

PEER-MEDIATED INTERVENTIONS

CHARACTERISTICS OVERVIEW CHART

Verbal Skills	Grade Levels	Cognitive Level	Areas Addressed
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nonverbal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PK	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Classic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (Pre)Academic/Cognitive/Academic
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mixed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elementary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adaptive Behavior/Daily Living
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Verbal	<input type="checkbox"/> Middle/High	Functioning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Behavior
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communication/Speech
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Emotional

BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Over the years, social skills training has been emphasized in the school setting for students with autism (AU). Many of these students learn their interactional skills through adult direction. As a way to improve social reciprocity in more natural social contexts, peer-mediated interventions are used to provide social learning opportunities through peer interaction, peer-modeling, and peer reinforcing.

DESCRIPTION

Peer-mediated interventions emphasize the involvement of typically developing peers as socially competent facilitators to promote appropriate communicative and social behaviors. Peer-mediated interventions encompass various teaching strategies. DiSalvo and Oswald (2002) have organized peer-mediated interventions into three approaches according to peer expectancies to promote interaction: (a) manipulation of the situation or contingencies, (b) peer instruction in social interaction strategies, and (c) instruction of target child in initiation strategies.

The first approach encourages students with autism to interact with peers by creating learning and modeling opportunities. The second aims at teaching the typically developing peer specific social skill strategies to enhance social interaction with students with autism. Finally, the third approach increases peer effectiveness by teaching students with autism initiation skills.

Peer-mediated interventions usually take place in the classroom or in the community. The child's natural social environment is most preferable. In addition, it is important to establish peers' positive attitude toward the student with autism and to create supportive environment for social interaction.

Examples of peer-mediated interventions include:

- Integrated play groups (involve peers and adult guidance, see Play Skills)
- Peer buddy assignment (Baker, 2003; Bellini, 2006)
- Classwide peer buddy program (Kamps, Barbetta, Leonard, & Delquadri, 1994)
- Group-oriented contingencies
- Peer tutoring
- Peer networks (see Circle of Friends)
- Pivotal response training (Koegel, Koegel, & Carter, 1999)
- Peer initiation training (train peers to guide social initiation)
- Target child initiation training (teach children with AU with social initiation)
- Initiation training for target child and peers (see Circle of Friends or Social Skills group)

BRIEF EXAMPLE

Ben is a 9-year-old boy with autism who is good at drawing and arts and crafts but experiences challenges with social difficulties. Ben prefers to work alone and does not like to participate in group activities. In order to assist him in acquiring social skills, Ben's teacher decided to use peer-mediated instruction. She asked Jack, a classmate, to be Ben's peer buddy during art class. The teacher explained to Jack that her goal was to have Ben communicate with others during art class. Specifically, she wanted Ben to ask other members about their art projects and show the group his project in return.

Jack agreed to be Ben’s peer buddy, and their teacher taught him how to model and prompt conversation. Jack sat by Ben during art class, modeling the initiation skills and encouraging Ben to express his thoughts. With assistance from Jack, Ben began to talk with others during art class. The other group members recognized Ben’s talent and were happy that he was in their group.

TIPS FOR MODIFICATIONS

The incidental teaching (see Incidental Teaching) approach may be used to facilitate peer modeling and target child initiation skills. In this way, students with autism and their peers can learn the spontaneity and flexibility of realistic social interaction.

SUMMARY

As suggested by the name, peer-mediated interventions are mainly implemented by peers. The purpose is to teach typically developing peers appropriate and specific skills that they can use in interactions with students with autism.

RESEARCH TABLE

Number of Studies	Ages (year)	Sample Size	Area(s) Addressed	Outcome
80	3 to 13	361	Social skills, peer interaction, participation, communicative skills, cooperative learning, social interaction, group working responsibilities, reciprocal interactions, toy play, on-topic verbalizations, play behavior	+

*Note: Includes reviews by Chan et al (2009) and Wang & Spillane (2009).

STUDIES CITED IN RESEARCH TABLE

1. Ayvazo, A. (2010). Assessment of classwide peer tutoring for students with autism as an inclusion strategy in physical education. *Palaestra, 25(1)*, 4-7.
2 elementary school students with ASD were taught to engage in correct striking of a ball during physical education using a peer-tutoring model involving pairing them with a trained peer during PE classes. The intervention was evaluated using a reversal design, and increased correct responding was seen for both students only in the CWPT condition.
2. Chan, J. M., Lang, R., Rispoli, M., O'Reilly, M., Sigafoos, J., & Cole, H. (2009). Use of peer mediated interventions in the treatment of autism spectrum disorders: A systematic review. *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders, 3*, 876-889.
The authors identified 42 studies that included a total of 172 participants who participated in peer-mediated interventions. The outcome was positive in 91% of the studies. Treatment fidelity was not addressed in the majority of studies.
3. Wang, P., & Spillane, A. (2009). Evidence-based social skills interventions for children with autism: A meta-analysis. *Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities, 44(3)*, 318-342.
The purpose of this study was to provide a synthesis of research studies published in the last ten years on interventions to increase social skills for children and adolescents with ASD, examine the outcomes of these studies and evaluate whether a given intervention meets the criteria for evidence-based practice. Thirty-eight studies were included in this review. While Social Stories™, peer-mediated, and video-modeling all met the criteria for evidence-based; only video-modeling meets criteria for being evidence-based as well as demonstrating high effectiveness as an intervention strategy. Nine of the 38 studies were specifically concerned with peer-mediated interventions. These nine studies included 24 students with autism.
4. Harper, C. B., Symon, J.B.G., & Frea, W. D. (2008). Recess is time-in: Using peers to improve social skills of children with autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 38*, 815-826.
Two third graders with autism and six typically developing peers participated in this study. The intervention combined pivotal response training and peer-mediated practice during recess. Result showed improvement in social initiations and turn-taking skills.
5. Liber, D. B., Frea, W. D., & Symon, J.B.G. (2008). Using time-delay to improve social play skills with peers for children with autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 38*, 312-323.
The study involved three boys with autism who were taught play activities that combined a play sequence with requesting peer assistance using a graduated time-delay procedure. Results showed an increase in pretend play by one of the participants. Two also demonstrated a generalization of the skills learned through the time-delay procedure.

6. Owen-DeSchryver, J. S., Carr, E. G., Cale, S. I., & Blakeley-Smith, A. (2008). Prompting social interactions between students with autism spectrum disorders and their peers in inclusive school settings. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 23*, 15-28.
Three students with autism and their typical peers participated in this six-month peer training intervention. Three phases of training were provided to train typical peers. Results showed increased social initiation and responses made by both peers and students with autism.
7. Bauminger, N. (2007). Effectiveness of a cognitive-behavioral treatment on the social behaviors of children with Asperger disorder. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 37*, 1593-1604.
Nineteen children with high-functioning autism participated in a cognitive-behavioral-ecological social skills training. The intervention was implemented by the teacher, a child's older typical peer, and parents. Results showed significant improvement in social cognition and positive dyadic interaction, and decrease in low-level social interaction.
8. Carter, C., Meckes, L., Pritchard, L., Swensen, S., Wittman, P. P., & Velde, B. (2004). The friendship club: An after-school program for children with Asperger Syndrome. *Family and Community Health, 27*, 143-150.
Ten children with Asperger Syndrome participated in two groups of the friendship club with facilitators of parents and leaders. Specific topics/concepts were selected for each classroom or community activity to teach children with Asperger Syndrome appropriate social skills to maintain friendship. Positive feedback was reported by participants and parents.
9. Chung, K., Reavis, S., Mosconi, M., Drewry, J., Matthews, T., & Tassé, M. J. (2007). Peer-mediated social skills training program for young children with high-functioning autism. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 28*, 423-436.
Four boys with high-functioning autism participated in this 12-week peer-mediated social skills training program, which consisted of video feedback, positive reinforcement, and a token system. Results indicated improvement in social communication skills.
10. Lee, S., Odom, S. L., & Loftin, R. (2007). Social engagement with peers and stereotypic behavior of children with autism. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 9*, 67-79.
Three children with autism and two typically developing peers participated in this peer-mediated intervention. The intervention took place during structured play activities where trained peers directed social initiations. Results showed an increase in social engagement and a decrease in stereotypic behavior.
11. Jones, C. D., & Schwartz, I. S. (2004). Siblings, peers, and adults: Differential effects of models for children with autism. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 24*, 187-198.
Twelve participants (3 children with autism, 3 peers, 3 siblings, 3 teachers) participated in this study. The intervention included three modeling conditions: adult modeling, peer modeling, and sibling modeling. Results indicated improvement in target behaviors, which were novel language skills.

12. Thiemann, K. S., & Goldstein, H. (2004). Effects of peer training and written text cueing on social communication of school-age children with pervasive developmental disorder. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research, 47*, 126-144.
Five children with autism and 10 typical peers participated in two social interventions, peer training and written text treatment. In the first intervention, peers were trained to use five facilitative social skills. Results showed improvement in initiation and responses. The second intervention introduced direct instruction with written cues. Results showed increase in communication skills.
13. Garfinkle, A. N., & Schwartz, I. S. (2002). Peer-imitation: Increasing social interactions in children with autism and other developmental disabilities in inclusive preschool classroom. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 22*, 26-38.
Three students with autism and one student with developmental delays participated in this peer-imitation intervention. The small-group, peer-imitation training included teacher instruction to the small group, selection of the leader, prompts to promote imitation, and praise of imitative actions. Results showed increased peer-imitation, social behavior, and levels of nonsocial engagement.
14. Kamps, D., Royer, J., Dugan, E., Kravits, T., Gonzalez-Lopez, A., Garcia, G., Carnazzo, K., Morrison, L., & Kane, L. G. (2002). Peer training to facilitate social interaction for elementary students with autism and their peers. *Exceptional Children, 68*(2), 173-187.
The first of these two studies involved 5 students with autism and 51 general education peers. Peer training included social skills training for group work and tutor partners training. Results showed increases in social interaction. The second study involved 34 students with autism and 130 peer participants. The peer-mediated program trained peers in prompting and reinforcing social interaction. Videotaped probes were utilized to monitor social performance over two school years. Results showed increase in social skills and greater generalization of skills.
15. Morrison, L., Kamps, D., Garcia, J., & Parker, D. (2001). Peer mediation and monitoring strategies to improve initiations and social skills for students with autism. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 3*, 237-250.
Four students with autism and their typically developing peers were trained to use social skills monitoring strategies while playing games. The targeted social skills were requesting, commenting, and sharing. Results showed that the use of adult teaching, peer mediation, and reinforcement for skills use resulted in increased initiation and social interaction.
16. Pierce, K., & Schreibman, L. (1997). Using peer trainers to promote social behavior in autism: Are they effective at enhancing multiple social modalities? *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 12*, 207-218.
The study explored potential changes in collateral social behaviors after two children with autism were exposed to a naturalistic, peer-implemented social skills intervention. The two children and eight typical peers were videotaped during 10-minute play sessions before, during, and after pivotal response training. Results showed that both the frequency and quality of the language used increased from baseline to post-treatment. Social conversation among the participants increased. The findings suggest that peers can help in the

intervention and individualization of treatment of children with autism efficiently and effectively.

17. Dugan, E., Kamps, D., Leonard, B., Watkins, N., Rheinberger, A., & Stackhaus, J. (1995). Effects of cooperative learning groups during social studies for students with autism and fourth-grade peers. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 28*, 175-188.
Two students with AU and 16 typical peers were integrated in cooperative learning groups in a social studies class. Following the teacher's introduction of new material, cooperative learning groups engaged in tutoring on key words/facts, a team activity, and wrap-up review. Results showed improvement in information acquisition, academic engagement, and duration of interaction.
18. Farmer-Dougan, V. (1994). Increasing requests by adults with developmental disabilities using incidental teaching by peers. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 27*, 533-544.
Four preschoolers with autism participated in an intervention in which a typical peer demonstrated and physically prompted a variety of action and object manipulations that defined the activity. Following training, all four preschoolers generalized their imitative skill to a new setting involving new actions and object manipulations.
19. Kamps, D. M., Barbetta, P. M., Leonard, B. R., & Delquadri, J. C. (1994). Classwide peer tutoring: An integration strategy to improve reading skills and promote peer interactions among students with autism and general education peers. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 27*, 49-61.
Three elementary boys with high-functioning autism and 47 typical peers participated in this classwide peer-tutoring approach. In addition to increased reading rates and reading comprehension, an indirect effect was found in social interactions between the students with AU and their typical peers.
20. Kamps, D. M., Leonard, B. R., Vernon, S., Dugan, E. P., & Delquadri, J. C. (1992). Teaching social skills to students with autism to increase peer interactions in an integrated first-grade classroom. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 25*, 281-288.
Three 7-year-old boys with high-functioning autism, 2 children with physical disabilities, and 11 typically developing peers participated in this study. Social skills training was implemented in social skills groups. Specific social skills included initiation, conversations, giving and accepting compliments, taking turns and sharing, helping others and asking for help, and including others in activities. The social skills training resulted in positive social behaviors of both children with AU and their peers.
21. McGee, G. G., Almeida, M. C., Sulzer-Azaroff, B., & Feldman, R. S. (1992). Promoting reciprocal interactions via peer incidental teaching. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis. Special Issue: The Education Crisis: Issues, Perspectives, Solutions, 25*, 117-126.
The study evaluated peer incidental teaching as a strategy for increasing reciprocal peer interactions by children with autism. Six preschoolers were involved, with three trained as peer tutors for the other three. The results showed replicated positive effects of the intervention. In addition, teacher and peer ratings supported the social validity of positive findings.

22. Odom, S. L., & Watts, E. (1991). Reducing teacher prompts in peer-mediated interventions for young children with autism. *Journal of Special Education, 25*(1), 26-43.
Three preschool-aged boys with autism participated in this study. Peers were taught using social initiation strategies, verbal prompting skills, and feedback techniques. Small groups combining children with and without autism were then assigned to participate in structured play activities. Results showed substantial increases in peer initiations.
23. Carr, E. G., & Darcy, M. (1990). Setting generality of peer modeling in children with autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 20*, 45-59.
Four preschoolers with autism participated in an intervention in which a typical peer demonstrated and physically prompted a variety of action and object manipulations that defined the activity. Following training, all four preschoolers generalized their imitative skill to a new setting involving new actions and object manipulations.
24. Lanquetot, R. (1989). The effectiveness of peer modeling with autistic children. *Journal of the Multihandicapped Person, 2*, 25-34.
The study evaluated the effectiveness of peer modeling in increasing readiness behaviors necessary to begin formal learning among 20 children with autism. Results showed peer modeling in the classroom to be a way of allowing autistic children to benefit from the company of more normal peers.
25. Ihrig, K., & Wolchik, S. A. (1988). Peer versus adult models and autistic children's learning: Acquisition, generalization, and maintenance. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 18*, 67-79.
The study compared the effectiveness of a peer and an adult model in teaching an expressive language task to four boys with autism. Results indicated that all children learned through observing the peer and adult models and that few consistent differences occurred across the two conditions. The degree of generalization and maintenance of responding was high in both conditions.
26. Charlop, M. H., & Walsh, M. E. (1986). Increasing autistic children's spontaneous verbalizations of affection: An assessment of time delay and peer modeling procedures. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 19*, 307-314.
The study assessed the efficacy of time-delay and peer modeling procedures in increasing spontaneous verbalizations of affection by children with autism. Four children were taught to spontaneously say, "I like (love) you" in response to a hug from a familiar person and their mother. Results indicated that the time delay was a quick and effective procedure for all children, but peer modeling was unsuccessful in teaching the target behavior. Parents and siblings perceived the children to be more social and lovable following intervention and to demonstrate fewer inappropriate behaviors.

27. Shafer, M. S., Egel, A. L., & Neef, N. A. (1984). Training mildly handicapped peers to facilitate changes in the social interaction skills of autistic children. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 17*, 461-476.
Four children with autism participated in the study. A peer-training strategy consisting of direct prompting and modeling was utilized to evaluate the social interactions between children with autism and their peers. Direct prompting resulted in immediate and substantial increase in positive social interactions, and the results maintained across time.
28. Charlop, M. H., Schreibman, L., & Tryon, A. S. (1983). Learning through observation: The effects of peer modeling on acquisition and generalization in autistic children. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 11*, 355-366.
The study investigated whether low-functioning children could learn through observation by using a peer modeling procedure. Four children with autism were taught two receptive labeling tasks. Results indicated that all children learned by observation of their peer model. Generalization and maintenance of correct responding were superior when children learned through observation rather than by trial and error.
29. Egel, A. L., Richman, G. S., & Koegel, R. L. (1981). Normal peer models and autistic children's learning. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 14*, 3-12.
This investigation systematically assessed whether the learning of discrimination tasks by children with autism could be improved if they observed typical children perform the tasks correctly. Four children with autism were involved in the study; they worked on five discrimination tasks. Results revealed that when normal peers modeled correct responses, participants' correct responding increased dramatically. In each case, the peer modeling produced a rapid acquisition of the criterion, which was maintained after the peer models were removed.
30. Coleman, S. L., & J. M. (1974). Use of a peer model in language training in an echolalic child. *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry, 5*, 275-279.
The study utilized a peer model paradigm to train a 10-year-old girl with autism to speak in a normal voice volume and acquire a labeling vocabulary. Results indicated that the peer modeling facilitated both volume training and label acquisition.

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- Wang, P., & Spillane, A. (2009). Evidence-based social skills interventions for children with autism: A meta-analysis. *Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities, 44*(3), 318-342.

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

- Association for Science in Autism Treatment (ASAT). Peer-Mediated Social Skills Training: <http://www.asatonline.org/intervention/procedures/peer.htm>
- Autism Internet Modules. Peer-Mediated Instruction and Intervention (PMII): <http://www.autisminternetmodules.org/>
- The Autism Webcourse: Peer-Mediated Instructions and Interventions Module: http://cdd.unm.edu/swan/autism_course/modules/social/peer/index.htm

- National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders. Evidence-Based Practices Brief: Peer-Mediated Instruction and Intervention:
<http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/content/peer-mediated-instruction-and-intervention>
- Peer Initiation Strategies for Students with Autism:
<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/autism/teaching-methods/8203.html>
This Teachervision resource gives a succinct argument for using peer-mediated interventions.
- Peer-Mediated Intervention Strategy:
http://www.autismtaskforce.com/downloads/peer_mediation_intervention_strategy_may_2006.pdf
This two-page pdf presents a strategy for using peer-mediated interventions.

GENERAL RESOURCES

- Autism Internet Modules (AIM) www.autisminternetmodules.org. The Autism Internet Modules were developed with one aim in mind: to make comprehensive, up-to-date, and usable information on autism accessible and applicable to educators, other professionals, and families who support individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Written by experts from across the U.S., all online modules are free, and are designed to promote understanding of, respect for, and equality of persons with ASD.
- The Autism Web Course: http://cdd.unm.edu/swan/autism_course/about/index.htm. This web course was developed out of materials from the Interactive Collaborative Autism Network (ICAN). The Autism Programs at the University of New Mexico has updated and added information to this web course.
 - Characteristics
 - Assessment
 - Academic Interventions
 - Behavioral Interventions
 - Communication Interventions
 - Environmental Interventions
 - Social Interventions
 - Family Support Suggestions
- Indiana Resource Center for Autism (IRCA) <http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/fmain1.html>. The Indiana Resource Center for Autism staff's efforts are focused on providing communities, organizations, agencies, and families with the knowledge and skills to support children and adults in typical early intervention, school, community, work, and home settings.
 - IRCA Articles: <http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/index.php?pageId=273>
- Texas Statewide Leadership for Autism www.txautism.net. The Texas Statewide Leadership for Autism in conjunction with the network of Texas Education Service center

with a grant from the Texas Education Agency has developed a series of free online courses in autism. Please check the training page, www.txautism.net/training.html, for update lists of courses, course numbers and registration information. Current courses include the following:

- Asperger Syndrome 101
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication and the Autism Spectrum
- Autism for the General Education Teacher
- Autism 101: Top Ten Pieces to the Puzzle
- Classroom Organization: The Power of Structure for Individuals with ASD
- Communication: The Power of Communication for Individuals with ASD
- Futures Planning for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Navigating the Social Maze: Supports and Interventions for Individuals with ASD
- Solving the Behavior Puzzle: Making Connections for Individuals with ASD