Individualized Peer-Mediated Interventions to Increase Young Children's Social Competence

> "Social competence develops early in childhood as children interact with others and it is a significant contributor to children's social development."

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Ms. Caroline is the lead teacher of an inclusive preschool classroom in a suburban school district that serves children and families from low-income backgrounds. Yan Alberto, a 3-year-old boy, is one of 15 children in Ms. Caroline's class. He is monolingual, communicates with two- to three-word utterances in English, and follows two-word requests. In the mornings, many centers are available and up to five children participate in each center. Ms. Caroline observes that Yan Alberto engages in parallel play during these centers. He plays with the toys available in each center, stays close to his peers, and appears interested in what his peers are doing. However, he hardly initiates toward them. Yan Alberto's parents have also observed this behavior with his older sibling and during family gatherings. Ms. Caroline and Yan Alberto's parents feel he would like to interact with peers but that he does not know how to initiate those interactions. In consultation with a behavior specialist from the school district, she learns that peer-mediated interventions (PMIs) may help teach Yan Alberto to initiate and respond to his peers.

Social competence is the ability to achieve interpersonal goals by engaging in social behaviors that are appropriate and context-specific (Guralnick, 1992). Social competence develops early in childhood as children interact with others and it is a significant contributor to children's social development (Brown et al., 1996). The purpose of this article is to describe a practical method for how early childhood practitioners can address the social competence needs of young children by implementing PMIs. First, we discuss the importance of social competence in early childhood, specific to teaching children how to initiate and respond to their peers. Next, we offer an overview of PMIs. Finally, we describe a practical application of PMIs in early childhood settings.

Social Competence in Early Childhood

Young children demonstrate social competence when they are able to initiate interactions with peers, respond to peers' initiations, and maintain meaningful social interactions with peers using social behaviors that are appropriate to the context in which they are used (Brown et al., 1996). Definitions for initiations, responses, and social interactions, as well as examples of

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Table 1
Definitions and Examples of Initiations, Responses, and Interactions in Young Children

Definition	Example
Initiations: Verbal or gestural behaviors that are relevant to the ongoing activity and directed toward a child in an attempt to obtain the child's attention, elicit a response, or request help.	A child asks a peer to play with them (e.g., "Do you want to play toy cars with me?"). A child makes a comment to a peer while playing to obtain the peer's attention (e.g., "Look at my tower!"). A child points to a toy that they want but cannot reach and asks a peer for the toy.
Responses: Verbal or gestural behaviors that are relevant to the ongoing activity that are directed to an initiating child and overtly acknowledge the other child's initiation, including declining the initiation.	A child hands a peer a toy after the peer asked for it. A child responds "No, thank you" to a peer after being asked by the peer to play cars with her. A child responds "Yes!" to a peer after being asked by the peer "Do you want to play magnet tiles with me?"
Interactions: A sequence of social exchanges between a child and a peer within a short time period (e.g., 5 s of each other). Interactions begin after an initiation-response sequence with the *third behavior* in the sequence (i.e., initiation-response-interaction). Interactions stop once the social exchange between the children cease for a short time period (e.g., 5 s).	A child hands a truck to a peer, the peer takes the truck, and the initiating child says "Let's play cars" and the children begin playing together. A child asks the peer "What do you want to play?" the peer responds "Let's play with Legos," the initiating child says "Okay" and the children begin playing together.

Source. Definitions adapted from Conroy and Asmus (2006).

> "Young children who demonstrate social competence difficulties, such as children with autism or emotional/behavioral disorder, may also exhibit challenging behaviors."

each, can be found in Table 1. Children who demonstrate social competence through positive social interactions with peers show increased academic readiness (e.g., increased attention, persistence, and problem-solving skills), communication (e.g., increased vocabulary complexity), and cognitive skills (e.g., increased math skills; Bulotsky-Shearer et al., 2012). Many children develop social competence by observing and engaging in interactions with peers in early childhood settings (Whalon et al., 2015). However, for some children (e.g., children diagnosed with autism or developmental delays), targeted interventions may be necessary (Brown et al., 1996; Whalon et al., 2015) as these children often do not initiate interactions with peers, respond to peers' initiations, or engage in social interactions with peers (L. K. Koegel et al., 2012). Moreover, social competence difficulties may lead to poor developmental outcomes, decreased participation in inclusive educational and community settings, and increased negative interactions with adults and peers. Thus, it is important for practitioners to implement individualized interventions to address children's social competence needs, particularly with children with or at risk of disabilities (Brown et al., 1996; Martinez et al., 2019; Whalon et al., 2015). In addition, all children

benefit from environments that nurture social competence development and from intentional adult support to initiate, respond, and sustain positive interactions.

PMIs

PMIs are interventions in which one or more peers are taught strategies to support their classmates in the acquisition of academic, behavioral, or social skills (Chan et al., 2009). When implementing PMIs to address social competence needs, peers who already demonstrate age-appropriate language and communication skills are taught to engage children with social competence difficulties in positive and appropriate interactions to help them acquire appropriate social skills (Katz & Girolametto, 2013). That is, PMIs can be used to help children who do not typically and independently initiate or respond to peers to increase the likelihood that they can engage in meaningful interactions with others across settings (Martinez et al., 2019).

PMIs are an evidence-based practice (Wong et al., 2015) and a Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children recommended practice to address the social competence needs of young children with and without disabilities (i.e., E1, INS3, INS8, and INT2; DEC, 2014). PMIs are well suited to be implemented in inclusive early childhood settings as they can be easily incorporated into the natural context of classrooms' daily activities and routines (Chan et al., 2009; Watkins et al., 2015). In addition, the presence of children with varying levels of social competence in inclusive settings allows for many different social partners with whom children can practice newly acquired social skills (Chan et al., 2009; Watkins et al., 2015). This, in turn, increases the likelihood of children who need more targeted interventions to successfully learn and apply social skills independently across settings and individuals (Martinez et al., 2019). PMIs also have positive outcomes for children serving as peers, such as increased academic engagement, assignment completion, and class participation (Chan et al., 2009; Cushing & Kennedy, 1997). Finally, PMIs foster peer's appreciation of diversity and understanding of individual differences.

Implementation of PMIs to Teach Social Competence

In this section, we describe practical steps for early childhood practitioners to implement PMIs in their classrooms to address the social competence needs of young children, specifically with initiating or responding to peers in child-centered activities. First, we describe how practitioners can identify (a) social behaviors to target, (b) socially competent peers to participate in the intervention, (c) children's preferred materials to include in the intervention sessions, and (d) social activities in which to implement the intervention. Next, we describe practical strategies for how early childhood practitioners can implement PMIs in their classrooms and describe their roles during PMI sessions. Specifically, we describe how practitioners can teach children

with social competence difficulties (referred to as focal children from now on) to initiate and maintain meaningful interactions, teach peers to initiate and respond to focal children, and how they can collect data to assess the intervention's effectiveness and make data-driven decisions.

Identifying Social Behaviors to Target

Early childhood practitioners should use multiple means of assessing focal children to identify the specific social behavior to target (i.e., initiations or responses). Practitioners should conduct direct observations across different days (e.g., 3 days) as well as across different activities that are conducive to social interactions (e.g., centers) to determine the social behaviors that the focal children are engaging in and how often. A sample data collection form is provided in Table 2. To use this form, a practitioner should observe the focal child during free play activities (e.g., centers) for 10 min. During each minute, the practitioner should circle whether an initiation and/or response was present during that interval. Data can then be reported as percent of intervals in which that behavior was present. If the behavior is occurring in all intervals, the practitioner might consider that the child does not need the intervention or that the interval is too large (e.g., consider observing for 10- to 15-s intervals instead). Following the observations, the practitioner should engage in a conversation with the caregivers to discuss the results, as well as to gain information about these behaviors in the home setting. This step is important as the behavior first chosen for intervention should be meaningful in both classroom and home settings. The social behavior that should be selected as the target behavior should be the one that is the least exhibited during these observations and meaningful to the caregivers.

If a child exhibits low rates of both behaviors, initiations should be prioritized first to maximize social and verbal learning opportunities (Katz & Girolametto, 2015; R. L. Koegel et al., 2014). Specifically, children who independently initiate toward others have more opportunities to engage in meaningful interactions with adults and peers and tend to have better long-term outcomes than those children who do not (R. L. Koegel et al., 2014). Moreover, children who independently initiate are better prepared to navigate different social contexts as they can make comments, ask for help or questions, and elicit feedback from others (Martinez et al., 2019).

To ensure that she targets the appropriate behavior, Ms. Caroline conducts observations of Yan Alberto across 3 days during various morning centers. Each observation is 10 min in length. However, she splits the 10 min into smaller 1-min intervals. For each day that she observes Yan Alberto, Ms. Caroline circles the behavior(s) that she observes during each 1-min interval (i.e., if at any point during a 1-min interval Yan Alberto exhibits an initiation or response, Ms. Caroline notes it on the data collection sheet). Once each observation is completed, she calculates the percent of intervals in which Yan Alberto engaged in each behavior. Ms. Caroline notices that, across observations, the percent of intervals in which he initiated toward

Table 2
Social Competence Data Collection Sheet

Social Competence Data Collection Sheet

Child's Initials: _____ **Observer's Initials:** _____

Directions: For each day, circle the behavior(s) observed during each 1-min interval, write the activity in which the child was observed, and the date of the observation. Once each observation is completed, calculate the percent of intervals in which the child engaged in each behavior independently by dividing the number of times the child engaged in each behavior by 10 and multiplying by 100.

	Day		
Minute	**1**	**2**	**3**
1	I R	I R	I R
2	I R	I R	I R
3	I R	I R	I R
4	I R	I R	I R
5	I R	I R	I R
6	I R	I R	I R
7	I R	I R	I R
8	I R	I R	I R
9	I R	I R	I R
10	I R	I R	I R
Setting/activity:			
Date:			
Behaviors	___% Independent I ___% Independent R	___% Independent I ___% Independent R	___% Independent I ___% Independent R

Source. Adapted from Brown et al. (2002).
Note. I = initiations; R = responses.

peers was significantly lower than the percent of intervals in which he responded. Following the observations, Ms. Caroline met with Yan Alberto's parents to discuss her findings. Yan Alberto's parents would like to see him playing more appropriately with his older brother, but agree that in the home he does not typically initiate any social interaction with them or his sibling. Therefore, Ms. Caroline and Yan Alberto's parents believe that his PMI should focus on increasing his independent initiations.

Identifying Socially Competent Peers

Early childhood practitioners should select peers who (a) use age-appropriate language and communication skills to engage in frequent social interactions; (b) have

age-appropriate, creative play skills; (c) generally follow instructions; and (d) get along with and are of a similar age to the focal children (Chan et al., 2009; Conroy et al., 2014; Odom & McConnell, 1993; Odom & Strain, 1984; Watkins et al., 2015). Although not a requirement, focal children may be more likely to engage in interactions with peers who have similar interests or preferences (e.g., preferred toys) so this should also be a consideration in choosing a peer for the intervention.

Ms. Caroline identified three children who may be good peers for Yan Alberto. All three children meet the requirements for the peer in PMI; however, Ms. Caroline selects Katie, to be Yan Alberto's peer. She choose Katie because she has been observed attempting to play with Yan Alberto several times and potentially has similar interests.

Identifying Preferred Materials and Social Activities

Researchers have found that children who demonstrate social competence difficulties may be more motivated to engage in and sustain meaningful social interactions with peers when social activities include materials (e.g., toys) that they prefer (Boyd et al., 2007; Conroy et al., 2014). Early childhood practitioners can use indirect preference assessments to identify focal children's preferences. To do so, they should observe the children during free playtime to identify the toys that they prefer to play with. They should also ask caregivers and school personnel familiar with the children to identify toys that they enjoy playing with while at home or at school. If early childhood practitioners cannot identify children's preferences through indirect preference assessments or caregiver interviews, they should conduct direct preference assessments. A description of direct preference assessments is beyond the scope of this article. However, early childhood practitioners can access the *Evidence-Based Instructional Practices for Young Children with Autism & Other Disabilities* website for more information on direct preference assessments (http://ebip.vkcsites.org/preference-assessments/).

Once early childhood practitioners identify focal children's preferred toys, they need to identify ways in which the chosen toys might lead to social interactions. That is, they should select toys that, when embedded in social activities, allow children to play together and engage in meaningful interactions with one another. This would require the early childhood practitioner to structure activities that are social in nature for both children. For example, a puzzle could be independently completed, however, the teacher might structure the activity where the children need to take turns to complete the puzzle.

Through observations and consultation with Yan Alberto's parents, Ms. Caroline learned that he enjoys playing with dinosaurs, play-dough, and wooden puzzles. Ms. Caroline has noticed that Katie also enjoys playing with dinosaurs and play-dough. Whenever other children are playing with dinosaurs, Katie joins them and creates play schemes around the dinosaurs, such as taking them for a train ride or to the veterinarian. Therefore, Ms. Caroline selects play-dough and dinosaurs as the two toys that she will use during Yan Alberto's PMI sessions. As Ms. Caroline identified

two preferred social toys for Yan Alberto and Katie, she decides that the children should choose the toy they want to use in each PMI session.

Teaching Sessions for Focal Children and Peers

Teaching sessions for focal children and peers should be conducted separately. In an early childhood setting, the practitioner might consider times where the whole class is engaging in an independent activity or routine. Practitioners might consider utilizing paraprofessionals to assist in the teaching session or supervision of the class. These sessions should last approximately 5 to 10 min.

Focal children's teaching sessions should be focused on the social behavior identified as the target behavior. When teaching children to initiate and sustain meaningful interactions, practitioners should follow the following steps: (a) explain the purpose of the intervention, (b) introduce or review the role of initiations or responses in being an effective social partner, (c) model and practice initiation/response strategies through role-play, and (d) provide children with performance feedback (Katz & Girolametto, 2013; Thiemann & Goldstein, 2004). A model of the steps and suggested language, which practitioners can use during teaching sessions for peers and focal children is provided in Table 3. Practitioners should decide on a criterion to determine whether the children learned the strategies taught to them. For example, practitioners could conduct training sessions until a focal child, whose target skill is initiation, is able to independently initiate with them using any of the strategies at least three times while they are role-playing.

The purpose of the teaching session for the peers is to teach them how to be effective social partners, based on the focal children's strengths and needs. For example, if the focal children exhibit difficulties responding to peers' initiations, peers should be taught how to initiate positive and appropriate interactions. Similarly, if a focal child exhibits difficulty initiating interactions with peers, then their peer should be taught how to effectively respond to the focal child's initiations. If a focal child has more than one peer, the peers can be taught how to be effective social partners individually or as a group. Training sessions for the peers should follow a similar format as that of the focal children, with an emphasis on performance feedback for the strategies they are practicing. Peers may require multiple teaching sessions to ensure that they can reliably use the strategies they were taught with the focal children.

Ms. Caroline conducted teaching sessions for each child separately during morning centers. The paraprofessional in Ms. Caroline's classroom was in charge of supervising the rest of the class while Ms. Caroline worked with Yan Alberto and Katie. First, Ms. Caroline taught Katie to respond every time Yan Alberto initiated to her. For example, while pretending to be Yan Alberto, Ms. Caroline would play with play-doh with Katie while repeatedly asking Katie to share materials with her. If Katie shared the materials quickly, Ms. Caroline would praise Katie saying "Great, I like how you responded quickly when asked for the item." Conversely, if Katie ignored Ms. Caroline's

Table 3
Steps Followed During Focal Children and Peer Teaching Sessions

Step	Description	Example of language used with peers	Example of language used with FC
1. Explain the purpose of the intervention	Explain the purpose of PMI and the importance of friendships to the children using developmentally appropriate language. The focus should be on children being able to make new friends and/or children being able to learn new ways to interact with their friends while engaged in fun play–based activities.	"You and I will help (name of FC) learn new ways to talk to and play with friends here at school. We will do that by playing fun games each time that he or she joins us." "Making new friends is great! You can learn new games or cartoon characters from them. One of the best ways to make new friends is to play games with them; that is how we will help (name of FC) make new friends!"	"I will teach you new ways that you can talk to and play with your friends here at school. It will be fun! You will be playing (FC's preferred item[s]) with (name of peer[s])." "Making new friends is fantastic! You can learn a lot from new friends. You can also share toys with them, play many fun games, and talk to them about things you both enjoy, like (name of a preferred cartoon character)."
2. Teach strategies	Introduce/review and model examples of the target social skill strategy to each child. Visuals of the strategies taught to the children can be used during this step (see Figure 1 for a sample visual that can be used while teaching initiations).		
a. Initiations	Teach children to initiate appropriate and positive interactions using the following strategies: (a) greeting friends by making eye contact with them and using their names, (b) appropriately asking questions, (c) making comments that are appropriate to the ongoing activity, and (d) appropriately requesting for help or for a desired object.	"When you are playing with (FC's name) you can ask him or her questions about the game or toy. This is a great way to play together with friends! For example, I could ask you: *What is your favorite car*? While playing toy cars with you." "When playing with friends, you can make comments about the games that you are playing together. For example, I could say to you: *I love the Lego tower that you are building!* While playing with Legos with you."	"While playing games with other children, you can ask them for help if you do not understand something, like the rules of a game, or need help with something else. For example, I could say to you: *Can you please pass me the green Lego block*? While playing with Lego blocks with you." "You can start talking to your friends by saying *hello* to them and then saying their names. For example, if I was saying hello to you I would say: *Hello (name of FC)!* When you say hello to others, remember to always look at them in the eyes. It lets them know that you are talking to them."
b. Responses	Teach children to effectively respond to initiations (i.e., respond between 3 and 5 s) by providing them with examples and non-examples of efficient responses.	"After (name of FC) says something to you or asks you a question, make sure to respond to him or her fast so he or she does not lose interest in playing with you. For example, I always make sure to respond to my friends before four seconds are over (One Mississippi, two Mississippi, three Mississippi, four Mississippi)." "A not so good example of answering a question fast is if someone asks me: *What is your favorite TV show*? And I answer (practitioner waits more than five seconds before answering): *Blue*. See how slow that was? Someone can lose interest in the answer if you take too long."	"Responses are when you answer your friends' questions or make comments about something they have said to you first. While playing games with (name of peer[s]), make sure to respond to what he or she asks you." "An example of answering a question fast is if someone asks me: *What is your favorite color*? I answer right away (practitioner answers within three seconds): *Blue!* See how fast I answered that question?"

(continued)

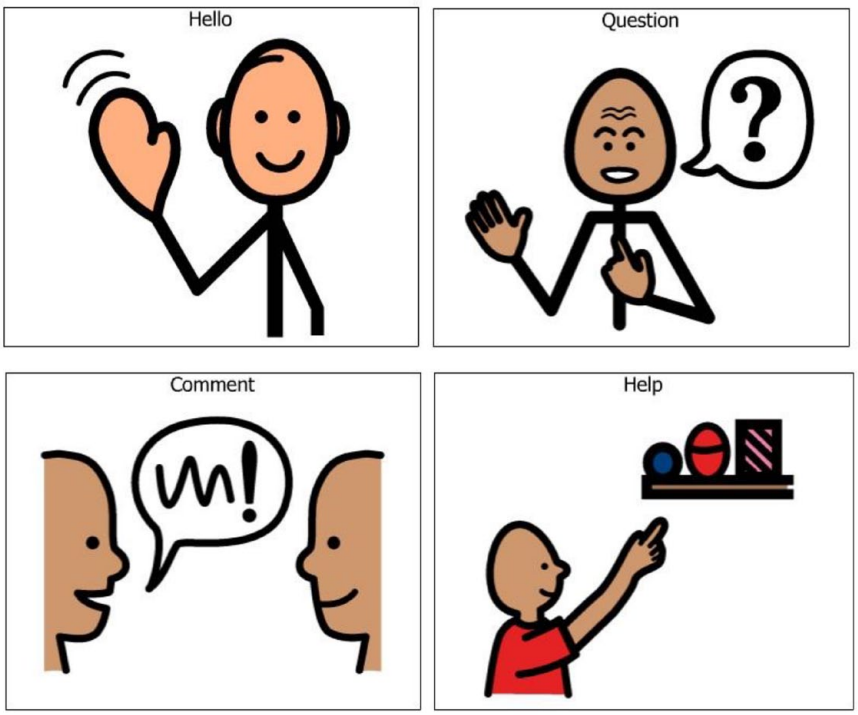
Table 3
(continued)

Step	Description	Example of language used with peers	Example of language used with FC
3. Practice strategies	Practice the strategies taught to the children by creating role-play scenarios with them. Assume the role of the child not present in the role-play scenarios and they should be conducted during play-based activities chosen by the children. Role-play scenarios should focus on the strategies being taught to the children (e.g., a practitioner assuming the role of a peer during a scenario to help a FC practice independent initiations). Decide on a criterion to determine whether the children have learned the strategies (e.g., a practitioner continues to role-play with a FC until they independently initiate to the practitioner using the focal strategy at least three times). Prompting procedures are also practiced in this step.	"We will practice how you can respond to my comments and questions while we are playing together. Choose something that we both can play with. Before we get started, remember to respond quickly to my comments or questions." "I will help you remember ways to respond quickly to your friends. If (name of FC) asks you to pass him or her a green Lego block and you do not do it quickly, I will say to you: *(name of peer) remember to pass (name of FC) the green Lego block.*"	"We will practice how you can start talking to me while we are playing together. Choose something that we both can play with. While we are playing, remember the ways I told you that you can start talking to others while playing a game." "I will help you remember ways to start talking to your friends while playing games. For example, if you are playing with (name of peer) and you forget to say something to him or her, I will say to you: *(name of focal child) you can ask (name of the peer) to help you build the Lego tower.* I will remind you also by showing you these cards (practitioner shows the child a visual of the strategies)."
4. Provide children with feedback	Provide children with feedback to support their initiations and responses.		
a. Behavior-specific praise	Provide children with behavior-specific praise to let them know the steps that they followed correctly while role-playing. Explicitly acknowledging children for engaging in appropriate behaviors helps them identify what they are expected to do and helps foster positive relationships with them. Behavior-specific praise should be provided to the children immediately after role-play scenarios.	"I liked how fast you passed me the green Lego block when I asked you for it. Keep it up!"	"I really liked how you said *hello* to me as soon as we started playing together and you looked at me in the eyes when you said hello. That is how you say hello to your friends! Keep it up!"
b. Corrective feedback	Provide children with corrective feedback to let them know the steps that they did not follow correctly while role-playing and to explicitly let them know their behavioral expectations. Corrective feedback statements should not be provided as reprimands; the focus of these statements is to support children's learning. Corrective feedback should be provided to the children immediately after role-play scenarios.	"I liked that you passed me the Lego block, but I think that you can pass it to me even faster when I ask you for it! Remember to respond quickly to your friends when they ask you questions or make comments to you."	"I heard you ask me for the blue Lego block, but you were looking at the floor when you asked. Remember to make sure your friends know you are talking to them when asking for help or talking to them. Let's practice asking for the Lego block again."

Source. Adapted from the procedures followed by Katz and Girolametto (2013), and Thiemann and Goldstein (2004).
Note. FC = focal child; PMI = peer-mediated intervention.

requests to share, Ms. Caroline would provide feedback such as, "If Yan Alberto asks you for some play-doh make sure you share the material with him while you are playing." With Yan Alberto, Ms. Caroline focused her instruction on how and when he may initiate to Katie. She taught him ways to play with the play-dough together, such as suggesting something they could make together or asking for a

Figure 1
Example of a visual support that can be used while teaching initiation strategies



material. For example, while pretending to be Katie, Ms. Caroline began to play with all of the play-doh and waited for Yan Alberto to request some of the play-doh from her. If he asked "Can I have some play-doh?" Ms. Caroline praised him for the initiation and told him that he did a nice job asking for something to play with. If Yan Alberto remained quiet and did not ask for the play-doh, Ms. Caroline reminded him that one way to play with his friends would be to ask for them to share their toys with him or to make comments about what they are playing with. While reminding Yan Alberto ways in which he can initiate toward peers, Ms. Caroline provided him with a visual prompt of the strategies taught to him (see Figure 1 for a sample of a visual support that can be used when teaching social skills strategies to the children or prompting them to engage in the strategies).

PMI Sessions and Early Childhood Practitioners' Role

PMI sessions (i.e., sessions in which the peer and focal child are interacting together) can be implemented daily and should be long enough (e.g., 10–15 min) for practitioners to observe and determine if children are engaging in the target social behaviors (Figure 2). Within early childhood settings, small groups or centers are ideal times to conduct PMI sessions as these are times in which children have opportunities to engage in interactions and the toys selected for PMI can be easily incorporated. Before each session, practitioners should have children's preferred toys available in the session's location.

Figure 2
Example of a peer-mediated intervention (PMI) session in which the peer and focal child are interacting together

Once the children are in the area, practitioners should encourage children to play together using the strategies taught to them.

Practitioners' primary roles during PMI sessions are to monitor the children to ensure that they are engaging in positive and appropriate interactions and to collect data (i.e., INT2 and INS3; DEC, 2014). Early childhood practitioners can prompt the children when needed, however, involvement should be limited to encourage interactions between the children (Odom & McConnell, 1993). For example, early childhood practitioners can prompt focal children to initiate toward their peers using one of the social skills strategies previously taught to them. Finally, practitioners are encouraged to praise all children for their participation.

Data Collection During PMI

Data should be collected on focal children's target behavior(s) during each PMI session. Although data on prompted behaviors (e.g., a child initiating toward a peer within 5 s of being prompted to do so) can be collected, practitioners should solely use the data on children's independent behaviors to make data-driven decisions regarding the effects of PMI on the children's target behaviors (i.e., INS3; DEC, 2014). The data sheet provided in Table 2, or any other data collection method that is feasible in early childhood classrooms, can be used to collect data. For example, early childhood practitioners may tally the number of independent responses or initiations made by a child on a note pad or small notebook.

If the data indicate that the intervention is increasing the target behaviors (e.g., independent initiations), practitioners should collect data to determine whether other behaviors should be targeted (e.g., independent responses). If no other behaviors need to be targeted, practitioners can terminate the intervention. If the data indicate that the intervention is not increasing target behaviors, practitioners could consider the following: (a) conducting new preferences assessments to determine whether children's preferences have changed and, thus, they need to include new toys in intervention sessions; (b) selecting new peer(s) to include in the

Figure 3
Example of children playing together with toys the way that they were taught to play

intervention; (c) increasing the number of days in which they conduct the intervention (i.e., increase intervention dosage); or (d) increasing the frequency with which they provide prompts to both children (i.e., peer and focal child) during intervention sessions.

Ms. Caroline began conducting PMI sessions with Yan Alberto and Katie three times a week during centers for 10 min each. Before each PMI session, she put the toys that the children will play with on a table in a corner of the classroom where a center would usually occur. Ms. Caroline brings the children to the table and prompts them to play together with the toys the way that she taught them to (Figure 3). After a few sessions, the data showed that Yan Alberto started to initiate toward Katie independently. However, his initiations toward Katie were not consistent. Therefore, Ms. Caroline decided to keep implementing the intervention. Because Yan Alberto was making progress, Ms. Caroline decided to continue conducting PMI sessions three times a week. Moreover, Katie consistently expressed pride regarding her involvement in the intervention and Ms. Caroline observed Katie helping Yan Alberto across activities. Therefore, she decided to keep Katie as Yan Alberto's peer. After a few months of implementing the intervention, Ms. Caroline was satisfied with Yan Alberto's overall progress and thus, with consultation of the behavior specialist, terminated the intervention. However, they decided to continue to collect data on Yan Alberto's behaviors twice a month during naturally occurring center activities to determine whether the effects of the intervention maintain over time and continue with a variety of children in the classroom other than Katie.

Conclusion

Early childhood practitioners can implement PMIs within inclusive settings to address the social competence needs of the children with whom they work and thus actively engage all children in learning opportunities through meaningful interactions with their peers.

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