

SWEENEY, JENNIFER JEAN, Ph.D., May 2010

SCHOOL OF LIFESPAN  
DEVELOPMENT AND  
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

A SYSTEMATIC REPLICATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GROUP DISCRETE  
TRIAL TEACHING FOR STUDENTS WITH AUTISM (165 pp.)

Co-Directors of Dissertation: Melody J. Tankersley, Ph. D.  
Lyle Barton, Ed. D.

Students with autism have varied profiles with deficits across many domains such as communication and social interactions. Education for students with autism requires highly trained teachers in autism spectrum disorders and in evidence-based practices (EBP). Researchers are working to identify treatments that meet standards for EBP and have offered guidelines for assessing and developing current and future research. Replicating research is one important aspect in identifying EBP.

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the list of EBP for students with autism by replicating the findings of Taubman et al. (2001). Specifically, the researcher sought to determine the effectiveness of group discrete trial teaching when implemented with a group of five students with disabilities, including autism. The study also investigated the teacher's ability to deliver instruction with integrity while collecting data. Additionally, the researcher sought to determine generalization effects of the instructional method. Group discrete trial teaching consists of a series of instructional trials delivered systematically to a small group of students. The procedure leads to an increase in the number of times each student responds during group instruction (Taubman et al., 2001). By offering multiple opportunities to respond during group instruction, the teacher gains information regarding each student's level of performance. Group discrete

trial teaching offers a consistent format for students with autism to acquire skills in an inclusion setting.

The effects of group discrete trial teaching on skill acquisition were evaluated within a multiple baseline across skills design. The teacher delivered discrete trials sequentially and chorally to the group of students each day. Sequential trials consisted of paced trials delivered to each student one at a time and choral trials consisted of the teacher delivering an instruction to the group with the group responding in unison. Results indicated that group discrete trial teaching was effective in skill acquisition for all five students and that the teacher was able to deliver the instruction with integrity while collecting data. Additionally, the study demonstrated that observational learning was possible during instruction. The findings offer a promising strategy for teachers to instruct students with autism in a group instructional setting.