

## **To look or not to look: Effects of prompting for eye contact on task performance in boys with fragile x syndrome and boys with autism**

Preliminary research indicates that the typical social expectation of eye contact elevates nervous system arousal levels in boys with fragile x syndrome (fxs). Hyperarousal has been found to trigger commonly observed behaviors in this population such as hand-flapping, fidgeting, increases in types and number of speech and language errors, and attention deficits. Consequently, expectations of eye contact may interfere with social and academic engagement and performance.

This study is designed to empirically investigate the hypothesis that boys with fragile x syndrome will perform better on a task *when not prompted to make eye contact* with the experimenter than when they *are* prompted to make eye contact with the experimenter when being given task instructions. Boys with autism serve as a comparison group. Both populations characteristically avert eye gaze, but it is thought that different mechanisms underlie this behavior for boys with fxs and boys with autism.

Evidence of the desirability of modifying the common practice of prompting boys with fxs for eye contact as a strategy for task engagement will be produced should significant results supporting the hypothesis be obtained. This in turn may lead to improving task performance outcomes for boys affected by this syndrome.

For further information about study details and subject participation, please contact Laurie Yankowitz at [LYankowitz@aol.com](mailto:LYankowitz@aol.com).