Friendship and Social Inclusion

Down Syndrome VICTORIA

downsyndromevictoria.org.au | ph: 1300 658 873
The 4 R’s

- Reading
- Writing
- (A)rithmetic

- RELATIONSHIPS
  - i.e. social skills instruction.
Considerations

“Children 20% of their time in school & 80% in the community, on the playground and at home with siblings and other family members”

“What would life be like if in spite of your efforts you couldn’t find ways to connect with others? If you craved friendship, companionship, trust and rapport but felt rejected, lonely and an outsider?”
For some children with Down syndrome some social skills such as empathy can be a strength.
The 4 key social skills

• The ability to join or enter a group
• The ability to establish and maintain relationships
• The ability to resolve conflicts
• The ability to ‘tune in’ to social skills
We all want / need

• At least one good friend!
• Birthday party invites, sleepovers
• Someone to play with and to visit
• Success at something
Face-to-face communication

• 55% of messages are non-verbal - Gesture, posture, facial expression

• 40% is conveyed through tone of voice

• 5% is communicated by words
For a child with a learning difficulty social acceptance is inhibited by:

- Cognitive skills – these differ greatly
- Language – content, tone
- Speech – intelligibility
- Body language
- Understanding of peers – laughing at / not with e.g. Kieran P changing in the gym
- Environment
- Expectations
- Subtlety
Responsibilities

School

Staff, CT, TA
- Inclusion, attitude, positive behaviour support e.g. Esther & greetings

Peers
- play equipment, games, conversation, loneliness
  e.g. Emily R in the playground
Responsibilities

Parents

- Birthday invites, sleepovers
- Just when you think it all should start to get easier
- Leisure activities
- Issue of DS specific activities versus mainstream
- Appearances are very important – clothes, haircut, music
- Plan (& limit) play sessions, parties, excursions
- Teenage years - dating, parties, wanting to be the ‘same’
Strategies

- Inclusion
- Attitude, expectations. Emphasise similarities
- Games – rules and pace? e.g. footy vice capt; volley ball (newcomb); Duck, Duck, Goose; Ship, Shark, Shore; poison ball, tabloid sports
- Joining outside school groups, activities, clubs
- Tasks, roles, responsibilities
- Circle of friends
- Buddies
Best strategies

• Explicit teaching of the social skill
  – Can list deficit skills, but if possible:
    • Teach in context
    • Teach immediately – as they occur
    • Practise in a similar situation
    • Use positive reinforcement – lots of labelled praise
    • Use scenarios
      – School, community, home
    • Social skill games
    • Involve, inform the triangle – student, school, parents
Top 20 manners that adults appreciate

- Using please & thankyou
- Thank you notes
- Eye contact
- Cleaning up
- Showing respect
- Not interrupting
- Treating people as you wish to be treated
- Appropriate table manners
- Firm handshake
- Compassion and sympathy for others
Today’s Big Picture

- Independent living
- Open employment
- Adult relationships
References

• **It’s So Much Work to Be Your Friend** (book & video)
  – Richard Lavoie
    • (even if you just read and practise the introduction & the tips in the appendix)

• **Skill-Streaming for the Elementary School Child**
  – Arnold P. Goldstein
    • (good checklists)

• **Social skills board game** *n.b. my version* – Social Scenarios

• **Special at School but lonely at home**

• **Group game references**
  – Fundamental Motor Skills – An Activities Resource for Classroom Teachers - Department of Education
  – My resources - Feelings activity, Thermometer for feelings, anger, acceptance of Down syndrome, Lifetime timeline, St. Lukes.
Resources presented at Teaching Students with Down Syndrome workshop can be found on our website – see link:
