



**NCPMI**

# The Power of Peers: Peer Strategies to Support Appropriate Behavior and Social Development

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# Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Importance of social skills
3. What are the key skills to teach
4. How to teach social skills
5. How to embed social skill opportunities
6. How to evaluate progress
7. Outcome Data



# What Having A Friend In Preschool Means For Later In Life Success

- Better academic skills
- Higher high school graduation rates
- Fewer special education services
- Better adult employment status
- Greater chance of independent living
- Better adult mental health
- Less drug/alcohol use in teen years
- Longevity



# It's Not Magic: Here Is What Friends Do For Each Other

- Always involve and include their friend
- Look out for their friend's best interest
- Encourage exploration/learning new things



# Other Reasons to be Concerned About Social Skills

- Foundation upon which many other crucial skills are built
- Major defining characteristic of children with special needs
- Often the first priority for families



# Selecting Skills to Teach: Specific Behaviors that Lead to Friendships

- Play Organizers
- Shares
- Assists
- Affection



# Selecting Skills to Teach: Specific Behaviors that Lead to Friendships

- Lengthy Encounters
- Reciprocity



# Selecting Skills to Teach: Specific Behaviors that Often Have a Major Effect

- Greetings (“Hi”, Wave, etc.)
- Smiling
- “Hot” Sayings (“Cool”, “Icky”, “Fab”)



# Teaching Social Skills in 4 Easy Steps

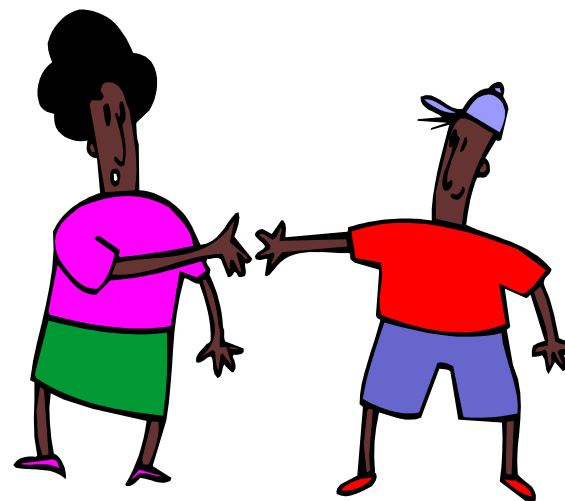
1. Direct group instruction (All kids)
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.



# Peer Mediated Strategies

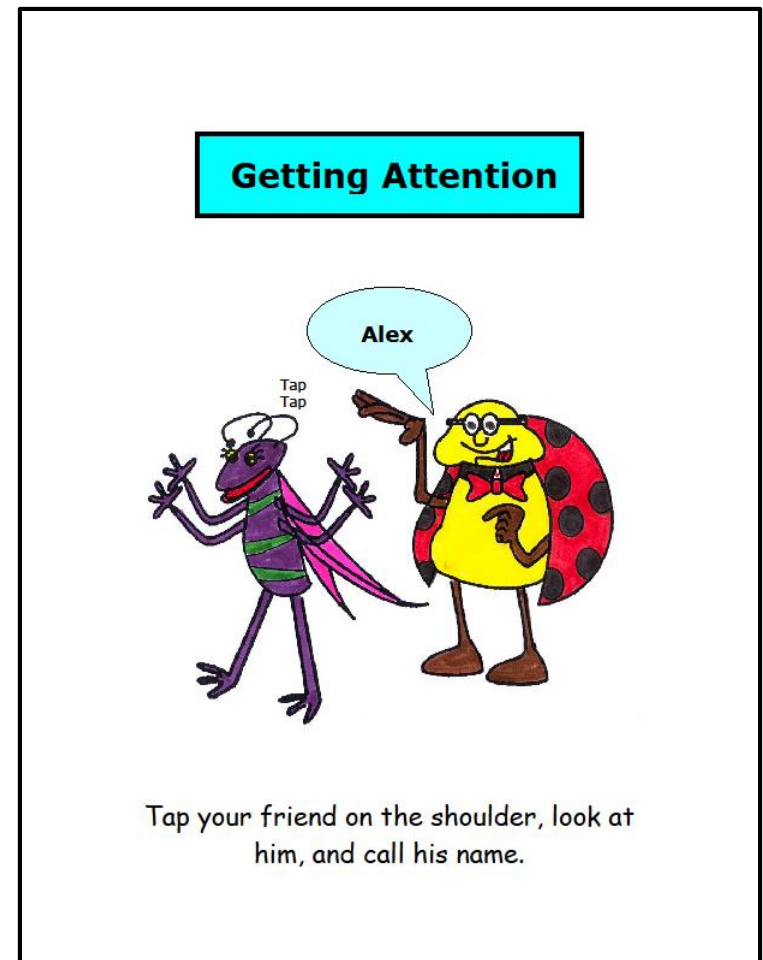
## LEAP's Social Skills Curriculum

1. Getting Your Friends Attention
2. Sharing - "Giving Toys"
3. Sharing - "Requesting Toys"
4. Play Organizer
  - "You be the Mommy."
5. Giving a Compliment
  - "I like your painting."



# Social Skill Curriculum – Teaching the Skills

1. Describe Skill
2. Demonstrate  
the “Right Way”
3. Demonstrate  
the “Wrong Way”
4. Child Practice with  
Adult
5. Child Practice with  
Child
6. Set up Reinforcement  
System



# Social Skills Instruction



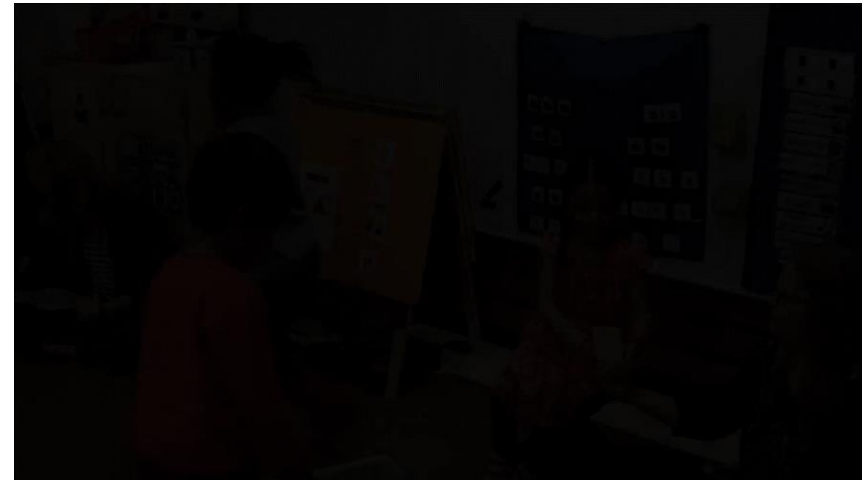
# Teaching Social Skills in 4 Easy Steps

1. Direct group instruction
2. Provide opportunities to practice the targeted skill (Natural and Planned/Embedded)
- 3.
- 4.



# Creating Planned Social Opportunities in the Classroom

- Look at things we do for children everyday
  - Have children invite peers to an activity
  - Have children pass out and collect materials
  - Serve snack “family style” (Snack Captains)
- Start thinking in terms of creating social opportunities when curriculum planning (Activities, Materials, Routines, etc.)



# Practicing Social Behaviors with Dramatic Play Scripts



# Activity – Embedding Social Interactions into Daily Routines

## Instructions:

- Using the table provided, write your daily schedule in the first column, under *Activity*.
- Identify 1-2 planned (embedded) social response opportunities for each daily activity.
- List additional (naturalistic) opportunities that might occur under *Additional Ideas to Promote Interactions*.



# Teaching Social Skills in 4 Easy Steps

1. Direct group instruction
2. Provide opportunities to practice the targeted skill(s) (Natural and Planned)
3. Prompting children to use the targeted skill
- 4.



# Tips for Promoting Social Interactions

- Arrange Materials and Classroom environment.
- Place Children in Positions where they can interact.
- Be sure children look at each other and use names.
  - Nonverbal children can use physical contact.
- Remind children to try again if they don't get a response.
- Remind children to “Play with your friends”.

# Prompting for Social Behaviors



# Teaching Social Skills in 4 Easy Steps

1. Direct group instruction
2. Provide opportunities to practice the targeted skill(s) (Natural and Planned)
3. Prompting children to use the targeted skill
4. Reinforcing social behaviors when they happen



# Recognizing That Social Behaviors are Important AND Effortful:

1. Tell children what they will be reinforced for.
  - Establish (choose) reinforcement
2. Watch for natural occurrences of the target behavior.
3. Reinforce with Behavior Specific Praise and specified reinforcer.
4. Reinforce Effort and/or the demonstration of effortful behavior.



# Additional Ideas for Promoting Peer Interactions

- ❖ Peer Statues
- ❖ Peer Transitions
- ❖ Friendship Activities
- ❖ Toys with High “Social Value”



# Putting it All Together – Snack Captains



# Putting it All Together – Buddy Play

- Children are paired up for Center Time
- Use visuals to help ID peers
- First 10-15 minutes of Centers is plenty



# Peer Behaviors as an Instructional Resource

- Initiate social interactions
- Respond to social bids
- Pass-out & Pick-up materials, props
- Model desired actions
- Invite others to activities
  - Take their hand and lead them there
- Give play directions (play organizer)
- Praise, compliment peers
- Help others complete a task/activity (give assistance)



# Some Thoughts on the Assessment of Social Skills

- ✓ Starts with creating social objectives on the IEP.
- ✓ Requires some knowledge of typical norms related to peer social interactions
- ✓ Have a systematic way of measuring targeted social skills
  1. Assessing social skills
  2. Social Skills Objectives on the IEP



# Benefits for Typical Children

- More positive/accepting attitudes about people with disabilities
- More social skills
- Equal if not greater, developmental progress
- Less disruptive/inappropriate classroom behavior
- Viewed as more socially skillful by teachers and parents



# How Long Does it Take?

- For children to show some positive response:  
1 day
- For children to reach normative range on percent of time engaged in positive interactions:  
 $\bar{X} = 24$  days;      Range = 6 to 42 days
- For children to average at least 4 turns:  
 $\bar{X} = 123$  days;      Range = 27 to 191 days



# How Long Does it Take?

- For children to initiate more than 30% of the time:  
 $\bar{X} = 187$  days;      Range = 63-290
- For children to initiate more than 40% of the time (N=72):  
 $\bar{X} = 214$ ;                      Range = 68-340



# What is the Intensity Across Two Years of Intervention?

- $\bar{X}$  number of embedded response opportunities = 33,000
- $\bar{X}$  number of peer initiations during free play = 39,000
- $\bar{X}$  number of adult social praise comments = 5,200 (during free play only)

# How Long Does the Effect Maintain?

- Research data indicate that social gains maintain for at least 6 years (through Elementary School)
  - Assuming the child remains in inclusive settings



# Available Resources

- Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning
  - Training Materials
  - What Works Briefs
  - <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/>
- Teacher's Toolbox: Quality Inclusion Curriculum
  - <http://www.ttoolbox.com/>



# Questions?

- Please feel free to contact us.  
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