



Peer Interaction & Activities Within the Community



October 2023 Parent Training
Dr. Amanda Luciano



Overview

- Friendships & Social Skills
- Community Resources including:
- East Islip recreation guide <https://islipny.gov/community-and-services/documents/parks-recreation-cultural-affairs/213-recreation-news/file>
- Eischools resources:
 - Special ed → Community resource guide (counseling services, psychiatrists, public agencies providing mental health services, neurologists, substance abuse services).
 - Community → Activities (Library Programs, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts)
 - Community → Community Links (Booster Club, Ice Hockey and Bowling, Historical Society, Library, Soccer Club, EJ Autism Foundation)

Friendships

- True definition: intimate relationship providing companionship, mutual support, and affection.
- Components: understanding what someone is thinking and feeling, mutually voluntary (friendship is a choice), relatively long term, stable.

Friendship Quality: Features of the relationship such as the level of support, companionship, or conflict it provides the child

- 3 aspects: Does the child have friendships and are they mutually reciprocated? What are the qualities of those friendships? What does the friendship provide for the child?
 - A high conflict relationship can transmit to a lower quality friendship.

Benefits of High Quality Friendships

- Buffer the impact of stressful events: help with coping, venting, opportunities to go out and spend time to mitigate the impact of stressful events
- Correlates positively with self-esteem: feelings of belonging
- Correlates negatively with anxious/depressive symptoms
- Protective factor against being treated poorly by others
- A predictor of later school adjustment and academic achievement

What Makes it Hard to Form Friendships?

Motivation: child might lack skills and therefore was rejected or denied friendships for quite some time, which results in a lack of motivation.

Social Communication Delays: difficulty with reciprocity, having a conversation/initiating conversation, inability to pick up on non-verbal cues, not recognizing body language.

Other Skills Needed

- Ability to manage emotions: processing & coping with emotions, some children become overwhelmed and may feel flooded
- Situational awareness: “reading the room”, a lot of communication is through body language!
- Having empathy: understanding what someone is going through/how they might be feeling
- Compromise/Cooperative Play: give and take, giving up some control and maybe not always getting to do what they want
- Flexibility/adaptability
- Reading your audience: time and place, realizing who you are talking to and adjusting your communication

Interventions

- Expanding students' shared activities: does not always need to focus on the classroom- extracurriculars, after school activities, lunchtime, recess, etc. all provide opportunities for students to deepen friendships with peers.
- Equipping students with the proper skills:
 - Initiating interactions
 - Responding to initiations to keep an interaction going
 - Starting and engaging in conversations (greetings, topics)
 - Giving and accepting compliments
 - Taking turns and sharing
 - Helping others and asking for help
 - Including others in activities

Engaging adults as facilitators offers a viable pathway to helping students create friendships.

How Can Staff and Parents Help?

Peer support networks such as dances, school newspapers, sporting events, clubs, service-learning projects, all provide potentially rich places for students to meet others, develop friendships, and learn new skills.

- Identify potential activities: what clubs, programs, or other events are students interested in? Ask and help them brainstorm.
- Determine activity requirements: parental permission? Fees?
- Address logistical issues: where do they take place? Will the student need accommodations?
- Identify peer buddies: are there students participating who could assist? Is there a current peer buddy who is participating or who shares similar interests and would be willing to assist?
- Determine supports needed: what sort of adult supervision is provided for the participating student?
- Address potential challenges: issues may arise, try and prepare for any potential barriers ahead of time.

Strategies

- It's important to not assume that children and teens know the right things to do in a situation, they may need to be taught! Spend time talking and practicing social skills.
- Use literature: Read alouds are one of the most effective and efficient ways to teach social skills.
- Play games: Games lend themselves to teaching social skills. When playing games, be purposeful about what skills you are working on and focus on integrating them into the game.

Use literature 	Strategies for Teaching Social Skills www.thepathway2success.com	
Practice social problem-solving 	Use social skill writing prompts 	Create social scripts binders 
Model and practice together 	Integrate art activities 	Play games and sports 

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Strategies

- Social skills writing prompts can be used in school or at home. Discussing social expectations before an event or activity helps to reinforce those skills.
- Model and practice skills together: Modeling helps children integrate these skills into their daily lives. For example, modeling positive self-talk to a child.
- Teach social-problem solving skills: Provide a social scenario to a child or teenager and have them discuss.
- Discuss movies and video clips: Can be similar to literature, can be helpful for visual learners.

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Relationships



Friendship Skills	- How to Lose All Your Friends by Nancy Carlson - Love Monster and the Last Chocolate by Rachel Bright - Jessica's Box by Peter Carnavas - Louise and Andie: The Art of Friendship by Kelly Light
Conversations	- Why Should I Listen? By Claire Llewellyn - Lacey Walker, Nonstop Talker by Christanne C. Jones - Amelia Bedelia by Peggy Parish - Howard B. Wigglebottom Learns to Listen by Howard Binkow
Including Others	- The Boy Who Wouldn't Share by Mike Reiss - Rulers of the Playground by Joseph Kuefler - A Sick Day for Amos McGee by Philip C. Stead - The Invisible Boy by Patrice Barton - Same Same But Different by Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw
Working with Others	- Swimmy by Leo Leonni - Little Blue Truck by Alice Schertle - The Giant Jam Sandwich by John Vernon Lord - Yes We Can! By Sam McBratney - Farmer Duck by Martin Waddell and Helen Oxenbury - Stone Soup by Jan J. Muth
Getting Along with Others	- Pass It On by Sophie Henn - We Can Get Along by Lauren Murphy Payne - Red: A Crayon's Story by Michael Hall - Being Agatha by Anna Pignatari - Swimmy by Leo Leonni
Conflict Resolution	- Eat Your Peas by Kes Gray - Sharing a Shell by Julia Donaldson - There's a Bear on my Chair by Ross Collins - Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak - Iris and Isaac by Chetivine Rayner
Making Up for Mistakes	- Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse by Kevin Henkes - Martha Doesn't Say Sorry! By Samantha Berger - Zach Apologizes by William Mulcahy - I Did It, I'm Sorry by Carolyn Bushner

Social Awareness



Social Expectations	- Time to Say Please by Mo Willems - Manners by Alki - How to Speak Politely and Why by Munroe Leaf - The Thingumajig Book of Manners by Irene Keller - I Want to Win by Tony Ross
Social Cues	- Clark the Shark by Bruce Hale - Don't Touch My Hair! By Sharon Miller - Freddie the Fly: Connecting the Dots by Kimberly Delude
Respect	- David Goes to School by David Shannon - The Way I Act by Steve Metzger - Respect and Take Care of Things by Cheri J. Meiners
Perspective-Taking	- Just Because: Where Seeing Another Point of View Makes a Better You by Amber Housey - How Do I Stand In Your Shoes? By Susan DeBell - The Girl Who Thought in Pictures by Julia Finley Mosca
Empathy	- The Invisible Boy by Trudy Ludwig - The Bicycle Man by Allen Say - Do Unto Others by Laurie Keller - Stand In My Shoes by Bob Sornson - Zen Ties by Jon J. Muth
Showing Kindness	- Each Kindness by Jacqueline Woodson - Those Shoes by Maribeth Boelts - Pinduli by Janell Cannon - Good People Everywhere by Lynea Gillen - Kindness Starts with You by Jacquelyn Stagg - A Chair for My Mother by Vera B. Williams
Celebrating Diversity	- Strictly No Elephants by Lisa Mantchev - If the World Were a Village by David J. Smith - Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon by Patty Lovell - Sam, Sam But Different by Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw - Smoky Night by Eve Bunting - Wings by Christopher Myers

More Intensive Strategies

- Attending a social skills group: Available as a resource in school, as well as outside of school
- Social Scripts/Stories: short stories that explain how and when different skills should be used. Written in first person so that children can internalize the skills they need to use.
- Role-playing: Acting out scenarios is a fun and memorable way to remember social skills!
- Social Skills Discussion Cards: short questions/discussion starters that allow for teaching of social skills.



Community Resources



Community Activities

<https://islipny.gov/community-and-services/documents/parks-recreation-cultural-affairs/213-recreation-news/file>

Contains information on: School-aged programs, community service, sports (golf, basketball, flag football), art classes, dance programs, events (holiday happenings and festivals).



Recreation Activities

- Found on school website: Departments -> Special Education & Pupil Personnel -> Recreational Resources (on the left side)
- Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts: builds character, works with students to build skills to become good citizens and develop physical fitness
 - Boy Scouts Suffolk County Council: 631 924 7000
 - Girl Scouts Suffolk County Council: 631 543 6622

Sports/Activities

- East Islip Just for Kicks: open to children between the ages of 5-14, specifically designed soccer program for children on the autism spectrum. Contact: 516-885-1087 (information found on East Islip Soccer website)
- East Islip Youth Challenger Flag Football: non-competitive flag football league, children 7-12. Contact: 631 987 9613
- HOPE Fitness: customized exercise routines based on needs and abilities to children and adults with disabilities. www.hopefitness.com
- Little League of the Islips: Challenger Division: open to all children with special needs. Email: clubhouse@islipLL.org

Sports/Activities Continued

- Modern Dance Program: Offered by Town of Islip at David Sanders Dance Dynamics in Oakdale. Contact: 224-5320
- Pal-O-Mine Equestrian: offers programs in adaptive riding, equine assisted learning, equine assisted psychotherapy, and competitive riding for children 12 and over. <https://pal-o-mine.org>
- St. Mary's Champion League Basketball: basketball league for children with special needs. For information: email- StMarysHoops@hotmail.com
- Suffolk County PAL: offers programs to children and young adults with varying disabilities. www.suffolkpal.com

Sports/Activities Continued

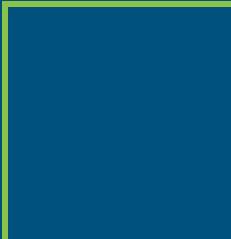
- Inclusive sports and fitness: organization whose mission is to provide skill-based fitness and habilitation training that maximizes an individual's capacity to engage in physical fitness, play sports, and participate in physical recreation activities. <https://inclusivesportsandfitness.org>
- KidStrong: for children walking-age 11. Combines physical activity with character development. Kidstrong.com
- Suffolk YJCC: provides after school social and recreational programs for students with disabilities. Contact: 631 462 9800 ext. 251

Social Skills Groups

- Cody Center at Stony Brook: Offers social skills training for students on the autism spectrum (group and individual). Contact: 631 632-8850
- Family of Kidz: Offers social skills training programs for elementary aged and middle school aged children with and without diagnoses of autism: Familyofkidz.com (go to Group Therapy on the top tab).
- Life's WORC: socialization program for students with autism between 5 and 12 years old, as well as a creative arts therapy program. www.lifesworc.org

Day Camp Programs

- ACLD: provides after-school therapeutic recreation, and school vacation and summer day camps to students five and older with disabilities. Contact: 631 665-1900 ext. 345
- Gersh Academy: day camp program for students with autism. Contact: 631 427 6700
- Great South Bay YMCA Inclusion Program: gives children with special needs the opportunity to have an inclusionary camp experience, for students from 1st grade- grade 6. <https://ymcali.org/camps/great-south-bay-ymca-summer-day-camp/inclusionprogram>



Any Others?

Any Positive Experiences with the
Ones Listed?

