

Using Environmental Strategies to Promote Positive Social Interactions

HANDOUT

6



Preplan for environmental changes and adaptations that can be made.

- ⇒ Planning can involve looking at several aspects of the classroom including:
 - Activities that are open and available for children
 - Classroom materials that are available
 - Composition of small groups at centers and other activities in the classroom



Examine your group composition.

- ⇒ Make sure children with good social skills are grouped with children with poor social skills.
- ⇒ Keep children with low social skills from isolating themselves by using novel and interesting materials and encouraging children with good social skills to interact with them.



Limit the number of centers available.

- ⇒ If you have 10 centers available during center time and 14 children in your class, there is a good chance that only 1 or 2 children will be in a center at a time, reducing the opportunities for social interactions. Increase the likelihood of positive social interactions by limiting the number of open centers to increase the number of children at each center.
- ⇒ Make sure there are enough choices for children during play time. If children are bored and not engaged, they are more likely to exhibit problem behaviors.



Keep toys and materials novel and interesting.

- ⇒ Rotating toys is an excellent and cost-effective means of maintaining the “newness” and novelty of materials. Simply shelving materials so they are not available for a few weeks and reintroducing them to the classroom can make them appear brand new and greatly increase the children’s interest in them.



Use toys and materials with high social value.

- ⇒ Replace toys and materials made for individual use (e.g., Sit and Spin, small puzzles, painting easels) with toys and materials made for cooperative use (e.g., rocking boat, giant floor puzzles, mural painting) to help increase the opportunities for positive social interactions.



Give positive attention and reinforcement to children who are playing together.

- ⇒ Give specific positive feedback to children who are playing nicely together and engaging in positive social interactions (e.g., “You two are doing a great job building that zoo together!”).