

From Article to Action: Supporting Peer Mediated Interventions (PMI)

Gillian Lake, Ph.D.

The article by Martinez et al (*Individualized Peer Mediated Interventions to Increase Young Children's Social Competence*) is a multi-faceted resource for both current and future early childhood professionals and the faculty and leaders who support them as they work toward truly inclusive practice. They review the research on the evidence-based practice of PMI and describe the uses of PMI in addressing social competency needs of young children. The article gives step-by-step guidance and sample scripts, making the complex content of the article accessible. Read on to discover ways to use this article to support holistic development by putting child at the center of the intervention.

Are you providing professional development for early childhood professionals?

- **Use this article to support the full the concept of inclusion.** The DEC-NAEYC position statement on inclusion reminds us that *"the desired results of inclusive experiences for children **with and without disabilities** and their families, include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, and development and learning to reach their full potential."* (<https://www.decdocs.org/position-statement-inclusion>, p. 3). To support students or participants in envisioning quality inclusion that benefits both a focal child and peers, consider starting with Rolling with Friends, a video that shows a physical therapist supporting both a focal child and his peers in PMI (<https://connectmodules.dec-sped.org/connect-modules/resources/videos/video-1-12/>). Discussion of the video could focus on how the adult therapist in the video individualizes her interactions to support both the focal child and the peers. This introduction to PMI could be followed by reading the article and discussing steps that are essential for making sure that planning for PMI focuses on supporting needs and interests of each child.
- **Use a vignette to enable students or participants to develop their own PMI.** The use of the vignette in the Martinez et al article is particularly effective at conjuring up a real-world context for the reader. Knowledge of the child's strengths and interests is central to the establishment of any meaningful PMI. After reading the article, students or participants could be introduced to a different vignette (below), and asked to generate their own PMI by following the model provided in the article. Furthermore, the ability to evaluate and monitor its relative success could also be explored through this assignment. The Action Planning Template from the Irish National Council for Curriculum and Assessment could support preparation for this exercise (<https://www.aistearsiolta.ie/en/planning-and-assessing-using-aistears-themes/action-planning-tool/action-planning-tool-for-siolta-and-aistear.pdf>). The template allows for a check-in at a mid-way point and an evaluation after the PMI has ended.

Vignette

Aska is a lively 3-year-old girl who lives with her mom and her stepfather. Her mom is from Latvia and communicates with her husband in her steadily-improving English. Aska speaks Latvian to her Mom (mostly one or two word utterances) and attends a child care program five days per week, where everyone speaks English. She likes Paw Patrol and books about dogs. She struggles to initiate play or ask for toys from her classmates during free play interactions and prefers to engage in solitary play with small world Paw Patrol toys, in the same part of the classroom each day. If other children are playing with the Paw Patrol toys, rather than approach, she will watch and wait until they leave the toys and then take them. She responds to her teacher and sometimes enjoys watching the other children when they engage in dress up. Aska has recently been diagnosed with receptive and expressive language delays and is receiving speech-language pathology services in her classroom. Her therapist has suggested PMI as an approach to supporting Aska's development as a dual language learner with identified delays. If you were Aska's teacher, describe the steps you would take in implementing a PMI approach, using the model provided in the article.

Do you work young children and their families?

- **Use a DEC Recommended Practice tool** like the Child-Child Interaction Checklist (https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/decrp/INT-4_Child-Child_Interaction_2018.pdf) or the Peer Social Interactions Professional Practice Guide (https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/decrp/PGP_INT7_peersocial_2018.pdf) to examine your current practices. Either tool could be completed individually or with partners who could come together to discuss and share their reflections. This may lead to professionals working together on a PMI, or conducting simultaneous PMIs. After this, professionals could regroup to offer support and discuss strengths and difficulties regarding the practice. This would only serve to strengthen the understanding of PMI and could help to embed the practice in the setting into the future.
- **Consider using the DEC Recommended Family Practice Guide on Playing With Friends** (https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/decrp/PGF_INT7_playingfriends_2018.pdf) as an information pack to introduce key concepts of PMI to parents and caregivers. PMI is dependent on cooperation and support from the families of the focal child and also from the families of the other peers in the setting. Key points from the Martinez article could also be synthesized into a fact sheet for initial discussion with families and caregivers, after which the article could be offered as an additional information source.