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**ENHANCING GENERALIZATION OF SOCIAL SKILLS WITH STUDENTS WITH  
SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES**

by

Joseph Prenenski

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Education  
College of Education  
In partial fulfillment of the requirement  
For the degree of  
Master of Arts in Special Education  
at  
Rowan University  
May 22, 2019

Thesis Chair: S Jay Kuder Ed.D.

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## **Dedications**

This thesis is dedicated to my wife Shannon, for always being there for me during this long and tedious process. Without your constant love and support this would have not been possible. I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Rose and Stan, without your support and guidance from day I would not be where I am today. I would also like to dedicate this to my Aunt Pat, “whatever it takes”.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to acknowledge my Professor, S Jay Kuder for his guidance and expertise when it came to completing my thesis. Also I would like to thank my school district and students for allowing me to conduct my research to help students enhance their social skills.

## **Abstract**

Joseph Prenenski  
ENHANCING GENERALIZATION OF SOCIAL SKILLS WITH STUDENTS WITH  
SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES  
2019-2020  
S. Jay Kuder Ed.D.  
Master of Arts in Special Education

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the implementation of methods for enhancing generalization of social skills for students with significant disabilities will improve their social skills. Research indicates that students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have difficulty using social skills and generalization of social skills interventions in the classroom. This study included five sixth grade students. Three of the students have multiple disabilities (MD) and two have autism (AUT). A-B-C design was used to assess the generalization effects of my intervention. The study has three phases. Phase A was the baseline where no program consequences nor prompts were delivered when social questions were asked. Phase B, I implemented the treatment, where prompts were provided and reinforcement was delivered for responding to social questions being asked. Phase C, generalization was assessed by asking the learners the same social questions in new environmental by novel adults and peers. During baseline testing the students had a mean score of .4. After each probe, the mean average increased showing skill acquisition. Each time a new probe was done in the generalization phase the students were taken in a new classroom where no teaching was done and no prompts were used. Results from this analysis suggested that teaching social skill interventions are minimally effective for students with ASD and should be implemented more frequently and at a higher intensity level to provide the most effective treatment.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Special education teachers have a tremendous amount of responsibility when it comes to teaching their students social skills that need to be used inside and outside of the classroom. Social skills consist of a variety of components, including social communication, social-emotional skills, and social competence. “Though researchers can describe social skills in these three components, the complexity of social skills can make it difficult to parse apart specific social skill deficits” (Schindorf, 2016, p. 4). Once social skills are taught we must continue to target the social skills after the intervention concludes. This is called generalization-the transfer of what is learned in one setting or situation to another setting or situation without explicit teaching or programming in the second transfer setting (Autism Ontario, 2011, p. 35-36).

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is characterized by deficits in two core domains: deficits in social communication and social interaction; restricted repetitive patterns of behavior, interests and activities (Yeo, 2015, p. 1001). Students with Autism lack the ability to have good social skills and lack the ability for developing language skills. Students with ASD specifically often have poor eye contact, lack of joint attention, pedantic or odd speech patterns, difficulty both initiating and maintaining conversations, lack of social problem-solving ability, lack of empathy, and difficulties interpreting body language (Yeo, 2015, p. 1002). There are three main areas of developmental difficulties: social interaction, communication and rigidity of behavior and thought, (Yeo, 2015, p. 1002).

## **Statement of the Problem**

Educators have seen the importance of effectively teaching social skills to children with high-functioning autism. (Mirsky, 2014, p. 1). Because social functioning is a critical part of success in society, children with high-functioning autism must meet developmental social milestones in order to be a successful and contributing members of society (Mirsky, 2014, p. 1). Working in the special education field, I have noticed that there needs to be a more effective and hands-on approach to teaching these students. Public Law 94-142 was the starting point for helping students with special education needs. In 1997 the individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) was created to give more service to the children with disabilities. Thanks to IDEA, these students were not only in school, but also, at least in the best case scenarios, assigned to small classes where specially trained teachers tailored their lessons to each student's individual needs (Mirsky, 2014, p. 10).

Working in a classroom with nine students who all have varying disabilities has been an eye opening experience to say the least. The one thing that they all have in common is a lack of social skills. Critical social skills development for these students is limited at best and it is displayed in their behavior, academic work and emotions. I have eleven and twelve-year-old boys who present at a five-year-old education level. The boys in the class present with low cognitive functioning and are not capable of completing work on a sixth grade level, but due to their disabilities they function on the second grade level. An example of this is in sixth grade math you should be adding, subtract, multiply, and divide decimals to hundredths, my students currently are working on simple single addition problems such as two plus two. They need extensive assistance and guidance in areas of social skills. With such an abundance of children

with high-functioning autism in academic institutions these days, their substantial social deficits more often than not set them apart from the rest of the class. If students are not being taught these skills they will miss out on learning what good relationships are and might affect their long term behavior.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate how implementation of methods for enhancing generalization of social skills for students with significant disabilities will improve their social skills. In addition, the study will also look at the types of monitoring teachers and parents can use to check the continued progress of the children.

For my current students I feel the best way to teach them social skills is by using visual prompts, video modelling, practicing play skills. I also will work teaching social skills into their daily academic program using Rethink.

Generalization of social skills across participants will be programmed for by having the learners engage in social activities and conversations with a variety of peers and adults throughout the building. Opportunities will be presented throughout the day for learners to engage in various social interactions (e.g., greetings, delivering messages) and activities (e.g., board games, lunch time) with peers and adults.

Assessments of student's social skills will be conducted two times a week and this will be imputed into The Rethink Program. Rethink is an evidence based technology program that was created by professionals in behavior management, special education teachers, social and emotion learning which allows classroom teachers to increase student engagement and motivation,

accelerate social and emotional learning, instill a growth mindset in students and encourage positive behavior.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. Will teaching new generalization skills help students with disabilities have more success outside of the classroom.
2. How will students with autism have more success when the social skills are generalized for their needs in the classroom.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study is to help prepare students with disabilities for success in their transition to life. Social skill learning helps students improve their communication with peers, adults and will help them become good members of their communities

### **Key Terms**

1. **Generalization:** refers to the transfer of what is learned in one setting or situation to another setting or situation without explicit teaching or programming in the second transfer setting
2. **Social Skills:** skills that we use to communicate and interact with each other, both verbally and non-verbally.
3. **Social communication:** is considered to be complex and involve concepts such as the pragmatics of language and language expression, social interaction, and social cognition (Shindorf, 2016, p. 5)

4. **Social Competence:** refers to a child's ability to adequately use social skills during social situations in various settings (Shindorf, 2016, p. 7)
5. **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
6. **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD):** is characterized by differences in two core domains: social communication and social interaction; restricted repetitive patterns of behavior, interests and activities

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the implementation of methods for enhancing generalization of social skills for students with significant disabilities will improve their social skills. Throughout this literature review I will discuss the difficulties students with ASD have with the use of social skills, social skills interventions and generalization of social skills interventions in the classroom.

#### **Social Skills Difficulties of Children with ASD**

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association* (DSM VU defines Autism as, “Persistent deficits in social communication and social interactions across multiple contexts.” As the definition states, social skills deficits are the primary characteristic associated with autism

A study by Craig (2017) was completed to help classify students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) according to the Autism classification system of functioning and social communication criteria (ACSF:SC). Investigation was done to see if there was any type of association between social communication ability and ASD. How can the use of the ACSF:SC help therapist and clinicians work to better understand the strengths and weakness of students with ASD.

Fifty- four students ages from three to six were able to be a part of this study, only if there currently diagnosed with ASD by a clinical expert according to the DSM-5 criteria. Developmental histories were taken on the children from parent interviews, subject interviews and extended neuropsychological testing on the children. This study took place at the Scientific Institute IRCCS Eugenio Medea unit for severe disabilities of development age and young



adults. Students were assessed using a variety of assessments, the ACSF:SC, Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-IV), Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI), ADOS-2 for clinical and research measuring. The PEP-3 test was used to measure the skills and behaviors of children with autism and communicative disabilities.

After looking through the results from this study I noticed a wide range of outcomes from all of the assessments used. Each assessment had positive and negative correlations, a positive correlation between DSM-5 and ACSF:SC was found. The result show that the ACSF:SC is not an alternative to the DSM-5 classification, but helps clinicians and researchers using the DSM-5 to better define the functioning of preschool children with ASD. Something interesting that I found was a correlation between ASCF:SC and motor skills. The lack of social skills can correspond to the lack of motor skill impairment. This was the first study of this type that focuses on social skills communication and ASD. The ACSF:SC tool can help professionals understand the strengths and weakness of the affected children. They also can create a specific treatment plans to help promote social integration.

Yeo (2015) sought to identify why students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) lack the ability to use social skills and determine the differences between the three main areas which were cognitive, behavioral and affective. The author sought to identify the most frequently occurring deficits in social skills for students with ASD in the classrooms. Throughout this process they used the TRIAD Social Skills Assessment (TSSA) which was created by Vanderbilt Kennedy Center. A survey with 41 items was used to assess the knowledge and skill level of students with ASD. Three specific areas were looked at: cognitive, behavioral and affective. The results showed that a large portion of social skills difficulties fall under the area of behavioral and affective. When assessing the students with ASD the teacher used the TSAA to check their

social skills in the classrooms. They assessed three specific areas: cognitive, behavioral and affective. Information was given out to the participants on how data collection should be completed with the help from the Teachers who worked In the inclusive classroom setting. The areas of social skills among students with ASD were partially consistent with which showed that behavioral as one of the problematic social skills.

### **Social Skills Interventions**

Bellini et al. (2007) reviewed research on school-based interventions for social skills for students with ASD. The authors reviewed fifty-five studies which included one hundred fifty-seven total participants. Each one of these studies was analyzed across the following categories:

1. Participant characteristics, including number of participants, diagnosis, and age;
2. Intervention description, including the type of intervention strategy employed and the format of the intervention (e.g., individual versus group training);
3. Length and dosage of intervention, including number of treatment sessions, hours of intervention, and duration of intervention (number of days from the beginning of the intervention to the end of the intervention);
4. Research design;
5. Description of the targeted skills and dependent variables;
6. Intervention effectiveness, including intervention, maintenance, and generalization effects as measured by the percentage of non-overlapping data points;
7. Location of intervention (e.g., classroom or resource/therapy room);
8. Confirmation of experimental control through the introduction or withdrawal of the independent variable across three points in time or across three data series
9. Confirmation of whether the study measured interobserver reliability, intervention

10. Confirmation of whether the study systematically matched the intervention strategy to the type of skill deficit.

The areas that were scored were intervention effects, maintenance effect and generalization of facts. Overall, the results from this analysis suggest that teaching social skill interventions are minimally effective for students with ASD. Social skills should be implemented more frequently and at a higher intensity level to help the students who have deficits in social skills. Schools and teachers should look for more opportunities to teach and hammer home the skills throughout the school day and in their natural setting. The overall results from this study helped me plan my intervention, which programed for frequent opportunities throughout the learner's day to learn these social skills.

### **The Importance of Teaching Social Skills**

Determining the importance of social skills interventions for students with significant disabilities is something that is very important for the future of these students. In the study "Social Skills Interventions for Children with High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders" (Schreiber, 2010), research was completed to see what impact the lack of social skills can have on the development of the student. They also looked into what factors (if any) make the interventions effective. When teaching social skills to students with disabilities the author was looking to find out if there was value in effectively teaching the skills. Three special education teachers, three speech and language pathologists and two cognition specialists were used as the subjects for this study. Seven of the participants were female and one was male. They volunteered their time and were interviewed and asked questions that dealt with their prior knowledge in the area of working with students with autism. The staff members were interviewed separately and the data was collected by the interviewer who took notes of the meeting. Throughout the process, the

teachers in the study were given face-to-face interviews where they were given eight questions. Each question focused on a different aspect of teaching and learning social skills. All of the educators gave his or her answers to the questions based upon their experiences working with students who lack the ability to use the correct social skills.

After the interview process was completed, the author of this study examined the responses for consistency within the responses. The author was then able to organize the answers into categories depending on the theme. All of the educators talked about how important teaching social skill intervention was for children. All of the educators indicated a need for more effective social skills interventions with students with high functioning autism. The author concluded that if interventions are done you will see success in the areas in which the students have the most difficulty.

### **Teaching Social Skills**

Yeo (2015) sought to identify why students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) lack the ability to use social skills and determine the differences between the three main areas of difficulty-behavioral, cognitive and affective- in social skills. The author sought to identify the most frequently occurring deficits in social skills for students with ASD in the classrooms. Throughout this process they used the TRIAD Social Skills Assessment (TSSA) which was created by Vanderbilt Kennedy Center. The survey that was given assessed the knowledge and skills for students with ASD in three major areas, behavioral, cognitive and affective. Results showed the students lacked the most deficits under the area of behavioral and affective areas.

When assessing the students with ASD the teacher used the TSAA to check their social skills in the classrooms. They assessed three specific areas: cognitive, behavioral and affective

with the results showing a major difference in those three areas. The findings will be useful in helping produce effective teaching models for students who suffer from ASD.

The results suggest that teachers can be provided with more specific training that addresses the three main areas of social skill deficits among students with ASD. There is room for growth for teachers can find a way to teach social skills differently in the classroom setting.

### **Generalization of Social Skills Interventions**

Teaching social skills to students with high-functioning Autism in the classroom setting has become more common in education. Laugeson, et al. (2014). reviewed research pertaining to the social skills intervention for school ages students and adolescents with high functioning autism spectrum disorder (HFASD). They sought to answer the question, how can students with HFASD become successful in the classroom and what types of strategies and programs can be put into place to help them? Thirty-eight journal articles that attempted to promote appropriate social behavior and reduce negative behaviors were reviewed. The studies examined social skills interventions, cognitive behavioral therapy, parent and family mediation, peer mediation and activity based activities to help students who lack social skills inside and outside of the classroom. The students who participated in these studies ages ranged from five to eighteen and had been diagnosed with high functioning autism (HFA).

The one area in which the authors found the largest amount of research was applied behavior analysis (ABA). Looking at the results from each area there is one constant thing that all of the areas showed. Social skill programing is effective when it comes to improving social functioning for students with ASD. For social skills to be maintained and generalized they must be practiced in the most natural environment possible. Classroom setting, play dates and family

outings are all examples for places that student with HFASD can get more comfortable with the skills being taught and learned.

### **Teaching Social Skills in the Classroom**

Working in the classroom with students with ASD is something that I have become very familiar with over the past three years. You have to be creative in the way you teach the students and give them the skills that will potentially help them become successful. Kamps, Leonard, Veron, Dugan and Delquadri (1992) examined changes in social functioning among students with high functioning ASD. The study examined whether the use of the PEERS program can help students with ASD show improvement in social skills while learning in the classroom. PEERS is a manualized social skills training program for youth with social challenges.

Seventy-three middle school students with ASD participated in this study and were assigned to the PEERS treatment plan or to an alternative social skills course of study. In order to take part of this study the student must have a diagnosis of autism from a reliable health professional. Students were provided daily instruction over a fourteen-week period, which covered social responsiveness, communication, social awareness. The research was conducted with guidance from the Help Group- UCLA Autism Research Alliance. This group developed and tested evidence-based practices for students with ASD for the school and community setting. Students received social skills instruction for thirty minutes each day for fourteen weeks. Data was collected from the teachers and students during the pre-test and post-test. Overall results showed that the use of the PEERS program is effective when it comes to improving the social functioning of students with ASD.

The current study concluded that it is important to provide evidence based methods for teaching social skills in the classroom setting with the help of the teachers. This will allow

educators to reach a large portion of students with ASD that what is normally found in the more traditional intervention methods.

### **Increasing Peer Interactions in an Integrated Classroom**

The overall purpose of the Bellini et al. (2007) study was to evaluate the effectiveness of school-based social skills interventions for children and adolescents with ASD. There were three male students who were all seven years-old who took part in this study and they all were classified as having autism. The classroom which they were in had eleven regular education students and two students with physical disabilities. All students were observed during play groups to see how often they interacted with their non-handicapped peers with data being collected with the Social Interaction Code. The data was collected every 5 minutes and logged into a laptop computer. A social skill rating scale was used to measure the amount of times a particular social behavior occurred. The groups were placed together four times a week for twenty minutes. Each group had one student with autism and three regular education students and were given two activities to complete. Training was given during the first half of the session and targeted skills were worked on. Initiating an interaction, conversation greetings, giving compliments, turn taking, asking for help and including other into their activities.

Two results came about this study. First, the results showed the benefits of social skill training as a class wide curriculum. The second finding focused on the structured learning of social behaviors. The group of students who had more success when focusing on smaller amounts of behaviors with more time for practice. Overall the findings from the study support the use of social skill instruction in smaller groups that have regular education students and students with disabilities.

## **Conclusion**

These studies helped guide my research in a more effective direction. Given the previous research, I ensured that multiple opportunities to acquire social skills were presented to the learner throughout their day to maximize skill acquisition. Throughout all of these studies the results have helped me plan my intervention which programmed for frequent opportunities throughout the learner's day to learn these social skills.

Generalization of social skills across participants was programmed for by having the learners engage in social activities and conversations with a variety of peers and adults inside and outside of the classroom. The students will be given opportunities throughout the day for the learners to engage in various social interactions (e.g., greetings, delivering messages) and activities (e.g., board games, lunch time) with peers and adults.



## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### Setting

**School.** This study took place at a public middle school in North Jersey. The special education portion of the program in which I currently work has students from third grade up to age twenty-one. The majority of the special education students stay in this classroom setting until they are able to graduate or age out of the program. The program has made a push to become a Google school and incorporate the uses of Mac books and iPads for all data collection using the Rethink programs for students in the self-contained setting.

The school includes 756 students, according to the New Jersey Performance Report from 2017-2018. Of this total, 86 students who receive services, 174 special education students and 12 students are speech only students. In 2017 33.4% of the students were Caucasian, 27.6% are Asian, 34.9% are Hispanic, 2.6% are Black or African American, 1.1% are two or more races and 0.1% are Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

**Classroom.** The classroom where the student took place was a self-contained middle school class, which had students whose ages ranged from eleven to fourteen. The classroom consists of two teacher desks, nine student desks, a kidney shaped table and five chairs for the staff in the classroom. The room is also equipped with a smart board which hooks up to the teachers Apple MacBook. Each classroom is assigned an Apple iPad for student usage.

The instruction for this class is done by using the Rethink program. All classroom topics are covered in the students programming. The students also receive history and science during the school week. There was a total of 10 nice students in this self-contained classroom. Three students have 1to1 assistants, with the remainder of the students having a 2 to 1 ratio.

## Participants

This study includes five students. All of the students are in the sixth grade. Three of the students are classified as having multiple disability (MD) and the other two students are classified as having Autism (AUT). The students showed a variety of needs which included, communication difficulties, social skills deficits, motor skills, reading and writing skills and behavior modification. All students have an IEP that meets their exact needs. Table 1 shows the general participant data.

Table 1

### *Participant Data*

| Student | Age | Grade           | Classification |
|---------|-----|-----------------|----------------|
| A       | 11  | 6 <sup>th</sup> | MD             |
| B       | 12  | 6 <sup>th</sup> | AUT            |
| C       | 11  | 6 <sup>th</sup> | MD             |
| D       | 12  | 6 <sup>th</sup> | MD             |
| E       | 11  | 6 <sup>th</sup> | AUT            |

**Participant 1.** Student A is an eleven-year old African American male who is hearing impaired and wears a cochlear implant. This student was deemed eligible for special education under the classification as (MD). This student is in a self-contained classroom for the entire school day, but he travels for specials which include gym, art and music. Student A is a loving a

caring student who loves coming to school each day. He needs frequent redirection to stay on task and assistance from his one to one with communication of his needs and wants.

**Participant 2.** Student B is a twelve-year old Hispanic male. This student was deemed eligible for special education under the classification as (MD). This student is in a self-contained classroom for the entire school day, but he travels for specials. Student B is a very out-going students and loves to interact with his peers and classroom staff. The student is able to do some work independently but needs redirection from staff to stay on topic.

**Participant 3.** Student C is an eleven-year old White male This student was deemed eligible for special education under the classification as (MD). This student is in a self-contained classroom for the entire school day, but he travels for specials. Student C is a shy and quite student. This student has difficulty with expressive language and has been using PECS to help communicate his wants and needs. This student has a one to one assistant who helps him with all aspects of his day, and needs redirection to stay on task and to keep his fingers out of his mouth.

**Participant 4.** Student D is a twelve-year old Hispanic male. This student was deemed eligible for special education under the classification as (MD). This student is in a self-contained classroom for the entire school day, but he travels for specials. Student D is a very caring and kind student who enjoys seeing his peers each day. Overall this student needs constant redirection to stay on task and hand over hand prompting while doing work.

**Participant 5.** Student E is an eleven-year old Hispanic male. This student was deemed eligible for special education under the classification as (AUT). This student is in a self-contained classroom for the entire school day, but he travels for specials. Student E is a well-mannered student who is very happy also looks forward to seeing his peers and staff members each day. This student is currently working close to his grade level.

## **Research Design**

I used a single subject, A-B-C design to assess the generalization effects of my intervention. Phase A was the baseline where no program consequences nor prompts were delivered when social questions were asked. During phase B, I implemented the treatment, where prompts were provided and reinforcement was delivered for correct responding to social questions being asked. During phase C, generalization was assessed by asking the learners the same social questions in new environmental settings by novel adults and peers.

## **Procedures**

During baseline phase A, questions were asked to the learners but no prompts were provided. Questions that were asked during sessions were “How are you?”, “What’s your name?”, “How’s your day going?”, “How was your night?”, and “What are you doing after school?”. The baseline testing was completed in one day. It took about 5 minutes to complete the testing with 1-1 teaching. During phase B, treatment consisted of teaching the learners, via written prompts, modeling, and or pictorial cues, socially appropriate comments when asked specific social questions by their teacher. Phase B was taught over the course of four sessions within a thirty-minute period. During phase C, I exposed the learners to new environments and new people. The students were brought to novel classrooms within the same building where teaching had never occurred. During this time, novel teachers who are unfamiliar to the students asked the students the same questions that were taught during teaching. This allowed me to assess whether or not the social skills taught during phase B had generalized.

## **Materials**

The questions that I will be asking are: How are you? What’s your name? How’s your day going? How was your night? What are you doing after school? Written prompts will consist

of the student's responses to the questions being asked by the staff in the classroom. The use of a token board reward system will be used. The students will receive rewards for answering questions presented by the staff in the classroom.

### **Dependent Variables**

The dependent variable in this study was the students' response to the social questions being asked. Responses were considered correct if they were emitted in the absence of prompts and within 5 second of the social question being asked. During teaching days, prompt responses varied as to teach the student various ways to respond to a particular social question. For example, when asked "How's your day going?", staff had cues to prompt the response "It's going great", "I'm having a good day", "My day is going well". Any of these answers along with any other contextually appropriate statements were accepted and counted as correct.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were collected during each phase of this study. A plus was scored if the learner emitted a contextually appropriate response to the question being asked. A minus was scored if the learner did not respond to the social question or emitted a response that was not contextually appropriate (e.g, student responds "I'm great" in response to the question "how was your night"). Raw data were put into a graphic display using an equal interval line graph for better visual analysis. The graphs were assessed after each session to determine if the learners were acquiring the skill.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

This study utilized a single subject (A-B-C) design to assess the effects of the use of prompts and reinforcement for correct responding to social questions. Research questions to be answered were:

1. Will teaching new generalization skills help students with disabilities have more success outside of the classroom.
2. How will students with autism have more success when the social skill are generalized for their needs in the classroom.

### **Measurement Procedures**

The students were given a score of 0-4 based on their work during the study. If the students completed all the trials correctly, they would receive the score of a 4. The students received the score of a 3 if seventy-five percent of the trials were completed correctly. The score of a 2 was given if students answered fifty percent of the questions correctly. If the students received a 1 it meant they answered twenty-five percent of the questions correctly. If the students received a score of 0, they failed to answer any of the social questions correctly. Individual student break downs will show the overall results for the students and how they progressed during the research.

### **Group Results**

Table 2 shows the mean scores for the entire class. During baseline testing the students had a mean score of .4 on the social questions. After each probe, the mean average increased showing skill acquisition. Each time a new probe was done in the generalization phase the students were taken in a new classroom where no teaching was done and no prompts were used.

Table 2

*Results for Each Phase*

| Student        | Baseline     | Intervention Phase |         |         |         | Generalization Phase   |                        |                        |
|----------------|--------------|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
|                | <i>Phase</i> | Probe 1            | Probe 2 | Probe 3 | Probe 4 | Generalization Probe 1 | Generalization Probe 2 | Generalization Probe 3 |
| A              | 1            | 1                  | 2       | 3       | 4       | 2                      | 2                      | 4                      |
| B              | 0            | 3                  | 3       | 4       | 4       | 4                      | 4                      | 4                      |
| C              | 0            | 1                  | 1       | 1       | 2       | 0                      | 1                      | 1                      |
| D              | 1            | 1                  | 2       | 2       | 3       | 1                      | 3                      | 3                      |
| E              | 0            | 1                  | 1       | 2       | 4       | 1                      | 1                      | 2                      |
| <b>Mean</b>    | 0.4          | 1.4                | 1.8     | 2.4     | 3.4     | 1.6                    | 2.2                    | 2.8                    |
| <b>Average</b> |              |                    |         |         |         |                        |                        |                        |

**Individual Results**

Student A is an eleven-year old African American male who is hearing impaired and wears a cochlear implant. This student was deemed eligible for special education under the classification as (MD). This student is in a self-contained classroom for the entire school day, but he travels for specials which include gym, art and music. Student A’s score was 1 during the first baseline testing. After the introduction of the social skills procedure, the student’s score on the first probe day stayed the same as the baseline testing and he received a 1. On days 2,3 and 4 the student scores increased to a point where the topic was mastered. During the generalization phase, the student showed good generalization of the use of social skills inside the novel classroom with novel teachers asking the social skills questions. By the last generalization probe, the learner was able to answer all the social questions appropriately.

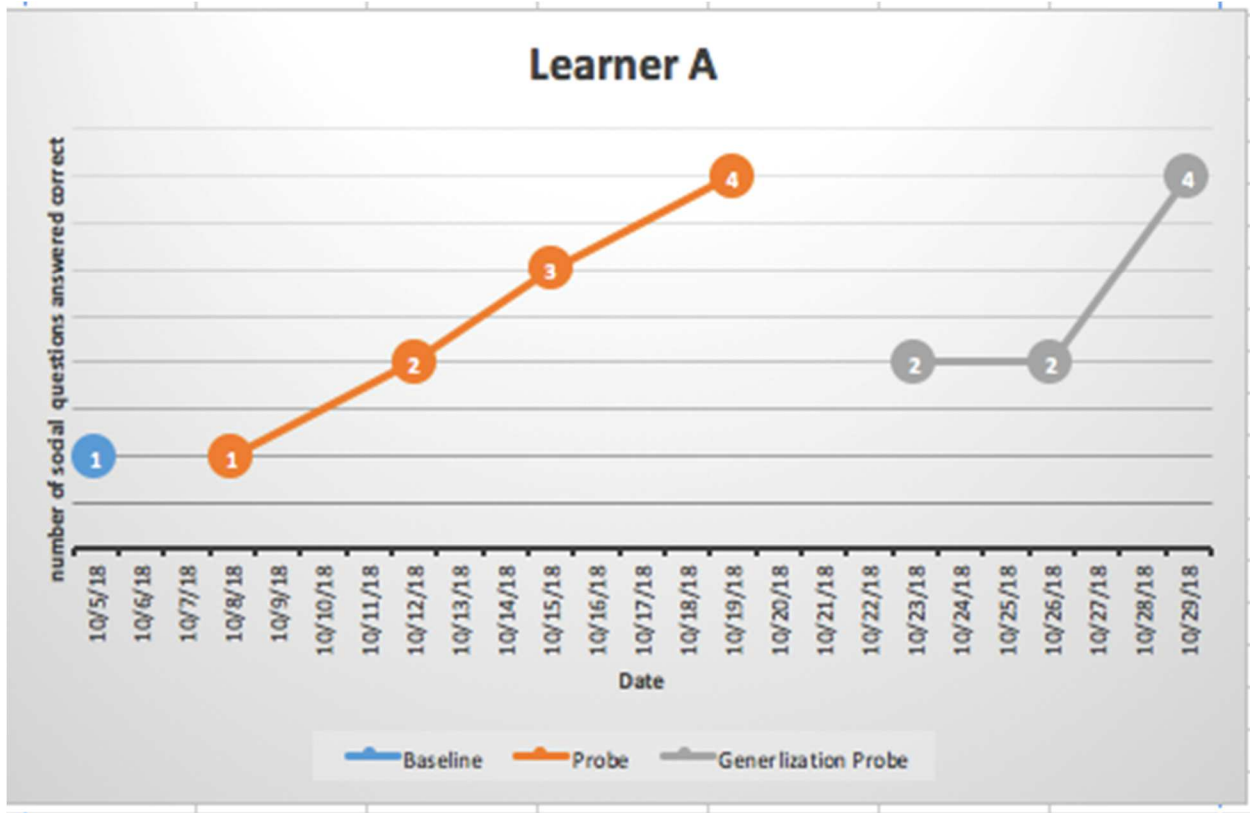


Figure 1. Results for Student A.

Student B is a twelve-year old Hispanic male. This student was deemed eligible for special education under the classification as (MD). This student is in a self-contained classroom for the entire school day, but he travels for specials. Student B’s score was 1 during the first baseline testing. After the introduction of the social skills procedures, the students score on the first probe day stayed the same as the baseline testing. On days 2,3 and 4 the student scores increased to a point where the topic where mastery was shown. During the generalization phase, the student showed good generalization of the use of social skills inside of the classroom when being tested by the staff. The student was consistent on the first two days on the probe but he received the highest score on the last day of the generalization probe. By the last generalization probe, the learner was able to answer all the social questions appropriately.



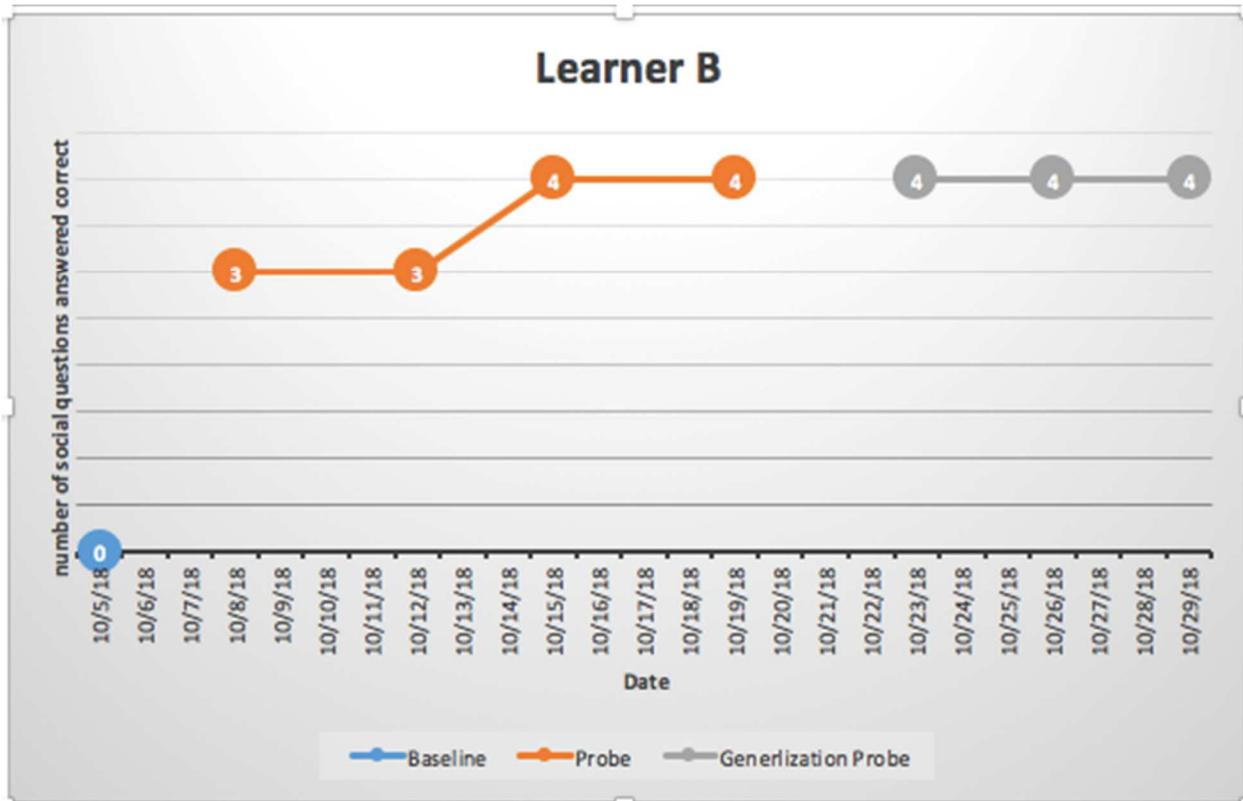


Figure 2. Results for Student B.

Student C is an eleven-year old White male This student was deemed eligible for special education under the classification as (MD). This student is in a self-contained classroom for the entire school day, but he travels for specials. Students C score was 0 during the first the baseline testing. After the introduction of the social skills the students score on the first probe day was a 1 the same until day 4 when the student made little improvement scoring a 2. For the last three days of the testing the student showed very little improvement with the use of social skills in the

classroom.

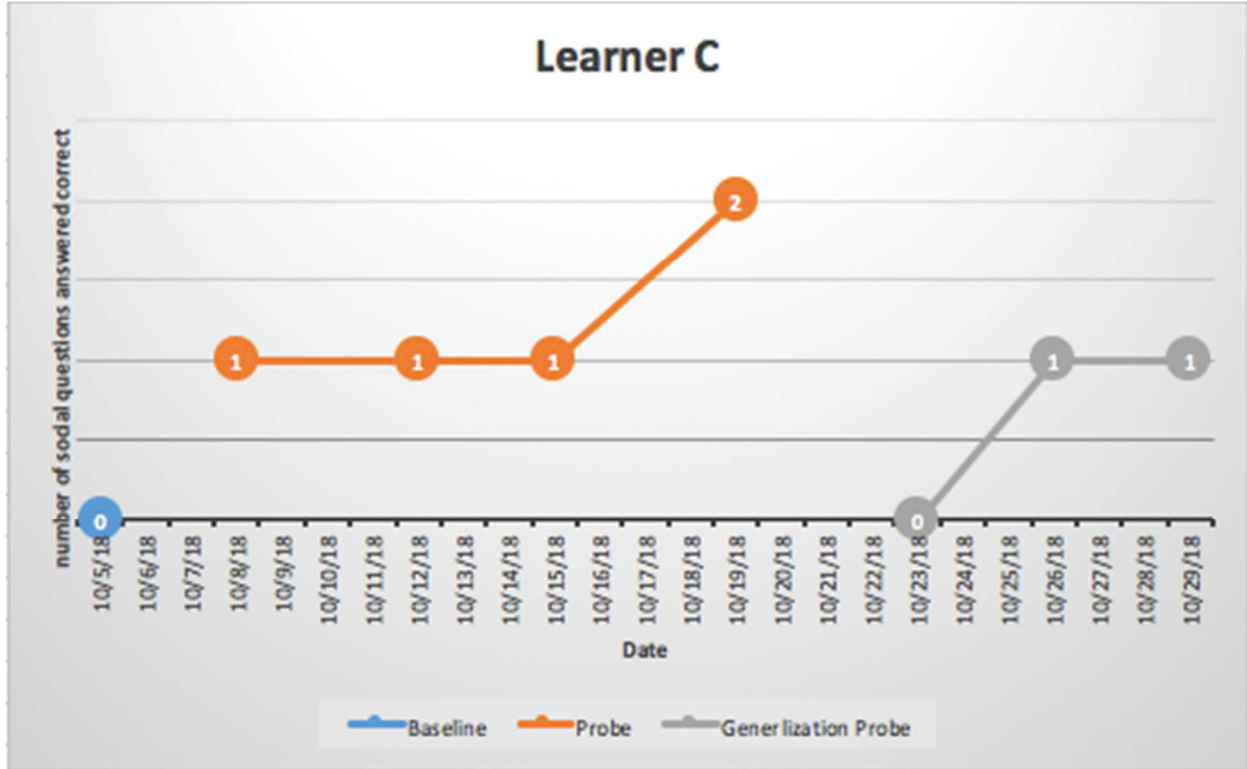


Figure 3. Results for Student C.

Student D is a twelve-year old Hispanic male. This student was deemed eligible for special education under the classification as (MD). This student is in a self-contained classroom for the entire school day, but he travels for specials. Student D's score was 0 during the first baseline testing. After the introduction of the social skills the students score on the first probe stayed at a 1 for the first three days and jumped up to a 2 for the last day of testing. For the last three days of the testing the student showed very little improvement in his generalization of social skills.

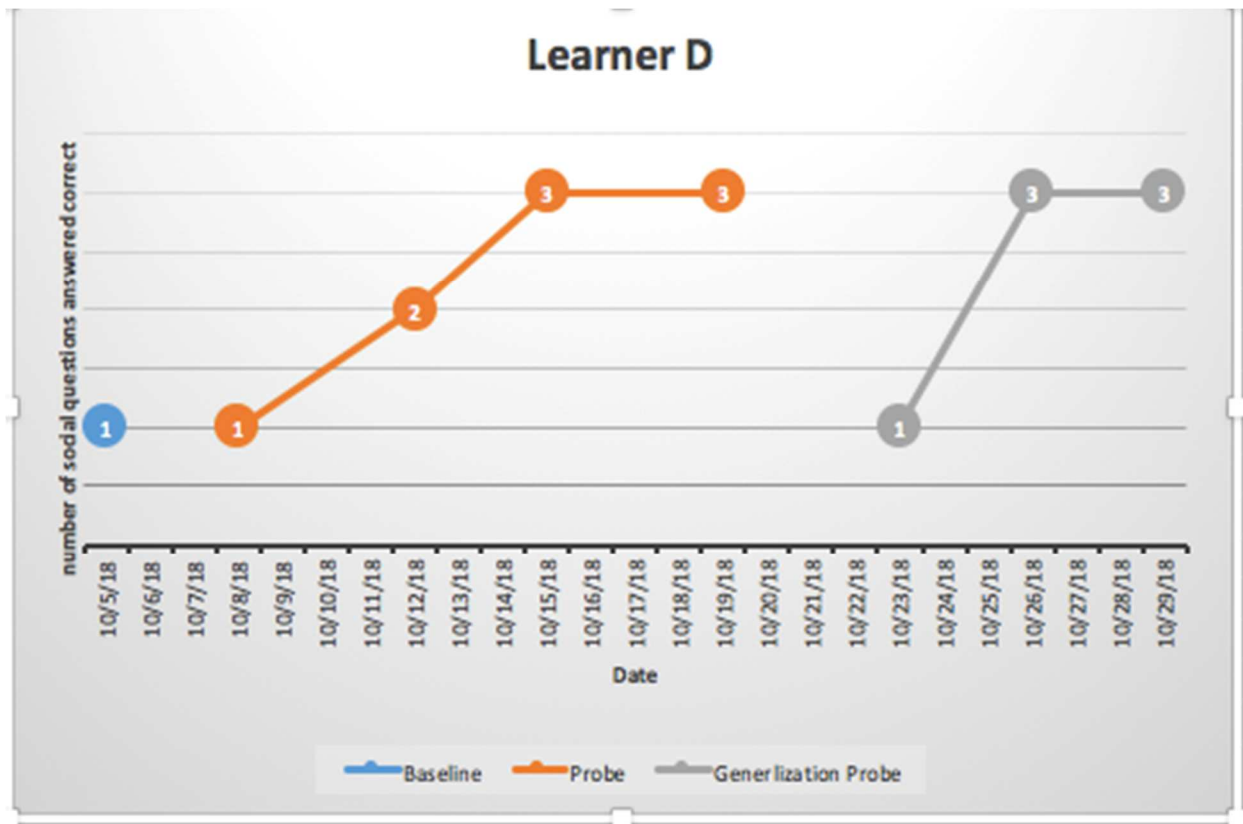


Figure 4. Results for Student D.

Student E is an eleven-year old Hispanic male. This student was deemed eligible for special education under the classification as (AUT). This student is in a self-contained classroom for the entire school day, but he travels for specials. Students E score was 0 during the first the baseline testing. After the introduction of the social skills the students score on the first probe day stayed the same as the baseline testing and he received a 1. On days 2,3 and 4 the student scores showed improvement. For the last three days of the testing the student showed a small amount of improvement, but was not able to master the topic.

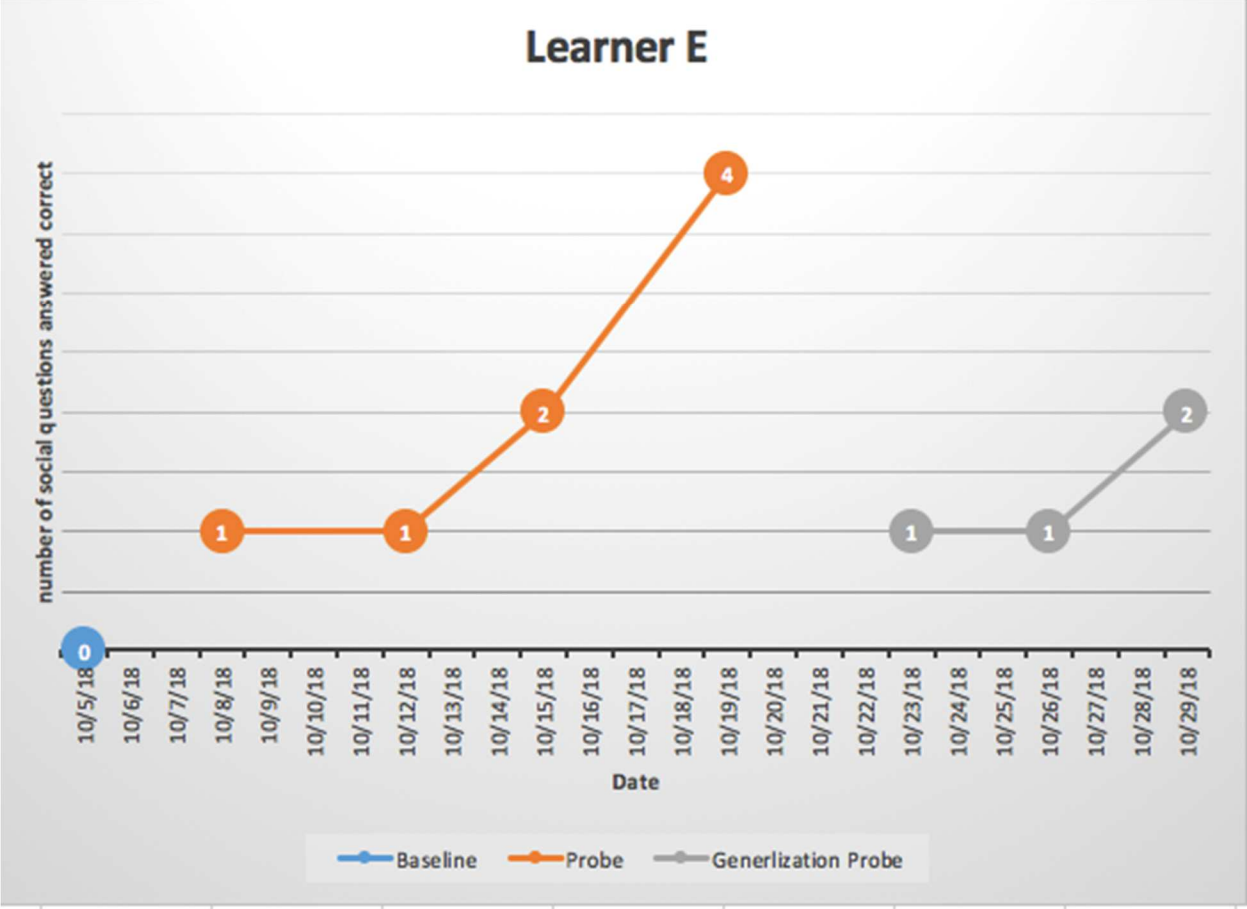


Figure 5. Results for Student E.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to investigate how the implementation of methods for enhancing generalization of social skills for students with significant disabilities will improve their social skills. In addition, the study looked at the various types of monitoring tools teachers and parents can use to keep track of the continued progress of the children. The significance of the study was to measure if the students will have more success when the social skills are generalized in the classroom to fit their education needs. The participants in the study were five students that were determined eligible for special education and related services. Three of these students were documented under the classification of MD and two were documented as ASD. All five students were documented to have social skills functioning below age-level expectations.

### **Findings**

During the initial baseline testing, the students had a mean score of .4 on the social questions, where a score of 4 would have indicated 100% accuracy. After each of the four probes were introduced, scores for each individual student increased. These scores caused the group's mean average to increase and suggested an overall trend of skill acquisition. Following the probe phase, three generalization probes were introduced in a novel environment in order to test for carryover. No prompts were used during these sessions; therefore, scores reflect independent use of learned skills. At the end of the generalization phase, students' scores reflected a variety of trends. Three of the students' (Student A, Student B, and Student D) scores from the final initial probe to the final generalization probe remained the same (respective scores: 4, 4, 3). The remaining two students (Student C and Student E) demonstrated a decrease in scores from a 2 to a 1 and a 4 to a 3 respectively. These aforementioned declines in scores negatively impacted the

overall mean average across students, as it dropped from 3.4 (Probe 4) to a 2.8 (Generalization Probe 3). Expectations for the study were that students' overall social skills will improve in a novel environment, when the social skills are generalized in the classroom to fit their education needs.

### **Previous Research**

One study that reviewed research on school-based interventions for social skills for students with ASD was Bellini et al (2007). In this review, the authors evaluated fifty-five studies which were assessed in a variety of categories ranging from the number of participants to the location of implementation to the presence of inter-observer reliability. Intervention effects, maintenance effects, and generalization of facts, were the areas that most closely parallel that of which this study was focused on. However, overall, the results from this analysis suggested that teaching social skill interventions are minimally effective for students with ASD and should be implemented more frequently and at a higher intensity level to provide the most effective treatment. Schools and teachers should look for more opportunities to hone these skills throughout the school day and in their natural setting. The overall results from this study served as a foundation for my intervention, which allowed for frequent opportunities throughout the students' day to focus on social skill development. I noticed a similarity when comparing Bellini's result to my overall students' results. A major similarity that was prevalent was the majority of the students in my study did not show growth when the final probe was completed. This coincides with Bellini's results which stated the social skill intervention was minimally effective for students with ASD. Another thing that was similar was the conclusion of his study which suggested that the students should be exposed to more frequently to these types of social skills, inside and outside of the classroom. A few of my students had success when these skills

were taken outside of the classroom and placed in real life situations. They would benefit from more exposure outside of the classroom.

### **Limitations**

Two limitations to this study were the sample size and the lack of female students. My study was conducted with five students. Having a larger group would have allowed me more opportunities to collect more data on social skills limitations. This would enable me to make stronger conclusions about the effectiveness of this trail. Would a female student have similar numbers to the male students in the class? This is one question that I will never have the answer for. Does the lack of social skills in females compare to those of her male counterparts? Would the testing show similar results for her having a lack of social skills?

### **Future Studies**

Future research studies should look for more opportunities to hone these skills throughout the school day and in the natural setting. Take what is learned in the classroom and apply them to the student's everyday life. Another option for future research could be taking students who are not classified but who struggle with social skills. You can take the same type of study and compare the results of the two different groups to see if there is a difference about how social skills are taught and used in everyday settings. Something that goes along with each of these future studies would be increasing the number of participants which would give more data on the limitations of social skills.

### **Conclusion**

The overall results from this study served as a foundation for my intervention, which allowed for frequent opportunities throughout the students' day to focus on social skill development. Overall, the results from this analysis suggested that teaching social skill

interventions are minimally effective for students with ASD and should be implemented more frequently and at a higher intensity level to provide the most effective treatment.



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