

## Research Best Practices

### Researcher Clinician (Sandy Kaul, MS, CCC-SLP)

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- The best way to turn a therapy technique into an evidence-based practice is to get a university program behind it. If you have a well-developed program, fear not; they want you as much as you want them.
- If you work for a school district, get the support of the head of special education because you will need human subject approval. This is easy to get.
- Be sure you also have signed consents for filming the student and for using the student in the research project. Parents are usually more than happy to comply.
- In order to get valid research data, it is often necessary to postpone therapy to get a baseline. This is very hard but necessary.
- Try and give yourself plenty of days to collect data as students are often sick or absent.
- When filming children for articulation assessment of judges, be sure to show your stimulus item to the camera first.

### University Mentoring (Lauren O'Hanlon, PhD, CCC-SLP)

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- Be the facilitator and coach.
- Schedule meetings as deadline dates.
- Students can do tremendous background research and formulate great draft documents.
- Be prepared to give more time near the beginning and ending of projects.
- Students can prepare data sets although analysis may need to be done by the faculty member.
- Success is others feeling successful.

### University Students (Kelly Dodge, Melisa McCampbell, Lori Nelson)

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- Give yourself an end goal for the study results -- a paper, a thesis, a presentation to fellow students.
- Clearly define all terms, jargon and procedures among all team members before you begin and make sure you use terms precisely with each other to minimize confusion.
- Summers are a good time to collect data and work collaboratively.
- You can include other students as judges, if you are measuring behavior this way.

## **Research Best Practices, cont.**

- Schedule oversight meetings with your academic advisor. You can bunch questions and challenges and address them as early as possible, before you start spinning your wheels.
- Understand what you are measuring and how; be sure to have a stable baseline strategy firmly in place. Be flexible; be prepared to reduce the scope or change directions if needed. Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater if something changes; regroup and discuss with your academic advisor.
- Get involved in what interests you. Follow your instincts and explore what makes you curious.
- Be focused but keep an open mind. You never know what the project can bring. You don't want to miss an opportunity for the project (or yourself!) because of preconceptions you held regarding the topic or your skills. (A summer research project could turn into a grant proposal and an invitation to ASHA.)
- Work outside your comfort zone. Use a research project as a way to explore new frontiers for yourself. Maybe you are a good organizer but have a fear of numbers. You can contribute to project management but also offer to work on the budget.
- Get a mentor, be a mentor. Don't underestimate what you have to offer, even as a student. That summer job working with kids in a school could give you insight into current practices that an academic might not be aware of. At the same time, use the project to partner up with an expert and learn a new skill.
- Don't drop the ball, but pass it when you have to. If you promised to do something, follow through. If something happens and you can't complete a task, find a replacement or present an alternative to getting the work done.