

Response to intervention: a solution for school-aged children with autism?

Sarah Maude Gagnon, Marie Grandisson, Myriam Chrétien-Vincent, Elise Milot, Béatrice Niquette

Laval University, Quebec, Quebec, Canada

Rationale. Children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are frequently included in mainstream educational settings. To enable successful inclusion and participation, support must be available to teachers. Considering the waiting lists for occupational therapy (OT) services in Quebec (Canada), it is critical to consider alternative service delivery options. One such example is response to intervention (RTI), a tier-based model where the OT is part of the school team and offers interventions associated with: 1) prevention/promotion 2) targeted services and 3) specialized services.

Objectives. To explore how response to intervention (RTI) could be adapted to meet more efficiently the needs of children with ASD in Quebec (Canada).

Method. Three main data collection tools were used: 1) referrals to occupational therapy for school-aged children with ASD, 2) two participatory discussion groups with OTs and, 3) semi-structured interviews with parents (n=10) and teachers (n=10).

Results. The prioritized interventions and critical components of effective collaboration between occupational therapists, school educators and parents will be presented, based on the adapted RTI model for children with ASD. The interventions included are expected to build school capacity to facilitate participation in classroom, recess, and lunch activities, as well as during transitions. In addition, the adapted model should include interventions targeting the promotion of children's physical and mental health.

Conclusion. This presentation will provide an innovative example of how RTI could be adapted to meet the needs of a specific population, and hence can be useful for all occupational therapists who intervene in schools.