

# **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?**



**A FRIEND IS ONE WHO KNOWS YOU AND LOVES YOU JUST THE SAME.**

# 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;  
Buyse, 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**

TRUE FRIENDS ARE  
HARD TO COME BY.



# **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**







"WE'LL BE FRIENDS FOREVER  
WON'T WE, POOH?"  
ASKED PIGLET.



"EVEN LONGER,"  
POOH ANSWERED.

# Resources

**“MAKING FRIENDS With and Without Disabilities in School”**

**<http://thearcofmass.org/toolkit/>**

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