

ABSTRACT

AUTISM IN FRESNO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA: CURRENT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

Autism is a pervasive, developmental disability that has a profound effect on how children learn to be social beings, to take care of themselves, and to participate in the community. While the cause of autism has not yet been determined, the UC Davis M.I.N.D. Institute has verified that autism, in recent years, has significantly increased in California. This growing population offers several challenges to the educational system due to the intensity and specificity of instruction needed to combat the behavioral and cognitive deficits of autism. In this thesis, the current literature on best practices for educating children with autism is discussed, and the number and quality of autism programs in Fresno County is examined. The programs evaluated are compared with best practices as recommended by the National Research Council (NRC) using The Autism Program Inventory (TAPI).

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