Editor's Note. *This special series in* Remedial and Special Education *provides a comprehensive look at research and practice in peer-mediated instruction and interventions. Cheryl A. Utley, guest editor, and her colleagues cover the most important topics related to academic instruction and learning, personal and social behaviors, performance on academic assessments, and classroom inclusion strategies. We hope our readers will appreciate the descriptions of peer-mediated instruction and interventions that are covered in the articles in this issue and the next and consider pursuing these successful models in their own work.*—**Ernest Rose, *RASE* Special Issues Editor**

Introduction to the Special Series

Advances in Peer-Mediated Instruction and Interventions in the 21st Century

CHERYL A. UTLEY, GUEST EDITOR

PEER-MEDIATED INSTRUCTION AND INTERVENTIONS (PMII) may be conceived as one solution to overcoming the instructional challenges presented to general and special educators in teaching students with mild disabilities. PMII refers to "an instructional strategy developed to help teachers individualize instruction, while still providing students with ample opportunity to become actively engaged during instruction" (Greenwood, 1997, p. 53). For general and special educators, PMII addresses important classroom-based questions such as "How do we differentiate reading instruction for elementary, middle, and high school students?" "Can literacy instruction be taught by using computer and information technology?" "How do we improve reading comprehension?" and "In what ways can general educators minimize the disruptive behavior problems of all children with disabilities in general education classroom settings?" PMII may serve as an effective strategy that (a) facilitates the inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classroom settings, (b) enhances academic achievement on standardized tests and curriculum-specific measures, (c) improves interpersonal relationships and the acceptance of individual differences among diverse students, and (d) improves student discipline in a proactive and positive manner.

This special series is devoted to an in-depth analysis of PMII and provides descriptions of good practice with research findings. The lead article by Maheady, Harper, and Mallette presents the demographic and instructional challenges general and special educators face in teaching students with mild disabilities and describes how PMII are solutions to these challenges. This illustrative review of literature presents a state-of-the-art picture of the use of PMII.

In the second article, Fuchs and colleagues are concerned about the reading problems of children and the impact of illiteracy on society in general. To address these specific academic needs of children in Grades 2-6, the authors describe the components of the downward and upward extensions of Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) in reading. These components differ along the lines of reading skills required in Grades 2–6, structured activities, content material, and teacher training.

In an age of school reform, Gardner, Cartledge, Seidl, Woolsey, Schley, and Utley demonstrate how a partnership between The Ohio State University and Mt. Olivet Baptist Church in an urban community has collaboratively provided peer-mediated academic and social interventions in an after-school program to improve the reading and math performance of at-risk African American males.

The newest and most ambitious effort in advancing PMII is a study conducted by Greenwood, Arreaga-Mayer, Utley, Gavin, and Terry. These authors report on the literacy

Volume 22, Number 1, January/February 2001, Pages 2–3

instruction of elementary-level English-language learners, program implementation features, and student outcomes, using the computer and information management technology of the ClassWide Peer Tutoring Learning Management System (CWPT-LMS).

In the fifth article of the series (which will appear in the next issue of *RASE*), Vaughn, Klingner, and Bryant will review empirical studies using Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) for reading comprehension and content areas in small-grouping instructional arrangements with students with mild disabilities. The overall goals of this strategy are to (a) meet the academic needs of a diverse student population, (b) improve student outcomes, (c) provide instructional procedures that enhance the comprehension of text and skills to learn from text, (d) provide procedures that incorporate peer-mediated instruction, and (e) help teachers focus on teaching comprehension strategies. As these authors implemented a series of CSR studies, they developed a knowledge base of the professional development needs (e.g., coaching and modeling) of teachers for implementation to be ongoing and successful.

In the next article, "Adapting Self-Management Programs for Classwide Use: Acceptability, Feasibility, and Effectiveness," Mitchem and Young will provide empirical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness Class-Wide Peer-Assisted Self-Management (CWPASM) as a strategy for improving behavior problems in students with disabilities in general education classrooms. These authors bridge theory and practice by addressing issues and factors related to the sustained use of PMII: teacher training, time and resources, acceptability, and feasibility.

The final article, by King-Sears, will present significant research-to-practice issues that are instrumental to the institutionalization of PMII. For institutionalization of PMII to occur, a paradigm shift in how we implement instruction, coupled with systems change efforts, is mandatory. The barriers to the sustained use of PMII will be identified, and guidelines for knowing how to promote PMII in schools will be recommended.

The contributors for this special issue are research-practitioners who are interested in implementing best practices that improve student outcomes of children who are poor, have high-incidence disabilities, are culturally and linguistically diverse, and are educated in inclusive classroom settings. These contributors are committed to providing quality instruction and interventions so that every student can learn in a proactive and positive manner, regardless of their individual differences and backgrounds. The contributors have developed, tested, and evaluated instructional procedures that place the responsibility of learning and developing positive social and interpersonal relationships in the hands of the children. The contributors are actively pursuing research-to-practice issues and finding ways to minimize differences in values, perspectives, and orientations of teachers and researchers that have served as barriers to the implementation of effective instructional practices. The contributors believe university/school/community partnerships (e.g., The Juniper Gardens Children's Project) must be expanded if poor, urban, culturally diverse children with and without disabilities are to be successful learners. ■

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