Australian ASD Educational Needs Analysis

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²Queensland University of Technology
1. Presentation and discussion of initial findings from ASD-ENA (approx. 30 mins)
2. Workshop activity – ASD-ENA -Implications for practice (approx. 15 mins)
3. Presentation and discussion of some communication findings related to ASD-ENA(approx. 30 mins)
4. Workshop activity – ASD-ENA/Communication -Implications for practice (approx. 15 mins)
The Autism CRC Research Team

- Dr Beth Saggars (QUT)
- David Klug (QUT)
- Dr Keely Harper-Hill (QUT)
- Dr Jill Ashburner (Autism Qld)
- Dr Debra Costley (ASPECT)

- Dr Trevor Clark (ASPECT)
- Dr Susan Bruck (ASPECT)
- Dr David Trembath (Griffith)
- Dr Amanda A. Webster (UOW)
- Professor Suzanne Carrington (QUT)
• Students with ASD & ABS (2012)

- Only 5% attended school & DIDN’T experience any educational restrictions.
- 95% experienced some educational restrictions

• 6% not able to attend school
• 44% needed to attend a special class in a mainstream school, or a special school.

For those attending school 86% reported ‘having difficulty’ at school, the majority of whom had difficulty with fitting in socially, learning and communication.
Objectives of the ASD-ENA

- **1ST** Australia-wide educational needs analysis for school aged students on the autism spectrum (5-18 years).

- **4** key stakeholders:
  - Educators,
  - Specialists,
  - Parents,
  - Students on the autism spectrum
Average teaching = 15.5 yrs (range 1-40 yrs).

Average working students w/ASD = 10.5 yrs (range 1-30 yrs).

- Over 50% CT’s

- 70% = mainstream primary or secondary school settings

- 30% = special school or autism specific schools

Specialist Participants:

- Worked across a range of:
  - organisations nationwide
  - mainstream and/or specialist settings

- Highest numbers = specialist teachers, SLPs, OTs
80% referring to primary or high school mainstream settings with their children attending a range of:

- state education organisations,
- catholic and
- independent schools.

The remaining 20% of parent respondents referred to either:

- special education,
- autism specific,
- distance education or
- home schooling placements.
Some Preliminary Findings

- **Social, emotional and behavioural needs** = biggest impact

- Top 3 most common supports =
  - teacher aide support,
  - in-class support, and
  - behaviour support.

- Behaviour support = essential element

1468 Respondents

- Educator (248)
- Specialists (179)
- Students (107)
- Parents (934)
## Top Rating Areas of Need in Educational Settings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top rating</th>
<th>Educators</th>
<th>Specialists</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Social emotional needs</td>
<td>Social emotional needs</td>
<td>Social emotional needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Behavioural needs</td>
<td>Behavioural needs</td>
<td>Behavioural needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Communication needs</td>
<td>Communication needs</td>
<td>Communication needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sensory &amp; academic/learning needs</td>
<td>Sensory &amp; academic/learning needs</td>
<td>Sensory needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• 50% agreed they felt confident to some degree in their ability to:

  – **Support and teach** students on the spectrum in school,
  – **Find evidence-based practices** to support and teach students on the spectrum
  – **Evaluate these evidence-based practices** and their application to support and teach students on the spectrum, and
  – **Apply** these evidence-based practices to support and teach students on the spectrum.
Positive Approaches to Behaviour in Schools

Agreement =

• 73% Educators
• 52% Specialists
• 63% Parents
Factors Influencing Capacity of Students with ASD to Participate

Highest rating =

- Suicidal attempts & thoughts
- Self-injurious behaviour
- School refusal
- Depression
- Aggression – peers & adults
- Passive resistance.

Other factors:

- Anxiety
- Organising self & thoughts
- Rigidity to change
- Attention to task.
## Top 5 Comorbid Conditions Affecting Educational Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educators</th>
<th>Specialists</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety disorder</td>
<td>Anxiety disorder</td>
<td>Learning difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning difficulties</td>
<td>Language disorder</td>
<td>Anxiety disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditory processing disorder</td>
<td>Learning difficulties</td>
<td>Auditory processing disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>ADHD</td>
<td>Language disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language disorder</td>
<td>Auditory processing disorder</td>
<td>Intellectual impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual impairment</td>
<td>Intellectual impairment</td>
<td>ADHD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Top 4 Barriers to Addressing Challenging Behaviours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educators</th>
<th>Specialists</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Funding</td>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Education &amp; training</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Education &amp; training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Specialist support</td>
<td>Education &amp; training</td>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Time</td>
<td>Specialist support</td>
<td>Specialist support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further Assistance Required to Meet the Complex Needs

**Barriers**
- Withdrawal/ Safe spaces
- Suspensions
- Other:
  - “stress level of teachers”
  - “too crowded curriculum to allow time for needs to be addressed”

**Further Assistance**
- Additional staff- individual support/ smaller classes
- Specialised/multidisciplinary support
- Home school cooperation
- Assistance with planning/implementation
- Resources/suitable accommodations
Sensory Experiences Having Most Impact

Top 3 sensory issues that have the most impact

= Noise, touch and staying still
Transition Support

- **Educator** – 80.1%
- **Specialist** – 70.2%
- **Parents** - 56.6%

Most comments described major transitions

Limited description of:

- year levels,
- teachers and supply teachers, and
- between lesson transitions.

Wide variation in transition practices reported
### Areas of learning effectively supported using technology

#### AutismCRC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Specialist</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic/learning</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
<td>71.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social/emotional</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>51.8%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>46.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Perspectives on Technology

Most Helpful:

- Computers and laptops
- iPads, iPods or tablets
- Music

Preferred:

- Computers and laptops
- iPods, iPads or tablets
- Other
  assistance with writing, video, games, earphones, count down timers, skype etc.

- Other
  calculators, Facebook and voice activated software
Top 10 Hardest Tasks

- Planning assignments
- Group work
- Neat handwriting
- Coping with change
- Coping with bullying
- Handwriting speed
- Copying information from board
- Doing homework
- Staying calm - annoyed
- Staying calm - noisy classroom

Qualitative Themes:

- Social issues
- Academic issues
- Sensory issues
Helpful Strategies

Qualitative Themes

- Empathic, patient teachers
- Social support and friendships
- Interesting work
- Other
  
  e.g. games, shorter days, quieter classroom, listening to music at school

- Technology - school work & handwriting
- Taking a break
- Time away from others
- Warning of change
- Copy of information
- Doing projects on special interests
- Help to organise self
- Rewards for doing things well
- Quiet space for assessment
- 1-1 help with an adult
- Extra time for assignments
- Help to organise assignments
Student Wellbeing – Strengths & Difficulties (n=48 students)

- **94%** = clinically significant difficulties.

- ‘Substantial risk’:
  - emotional problems  
    (e.g. low mood, anxiety, fears & headaches)
  - peer problems  
    (e.g. preference for being alone or with adults, bullying, not being liked).
1/3 reported high levels:

- separation anxiety,
- social phobia
- generalised anxiety.

Low levels:
- obsessive compulsive behaviours
- panic/agoraphobia,
- physical injury,
- fears
- total anxiety.
• Majority reported:
  – moderate levels of negative mood (87%)
  – anhedonia (82.2%) (inability to experience pleasure)
  – negative self-esteem (73.3%)
  – overall depression (93.5%).
Comorbid Conditions

Of the students with ASD completing the survey:

- **46%** had an additional diagnosis of **anxiety disorder**
- **22%** had an additional diagnosis of **depression**
- **21%** had an additional diagnosis of **social emotional disorder**
SOME FURTHER QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK
Effective Classroom Teachers & 
Teacher Practice

• Positive, patient & caring
• Knowledgeable about autism
• Able to differentiate
• Flexible
• Establishes consistent rules & routines
• Know & value individual students
• Effective communicator
• Meets sensory needs of students
• Clear consistent rules/organisation/structure
• Knowledgeable teachers
• Caring positive teachers
• Positive relationships
Ideal Classroom

- Calm, sensory classroom
- Smaller class sizes
- Routines/organisation
- Trained & supported teacher
- Safe & accepting
- Differentiation & pedagogy
- Technology available
Effective Schools:
- Individual support
- Positive & accepting culture
- Well trained staff
- Equipped to meets sensory needs
- Small classes or school
- Differentiated curriculum
- Consistent structures & routines
- Work with parents
- Whole school approach
- Specialist or multidisciplinary support
- Social support

Effective Programming:
- Utilise technology & resources
- Support in mainstream classes
- Assessments & planning based on individual needs
- Differentiation & adjustments
- Social support
- Staff training
- Multidisciplinary approach
- Flexible program
- Hands on learning
- Supportive schools & programs
- Routines & consistency
- Small class size
Tiers of Support

Top tier:
- Intensive monitoring, data collection, and one-on-one interventions

Middle tier:
- Increased monitoring, data collection, and small group interventions

Bottom tier:
- Universal monitoring and classroom interventions to increase learning

Response to Intervention Model
Top 10 Key Recommendations

1. Support the social emotional wellbeing of students on the spectrum.

2. Positive behaviour support.

3. Flexible and individually tailored educational approaches with an array of support options.
4. Student preferences for support considered:

- **using technology** (academic and learning needs)
- **one-on-one support** (inside & outside the classroom)
- **Social aspects of schooling** (working as part of a group, getting along with others, bullying)
- **Accessing time away**
- **Support:**
  - Handwriting tasks
  - Sensory needs
  - **Transition or pending change**
  - **Executive function skills** (e.g., planning, organisation, time management skills);
  - **Use of rewards**
5. **Technology essential element of support.**

6. **Support school connectedness**

7. **Consider sensory environment.**

8. **Support comorbid conditions** (e.g. anxiety, depression, ADHD, learning difficulties)

9. **Educator & specialist professional learning focus on confidence and self-efficacy in supporting students on the spectrum.**

10. **Access to multidisciplinary team**
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- Use of rewards

• In relation to student identified support needs consider what you would like to:

  • **Start – Stop – Continue**
Contact us

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