# ""Steps in fostering children’s friendships

## Identify what the child does well in social relationships.

## Identify why the child is having difficulty in social relationships.

### A. Determine if the child is physically included. For example, does the child:

1) Have access to all parts of the room and the playground?

2) Have access to the toys and materials in the room?

3) Sit and stand at the same level as his or her friends in all activities?

4) Participate in all activities? Are adaptations made to materials (e.g. add knobs to puzzles); activities (e.g., shorten circle time for a child that has difficulty attending); and the way   
the child is asked to respond (e.g. ask a nonverbal child to choose by pointing to one   
of two pictures or selecting an object from the tub)? (Campbell, 1992)

### B. Determine whether the child uses misbehavior that interferes with making friends.

If so, then develop a plan to foster the child’s self-control.

### C. Identify what social skills the child has difficulty using in social relationships.

1) **Determine if the child initiates.** For example, does the child:

- Greet?

- Share?

- Help others?

- Touch others?

- Call someone’s name?

- Give directions?

- Show affections? (Adapted from DeStafno, Howe, Horn, & Smith, 1991)

2) **Determine if the child responds.** For example, does the child:

- Look when his/her name is called?

- Follow directions?

- Accept an offered object? (Adapted from DeStafno, et al., 1991)

3) **Determine if the child keeps an interaction going.** For example, does the child:

- Continue sharing?

- Play cooperatively?

- Play dramatically?

- Continue communication?

- Continue showing affection?

- Engage in roughhousing?

- Use toys for their intended functions? (Adapted from DeStafno, et al., 1991)

Note: Be sure to involve families in discussing what their child does well and hypothesizing   
 why their child is having difficulty in social relationships.

## Select the least intrusive ways to foster friendships. Consider ways to:

### A. Structure the environment. For example:

1) **Promote spatial density**

- Provide small, well-defined play areas (e.g. learning centers) (Brown, Fox, & Brandy, 1987).

2) **Provide social toys**

**-** Provide social toys in learning centers and outdoors (dress-up clothes, housekeeping materials, puppets, vehicles, sand and water toys, record player, blocks, see-saw, kiddie car, jungle gym) (Beckman & Kohl, 1984; Hendrickson, Tremblay, Strain, & Shores 1981; Odom, Hoyson, Jamieson, & Strain, 1985; Quillitch & Risley, 1973; Stoneman, Cantrell, & Hoover-Dempsey; Strain & Kerr, 1981).

3) **Plan seating**

- Seat the child with delays between peers, not beside an adult.

- Have an adult sit behind the child if he or she needs assistance (Odom & Strain,   
1984; Strain, 1985).

4) **Provide theme-related prop boxes**

* Provide theme-related prop boxes and only provide materials related to that theme (Rogers-Warren & Wedel, 1980).

### B. Use curricular activities and materials. For example,

1) **Affection activities**

- Discuss friendship, the purpose of the activity and how children may show friendship.

- Provide directions for affectionate greeting (e.g., John hugs Jim, Kim shake Joe’s hand).

* Lead a song or game which is modified to include prompts for affectionate interactions (e.g., hugs, pats, shaking hands) (sample attached) (McEvoy, Twardosz, & Bishop, 1990).

2) **Cooperative activities**

**-** Plan an activity for two or more children that requires:

• Participating children to coordinate with the actions of other players to accomplish the task or complete the activity.

• Low adult intervention or direction (sample attached) (Goffin & Tull, 1988).

3) **Structuring**

- Describe a theme to act out.

- Assign roles and provide theme-related props.

- Provide suggestions regarding what to do in the roles and with the props.

- List the rules related to the play.

- Step back and observe the interaction.

- Intervene only if the play stops by providing extra props to expand the children’s   
play or by providing extra play suggestions (Chandler, Fowler & Lubeck, 1992).

4) **Story reenacting**

- Read the selected story or nursery rhyme. Identify verbal, minimal verbal   
and nonverbal roles for all characters or for a few characters and make props.

* Day 1: The teacher reads the book.
* Day 2: The teacher models what to do during the story and tells the children whose turn it is, what to do and what to say.
* Day 3: The children practice with props and the teacher gives prompts as needed   
  and encourages deviations from the story (Bos, 1983; Goldstein & Gallagher, 1992).

### C. Encourage classmates to interact with the child having difficulty in social relationships.

For example:

1) **Use natural helpers**

- Select natural helpers to use in peer-mediated interventions that are:

* Eager to follow adult directions.
* Persistent at getting friends to play with them.
* Regular preschool attendees.
* Not biased by a negative history with the children with disabilities in the class.
* Able to imitate verbal and motor behaviors modeled by an adult.
* Skilled at cooperative play such as taking turns, sharing, offering assistance, being able to ask for help and capable of labeling their emotions.
* Skilled at dramatic play (e.g., capable of pretend play where several children enact roles related to a topic).
* Skilled at constructive play, such as using toys for their intended functions (Odom   
  and Strain, 1984).

2) **Promote belongingness**

**-** Identify the child that is not included in an activity and:

• Identify that child’s “circle of friends.”

• Ask peers to suggest ways the child with disabilities can be involved.

• Guide the peers to make appropriate suggestions.

• Use the suggestions (Lusthaus & Forest, 1987).

3) **Promote interdependence**

- Redirect children to other children when they:

* Come to the teacher for assistance – “Ask John to help.”
* Ask the teacher to answer a question – “Why don’t you see if Cindy knows the answer?”
* Ask the teacher to play with them – “It looks like Sue needs someone to help her cook. Let’s go see.”
* Show the teacher something – “You made the color purple. Show Jim what you made.”

4) **Use peer-mediated interventions**

- Teach classmates to:

* Share toys – “Read this book with me.”
* Ask classmates to share their toys – “Can I do that too?”
* Offer assistance – “I’ll hold the bucket while you pour the sand in.”
* Ask classmates to assist them – “Come help me with \_\_\_.”
* Organize play with a theme – “Do you want to play \_\_\_\_?”
* Give compliments to others – “I like your block tower.”
* Show physical affection – give pats, share a pillow.
* Ask classmates questions – “What are you doing?” (Adapted from Hendrickson,   
  et al. 1982; Odom & Strain, 1984)

- By:

* Role-playing or modeling to the child what to do.
* Letting the child practice, allowing for improvisations, while the teacher watches   
  and gives suggestions and guidance.
* Praising the child for using the strategies correctly and then supervising their use   
  of the strategies with other children, giving suggestions if the child forgets something   
  or does something inappropriately.
* Praising the child for trying to use the strategies (Strain & Odom, 1986).

5) **Establish a joint focus on attention**

- Teach classmates to:

* Ask the child they are interacting with to make eye contact or focus their attention   
  on what they are playing with by saying, “Look at me” or “Look at what I’m playing with.”
* Give the child a prop and tell him or her what to do with it. (e.g., handing a shovel   
  to a child and saying, “Help me fill the bucket.”) (Adapted from Goldstein & Ferrell, 1987; Goldstein & Wickstrom, 1986).

6) **Give play suggestions**

- Teach classmates to:

* Describe their own play or the play of others to the child they are interacting   
  with (e.g., “I’m washing my baby’s hair.”).
* Give the child they are interacting with play suggestions (e.g., “Feed your baby, too.”).

7) **Redirect**

**-** Teach classmates to:

* Redirect play when they do not like it (e.g., “Stop knocking my blocks over. Make   
  a tower and knock it over.”).

8) **Prompt**

- Teach classmates to:

* Ask the child to respond in a specific way (e.g., “Trade.”).
* Praise the child for responding in the specified way (e.g., “Thanks for trading.”)   
  (Adapted from Odom & McEvoy, 1988).

9) **Model**

- Teach classmates to:

* Initiate play (e.g., teach the child to use “Let’s” statements, such as “Let’s play   
  with blocks.”).
* Demonstrate how to play (e.g., “Watch me make a bridge.”).
* Offer a turn (e.g., “Now you make a bridge.”) (Adapted from Odom & McEvoy, 1988).

10) **Respond to communication attempts**

- When a child attempts to communicate:

* Recognize the child’s communicative purpose – How does the child want to affect   
  the environment? Requesting attention, refusing to participate, greeting, etc.
* Recognize the child’s communicative form – What form does the student use to communicate? Raising their foot because of limited use of upper limbs to request attention, looking away to indicate “no” or refusal to participate, vocalizing to greet, etc.
* Identify the child’s communicative purpose and form to peers and adults – I think Sue **wants the ball** because she is **looking at the ball**.
* Teach peers and adults to respond to the child’s form(s) of communication by explaining that it is important to react – When Sue looks at something, we need to give her what she wants quickly so she will learn to keep looking when she wants something.
* Model reacting to the child’s communicative attempt.
* Praise peers for responding to the child’s communicative attempts (Adapted from Rainforth, York, & MacDonald, 1992).

## If social isolation persists then select ways to teach the child having difficulty in social relationships to initiate and/or respond to peers.

### A. Consider ways to encourage children with disabilities to interact with classmates. For example:

1) **Use incidental teaching**

- The child attempts to communicate to another child by pointing, attempting to obtain   
a desired object from another child or gesturing.

* Ask the child to “Tell \_\_\_\_\_ what you want.”
* If there is no response after three seconds, model what to say, beginning with “Say, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”
* If there is still no response after three seconds, say, “I think \_\_\_\_\_ wants \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because she or he is (looking, pointing, etc.) at the \_\_\_\_\_.” and give the desired object to him or her.
* If the child uses words appropriately, make sure the friend gives the child what he or she wants and praise the child for “using his or her words.” (Adapted from Cavallaro & Bambara, 1982; Hart & Risley, 1975).

2) **Prompt and guide**

- When a classmate attempts to communicate and the child does not respond:

* Model for the child how to respond to the classmate while repeating the classmate’s initiation.
* If the child still does not respond, physically guide the child to respond to the classmate while again repeating the classmate’s initiation (Odom and Strain, 1984).

## 5. Begin undoing the plan. Remember though, real friendships take time.

# Sample affection activities

| **Preschool games and**  **activities** | **Directions** | **Modified directions for affection activities** | **Teacher prompts  and praises** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| If you’re happy and you know it | Students sit in a circle with the teacher and sing the following verses. If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands. If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands. If you’re happy and you know it, then your face will surely show it. If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands. Repeat with: stomp your feet, shout hooray and do all three. | Use the following verses: hug a friend, tickle your neighbor,  or give high fives. Continue, using as many affectionate responses as desired. | Great listening!  Doesn’t it feel good  to be hugged? |
| Simon Says | Students sit or stand in a group facing teacher. The teacher gives verbal directions to students and if he or she says, “Simon says,” the students follow the direction. The teacher begins: “Simon says, ‘Touch your toes.’ Simon says, ‘Jump up and down.’ ‘Turn around.’” Continue by using a variety  of simple directions that students can follow. | Use the following instructions: “Simon says, ‘Pat a friend’s back.’ Simon says, ‘Hold your neighbor’s hand.’ ‘Tell \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that you like her.’” Continue, using a variety of affectionate, responses. | You are doing a good job of becoming better friends! Thank you for paying attention! |
| Role-play | Students sit or stand in a group facing teacher. Teacher presents situations that the students can pretend they are doing. Some examples are: Pretend that you are helping your mother paint a wall  in your house. Pretend that you  are popcorn popping out of a pan. Pretend that you are a dog running around the yard. | (Name) fell and hurt himself. Help him feel better (give a hug). (Name) is asleep. Help wake her up (rub head). (Name) is sad. Help make him feel better (give a compliment). Continue, using situations that allow for affectionate responses. | You are a good helper! That is how friends show each other that they like each other! |
| The farmer in the dell | The teacher and students stand in a circle with one student in the middle to be the farmer. After each verse, another student is added to the middle of the circle. The verses  are as follows:  The farmer in the dell,  The farmer in the dell,  High-ho the derry-o,  The farmer in the dell.  The farmer takes a wife...  The wife takes a child...  The child takes a nurse…  The nurse takes a dog...  The dog takes a cat...  The cat takes a mouse...  The mouse takes the cheese...  The cheese stands alone... | Use alternative verses:  The farmer hugs  his wife...  The farmer hugs  a child...  The child tickles  the nurse...  The nurse pats  the dog...  The dog bumps  the cat...  The cat holds hands with the mouse...  The mouse puts  her arms around  the cheese...  Everyone tickles  the cheese… | I am so proud of you for playing so well together! You are being so nice to each other! |
| Duck, duck, goose | Students sit in a circle with teacher, and one child is chosen to be ‘it.’ The child walks around the circle, tapping each child on the head, saying “duck” each time. When he or she taps a child and says “goose,” the ‘goose’ chases the person who  is ‘it’ he or she gets back to the goose’s place and sits down. If  the goose catches the child, then  he or she must sit in the center  of the circle. The goose automatically becomes it,  and the game begins again. | Instead of saying “goose,” the person who is ‘it’ must give somebody a warm fuzzy before being chased. The teacher may want to explain the concept of giving warm fuzzies being friends and making others feel good. Warm fuzzies include hugging, patting, smiling, complimenting, etc. | Do you see how good it feels to get a warm fuzzy? Thank you for waiting your turn! |
| Ring around the roses | Students join hands, standing in  a circle with the teacher and sing  the following song:  Ring around the roses.  Pocket full of posies.  Ashes, ashes, we all fall down!  Students fall on the floor and repeat song if desired. | Ring around  the roses.  Pocket full of posies. Ashes, ashes, we’re all good friends  Teacher then gives verbal directions to students, such as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, give \_\_\_\_\_\_ five. Scratch your neighbor’s back. Hug a friend. | You are doing a good job of participating!  I love making new friends, don’t you? |

(McEvoy, Twardosz, & Bishop, 1990)

# Sample cooperative activities

| **Ages** | **Cooperative activities** |
| --- | --- |
| **Toddlers and twos** | * Two children string large beads onto opposite ends of the same string (Quillitch, 1982). * Two children try to bounce a ball with their blanket. * A pair of children carries an object in a two-handled container for a specific distance. |
| **Threes  and fours** | * Three or four children build a dog house for a stuffed dog. Tasks such as this require children to coordinate plans, assign tasks and share ideas and materials. * Two children play three-legged games. The three-legged walk has two children share their inner legs by having them tied to each other with a soft cloth. * Two children sit back-to-back with their legs outstretched and arms interlocked; then they try to stand up. |
| **Fives** | * **Bear swap –** Four players begin the game with five bear counters each of four different colors and a colored paper plate in corresponding colors. The first player rolls the dice, counts that many bears from her collection and distributes them to other players in any desired way. The game is over when all players have collected 20 bears matching the color of their plate. * **Blanketball –** Two groups of eight children each hold a blanket and pass a ball back and forth by spreading and grasping the edges of the blankets. Each team practices tossing and catching a beach ball by tossing it in unison to the receiving team (Saskatchewan Co-operation and Co-operative Development, North Dakota). |

(Golfin & Tull, 1988).

# Sample story re-enacting

**Setting: Pet shop.**

**Characters: Salesperson (S), animal caretaker (A) and customer (C).**

Stuffed animals representing familiar cartoon characters are used, such as Snoopy, Garfield, Spuds, Kermit and Benji. Smaller versions of these stuffed animals are used to represent the “puppies.” Crates serve as cages for the pets. Cards with the animals’ names and pictures are placed on each cage.

|  | **Minimal verbal** | **Nonverbal** | **Elaborated** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. S tells A to let  the people in. | Open | Waving, motioning  in gesture. | It’s time to open the store and let people in. |
| 2. A welcomes customers. (Flips sign and opens door.) | Hi, come in. | Points to animal type. | Hi, come in and look  at all the pets. |
| 3. S offers assistance to C. | Need help? | Guides C to a cage. | What type of animal  are you looking for? |
| 4. C expresses interest in an animal. | Dog. | Give animal to C. | I’d like a small, playful house dog. |
| 5. S assists C to pet cages. | Follow me. | Extends arms to obtain dog. | Just follow me. We have about five dogs  in our store today. |
| 6. A offers first animal to C. (Gets animal out of cage.) | Here. | Give C a picture card with the animal’s name. | Here’s a small beagle that we just received. |
| 7. C receives animal from A. | Nice doggie. | Points to puppy cage. | He sure is a friendly dog. |
| 8. A tells C the animal’s name. | Snoopy. | Offers choice of animal to C. | The dog’s name  is Snoopy. |
| 9. S draws C’s attention to the new animals. | Puppies. | Chooses animal card from A or points to puppy. | Look at all the new puppies over here. |
| 10. A asks C about desire to see an animal. | Which one? | Points to puppy or the animal card. | Which one of the puppies would you like to see? |
| 11. C responds. | Baby Spuds. | Give animal to C. | I’d like to see the small, white puppy in the corner. |
| 12. A restates C’s request. (Gets the desired animal.) | Spuds. | Extends arms to obtain animal. | Okay, I’ll get that one. |
| 13. A offers second animal to C. | Here. | Nods yes. | He’s really a little puppy. |
| 14. C receives second animal from A. | Cute puppy. | Points to dog or chooses animal card. | Thanks, this is the cutest puppy. |
| 15. S asks C about the decision to buy an animal. | Buy one? | Gives the bill to C. | Have you made up your mind which one you want to buy yet? |
| 16. C responds. | Snoopy. | Hands money to S. | I’ve decided I’d like  to buy Snoopy. |
| 17. S states cost of the animal. | Ten dollars. | Receives money from C. | That dog costs 10 dollars. |
| 18. C offers money to S. | Here. | Gives animal to C. | Here’s 10 dollars. |
| 19. S receives money from C. | Thank you. | Extends arms to obtain animal. | Thank you very much. |
| 20. A offers C requested animal. | Here. |  | Snoopy is all ready  to go home. |
| 21. C receives animal. | Thank you. |  | Thanks and have a good day. |
| (Adapted from Goldstein & Gallagher, 1992) |  |  |  |

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fostering social relationships plan for: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. List what the child does well in social relationships.
2. Identify why the child is having difficulty in social relationships.
3. Select the least intrusive ways to foster friendships.
4. If social isolation persists, select ways to teach the child to initiate and/or respond to peers.

Brainstorm solutions

# References

Beckman, P.J., & Kohl, F.L. (1984). The effects of social and isolate toys on the interactions and play   
of integrated and nonintegrated groups of preschoolers. *Education and Training of the Mentally Retarded*, *19*, 169-174.

Bos, B. (1983). *Before the basics: Creating conversations with children.* Roseville, CA: Turn the Page

Press.

Brown, W.H., Fox, J.J., & Brady, M. (1987). Effects of spatial density on 3-and 4-year-old children’s

socially directed behavior during free play: An investigation of a setting factor. *Education and*

*Treatment of Children, 10*, 247-258.

Campbell, P.H. (1992). *Preschool integration network: Training manual.* Tallmadge, OH: Family   
and Child Learning Center.

Cavallaro, C., & Bambara, L. (1982). Two strategies for teaching language during free play. *The Journal*

*for the Association of the Severely Handicapped*, *7*(2), 80-92.

Chandler, L.K., Fowler, S.A., & Lubeck, R.C. (1992). An analysis of the effects of multiple setting

events on the social behavior of preschool children with special needs. *Journal of Applied*

*Behavior Analysis*, *25*, 249-263.

DeStafno, D.M., Howe, A.G., Horn, E.M., & Smith, B. (1991). *Best practices: Evaluating ECSE*

*programs*. Tuscan, AZ: Communication Skill Builders.

Goffin, S.G., & Tull, C.O. (1988, July 16). Ideas! Encouraging cooperative behavior among young

children. *Dimensions*.

Goldstein, I.T., & Ferrell, D.R. (1987). Augmenting communicative interaction between handicapped

and non-handicapped preschoolers. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, *52*, 200-211.

Goldstein, H., & Gallagher, T.M. (1992). Strategies for promoting the social-communicative

competence of young children with specific language impairment. In S. Odom, S. McConnell,   
& M. McEvoy (Eds.), *Social competence of children with disabilities* (pp. 200-201). Baltimore:

Paul H. Brookes.

Goldstein, H., & Wickstrom, S. (1986). Peer intervention effects on communicative interaction among

handicapped and non-handicapped preschoolers. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis,* *19*, 209-214.

Hart B., & Pisley, T.R. (1975). Incidental teaching of language in the preschool. *Journal of Applied*

*Behavior Analysis*, *8*, 411-420.

Hendrickson, J.M., Tremblay, A., Strain, P.S., & Shores, R.E. (1981). Relationship between toy and

material use and the occurrence of social interactive behaviors by normally developing preschool

children. *Psychology in the Schools*, *18*, 500-504.

Hendrickson, J.M., Tremblay, A., Strain, P.S., & Shores, R.E. (1982). Interactions of behaviorally

handicapped children: Functional effects of peer social initiations. *Behavior Modification*,   
*6*, 323-353.

Lusthaus, E., & Forest, M. (1987). The kaleidoscope: A challenge to the cascade. In M. Forest (Ed.),

*More education integration* (pp. 1-17). Downsview, ONT, Canada: O. Allan Roeher Institute.

McEvoy, M.S., Twardosz, S., & Bishop, N. (1990). Affection activities: Procedures for encouraging

young children with handicaps to interact with their peers. *Education and Treatment of Children*, *13*(2), 159-167.

Odom, S.L., & Brown, W.H. (1993). Social interaction skills interventions for young children with

disabilities in integrated settings. In C.A. Peck, S.L. Odom, & D.D. Bricker (Eds.), *Integrating young children with disabilities into community programs: Ecological perspectives on research and implementation* (pp. 39-64). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Odom, S.L., Hoyson, Jamieson, B., & Strain, P.S. (1985). Increasing handicapped preschooler’s peer

social interactions: Cross-netting and component analysis. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Analysis, 18*, 3-16.

Odom, S.L., & McEvoy, M.A. (1988). Integration of young children with handicaps and normally

developing children. In S. Odom & M.B. Karnes (Eds.), *Early intervention for infants and*

*children with handicaps: An empirical base* (pp. 241-267). Baltimore: Paul N. Brookes.

Odom, S.L., & Strain, P.S. (1984). Classroom-based social skills instruction for severely handicapped

preschool children. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, *4*(3), 97-116.

Quilitch, H.R., & Risley, T.R (1973). The effects of play materials on social play. *Journal of Applied*

*Behavior Analysis*, *6*, 573-578.

Rainforth, B., York, J., & MacDonald, C. (1992). *Collaborative teams for students with severe*

*disabilities: Integrating therapy and educational services.* Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Rogers-Warren, A.K., & Wedel, J.W. (1980). The ecology of play materials on social play. *New*

*Directions for Exceptional Children*, *1*, 1-24.

Stoneman, Z., Cantrell, M.L., & Hoover-Dempsey, K. (1983). The association between play materials

and social behavior in a mainstreamed preschool: A naturalistic investigation. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, *4*, 63-174.

Strain, P.S. (1985). Programmatic research on peer-mediated interventions. In B.H. Schneider, K.H.

Rubin, & J.E. Ledingham (Eds.), *Children’s peer relations: issues in assessment and intervention*, (pp. 193-206). New York: Springler-Verlag.

Strain, P.S., & Kerr, M.M. (1981). Modifying children’s social withdrawal: Issues in assessment   
and clinical intervention. In M. Hersen, R.M. Eisler, P.M. Miller (Eds.), *Progress in behavior modification*, (Vol. II, pp. 138-173). New York: Academic Press.

Strain, P.S., & Odom, S.L. (1986). Peer social initiations: Effective intervention for social skill

development of exceptional children. *Exceptional Children*, *52*, 543-552.