DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 352 792 EC 301 726

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TITLE Using Progressive Time Delay in Arts/Crafts Activities To Teach Peer Imitation to Preschoolers with Disabilities.
SPONS AGENCY Special Education Programs (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC. Early Education Program for Children with Disabilities.
PUB DATE Dec 92
CONTRACT H024K90005
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Conference of the Council for Exceptional Children, Division for Early Childhood (Washington, DC, December 2-6, 1992).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Art Activities; Autism; *Disabilities; Generalization; *Imitation; Instructional Effectiveness; Mainstreaming; Males; *Mediation Theory; Peer Influence; *Peer Teaching; Preschool Children; Preschool Education; *Prompting; Role Models; Small Group Instruction; *Teaching Methods; Time Factors (Learning)
IDENTIFIERS *Time Delay

ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the effectiveness of progressive time delay in teaching three male preschoolers with disabilities to imitate their peers during arts and crafts activities. The subjects were enrolled in a half-day, mainstreamed program designed for children with autism. Teacher-delivered peer-mediated trials were embedded into a daily arts and crafts activity conducted with small groups consisting of no more than three typical peers and one child with disabilities. Results indicated that the progressive time delay procedure produced high levels of peer imitation to the novel responses of their peers in a nearly errorless fashion. Generalization data indicate that increases in unprompted full imitations and decreases in errors and no responses occurred for all subjects. (Contains 10 references.) (JDD)

Using Progressive Time Delay in Arts/Crafts Activities To Teach Peer Imitation to Preschoolers with Disabilities

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This study was supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Early Education Program for Children with Disabilities (Research Institute on Preschool Mainstreaming, Grant Number HO24K90005). However, the opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

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Using Progressive Time Delay in Arts/Crafts Activities
To Teach Peer Imitation to Preschoolers with Disabilities

Imitation of others has been recognized for many years as a means by which children learn to perform new behaviors and learn when to perform behaviors that are already in their repertoires (Bandura, 1969). Imitation is considered an important developmental phenonmenon (Piaget, 1951) and has been the subject of substantial research (Olson & Sherman, 1983; Ormrod, 1990). Imitation of peers also has been cited as a primary rationale for preschool mainstreaming (Bricker, 1978; Peck & Cooke, 1983). The logic is as follows: Given that children learn through imitation, then the available models should be competent in performing adaptive behaviors. The probability of being exposed to competent models is greater in mainstreamed than in segregated classrooms; thus, children with disabilities should be placed in mainstreamed classrooms. Unfortunately, despite being placed in such classrooms, many young children with disabilities rarely imitate their peers' behavior (Cooke, Appolloni, & Cooke, 1977; Nordquist, 1978).

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of progressive time delay in teaching preschoolers with disabilities to imitate their peers during arts/crafts activities. Three male preschoolers with disabilities participated in this study. They were enrolled in a model, half-day, mainstreamed program designed for children with autism.

for children with autism.

All children rotated through the arts/crafts activity during the day. No more than 3 typical peers and 1 child with disabilities were at the table at one time. Five teacher delivered peer-mediated trials were embedded into a daily arts/crafts activity for each child. For each trial, four possible child responses were measured: (a) unprompted full imitations, (b) prompted imitations, (c) approximations, and (d) errors/no responses. Children's participation was also measured by amount of time spent engaged, waiting or non-engaged during the arts/crafts activity.

A multiple probe design across subjects was used to assess the effects of the progressive time delay procedure. During probe and generalization conditions the teacher said, "(Subject's name), see what (Peer's name) is doing. You do it." A 6 sec. response interval was provided. During the progressive time delay condition two types of trials were employed: 0-s trials and delay trials. For 0-sec trials the teacher said, "(Subject's name), see what (Peer's name) is doing. You do it." and immediately provided a full physical prompt. For the delay trials a 2-sec. response interval was employed after three sessions at 0-sec., 2-sec, 4-sec., and holding at 6 seconds. The teacher said, "(Subject's name), see what (Peer's name) is doing. You do it." and provided the appropriate response interval.

The results indicate that the progressive time delay procedure produced high levels of peer imitation to the novel responses of their peers within the arts/crafts activities in a nearly errorless

fashion. There were no notable findings for child participation during arts/crafts activities. Generalization data indicate that increases in unprompted full imitations and decreases in errors/no responses occurred for all subjects after training was introduced. Lastly, teachers could reliably implement the probe and progressive time delay procedures.

Future research should address the following areas: (a) training procedures for training teachers to use progressive time delay as employed in this study, (b) assess the effects of such training on a broad array of generalization measures, and (c) evaluate the long term and general effects of teaching children to imitate their classmates.

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