# Friends Matter! Promoting Authentic Social Opportunities for All

13<sup>th</sup> Annual "Focus" on Vision Impairment and Blindness Conference
Norwood, MA

## Why is Friendship Important?

#### **Benefits of Friendship**

- Results in personal benefit
- Facilitates developmental gains
- Leads to positive school outcomes
- Protects against bullying experiences
- Enriches individual lives
- Creates community

Rossetti, Ross, & Brennen, 2017

#### Consequences of Social Isolation

- Individuals with IDD tend to be:
  - Socially isolated
  - On the social periphery of inclusive settings
  - Less likely to interact with peers outside of school

Social isolation is a risk factor for death.

Ingram & London, 2015; Orsmond, Krauss, & Seltzer, 2004; Tipton, Christensen, & Blacher, 2013



### What is Friendship?



#### **Definition of Friendship**

Voluntary and reciprocal relationships...

...in which two individuals show:

- Mutual attachment to one another
- Frequent proximity and companionship, and
- Evidence of enjoyment or affection

Bukowski, Newcomb, & Hartup, 1996; Buysse, Goldman, West, & Hollingsworth, 2008

#### Characteristics of friendship

 Proximity, similarity, transcending context, companionship;

 Reciprocity, mutuality, help/support, conflict management;

Stability, trust/loyalty, and intimacy/disclosure

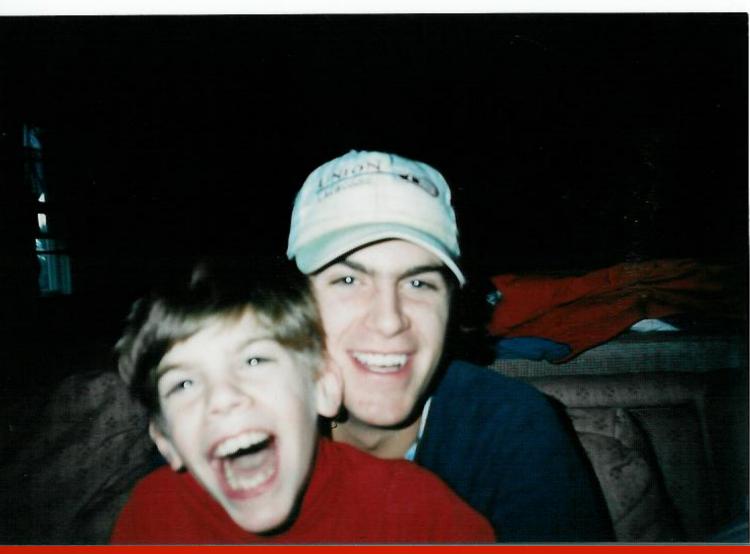
Matheson, Olsen, & Weisner, 2007



# The Five Vowels of Friendship Facilitation

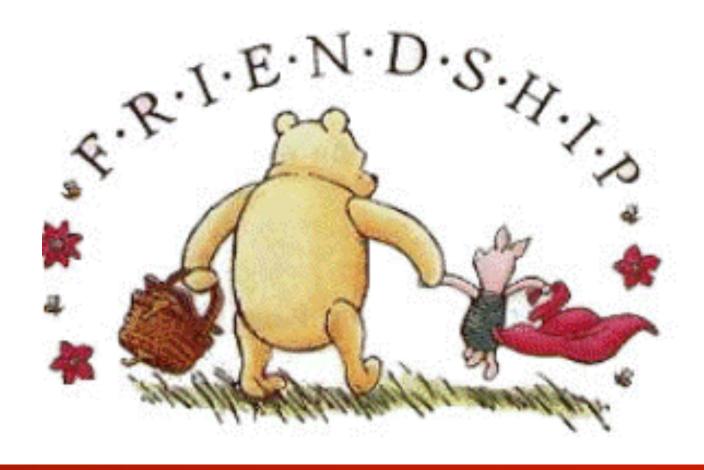
#### A = Attitudes





#### **E = Expectations**

#### Develop a friendship mindset.



#### **Friendship Mindset**

Recognize the importance of friendship.

Believe he/she would make a wonderful friend.

Think constantly about social interaction opportunities.

Consider the social implications of decisions.

#### I = Inclusion



#### **Participation**

#### What results in friendship?

- Regular contact in integrated environments...
- ...with opportunities for meaningful interaction
- Two types of community participation
  - Surface-level recognition
  - Known member who belongs

Amado, Stancliffe, McCarron, & McCallion, 2013; Carter, Asmus, & Moss, 2013; Rossetti, Lehr, Lederer, Pelerin & Huang, 2015

#### O = Opportunities

Social opportunity > social skills

Quantity of social interaction opportunities

Quality of social interaction opportunities

Carter et al., 2013; Cutts & Sigafoos, 2001; Matheson et al., 2007; Rossetti, 2014, 2015; Rossetti & Keenan, 2017



#### **U** = Understanding

- What do we need to know?
  - Interests
  - Age context
  - Non-negotiables
- What do peers need to know?
  - In short, what we know!
  - Thus, reframe the provision of direct support.

Calder, Hill, & Pelicano, 2012; Carter, Sisco, Brown, Brickham, & Al-Khabbaz, 2008; Cuckle & Wilson, 2002; Rossetti, 2012, 2014





#### Resources

"MAKING FRIENDS With and Without Disabilities in School"

http://thearcofmass.org/toolkit/

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