
Working with Families to Strengthen Children's Peer Relationships

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INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with "Toddlers Making Friends," an article from Raising Children Network (Australia) Limited. The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

- ◆ Learn about how young children's personalities and early social skills affect their peer relationships.
- ◆ Identify ways to collaborate with families to strengthen children's peer relationships.
- ◆ Plan activities and take-home materials to share with families. Learn more about children and how to help them make friends.

Activity

- ◆ Review the article.
- ◆ Use the reflection questions to guide your work with families to strengthen children's peer relationships.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support children's peer relationships.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ To support young children in their early peer interactions, it is critical that we know and accept their unique personalities and developing social skills.
 - What have you noticed about children’s peer interactions in your classroom?
 - How do personalities and social skills affect how they relate to each other?
 - Do the interactions change based on the type of activity, setting, or the number of children involved?
 - Families are a great resource to learn more about their children. How do you currently engage with families to learn about their children’s personality and skills?
 - Plan a “get-to-know-you” activity. For example, an “All About Me” printable or “My Feelings” emotion naming.
 - Think of ways to learn more about their likes and dislikes. How does knowing this allow you to support children more in social situations?
 - Include a take-home component for families to add more about their child’s personality.

- ◆ Review the “Helping Toddler Playdates Go Smoothly” section. *Note: some practices may not be applicable to the classroom environment.*
 - Which of these practices are you already doing in your classroom? Which are new to you?
 - Discuss with a partner (e.g., coach, colleague) some other ways you can support children to begin to form friendships. Consider some specific ideas that may apply more at home that you can share with families.

- ◆ Forming friendships can be valued and viewed differently across cultures and family structures. Including diverse perspectives and traditions teaches children to be accepting of others.
 - Think about the different family cultures and structures among the families in your classroom. How does knowing a family’s culture and structure help you support children’s peer relationships?
 - Discuss with a partner (e.g., coach, colleague) how knowing a family’s culture and structure strengthen children’s peer relationships.
 - Brainstorm ways you can connect with families to learn more about their cultural and family traditions.
 - Plan to integrate them as part of classroom centers and lessons that focus on working together.

- ◆ This article is a great opportunity to connect with families around supporting their children to form friendships. Plan for ways to share with families. For example:
 - Create a take-home flyer or activity with the link to the article.
 - Think of ways to get family feedback. This can be during parent/caregiver meetings, a family night, or an informal conversation during pick-up or drop-off.
 - What did they find new or interesting from the article?
 - What would they want the teacher or other children to know about their child to better support their peer relationships?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about working with families to strengthen children's peer relationships:

- ◆ **Source:** Raising Children Network (Australia) Limited
- ◆ **Video:** Social Development: Children 1-5 Years
- ◆ **Link:** <https://raisingchildren.net.au/preschoolers/videos/social-development>
- ◆ **Description:** In this video, mothers share about their children's social development. Teachers can use the video to understand the perspectives of families on socialization. Teachers can also share the video with the families in their classroom to connect how peer relationships impact child development.

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- ◆ **Source:** Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation
 - ◆ **Booklet:** "Discovering Feelings"
 - ◆ **Link:** https://www.ecmhc.org/documents/CECMHC_Feelings_Book.pdf
 - ◆ **Description:** We are better able to support children to develop social-emotional skills when we know them very deeply. This booklet is designed to support teachers and families as they learn more about children's personalities, emotions, and preferences. It includes tips for using the resource with young infants.

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- ◆ **Source:** National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI)
 - ◆ **Handouts:** Backpack Connection Series: Social Skills (Green Handouts)
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Implementation/family.html - collapse2>
 - ◆ **Description:** These handouts include strategies to support specific social skills in older toddlers and preschoolers. Teachers can use the suggestions to work on those skills in the classroom. Teachers can also share these with families to support these same skills at home. Available in English and Spanish.