STAY–PLAY–TALK

Teacher Implementation Checklist Part 1

Selecting & Training Peer Buddies

Stay–Play–Talk (SPT) is a type of peer-mediated intervention (PMI) that teaches young children simple strategies for interacting and playing with classmates: **stay near your friend, play with your friend, and talk with your friend.**

1. Selecting the Focal Child

□ I identified a focal child who may benefit from additional support interacting and playing with friends (for example, a child who rarely initiates or responds to peers, often plays alone or alongside peers rather than with them).

□ I observed the focal child during natural play activities to better understand their current peer interactions.

2. Selecting a Peer Buddy

□ I selected a peer buddy (or small group of 2–3 buddies) who enjoys playing with other children and demonstrates developmentally appropriate play and communication skills.

□ I selected a peer buddy who can follow simple directions and adult prompts.

□ I considered whether the focal child and buddy share interests, preferred toys, activities, or play areas.

□ I considered the children's existing relationship and whether they have shown interest in or positive interactions with one another.

3. Introducing Stay–Play–Talk

Introduce Stay–Play–Talk with just the peer buddy before they use the strategies during play with the focal child.

□ I talked to the buddies about what it means to be a good friend and explained that some children have different ways of playing and communicating. I provide examples and let the buddies contribute their thoughts.

□ I explained that I am going to teach the peer buddy some ways to be a good play partner.

□ I introduced the Stay–Play–Talk visual and explained each strategy:

- **STAY**: Stay near your friend and pay attention to what they are doing.
- **PLAY**: Play with your friend using the same toys or activity.
- **TALK**: Talk or communicate with your friend about what you are doing.

□ I provided examples of what each strategy might look like during play.

4. Modeling & Practicing Stay–Play–Talk

Model and practice Stay–Play–Talk with just the peer buddy before they use the strategies during play with the focal child.

□ I modeled Stay, Play, and Talk so the peer buddy could see what each strategy looks like.

□ I role-played as the play partner while the peer buddy practiced each strategy with me.

□I gave the peer buddy opportunities to practice all three strategies together using familiar play materials.

□ I provided specific positive feedback during practice.

□ I provided individualized guidance that may help the peer buddy interact successfully with their classmate (for example, getting their friend's attention, giving their friend additional time to respond, offering choices, or giving positive feedback).

□ I made sure the peer buddy could successfully use the strategies before beginning play with the focal child.

Part1: Reflection & Adjusting

- Does the peer buddy understand Stay, Play, and Talk?
- Can the peer buddy use the strategies during practice with little or no help?
- Does the peer buddy need more modeling, practice, feedback, or guidance before playing with the focal child?
- Does this seem like a good match based on the children's interests, skills, and previous interactions?

Adapted from: Fedewa, M. P., Watkins, L., Carden, K., & Grbac, G. (2025). Effects of a teacher-facilitated peer-mediated intervention on social play of preschoolers with autism. Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 55(5), 1595-1614 and Milam, M. E., Velez, M. S., Hemmeter, M. L., & Barton, E. E. (2018). Implementing peer-mediated interventions in early childhood classrooms. DEC Recommended Practices Monograph Series-Instructional Practices, 77-90.