

Peer-Mediated Social Skills Development: Using Peers to Enhance the Social Skills of All Students A Peer-Mediated Approach

Presented by **Dr. Kimberly Maich**

Friday, September 21, 2012

9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Mount Peyton Hotel,
Grand Falls-Windsor

*Sponsored by the
Council of Special Services (COSS)*



Download Registration Form at www.nlta.nl.ca



Workshop Description

A peer-mediated approach involves teaching peers how to interact with students with social challenges and teaching social skills to those who may need additional instruction. The power of peers has tremendous impact, and this approach allows students to learn age appropriate skills that occur in natural settings.

In this model, peers are introduced to the concept with awareness activities and learn specific skills to interact with children with differing abilities. The teaching benefits all children, but is specifically designed to teach the skills to start conversations and maintain play with students who have disabilities or social challenges.

The most crucial aspect of a peer-mediated approach is the way educators prompt the peers. Educators prompt through peers rather than the traditional adult-mediated method of prompting the student directly. Incorporating this strategy into their teaching practice can be challenging, but becomes common practice over time.



Research Example

In Spring 2011, a pilot project focused on social skills development for young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder was implemented in one school board and one child care centre in Southwestern Ontario. This collaborative project involving staff and faculty from All Kids Belong, Fanshawe College, and Thames Valley Children's Centre, focused on the social skills of three children who were diagnosed with ASD and in fully inclusive settings with typically developing peers. For three months, social skills were measured while the program was implemented.

Social skills were measured in two ways: a) A social skills questionnaire in which each assessed social skill was rated on a scale of one to five. This was completed by educators of students with ASD both before and after intervention, allowing for comparison in social skills growth. b) Direct and regular observation of each child with ASD by Fanshawe College students from the Autism and Behavioural Science Graduate Certificate program trained in data collection. Fanshawe students tracked, recorded, and measured many dimensions of all interactions with peers and adults during appropriate social periods.

Preliminary Results

Using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, further analysis showed that after the intervention, positive change was seen in numerous areas of social skill development. The most prominent finding in all three children was an increase in the number of interactions with peers specifically in the context of structured activities with multiple opportunities for social interactions (i.e., centres, crafts) rather than unstructured activities or those with little opportunity for social interaction (i.e., snack time). Overall, this model of peer-mediated social skills instruction seems to have areas of strong impact for the children who participated in this project, and **appears to be a potentially promising intervention for students with social challenges in inclusive environments.**

Training Event Outline (5 Hours)

Introduction to Peer-Mediated Social Skills

- Rationale, Model, & Research

Preparing the Classroom and Students

- Assessing the Environment
- Teaching Strategies
- Choosing Peers

Step 1: Diversity Awareness

- Rationale
- Awareness Activities, Role Play, & Examples

Step 2: Teaching Tracks Program

- TRACKS Lesson Plans (an acronym to teach peers how to interact with students with social challenges: e.g., T = Try Again!)

Step 3: Social Skills Teaching

- Customization of Social Skills Teaching for Individual Students
- Social Skills Lesson Plans

Step 4: Prompting Through Peers

- The Prompting Sequence
- Variations in Prompting through Peers
- The Prompting Steps

During this workshop participants will:

- Determine helpful ways to teach peer awareness and develop empathy about exceptionalities using books and awareness activities.
- Discover a method to effectively teach social skills to children with ASD and other social-based disabilities in an inclusive environment.
- Learn the theory, research and practical strategies to implement the peer-mediated model of social skills development in your own classroom environment.

Dr. Kimberly Maich

Dr. Kimberly Maich, PhD, OCT has studied and taught from coast-to-coast in Canada. She earned a BA in Psychology from the University of Guelph, in Guelph, Ontario, a BEd from Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario, a Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Special Needs and the Professional Development Program in Inclusion from Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, BC, a Master of Education in Exceptionalities from Memorial University in St. John's, NL, and a PhD in Educational Studies: Cognition and Learning from Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario. Both her graduate degrees focused on research with Newfoundland teachers, entitled *When Pathways Cross: Special Education Teacher Collaboration under Pathways to Programming and Graduation* and *Opening a Can of Worms: Perceptions and Practices of Teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador Incorporating the Role of a Therapist*.

She has spent most of her career as a resource teacher, supporting students with exceptionalities from Kindergarten to Grade 12, but has also had roles as a Guidance Counsellor, Vice Principal, Librarian, Classroom Teacher, and Computer Lab Coordinator. During her seven years in Newfoundland and Labrador, she lived in St. Anthony and taught at St. Anthony Elementary, and lived in Botwood, teaching at Point Leamington Academy and Leading Tickles Elementary.

After spending a number of years as an ASD Consultant and Program Coordinator with McMaster Children's Hospital, she is now an Assistant Professor in Brock University's Department of Teacher Education. Currently, Dr. Maich is involved in a number of research projects focused on special education knowledge, emotional/behavioural disorders across Canada, iPads in the classroom, and peer-mediated social skills instruction. She has facilitated many workshops with provincial, national, and international audiences, including St. John's, Grand Falls-Windsor, Lower Cove, and St. Anthony. Some of her recent publications include *Using picture books to create peer awareness about Autism Spectrum Disorders in the inclusive classroom for Intervention in School and Clinic* and *Out in the field: Experiencing a research journey through a community-based pilot project* for *College Quarterly*. Currently, she is writing a book for Pearson Education entitled *Early*

Learners in preschools and kindergartens: 50 case stories child development, inclusion, collaboration and special needs.

Along with her husband, Rev. John Maich, she has four children aged 20, 18, 16 and 11. Her family lives in Brantford, Ontario and vacations in Raleigh, Newfoundland.



Peer-Mediated Social Skills Workshop Registration Form

(Early Bird Deadline: July 10, 2012)

Name: _____

School: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Early Bird Rates (before July 10, 2012):

- \$169 per person Individual Rate
- \$139 per person (*for groups of 4 or more from the same school/building*)

Late Registration Fees (after July 10, 2012):

- \$199 per person Individual Rate. No group rate available after July 10, 2012
 - Payment is accepted by cheque (*payable to Council of Special Services*) or purchase order only.
 - When registering a group please issue only one cheque or purchase order for the entire group.
 - Groups may register without a finalized list of participants. The names of participants will not be needed until September 8, 2012.

Registration for this workshop is open to the general public.

Cancellation Policy:

A person may attend in your place at no extra cost. You are required only to notify us of the name of the person attending.

Cancellation – 30 days or more before the workshop date

- Receive a refund, less a \$40 administration charge

Cancellation – fewer than 30 days before the workshop date

- You will receive a credit (*less a \$40 per person administration charge*) to any future COSS workshop

Mail Registration to:
Council of Special Services
46 Thomas Street
Grand Falls-Windsor, NL A2A 2V6

For More Information Contact:
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***This workshop is limited to 50 participants.
To avoid disappointment, please register early!***