

## **PEER-ASSISTED INTERVENTIONS: OVERVIEW**

### **What are peer-assisted behavioral interventions?**

Most interventions used to modify student behavior are typically teacher mediated. The teacher sets up and implements the behavior plan and gives the student cues and feedback regarding their behavior. In peer-mediated interventions, the teacher designs a program and trains a peer or peers to deliver needed social cues and the reinforcement that may follow targeted behavioral outcomes. Many peer-mediated interventions combine self-monitoring interventions with a peer-partnered intervention. Although peer-mediated interventions are used infrequently, there is promising research indicating that it can be beneficial to all involved.

### **What are the advantages for using peer-assisted behavioral interventions in the general education classroom?**

Peer-mediated interventions have several advantages. A well set up intervention mediated by a peer can free up the teacher to engage in other teaching activities. Instead of cueing and delivering feedback to target students, teachers can focus on academic tasks, help other students in need, or simply have uninterrupted teaching time. Students with a peer support plan actually receive an increase in individualized attention, especially when partnered with a same age appropriate peer. Well-trained peer mediators actually allow the target student to receive more immediate feedback more often as the mediator is often assigned one student and a teacher usually has several to monitor at one time. Additionally, when the target student is assigned several peer mediators across settings, maintenance and generalization of social skills being reinforced is more likely. (DuPaul, McGoey, & Yugar, 1997). Peer mediated interventions may consequently result in the improved behavior and academic performance of the peer mediating the intervention (DuPaul & Henningson, 1993; Gardill et al., 1996). Students respond to peer feedback more often than an adult initiated contact in intermediate grades and up. Educators have utilized role reversal interventions where a student who may have behavioral issues acts as a mentor or tutor for a younger student with promising results. Because this capitalizes on the tutor's strengths and promotes responsibility, positive behavioral changes occur through the reverse role tutoring (Tournaki & Criscitiello, 2003).

### **What characteristics do effective peer-assisted behavioral interventions have?**

Clear objectives, boundaries, and ground rules need to be established with both the target student and the peer mediator through training done by the educator. Confidentiality and child protection issues need to be covered in training to ensure the privacy of the target student is protected. Peer-mediated intervention programs need to be monitored and evaluated by staff to ensure that all involved parties are experiencing positive results. Peer mediators need to be instructed on identifying when a situation is out of their level of expertise and when to ask for assistance and/or support from an adult.

## References

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## Additional Recommended Resources

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- Gardill, M.C., DuPaul, G.J., & Kyle, K.E. (November, 1996). Classroom strategies for managing students with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 32, 89-94.
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- Mitchem, K.J., Young, K.R., West, R.P., & Benyo, J. (2001). CWPASM: A classwide peer-assisted self management program for general education classrooms. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 24, 2, 111-140.
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