

Topic: **Build student skills to promote successful social interactions.**

Hughett, K., Kohler, F. W., & Raschke, D. (2011). The effects of a buddy skills package on preschool children's social interactions and play. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 32*, 246-254. doi: 10.1177/0271121411424927

Context

Increasing the use of positive social interaction skills among children with and without disabilities has been a goal for many early childhood professionals and researchers. From the numerous studies conducted on children's social interaction skills, four prominent interventions have been identified: adult-directed, peer-mediated procedures, social stories, and video modeling. Further, blended interventions that included both adult and peer-mediated procedures were found to be effective for increasing social interactions between children with autism and developmental disabilities and their typically developing peers.

Purpose of the Article

This article presented a study that examined the effects of a buddy skills package on the social and play interactions between three children with developmental delays and their typically developing peers. Researchers engaged each child with developmental delays in sociodramatic play activities with two typically developing peers who showed age-appropriate social and play skills. The buddy skills package included three lessons on play interactions with children followed by four play activities. Authors discussed the intervention, results, and directions for further research.

Buddy Skills Package

Authors included a buddy skills intervention that consisted of two parts. The first part of the intervention included teaching skills of stay, play, and talk with friends. A total of three 10-min lessons were conducted with three different play groups that consisted of one child with developmental delays and two typically developing peers. The teacher provided explanations and modeling, visual cues, and opportunities to practice each skill during each lesson. The second part of the intervention

involved incorporating the stay, play, and talk skills into four 10-min play activities: doll play, pizza shop, dress-up, and kitchen play. Visual cues and verbal prompts were provided during each activity to reinforce use of learned skills.

Method

The quality of play (e.g., solitary, parallel, cooperative) and exchanges of verbal talk (e.g., positive, related to play) between the children within each play group were measured and coded. Additionally, the numbers of adult prompts (e.g., specific verbal direction, reminders) were coded. Researchers gathered data during three phases: baseline, intervention, and maintenance. No part of the buddy skills package was included during baseline and maintenance phases.

Conclusion

Findings included increases in the frequency and duration of children's cooperative play, increases in more play-related talk during the intervention phase (e.g., buddy skills package), and continued engagement in high levels of cooperative play and verbal interaction during maintenance. This study supported and furthered research involving the positive impact of buddy skills interventions on the frequency and reciprocity of children's social engagement. This intervention was shown to be feasible for teachers to use in the classroom and for children who exhibit various levels of social interaction challenges. Additional research that examines the use of peer-mediated interventions to increase skills of children with developmental disabilities in inclusive settings was suggested.

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Research-to-Practice Briefs provide summaries of key studies that inform practice related to early childhood special education. The series is designed specifically to support community college faculty who prepare candidates to work with children with special needs in the early childhood setting.

About the ACCEPT Project

The ACCEPT (Advancing Community College Efforts in Paraprofessional Training) Project is a federally-funded cooperative agreement between the U. S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte College of Education. The focus of this effort is the inclusion of special education content in the coursework and experiences provided within the associate degree program in early childhood education at targeted state-supported community colleges in North Carolina.

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