

# Understanding Consultation for students with ASD Through Conversations With Stakeholders

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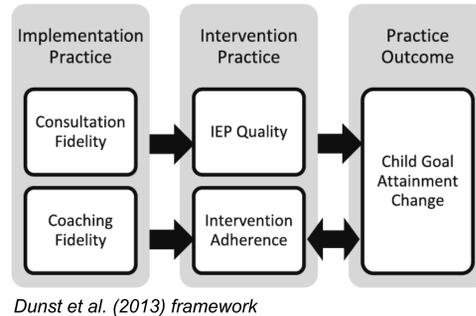
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## Study Background

COMPASS, or the **Collaborative Model for Promoting Competence and Success**, is an evidence-based intervention for improving student educational outcomes.

As part of a larger project, we are seeking to create a valid, and locally adapted and evidence-based implementation training package for COMPASS considering training fidelity, validity, and reliability.

Little is known about building an evidence-based training package, but we believe this study addresses a significant research-to-practice gap that addresses the lack of educational strategies for children with ASD that are based on evidence (<10%). The direct relationship between the quality of consultation and student outcomes makes this project significant and timely.



## Guiding Questions

The goals of this project were to identify perceptions of stakeholders regarding:

- Factors that are helpful and unhelpful for good consultation and consultants as well as *good training* of consultants
- Past experiences with consultants and with consultation (e.g., appropriateness, acceptability, and content with previously experienced consultant training)
- How to best fit COMPASS training into the local context
- Barriers for sustaining training

## Participants

Type of Participant	n
School District Consultants	11
School Administrators	6
General and Special Education Teachers for All Ages	6
Parents of Individuals with ASD	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>

87% Female; 97% White

## Focus Group Methods

- We used a semi-structured interview to guide each of the **FIVE** focus groups that lasted 40 to 90 minutes each.
- Group size ranged from 4-9 participants and included participants from similar stakeholder groups.

### Sample Focus Group Questions

1. What makes a good consultant?
2. What is unhelpful in consulting?
3. What are your experiences in training in consulting or in autism?
4. What are the elements of good training in consultation or in autism?

- To analyze our data we recorded, transcribed, and entered our interviews into qualitative data analysis software (MAXQDA) for analysis.
- Initially, three team members read transcripts to identify possible themes (open coding) using qualitative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013).
- An iterative, consensus-building process was used to review and identify emergent themes related to the main topic areas that were then developed into codes. The final codebook included the following codes:

	CODE	SUBCODES
1	Good consulting	Teacher/Consultant Alliance, Building on Strengths; Teacher/student focused; Modeling; Practical for Teachers; Ongoing Engagement; Coaching/Teacher Empowerment; Consistent
2	Attitudes toward consulting process	Openness
3	Aspects of good training for consulting	Peer feedback; Modeling; Homework; Customize
4	Recommended training delivery	How; When; What
5	Evaluating consulting outcomes	

## Stakeholder Perspectives

### Good Consulting

“As a teacher it was always very useful if they gave me strategies that I could actually, in real life, I could use and knowing that I have other students also, you know things that aren’t just pie in the sky, that they were things I could really do...” –Teacher

### Attitudes toward consulting process

“Well they need to buy into that the evidence-based practices are something that’s gonna make their life better and that you might have to spend more time and energy on the front end in order to see the long-term pull....I struggle with convincing folks that in order to change the student’s behavior you have to change your behavior first. That can threaten some people...And that relationship building helps with that.” - School-based Consultant

### Aspects of good training for consulting

“Training needs to happen before we get them for the beginning of the school year, so that we can have some more things in our toolbox, to attack this.” - Administrator

### Recommended training delivery

“We have to start where the audience is at. If [the trainer is] using too many rigid, huge words, or whatever, that the the audience can’t relate to. Sometimes that makes it very challenging if you’re trying to train people and [the trainer is] just way over your head.” - Administrator

### Evaluating consulting outcomes

“I think to look at each child’s IEP to make sure at that 4-6 week point that all the points on that IEP are being met. Because that is a continual problem that I have had for my son. Over and over.” - Parent

## Completed Actions From Stakeholder Recommendations

Identification of barriers, expectations, and current intervention practices were used to build a consultation training package that was sensitive to local concerns and contexts, while also preserving integrity of the EBP.

### Example Recommendations From Stakeholders

- Got feedback from pilot participants on how best to integrate the consultant training into the state’s autism manual
- Completed a pilot cohort of trainers to work on timing understanding the barriers to consultants attending in-person training days
- Considered the timing of the training as based on feedback from the focus groups
- In training plan, we included frequent opportunities for practice and short lectures to keep attention of participants
- Intentional use of words “coaching” and “consulting”

We conducted a promising pilot administration of our training package with N = 3 school-based consultants. Preliminary evidence demonstrates consultants were able to implement COMPASS with good fidelity. Consultants received high satisfaction from parents and teachers.

want to know more?

<https://sites.education.uky.edu/asrg/>

For a full list of references, please contact Abigail Love, [amlove2@uky.edu](mailto:amlove2@uky.edu).

