



What is LEAP?

- A developmentally-integrated preschool for typically developing children and peers with autism.
- A comprehensive parent education program providing real help in real-world home and community settings.
- A research and training model funded continually by the office of Special Education since 1981.
- A network of replication sites in school districts throughout the U.S.
- A science-based program in which some 36 peer-reviewed studies have demonstrated the positive effects of specific program components on child and parent behavior.

Key Intervention Components

- Teaching typically developing peers to facilitate the social and language skills of children with autism.
- Embedding hundreds of learning opportunities each day within typical preschool routines.
- Employing transdisciplinary service delivery to help promote the generalization of skills from setting to setting.
- Using systematic, daily data collection on IEP objectives to determine the next day's instructional plans.
- Addressing problem behavior by teaching compatible, more adaptive skills (e.g. language, self-regulation).
- Using only practices that are evidence-based.
- Teaching behavioral skills to adult family members in home and community settings.

Key Research Findings from LEAP Studies

- Typically developing peers as young as 36 months can be taught easily to utilize facilitative social and communicative initiations with their peers with autism.
- Peers' use of facilitative strategies result in higher rates of communicative interaction for preschoolers with autism.
- The peer facilitative strategies often produce "day one" effects, suggesting that the delayed social and communicative abilities of many young children with autism may be attributable, in part, to the socially non-responsive settings in which they are most often educated.
- For many children who receive peer-mediated intervention, their eventual level of social participation falls within the typical range for their age cohorts.
- The naturalistic or incidental teaching used in LEAP to influence cognitive outcomes yields approximately two months gain for each month enrolled.
- When compared to one-to-one tutorial instruction, the LEAP incidental teaching model yields more active engagement and more complex developmental skills by children with autism and their typical peers.
- In contrast to comparison parents, LEAP clients are far less likely to develop systems of depression 3-4 years away from active interventions.
- The majority of LEAP graduates have been enrolled (without identification) in regular education setting with no subsequent deterioration in performance.
- No negative and some positive outcomes accrue to typical children (e.g. better social skills, fewer disruptive behaviors) in the LEAP model.
- Gains for LEAP children maintain following program participation
- Children who begin early have better outcomes.

Where to Find More Information About LEAP

- To inquire about ongoing research, contact Phil Strain, PhD. (303) 556-3353 or phil.strain@cudenver.edu
- To inquire about training opportunities, contact Ted Bovey, M.A. (303) 556-6631 or ted.bovey@cudenver.edu
- To inquire about intervention manuals and instructional videotapes, see <http://www.toolbox.com/>
- To inquire about programs in Miami-Dade County Public Schools contact the Prekindergarten Program for Children with Disabilities (305) 271-5701 or <http://prekese.dadeschools.net>