It Takes Two: The Dyads Program Manual for Staff and Parents

By

Cierra Vandermeer

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family, who has supported me since the beginning, and for helping me become who I am.

I also want to dedicate this thesis to all the families who love someone who has ASD. I hope this thesis can be the start of something great for a program that can help children with ASD in the future.
Abstract

Children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) have many characteristic behaviours and social skills that are different than peers who are typically developing in the same age range. Children within the intensive behavioural intervention (IBI) program at this agency currently receive one-on-one intensive treatment with a therapist that helps develop a wide range of skills. While IBI services are beneficial to children with ASD in the beginning, when a child graduates from this program, transitioning from one-on-one IBI services into a classroom setting with many students to fewer staff supports may be particularly difficult for some children to adjust to. The Dyads working group was developed recently to support children within the IBI program who are ready to transition into a classroom setting, but it is a relatively new program that the agency has implemented. This program seeks to provide the child with transitional support, teaching of appropriate classroom and social skills, as well as adjustment from being one-on-one to a two-on-one setting with a peer. The Dyads Staff Manual was created for this newly implemented Dyads program during a 15-week thesis placement for staff at the agency to use to run the Dyads program smoothly and consistently between all staff. The manual included descriptions of effective techniques, and effective skill building programs for transitioning children based on current literature and a survey of needs from current stakeholders such as teachers and instructor therapists. A parent information brochure was created for parents of children attending the dyads program, and it included guidelines for parents, a description of challenges, along with literature to support it. A feedback survey was distributed to members of the agency who used the manual to determine effectiveness, and while responses were limited, the manual was deemed helpful and effective overall.

Keywords: ASD, autism, transition, dyads, manual, classroom
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) describes various neurodevelopment conditions on a spectrum as an umbrella term (Bergmann, Sappok, Diefenbacher, & Dziobek, 2016). The condition involves many idiosyncrasies in behaviours and social skills that are different than peers who are typically developing in the same age range. These include deficits in social communications, social responsiveness, communication abilities, feelings for others, as well as repetitive or restricted behaviours, fixations, or interests (Mash & Wolfe, 2016). ASD is usually diagnosed within the primary years after birth, and it is a neurodevelopmental disorder that has lasting effects throughout life. ASD is very individualized, and can range from low to high functioning, as well as low to high verbal, and is prevalent across all races, genders, and languages.

Treatments for Autism Spectrum Disorder

Intensive behaviour intervention (IBI) is a more intensive form of applied behaviour analysis (ABA) typically implemented with young children who have ASD. Children who are in the IBI program experience one-on-one services with a therapist mixed with natural environment teaching (NET), as well as social play time with peers. The one-on-one intensive program usually occurs in a private space and is delivered by a trained behaviour therapist. Table top and play-based instruction focus on teaching children strategies to learn such as imitation, cooperation and attention as well as verbal behaviour such as receptive and expressive communication. Tabletop intervention is intensive, but is beneficial as it allows for minimal distractors, and it sets a stage for basic skill development, communication, and other play and social skills (Cowan & Allen, 2007). IBI has been shown to be an effective intervention for children who have autism spectrum disorders, which can help improve functional skills, as well as increase IQ scores overall (Perry et al., 2008). However, Cowan and Allen (2007) noted that generalization is difficult to establish with tabletop intervention alone, as the child does not have an opportunity to put their skills to use across a variety of different settings.

The NET programs seek to put a balance to intensive interventions and are run during program hours. A naturalistic environment teaching approach uses evidence-based practices within an environment that is familiar to the child, while acknowledging natural opportunities to teach children to generalize skills they have already been learning (Harjesuola-Webb & Hess Robbins, as cited in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA]; 2004). NET programs usually operate concurrently with tabletop interventions in order to help generalize skills learned at the table to a more natural environment, and often with peers. Since every child with ASD is different and has varying strengths, skills, abilities, motivations, and attention spans, some children have more NET time built in to their programs than others, which helps them to learn new skills in a different way as they play in a natural environment. Benefits of NET are that it teaches the child to generalize skills learned at the table, based on the child’s motivation and interests. NET with embedded instruction has also been shown to increase engagement, functional skill development, increase correct rates of responding, and reduce problem behaviours (Rakap & Balikci, 2016).
Transitioning

One of the challenges suggested within the IBI program is adjustment from intensive one-on-one teaching environments to a lower staff-to-student ratio within the typical school environment, which supports the need for a transitional program for the children in IBI. Most children in intensive services will eventually transfer to a classroom at a local school. Providing a transitional classroom is a potential solution for this identified shortcoming of IBI. The goal of this classroom would be to teach appropriate social and classroom skills, acceptable classroom behaviours and expectations, smooth transitions, as well as fading out the one-on-one teaching. Forest et al. (2004) identified some key elements and criteria which help with effective transitioning to a kindergarten classroom from intensive services.

Transitioning in general can be exceptionally difficult for individuals diagnosed with ASD, as key features of this disorder involve fixations, ritualistic tendencies, and certain expectations towards routines (Rapp et al., as cited in Kientz et al., 2013), all of which may affect fluency and success with transitions and novel environments. While there are specialized classes for students with ASD in many schools, there is a limited amount of research and resources describing best-practice standards for these specialized classes. Despite the lack of research, models, and resources for teaching dyads or small groups of children diagnosed with autism, this teaching strategy currently exists in many centres with efforts to transition the children into another program. With financial constraints and the potential benefits of providing peer modeling, fading out 1 to 1 teaching and the increased opportunity to develop social skills, group teaching appears to have propagated ahead of research. Developing comprehensive resources and providing models for this evolution of services is vital in order to provide research into the most effective strategies to include within transitional classrooms.

Parent Education

Solish and Perry (2008) identified the importance of parent involvement for success in a child’s treatment, through positive attention, providing physical resources for the child, appropriate emotional responses, as well as overall support for the child. Having parents providing support in their home environments, as well as continued compliance with the child’s ongoing behavioural programming can help promote overall success (Solish & Perry, 2008). Providing parents with education about their child’s program and how to effectively continue to implement it at home is an important component relating to the success of the program. However, there is a lack of resources and research surrounding parent education of the transitional programs between intensive services and classrooms, which is an identified gap in this research. There is also limited research about how parents can further help their child through the transition, along with activities and practice that can be run at home.

Overview of Thesis

The purpose of this thesis was to create a manual to help effectively run the dyads transition program, as well as to create a parent information brochure to inform parents and aid them in their child’s journey through this program.

Dyads Staff Manual. This manual provided staff with an overview to the Dyads program, a general schedule of what to accomplish during the day, the essential skills to focus on teaching while running the programs, different set ups and room layouts options, organizational tips, guidelines and pointers about successfully running the Dyads transition group. Another section outlined how parents should respond to challenging behaviour, including sample data,
activity, and reinforcement assessment sheets, as well as sample NET lesson plans to use with both children. This manual also included various strategies to help teach parents to practice helping their children generalize skills learned in the transition class. The importance of effective communication between parents and staff is also crucial in maintaining treatment integrity into the education of the children in Autism Intensive Services.

**Parent Information Brochure.** This brochure included an overview to the Dyad transitional program to help new parents achieve a broader understanding about the goals and objectives of the program. A summary of the challenges that individuals diagnosed with autism may have when faced with transitions, as well as general information about the benefits of this program were also included. A list of targeted essential skills were included to help give parents an idea about the necessary skills for their child to have in order to transition successfully to a classroom setting.
Chapter II: Literature Review

Intensive Behavioural Intervention

Since its launch in 1999, Ontario has been providing Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) services to children who have been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD; Blacklock & Perry, 2010). The Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ontario Autism Intervention Program established a panel in 2006 called the Expert Clinical Panel, in which they developed five benchmark skills used to determine whether or not the child would remain within the IBI program or be transferred out to a different program (Blacklock & Perry, 2010). These benchmark skills included forms of communicating functionally, cognitive non-verbal skills, expressive and receptive language, imitation skills, readiness, as well as social and other play skills (Blacklock & Perry, as cited in Benchmark Development Expert Panel, 2008). When a child enters the program, these benchmarks are tested in an arrangement of different levels to determine their entry level of skills, so as to obtain a starting point for beginning the programming (Blacklock & Perry, 2010). The authors conducted a case study with six individuals to determine the effects of IBI alongside the proposed benchmarks, as well as to conduct further research into specifics for validating these proposed benchmarks (Blacklock & Perry, 2010). These benchmarks were determined to be an overall effective way of evaluating success and progress within the program, and criteria regarding when to continue in IBI, or to be transferred to a more relevant program, as Blacklock and Perry (2010) discussed. The benchmarks were determined to be valid, as the progressions made were considered logical and sequential, and were developed to individually measure a child’s progress within their programming during their time within the program, as demonstrated throughout the case studies presented within the study (Blacklock & Perry, 2010). The IBI program continues to develop, as new research and new methods of testing are constantly evolving, therefore further research into measuring effects of IBI are suggested to be beneficial to all agencies using IBI (Blacklock & Perry, 2010).

Perry et al. (2008) sought to examine the effectiveness of the Ontario IBI program through testing and measuring autism severity, cognitive levels, adaptive levels, and rates of development. All children involved within the study were placed into groups based on functioning level in order to determine general effects of the treatment. Functioning levels were assessed based on an initial intake assessment using the Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Composite Standard Scores (Perry et al. 2008). Group A consisted of higher functioning students, Group B was moderate, and Group C was made up of lower-functioning individuals. Each child was paired with a trained Instructor-Therapist (IT), and all sessions either took place within the centre, at the child’s home, or within a child care setting. Each IT was consistently supervised and evaluated in order to ensure their skills were maintained and that they were delivering the services effectively, while parents received training and education both before and during IBI sessions began. Children were tested upon entry to the program, as well as before their discharge, and results indicated that the rate of development almost doubled for most children in the higher functioning groups, functioning increased overall, and most participants saw an increase in their IQ. While the general sample for this study showed major increases, Perry et al. (2008) found that the children who displayed little to no change in development and functioning were in the lower-functioning group. Overall, this study shows that IBI sessions are beneficial to the development and functioning of children who have autism, and that this is an effective program as a whole (Perry et al, 2008).
Another study examined the longitudinal effects of a home-based IBI program over the

course of four years, where children learned valuable skills through their daily intervention, as

well as incidental learning (Virues-Ortega, Rodríguez, & Yu, 2013). Children received between

30 and 50 hours of intensive services within their homes, and all routines that required parent

involvement were taught to the parents, then practiced under supervision of the therapist. Skills

that were targeted included teaching in natural environments and contexts, transitioning into

group and social settings, as well as specific and individualized goals for each participant. Upon

completion of this study, Virues-Ortega, Rodríguez, and Yu (2013) determined that total

intervention time, duration of intervention, and intensity were all important factors to consider

for a successful longitudinal progression when conducting home-based IBI, for a duration of up
to four years.

Once children within the programs reach a certain level of skill in IBI, they are no longer

in need of intensive services, and instead they are integrated fully into a school and classroom

setting to continue their learning and education in a typical learning environment that is age

appropriate for them. However, it is the transition from IBI to a school setting that is difficult for

both children and parents (Levy & Perry, 2008), as the dynamic between individualized

treatment with one-to-one therapy and a classroom setting where there is one teacher to a larger

ratio of children is different and requires a significant adjustment time. While intensive services

are beneficial to individuals overall, when children reach the next level of intervention, helping

them to generalize skills is more valuable through natural environment teaching (NET) and
group learning (Leaf et al., 2017; Akers, Higbee, Gerencser, & Pellegrino, 2018; Ledford &
Wehby, 2015; Ledford, Gast, Luscre, & Ayres, 2008).

**Natural Environment Teaching/Learning**

Teaching in the naturalistic environment is important for generalizing skills that are

learned during intensive behaviour intervention. A study conducted by Harjusola-Webb and Hess

Robbins (2012) used a teacher training model to assist teachers with intervention strategies

within the classroom to help influence behaviours in three children who have autism, as well as
to promote positive social communication within the natural environments in their preschool

classrooms. Teachers were trained to increase their intervention strategies within the classroom,

and they were provided with a manual containing intervention strategies, which ensured teachers

were responsive to initiations made by the children and followed their leads throughout the

completion of activities. Consistent meetings were held with the researchers to address any

concerns, and performance feedback was provided to ensure implementation was accurate and

consistent (Harjusola-Webb & Hess Robbins, 2012). The results from Harjusola-Webb and Hess

Robbins (2012) showed that overall, strategies for increasing and promoting communication

increased in frequency across daily routines, activities, and natural environments through teacher

training. Through this study, teaching functional communication in a natural environment was

shown to be effective overall. Constant communication with teachers, consistent feedback, and

researchers’ support for the teachers was shown to have an increased performance effect on the

teachers, with increased frequencies of the teachers delivering intervention in their classroom

through sustaining teacher accountability for providing data, as well as having opportunities to

ask for clarity about anything that may have been misunderstood (Harjusola-Webb & Hess

Robbins, 2012). This study showed the importance and relevance of adequate training for any

staff who may be new to implementing a program, who may be working outside the agency in a

schoolboard, or for a teaching staff who is new to behaviour interventions. This study also
demonstrated the importance of ongoing communication and follow-ups to ensure interventions are implemented accurately and consistently, which can become difficult when students are transitioned into a classroom setting outside of the agency.

Another study focused on embedded instruction within naturalistic learning environments in a preschool classroom (Rakap and Balikci, 2016). The authors sought to extend the preexisting literature on the use of embedded instruction to help two students learn three functional skills each; the first child’s goal was to open up their lunch box, to wipe down the table, and to their hands together while washing them, and the second child’s goals were to put homework papers into their backpack, to put their backpack on, and then open up the door to leave. These skills were taught using most-to-least prompting, mainly during transitions, through activities within his classroom, and other daily routines. Rakap and Balikci (2016) outlined that all three of these and skills for each child were easily implemented into the daily schedule of the classroom, and interventions were consistently implemented at the same times each day. Overall, this study found that the student was able to effectively learn all three skills throughout this intervention with a high success rate and was able to maintain these behaviours successfully (Rakap & Balikci, 2016). Most-to-least prompting was also demonstrated to be an effective way in teaching behaviour through embedded instruction in a natural classroom environment for this particular study, however a major limitation that Rakap and Balikci (2016) outline in this study was that generalization effects were not assessed. This study can be applied to this thesis through using a variety of techniques based on the learners in this particular program, as well as furthering the research in generalizing effects of embedded instruction and NET in a variety of learners.

Teaching functional skills in a natural environment is one of the important main targets for the dyads transition group, as students will be learning generalizable skills in the natural environment and will also be learning to generalize skills learned in table top. These studies show that overall improvement in skills and learning behaviours is high when conducted in a naturalistic environment setting, which can be applied to the dyads transition group, with teaching the students together within their natural environments.

**Group Teaching**

Teaching skills to children with autism in groups has a high overall success rate (Leaf et al., 2017; Akers, Higbee, Gerencser, & Pellegrino, 2018; Ledford & Wehby, 2015; Ledford, Gast, Luscre, & Ayres, 2008). Leaf et al. (2017) tested the effects of instructional feedback in peer groups of three, and the results demonstrated that the students were able to effectively learn primary and secondary responses, whether or not the skills were taught directly to one member, or to the other members of the group. Within group instruction, students were able to learn directly from the instructor or therapist, as well as their peers, which facilitated quicker responses and an increased rate of learning overall (Leaf et al., 2017).

The study conducted by Akers et al. (2018) sought to teach social skills and examine interactions between three children with a diagnosis of ASD and twelve of their typically developing peers. Through the use of activity schedules with social scripts, Akers et al. (2018) investigated how well the students with autism could learn social behaviour through playing with their peers within the complexity of a group, while also investigating the effects and reactions of the students when activity schedules and scripts were systematically faded. Akers et al. (2018) focused on teaching the game of hide-and-seek to three students, including social expectations of the game, scripted phrases students could use when they were caught (e.g. “Aw man!”), and
phrases students could use when they found their peers (“Found you!”). Additionally, multiple probes were conducted during unstructured play, for purposes of generalization, and daily activity schedules (Akers et al., 2018). This highlighted the aspect of teaching this skill in a natural classroom environment and transitioning from one activity to the other, while the activity schedule was successfully taught, then faded (Akers et al., 2018). The results indicated that overall, the three students with autism were able to effectively learn social play through the use of activity schedules and fading. Probes conducted during unstructured play time were found to have increased with two of the students, suggesting that learning in groups is an effective method for teaching social skills and expectations (Akers et al., 2018).

While some studies focused on teaching in larger groups, a study conducted by Ledford and Wehby (2015) involved forming dyadic and triadic groups with typically-developing students and students with ASD who were in kindergarten and grade one within a public-school environment. These groups consisted of one peer with ASD, and one or two typically-developing peers in order to determine whether or not academic and social behaviours could be taught simultaneously to these students through instructional group sessions (Ledford & Wehby, 2015). The target behaviours consisted of academic and social behaviours, such as following instruction and unstructured play, while probe and screening assessments were presented along with typical instruction, peer training and observational learning. They also worked on generalizing the sessions for unstructured play into more natural and less structured settings (Ledford & Wehby, 2015). Ledford and Wehby (2015) established that simultaneously teaching academic and social skills was effective in dyadic and triadic groups within classroom settings within a public school. Further analysis of this study demonstrated generalization within these settings. All students within the study were able to learn new academic skills and behaviours at a similar pace, and the students who with a diagnosis of ASD were able to learn appropriate social behaviours in various contexts, both academically and during unstructured activity (Ledford & Wehby, 2015).

Research in dyadic group teachings has continued to support the effectiveness of this strategy for students diagnosed with ASD (Ledford et al., 2008). In their study, six students with a diagnosis of ASD and speech/language impairments were selected from a specialized autism classroom, from a local school and were placed in a dyadic formation with each other based on similar skillsets and reading levels of their peer (Ledford et al., 2008). Table top probe sessions were conducted with the two students sitting across from the instructor, and this took place in multiple rooms, as well as a natural environment setting, to allow for generalization. Reinforcement was delivered with a token economy, using back up non-edible sensory-based items chosen using a preference assessment. Sessions were run in a similar format as a typical intensive table top intervention. Overall, the study successfully demonstrated that students could learn through observational and incidental learning within a dyad group (Ledford, et al., 2008). This is comparable to the results of a similar study conducted by Leaf et al. (2017) in which high rates of learning were shown in students who were placed in triads.

Literature has shown that learning skills in groups helps children generalize their skills, especially when they are moved into a classroom setting, thereby increasing their future success within the classroom (Leaf et al., 2017; Akers et al., 2018; Ledford & Wehby, 2015; Ledford, Gast, Luscre, & Ayres, 2008). While there is some research regarding the use of group instruction, there is limited research on programs based on teaching through dyadic groups and programming specific to transitions. Without manualized treatment or best-practice standards for transition classes, a lack of treatment integrity will occur, which then makes it difficult to evaluate these programs effectively. This demonstrates the importance of developing treatment
standards and then conducting further research to evaluate group teaching and transitional classes.

Transitions

A study conducted by Forest, Horner, Lewis-Palmer, and Todd (2004) identified 25 elements that were important to transitioning a child into kindergarten. The authors created the *Elements for Transition to Kindergarten* (ETK; 2004) based upon important transitional items from a preschool to a kindergarten class from previous research, in the form of a direct interview with the teachers and parents of the children transitioning. Items on the list were socially valid, as surveys were distributed to parents and teachers to assess the importance of the items, and results from the surveys were consistent with high perceived importance for the items listed (Forest et al., 2004). Forest et al. (2004) began assessments up to one year prior to the transition to ensure all parties involved were well prepared in advance for the child’s transition, and the ETK was distributed at certain checkpoints prior to transitioning to the classroom. Seven items were implemented 12 to 6 months prior to transition, ten items were implemented 6 months up until transition, and the remaining items were implemented during transition, until after transitioning. Following the completion of this study, Forest et al. (2004) found that students were successful in transitioning into a kindergarten classroom when items on the ETK were reviewed and implemented into their programs prior to, during, and after transitioning into the classroom. This study highlights the importance of communication and collaboration between all parties involved with a student’s transition in order to promote continued success and a smooth transition to prepare the student in the best way possible.

Quintero and McIntyre (2011) addressed an important limitation that was highlighted throughout the study they conducted, which is the limited research conducted towards children with various disabilities who are transitioning to kindergarten, and whether or not more difficulties are displayed in children with ASD in comparison with, or alongside other developmental disabilities (DD). In order to measure effects of this study, data were taken in the final two months of the students’ time in preschool in the spring, and during the first two months of school in the fall. Reports from both parents and teachers evaluated parent and teacher roles and any preparations completed during the students’ transitions (Quintero & McIntyre, 2011). These surveys were also conducted to determine how much planning and preparation had gone into the students’ transition, including classroom activities, meetings concerning planning for the transition, home visits, and visits to the students’ future classroom (Quintero & McIntyre, 2011). Results of the study indicated that teachers were more concerned overall for students with ASD who were transitioning into kindergarten than the students with DD, however parent preparation and involvement remained consistent between the two groups (Quintero & McIntyre, 2011). Teachers were shown to have ample involvement with the child’s transitions by having monthly contacts with parents, having a meeting with staff from the students’ preschools, and communicating regularly with parents through written notes, and parents were reported to have found this helpful (Quintero & McIntyre, 2011). A concern that Quintero & McIntyre (2011) addressed within this study is additional and ongoing collaboration between elementary school, kindergarten staff and preschool staff with parents in the form of partnership, and that time was a major limitation to ensuring all needs and concerns were being met and addressed before and during the transition period.
Transitioning from IBI into a school setting may be a stressful time for children and parents. Levy and Perry (2008) discuss concerns and issues that arise through transitioning from an IBI setting to a school program, from planning the transition and learning school-appropriate skills, to social deficits, age-appropriate play skill concerns, as well as peer imitation. They found results similar to that of Forest et al. (2004), in the sense that planning for the transition should occur at least six months prior to the transition from school staff, while IBI staff thought that planning for transitions should occur at least seven months prior to transitioning. Their study also showed that parents were less likely to be involved and included in the transition planning process as a whole than they were within the IBI program, when they should be more involved in helping to plan to help with their child’s success, and this was mainly identified through collaboration discrepancies. In terms of planning for the transition, the authors determined that prerequisite skills should include skills that are critical for success within classroom, and the child’s programs in IBI should revolve around and reflect a school environment, while still learning skills that they would in their everyday programs (Levy & Perry, 2008). The researchers also indicated that collaboration between IBI staff and school staff is important in order to discuss any challenges and strategies to ensure the child’s success. While communication was indicated to be an essential part in transitioning, both school staff and IBI staff indicated that cooperation was a major barrier, with miscommunication and misconceptions about programs running in IBI playing a role (Levy & Perry, 2008). This is also important to consider for a transitional program, as collaboration with all parties involved will not always go as planned, and plans may not always follow through due to lack of time, resources, and understanding of programs.

Forest et al. (2004) and Quintero and McIntrye (2011) outline key points to consider when transitioning a child into a classroom environment, however they lack experimental data to illustrate which strategies are most effective at supporting students within transitional classes. Levy and Perry (2008) contributed to more empirical evidence about transitioning from IBI to school, along with staff involvement and perceptions. However, all of these studies highlight the importance of preparation for the transition, as well as ongoing communication, which reinforces the significance of initiating a transition class for students who are getting ready to transition to a classroom setting as well as the importance of parent involvement.

Parent Involvement
Parent involvement in any treatment setting plays a dynamic role in how much attention, time, emotional, and physical resources, as well as show much support overall the child has (Solish & Perry, 2008). Solish and Perry (2008) studied correlations in parent involvement with the independent variables of self-efficacy, their perception of their child’s progress and the general belief and knowledge surrounding it. They concluded that parent involvement overall was highly correlated with parents’ self-efficacy, their own knowledge, and their general belief in IBI. It was found that the more informed and updated about the services parents were, the more likely the parents were to get involved with their child’s treatment plan (Solish & Perry, 2008).

The effectiveness and advantages of having parents directly involved in treatment as part of team as a whole was trialed by Masse, McNeil, Wagner, and Chorney (2007), as they trained parents to effectively deliver intervention and treatments at home outside of therapy in continuation to their programs already occurring. In their study, parents continued to be involved through meetings, and Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) played a significant role, in
which parents learned important skills in helping their child develop communication skills, strengthening the overall bond they have with their child, as well as helping to increase their child’s social skills as a whole (Masse et al., 2007). Through this training, parents also learned how to handle difficult behaviours, increasing overall compliance, and decreasing undesirable behaviours, which all led to a more positive relationship with their child. The main purpose of PCIT was to increase school readiness for children who would be transferring to a classroom program, and the authors discovered it was successful, so long as social reinforcement was among the child’s top reinforcers (Masse et al., 2007). Overall, the researchers found this parent training and involvement method to be successful overall in modifying behaviours, while also improving relationships between parents and their children, which contributed largely to the overall success of their child within this program. Having parental involvement within an intervention, as well as allowing parents to continue treatment in a home environment can be beneficial for the overall success of the child.

Despite the research indicating the importance of parent involvement, there is little research directed toward how to support parental involvement within a transitional class.

**Thesis Relevance**

The focus on this thesis is the creation of a manual for a transitional program created within an IBI center for children who are transitioning from IBI services to a classroom setting. Obtaining adequate literature and research to support a transition from intensive behaviour intervention to a school setting is beneficial due to the limited amount of research focusing on transitional programs. Creating a model transition program with key elements to facilitate the transition to a classroom setting is imperative for both treatment integrity and evaluation. Testing skills regularly is also beneficial to determine the effectiveness of the program, as well as the amount of progress made (Perry et al., 2008; Virues-Ortega, Rodriguez, and Yu 2013). This thesis will provide a manual of effective strategies to include within a transitional class. Having a manual of strategies for the transitional class will increase treatment integrity and provide opportunities to effectively evaluate strategies.

This thesis will also support the inclusion of informed and involved parents through an open communication system and the development of a parent companion manual. This manual will illustrate potential challenges children with ASD may have transitioning to schools as well as strategies and instructions for specific skills, which their child is learning within the transitional class, in order to practice at home.

**Words: 4033**
Chapter III: Method

The focus of this thesis was a mediator manual for staff to implement the Dyads program, as well as a parent information brochure, therefore, the subjects who received this manual were staff who ran the Dyads program and the parents of children who transitioned into this program received the brochure. The manual was based on empirically-validated best practices. The manual was designed to aid staff and families in supporting children with the transition from an intensive behaviour intervention program to a school-based program. The manual began the process of developing treatment integrity for a transitional class for children diagnosed with autism.

Participants

Children. All children who transition into the Dyads program have a diagnosis of ASD, are in the early schooling years between the ages of three and six years, and are no longer in need of intensive services. These children have excelled in their programs and have learned quickly in a one-to-one instructional format. Children are excluded from the Dyads program if they did not participate in the early intensive intervention program offered at the agency, and if they are considered early learners.

Staff. The staff manual was written specifically for the staff at a government-funded autism support agency to help guide the application of the dyads program. The Dyads program provides intensive services for children who have ASD as a transitional program to their autism behavioural classroom (ABC) at a local school. The staff were the primary participants identified for this project. Staff implementing the Dyads program were full time staff who felt comfortable running programs with two children, and have obtained either a degree or a diploma in a program related to behaviour, autism services, social work, or child-specific work. Staff who run this program are staff who currently work in intensive services and are experienced in running IBI at the agency. However, staff are selected due to capability and comfort level rather than years of experience.

Parents. The parents of children who have ASD and who were involved in the dyads group were also identified as participants for this project. The inclusion criteria for the parents were that they had to have a child in intensive services between the ages of 3 and 6 years, and their child must be a candidate for the Dyads program. This informative brochure was created to help parents learn more about the dyads program, provide them with extra resources to help their child, as well as to help them practice the skills in their own homes. All parents had varying ages and education levels, so the brochure was written at a common reading level.

Selection Procedures

Since there was no research conducted or collected on human participants for this thesis, consent procedures were not required. Staff were provided with the staff manual, and they were also provided with the parent companion manual. Staff were encouraged to select portions of the companion manual to share with parents of the children who attended the transitional dyads program. The selection of material was based on the current goals of treatment and specific programs being taught. Surveys were then distributed to staff who received the mediator manual, to obtain social validity data on the manual. All surveys distributed remained anonymous in order to eliminate any bias that could have be present.
Design

The manual and brochure were created as a thesis project within a 14-week field placement in which the BPSYC student worked at a government funded autism program. **Dyads Staff Manual.** The Dyads Staff Manual was created to help staff implement the Dyads program effectively. The manual included descriptions of effective techniques, and effective skill building programs for transitioning children based on current literature and a survey or needs from current stakeholders such as teachers and instructor therapists. The manual also included sample sheets which were removable and available to photocopy as quick resources. **Parent Information Brochure.** The Parent Information Brochure was created specifically for parents of children attending the dyads program. This brochure included guidelines for parents to follow to help prepare for their child’s transition through the Dyads program. It included a description of challenges, which children diagnosed with autism who transition from IBI to school may encounter, along with literature to support the program. The information brochure also included subsections describing skills, which were currently being learned within the class, as well as their importance to the future for their child. This brochure was brief and written at a grade six level to increase the utility and inclusiveness of this resource.

Setting and Apparatus

The Dyads Staff Manual was designed for use at the agency for staff. The Dyads transitional group operated out of a local government funded agency within the intensive services department. At the agency, the rooms used for Dyads were larger rooms with a table and a set up for two children for tabletop intervention, and for the portion that occurred in the natural environment, a large room labeled the “Group Room” was used. The Group Room had three tables, white boards, craft materials, and mimicked a layout similar to that of a kindergarten classroom. The ABC environment that children were working to transfer to was similar to the construction of a kindergarten classroom; it was in a large room, there were many toys and work stations set up, and there were tables for when children do table work. A maximum of 8 children were present within the classroom to allow for a 2:1 or 3:1 ratio of children to staff. The classroom was structured so there was time for independent and group work, circle activities, sensory time, as well as music with their teacher, and most of the teaching occurred either during circle, or within the classroom environment.

The Parent Information Brochures were given to parents by the instructor therapists prior to the start of the Dyads program to increase parents’ knowledge about the program, and how to best support their children through this transition both at home and within the community.

Materials

A variety of worksheets and activities were prepared as resources to be included into the manual for mediators to use during activity time, and to help with skill development. Sample data sheets were also provided in the staff manual for use during the Dyads program.

Measures

Staff surveys were distributed through an online survey resource (surveymonkey.com) after the manual was given out (Appendix C). The purpose of this survey was to evaluate the staff’s opinions on the content, the clarity, as well as the usefulness of the resources. The survey contained items that evaluated the manual as a whole, such as: “This manual covered all relevant
concerns and troubleshooting”, “The set-up options for individual rooms and table given in this manual are helpful”, “This manual was clear, structured, and easy to navigate”, “This manual was helpful to me overall”, and “This manual will be helpful for parents with children in the Dyads program”. The survey included a Likert Scale with ratings of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) to evaluate each question.
Chapter IV: Results

The product of this project was a Dyads Staff Manual (Appendix A) and a Parent Information Brochure (Appendix B), which described the transitional class program in depth and included steps on how to run the program for the staff, as well as background research supporting the program and an in-depth description of the program for parents. The goal of these resources was to provide comprehensive resources and support for both staff and parents in order to increase consistency, treatment integrity and overall knowledge of the program.

Staff Manual

The Dyads Staff Manual was divided into three parts: planning and preparing, troubleshooting, and sample programs and data sheets. An overview of the Dyads program and what to expect in the manual was included at the beginning, along with importance of transitions for children who have ASD and background research about benefits of group teaching with four sources to help staff become familiar with the structure of the manual. These articles were also added to the Maltby Centre’s shared database for future reference to staff. The articles were summarized and discussed in an oral presentation to one of the staff teams in a team meeting. There were no pre- and post-evaluations for the use of this manual since this was a new program and was scheduled to begin at the end of December 2018.

The manual was sent to staff at the Maltby Centre, as well as a link to an online survey (Appendix C) via SurveyMonkey to evaluate the effectiveness of the manual through the use of a feedback form with a 5-point rating scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), as well as a section for comments at the end. However, due to time restrictions, only two responses were processed. Out of the two responses, the feedback survey showed that items were mostly scored as Strongly Agree (Table 1; Figure 1), demonstrating the usefulness and comprehensiveness of the Dyads Staff Manual. Given the limited responses, mean, median, and mode for feedback were unable to be accurately calculated to represent the sample who used the Dyads Staff Manual.

Parent Information Brochure

The Parent Information Brochure was created for the parents of children in the IBI program who were transitioning into the Dyads program. This brochure included basic information about the Dyads program and briefly described the program components, so parents could get a general idea about the program that their child was starting. Included in the brochure were research about the importance and challenges of transitioning, as well as benefits of group teaching. The goal of the brochure was to help demonstrate the importance and the necessity of the transitional program. The Essential Eight Skills for the Maltby Autism Behavioural Classroom (ABC) was also included to aid parents in understanding the key target skills their child would be learning throughout the transitional program.
Table 1
Feedback Survey Results for the Dyads Staff Manual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This manual was easy to use and navigate.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This manual covered all relevant information about the Dyads program.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The set-up options for individual rooms and table given in this manual are helpful.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This manual was clear, structured, and easy to navigate.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The manual covered relevant concerns and solutions for troubleshooting.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This manual was helpful to me overall.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 1: Feedback survey results for the Dyads Staff Manual.*
Chapter V: Discussion

Summary
Transitioning for children who have autism spectrum disorders can be difficult, especially from a one-on-one intensive program to a classroom setting. The Dyads program was developed to assist children with their transition into a classroom setting and to prime them for the necessary skills (listening, social skills, independence, etc.) that they need in order to be successful in their future learning. The purpose of this thesis was to create a manual for staff that outlines and highlights key components of the Dyads program to help prepare staff to run the program effectively and efficiently with consistency. A Parent Information Brochure was also designed for the parents that included information about the Dyads program, background research about transitional importance and working with groups, as well as the necessary skills for their children to learn to help with their transition to a classroom setting.

Current Literature
Current and past literature have indicated that group learning has benefited children with ASD in both learning important skills, as well as transitioning. Research outlined the benefits and effectiveness of teaching students within a natural environment (NET), teaching children in a small group setting to learn skills, preparing children with ASD with transitioning into a new setting, as well as importance of parent involvement within the children’s treatments, and parental knowledge about their current programs. Although there was no current research about running a dyads program as a transitional program within an agency that also provided IBI services, this thesis sought to fill that gap in the literature and use past effective studies to support the need for the Dyads transitional program.

Strengths
This thesis used a variety of current literature to evaluate strengths and limitations of working with children who have ASD in group settings, NET settings, as well as transitional importance. Because of this, the Dyads Staff Manual was created with support of this empirical evidence to ensure best practices were used throughout the creation of this program to ensure children within the Dyads program were receiving the most ethical, up-to-date, and practical treatments possible. This program was also run as a trial within the past year with other experienced staff, so these staff were able to contribute to the development of the manual, giving pointers about what worked well and what did not work as well.

Limitations/Challenges/Ethical Issues
A major challenge within this project was time and getting an adequate number of responses on the feedback survey. The manual took longer to complete than expected, as it was reviewed by members of the agency, and it went through a thorough review process. Since the manual took longer to complete, the feedback survey was not able to be distributed until a later date, causing a delay in response time, and resulted in only two responses. These two responses were not representative enough of the sample who used the manual, so that was also a limitation to the validity of the data obtained.

Another limitation was that the Dyads Working Group is run with a different set of staff than who ran the first trial previously. This discrepancy in staff can alter the way the Dyads group is run and affect the effectiveness of the manual as a whole.
Multilevel Challenges

There are multilevel challenges within any organization, especially with working in an intensive setting with children who have autism. For this thesis and the Dyads working group specifically, these challenges occur in the client level, program level, agency level, and societal level.

Client Level. Challenges at the client level included participation and attendance to the program. This thesis took place in the fall months, which is the prime season for illnesses, more particularly the common cold and flu. Due to sicknesses, children had to stay home depending on their symptoms to ensure the sickness did not spread to other children, and because these children attended 2-3 days during the week, there were some weeks where they did not attend therapy at all.

Program Level. Some challenges at the program level for this thesis were that the Dyads working group was not currently running during the creation of the manual. There also were not any designated staff to run the Dyads program, or any correspondence training alongside it. With this particular program, staff were unsure about how to approach it, how to run the program efficiently, and how to select their Dyad, as it was only previously run as a trial with different staff during the summer program.

Organizational Level. Challenges presented in the organizational level were mainly miscommunication throughout the different staff in the agency. Staff knew that the Dyads program was approaching, however none of them knew when, or who would be running them. Throughout the creation of the manual, there were activities that were prepared for the Dyads group when staff had an open block of time, but sometimes materials were prepared more than once due to a miscommunication between staff about what was still required.

Societal Level. On the societal level, some of the greatest challenges are the general acceptance and stigma around people who have autism spectrum disorders, as well as the resources available for families. This disorder is immensely misunderstood by many individuals in society who may not be familiar with the many levels of the spectrum and the challenges that individuals with autism face, which can create stigma at the societal level. In regard to resources, children with ASD can receive support both in schools and within the intensive service, however beyond these educational settings, additional support for families may be limited due to funding and expenses, which is also a challenge for families who want to support their child the best way they can.

Contributions to Behavioural Psychology Field

This thesis sought to help bridge a gap in literature in transitioning from an intensive setting to a group or classroom setting through the use and application of appropriate skills, fading one-on-one supports to a shared support staff, and the use of a specialized program to help with the transition. This manualized program can help ensure treatment integrity and best practices for future use of this program within the field of autism and intensive behavioural intervention, as well as for children transitioning into a classroom setting.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research into the Dyads program can be extremely beneficial to the Ontario Autism Program, as this can be a program which is mandated, and used across Ontario. Benefits to this are that it will ensure all children transitioning into a classroom setting from IBI are getting the best transitional support that can be provided. The Dyads Staff Manual can be tested
with Dyads staff and children participating in the program at the agency to ensure all material in
the manual is as relevant and accurate as possible, as well as add in any information or
techniques that may be discovered that can be useful for future staff.
References


Appendix A: Dyads Staff Manual
Dyads Staff Manual

This manual was created by Cierra Vandermeer, 2019, for a thesis project for use by the Maltby Centre.
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INTRODUCTION

This manual will provide an overview to the program as a whole, provide additional resources, as well as ideas on how to set up and run programs. The important factors to consider about a Dyads group and tips about how to work through challenging situations or difficulties with behaviour will also be included within this manual. By the end of this manual, you should be able to:

- Know the importance of transitional programs and group learning
- Plan for a Dyads group
- Have all materials prepped for filler activities, themes, and programs to run a successful Dyad
- Set up for a Dyad group
- Know what to do if you encounter problem behaviours and how to get back on track
- Run a Dyad group!

Included in this manual are also Eight Essential Skills that Intensive Services staff and staff in the Autism Behavioural Classroom (ABC) put together that are important to have before the transition to the classroom occurs. These skills correspond to items on the VB-MAPP and can be incorporated with a child’s overall learning goals in their program. They are essential to work on to help with the overall transition to a classroom setting through the Dyads program. These skills correspond to learning objectives highlighted in the VB-MAPP and will contribute to more functional behavioural skills overall within a classroom.
The Dyads program is run at the Maltby Centre for children ready to transition from intensive behavioural intervention into a classroom setting. This program runs on 2:1 or a 2:2 child to therapist ratio and will focus on operating both in natural environment training (NET) sessions with both children together, as well as individually. Intensive teaching trial (ITT) sessions have been used more commonly in the past, however, NET teachings will be used more frequently to help prepare children in Dyads to assist with their transition into the classroom. This teaching style is used to mimic a classroom environment. The purpose of running dyads groups is to help fade out the one-on-one intensive services, previously provided to children within autism services, as well as teach them how to effectively learn their skills with a peer and from a peer to help prepare them for when they are transitioned into a school and classroom environment.
Based on a clinical decision, children may have the option to transition into the Autism Behavioural Classroom (ABC) at J.G. Simcoe. Providing a transitional classroom is an effective way to teach skills before children move into a typical classroom setting from IBI. The goal of this classroom is to teach appropriate social and classroom skills, acceptable classroom behaviours and expectations, smooth transitions, as well as fading out the one-on-one teaching.

Transitioning in general can be exceptionally difficult for individuals diagnosed with ASD. While there are specialized classes for students with ASD in many schools, there is a limited amount of research and resources supporting best practice standards for this specialized class. Teaching dyads or small groups of children diagnosed with autism currently exists in many centres despite the lack of research, models, and resources to implement these in an effective manner. With financial constraints and the potential benefits of providing peer modeling, fading out 1 to 1 teaching and the increased opportunity to develop social skills, group teaching appears to have propagated ahead of research. Having comprehensive resources and providing models for this evolution of services is vital in order to provide research into the most effective strategies to include within transitional classrooms.
BENEFITS OF GROUP TEACHING (LITERATURE REVIEW)

Teaching within groups can be very beneficial to the learners, as there may be more motivation to participate, there is more opportunity for observing a skill before one learner tries it, and there are many opportunities for incidental learning through a peer. A study conducted by Leaf et al. (2017) tested the effects of instructional feedback in peer groups of three, and the results demonstrated that the students were able to effectively learn primary and secondary responses, whether or not the skills were taught directly to one member, or to the other members of the group. Within group instruction, students were able to learn directly from the instructor or therapist, as well as their peers, which facilitated quicker responses and an increased rate of learning overall (Leaf et al., 2017).

Akers et al. (2018) sought to teach social skills and examine interactions between three children who have ASD and twelve of their typically developing peers. Through the use of activity schedules with social scripts, Akers et al. (2018) tested how well the students with autism could learn social behaviour through playing with their peers within the complexity of a group, while also investigating the effects and reactions of the students when activity schedules and scripts were systematically faded. Akers et al. (2018) focused on teaching the game of hide-and-seek to three students, including social expectations of the game, scripted phrases students could use when they were caught (e.g. “Aw man!”), and phrases students could use when they found their peers (“Found you!”). Additionally, multiple probes were conducted during unstructured play, for purposes of generalization, and daily activity schedules (Akers et al., 2018). This highlighted the aspect of teaching this skill in a natural classroom environment and transitioning from one activity to the other, while the activity schedule was successfully taught, then faded (Akers et al., 2018). The results concluded that overall, the three students with autism were able to effectively learn social play through the use of activity schedules and fading. Unstructured play probes were found to have increased with two of the students, suggesting that learning in groups is an effective method for teaching social skills and expectations (Akers et al., 2018).

While some studies focused on teaching in larger groups, a study conducted by Ledford and Wehby (2015) involved forming dyadic and triadic groups in typical developing students and students with ASD who were in kindergarten and grade one within a public-school environment. These groups consisted of one peer with ASD, and one or two typically developing peers in order to determine whether or not academic and social behaviours could be taught simultaneously to these students through instructional group sessions (Ledford & Wehby, 2015). The target behaviours consisted of academic and social behaviours, such as instruction and unstructured play, while probe and screening assessments were presented along with typical instruction, peer training and observational learning, as well as generalized sessions for unstructured play (Ledford & Wehby, 2015). Through the analysis of the results, Ledford and Wehby (2015) established that simultaneously teaching academic and social skills were effective in dyadic and triadic groups within classroom settings within a public school.
Further analysis of this study demonstrated generalization within these settings. All students within the study were able to learn new academic skills and behaviours at a similar pace, and the students who with a diagnosis of ASD were able to learn appropriate social behaviours in various contexts, both academically and during unstructured activity (Ledford & Wehby, 2015). Research in dyadic group teachings have continued to support the effectiveness of group teaching within students diagnosed with ASD (Ledford et al., 2008). In their study, six students who have ASD and speech/language impairments were selected from a specialized autism classroom from a local school and were placed in a dyadic formation based on similar skillsets and reading levels (Ledford et al., 2008). Table top probe sessions were conducted with the two students sitting across from the instructor, and this took place in multiple rooms, as well as a natural environment setting, to allow for generalization. Reinforcement was delivered with a token economy, using back up non-edible sensory-based items chosen using a preference assessment. Sessions were run in a similar format as a typical intensive table top intervention. Overall, the authors concluded that this study successfully demonstrated that students could learn and benefitted learning through observational and incidental learning within a dyad group (Ledford, et al., 2008). This is comparable to the results of the study conducted by Leaf et al. (2017) when high rates of learning were shown in students who were placed in triads.

Full copies of these articles, as well as a summary PowerPoint, can be found in the I drive on Sharepoint under the Dyads tab.
# ESSENTIAL EIGHT SKILLS FOR MALTBY ABC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operant</th>
<th>VB-MAPP Code</th>
<th>Program Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listener Receptive</strong></td>
<td>3b</td>
<td>Responds to safety commands in context (i.e. no, stop, wait/not now/later, come, ‘(child name)’, hold my hand)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listener Receptive &amp; Tact</strong></td>
<td>LR 10M</td>
<td>Selects the correct item in a book, picture scene, video, or natural environment when named items and actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mand</strong></td>
<td>7C/12M</td>
<td>Politely mands to stop an undesirable activity or remove an aversive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mand</strong></td>
<td>4C (ind play)/7f(mand)</td>
<td>Mands to an adult for assistance (i.e. mands for help)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group</strong></td>
<td>7M</td>
<td>Lines up and puts away personal items with one verbal/gestural prompt (i.e. Snack, entry/exit).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group</strong></td>
<td>15M</td>
<td>Sits for a 20 minutes group involving 2+ peers with no disruptive bx, and answers 5 IV questions (i.e. what is your name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group</strong></td>
<td>11M</td>
<td>Uses the toilet and washes hands with only verbal prompts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Play</strong></td>
<td>15M</td>
<td>Independently draws or writes in pre-academic activity books for 5 minutes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other considerations:**

- Being able to accept 'no'
- working in dyads
- Proximity when delivering instructions (i.e. 2ft away, 4-6 ft., across the room while engaged in a highly preferred activity, etc.)
- Waiting for up to 5 minutes (for a r+, in line, for an activity to start, etc.)
- Fade VR schedule to VI schedule, reduce less tangible/edible items, more social praise and token econ.
- Mand -yes/no (8e)
- Can independently walk in the halls with IT, similar pace, at least 6+ feet away
  
  (VPMTS, LR, Tact) # and letter recognition. Phonetics are more beneficial than tacting letters
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BX Tracking</td>
<td>8:45-8:55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cubby</td>
<td>8:55-9:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Play</td>
<td>9:10-9:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle</td>
<td>9:25-9:50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom</td>
<td>9:50-10:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack</td>
<td>10:00-10:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside/Play</td>
<td>10:15-10:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Game</td>
<td>10:30-10:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPAS</td>
<td>10:45-11:00</td>
</tr>
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<td>Social Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reward Time</td>
<td>11:30-11:45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bathroom</td>
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<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>Outside/Play</td>
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<td>Circle</td>
<td>1:20-1:35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Play</td>
<td>1:35-1:50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom</td>
<td>1:50-2:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack</td>
<td>2:00-2:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Time</td>
<td>2:15-2:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Activity</td>
<td>2:30-2:50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward Time</td>
<td>2:50-3:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cubby</td>
<td>3:10-3:15</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
CIRCLE AGENDA

1. **Welcome**
   a. Check in with Name
   b. IV “What’s your name?”
   c. Responds to Greetings

2. **Morning or Afternoon Message**
   a. Theme week
   b. Teacher’s names - Kids say Hello to Teacher
   c. Anything else that is important for that day (ex-birthday)

3. **Calendar**
   a. Days of the week
   b. Today’s date - put date on calendar
   c. Month song

4. **Weather song**
   a. Hands up to check the weather
   b. Child A goes to window and tact’s the weather. Child B selects the weather picture

5. **Book of the Week**
   a. Mastered receptive skills
   b. Mastered tact skills
   c. Mastered IV skills

6. **Other songs or Companion Poem**
   a. Body Break (mastered actions)
   b. Mastered IV skills

7. **Craft to go with Book**
   a. Cutting (modified for each child)
   b. Gluing (modified for each child)
   c. Colouring (modified for each child)
   d. Writing (if possible)
PART 1: PLANNING AND PREPARING

Planning and preparing for this program is essential. Having two children who are both running their own programs will keep you busy. Make sure you are prepared for any situation, scenario, problem behaviours, and non-compliance that may occur with one or both children, by having resources available, such as activities to keep the other child occupied while you are teaching the other or addressing problem behaviour.

BINDERS

Each child will continue to keep their own NET and daily binders due to confidentiality purposes. Having the binders organized in a standardized way helps with efficiency and overall organization of the programs being run.

BINDER ACTIVITIES

Keep a binder for each child with numerous binder activities that they can complete independently in case you need a quick activity to keep them occupied, or even just to fill some extra time. These are also good for extended learning, and if you need to teach in a one-on-one scenario with the other child.

- mazes
- matching
- colouring sheets
- dot-to-dot
- tracing (letters, shapes, etc.)
- craft activities

FILLERS

Having crayons and colouring sheets, puzzles, play dough, Lego, extra toys, that one child can be engaged with while the other is in behaviour. Open-close activities such as file folder activities, IPAS, and iPad can also fill time and keep one child busy while your focus is on teaching the other child.

COLOUR COORDINATION

Colour coordinate each child’s items, High P cards, etc. to keep everything organized and to make it easy to quickly grab if needed. See SET UP – PROGRAMS/CARDS section for more ideas.

ACTIVITIES

Prepare which activities you want the children in your Dyad to do ahead of time, so that all materials are already prepared, and transitions can be seamless. This can be helpful if you run into behaviour during transitioning, as all materials will already be prepared and are ready to go when needed. These activities can include file folder activities, binder activities, IPAS (Independent picture activity schedule), any games you can run with the children together, circle activities, having an iPad on hand, and more.
INDIVIDUAL REINFORCERS/ REINFORCER ASSESSMENT

Each child is different and has different motivations, so ensuring you have reinforcers pertaining to each child’s specific motivations and interests can help with overall compliance. These reinforcers can be both edible and non-edible in order to keep the child’s motivation up.

Individual reinforcers need to be quick and accessible so that no reinforcement is delayed. Make sure you have all edible reinforcers prepared ahead of time, and that they are ready to go so you don’t have to wait or spend time setting them up during the session. Having reinforcers on plates instead of in baggies ensures that you can deliver any edible reinforcers quickly, so you can keep the flow moving smoothly during ITT sessions with both children.

PROGRAMS

Having similar programs with both children in the Dyad will increase efficiency as well as fluency within the session. From there, you can plan effective circle programs, NET targets, even similar programs at table that can be interchangeable between both children.

The “Wait” program and lining up program are beneficial to transitioning into the classroom, as these are common skills that are used in the classroom.

PAIRING

Having prior experience with the children helps with overall pairing, however it is still important to make sure you are paired well with the children you are working with. It is also important to pair the children with each other, so sessions run smoothly, and so they are motivated to work well and with each other during this group.
Pairing the children together can occur through peer manding, activities, giving reinforcement or freebies, and letting them play together.

TOKEN BOARD

Using a token board during the Dyads group may be useful in providing quick reinforcement and keeping motivation before working towards a bigger reward. This may increase duration of sitting at table, circle, or doing other group work, and make both children work for longer periods of time at table.
Token board training should occur before a child begins the Dyads group, during the child’s individual sessions. Having these skills going into Dyads can help set expectations right from the beginning, and it is also a program that many teachers run in a classroom, helping to promote generalization within different settings.
THEMES
Having themes during teaching in NET, circle, crafts, and low ration play mimics the classroom dynamic with having themes according to different weeks, seasons, or holidays. Many of these themes have been prepared already and should be in a binder in the Dyads cupboard in the group room.

VISUAL SCHEDULE
A visual schedule that is visible may help minimize anxieties about transitions between activities, as well as let the children know which activity will be coming up next.

COMMUNICATION
Communication is a vital part of keeping any program running smoothly. Having a communication log between different therapists as well as the family will help keep everybody updated about programs and progress during Dyads. Staff communication – Having a morning vs afternoon note section on the same page helps keep all information about the morning and afternoon sessions organized, as well as for quick reference. This can include general housekeeping items, what probes still needed to be worked on, what generally worked well and what didn’t, activities that worked or didn’t work, and where materials are in general. The staff communication note will include information on both children, so for confidentiality purposes, won’t be filed. It is mainly for staff and therapist communication to ensure all programs continue to run smoothly and effectively.
SET UP – ITT ROOM/TABLE ACTIVITIES

There are different ways to set up your dyads group, depending on personal preference, skill level of the children in the program, and ways that will help you run a smooth program overall.

TABLE SEATING 1

In this set up, the children sit beside one another with the IT sitting across the table from them. This is helpful in maintain eye contact, as well as mimicking a classroom setting. As the child progresses, the IT can move further away from the table to mimic the way teaching occurs in the classroom, which can make it easier for generalization in the future.

The room is set up so that each corner is designated to a specific child; each desk has child-specific activities, reinforcers, and items that the child likes. Advantages of this are if one of the children you are working with goes into behaviour at table, or if you need to individually teach, you can send the other child to their part of the room to work on activities to keep them busy or keep them in reinforcement while you teach with the other child.
TABLE SEATING 2

In this set up, a child sits beside the IT, and one sits across from the IT. This can be helpful if one child is apt to going into problem behaviour at the table, or if one child needs more intensive training than the other.
Setting up the cards and keeping them organized is part of running a successful and smooth dyads group. These can happen a few different ways:

**SET UP 1:**

This set up involves having 4 different card boxes – Two High P’s and two Targets (one for each child). You will need to set up 4 different piles to keep children’s cards separated and to make sure you are running the right program with the right child. This is where colour-coding cards comes in handy; you can make sure each child is designated a colour, so you’re running the right program, and so everything stays organized.

**SET UP 2:**

This set up involves having one pile of targets for each child, as well as a High P pile for both children combined. This is beneficial when children have common High probability cards and actions, especially if they are at a similar skill and learning level.
SET UP – BINDERS

Keeping all the information and data together will be helpful in the sense that you will only have to carry around one binder per each child for the day, as opposed to multiple separate binders. Having the binders set up the exact same way helps with fluency and organization during the programs. If you are running ITT, organize all probes ahead of time, and keep them located under the same tab in each child’s binder. If the children are working on the same program, it may be helpful to combine data sheets for efficiency purposes.

Most of the programs will be run in NET or the group room, similar to the setup of the ABC program. Having the general schedule at the front of the binder provides an easy way to stay organized and act as a visual prompt about where to proceed next.
PART 2: TROUBLESHOOTING

Programs don’t always run smoothly. Being flexible and thinking on the spot are key qualities you need to possess so you can fix any dilemma or problem you may encounter.

BEHAVIOURS

When one child goes into behaviour, it can be hard to deal with the behaviour while trying to keep the other child busy. When both children go into behaviour, it can be hard to get both of them back on track. Make sure to determine the function of behaviour and address the behaviour appropriate to that function. Some other ways to manage this may be:

- Start with one child. Getting compliance with one child is a start with gaining compliance with the other one. Once you get compliance, reinforce them for good behaviour and for responding appropriately. The other child may see that the first child is getting reinforced for good behaviour and they may begin complying in hopes of getting reinforcement as well.
- Buy-in with reinforcement. If a child is not complying, motivating them to comply with a high reinforcer is an option.
- Reinforcement for doing things well/good behaviour.
- Keep a smaller VR so the children can go into reinforcement sooner.
- Group instructions (ITT extinction)
  - i.e. “everybody do this” (Clap hands), “everybody do this” (touch nose), etc. and other high probability imitation to start getting compliance and build behavioural momentum.
  - Reinforce for compliance.

HAVING A BACKUP STAFF AVAILABLE IF NEEDED

If one child’s behaviour turns aggressive, safety to yourself and the other child is a priority. Having a backup staff to help is also helpful if you are having trouble recording VR, or if you are running into behaviour and need VR to be taken. It is also helpful to have a second prompter if a certain program is difficult to run because of non-compliance, or minimal motivation. A backup staff may be needed for a specific program if one staff needs to prompt, and if another staff needs to physically guide the child to functionally comply.
Teaching children to identify their emotions within zones can help them become more aware of how they are feeling and may help them to find a quicker solution. It can also help them with finding specific strategies to use when they are in a specific zone. Have children practice identifying their zones throughout the day and have them use different strategies to help them to become fluent in demonstrating coping strategies and appropriate behaviours to use. Below are the Zones of Regulation© that have been adapted and are currently used in the classroom at J.G. Simcoe. At the beginning of the day, students come in and put their name next to how they are feeling at that particular moment, with help from a staff within the classroom. Throughout the day, if they show a shift in their mood, become upset, or angry, staff will lead them over to the zones, ask them to identify how they are feeling, and then they move on to showing them a coping strategy they can use depending how they are feeling.

*Zones of Regulation© adapted by Maltby staff for use at the Maltby Centre*
ZONES STRATEGIES

Zones strategies are used mainly if children are identifying in the blue, yellow, or red zones. These strategies are used to help children to regulate their emotions after they have identified which zone they are in by using a visual that provides healthy and appropriate coping strategies depending on their current emotion. Staff will walk through the options with the child, making suggestions about how to choose an appropriate strategy, demonstrate the strategy, then have the child practice it.

The following page has an example of the appropriate strategies that are used in the ABC program at J.G. Simcoe in correspondence with the Zones program.
PART 3: SAMPLE DATA SHEETS

Included in this section are sample data sheets that you can use and adapt to the programs you are running. Most of your data sheets will be similar to the ones you have used in IBI with the child, however they are all adaptable to fit the learning needs of your child. All copies of the data sheets can be found on the I Drive on Sharepoint under Dyads, but here are a few examples of ones you can use in Dyads.
### Dyad’s Group Room Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/IT</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Probe</th>
<th>Trial-by-Trial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Group 7M:</strong> lines up and puts away personal items with one verbal/gestural prompt.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Social 8M:</strong> Engages in sustained social play for 3 minutes without adult prompts.</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>LR 14M:</strong> Follows 3-step instructions.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>N</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Mand 12M:</strong> Polite mands to stop an undesirable activity or remove an aversive</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Group 15M:</strong> Sits for a 20 minutes group session with no disruptive bx</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Group 15M:</strong> Follows 5 instructions in a group session</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>N</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Play 13M:</strong> Independently engages in arts and crafts for 5 minutes.</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Play 15M:</strong> Independently draws or writes in pre-academic activity books for 5 minutes.</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Group 13M:</strong> Works independently in a group for 5 minutes and stays on task 50% of the time.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Social 7M:</strong> Mands to peers.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Social 9M:</strong> Responds to mands from peers.</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>N</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please check this schedule on a regular basis. If there is a conflict, and you require the group room for treatment during a scheduled dyad, please contact a member of the dyad working group.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Time</th>
<th>Clients Present</th>
<th>IT’s Present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Response Criteria</td>
</tr>
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<td>------</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6c</td>
<td>Lines up with other children when physically prompted</td>
<td>Gets in line and waits in line and waits for: (\text{L1: 5 sec/L2: 10 sec/L3: 20 sec/L4: 30 secs})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7c</td>
<td>Goes to &amp; sits at a table with other children with only verbal prompts</td>
<td>(Learner) goes &amp; sits at a table with other with one or less verbal prompts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8c</td>
<td>Waits while seated at a table, without touching materials, until allowed to do so</td>
<td>Waits at table for: (\text{L1: 5 sec/L2: 10 sec/L3: 20 sec/L4: 30 secs})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8m</td>
<td>Transitions between activities with no more than 1 GP or VP</td>
<td>(Learner) transition from one activity to the next with one or less VP or GP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10b</td>
<td>Gets lunch with only VP</td>
<td>(Learner) gets snack/lunch items with one or less VP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10c</td>
<td>Puts away backpack, lunch box, or coat upon entering the classroom with group prompts</td>
<td>(Learner) puts away personal items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11c</td>
<td>Works ind on a task or activity for 1 min. w/o prompts or r+</td>
<td>(Learner) works ind for 1 minute across two days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12a</td>
<td>Raises hand to take turn in a group setting</td>
<td>(Learner) raises hand 90% of the time, across first 10 opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12c</td>
<td>Puts away toys and materials when prompted to do so</td>
<td>(Learner) cleans up materials when asked ind. to do so (ex. &quot;Jon, clean up&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14c</td>
<td>Follows safety rules in the classroom</td>
<td>Follows 100% of safety rules (X/# of rules)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NET Program/VB Mapp Code</td>
<td>Monday-</td>
<td>Wednesday-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Name: ____________________  CB#: ____________________
# ABC Data Sheet

Child: ____________________  CB#: ____________________

Behaviour: __________________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Antecedent</th>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>Consequence</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


The Zones of Regulation®: *A Curriculum Designed to Foster Self-Regulation and Emotional Control* (2011, Social Thinking Publishing)
Appendix B: Dyads Parent Information Brochure
ESSENTIAL 8 SKILLS FOR MALTBY ABC

These are eight skills that were identified as critical skills for students to transition into a classroom setting. These are priority skills for your child to learn that are targeted within the dyads program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responds to safety commands in context (i.e. no, stop, wait/not now/later, come, 'child name', hold my hand)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selects the correct item in a book, picture scene, video, or natural environment when named items and actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politely requests to stop an undesirable activity or remove an aversive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests for assistance from an adult (i.e. asks for help)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lines up and puts away personal items with one verbal/gestural prompt (i.e. Snack, entry/exit).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sits for a 20 minutes group involving 2+ peers with no disruptive behaviour, and answers 5 questions (i.e. what is your name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses the toilet and washes hands with only verbal prompts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independently draws or writes in pre-academic activity books for 5 minutes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES


THE DYADS PROGRAM

Your child has been selected to join the Dyads program! The Dyads program is run at the Maltby Centre for children ready to transition into a classroom setting from intensive services. Your child will be paired with another child during the day to help focus on social skills, and other appropriate classroom skills. This will help your child transition smoothly into a classroom setting. This program runs on either a 2:1 or 2:2 child to therapist ratio and will focus on teaching your child in an environment similar to school. Your child will still have individual instruction as well as instructions with another child. Individual table sessions, as you have seen in the past, will not be used during this program, but instead, natural environment teaching will be used. The purpose of running dyads groups is to help fade out the one-on-one intensive services your child has previously experienced as well as teach how to effectively learn with peers and from peers.

TRANSITIONS - BACKGROUND

Based on a clinical decision, children may have the option to transition into the Autism Behavioural Classroom (ABC) at J.G. Simcoe. Providing a transitional classroom is a great way to work on skills before you child moves into a typical classroom setting. The goal of this classroom is to teach appropriate social and classroom skills, acceptable classroom behaviours and expectations, smooth transitions, as well as fading out the one-on-one teaching to your child before he/she transitions into a classroom.

BENEFITS OF GROUP TEACHING – SUPPORTIVE RESEARCH

Learning in groups has been shown to have many benefits for children who have autism, which can help lead to more motivation to participate. There is also more opportunity for observing a skill before one learner tries it, and there are many opportunities for learning through a peer.

Research supports that learning in peer groups of three resulted in effective learning in children who have autism. It was found that responding appropriately to a question, whether or not the skills were taught directly to one member, or to the other members of the group (Leaf et al., 2017). Within group instruction, students were able to learn directly from the instructor or therapist, as well as their peers, which helped with quicker responses and an increased rate of learning overall (Leaf et al., 2017).

Research in teaching within groups of two children have continued to support the effectiveness of group teaching within students diagnosed with ASD (Ledford et al., 2008). Students were placed in a dyadic formation based on similar skillsets and reading levels and table sessions ran with the two students and the instructor, in multiple rooms, as well as natural environment settings to allow students to generalize their skills (Ledford et al., 2008). Overall, this study successfully showed that students could learn, and benefitted learning, through observing a peer within a dyad group (Ledford, et al., 2008).
Appendix C: Staff Survey of Effectiveness

Staff Survey

After receiving the Dyads Staff Manual, please answer the following statements on a by circling a number value on the scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree):

This manual covered all relevant concerns and troubleshooting.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

The set-up options for individual rooms and table given in this manual are helpful.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

This manual was clear, structures, and easy to navigate.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

This manual was helpful to me overall.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

This manual will be helpful for parents with children in the Dyads program.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Do you have any additional comments?

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