Inclusive Social Interactions in Early Childhood Settings

INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the magazine "Playing Together—Inclusive Social Interactions." The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

♦ Understand how inclusive social interactions support children's development of problem-solving skills and why that matters for all children.

♦ Explore strategies to create opportunities for inclusive social interactions for children and their families.

♦ Plan to support young children to solve social problems.

Activity

♦ Read the magazine.
   o If you cannot read the entire magazine, focus on the "Highlight and Key Ideas" section on page 4 and the "Try It Out" section beginning on page 13.

♦ Use the questions below to reflect on how you can support children's social problem-solving skills.

♦ Implement your plan and adjust as needed.

> **Prosocial skills and peer relationships are predictive of better school and life outcomes. We have to live in and negotiate a social world – even in preschool.**
>
> **Susan R. Sandall**

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ♦ What caught your attention from the magazine? Why was that fact, idea, or example meaningful to you?

- ♦ In the "Highlights and Key Ideas" section, the author writes, "putting children together in the same room is not enough for all children to learn how to interact with each other and develop friendships." Why do you think that is?
    - ○ How do inclusive social interactions support children with and without disabilities?
    - ○ How can intentional planning be especially helpful when supporting children with different abilities?

- ♦ Read the short classroom vignettes on page 7.
    - ○ What strategies did the educators use to individualize their support for inclusive social interactions?
    - ○ How did they proactively support children's problem-solving skills?
    - ○ Have you used any of these strategies with children in your care? How did it go?
    - ○ How did the educators collaborate with families or other educators to support each child?

- ♦ Partnering with families of children with different abilities is especially important when supporting social skills. It can also be powerful to help families build relationships with each other. How can inclusive social environments for families create inclusive social environments for children? How can you connect families with other families to share their knowledge and strength to support each other?

- ♦ Young children are just beginning to develop the social skills needed to solve problems with others. Observations are an effective way to understand where each child is in their development so that we can individualize our approach to build on their strengths and support their needs.
    - ○ Do you regularly observe children's social interactions?
        - ▪ If so, what have you learned about children's social problem-solving skills? How do you use that information to modify your support?
        - ▪ If not, when will you begin observing children's social interactions? What, specifically, will you look for? What will you do with the information you gather?

- ♦ Pages 13-15 share strategies to facilitate inclusive social interactions where you can support children problem solving skills. Based on your own professional development and children's needs, select one strategy to implement:
    - ○ When will you use this strategy?
    - ○ What resources or support (e.g., readings, videos, conversation with others, coaching) do you need to implement this strategy? How will you access those resources and support?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about supporting children's social problem-solving skills:

- ♦ **Source:** Cultivate Learning – University of Washington
- ♦ **Video:** "Playing Together—Inclusive Social Interactions"
- ♦ **Link:** https://cultivatelearning.uw.edu/circle-time-magazine/season-3/episode-4/
- ♦ **Description:** This video expands on the topics and strategies featured in the magazine "Playing Together – Inclusive Social Interactions." Hear families share more about how inclusive social interactions benefit their children and learn more from educators who intentionally plan activities that support friendship skills and social problem solving.

- ♦ **Source:** Head Start Center for Inclusion
- ♦ **Resource Library:** "Classroom Visuals and Supports"
- ♦ **Link:** https://headstartinclusion.org/tools-and-supports/classroom-visuals-and-supports/
- ♦ **Description:** Visuals are critical for helping all children but especially for making sure that children with disabilities and dual language learners can express their needs and participate in problem solving. This resource features a set of problem-solving visuals to download and use immediately.