

## **Early Social Skills: Joint Activities with Peers**

Encouraging simple peer interactions within familiar routines and activities can be an effective first step toward helping children to: attend to their peers, share attention with their peers, respond and initiate simple exchanges. A first step may be having the children non-verbally participate in the interactions, and later adults can model appropriate language that the children can use with their peers. The important part for these early interactions is that each child has a clear “role” in the interaction, and that an adult is nearby to help each child to take their turn.

### **Suggested Activities**

- Have all of the children partnered for parts of their daily routines (e.g., holding hands with a peer to walk to the washroom or to walk to outdoor play)
- Embed simple peer interactions within daily routines (e.g., have each child call out the name of a peer to be the next one to leave circle time, or to be the next one to leave the line and begin outdoor play)
- Within circle time routines, engage the children in songs wherein they need their peers to participate (e.g., Row Your Boat, London Bridge, Ring Around the Rosie, Sleeping Bunnies, etc.)
- Encourage joint art projects (e.g., gluing or painting joint murals, gluing or painting on boxes to make a house/car/etc.) wherein the children are working together on the same activity.
- Encourage simple back and forth play with a ball or toy vehicles
- Encourage wagon play outdoors so children can take turns pulling or being pulled by a friend
- Encourage simple games of chase or follow the leader during outdoor play
- Pair children for a tidy up routine – have one child hold a bin and the other fill it with the items that need to be put away. Alternatively, two children can be asked to work together to carry a bin/box and place it on a shelf to clean up an activity
- Dramatic play areas can lend themselves nicely to some simple object exchanges between children. Examples could include; giving a peer a drink/snack, handing a bottle to a peer playing with a baby, accepting a block from a peer when a child is working on making a tower/structure, etc.



Programs are more restricted right now regarding children sharing/passing items back and forth. Reading through the above ideas will hopefully help educators to brainstorm alternative ways of establishing the same goal.

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