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Confidence and Competence Appraisals of Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education Practitioners*

Abstract

More than 1,800 early intervention practitioners serving birth to 3 year old children and preschool special education practitioners serving 3 to 5 year old children made self-judgments of their competence and confidence in using six different kinds of practices (family-centered practices, teaming and collaboration, assessment and evaluation, IFSPs and IEPs, instructional practices, and natural environments and inclusion). The participants include regular and special education teachers, speech, occupation and physical therapists, and psychologists and social workers. Results showed that in nearly all analyses, the practitioners judged themselves as more confident than competent in using the practices with children and families regardless of discipline. The findings taken together constitute the first set of data on the similarities and differences in practitioners' appraisals of their early intervention and preschool special education capabilities. Implications for research and practice are described.

Key words: Early childhood practitioners, self-efficacy beliefs, self-competence, self-confidence.

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