



Region A Partnership for Children
Promoting Social and Emotional Competence

What to do When...

Helping a Child to Interact with Peers

(“What to do When...” provides short term advice for teachers and parents when they are confronted by common challenging situations. Refer to the Additional Resources to learn more about preventing and managing children’s challenging behavior.)

When a child avoids interacting with other children:

1. Teach peers positive social interactions during daily large group activities. Circle time or story time usually provide good opportunities to take a few minutes to teach these skills. Skills are taught by:

- Explaining the skill

- Demonstrating the correct way to use it

- Demonstrating an incorrect way and letting the children figure out what step was missing

- Letting a child practice a skill with an adult

- Letting a child practice a skill with another child

- Providing positive feedback and attention on use of the skills

Examples of target social skills are:

- Getting a friend’s attention

- Sharing objects

- Asking peers to share objects

- Providing a play idea to a peer

- Saying something nice to a friend

2. Monitor playtime for naturally occurring positive peer social interactions.

Teachers should be actively moving around the classroom, interacting with children during play, and looking for children using the targeted social skills. Additionally, teachers should be ready to provide assistance to children as needed so they can interact successfully with their peers.

3. Provide cueing as needed by reminding children to:

- Play together

- Share with their friends

- Be persistent



4. Provide additional assistance to children as needed to ensure that peer social interactions are successful. For example:

Modeling

Specific verbal cues (e.g. Remember to tap him on the shoulder)

Physical assistance

5. Provide positive attention to children who are using targeted social skills naturally with:

Positive feedback and attention

Superstar System

Additional Resources available online at www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel

What Works Briefs: Summaries of Effective Practices for Supporting Children's Social-Emotional Development and Preventing Challenging Behaviors. The Briefs describe practical strategies, provide references to more information about the practice, and include a one-page handout that highlights the major points of the Brief.

Brief 6

Using Environmental Strategies to Promote Positive Social Interactions by T. Bovey, P. Strain

[HTML](#) | [PDF Handout: HTML](#)

Brief 17

Strategies for Increasing Peer Social Interactions: Prompting and Acknowledgment by T. Bovey and P. Strain

[HTML](#) | [PDF Handout: HTML](#) | [PDF](#)

What Works Training Kits: Based on the What Works Briefs topics, short training packages are available that include PowerPoint slides with accompanying note pages, activities, and handouts, which provide a trainer with the materials needed to conduct a short staff development program on a focused topic.

Training Kit 5

Using Classroom Activities and Routines as Opportunities to Support Peer Interaction by T. Bovey, P. Strain

[PDF](#) | [Handout: PPT](#) | [Presenter: PPT](#)

Local Resources to contact online:

Region A Partnership for Children at www.regionakids.org, for a list of resources to promote social emotional competence and prevent challenging behavior in your county and in Region A.

