**Project Title:** Peer Networks Intervention: Improving Social-Communication, Literacy and Adaptive Behaviors for Young Children with ASD

**Principal Investigator:** Kamps, D

**Co-Principal Investigator(s):** Heitzman-Powell, L; Thiemann-Bourque, K

**Sponsor:** USDE - Institute of Education Sciences

**Sponsor Award Number:** R324A090091

**Duration Dates:** 03/01/09-02/28/13

**Brief Description of Project:**

Purpose: Literacy skills, social communication skills, and the ability to participate in groups are important for success in educational settings. However, many children with autism are not equipped with these skills, which may potentially limit these children's success in education settings. Moreover, interventions that are effective in peer inclusive education settings have yet to be determined for the estimated three to six children out of every 1,000 who will be diagnosed with autism. Researchers in this study are evaluating the Peer Networks Intervention Project, a comprehensive social-communication and literacy intervention program that addresses early social-communication and interaction skills, reading and academic skills, and behavioral and adaptive functional skills for young children with autism spectrum disorder. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the intervention against a typical classroom service model serving young children with autism spectrum disorders.

**Project Activities:** Approximately 120 children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders entering kindergarten will participate in the study. Children will be randomly assigned to either the intervention condition or the typical classroom service model. Schools in Kansas and Washington will participate. The intervention will be implemented for two years. Differential effects and rates of growth for academic, social communication, and behavioral performance outcomes will be determined for the children in the intervention and the typical classroom service model. Researchers will also examine how child characteristics and fidelity of implementation influence treatment outcomes.