

# Utilizing Peer Supports to Promote Positive Peer Interactions Among Students with Autism

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## INTRODUCTION

- Students with Autism can demonstrate difficulty with perspective-taking and may spend less time engaged in reciprocal conversations with others
- Facilitating peer supports using a Peer Network could increase social interaction between autistic students and their general education peers
- Collaboration between School Psychologists and Special Educators can effectively facilitate positive peer interactions and improve school engagement for autistic students in the general education setting

## INTERVENTION

- Collaborated with general education teacher to identify two neurotypical peers to support each participant
- Developed individualized "Peer Support Plan" and reviewed strategies with neurotypical peers
- Held six weekly check-ins with neurotypical peers, lasting 10-15 minutes to review concerns and role-play situations
- Data was collected covertly in natural settings throughout the school day

## PARTICIPANTS

Student	Grade	Ethnicity	First Language	English Proficiency	Exhibits Symptoms of Autism
G.A.	6th	White	Hebrew	Fluent/ Non EL	Yes
M.G.L.	6th	American Indian/ Japanese	English	Fluent/ Non EL	Yes

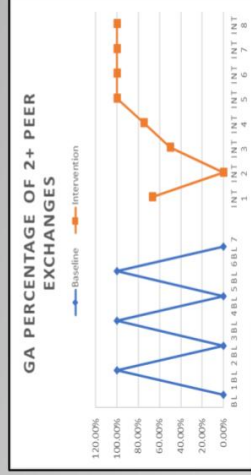
## METHODS

- Adapted the CSESA peer supports facilitator manual to identify specific ideas for how peers could initiate conversation or provide feedback during various times throughout the school day.

Sample "Peer Support Plan"

	G.A. could...	Peers could...	The teacher could...
<b>At the beginning of class...</b>	Talk quietly with peers when class starts and pass out materials to the class.	Ask G.A. about his day and upcoming school events, or share materials with G.A. if he has any. Materials he will need for class.	Involve G.A. in passing out class material and make sure G.A. has the same materials as his classmates.
<b>During whole group instruction...</b>	Quietly ask his peers questions about the material the teacher is presenting when their hand is not being raised.	Make sure G.A. has all of the same materials for the activity as you do, and encourage him to give positive feedback.	Brainstorm ways G.A. can be involved in the activity. Ask G.A. if he has any questions or ideas.
<b>During small groups or lab activities...</b>	Listen to the teacher as she presents instructions to the small group or lab activity.	Give G.A. opportunities to give feedback about the activity.	Give peers ideas for questions they can ask G.A. or ways to involve him.
<b>During independent seatwork...</b>	When other peers are done, help with his work and ask them for help completing his work.	If done with own work, check in with G.A. and encourage him to help with his work and give positive feedback.	Work with G.A. on completing his work. Encourage him to help with his work and encourage G.A. with lots of positive feedback.
<b>At the end of class...</b>	Talk quietly with his peers if everyone's work is completed or collect any materials for the teacher.	Ask G.A. about his day, what he is doing after school, or if he has any questions about his work with G.A. to or part way to his next class.	Try to draw all peers at the end of class. Encourage G.A. to help with his work. Modeling may be needed.

## RESULTS



GA Baseline Trials	2+ Peer Exchanges	% by Intervention
Trial 1	0%	66.7%
Trial 2	100%	0%
Trial 3	0%	50%
Trial 4	100%	75%
Trial 5	0%	100%
Trial 6	100%	100%
Trial 7	0%	100%
Trial 8	100%	74%
<b>Intervention Avg.</b>		<b>74%</b>
<b>GA Baseline Avg.</b>		<b>42.9%</b>



MGL Baseline Trials	2+ Peer Exchanges	% by Intervention
Trial 1	0%	40%
Trial 2	100%	65.7%
Trial 3	0%	100%
Trial 4	100%	100%
Trial 5	0%	66.7%
Trial 6	100%	100%
Trial 7	100%	100%
Trial 8	100%	100%
<b>Intervention Avg.</b>		<b>84.3%</b>
<b>MGL Baseline Avg.</b>		<b>40%</b>

## CONCLUSIONS

- Both participants displayed an increase in conversational attempts and number of peers interacted with per observation
- Participants' teachers reported increased positive social interactions for participants
- Contributes to the literature an understanding of how collaboration between Special Educators and School Psychologists can promote peer interactions in the general education setting
- The Peer Network intervention is a socially-valid step toward improving peer relationships for autistic students in the general education setting

## REFERENCES

Scan QR code for additional information regarding abstract and references.



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