

**BEST FRIEND FOREVER: A PEER-MEDIATED INTERVENTION FOR YOUNG  
CHILDREN WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER**

By

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### **Abstract**

PMI, also known as peer-mediated intervention (PMI), is an evidence-based intervention that involves typical developing (TD) peers' guidance of, and assistance to, students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to improve on social skills. This design-based research (DBR) sought to create a PMI based on previous research that could be easily implemented and effectively in inclusive classroom settings to improve desired social skills of students with ASD. Survey questions with detailed implementing instruction were sent out to experienced educators working in inclusive schools to gather feedback and suggestions on their thoughts regarding its efficacy and easiness for implementation in their current work environment. Their responses were carefully analyzed and categorized into four common themes which addressed improvements and the need for additional support to run the intervention. These themes are "being kind and compassionate" as an additional TD peer characteristic, implementing a debrief session, potential implementation challenges, and various levels of support needed. The feedback was incorporated into the second iteration of the PMI.

**Keywords:** Peer-mediated intervention, autism, inclusive education, design-based research