

# Relationships Matter: The Association Between Parent-Teacher Alliance, Parent Stress, and Student Outcomes



## BACKGROUND

- ❖ Positive parent-teacher relationships are critical for student success, in areas such as academic and behavioral outcomes (Garbacz, McIntyre, & Santiago, 2016).
  - These relationships are paramount for students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) as coordinated plans that promote generalization of skills across home and school are required for successful skill development (National Research Council, 2001).



- ❖ One description of the parent-teacher relationship is parent-teacher alliance (PTA).
  - PTA is defined as a direct mutual connection between teachers and parents (Thijs & Eilbracht, 2012).
  - Parents and teachers agree that collaboration and communication are critical for the education of students with ASD (Syriopoulou-Delli, Cassimos, & Polychronopoulou, 2016).
  - Stronger parent-teacher alliance has also been associated with lower stress for parents of younger children with ASD (Krakovich, McGrew, Yu, & Ruble, 2016).
- ❖ Collaboration and communication may be especially important for transition age youth (TAY) with ASD:
  - Poorer outcomes in employment, friendships, and community engagement compared to disabled peers (Anderson, Shattuck, Cooper, Roux, & Wagner, 2014; Taylor & Seltzer, 2011; Wehman et al., 2014).
  - Increased parental demands after student exits high school (Cheak-Zamora, Teti, & First, 2015).

➔ Thus, successful interventions for TAY with ASD may work in part by establishing and leveraging a stronger parent-teacher alliance.

## INTERVENTION

- ❖ As part of a secondary analysis of a randomized controlled trial of an adaptation of the Collaborative Model for Promoting Competence and Success (COMPASS) for transition age youth with ASD we examined intervention impacts on alliance and the association between alliance and student and parent outcomes.
- ❖ COMPASS is a student-centered, teacher coaching intervention that:
  - Results in improved IEP outcomes (Ruble et al., 2018)
  - Encourages collaboration by bringing together the student's parent and teacher
- ❖ COMPASS consultants work with the parent and teacher to identify personalized goals based on each student's personal and environmental challenges and supports and develops personalized teaching plans using an evidence-based practice in psychology framework (McGrew, Ruble, & Smith, 2016).

## OBJECTIVES

- 1) Examine the relationships between parent-teacher alliance and IEP goal achievement and parenting stress respectively.
- 2) Examine whether COMPASS results in measurable improvements in parent-teacher alliance.

## METHODS

### Participants

- ❖ 20 triads of students with ASD in their last year of school, their parent / caregiver, and their special education teacher overseeing their IEP were recruited.

| Participant Type   | Gender |        | Mean Age (years) | Mean Years Teaching |
|--------------------|--------|--------|------------------|---------------------|
|                    | Male   | Female |                  |                     |
| Parents/Caregivers | 2      | 18     | –                | –                   |
| Students           | 18     | 2      | 18.2             | –                   |
| Teachers           | 3      | 17     | –                | 12.33               |

### Procedure

- ❑ Parents completed a pre-test assessment of parent-teacher alliance and parenting stress using the following measures:

#### ❖ The Parent Teacher Alliance Questionnaire (PTAQ)

- 21-item self-report measure adapted from the Parenting Alliance Inventory (Abidin & Brunner, 1994)
- Parents answer questions about their relationship and interactions with the teacher using a 5-point Likert scale:
  - ➔ 1 = “strongly agree” and 5 = “strongly disagree”
- Yields a sum score ranging from 21 to 105 with a lower score indicating better alliance.

#### ❖ The Parenting Stress Index – Fourth Edition Short Form (PSI-4 SF)

- 36-item self-report measure and a shortened version of the PSI-4 (Abidin, 2012)
- Parents answer questions on parenting stress and problem areas in parent-child interactions using a 5-point Likert scale:
  - ➔ 1 = “strongly disagree” and 5 = “strongly agree”
- Items are divided into three subscales that combine to yield a Total Stress score:
  - Parental Distress (PD): level of parent distress as a result of parenting role
  - Parent-Child Dysfunctional Interaction (PCDI): Parent perception of parent-child interactions
  - Difficult Child (DC): Child behaviors that may make parenting role easy or challenging
- Only PD subscale was used in analysis to examine parenting stress.

- ❑ Parents were then randomly assigned to either the COMPASS intervention ( $N = 11$ ) or the placebo control group ( $N = 9$ ).

- ❑ Post-intervention, parents repeated the PTAQ and PSI-4 SF along with a brief questionnaire asking them to rate their child's progress on their IEP goals on a 5-point Likert scale in which 1 = “none at all” and 5 = “a great deal.”

### Data Analysis

- 1) Pearson correlations were calculated to examine the relationships between parent-teacher alliance and parent report of student IEP goal achievement and self-reported parenting stress.
- 2) A one-way analysis of covariance and paired samples t-test were conducted to examine whether COMPASS improves parent report of parent-teacher alliance.

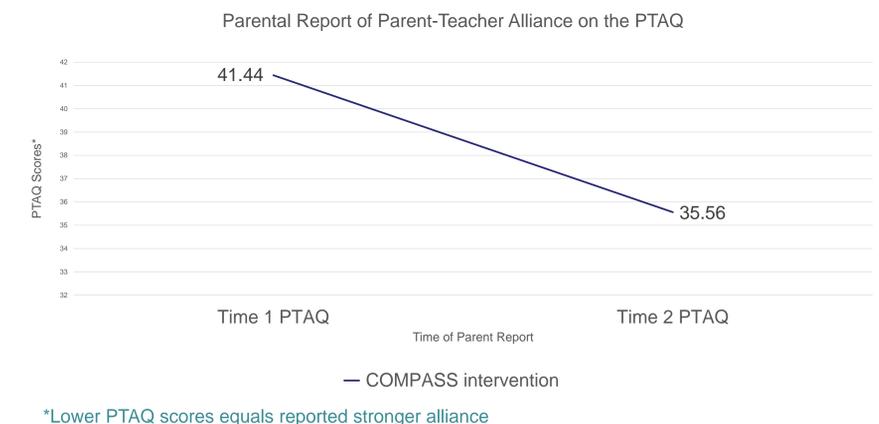
## RESULTS

### 1) Relationship between parent-teacher alliance and IEP goal achievement and parenting stress

- ❖ Lower scores on the PTAQ (stronger parent-teacher alliance) correlated with higher scores on the IEP goal achievement questionnaire (higher reported goal achievement)
  - ( $r = -.62, p < .01$ )
- ❖ Lower scores on the PTAQ (stronger parent-teacher alliance) correlated with lower scores on the PSI-4 SF (lower parenting stress)
  - ( $r = .50, p < .05$ ).

### 2) Changes in parent-teacher alliance post-intervention implementation

- ❖ Controlling for baseline alliance scores, a one-way ANCOVA indicated a trend toward significance between groups on post-intervention alliance scores
  - [ $F(1,14) = 2.87, p = .11$ ] with a medium effect size ( $\eta^2 = .17$ )
- ❖ For the COMPASS group, a paired samples t-test revealed parent-teacher alliance scores improved from Time 1 (pre-test) to Time 2 (post-test) at a trending level
  - Time 1 ( $M = 41.44, SD = 13.36$ ), Time 2 ( $M = 35.56, SD = 9.32$ ),  $t(8) = 1.94, p = .088$ .



## CONCLUSIONS

Stronger parent-teacher alliance is associated with greater student improvements on educational goals and lower parenting stress as perceived by parents. The findings also suggest that COMPASS, an intervention designed to increase collaboration between parents and teachers of students with ASD, may improve parent-teacher alliance. Further research with larger samples is necessary.

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### Acknowledgements:

This work was supported by grant Number 5R34MH104208-02 from the National Institute of Mental Health.