

SYMSEK, GINA H., October 2004 Special Education

PEER INTERACTIONS: EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING AND SKILL ACQUISITION TRAINING ON THE INTERACTIONS OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WITH THEIR PEERS WITHOUT DISABILITIES (113 PP.)

Co-Directors of Dissertation: Lyle Barton, Ph.D.
Melody Tankersley, Ph.D.

The purpose of this study was to determine if an intervention for both students with and without disabilities would increase the frequency and complexity of peer interactions of students with disabilities with their peers without disabilities. A secondary setting was used to measure the generalization of the interactions.

The participants in this study were three students with multiple disabilities and three students without disabilities. The students with disabilities received skill acquisition training and the students without disabilities participated in social skills training sessions, an combined intervention program that partially replicated two previous studies that investigated the separate effects of the interventions (Anderson & Brady, 1993; Vandercook, 1991). The students with disabilities received training on the skills needed to play leisure games (e.g., Uno, Trouble) with a determined mastery level of 50%. In the social skills training, the students without disabilities were provided with information on the disability characteristics of their peers with disabilities and were taught approaches for interacting with them. The study used a series of single subject AB designs to analyze the effectiveness of the intervention program.

The implementation of the intervention resulted in an increase in the frequency and complexity of interactions for the students with disabilities with their peers without disabilities. The results of this study support and extend other findings on social

interventions and interactions of students with disabilities. Specifically, this study found that students with disabilities can experience interactions with their peers without disabilities, but in order for such interactions to occur at higher frequencies and with more complexity, interventions need to be aimed at both students with and without disabilities. Although the results of the generalization probes did not show a transfer of the effectiveness of the intervention to other school settings, it did support findings from other studies that generalization tends to not occur without specific programming. Future research should apply training in multiple settings and provide students with practice in other settings in order to facilitate generalization of social interactions of students with disabilities.