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Social Validity of a School-Home Note Intervention for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Independent Stakeholder Perspectives

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Abstract: High quality communication between school and home is reported to be highly valued by parents of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). However, they remain dissatisfied with school-home communication and limited empirical research has addressed this topic. One study that used a school-home note with parent-provided, home-based reinforcement to reduce child off-task behavior showed differential results for some students, but high social validity according to parent and teacher participants. In this study we evaluated the social validity of this school-home note intervention from the perspective of other parents of children with ASD—outside consumers who did not participate directly in the intervention. Focus groups were conducted with 22 parents of children with ASD. Results showed high acceptability of this intervention related to: communication and data sharing, parent involvement, child motivation, and consistency between school and home. Participants also identified several limitations and suggestions for improving the school-home note. Implications for research and practice are discussed.

Decades of research have shown the importance of parent involvement at school to promote student outcomes such as academic achievement and graduation (Burke, 2012; Jeynes, 2005). Within special education, parents of children with disabilities have even greater, more specific rights to involvement in the special education process, as delineated through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). Parents are expected to hold the school accountable and should actively participate in decision-making on behalf of the child (Burke, 2012).

Across different models of school involvement from general to special education, communication is consistently included as a central component. In the most influential and commonly used model of parent engagement (Walker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2008), Epstein (2001) describes six types of parent engagement; each type is considered to have the potential to exert

considerable influence on student outcomes. One of these types, *communicating*, is defined as: effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school exchange of information about school programs and children's progress. Similarly, in a commonly cited model of collaborative family-professional partnership developed specifically for families of children with disabilities, Blue-Banning and colleagues (2004) identified six themes, one of which included communication. According to Blue-Banning et al., indicators of quality communication include a high frequency of communication, listening, being honest, and sharing resources. Across both models, bi-directional school-home communication is considered important in building partnership between the schools and families of all students.

However, the importance of communication and building strong family-school partnership may be even more critical for parents of children with autism spectrum

disorders (ASD). By definition, children with ASD have deficits in social-communication, making it challenging for parents to rely on their children to communicate what happens at school (Azad et al., 2016). Parents of children with ASD themselves report school-home communication to be a highly valued method of collaboration (Tucker & Schwartz, 2013). In fact, quality of communication is positively correlated with outcomes such as parent satisfaction with child service provision (Whitaker, 2007). Despite the established importance of bi-directional communication for parents of children with ASD, these parents report being less satisfied with communication from school compared to parents of children with other disabilities and parents of children without disabilities (Zablotsky et al., 2012).

Although the identification of research-based practices for developing high quality communication should be a priority, the empirical research on this topic is limited (Goldman et al., 2019). Tucker and Schwartz (2013) provided some recommended practices for teachers of children with ASD, such as: using formal and informal means of communication, creating a formal communication plan, and using the parent's preferred method to communicate. While limited empirical research has evaluated these recommendations for children with ASD and their families, there is evidence for the effectiveness of interventions that use school-home notes for other similar populations of students with disabilities (Vannest et al., 2010).

In the first experimental study to evaluate the use of school-home notes for school-age students with ASD, Goldman and colleagues (2019) used school-home notes with home-based contingent reinforcement to decrease the off-task school behavior of four students with ASD. While students earned a reward if

they met a certain behavioral criterion at school, this reward was provided by parents at home later that day. This information-- and the corresponding data-- were communicated to parents daily using a school-home note (see Figure 1 for an example). School-home notes were individualized, but all included the following components: (a) target behavior and goal; (b) space for brief teacher comments; (c) an indication of how often the behavior occurred, according to teacher-collected direct observational data from a target activity; (d) whether the criterion was met; (e) a 5-item parent fidelity checklist; and (f) space for parents to write a note to the school.

Findings showed the intervention to be differentially effective for some participants, precluding the demonstration of a functional relation (Goldman et al., 2019). However, social validity results were promising, with all eight participating teachers and parents rating the acceptability of the intervention and its outcomes highly. Parents and teachers described improvements in partnership and communication as a result of the intervention; more specifically, they reported positive perceptions of the structured, focused, and consistent nature of communication using the school-home note.

Social validity has long been considered an essential component of applied behavior analysis (ABA). Researchers and practitioners must address socially significant behaviors (Baer et al., 1968) with "social validation" of intervention goals, procedures, and effects (Wolf, 1978). In updated guidelines for identifying evidence-based practices (EBP) in special education, Horner and colleagues (2005) included social validity as one of seven main quality indicators for single-subject research. A focus on social validity is thus necessary for the important task of establishing EPBs in

Figure 1

Sample School-Home Note

JOHN'S NOTE HOME									
Date: _____					Activity: Math				
<u>During Math I need to have:</u>									
1. Eyes on teacher									
2. Calm body									
3. Follow directions									
If I earn _____ points, when I get home from school I will get to play on the iPad.									

Today I earned ____ points									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Did I meet my goal today?					YES		NO		
Note to parent:									
<u>Parent Checklist</u>									
<u>Please review this behavior sheet with your child and initial the following items as you complete them:</u>					Initial when completed:		Parent notes:		
1. Got school-home note from child's backpack within 1 hour of arriving at home									
2. Reviewed school-home note with child									
3. Provided praise and the reinforcer if child earned it, or remained neutral if he did not									
4. Did not give access to the reward if it was not earned based on school behavior									
5. Put form back in child's backpack.									

special education and is also considered particularly important for research on interventions specifically for students with ASD (Dingfelder & Mandell, 2011).

While ABA and single-subject research typically rely on quantitative measurement to maximize objectivity, there is a push for the use of qualitative methodology, such as interviews and focus groups, to understand the social validity of intervention procedures and outcomes and contribute to the establishment of EBPs (Kozleski, 2017). Typical social validity surveys and direct, face-to-face interviews may inflate participant satisfaction (Machalicek et al., 2007). Additionally, traditional social validity measures typically only consider the perspectives of those directly involved in a study. While these participant perspectives are important in understanding the acceptability of the intervention, it is valuable to also recruit the perceptions of outside “consumers” not directly involved in implementation of the intervention (Machalicek et al., 2007). These individuals may be able to more freely provide their honest opinion and can promote generalizability by allowing larger and more varied groups of people to contribute their perceptions. The representation of diverse participants in literature establishing EBPs for students with ASD is currently extremely limited, further highlighting the need to incorporate more diverse perspectives (West et al., 2016). Therefore, in this study, we explored the perceptions of parents of children with ASD who were outside consumers (i.e., did not participate directly in the intervention) of the social validity of the school-home communication intervention used by Goldman and colleagues (2019).

Methods

Sample

Participants in this study included 22 parents of school-age students with ASD. On average, parents were 38 years old and their child with ASD was 6 years old (range: 3-18 years). Participants included mothers (59%) and fathers (41%), and were distributed across racial and ethnic groups. Overall, they were 50% White, 25% African American, 20% Hispanic, and 5% Asian. Two Spanish-speaking Latino parents used a translator to participate. Across participants, the median level of education was completion of some college or an Associate’s degree.

Procedures

After receiving approval from the university Institutional Review Board, recruitment flyers and emails were sent to local schools and community disability organizations to be disseminated. This study used purposive sampling; any caregivers of school-age children with ASD were invited to participate. A total of three focus groups were conducted, with a mean of eight participants per group.

At the start of each focus group, participants provided their consent and completed a brief demographic form. Before beginning, each participant chose a pseudonym that they used throughout the focus group to maintain their anonymity. They then participated in focus groups led by the authors using semi-structured scripts. During the focus group, participants were shown samples of school-home notes (see Figure 1) that corresponded with scripted questions. For example, the facilitator described the school-home note intervention, passed around sample school-home notes, and asked, “Is this something you might want your child’s teacher to use? Why or why not?”

Each focus group was audio-recorded and lasted approximately one hour; topics beyond social validity were addressed during this

time. In addition to audio-recording, graduate research assistants took detailed field notes for each focus group, indicating who was speaking when and the general topic of their comment. The focus group facilitators also recorded less detailed notes and impressions during and immediately after focus group completion.

Data Analysis

Focus group recordings were transcribed and independently coded line-by-line by both authors using constant comparison (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The authors then compared their codes, discussed commonalities and differences and re-analyzed the data independently to allow any new codes to emerge. After multiple iterations of this constant comparative coding process, the authors agreed upon the final themes and sub-themes presented below.

Trustworthiness

To ensure the quality and credibility of this study, we followed the guidelines for qualitative research in special education established by Brantlinger and colleagues (2005). Participants purposefully included diverse representatives of the population of interest (i.e., caregivers of school-age children with ASD who did not participate in the original study by Goldman et al. [2019]). Semi-structured focus group scripts were carefully designed to be clear, open-ended, appropriate for exploring specific questions about social validity, and consistent from group to group (with different facilitators). Both facilitators reflected on their positionality as doctoral students and special educators before conducting focus groups and while analyzing focus group transcripts. These facilitators were of different ethnicities (Latinx and White) and had experiences working with individuals with ASD of different ages (elementary versus transition-age). To further ensure Trustworthiness, data

sources such as informal and formal field-notes recorded by multiple observers were triangulated with audio-recordings and transcripts, utilizing evidence from multiple and varied sources. Finally, external auditors reviewed findings and confirmed that inferences were logical based on their varied experience (Brantlinger et al., 2005).

Results

Acceptability of Intervention

Across all focus groups, participants agreed that this school-home communication intervention and its procedures were acceptable. Positive findings related to four main areas: (1) consistent communication, (2) parent involvement, (3) student motivation, and (4) consistency across settings. Participants also made connections to other interventions and practices currently used by their child at home or school.

Consistent Communication and Data Sharing

Parents appreciated that the school-home notes could be used to collect and share data, rather than having to rely on subjective or anecdotal information about the child's behavior and progress, which was the norm. Sadie, the mother of an 18-year-old son explained this by agreeing with another parent's earlier comment about the importance of documentation. Referencing her son's teachers, she shared:

It's for documentation too, like she talked about. They can document. It's a great way to help them see what they're doing over time. I wish I had all that when my son was that small because all we got was the teacher's word, and that was it. But this way I can see the pattern, and we can work on a pattern and focus on that. So this is great.

Parents across the other focus groups agreed, with one mother noting that receiving the school-home note would provide her with

“something tangible that occurred during the school day” and another agreeing that “it would be a good tool.”

Parents also liked this documentation because data-sharing was built in to the intervention to promote communication on a daily basis. Instead of having to wait for more formal opportunities for communication and progress monitoring, such as meetings, this intervention provided frequent opportunities for consistent, informal exchange of information. Jeff, the father of a preschooler highlighted the benefits of consistent communication and data sharing: “...instead of just having to wait for that IEP, whenever that comes. Because that’s most frustrating. Having to figure out that something is not progressing way after the fact...” Thus, parents appreciated that the school-home note promoted objective data collection and documentation of progress that could be shared consistently with families.

Parent Involvement

Parents also liked that they would be explicitly involved in this intervention in the role of providing home-based reinforcement for the child’s behavior at school. To ensure fidelity, a parent checklist was included on the school-home note used by Goldman et al. (2019; see Figure 1). This checklist was generated by the authors and reminded parents to check the note each day and provide reinforcement only if it was earned. Andy, a mother with a background in special education, noticed this checklist on the sample school-home note and shared: “I like the fact that it has a parent checklist. That’s one thing I wish they would have-- also that responsibility for the parent.” Similarly, another parent shared that this would “make it easier for us to hold her accountable for her behavior.” Parents consistently wanted to be involved in this intervention and take on responsibility to help improve the child’s

behavior at school. When parents in a different focus group were asked if they would like their child’s teacher to use a school-home note, one parent concisely explained, “Absolutely. Again, it’s just about being more involved.” Therefore, across groups, participants found the inclusion of parents in this intervention to be highly acceptable and desirable.

Student Motivation

Relatedly, parents liked and appreciated the value of being able to provide the child with a reward at home based on school behavior. Through a translator, Dolores shared her perspective: “That motivates the child a lot because he’ll get all excited if he had a really good day and he’ll come home to show her.” Additionally, home-based rewards can be more motivating because the child may be able to access toys or other tangibles and activities that they may not have at school. Sadie stated:

It was something that they could connect with and identify with that reminded them that, if I get the reward, it’s associated with something that I’m interested in. And it motivates me to want to go do that. Yeah, that’s neat.

Overall, parents found the home-based, parent-provided reward component of the intervention to be highly acceptable and thought it was likely to be effective in motivating students with ASD.

Consistency between Home and School

Parents also appreciated that the school-home note intervention and the information shared through it could help promote the consistency between settings and providers that is so important for children with ASD. Jeff’s wife, Michaela, stated that:

I do like the idea of being able to carry home the idea of, ‘Here’s your follow through reward for whatever you’ve been doing all week.’ It’s been hard to keep the

two-- for him, it's just so different and separate-- so to keep it one continuous form of discipline and communication for him would be awesome.

Building on this idea, Jeff explained that it was challenging for him to know what to do with his child at home because Michaela was the one who was typically present. He was aware that his son was working on specific skills at school, such as handwriting, but did not know how to translate these activities to the home setting because this information was not shared by his son's school. Jeff agreed that, "something like that seems excellent" to improve consistency between home and school. This sentiment was echoed by another father, David, who noted that the school-home note and corresponding documentation "...gives us as parents something, 'Oh great, you met your goal. You worked on +1's today. Let's review them'." Parents therefore thought this intervention would help them to "reinforce" skills the child was working on at school at home.

Similarity to Current Practices

In addition to high social validity in terms of general acceptability, participants indicated their approval by making connections between the school-home note and similar systems they liked and used with their own child. Michaela made a connection to a similar detailed note she received from her son's new teacher in preparation for his transition to a new classroom:

I was really thankful because he sent home a very thorough thing like this. I was so glad, because it had what he ate for lunch, what he did during recess... It would say what activity he chose, and then if he had any behavioral issues or something he needed to work on. And I was like, 'This is what I needed!' It was just super helpful.

Likewise, Andy, mother to a daughter in 3rd grade, shared that "we have something similar to that, but it didn't have the parent response." Although similar, this school-home note intervention seemed to provide greater opportunity for bi-directional communication beyond the typical one-way information sharing from school to home that more often occurs with traditional school-home notes.

Parents also made connections to other behavior management systems with contingent rewards used by their children at home and school, such as token boards and color charts. Some focus group participants had children who attended, or had previously attended, the same school and therefore had exposure to similar class-wide behavior management systems (e.g., color charts). Jen, David's wife, made a connection between rules listed on the school-home note and specific rules their son used at therapy and home. She stated that, although they had "rules like that," she liked this format better: "I like how it's written up. I really like that." Although David agreed that they used similar rules, he noted that, "we don't do the communication- like the back and forth with the teacher." Therefore, parents made connections to other behavioral practices used with their children to highlight the acceptability of the components and procedures of the school-home note intervention. However, other behavior management systems mentioned did not typically include a method to promote bi-directional communication.

Limitations and Suggestions for Improvement

Despite these positive perceptions, parents did share some concerns and suggestions for making the intervention even more acceptable to them.

Limitations

Parents identified two main limitations of the school-home note intervention. First, they had concerns about the delay to reinforcement necessitated by home-based contingent reinforcement for school-based behavior. Particularly for younger students and children with limited communication, parents were unsure if this intervention would be effective. Jen expressed uncertainty about the effectiveness of this intervention for younger children even though she felt it would work for her 3rd grade son: “The only thing I wonder about the younger kids is, they kind of want instant gratification. So with the preschoolers, I don’t know.” A parent of a younger child agreed with this sentiment: “I think it’s a great idea eventually. It wouldn’t work great right now. But eventually, yeah.” Similarly, participants expressed concern about the effectiveness of this intervention for students with limited receptive and expressive language and communication skills. Gerald, father to a 3-year-old son who had just begun to receive school services expressed his skepticism:

I don’t really know how much it would help him. He’s three and he’s autistic and stuff... like I said, he don’t really talk. He just mumbles. He’ll let you know what he wants. But he just mumbles. He’s working on his... you know, it’s a process, he’s working on it. So I don’t know if that’s really gonna help him.

Another concern related to the teacher’s role in this intervention. Some participants questioned whether teachers could accurately collect data and if they would honestly share it. Deena, mother to a minimally verbal 5-year-old son, was skeptical. She explained

What I get a kick out of is, when I look at a parent checklist like this and it says the same thing every day. Every day! And you’re like, how? You’re talking about [son’s name], right? You’re gonna tell me

he didn’t get upset when you told him no goldfish crackers? You’re full of it.

Other parents agreed with this sentiment, but were more concerned with overwhelming teachers with too much data collection and paperwork. Jeff explained the need to design a well-structured, efficient communication form that meets the needs of all involved. He stated:

I’ve thought about that a lot over the past year... I think it’s rare that a teacher straight up just doesn’t care. It’s that they’re overwhelmed, they have a ton going on. Something that is either poorly designed or is an overburden on top of their current workload. How do you design something so that it’s easy for them to communicate something? How do you communicate a whole day?

Overall, parents across focus groups agreed with this goal of simplicity and efficiency, and that a complex, labor-intensive school-home communication system would be ineffective. Thus, two main concerns were identified by parents, relating to delayed reinforcement and teacher responsibility for data collection.

Suggestions for Improvement

Building on the school-home note intervention that was described to parents, focus group participants also made suggestions for improvement and asked clarifying questions that fell under two main categories. First, parents highlighted that the note and intervention components should be tailored to the specific needs and abilities of each individual student. For those students who were able, parents suggested involving them in the intervention as much as possible. For example, Jen thought her son who was in 3rd grade would be motivated by being involved in writing his goal or crossing off points as he earned them. She explained, “Because he’s old enough to write out his own goal. Because that would get him a little

bit more involved... So he would enjoy that.” Relatedly, David suggested that the note should include the child’s specific target activity and goal to give the parent more information and help promote carryover from school to home.

The other main theme related to keeping the focus of the school-home note positive. Sam explained how she takes the initiative to make sure communication from the school about her daughter-- who is minimally verbal-- focuses on the positive. She shared: “So I make my home sheets positive.... So I changed it, I changed it to be like the child psychologist told me. You concentrate on the positive and reward her for the positive.” Sam felt that any school-home note should maintain this positive focus. Another mother, Linda, inquired about the ability for the student to gain and lose points, making another comparison to her child’s current system. She explained, “They can recede and get better throughout the day. And sometimes that information about how they can recede is just as important, because then you know that they really did slip past it, not that they pushed forward.” Thus, parents wanted to ensure that the school-home note had a positive focus, but also presented a full picture of the child’s behavior over the course of the day.

Discussion

Although building strong family-school partnership and high-quality bi-directional communication should be a priority for schools and families of students with ASD (Tucker & Schwartz, 2013), empirical research on this topic is limited. As part of the process of establishing a research-base for communication-based interventions, it is important to determine the acceptability for key stakeholders (i.e., social validity). In this study, we examined the perceptions of outside stakeholders regarding the

acceptability of a home-school communication intervention for children with ASD. We identified three main findings regarding the social validity of this intervention according to the perspectives of independent consumers who were parents of children with ASD but did not participate directly in the intervention. These findings related to: (1) intervention acceptability, (2) suggestions for improvement, and (3) areas of concern.

Intervention Acceptability

First, parents across focus groups consistently found this home-school communication intervention with parent-provided contingent reinforcement to be highly acceptable. Many made connections to effective, research-based behavior management strategies (e.g., token boards) currently used with their children. They also stated that they themselves would be interested in using a similar school-home note intervention with their children with ASD.

Additionally, although focus group participants did not participate in the prior study to establish an evidence-base for this practice (Goldman et al., 2019), they independently identified key components of this intervention. The purpose of a school-home note intervention is to increase parent-school communication and create a partnership between school and home; the home-school note can act as an intervention, progress monitoring tool, and system of communication all in one (Vannest et al., 2010). Without prompting, parents touched upon these characteristics in their evaluation of the intervention. First, participants appreciated that a school-home note intervention like this would support them in more frequent, consistent communication with the school to share data and monitor progress. It is well established that data

should be collected and shared consistently to monitor progress and inform educational decision-making for students with ASD (Witmer et al., 2015) but, in practice, parents are often unhappy with the extent to which this occurs (Zablotsky et al., 2012).

Participants also highlighted the parent-involvement component as a strength, indicating a desire to be involved in managing their child's behavior. By providing the reward at home, parents could give access to a tangible that may be more reinforcing than what was available to the child at school. In this way, parents felt empowered to contribute to the effectiveness of this intervention. Also related to parent involvement, parents cited consistency across settings as an important factor for the high social validity of this practice. Parents reported a desire to be more involved in generalizing skills from school to home, which is particularly important for students with ASD who often experience challenges with generalization across people and settings (Church et al., 2015). Therefore, parents' high ratings of social validity specifically related to the benefits of: consistent communication and progress monitoring, parent involvement in providing home-based reinforcement and increasing student motivation, and consistency across settings.

Suggestions for Improvement

Despite the overwhelmingly positive feedback, participants also shared some suggestions for improving the school-home note intervention and reflected on concerns regarding its effectiveness for certain student populations. Overall, respondents thought that the more individualized the school-home note and intervention, the better. This is consistent with general best-practice in special education and the requirements of IDEA (2004) to provide students with

disabilities with individualized services and supports. Also consistent with best practices in ABA and positive behavior supports (PBS), parents highlighted the benefits of focusing on the positive. Although not explicitly emphasized during focus groups, these parent suggestions align with the flexible design of the school-home note intervention. All school-home notes shared common components specified by Kelley (1990), but were otherwise individualized to meet the child's level and interests; the intervention setting, target activity, behavioral expectations, and reward also varied across participants (see Goldman et al., 2019 for more details). However, across all participants, the behaviors were framed positively, with students earning points for appropriate behavior instead of losing points for engaging in challenging behavior. Parents and teachers were also coached to focus on the positive and not provide too much attention when students engaged in challenging behavior or did not meet their goal. Thus, parent suggestions regarding the acceptability of this intervention nicely match the flexibility of school-home note interventions (Vannest et al., 2010).

Areas of Concern

Based on their personal experience, parent participants also identified two main concerns that might limit the effectiveness of this intervention. The first of these concerns related to student characteristics: young students and those with significant communication deficits may not benefit from this type of intervention. In fact, these concerns identified by parents aligned with results from the study that experimentally evaluated this practice (Goldman et al., 2019). Although age did not seem to play a role, this intervention was differentially effective for the two participants who were on the "less severe" end of the autism spectrum (American Psychiatric Association,

2013) with fewer support needs. Thus, this parent concern may be validated by future research. Parents were also concerned about teachers' ability to implement this intervention given the well-established demands on their time (Witmer et al., 2015).

These findings regarding social validity are particularly valuable because they involve the perceptions of participants who have children with ASD, but who did not participate in the intervention. These outside consumers were able to be honest about the fit of the intervention to their needs and values (Dingfelder & Mandell, 2007). Focus group participants provided responses that highlighted the overall acceptability of this intervention, but also included valid concerns, which happen to be supported by the literature (Goldman et al., 2019; Vannest et al., 2010). In determining the acceptability- or social validity—of an intervention, some would consider the primary goal to be identifying what consumers dislike about a treatment (Machalicek et al., 2007). Through this lens, participants provided thoughtful suggestions to improve an already acceptable intervention for future use.

Implications for Research and Practice

These findings have several implications for research and practice, particularly related to the establishment of EBPs in special education. First, findings from this study show the importance of collecting social validity data beyond direct study participants (Machalicek et al., 2007). Although both Goldman et al.'s (2019) study participants and this study's focus group participants reported high social validity overall, they focused on different facets of the intervention procedures and outcomes and represent different perspectives. While it is important to attend to social validity in establishing EBPs for students with ASD in general (Callahan et al., 2008), in future research,

measurement should be extended beyond typical quantitative questionnaires assessing the perspectives of typical participants (i.e., those who participate directly in the intervention; Kozleski, 2017).

Further, the literature on EBPs for students with ASD in particular lacks the perspectives of diverse participants (West et al., 2016), such as those presented in this study. For example, research on families of children with ASD typically focuses on the mother's perspective, with those of fathers overlooked (Potter, 2017). However, the fathers who participated in these focus groups contributed valuable, insightful perspectives that should be considered. In the original study by Goldman and colleagues (2019), only one father participated in social validity interviews, but he was not actively involved in implementing the home-based component of the intervention. Beyond role, other "contextual factors," such as race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status, should also be considered in determining "what works" (West et al., 2016). In the school context, families of students with disabilities that are racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse experience differences in social-cultural capital and face unique systemic barriers to involvement (Harry, 2008). These differences, if not addressed, may lead to inadequate cultural fit between interventions and families. Therefore, additional research is needed that considers social validity and other factors related to EBPs from the perspectives of all who are involved.

Particularly for home-school communication interventions, additional high-quality research is still needed to establish an evidence-base for this practice. Some of the findings from this study may be used to inform the design of future studies. For example, results from Goldman et al. (2019), showed that the intervention was

differentially effective for certain participants. Findings from this study support those results and provide guidance for identifying more specific inclusion and exclusion criteria that can guide future research. To determine if participants met inclusion criteria, Goldman and colleagues relied on parent and teacher perceptions of whether the student's receptive language level was sufficient to understand the school-home note and home-based contingency, and whether they could comprehend and respond to delayed reinforcement. Findings from this study indicate that more formal measures of child communication and functioning may be necessary to identify participants who will benefit most from this intervention.

Although additional research is needed to establish an evidence-base for school-home notes, some of our findings can be used to inform practice. Parents in this study, whose children attended various schools across districts, reported the use of similar home-notes by their child's teacher or the use of other research-based behavior management strategies, such as establishing clear, specific rules or using token systems. Teachers should be encouraged to continue to use these practices, particularly in coordination with families. But, our findings show that families are aware of the demands on teachers and do not expect or desire burdensome forms of communication and data-sharing. The focus should be on developing and using efficient systems for ongoing progress monitoring and frequent bi-directional communication between teachers and families of students with ASD.

Limitations

This study also has some limitations that should be considered. First, although the participants represent a relatively diverse group of parents in terms of role, race/ethnicity, and education, all lived in one region of a southeastern state. This may limit the generalizability of our findings to families whose children attend school in other districts and states with different service-delivery systems and procedures. Relatedly, although participants were parents of children who represented the full school-age range (i.e., ages 3-18), few had older children (e.g., high-school age). However, social validity findings related to intervention effectiveness and child age still emerged, so this likely did not limit our findings. Additionally, although we achieved data saturation, indicated by redundancy of themes across groups, it is possible that novel perspectives would have emerged from additional focus groups and a larger sample.

Conclusion

In conclusion, findings from this study provide additional support for the social validity of a school-home note intervention from outside consumers. Parents who were not directly involved in implementing the intervention perceived specific benefits relating to communication, progress monitoring, parent involvement, and consistency across settings. These strengths, in addition to limitations identified during focus groups, should be used to inform future research related to establishing an evidence-base for the use of school-home notes for students with ASD.

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