

Peer-Mediation and Social Interactions for Elementary Children with ASD.

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Background

- Social interaction plays a significant role in children's academic, social, and behavioral development.
- Social interaction and communication is particularly difficult for children diagnosed with ASD.
- Peer mediated interventions utilize typically developing peers who implement behavioral and social interventions while engaging with peers diagnosed with ASD.
- Previous research shows peer-mediated interventions improve social initiation interactions for children with ASD (Chang & Locke, 2016).



- Reciprocal imitation interventions have positive outcomes in improving socially responsive behaviors for children with ASD (Field, 2017).
- There is limited research on peer-mediated interventions that utilize reciprocal imitation.
- Research has indicated that the peers without ASD also profit both academically and socially (Franca, Kerr, Reitz & Lambert, 1990).

Purposes

To examine the effects of peer-mediated interventions on:

1. the social behavior of children diagnosed with ASD
 - a. with a reciprocal imitation intervention
 - b. without additional interventions
2. the empathy of students serving as peer mentors

Methods

Participants

5 4th or 5th grade students with ASD diagnosis
10 typically developing peers

Measures

For students with ASD:

Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS-2)
Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS-2)
Classroom Generalization Survey
Direct observation of social behaviors

For peer mentors:

Empathy Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (EmQue-CA)
Peer Daily Survey
Peer Survey

Design

Multiple-baseline design across participants

Procedure:

Training: Peer mentors will learn about ASD and will be taught to encourage interactions using positive reinforcement, modeling & prompting.

Baseline: Direct observation of naturally occurring social interactions during 20 minutes of lunch time

Peer-Mediated Intervention: Peers mentors will encourage social interactions with children with ASD during lunch.

Reciprocal Imitation: Peer mentors will imitate behaviors that their peers with ASD engage in for 5 minutes before lunch and continue peer-mediated intervention during lunch.

Follow-Up: Two months after the intervention, participants will be observed during lunch.

Proposed Analysis & Outcomes

Direct observation data will be analyzed using visual analysis to determine changes in social behavior of children with ASD.

Pre- and post-measures will be compared for the SRS-2 for children with ASD and the EmQue-CA for peer mentors.

It is anticipated that children with ASD will show some improvements in social behavior with the peer mediated intervention and even greater improvements when imitation is used.

It is anticipated that peer mediators will show increased empathy as a result of participation.