

Improving the Understanding and Skills of Teachers and Parents of Children with Special Needs through Practice-Based Training and Mentoring

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Article Info	Abstract
Article history: Received: December 8, 2025 Accepted: April 12, 2026 Published: May 30, 2026 Keywords: Children with special needs Early intervention Parents Teachers Training This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License © 2026 Bubungan Tinggi: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat	This community service activity was carried out to improve the understanding and skills of teachers and parents in providing early intervention to young children with special needs. The target of this activity was 33 participants, consisting of teachers and parents at Teratai Putih Banjarbaru Early Childhood Education Center. The activity was carried out through training methods, demonstrations of intervention techniques, and hands-on practice by participants. Evaluation was conducted using pre-tests and post-tests to measure the increase in participants' knowledge and abilities. The results of the activity showed an increase in the average score from 88.18 on the pre-test to 94.24 on the post-test, indicating an increase in participants' understanding and skill to deliver early intervention. This activity had a positive impact on participants' ability to design and implement simple practice-based interventions. To cite this article: Trunoyudho, E. A., Yuwono, I., Rasuna, R., Fitriani, A., Rahmawati, N., & Shobah, N. (2026). Improving the understanding and skills of teachers and parents of children with special needs through practice-based training and mentoring. <i>Bubungan Tinggi: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat</i>, 8(2), 409-417.

INTRODUCTION

Screening the growth and development of early childhood is beneficial for schools in designing learning programs and following up on interventions necessary for children to achieve optimal development ([Anjani & Muzdalifah, 2025](#); [Salwiah et al., 2024](#); [Thaibah et al., 2025](#)). Children with special needs require appropriate intervention from an early age to support their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Early intervention is understood as structured services provided to children at risk or with developmental barriers to optimize their development from an early age. Various systematic reviews show that early intervention, especially those involving parents in the learning and mentoring process of children, can improve adaptive abilities and long-term developmental outcomes ([Almuhanna et al., 2025](#); [Rahayu & Yudiati, 2022](#); [Anjani & Mashudi, 2024](#); [Jeong et al., 2021](#); [Nara et al., 2023](#); [Rani et al., 2018](#); [Taris et al., 2025](#); [Vitriana et al., 2025](#)). Collaboration between teachers and parents is also an important component in the effectiveness of early intervention, as emphasized by [Sukkar \(2016\)](#) and confirmed by the findings of [Garbacz et al. \(2016\)](#) regarding the importance of a positive relationship between family and school. Challenges such as limited teacher knowledge and lack of parental involvement can hinder the effectiveness of interventions, thus requiring training that can improve the capacity of both parties ([Tan, 2019](#)).

In Indonesia, parents and teachers play an important role in the implementation of early intervention, especially in early childhood education institutions (PAUD). However, the challenges faced are not simple. Parental involvement in early intervention will have a positive impact on child development ([Almuhanna et al., 2025](#); [Jeong et al., 2021](#); [Nara et al., 2023](#); [Rahayu & Yudiati, 2022](#); [Roesminingsih et al., 2022](#); [Sukkar et al., 2016](#); [Vitriana et al., 2025](#)). Limited knowledge of intervention methods, lack of supporting facilities, and lack of collaboration between families and schools are often obstacles ([Garbacz et al., 2016](#)). These conditions can prevent optimal stimulation of child development, putting children at risk of falling behind the developmental milestones they should be reaching.

A similar situation was also found at Teratai Putih Early Childhood Education Center, Banjarbaru. Initial interviews showed that only 5 teachers had previously received training to support children with special needs, and 15 had not received formal training in interventions for children with special needs. Meanwhile, parents did not understand how to give interventions to their children at home. This situation led to inconsistent implementation of intervention strategies, often unsuitable for the children's specific needs. Therefore, a training program was needed to provide conceptual understanding and practical skills applicable both in the classroom and at home.

The objectives of this community service activity are to improve the knowledge and skills of teachers and parents in implementing early practice-based interventions according to the needs of young children with special needs. In addition, this activity aims to strengthen collaboration between teachers and parents in supporting children's growth and development. Through this activity, it is hoped that teachers and parents will not only gain new knowledge but also be trained in simple intervention strategies that can help accelerate children's development at home and at school.

METHODS

This community service activity employed a practice-based training and mentoring method that integrated theoretical frameworks with hands-on simulations. This approach was specifically selected to ensure the effective transformation of cognitive knowledge into applicable skills for the participants. This activity was held on July 26, 2025, at PAUD Teratai Putih, Banjarbaru, South Kalimantan. There were 33 participants, consisting of PAUD teachers and parents of young children with special needs. This community service activity was carried out through a series of stages designed to improve participants' understanding and skills in providing early intervention for young children with special needs. This event was held on the weekend because more parents were able to attend, and it lasted half a day, consisting of a 4-hour session.

The first stage involved the delivery of material, in which participants were given an explanation of the basic concepts of early intervention, the characteristics of young children with special needs, and simple interventions in the form of experience-based learning strategies, in which children are encouraged to learn through daily activities using objects that are easily found at home. The material delivery was conducted through interactive lectures supported by presentation media and case studies so that participants not only received theoretical information but also understood its application in real-life situations. The second stage is a demonstration of intervention techniques. At this stage, the presenter demonstrates the steps for implementing interventions through modeling and simulation activities. This demonstration aims to provide participants with a concrete picture of how to design, develop, and implement interventions appropriate to children's needs. Participants can observe firsthand how the techniques are carried out while also receiving explanations of the important principles involved in their implementation.

The next stage is hands-on practice and group simulations. Participants are divided into six small groups and given the opportunity to develop simple intervention plans using materials and tools provided by the presenter. One of the groups consisted of five members, combining both teachers and parents, to encourage collaboration and the exchange of perspectives in designing intervention strategies. After developing their plans, each group practices the intervention through simulations in front of other participants. This activity provides participants with hands-on experience in translating theory into action while also improving their collaborative skills, creativity, and confidence in implementing interventions.

The success of the activity is evaluated by analyzing it quantitatively using descriptive statistics. Pretest and post-test scores were compared to measure changes in participants' understanding of early intervention for children with special needs. The analysis involved calculating the mean, percentage increase, and difference between pre-test and post-test scores. In addition, paired comparisons were used to determine whether the improvement was consistent across all participants' pre- and post-tests to measure participants' increased understanding of early intervention. In addition, observations of participant engagement during practice and simulation were conducted to assess their ability to apply intervention techniques directly.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Program Dosen Wajib Mengabdi (PDWA) activities are designed to address the problems faced by partners, namely the limited knowledge and skills of parents and teachers in providing early intervention for children with special needs. Activities are carried out offline through face-to-face meetings. The methods used include demonstrations, group discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and hands-on practice. Participants not only listen to presentations from facilitators but are also given the opportunity to try and practice the material they have learned. With this method, participants not only receive theory but also gain practical experience in designing and implementing simple intervention strategies at home and at school.

This PDWA activity began with remarks from representatives of the PDWA Team, the Head of the Teratai Putih Foundation, and the Principal of the Teratai Putih Early Childhood Education Center. This was followed by a presentation on training materials for Early Childhood Intervention for Parents and Teachers at Teratai Putih Early Childhood Education Center in Banjarbaru. Documentation of the opening of the activity and the presentation of material by the speaker can be seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1 (a) Opening of the activity by PDWA team and (b) Presentation of training materials

The material provided in the training covers understanding the characteristics of children with developmental disabilities, efforts to recognize and optimize the unique potential of each child, and the application of simple interventions through learning strategies based on real experiences in daily activities. After the presentation of the material, participants were invited to discuss and practice directly. In the practice session, participants were invited to form three groups. Each group then discussed the types of activities that could be designed using available media, including plasticine, water beads, shallots, garlic, and various other materials that are easily found in the household environment. Using everyday items makes it easier for parents to provide ongoing support for their children at an affordable cost, since they don't have to buy those items. Demonstration of training participation is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2 Demonstration of training participation

Early Childhood Intervention Training for Parents and Teachers at Teratai Putih Banjarbaru Early Childhood Education Center was equipped with evaluation sessions conducted before and after the activity. This evaluation used pre-tests and post-tests consisting of 10 questions, with 5 questions related to understanding the training material and 5 questions regarding parents' attitudes in assisting children with special needs. Participants completed the questions before the training began and again after the activity was completed. The purpose of this evaluation is to measure participants' level of understanding and changes in attitude after attending the training. The results of the comparison of pretest and posttest scores are presented in Table 1.

Tabel 1 Results of the pretest and posttest of training participants

Description	Evaluation Results	
	Pretest	Posttest
Number of participants	33	33
Average Score	88.18	94.24

The evaluation data were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics. Pretest and post-test scores were compared to measure changes in participants' understanding of early intervention for children with special needs. The analysis involved calculating the mean, percentage increase, and difference between pre-test and post-test scores. In addition, paired comparisons were used to determine whether the improvement was consistent across all participants. The data in the table show the results of the pre- and post-training questionnaires, indicating a significant increase in participants' understanding of early intervention for children with special needs. The pretest data shows an average score of 88.18, while the posttest score increased to 94.24. This reflects that 33 participants

successfully gained improved knowledge and skills in understanding the concepts and strategies of early intervention for ABK.

The improvement in participants' knowledge and skills, as reflected in the increase from an average pre-test score of 88.18 to a post-test score of 94.24, demonstrates the effectiveness of practice-based training. This improvement shows that a practice-based training and mentoring approach, which combines material delivery, demonstration, and hands-on practice, is effective in strengthening participants' conceptual understanding and applied skills. These findings are consistent with [Jeong et al. \(2021\)](#), who highlighted that parenting interventions and hands-on training significantly enhance caregivers' ability to apply early intervention strategies. Similarly, [Sukkar \(2016\)](#) emphasized the importance of collaboration between families and schools, which was evident in this program through the mixed teacher–parent groups that fostered shared learning and mutual support.

[Garbacz et al. \(2016\)](#) further argue that positive parent–teacher relationships contribute to consistent and responsive interventions tailored to children's needs. This was reflected in the group simulations, where teachers and parents jointly designed intervention activities using everyday materials, thereby strengthening collaboration and ensuring continuity between home and school.

[Afia & Malik \(2024\)](#) demonstrated that collaboration in PAUD strengthens holistic child development, while [Purwanti et al. \(2025\)](#) highlighted that inclusive early childhood programs rely heavily on joint efforts between teachers and parents to ensure interventions are sustainable. Similarly, [Karimah et al. \(2025\)](#) found that organizing inclusive learning in schools requires active cooperation between educators and families. These arguments resonate with the outcomes of the present training, where mixed teacher–parent groups not only improved skills but also fostered collaboration, which is a key determinant of successful early intervention.

The results also align with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (as cited in [Garbacz et al., 2016](#)), which places parents and teachers within the microsystem that directly influences child development. By enhancing their competence through training, the quality of support within this microsystem improves, leading to better developmental outcomes for children with special needs. [Almuhanna et al. \(2025\)](#) reinforce this point, showing that early interventions involving both teachers and parents significantly increase the effectiveness of strategies for children with developmental delays.

Finally, [Tan \(2019\)](#) noted that parents who actively engage in early intervention programs experience increased knowledge and practical skills, enabling them to sustain interventions at home. Thus, practice-based training and mentoring in this community service activity not only enhance participants' competence but also strengthen the synergy between home and school in supporting the sustainable development of children with special needs.

However, there are several obstacles to note. Although the material presented in the training was quite in-depth and relevant to the participants' needs, many parents still had questions and wanted further explanation. However, time constraints meant the question-and-answer session could not accommodate all participants' aspirations. As a result, only a small number of parents had the opportunity to ask the presenters questions directly, while others had to hold back their curiosity or wait for opportunities outside the official session. This shows the high level of enthusiasm among participants and serves as an important evaluation point so that future similar activities can provide more time specifically for interactive discussions. Due to time constraints and the large number of parent questions that could not be addressed during the event, the interventions parents and teachers could implement were very limited. Therefore, the organizing team took proactive measures by offering to collect any unanswered questions, which the school will address at a later date.

CONCLUSION

Based on the evaluation results of early intervention training activities for teachers and parents of children with special needs held at PAUD Teratai Putih Banjarbaru, the activities had a positive impact. This community service activity improved the understanding and skills of teachers and parents in applying early intervention for young children with special needs. The increase in the average score from 88.18 on the pretest to 94.24 on the posttest shows that participants gained a better understanding after attending the training. In addition, hands-on group activities allowed participants to put theory into concrete action. In the future, similar training sessions could be held every six months, with long-term support to ensure that interventions at home and at school are implemented more effectively.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Forming a team, EAT; formulating objectives, IY, R; identifying stakeholders, EAT; preparing for community service, EAT; NS; NR; A.F.; prioritizing issues, I; analyzing needs, EAT; implementing activities, EAT; NS; NR; AF, IY, R; training on assessment instrument development, EAT; NS; NR; AF, IY, R; and evaluating the community service, IY. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) during the preparation of this work for language refinement and minor editing of the manuscript. After using the tool, the author carefully reviewed, revised, and edited the content to ensure accuracy and coherence. The author takes full responsibility for the final content of the publication. The research, analysis, and interpretation presented in this article were conducted by the author without reliance on artificial intelligence (AI) for generating the scientific findings

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