

# Effects of Visually-Mediated Intervention on the Social Communication of Children with Pervasive Social Impairments

Kathy S. Thiemann, MA & Howard Goldstein, PhD  
Department of Communication Disorders  
Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL  
Contact: thiemann@electro-net.com

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## Purpose:

- ❶ To investigate the effects of a visually-mediated intervention program (i.e., social stories, written social phrases, pictures of conversational skills, and videotaped feedback) on the social communication of higher-functioning elementary students with pervasive social impairments.
- ❷ To determine if social skill improvements generalize to new settings and social partners.
- ❸ To measure parents' and naïve judges' perceptions of changes in the quality of social interactions with typical peers following intervention, and examine changes in class wide sociometric status ratings.

## Method:

Participants:

- ➔ 5 male students with pervasive social impairments from one elementary school (ages 6 to 12 yrs.)
  - all demonstrated emergent or acquired reading skills, verbal expressive language, and were partially or fully included in regular education classes
- ➔ 10 typical peers without social impairments participated as communication partners
- ➔ Triads were formed consisting of 1 child with a social impairment and 2 typical peers

## Procedures:

- Intervention effects were assessed using a multiple baseline design across triads and social behaviors.
- Each triad was taught specific social skills using multiple visual cues/stimuli, engaged in a familiar social activity, then self-evaluated their use of targeted social skills through videotaped feedback.
- Generalization was measured through classroom observations and pre- and post-intervention home videotaped samples of dyadic social interactions.
- Parents completed a pre- and post-intervention Parent Perception Questionnaire.
- Naïve judges rated pre- and post-intervention videotape segments of interactions to assess social validity.
- Classmates rated sociometric status of participants with social impairments before and after treatment.

## Results:

- The visually-mediated intervention was effective in improving a number of social communication skills (i.e., securing attention, initiating comments and requests, and responding contingently) across participants; some generalized treatment effects were observed across untrained social behaviors (e.g., multiple-turn conversations).
- Generalization of social improvements was observed in the classroom for only 1 child, but not in the home.
- Parents' perceptions of meaningful changes in their child's social interactions with peers did not change.
- Naïve judges reported improved social behaviors and interactions between target children and their peers.
- Sociometric status improved (and was higher than average class-wide changes) for 4 of 5 participants.

## Clinical Implications:

- The findings support recommendations for using visually-cued instruction to guide the social development of children with pervasive social impairments, related to PDD or other developmental disorders.
- Involving typical peers as conversational partners contributed to the children's success; and peer acceptance increased among classmates not involved in the intervention.
- Increasing social skills necessary to participate in successful conversations and social interactions with regular education peers may help young children with social impairments develop and maintain friendships across the elementary school years.