

This booklet has an ambitious goal: *to describe proven, practical ideas for individualizing support to students who have social limitations with their peers.* It is intended for teachers and other individuals who work in schools with students whose social relationships are lacking, nonsupportive, or troublesome. Chapters 1 and 2 lay the foundation for understanding children's social interactions and connections with their peers. Chapters 3 through 5 discuss strategies to make school environments conducive to the development of social relationships as well as strategies to assess, plan for, and teach skills that bolster positive ties among peers, particularly with students who have disabilities. Chapter 6 provides guidelines for initiating programs that encourage positive social relationships in schools and classrooms. Some students who do not have disabilities also will benefit from facilitation of social relationships. This may include teaching social skills or supporting students' membership in a classroom and among peer groups. Thus, the strategies presented in this booklet can be used to benefit students with disabilities as well as particular students without disabilities.

WHAT ARE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS?

Enormous variations exist in the types and intensities of social relationships that develop among people. Social relationships can be lasting or temporary, loving or hateful, mentoring or modeling, intimate or superficial, balanced or uneven; there are many ways to describe how social relationships vary. One prominent dimension along which positive social relationships can vary is the degree of closeness and intensity of caring that is maintained in the relationship. Friends, due to their close bonds and mutual alliance, are situated at one end of a closeness continuum; peer group members are located in the middle range; and acquaintances fall at the opposite end of the continuum. This book focuses on strengthening social relationships among children and adolescents, with a particular

focus on those individuals who lack close, positive peer associations.

Friendship has been defined in many ways, most likely because of its importance in our lives. A frequently cited characteristic of a "friend" is *someone who is socially important to and particularly liked by a person* (Figure 1.1). Friendships develop when several ongoing conditions or processes are present:

1. Opportunities to be together
2. Desire to interact with another person
3. Basic social interaction and communication abilities
4. Organizational, emotional, and social supports to help maintain the relationship as it develops

Friendships that are not entirely mutual or reciprocal may still be supportive and valued by one or both of the individuals; however, *social reciprocity*, or the balanced exchange of interactions between two people, is a characteristic of close relationships and differentiates mutual relationships from "helping" relationships, in which one person mainly serves as teacher, helper, or assistant to the other person (Haring, 1992; Odom, McConnell, & McEvoy, 1992).

Social networks refer to a student's reliable patterns of interaction and friendship with others as well as to the individuals that a person identifies as being socially important (e.g., kids I like to play with, those who are my friends, kids I would invite to a party).

Social support behaviors are behaviors in which a person engages to aid another person, either socially or emotionally. Social support can occur among friends, social network members, and acquaintances. Within friendships, social support is two-way and often reciprocal; however, support also can be one-way, as in a helping or teaching relationship.

Social support seems to vary both in its form (what it looks like) and its function (its purpose), depending on the supported person's age, gender, and cultural group. For example, older female friends lend emotional

Friend:	Someone socially important to an individual; someone whom a person particularly likes (Fryxell & Kennedy, 1995)
Social interaction skills:	Includes an array of interpersonal behaviors such as greeting others, approaching an individual or a group, listening to others, commenting/acting on others' requests or remarks, initiating an exchange, asking others to respond to or engage in an activity, entering into an ongoing social dyad or group, taking turns, taking actions intended to maintain an exchange or social activity, and terminating an interaction
Social competence:	Encompasses both an individual's effectiveness in influencing the behavior of a peer and the appropriateness of the behavior (given the setting, culture, and context) (Odom, McConnell, & McEvoy, 1992, p. 7)
Social networks:	The individuals identified as being socially important to a person; the patterns of interaction, acquaintance, and friendship an individual has with others, usually peers (e.g., Who do you like to play with? Who are your friends? Who would you invite to a party?)
Social reciprocity:	The interdependent exchange of interactions between two individuals that reflects balanced turn-taking.
Development of friendships:	A growth process that leads to close human relationships between two individuals and reflects several ongoing processes such as creating opportunities for interaction; learning social skills that facilitate interactions; and generating organizational, emotional, and social supports to maintain relationships. The outcome of development is a relationship between two individuals that is characterized by social reciprocity or the mutual exchange of interactions (Haring, 1992, p. 314; Odom et al., 1992, p. 8)
Peer support:	Actions taken by individuals of the same age that involve lending emotional and social sustenance or assistance to each other in a reciprocal unidirectional manner. The form of these supports may vary according to the age, gender, and cultural group of the individuals involved and also according to the manner in which the individuals communicate. The function of the support may also vary in that it can be directed toward physical care, entertainment, learning or tutoring, emotional comfort, and so forth.

Figure 1.1. A glossary of terms.

support to each other in ways that appear different from the support that teen-age boys give to each other, but the function of giving consolation is the same. Fryxell and Kennedy (1995) identified, by their function, five peer support behaviors that were used by 6- to 12-year-olds and that were relevant both to children with severe disabilities and to their peers without disabilities:

1. Providing information about daily events
2. Lending emotional support (consoling another during a crisis or sharing during a happy event)
3. Giving access to others (introductions to new people)
4. Giving material assistance (physical help, lending needed items)
5. Assisting with daily choices (making decisions)

For most of us, social relationships give life meaning. Relationships are usually a motivating force of children's school attendance; adults' relationships at work usually make the week more interesting, if not actually pleasant. Relationships provide opportunities to give support to others, both socially and emotion-

ally, and to receive support in return. Our ability to build and keep relationships goes hand in hand with our social skills. We call on these skills repeatedly throughout a given day; when we forget to do so, disharmony and conflict with others can result. Over the long term, our relationships have a strong impact on our general outlook on life and on our self-concept.

VALUING SOCIAL SKILLS AS AN EDUCATIONAL DOMAIN

Social skills and peer support are not tested by state assessments, and their impact on student learning is not measured on typical achievement tests. Most school curricula do not place the achievement of stable, positive social networks on par with reading, math, and geography; yet, we know that young adults who are lacking in social skills and who have minimal social supports are far more at risk for job loss than are those lacking in basic academic and production skills (Chadsey-Rusch, 1992). Many professionals view childhood social status as being a reliable predictor of mental health in adolescence and adulthood (Parker & Asher, 1987). *Children who exhibit poor relationships with their peers during childhood are at risk for an array of social adjustment problems later in life.*

These theories about social relationships are even stronger with regard to students with disabilities. Literature on social relationships suggests that students with disabilities encounter a number of social difficulties:

- The social opportunities of students with disabilities are often more limited than those of their typical peers (Farmer, Pearl, & Van Acker, 1996).
- Students who participate in general education classes and are currently eligible (or likely candidates) for special education, but who are not yet receiving special education services, are perceived negatively by their typical peers (Sale & Carey, 1995).
- Eight- to thirteen-year-old boys with mental retardation requiring intermittent support experience significantly more loneliness than their peers without mental retardation (Williams & Asher, 1992).
- Students with disabilities often are vulnerable to social networks that support or maintain their problematic social behaviors (Farmer, Pearl, & Van Acker, 1996).

It is important for those who work in schools to examine their beliefs regarding teaching social skills and supporting social relationships among students; if these skills are not valued in a school, it is doubtful that improvements can be made beyond each individual classroom. Strong justifications exist for including the development of social skills and relationships in the school curriculum; some of these justifications are listed in Figure 1.2. Schools have taken an important first step in the process of making a difference when they recognize the value of positive social relationships among students.

Why are social relationships important for all students?

1. Social relationships add substantial quality to our lives.
2. Social interaction skills are needed in many daily routines.
3. Social relationships are often a prime motivation for attending school, holding jobs, and making positive contributions in life.
4. A positive relationship exists between social competence and an absence of problem behavior.
5. The presence of relationships between people with disabilities and those without disabilities in a given community can serve as an indicator that disability is more an attitude than a defining human characteristic.

Figure 1.2. Rationale for social skills and relationships. (Source: Haring, 1991.)

UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENCES IN SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The nature of social relationships changes as individuals mature. Research on children's expectations of friendships states that younger children report that "a friend is someone you play with"; older children more often mention qualities such as loyalty, trust, and intimacy (Williams & Asher, 1992). Adolescent boys often interact in large groups, whereas girls spend more time in dyads. Consequently, having one good friend may prevent feelings of loneliness in girls but not in boys. The group membership of one's friends can further complicate relationships, especially for children with disabilities who are part of a special education classroom. If, for example, a boy wants to participate in a large-group activity, such as basketball, but is not accepted into the group, his friend from the special education class may be inadequate to buffer the boy from feelings of loneliness (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995). Some of the difficulties that inhibit successful social exchanges and gatherings between students with disabilities and their typical peers are not unique to individuals with disabilities. There is, however, ample evidence to indicate that these behavior difficulties are more prevalent among children with disabilities, particularly when there is no focus on social skills intervention and when achievement in school has been poor. The major categories of behavior difficulties include the following:

1. Aggression (both physical and verbal)
2. Withdrawal from or avoidance of interactions with others during structured times (class) and unstructured times (recess)
3. Nonresponsiveness to peers or inappropriate responses to peers
4. Interactions with peers that are of poor quality or immature
5. A failure to generalize or transfer social skills across situations and people (Brady & McEvoy, 1989, pp. 214–215)

The range of possibilities for support is broad when teachers match feasible social support plans to specific students of different ages, cultures, gender, and abilities. A social support plan is an individualized set of goals and strategies that will involve peers in the promotion of a student's membership and social acceptance; the plan may include instruction in social skills and communication as well as modification of classroom practices. Some support approaches apply to rather narrow groups of students with disabilities; therefore, their widespread application is inappropriate. The process of designing support plans for individual students must be collaborative and should involve the focus student, peers, family members, educators, and other school staff. The collaborative teaming process to design social support plans for individual students should be guided by the following core principle: *The individual student (and often the family) should be given opportunities to select, to shape, and to reject social supports and to determine the kinds of supports and the location and manner in which those supports are given.*

ESTABLISHING THE CONDITIONS FOR SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Because the traditional business of schools is to teach academics, not to build social relationships, many barriers to social interaction may exist within schools. These barriers can be traced to different sources: school buildings and grounds; school buses and transportation policies; teachers, staff, and administrators; schedules and student groupings; and the students themselves (Figure 1.3). These barriers can hinder teachers from creating conditions that are favorable to social relationships.

There are six major factors that influence students' social participation: 1) opportunities, 2) atmosphere, 3) social support and motivation, 4) social competence and interaction skills, 5) academic achievement, and 6) maintenance generalization of relationships (Breen, Haring, Weiner, Laitinen, & Berstein, 1991).

<p>Physical and contextual barriers to social interaction: Building, scheduling, and staff issues that prevent opportunities for interacting with peers</p>	<p>Student barriers to social interactions: Student characteristics that get in the way of learning social skills or attaining social acceptance</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students with disabilities are separated from peers (e.g., bus, classroom, daily schedule) • Few opportunities exist for social interactions • Architectural barriers are present (e.g., building, grounds, transportation) • Adults encourage helping or teaching interactions rather than social interactions • Inappropriate contexts and activities exist: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socially unacceptable (culture, age, or group standards) • Stigmatizing • Not amusing or interesting • Nonreciprocal • Adults interfere with interaction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hovering • Interrupting interactions • Suggesting activities that are not "cool" • Staff fear or misunderstand disabilities • Staff do not value interactions between students with and without disabilities • Staff models for positive interactions with students who have disabilities are lacking • The school atmosphere is competitive or uncooperative; most students with disabilities never "make the grade" 	<p>Students who are isolated socially may exhibit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antisocial behaviors: Aggression, withdrawal, nonresponsiveness • Age-inappropriate interests and behavior • Grooming problems • Communication difficulties • Challenging learning characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few learned skills • Poor retention of learned skills • Poor generalization of skills <p>Students who are not socially isolated may exhibit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative attitudes (e.g., pity, fear, aversion) toward human differences in ability, culture, and beliefs • Inexperience with others who have disabilities or differences • An inability to model positive interactions with students who have disabilities

Figure 1.3. Barriers to social relationships.

Teachers should determine whether their schools, classrooms, and individual students have shortcomings in any of these six areas. In order to build supportive social relationships between students with disabilities and their peers, teachers need to work collaboratively among themselves and with others (i.e., administrators, other school staff, students) and set goals and take actions regarding one or more of these six influencing factors.

Opportunity

Often, interactions between students with disabilities and their peers are limited by

using separate classrooms, frequent "pull-out" sessions for special services, special education "wings," short lunch periods, separate buses, different arrival and departure times and bus locations, cafeteria seating arranged by classroom, and rules to reduce talking in the halls or classrooms. Some of these practices are a result of special education's being "a location that one goes to" rather than "a portable set of supports." The other practices are meant to diminish peer interaction in general; these practices are based on the philosophy that schools are for learning and that socializing "gets in the way." History, how-

ever, has taught us that if students with and without disabilities do not spend time together during their school years, they will not develop meaningful relationships. Some administrative actions, such as the elimination of separate bus schedules for students with disabilities, the use of lift-equipped buses for all students, and the replacement of pull-out special education with classroom-based support, abolish the isolation that many children with disabilities experience during their school years.

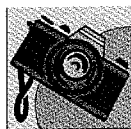
As students are brought together and opportunities for social interaction increase, other factors that influence a student's social development become more visible and may require attention. Teachers may discover a need to

- Facilitate social skills development
- Provide motivating and age-appropriate activities
- Plan individualized support for students
- Eliminate staff and student prejudices and ignorance about disabilities

Atmosphere

We all have been in schools that feel welcoming, that take pride in having a diverse student body, and that value all students as part of their community. Positive school atmospheres often are a product of the leadership of certain teachers and school administrators; however, sometimes individual students with disabilities are largely responsible for transforming attitudes (Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, & Schattman, 1993). A number of specific staff and student characteristics contribute to an atmosphere in which disabilities and other human differences (e.g., racial, ethnic, cultural, ability) are less visible. These characteristics are interrelated and include one's personal attitudes toward human differences, one's prejudices, and one's knowledge of and experience with people and cultures different from one's own.

Student Snapshot



Daniel is a second grader who has multiple disabilities: He has cerebral palsy and a visual impairment, as well as a seizure disorder. Daniel uses a wheelchair and needs to be fed and dressed. To communicate with others, Daniel is learning to use a communication device that speaks for him. When Daniel first attended the preschool special education program at age 3, several staff members who did not work with Daniel wondered why he was in school. Older pupils attending the school stared at Daniel while he was being fed in the lunchroom and even imitated the way food dribbled from his mouth. Now, in a school that values diversity and practices inclusion, Daniel is an appreciated member of Ms. Kilmer's second-grade class. Students in Daniel's school have learned to look beyond Daniel's differences and instead focus on his similarities to them.

Social Support and Motivation

Although proximity and attitude strongly promote the development of peer relationships, they may not be sufficient to create supportive relationships between students with disabilities and their typical classmates or even to lead to successful, positive interactions. It may be appropriate to organize social support groups or friendship pairs to encourage the focus student's typical classmates to involve themselves as models, social partners, and problem solvers in the focus student's school routines. Adults should initiate these support groups until the focus student's peers take over and the focus student becomes comfortable with them.

The *motivational* factor concerns all of the reasons why students seek to interact socially or to avoid interaction. These motivational factors affect not only students who exhibit interaction difficulties but also students without disabilities who may be skilled at social interaction. Usually, within groups of peers who know one another, no coaxing is needed

to initiate social interaction. Sometimes, however, adults discourage social interaction simply by being insensitive to peer preferences. For example, *depending on the age of the students*, if one or more of the following circumstances is added to a social situation, the motivation for interaction may be reduced or threatened:

- Students do not know one another.
- Students are of different ages.
- Students are of different genders.
- Students have few common interests.
- One or more of the students cannot be understood or cannot understand others.
- Students are fearful of an individual in the group.
- Students are not given a choice about whether they want to be in the group.

When students lack experience with interacting with their peers, they and their peers have little motivation for socializing. Their interaction rates are low, their initiations and responses to peers are inconsistent, and their social skills, in general, are deficient. The motivation factor includes strategies that teachers can use to teach and encourage positive social interactions among peers when one or more peers in the group exhibit social difficulties.

Academic Achievement

Poor academic achievement can contribute to a student's lack of social relationships. Although these students may be fairly skilled socially, they may lack the confidence that arises from having and using skills in academic areas such as reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. More often, however, anti-social behavior contributes to the student's lack of friends and companions and to the student's poor academic record.

Rick is a ninth grader who attends general education classes and also receives individualized support from special education staff in a resource room. Although he is highly articulate, Rick has been diagnosed with

obsessive-compulsive disorder and Tourette syndrome; he requires extensive behavioral support throughout the day, and his social skills are immature. When Rick's academic engagement is low (e.g., when he is upset, needs to leave class, worries about mistakes), his learning is poor.

Frustration that arises from a student's inability to meet academic demands can spiral quickly into out-of-control behavior. "Very strong links exist between antisocial behavior patterns and school academic failure" (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995, p. 63). Underachieving students' reactions to failure in school can change their existing reputation with peers and threaten their social relationships. In schools where the atmosphere is highly competitive and there are few nonacademic outlets for achievement (e.g., chorus, band, art, volunteering groups, auto or shop clubs, theater, computer clubs), only the top percentage of students will feel successful. In schools such as these, conditions fostering the development of antisocial behavior exist for a large number of students (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995).

Because academic achievement can have a positive influence on a student's self-concept, his or her acceptance by others, and his or her success in forming social relationships, individualized educational supports may be one component of a program that is designed to build social relationships. Individualized academic support may require skill assessment, focused and effective instruction, modifications in schoolwork, and the identification and use of specific accommodations for some students. Some students need a combination of individualized academic instruction and social skills training.

Social Competence and Interaction Skills

Many researchers who have studied peer support methods have found that the incidental modeling and teaching of social skills during school routines such as lunch, between-class breaks, and in-class cooperative groups is effective enough for students with disabilities to

better their social interaction skills. For some students, however, these naturalistic opportunities may be inadequate; these students may require more structured development of their social skills. The social skills that a student needs can vary widely and are related in part to the student's cognitive ability, the amount and type of the student's communication, and the student's disability. Some students need instruction in the basics: initiating interactions with peers, responding to peers' initiations, and elaborating on the initiations or responses of peers in an appropriate manner. For other students, teams need to address reliable communication methods that the student can use with his or her peers at typical rates. Some students need to learn methods to control their anger, to monitor interfering behavior, and to self-prompt an alternate and appropriate way to react to peers.

For Rick, the ninth grader with a history of acting-out behavior, the transitions between classes and activities are particularly challenging, and Rick often reacts with confusion, anger, and aggression. At times, Rick makes comments about his own and others' biological functions, which often make peers laugh but decrease their regard for him. Both of these difficulties in social competence have motivated his team to develop teaching plans to build appropriate skills.

Age-appropriate social skills are essential to an individual's social acceptance; however, whether these skills are acquired naturalistically, through intentional, structured teaching by adults and/or peers, or through some combination of these means varies from student to student.

Maintenance and Generalization

Some children have trouble keeping and extending their social relationships; other students, especially those with cognitive disabilities, may find it hard to remember and to carry their known social skills across different people and environments. For many students, teachers need to be alert to the frequently

documented learning difficulties of skill maintenance and generalization.

Rick, who has learned to control his angry outbursts at school through a combination of self-management methods, is still verbally aggressive on the bus and at home; consequently, Rick's teachers are working with the bus driver and with Rick's family members to adjust the methods that work for Rick at school so that they are successful on the bus and at home.

Although instruction often focuses on the initial development of a socially relevant skill, it is sometimes necessary to plan ways to teach the student to use the skill in varied situations.

BUILDING SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Several steps are involved in building the social relationships of students. These steps include setting goals, collaborative teaming, and, finally, developing strategies to enhance students' social relationships.

Setting Goals

When a student with disabilities is included in a general education classroom after being a member of a self-contained classroom or a resource room, both the student and his or her general education classmates experience an abrupt change. Students who have been included without adequate support experience various challenges to improving their social relationships. These students may have social skills to learn and negative reputations with their classmates to overcome and their teachers may need to modify classwork so that these students can learn and to conquer their own lowered expectations for these students' academic achievement and behavior.

How do teachers assess a student's social relationships to determine whether supports are necessary, and, if so, what form these supports should take? A variety of approaches can help the team determine this need:

- Informal conversations with those who know the focus student, including the student's peers (Figure 1.4)
- Observations gathered by team members of a particular student
- Use of various rating scales and checklists to judge the adequacy of inclusion efforts and to pinpoint any difficulties that a student may be experiencing with social relationships

For example, Meyer, Minondo, and their colleagues (1998) found that the answers to six key questions about a particular student's relationships in school could be used both to target needed improvements and to informally evaluate outcomes. These questions address the ways in which staff, classmates, and the focus student behave (a rating scale based on these questions is included in Figure 1.5):

1. *Ghost/Guest*: Does the focus child frequently get "passed over" as if he or she were not there (ghost)? Do staff members talk about another placement as soon as there is a problem (guest)?
2. *Inclusion child*: Does the teacher say, "I have 27 students plus 2 included students"?
3. *I'll help*: Do classmates use the words "work with" or "help" whenever they refer to times spent with the focus child?
4. *Just another child*: Is the child expected to participate in class activities along with everyone else?
5. *Regular friend*: Has the child ever been invited to a party by a classmate?
6. *Best friend*: Does the focus child have one or more friends who call him or her on the telephone at home and/or who visit him or her after school or on weekends? (Meyer et al., 1998, p. 216)

The last chapter of this book discusses a rating scale for individual students designed around the six previously discussed factors that influence social relationships at school: opportunities, atmosphere, social support and motivation, social competence and interaction skills, academic achievement, and maintenance and generalization of relationships. Other checklists that focus on the adequacy of inclusion can be used by team members to target ways that inclusion efforts can be im-

What the Research Says



Several researchers asked more than 1,000 middle school and high school students from three states about their friendships with students who have extensive disabilities. The majority of students interviewed agreed on the following:

- These friendships were not only possible but also yielded benefits for both the student with disabilities and themselves.
- Adolescents should try to make friends with peers who have disabilities.
- Relationships were more likely to develop if students with disabilities were placed in general classes for part or all of the day; they thought that placements in special classes in a general school were less facilitative, but that placements in special classes in a special school were least likely to facilitate such friendships.
- The most effective strategies teachers and schools might use to facilitate friendships are, in order of importance: (1) Use teaching approaches that allow students to work together, (2) present information on disabilities to students, teachers, and parents, (3) arrange social activities for all students, (4) teach students without disabilities to be tutors, and (5) organize a "circle of friends" around the student.
- The primary responsibility for facilitating such friendships should be on the students themselves; however, the students also listed others who should promote these relationships, including special education teachers; youth clubs and organizations; parents of students with disabilities; and guidance counselors, school psychologists, and social workers.

Figure 1.4. Strategies adolescents think facilitate social relationships. (Source: Hendrickson, Shokoohi-Yakta, Hamre-Nietupski, & Gable, 1996.)

School: _____ Date: _____

Classroom: _____ Focus Student(s): _____

Ratings: Frequently Sometimes Never No Opportunity to Observe (NO)

Assessment Question	Rating	Ideas for improvement
<i>Ghost/Guest:</i> Does the focus child frequently get "passed over" as if he or she were not there (ghost)? Do staff members talk about another placement as soon as there is a problem (ghost)?	Frequently Sometimes Never NO	
<i>Inclusion child:</i> Does the teacher say "I have 27 students plus 2 included students"?	Frequently Sometimes Never NO	
<i>I'll help:</i> Do classmates use the words "work with" or "help" whenever they refer to times spent with the focus child?	Frequently Sometimes Never NO	
<i>Just another child:</i> Is the child expected to participate in class activities along with everyone else?	Frequently Sometimes Never NO	
<i>Regular friend:</i> Has the child ever been invited to a party by a classmate?	Frequently Sometimes Never NO	
<i>Best friend:</i> Does the focus child have one or more friends who call him or her on the telephone at home and/or who visit him or her after school or on weekends?	Frequently Sometimes Never NO	

Figure 1.5. A rating scale to assess a student's social relationships. (From Meyer, L.H., Minondo, S., Fisher, M., Larson, M.J., Dunmore, S., Black, J.W., & D'Aquanni, M. [1998]. Frames of friendship: Social relationships among adolescents with diverse abilities. In L.H. Meyer, H. Park, M. Grenot-Scheyer, I.S. Schwartz, & B. Harry [Eds.], *Making friends: The influences of culture and development* [pp. 189-218]. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.; adapted by permission.)

improved in a classroom or a school. These improvements can directly or indirectly affect the conditions for social interactions among peers. One such checklist, the Integration Checklist (1989), lists both general schoolwide

practices (e.g., movement around the school and scheduling) and the characteristics of students who have been included (e.g., their involvement, communication patterns, and appearance) (Figure 1.6). Other teams may find

Integration Checklist
A Guide to Full Inclusion of Students with Disabilities

School: _____ Classroom(s): _____ Date: _____

Go with the Flow

- Does the student enter the classroom at the same time as classmates?
- Is the student positioned so that she or he can see and participate in what is going on?
- Is the student positioned so that classmates and teachers may easily interact with her or him (e.g., without a teacher between the student and classmates, not isolated from classmates)?
- Does the student engage in classroom activities at the same time as classmates?
- Is the student involved in the same activities as classmates?
- Does the student exit the classroom at the same time as classmates?

Act Cool

- Is the student actively involved in class activities (e.g., asks/answers questions, plays a role in group activities)?
- Is the student encouraged to follow the same classroom and social rules as classmates (e.g., hugs only when appropriate, stays in seat during instruction)?
- Is the student given assistance only as necessary, and is assistance faded as soon as possible?
- Are classmates, not just teachers, encouraged to provide assistance to the student (e.g., transitions to other classrooms, with the classroom)?
- Are classmates encouraged to ask for assistance from the student?
- Is assistance provided for the student by the classroom teacher?
- Does the student use the same or similar types of materials during classroom activities as classmates (e.g., Tom Cruise notebooks, school mascot folders)?

Talk Straight

- Does the student have a way to communicate with classmates?
- Do classmates know how to communicate with the student?
- Does the student greet others in a manner similar to that of classmates?
- Does the student socialize with classmates?
- Is this socialization facilitated?
- Do teachers and support staff give the same type of feedback (e.g., praise, discipline, attention) to the student as to classmates?
- If the student uses an alternate communication system, do classmates know how to use it?
- Do teachers know how to use the alternative communication system?
- Is the alternative communication system always available to the student?

Look Good

- Is the student given the same opportunity to attend to her or his appearance as classmates (e.g., use locker mirror between classes)?
- Does the student have accessories that are similar to those of classmates (e.g., oversize tote bags, friendship bracelets, hair jewelry)?
- Is the student's dress age-appropriate?
- Is clothing for activities age-appropriate (e.g., napkins not bibs, "cool" paint shirts)?
- Are personal belongings carried discreetly?
- Is the student's equipment kept clean?
- Is the student's hair combed?
- Are the student's hands clean and dry?
- Is the student's clothing changed as necessary to maintain a neat appearance?
- Does the student use chewing gum, breath mints and breath spray if needed?

Figure 1.6. Integration Checklist. (From *Integration Checklist: A Guide to Full Inclusion of Students with Disabilities*. (1989). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration; reprinted by permission.)

that comparing their school practices to a list of social relationships barriers (see Figure 1.3) will assist them in targeting areas for improvement. Goals can be set to make general improvements in schools and classrooms so that they are conducive to the development of social relationships, but goals also may be targeted for developing and improving programs (strengthening cooperative learning groups, building a cross-age tutoring program, or organizing a Best Buddies high school chapter), staff development, peer support skills, and individual students' needs.

Making Accommodations in the IEP Educators are responsible for making academic accommodations for students in order to assist the student's educational progression. For many students, these accommodations must include some kind of social support plan suited to the student's age and social needs. For example, peer support strategies such as friendship groups or classwide peer planning (both explained in Chapter 3) may be written into the accommodation section of a student's IEP. Related instruction in social skills and communication with peers may also be listed and will appear as objectives in other sections of the IEP. Writing social skills objectives into a student's IEP ensures that students with disabilities are not just physically placed alongside their peers without disabilities in classrooms but that efforts will be made to assist them in building peer relationships.

Paul is a sixth grader with a seizure disorder, learning disabilities, and a history of exclusion by peers. The following accommodations were written into Paul's IEP:

1. Peer planning sessions will be conducted with Paul's classmates to brainstorm issues and to provide Paul with needed support. With some assistance from the special education teacher, Paul's peers also will learn to conduct their own planning sessions for Paul.
2. Peers will be taught how to increase Paul's conversational skills in planned

lessons and during informal conversations with him.

3. Paul will learn to self-manage (i.e., identify, keep track of, control) the behaviors that are annoying to his peers (repeating topics, touching others).

Students who are exceptions to formalized peer support are

1. Students whose differences are not noticeable to peers or are ignored by peers
2. Students who have suitable social skills
3. Students who already have meaningful connections to peers or to a peer network

These students do not need planned support to establish social relationships with their peers. Other students with disabilities may choose not to have formalized peer social support, even though they may benefit from it. These exceptions more often occur with students in secondary schools who have mild disabilities and/or take an active part in their own IEP development.

Setting Goals for Social Skills and Academic Achievement Occasionally, an intervention that focuses on improving a student's academic achievement can have a positive effect on the student's social relationships. Students are more likely to be referred for special education services *before or during, rather than after, third grade*, and the referral is usually for academic rather than social-behavioral problems (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995). Researchers studying teacher referrals to special education learned that 69% of referrals were for boys, 67% were during the early grades (kindergarten through third grade), and the seven most frequent problems that caused teachers to refer children to special education services were various academic difficulties, not antisocial behavior. Aggressive and disruptive behaviors were tenth on the list of cited reasons (Lloyd, Kauffman, Landrum, & Roe, 1991). Therefore, students who fall behind academically after the early grades are less likely to receive remedial assistance or special education during middle

school and high school, even though such assistance might have positive benefits for the student both socially and academically. Research also indicates that teachers tend to target special education supports when students exhibit academic problems, but less so when students display antisocial, particularly withdrawn, behavior.

Measuring the Social Indicators As part of the IEP process, teachers need to assess a student's progress on stated objectives. The primary yardstick that should be used to measure the effectiveness of efforts to build a student's social relationships should be the student's actual social relationships: Has the student built successful relationships with his or her neighbors; with peers at school; and, later in the student's life, with co-workers on the job or with fellow college students (Meyer, Park, Grenot-Scheyer, Schwartz, & Harry, 1998)?

Evaluation should focus on indicators such as social contacts, demonstrated support behaviors, and classroom social networks:

- *Social contacts:* The number of different peers with whom the student has positive contact, the number of activities in which the student engages, and the environments where the contacts take place
- *Demonstrated social support behaviors:* Providing emotional support, giving access to others or to information, providing material aid, and helping with decisions
- *Classroom social networks:* Numbers and size of networks, types of individuals, and positive and negative characteristics of the networks

Alternately, the six questions listed previously in Figure 1.5 can provide an informal means of assessing growth and change in students' social relationships.

As adults work to 1) understand the social limitations that a focus student experiences, 2) set goals, and 3) draw up support plans, it is important that they do the following:

1. Listen to the student's own expectations and hopes.
2. Recruit the viewpoints and ideas of the student's peers (using the guidelines that are established in Chapter 3).
3. Familiarize themselves with the developmental and group expectations for students of different genders, chronological ages, and cultures.

Collaborative Teaming

By its nature, inclusion obligates teachers to collaborate as a team. This means that the core team (general and special education teachers along with the student and the student's family) plans, selects, and implements various actions to improve the student's social relationships and peer supports. Members of the focus student's extended team may also be involved. These members may include additional teachers, therapists and other specialists, administrators, and peers. Collaborative teams are necessary: Working alone will not do the trick! Ideas that are generated individually may be off-base or incomplete in some way, especially if two or more teachers share responsibility for students with disabilities. The implementation tasks are too taxing for one person to undertake and oversee. (For more information, refer to *Collaborative Teaming* [Snell & Janney, 2000], a companion book in this series.)

The following guidelines, which are discussed in more depth in the upcoming chapters, address ways in which teams should work together to plan, select, and implement actions that have been designed to improve a student's social relationships:

1. Use collaborative teams to make decisions and to implement actions.
2. Examine the student's social relationships as the "yardstick" for measuring the need for or success of a social support plan.
3. Involve the focus student and his or her peers in the process: All can contribute to

planning, problem solving, implementing a plan, and evaluating the focus student's progress.

4. Seek team consensus about what is the simplest, yet most effective, initial action to take: This often translates into increasing the student's social opportunities before undertaking more complex actions.
5. Contextualize instruction: Embed teaching in daily routines and in natural social contexts.
6. Don't let the implemented supports become barriers to social interaction: Hovering adults, overzealous "helpers," stigmatizing support or instruction, and a failure to fade assistance hinder natural peer-to-peer contact.

Strategies to Enhance Relationships

The following five strategies are developed in detail in later chapters and are applied to case studies of students of varying ages, needs, and disabilities.

Adult Facilitation Teachers are critical in promoting the development of social relationships among children in their own classrooms. One primary method teachers use to build camaraderie among their students is to *model their acceptance of each student in a classroom by demonstrating their approval and recognition of each individual student in age- and culture-appropriate ways* (e.g., standing nearby and smiling at the student, using the student's preferred name, interacting with the student in natural ways, "pulling students into" ongoing activities unobtrusively). Teachers also can *demonstrate how to interact with an individual who may have unique ways of communicating* (e.g., use the student's picture communication board, speak slowly, wait for the person to look up first, use manual signs while speaking). Other methods that teachers report using are

- Actively promoting interactions between focus students and peers, followed by "backing off" and allowing the interaction to proceed without adult interference

- Similar treatment of each individual student
- Teaching peers to lend support to classmates who might need it without hindering the student's independence (Janney & Snell, 1996; Salisbury, Gallucci, Palombaro, & Peck, 1995; Snell et al., 1995)

Improvement of the School Environment

Strategies for improving the school environment as a whole address the school's attitudes, its atmosphere, and its understanding and appreciation of human differences. Many researchers and practitioners have found that indirect strategies strengthen the school's attitudinal base to allow peer support and positive social relationships to flourish. For example, ability (or disability) awareness programs can help people without disabilities understand how particular disabilities affect learning, perception, or communication, thereby increasing their sensitivity toward and appreciation of a student with a disability. Other strategies are geared toward

1. Increasing acceptance (training in conflict resolution methods, use of classroom community groups to discuss and resolve interaction problems)
2. Accommodating human differences (learning about other cultures through social studies and reading projects, inviting speakers from other countries and cultures to address the class, teaching units on different cultures)
3. Creating cooperative and safe school environments (student problem-solving concerning schoolwide problems, use of students as conflict mediators)
4. Teaching active participation and responsibility in society (school cleanup and recycling projects, community volunteering and sharing programs, school citizenship and Key Club groups) (Salisbury, Evans, & Palombaro, 1997)

Support Through Peer Groups and Pairs

Social support methods were developed in

the 1980s and 1990s that encourage peers to foster social relationships and membership within stable social groups. These methods may include the following tactics:

- Promote planned peer support programs such as peer planning, friendship pairs or groups, and lunch partners.
- Focus on typical environments and activities in addition to natural strategies kids use to “get connected” to social groups. At the same time, provide “access and support to ensure that students with disabilities can participate in similar ways” (Schnorr, 1997, p. 1).

Peer support approaches generally involve answering students’ questions about disability while teaching them to problem-solve ways to get along and interact with others in school who may be different from them, such as students with a disability.

Social Skills Instruction Researchers, working in tandem with teachers, have learned much about intervention approaches that can be successful with social skills difficulties such as aggression, withdrawal, nonresponsiveness, poor quality of interactions, and a failure to generalize social skills across daily routines. Frequently, a combination of proven techniques rather than a single, narrow approach are used in intervention. The combination depends on the student, his or her particular behavior difficulty, and the circumstances. The teaching emphasis has shifted from eliminating undesirable behavior to building appropriate replacement skills, or *positive behavioral support*. Most successful approaches used in schools include the teaching of alternate, appropriate behavior as a means for reducing problem behavior. Often, these alternate behaviors include social, communication, or academic skills.

Functional assessment plays an important role in the design of social skills programs. This method involves studying the “triggers” for a particular behavior difficulty and the purpose the behavior seems to serve for the student. This information is a necessary component of

many combined approaches, regardless of social skill difficulty (Horner & Carr, 1997). Functional assessment, which is recognized in special education law as a valuable teaching tool, is discussed briefly in Chapter 4 and more thoroughly in the booklet *Behavioral Support* (Janney & Snell, 2000).

Instructional Peer Supports Student-to-student teaching can be beneficial in tutoring programs and cooperative learning groups. Both strategies can produce gains in academic language, or social skills. Several tutoring models exist. In *peer tutoring*, teaching is one-way and students are the same age. Peer-mediated strategies, frequently used during play time with preschoolers, are an example of peer-to-peer teaching with a social focus: Typical youngsters are taught to initiate interactions with their classmates who have disabilities and to prompt their responses. *Cross-age tutoring* involves an older student teaching, interacting with, or reading to a younger student. Another approach is *classwide tutoring*, which incorporates *reciprocal peer tutoring*, during which each student alternates between the tutor and tutee roles; this classwide tutoring can lead to academic improvements and can also teach cooperative interdependence among students of the same age but differing abilities.

Cooperative learning entails restructuring learning and leisure activities to promote interdependence among students. Group members learn several messages:

- “We sink or swim together.”
- “Do your work—we’re counting on you.”
- “How can I help you to do better?” (Nevin, Thousand, & Villa, 1994, p. 145)

Cooperative groups are not ability groups; group members have multiple talents and a variety of abilities and needs. The group’s work tasks, activities, or games are planned to achieve academic and/or social objectives, which may vary for different group members. Students assume different responsibilities, but they problem-solve and make decisions as a group in order to achieve the stated group ob-

jective. For example, groups of fifth and sixth graders might be given math story problems that require reasoning and basic computational math skills and can be solved in several ways. Group tasks might be to build structures from toothpicks and marshmallows or to create a videotape clip or poster that illustrates the group's solution. Teachers provide the structure, monitor in ways that encourage learning and group interdependence, and evaluate academic and social learning.

Tutoring and cooperative groups promote peer support during instruction and can lead to cooperative behaviors, social skills, and academic improvements. Depending on the approach used, peers with and without disabilities may fill equitable roles in cooperative learning groups and in reciprocal peer tutoring.

The following chapters elaborate on the strategies just reviewed and set forth some guidelines for using these strategies in schools with students of different ages and disabilities.

A Rating Scale to Assess a Student's Social Relationships

School: _____ **Date:** _____

Classroom: _____ **Focus Student(s):** _____

Ratings: Frequently Sometimes Never No Opportunity to Observe (NO)

Assessment Question	Rating	Ideas for Improvement
<i>Ghost/Guest:</i> Does the focus child frequently get "passed over" as if he or she were not there (ghost)? Do staff members talk about another placement as soon as there is a problem (guest)?	Frequently Sometimes Never NO	
<i>Inclusion child:</i> Does the teacher say "I have 27 students plus 2 included students?"	Frequently Sometimes Never NO	
<i>I'll help:</i> Do classmates use the words "work with" or "help" whenever they refer to times spent with the focus child?	Frequently Sometimes Never NO	
<i>Just another child:</i> Is the child expected to participate in class activities along with everyone else?	Frequently Sometimes Never NO	
<i>Regular friend:</i> Has the child ever been invited to a party by a classmate?	Frequently Sometimes Never NO	
<i>Best friend:</i> Does the focus child have one or more friends who call him or her on the telephone at home and/or who visit him or her after school or on weekends?	Frequently Sometimes Never NO	

(From Meyer, L.H., Minondo, S., Fisher, M., Larson, M.J., Dunmore, S., Black, J.W., & D'Aquanni, M. [1998]. Frames of friendship: Social relationships among adolescents with diverse abilities. In L.H. Meyer, H. Park, M. Grenot-Scheyer, I.S. Schwartz, & B. Harry [Eds.], *Making friends: The influences of culture and development* [pp. 189-218]. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.; adapted by permission.)

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