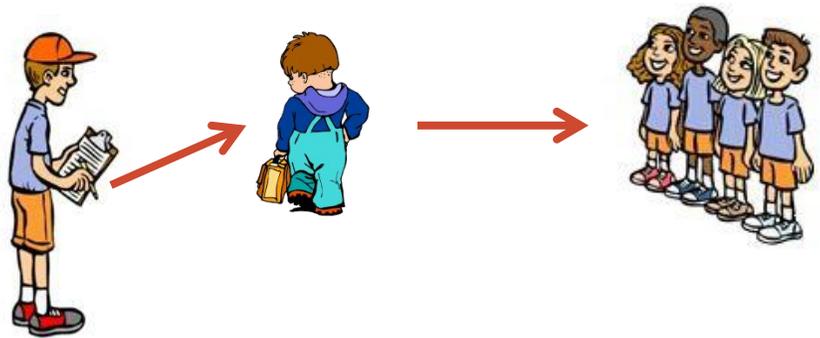## The Peer-Mediated Approach

A peer-mediated approach involves teaching peers how to interact with children with social challenges, and then teaching social skills to those who may need additional practice. The power of peers is impactful, and this approach allows children to learn skills that are both age-appropriate and in the natural setting.

First, peers are introduced to the concept with awareness activities, and then learn specific skills on how to interact with children with differing abilities. The teaching benefits all children, but is specifically designed to teach skills to start and maintain play and conversations with peers who have social challenges.
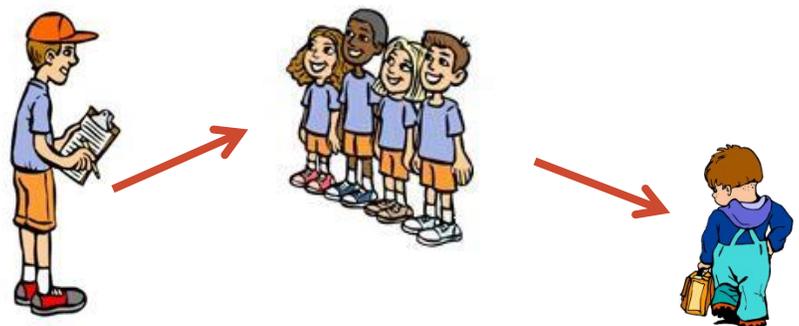
The most critical aspect of a peer-mediated approach is the way adult leaders prompt children. It requires the leaders to prompt **through** peers rather than the traditional adult-mediated approach of prompting the target child directly. Incorporating this strategy into routine teaching practices can be the most challenging behaviour change for adult leaders.

## Adult-Mediated Approach

**EXAMPLE:** For instance, when a target child does not respond to a classroom instruction, the educator would typically prompt the child directly by saying, "Lucas, come and sit at the circle."

## Peer-Mediated Approach

**EXAMPLE:** A peer-mediated approach requires the adult leader to discretely prompt a peer with, "Mark, please show Lucas how to clean up the toys." It is then the responsibility of the adult leader to reinforce Lucas for responding to Mark and reinforce Mark for prompting Lucas in the first place. This increases the likelihood that both, Mark and Lucas will seek other opportunities to interact without the direction of the adult leader. Initially, the adult leader needs to prompt through peers and reinforce each interaction. In time, the reinforcement will change from being adult-delivered to the natural reinforcement of the interaction itself. This will indicate the time to begin fading adult prompts.