

Helping Students with ASD Build Friendships Using PMI

Half-Day Workshop Handout

Peer-mediated Instruction & Intervention (PMI) is an evidence-based practice where peers are taught to interact with and support students with ASD.

- Peers act as a positive influence for the autistic student, helping them feel included in activities and conversations, rather than assuming the role of a second teacher
- This approach enhances social opportunities and cultivates social skills development in students with ASD across various school settings
- Can be used from preschool through high school

Advantages

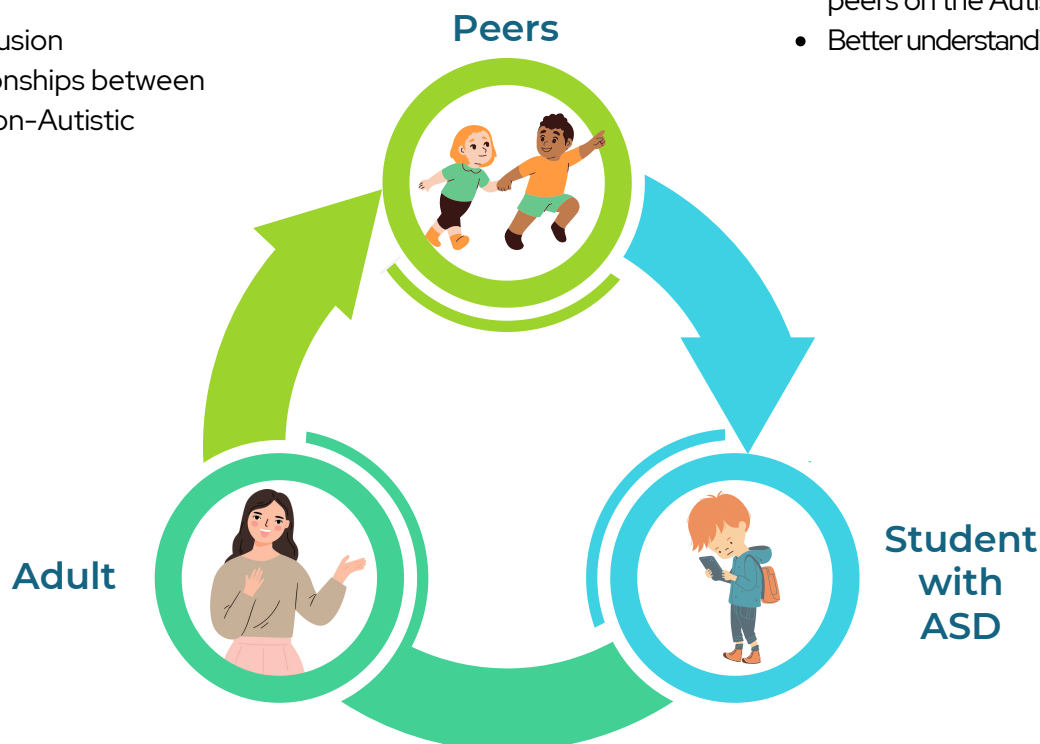
- Occurs in the natural environment
- Autistic students learn social behaviours directly from peers
- Reduces the need for adult support
- Promotes inclusion
- Fosters relationships between Autistic and non-Autistic students

Benefits for the Autistic Student

- Improved social interaction skills
- New friendships and social networks
- Increased academic engagement
- Reduced distressed behaviour

Benefits for the Peer(s)

- New friendships and social networks
- Enhanced social skills
- Improved academic skills
- Gain advocacy skills
- Learn strategies for interacting with peers on the Autism spectrum
- Better understanding of Autistic individuals



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Peer Modelling

Peers are trained to model the skill to the student with ASD.

Example:

- Josh models how to ask his classmate for a turn on the swing; Fred then copies

Peer Initiation Training

Peers are taught specific strategies to interact with the Autistic student.

Example:

- 3 of Taylor's peers are being taught to invite him to play

Peer Supports

Peers provide social and academic support to the Autistic student.

Example:

- Julia helps Claire follow her visual schedule throughout the day

Peer Networks

The Autistic student and peers interact in a facilitated group setting.

Example:

- A group of 6 students meet at lunch time to learn social skills and play structured games

Direct Training for Target Student & Peer

Both Autistic students and peers are taught the social skill.

Example:

- Ms. Brown teaches her class to differentiate expected vs. unexpected behaviours

PMI

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How To Implement



Prepare

1) Identify When and Where PMI Will Occur

- Examples: group academic work, centre time, recess or lunch, gym, music, library transitions or group games

2) Select 1-6 Peers Who:

- Are liked by the student with ASD
- Express interest in having positive interactions with the student with ASD
- Are similar in age to the student
- Attend school regularly
- Share interests with the student with ASD
- Have their own social networks
- Demonstrate good interpersonal skills
- Are willing to participate voluntarily

3) Meet with Peers To:

- Describe the process, expectations and purpose
- Confirm their interest and willingness to participate
- Discuss individual differences and relevant information about the Autistic student (eg. likes & dislikes, communication style, understanding neurodiversity, individual strengths & stretches etc.)
- Identify preferred activities and common interests of the Autistic student and the peers

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Half-Day Workshop Handout

Implementation



Prepare Continued

4) Identify Skills to Teach the Peers

Common skills to target include (AFIRM, 2022):

- Initiating interactions
- Responding to interactions
- Engaging in conversations
- Giving and accepting compliments
- Taking turns and sharing
- Helping others
- Including others
- Giving positive feedback to the student when expected behaviours are demonstrated
- Modeling communication skills
- Promoting interaction with other peers

5) Clearly Define the Skill

- Example: *Initiating interactions* is defined by saying hi, asking a question or showing something to the student.

6) Create Scripts

- Example: *Asking questions*: "Do you like...?" or "What are you doing?"

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Implementation



Train Peers

Use Behaviour Skills Training

1. Provide instructions
2. Model the skill
3. Have the peers role-play
4. Provide feedback

Example:

Skill: Asking Questions

1. Instruct: *"This strategy is about asking questions. Sometimes Sam wants to interact with you but he doesn't know how. Asking questions will help to include him."*
2. Model: Teacher: *"Do you like Pokemon?"* Student: *Yes, I like Pokemon.*
3. Rehearse/Role-Play: *"Now it's your turn".* Student: *"Do you like swimming?"* Teacher: *"Yes, I do!"*
4. Feedback: *"Great job, that's a good question and I like how you waited for me to be paying attention before asking".*

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Implementation



Monitor Progress

Assess

Use a data sheet to determine if PMI is having the intended effect:

- Is the student with ASD interacting more with peers?
- Are relationships forming?
- Are the interactions reciprocal?
- Is there mutual enjoyment?
- Is the autistic student acquiring new social communication skills?

		Date/ Activity:	Date/ Activity:	Date/ Activity:	Date/ Activity:	Date/ Activity:
Did the peer(s) use:	Strategy #1:	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No
	Strategy #2:	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No
	Strategy #3:	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No
Did the target student engage in:	Social interaction behaviour #1:	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No
	Social interaction behaviour #2:	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No
	Social interaction behaviour #3:	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No
Did the target student and peers appear to enjoy the activity?		Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No	Yes Somewhat No

Data Sheet Example:

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Monitor Progress Continued

If the student with Autism is not making progress, we may need to:

- Provide additional training for peers
- Ensure the skill is clearly defined
- Make sure the skill isn't too difficult
- Create more opportunities for practice
- Consider a different evidence-based practice that might better suit the student's needs

If the student with Autism is making progress:

- Continue to provide reminders as needed
- Reduce level of support
- Decrease reinforcement but continue to occasionally reinforce

Generalize and Extend

- Extend PMI or other activities or times of day
- Rotate peers
- Seat trained peers next to the Autistic student in the class

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References

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