

# Having the skills stick

[Mount Pleasant High School](#) junior Kraig Hoffman credits his growing comfort around his classmates at school to [PEERS](#), the Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills.

“I have experienced changes in my self-confidence,” he says. PEERS taught me “how to use humor appropriately, how to handle teasing, and most importantly, how to make and keep friends.”

Since September 2014, PEERS has done the same for other middle and high school students with ADHD, autism, depression, anxiety and other challenges who’ve had difficulty fostering and maintaining relationships. Tasked by the [Delaware Department of Education](#) in 2013 to identify an evidence-based intervention that can enhance the social skills of these students, CDS tapped PEERS, one of only two such programs in the country.

Early results are encouraging. PEERS project director [Debby Boyer](#) says data from participating PEERS classrooms have shown a 25-percent average increase in students’ social-skill knowledge.

[Brandywine School District](#), home to Mount Pleasant High School, is one of several Delaware districts to receive training from CDS staff in the PEERS curriculum. Over the next two years, CDS plans to expand PEERS programming within those districts, and to invite new districts to begin implementing the curriculum.

“There really wasn’t a comprehensive program out there and we had to pull from different sources” before PEERS, says Donna Carroll, Brandywine’s social skills curriculum coordinator. PEERS lessons target a student’s ability to choose appropriate friends, have conversations, and manage electronic forms of communication. Our students “need these skills to be broken down and explicitly taught. What stands out most with PEERS is that it is scripted step-by-step. Students know what to expect from each lesson, which allows them to learn at their own pace and have the skills stick,” says Carroll.

Kraig’s mother, Christie Hoffman, sees them sticking. “PEERS has helped him to blossom,” she says.



Kraig Hoffman says his confidence and comfort around his classmates has increased, thanks to his school’s use of the PEERS social-skills curriculum.