

EXHIBIT F

**Peer-Mediated
Support Strategies for
Special Education Students**

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Benefits – Inclusive Education

- *“among children who entered preschool with poor language skills in the fall, those surrounded by peers with better skills tended to make greater gains.”*
- *“the language skills of children with disabilities appear to benefit tremendously from exposure to typically developing peers”*

Justice, L. M., Logan, J. A., Lin, T., & Kaderavek, J. N. (2014). Peer Effects in Early Childhood Education: Testing the Assumptions of Special-Education Inclusion. *Psychological Science*, 25(9), 1722-1729.

Benefits – Inclusive Education

- Superior outcomes for students with disabilities
 - Academic
 - Social
- Teachers feel more confident
- No negative effect
- Students without disabilities are more positive and accepting

Benefits – Inclusive Education

“When supported well, participation in inclusive classrooms can increase access to interesting and relevant curricular content, shared learning opportunities, new peer relationships, and raised expectations”

Carter, E. W., Moss, C. K., Asmus, J., Fesperman, E., Cooney, M., Brock, M. E., . . . Vincent, L. B. (2015). Promoting Inclusion, Social Connections, and Learning Through Peer Support Arrangements. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 48(1), 9-18.

2 Types of Peer-Mediated Support Strategies:

- Peer Training Programs
 - Indirect approach
 - Broad focus
- Peer Support Arrangements
 - Focused on individual needs of student w/ disability
 - Peer training and ongoing facilitation by educational professionals

Peer Training

- Peers provided with disability awareness level training on a variety of topics:
 - Communication/socialization
 - Being helpful/supportive
- Peers are encouraged to seek guidance from teachers/paraprofessional and to ask questions
- Child w/ disability not necessarily identified to classmates

Research – Peer Training

- 60 target children (1st-5th grade) dx ASD and 815 typically developing classmates (3 typically developing children from each class of child w/ ASD)
- 56 classrooms from 30 different schools

Kasari, C., Rotheram-Fuller, E., Locke, J., & Gulsrud, A. (2011). Making the connection: Randomized controlled trial of social skills at school for children with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 53(4), 431-439.

Research – Peer Training

- Randomly assigned to 3 groups:
 - Child w/ ASD receives direct social skills instruction from professional (no peer training)
 - Peer training only (child w/ ASD receives no direct instruction)
 - Combination direct instruction and peer training

Kasari, C., Rotheram-Fuller, E., Locke, J., & Gulsrud, A. (2011). Making the connection: Randomized controlled trial of social skills at school for children with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 53(4), 431-439.

Research – Peer Training

- Peers giving instruction on “how to interact with children who had difficulty making friends”, including lessons on:
 - Identifying isolated children on playground and engaging them in playground activities
 - How to provide social supports in the classroom and during unstructured times

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Research – Peer Training

- Results:
 - Superior outcomes for children w/ ASD whose peers received peer training
 - Social network salience (popularity)
 - Playground engagement
 - Teacher perceptions of social skills

Kasari, C., Rotheram-Fuller, E., Locke, J., & Gulsrud, A. (2011). Making the connection: Randomized controlled trial of social skills at school for children with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 53(4), 431-439.

Research – Peer Training

“In summary, the educational setting of the school offers unique opportunities to teach typical peers to become sensitive and helpful toward peers with different learning or developmental needs. These results support the view that working with peers may be the most effective and ecologically valid approach for improving the social outcomes of children with ASD.”

Kasari, C., Rotheram-Fuller, E., Locke, J., & Gulsrud, A. (2011). Making the connection: Randomized controlled trial of social skills at school for children with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 53(4), 431-439.

Peer Support Arrangements

- Individualized (designed for a particular student)
- Peers selected based on both the support needs of the special education student and the particular skills/needs of the potential peer partners
- Peer partners provided w/ training & ongoing monitoring/guidance/support from educational professionals (teacher, paraprofessional, etc.)
- Formal “Peer Partner Plan” developed and included as part of the IEP

Examples of supports provided by peers:

- Academic:
 - Sharing notes
 - Highlighting important information shared by the teacher
 - Brainstorming answers to questions together
 - Helping organize assignments/materials
 - Offering additional examples of concepts/ideas
 - Redirecting student when he/she is off task

Examples of supports provided by peers:

- Social:
 - Telling jokes w/ student
 - Encouraging interactions w/ other classmates
 - Helping student “fit in” by learning social norms
 - Reinforcing communication attempts
 - Talking w/ the student about shared interests/hobbies
 - Walking w/ student to the next class

Example - Peer Support Plan

At the beginning of class...

| <i>Stephen could...</i> | <i>Peers could...</i> | <i>The facilitator could...</i> |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get out materials for taking notes from the board• Converse with peers about a social topic• Say hello to peers | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prompt Stephen to get out his notebook and copy down information; remind him we do this once every day• If he arrives late, let Stephen copy down the board information from your notebook• Ask Stephen about his day, his hobbies, or what his plans are for after school• Make sure to greet him when he arrives to class | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage peers to engage Stephen in conversation and provide some conversation starters if peers are uncertain• Offer peers ideas for Stephen's participation and answer any questions peers may have• Look through class materials to see if any adaptations or modification may be needed |

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Research – Peer Support Arrangements

- Outcomes – students with disabilities:
 - Improved academic engagement
 - More frequent, higher quality social interactions
 - Less need for interventions to address problem behaviors
 - Less reliance upon paraprofessional (increased independence)
- Outcomes – peer support partners
 - Improved academic engagement
 - Greater appreciation of diversity
 - Raised expectations of classmates w/ disabilities
 - Sense of accomplishment
 - Acquisition of new skills

Carter, E. W., & Kennedy, C. H. (2006). Promoting Access to the General Curriculum Using Peer Support Strategies. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 31(4), 284-292.

*“Peer support arrangements represent a **practical and promising** approach for supporting students’ with severe disabilities access to the rich learning and social opportunities that often exist within inclusive secondary-school classrooms”*

Contact Information

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