

Critical Review:
Is peer-mediated social skill intervention in school settings effective in increasing social communication in children with Autism Spectrum Disorder?

Jordanna Grossinger
M.Cl.Sc SLP Candidate
Western University; School of Communication Sciences and Disorders

This critical review examines the current research regarding the impact of peer-mediated interventions in school settings on the social communication abilities of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). A literature search yielded seven articles meeting the inclusion criteria. This critical review includes the evaluation of the following study designs: six single-subject designs and one randomized control trial. Overall, findings are highly suggestive that peer-mediated social skill interventions, implemented in school settings,

children with ASD. It would be beneficial for future research to compare more directly the effects of these specific factors on the efficacy of the intervention.

As previously mentioned, the ASD population is known to be heterogeneous. Each study examined in this review included explicit participant eligibility criteria, and of the seven studies, six provided in-depth descriptions of the target children's skills and overall functioning. In all of the six multiple baseline design studies, the sample size was limited, ranging from two to four target students. Though all studies yielded positive results, the authors cautioned that each child with ASD was unique and differed based on their level of functioning, supports received and varying abilities. Given this variability, three of the seven studies developed specific and individualized target goals and support for the target children based on their needs. While this individualization may not provide great support for generalization across all students with ASD, this specificity and naturalistic approach allowed for children to build on skills that were personally relevant to them (Garrison-Harrell et al., 1997). Additionally, future research should consider investigating whether this type of intervention may be more suitable for individuals with certain prerequisite skills, interests or abilities (Harper et al., 2008).

Finally, the goal of this paper was to examine the effects of PMI on social communication. The studies examined vary in their definition of social communication, which encompasses several behaviours that serve any function of communication. Most of the studies investigated the frequency and duration of social interactions, or total communicative acts. Some of the studies looked more explicitly

Mason, R., Kamps, D., Turcotte, A., Cox, S., Feldmiller, S., & Miller, T. (2014). Peer mediation to increase communication and interaction at recess for students with autism spectrum disorders. *Research in autism spectrum disorders*, 8(3), 334-344.

McFadden, B., Kamps, D., & Heitzman-Powell, L. (2014). Social communication effects of peer-mediated recess intervention for children with autism. *Research in autism spectrum disorders*, 8(12), 1699-1712.

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(4), 207-218.

Watkins, L., Kuhn, M., Ledbetter-Cho, K., Gevarter, C., & O'Reilly, M. (0 (y)(.) 8 99.36cm