

# Tri-State Autism Spectrum Disorder Webinar Series



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Tri-State 2018-2019 Webinar Series



## Circle of Friends

### Circle of Friends Peer-Mediated Intervention-Part 1



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## Objectives

### Webinar Part 1

- Explore evidence-base for CoF
- Learn CoF implementation basics
- Compare different CoF models

### Webinar Part 2

- Learn CoF meeting facilitation
- Explore obstacles and solutions
- Learn next steps-support for your groups

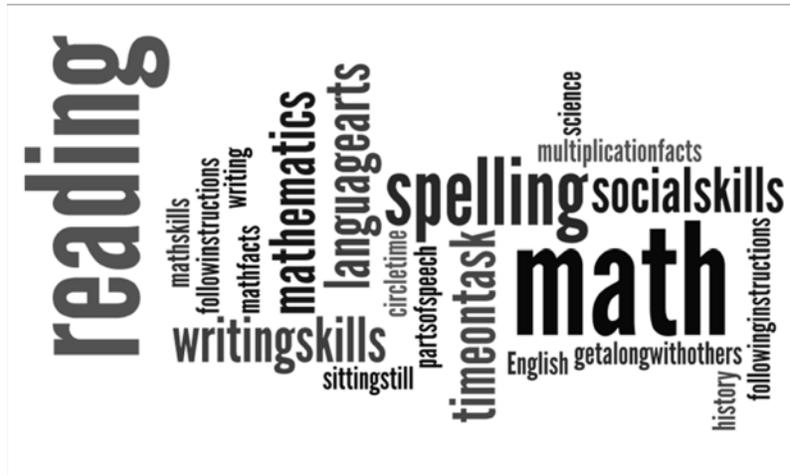


## Background





What we do...



## Terminology

- Circle of Friends: An educational approach that facilitates the inclusion of children with disabilities in the school community by engaging the peer group in proactively supporting the individual with special needs.
- Peer-Mediated Intervention: Approach in special education where peers of the focus students are trained to provide needed tutoring in educational, behavioral, and/or social concerns.



## Peer-Mediated Intervention



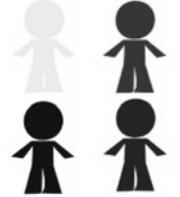
## Terminology

Focus Student



- Isolated
- Poor social skills
- ASD, other disabilities

Peer Partners/  
Peer Mentors



- Trained to support focus student

Facilitator(s)  
of COF Group



- SPED teacher, para
- Counselors
- Speech paths
- Gen ed, admin

## Why Circle of Friends?

- Teachers lack time for intensive social skills immersion.
- Fosters acceptance, empathy, and teamwork from peers.
- Provides an environment to learn and practice social skills
- Greater social contact opportunities = greater feelings of connectedness
- Peer communication = better opportunities to troubleshoot
- Saves adults time



## What the research tells us:

- Increase in children diagnosed with ASD; increase in inclusion; social inclusion vs. physical inclusion
- School staff lack training in interventions for ASD
- Academic competence associated with social competence



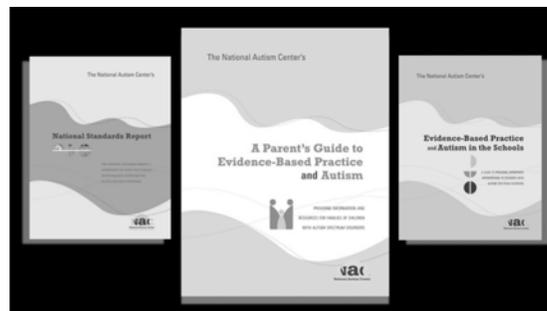
## What the research tells us:

- Poor social competence + school isolation by peers = poor outcomes for youth with ASD; higher rates of victimization
- Comprehensive planning for social competence development incorporates peer training; few children receive this intervention
- Social skill deficits contribute to anxiety and mood disorders, few school programs target social skill development.

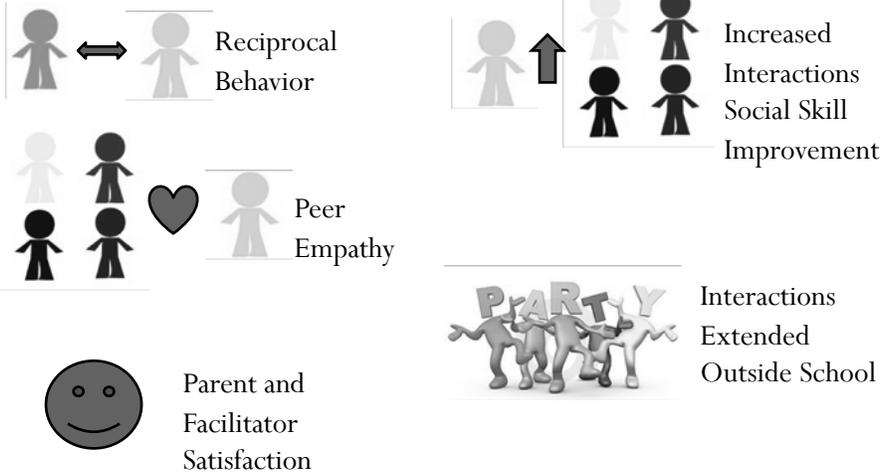


## What the research tells us:

- National Autism Center's National Standards Report: Peer Training = Established Treatment with Favorable Outcomes



## More Good News...



## How To: Implementation Basics Building Your CoF Peer Support Group

- #1 Choose focus students
- #2 Decide on group structure
- #3 Choose peer mentors
- #4 Communicate with parents
- #5 Know what to do at meetings



## Non-Negotiable

- Meet weekly: minimum 30 minutes
  - lunch
  - before/after school
  - recess
  - study hall
- Peer training
- Goal oriented, teaching focus
  - group goals?
  - focus student goals?
  - peer mentor goals?
- Provide ongoing feedback
- Philosophy—all have differences



## Negotiable

- Time of day groups meet
- # of facilitators
  - SPED staff--teachers, paraprofessionals
  - Gen ed staff (whole class option)
  - Specialists
- Size of group
- Type of awareness provided
- Additional out-of-school activities
- Funded or unfunded groups



## Choosing Focus Student(s)

- How many focus students will you choose?
- Consider students who need social skills interaction and instruction.
- Dual mentor/mentee role:
  - Empathy, perspective taking
  - Reluctant focus students
  - Develops leadership, pride



## Choosing Group Structure

### Small Group Model

- 1 or 2 focus students; several peers
- Advantages/disadvantages
- “Meetings” may take place entirely at recess or lunch.
  - Recess provides social skill practice time.
  - Prepare peers ahead of time to help teach skills.
  - Practice social skills with focus student ahead of time.
    - Role play, review, preview, video modeling, social stories



## Choosing Group Structure

### Large Group Model

- 3:1 ratio--Ex. 30 peer mentors, 10 focus students
- Co-facilitators
- Whole class option
- Advantages/disadvantages



## Choosing Group Structure

### Small Group Within a Large Group Model

- Co-facilitators
- Same or different meeting times/places
- Targeted individual focus student goals



## Feedback From Peers

- Build in a method for adults to get peer mentor feedback
  - Can be informal
  - Or formal 'mentor' only meeting monthly
  - Share successes and concerns.
  - Teach peers how to respond/interact to focus student.
  - Provide support for peers.



## Choosing Peer Mentors

- Confident kids; not afraid of differences
- Good social role models; including SPED
- Peers who want to participate
- Available peers (not too busy, same classes/lunch/PE)
- May have similar areas of interest
- Fluid mentor members, go big
- Can do whole class or multi-grade
- Consider suggestions from focus student



## Choosing Peer Mentors

### Peer Role

- Speak to focus student daily; conversations.
- Invite student to sit at lunch table.
- Act in mentor role; extracurricular activities as appropriate
- Communicate with CoF facilitator.
- Be 'cheerleader' for focus student.



## Notify Parents

- Participation voluntary
- If sharing diagnosis, get parent permission
  - Levels of privacy
- Phone calls, email, paper form

End Part 1 Circle of Friends Training Webinar



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