


The FRIEND Program

Fostering Relationships In Early Network Development


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Wings of Epoh



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The FRIEND Program

- Inclusive social skills program that promotes:
 - Awareness
 - Tolerance
 - Acceptance of individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) and others with social differences
- Students improve social communication skills in a natural setting from preschool-grade 12
- Curriculum of appropriate strategies for:
 - Peers
 - Parents
 - Educators
 - Therapists
 - School communities: preschool-grade 12



Program Justification

- Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs)
 - Incidence: 1990s was 1 in 10,000
 - Incidence: 2008 is 1 in 150
 - Most prevalent childhood developmental disorder in the U.S
 - 85 percent of individuals with autism are under the age of 21
- For individuals with an ASD or other social differences
 - School can be a lonely & stressful
 - Core social communication and behavior challenges
 - Difficulty developing meaningful social relationships
- Peer mentors
 - Develop confidence and interest in helping those with an ASD
 - Learn and practice social skills



Friendships

- Offers opportunities to practice and develop pro-social behaviors
 - Sharing
 - Caring
 - Cooperation
 - Play skills
 - Empathy
 - Emotional support
 - Social initiations and responses


(Bauminger & Kasari, 2000)



Everyone Needs A Friend

- Left to themselves, children with ASD may not:
 - Start up a conversation
 - Invite kids over
 - Play sports
 - Go to parties
- Lack of social relationships in childhood may lead to:
 - Decreased employment
 - Decreased independent living
 - Decreased life expectancy
 - Severe mental health problems (depression, suicidal ideation, anxiety)

• (Strain, 1991; Wing, 1981; Strain & Schwartz, 2001)




Skills Necessary for Friendship

<p>Typical Play Patterns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spontaneous progression along developmental continuum • Joint attention, spontaneous imitation, emotional responsiveness evident in early social exchanges with others • Play with peers spontaneously developing along a continuum of social complexity & cohesiveness across age span 	<p>Play Variations in ASD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed or atypical progression within developmental continuum • Problems in joint attention, spontaneous imitation and emotional responsiveness • Spontaneous development along social continuum of play with peers impaired & variable. Social interactions tend to be aloof, passive, odd
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Adapted from *Peer Play & the Autism Spectrum*, Pam Wolfberg


Inclusion Movement



- Increasingly more students included with typically developing peers
 - Least Restricted Environment
 - Rights of students not to be segregated (Individuals with Disabilities Act)
- Increase Learning (Social and academically)
 - Students with an ASD will not learn social behaviors unless exposed to typical peers (Strain, Odom, & McConnell, 1984)
 - Access to general curriculum with typical peers

Inclusion Movement Challenges

- Students with disabilities considered “least liked” (Sale & Carey, 1995)
- Physically integrating students alone is not enough (Gresham, 1984; Kamps et al. 1998)
- Incidence of peer victimization (Shtayermman, 2007; Little, 2002)
 - High levels of bullying
 - Peer shunning
 - Not invited to birthday parties
 - Eating alone at lunch
 - Picked last for teams



Social Skills Interventions


Effective Social Skill Interventions:

- Occur across multiple naturalistic settings (Bellini, Peters, Benner, & Hopf, 2007)
- Are peer mediated (Harper, Symon, & Frea, 2008; Kamps et al., 1992; Kohler et al., 2007; Owen-DeSchryver et al., 2008)
- Are frequent (Bellini, Peters, Benner, & Hopf, 2007; Strain & Schwartz, 2001)
- Are motivating and child directed (Kern et al., 1998; Koegel, Dyer, & Bell, 1987; Koegel et al. 2005)
- Include cooperative arrangements (Kennedy & Itkonen, 1996; Koegel et al. 2005)
- Are mutually reinforcing (Werner, Vismara, Koegel, & Koegel, 2006)




Benefits For Those with ASD

- Increased:
 - Peer initiations (Kalyva & Avramidis, 2005; McGee et al., 1992; Owen-DeSchryver et al. 2008)
 - Reciprocal interaction (initiations & responses) (Harper, Symon & Frea, 2008; Kamps et al., 2002; Kalyva & Avramidis, 2005; Kohler et al., 1997; Kohler et al., 2007 McGee et al., 1992)
 - Peer acceptance (Kamps et al., 2002; McGee et al., 1992)
 - Participation in community or after school activities (Goldstein, Schneider, & Thiemann 2007)
 - Opportunities to practice and generalize skills (Lashley and Heflin, 2000)
 - Engagement (Kamps et al., 2002)
- Decreased:
 - Stigmatizing behaviors (Lee, Odom, & Loftis, 2007)



Benefits For Peers

- Social skills curriculum supports all children
- Peers are accepting and excited to participate (Kamps et al. 1998)
- Increased skills: (Whitaker et al, 1998; Cushing & Kennedy, 1997; Carter & Kennedy, 2006)
 - Empathy
 - Academic Skills
 - Problem solving skills
 - Classroom participation
 - Group participation
 - Homework completion
 - Self-Esteem




FRIEND Program Overview

- STEP 1 - Recognize the Need
- STEP 2 - Schedule Planning Meeting
- STEP 3 - Planning Meeting
- STEP 4 - Peer Sensitivity Training
- STEP 5 - Select Participants for FRIEND Group
- STEP 6 - Frequent FRIEND Group Activities
- STEP 7 - FRIEND Program Generalization

Vignette

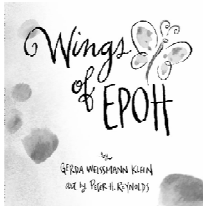
Every day at school Andrea sits at the lunch table with her class. She will watch the kids but never interacts with them. The kids are polite but they do not include her in their conversations or play. After lunch, on the playground, she always sits alone under a tree and tears leaves into tiny pieces. Andrea's teacher, speech therapist, & parents are concerned that she has no friends and spends her free time alone. The IEP team meets & decide on a plan to create a FRIEND program for Andrea. The speech therapist offers to use lunch as her time to provide speech services. The teacher & parents plan a peer sensitivity training for Andrea's classmates. They invite four of Andrea's classmates to be a part of her friend group. Everyday the kids eat lunch together & twice a month they have a pizza party during lunch. The therapist facilitates interactions between all the children. Through this experience the kids learn how to support Andrea & she learns how to interact with them. After lunch, they include her in their games on the playground.



Program Materials


Wings of EPOH
Wings of EPOH is the story of a young boy with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who takes a journey with an unlikely friend, a butterfly named EPOH, "hope" spelled backward. Written by acclaimed author, lecturer and Holocaust survivor, Gerda Weissmann Klein, and illustrated by New York Times best-selling illustrator and educational innovator, Peter H. Reynolds, the story teaches acceptance, tolerance and empathy.


- Materials can be used selectively or together



Program Materials


- **Wings of Epoh** book (Hardcover - 26 pages)
- **Wings of Epoh** (DVD - 8 minutes)
- **I'm Here** (DVD-2 minutes)
- **Educator Activity Guide** (36 pages)
- **FRIEND Program Manual** (32 pages)
- **FRIEND Program DVD** (9 minutes)






FRIEND Manual

- Easy to use guide (Preschool - 12th Grade)
- Outlines steps to implement program in the school
 - Planning the meeting (who to invite, etc.)
 - Meeting agenda
- Guidelines for peer sensitivity training
- Guidelines for FRIEND meeting activities
- Tips for friends, teachers, and parents



Implement FRIEND Program


- **Recognize the Need**
 - Student's with ASD have difficulty interacting socially with peers in unstructured settings
 - Referral from school/parent
 - Written into the IEP



Sample IEP Goal:
Student will interact with typical peers and demonstrate pro-social behaviors by 85% of baseline levels daily during recess, lunch and other less structured times of the day.

Start Early


- Social difficulties are inherent to ASD; intervene early
- The FRIEND Program can be implemented in preschool and adapted throughout a child's school experience



Implement FRIEND Program

Schedule Planning Meeting with appropriate

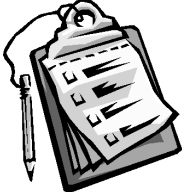
- Parents
- Regular Education Teacher
- Principal
- Special Education Teacher
- Therapist(s)
- Paraprofessional
- School Psychologist



Implement FRIEND Program cont.


Meeting Agenda

- Explain the FRIEND program
- Identify roles and responsibilities (refer to the IEP on how to staff the group)
- Permission forms
- Peer sensitivity training
 - Profile
 - Use diagnosis?
 - Identify student?
 - Is the identified student present?
 - Other identified students?
- Identify FRIEND participants
- Group activities



Peer Sensitivity Training Guidelines

- Grade level K - 12
- Customized for targeted student via Profile
- Provide an age appropriate explanation of ASD
 - Communication, Social and Behavior
 - Strengths and Challenges
 - Dispel myths
 - Not contagious
 - Potential for learning
 - Lack of engagement does not mean the individual doesn't want to engage but that they don't know how




Implement FRIEND Program cont.

Identify FRIEND Participants

- Small group of existing friends
- Child, parent and teacher input
 - Characteristics of the peers (Bass & Mulick, 2007; Taylor, 2001)

- Kindness
- Leadership Skills
- Shared Interests
- Appropriate play/social skills
- Regular school attendance


- Able to follow directions
- Flexible
- Cooperative
- Willing to participate
- Helpful



Implement FRIEND Program cont.



- Individualize the Program
 - Developmental abilities
 - Age group (Preschool vs. High School)
 - Mutual interest of all participants
 - Recognize strengths and challenges
- The Program may look like:
 - Play Date
 - Buddy Program
 - School Club
 - Lunch Group

Involve multiple typical peers to increase opportunities to practice skills and generalization





Recess

- Isolation & poor engagement
 - Highly motivating items of interest to child with ASD may increase play initiations and engagement
- Create recess “stations”
 - Board Games
 - Crafts
 - Games created around the child’s special interest

Settings for Generalization


<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School • Lunch • Recess • Transitions • Classrooms • Before/After School • Bus Rides • Special Activities • Clubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community • Scout groups • Religious activities • Sports groups • Art classes • Gymnastics • Other
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At the end of the year, establish a plan to continue the group for the next school year


Friend DVD

- Elementary Age Students
- Useful for Peer Sensitivity Training
- Provides Strategies to Help Kids with ASD
- Generates discussion
- Positive and Engaging




The Wings of EPOH Collection

- The *Wings of EPOH* collection
- Book (Hardcover - 26 pages)
 - Written by Gerda Weissmann Klein
 - Illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds
 - Produced by SARRC and FableVision
- Animated Film (DVD - 8 minutes)
 - Based on the manuscript by Gerda Weissmann Klein
 - Interpreted by Peter H. Reynolds and Paul A. Reynolds
 - Produced by SARRC and FableVision
 - *I'm Here*, 2-minute bonus film, created by Peter H. Reynolds and produced by SARRC and FableVision
 - 8-page tips guide for friends, parents and educators produced by SARRC (accompanies the DVD)




Sample Tips

- Peers (17)
 - **Say “hi.”** Think about how you feel when your friends say “hi” to you when you see them in the hall. Take time to say “hi.” Even if you’re in a hurry, when you pass someone in the hall, just say “hi.”
- Teachers (11)
 - **Teach all students to respond.** Encourage all students to respond appropriately to the individual with ASD when he approaches them. They can kindly support and reinforce appropriate behavior.

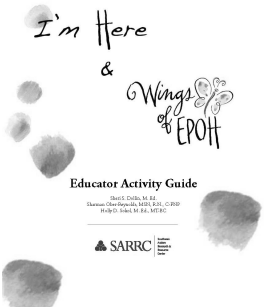


Sample Tips

- Play and Social Interactions (8)
 - **It takes time.** Be aware that a child with an ASD may not show an interest in social activities initially. Like teaching academics or developing language, it will take time to motivate & support the child as she learns social skills and develops confidence.
- Parents (25)
 - **Watch other children.** Help your child learn appropriate social skills. Watch children your child’s age. What are their interests? How do they play and communicate?



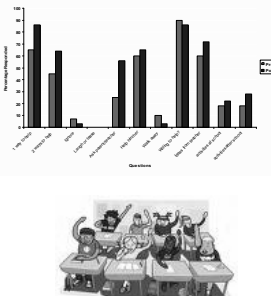
Educator Activity Guide



- Grades K-12
- Hands-on activities
- Meaningful discussions that encourages students to explore the way they treat other based on similarities and differences
- Activities can be implemented within curriculum

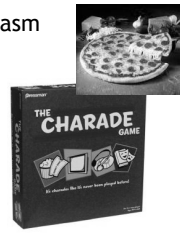
Research

- Peer Sensitivity Trainings
 - Presentation in classrooms grades 2-5
 - 1st visit - presented film *Wings of EPOH* and short activity
 - 2nd visit- follow up activity and collected post data
 - Data collection - student questionnaires and teacher questionnaires
- Meaningful Findings
 - Kids need information from their teachers



FRIEND Group Guidelines


- Based on needs/abilities
- Usually during lunch
- Meet frequently to maintain enthusiasm
- Should be fun
- Parents: food/toys/games/prizes
- Regular meeting time for Q & A
- Developmentally appropriate
- Kids suggest games
- Use the child's special interests
- Non-competitive
- Pair ASD student with a buddy or have him/her participate on a team



Activities Ideas


- Red light, green light
- Mother, May I
- Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes
- Hide and Seek
- London Bridge
- Telephone
- I Spy
- Musical chairs
- Changes

- Charades
- Twenty Questions (Use a globe for geography theme)
- Simon Says
- Board games
- Suggested topics of conversation for high school kids (sports, clothes, music, video games)



Current Practice

- School district wide program implementation
 - Scottsdale School District
 - Designated Staff Support the Program
 - Teachers
 - Parents of children with autism
- Ongoing training to schools and parents
- Continued research of best practices
- Building capacity in SARRC Vocational Programs
 - Zoo Works, Library Works, Community Works



SARRC's Mission

SARRC models and promotes best practices that enhance the quality of life for children and adults with autism spectrum disorders; empowers children, families and professionals with information and training; and advances discoveries that will ultimately lead to a cure.