

Using Peers as Natural Supports for Students with Severe Disabilities

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Steps for Developing Relationships Between Direct and Related Service Providers

1. Generate a holistic view of students from reading the IEP, and attending related service provider therapy sessions.
2. Read through the students' individual education plan (IEP) to gain insight into their needs and abilities.
3. Attend Team Consult meetings with the OT, PT, and Speech therapist, Classroom Teacher, & special education case manager to discuss common goals.
4. Attend students' individual OT and PT therapy sessions to see how the therapists are meeting the IEP goals and the interaction patterns of therapists and students.
5. Create a communicative dictionary of the students.
6. Create PE lesson plans that tie in commonalities with therapeutic and educational goals and include modifications for student participation and develop scripts used to facilitate peer relationships.
7. Review and model scripts with collaborative team so that everyone uses the same language across the school community.

8. Periodically reassess with collaborative team to determine effectiveness of the communication scripts.

Steps for Developing Peer Communication Skills

1. Identify the learning style of the student with SMD.
 - a. E. g. Are they visual, auditory or kinesthetic learners?
2. Learn the verbal cues, visual prompts, manual cues and manual assists used to guide the student with SMD learning.
3. Create PE lessons that incorporate learning style, cues, prompts and assists to foster communication and shared participation between student with SMD and peers.
4. Review scripted lessons with OT, PT, and paraprofessional.
5. Have the OT, PT, or paraprofessional practice lesson scripts with student with SMD in a therapy session.
6. Choose peer supports with general education teacher's input.
7. Train peer supports during the PE lesson by having the PE teacher or paraprofessional model the communication scenario with the students with SMD
8. The PE teacher or paraprofessional should provide positive and corrective feedback to support the peer's ability to recognize communicative behaviors, and the collaborative interaction between the peer and student with SMD.
9. Lesson debriefing questions should be used to acknowledge communicative behaviors between students with SMD and their mentors.

