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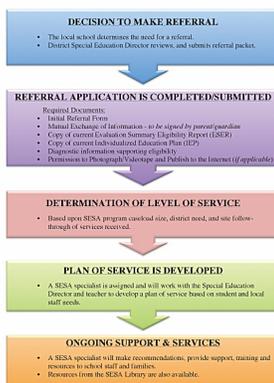
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Issue No. 3
Tips for Social and Play Skills

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Letter From Your Editor

By Jennifer Schroeder, SESA Multiple Disabilities Specialist

"Play is often talked about as if it is a break from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood"

- Fred Rogers

As teachers, it can be very easy to get caught up in the academic goals and percentages that we have set for our students. We want to have a way to make sure they are learning, but also a way to track what they are learning. More and more, this is coming down to sitting at a desk and doing "drill and kill" or rote tasks. Which, for some skills, is great (I can STILL remember sitting with my dad and learning those darn multiplication tables!).

However, it is important that we do not lose sight of what else is important for our students, and that is learning how to play. Learning how to play, both independently and with others helps to teach our students the skills that they will use for the rest of their lives. It is also a way to open up their worlds so that they can just be part of the group. Through play, our students are learning literacy, math, social, and behavior ideas that we work so hard to bring to them. While thinking about having one more thing to add into the day may be stressful, the following ideas for adding in social and play skills to your student's day will add to the fun and hopefully decrease the amount of time redirecting students back to some of those "drill and kill" tasks.

Learning to count is more fun and just as trackable when you are playing **Restaurant** as when you are counting blocks. Or, learning about environmental print is an adventure when you go on a **Sign Hunt** throughout the school. So, the next time you are getting ready to write those lesson plans, don't forget to add in time for what is really important... **PLAY!**

My SESA Story

By Rita Short, SPED Teacher, June Nelson Elementary School

As a teacher in rural Alaska, I am always looking for fresh ideas, knowledgeable feedback, and novel resources in order to improve my student's education. We found all of these qualities and more through the amazing SESA specialists that my team and I have worked with for the past year. I currently work in Kotzebue, Alaska. We have a great team of parents, general education teachers, paraprofessionals, speech and language pathologists, and administration. However, I still found myself seeking additional help especially in the areas of using a new AAC device and behavior supports for some of my students.



Ms. Rita Gage, Ms. Amy Rose,
Ms. Jenny Cargle, Mr. Patrick Henry

We had our first SESA specialist come to Kotzebue during the 15-16 school year. I was

admittedly nervous at first. As a second year teacher working with intensive needs students, I was nervous to have such an experienced professional in my room and observing my teaching. This specialist was fantastic though! They quickly made it clear that they were a part of our team and coming from a position to help improve programs and improve student success!

From the moment they joined my room, they were observant, helpful, and brought incredible experience. My nervous energy quickly disappeared. Our second specialist came in the Fall of 2016. This specialist dedicated numerous hours and energy to our student and made time for each member of that student's team, including the student's siblings. She led a beneficial training one evening for parents and staff working with our student. This training even benefited some teachers in an outlying community. Our whole IEP team felt empowered with a fresh set of ideas and approaches we could easily include in our daily routine.

The SESA specialists have been helpful even when they are not here physically in Kotzebue. They have been available for skype sessions to trouble shoot problems as they arise, and share in our accomplishments! During some follow-up emails, the SESA specialists have always responded promptly with genuine concern. SESA has given our team access to training materials, additional work ideas, programs, curriculums, and the vast library of resources.

We are all incredibly thankful here at JNES to our SESA professionals and can't wait for their next trip!

Social Skills for Students with Emotional Disturbances

By *Samantha Cowper, SESA Emotional Disabilities Specialist*

Social skills are the basic tools we use to communicate and interact with others. It involves using communication, problem solving, decision making, self-management, and peer relating abilities. Social skills allow us to initiate, build, and maintain positive social relationships with others. Failure to develop social competencies can result in a number of negative outcomes including: (1) peer rejections; (2) later manifestation of psychological conditions; (3) dropping out of school; (4) loneliness; (5) criminality; and (6) low academic performance. Many students identified with an emotional disability exhibit social competence deficits.



Deficits in social skills can be viewed as mistakes in learning. There are four main reasons why students exhibit lack of positive social skills: (1) they don't know another way to act or react; (2) they know other ways to behave but have not practiced them; (3) they tried another way, it didn't work the first time so they assume it will never work for them; and (4) tension and anxiety interfere with the ability to master the practice behavior.

The following strategies help overcome barriers by teaching and practicing social skills in a manner that is motivating and reinforcing:

1. Explicitly and frequently teach social skills and rules.
2. Model appropriate responses to social situations.

3. Engage student in role-play to practice appropriate responses.
4. Explain rules/rationale behind social exchanges.
5. Target perspective-taking skills.
6. Teach students to label his or her own feelings/emotions.
7. Teach students to accurately label the emotional status of others (based on facial cues, verbal cues, etc.).
8. Be aware of and control situations that involve peers and staff who interact negatively with the student.

Social Strategies and the Student with Visual Impairments

By Angel Black, SESA Vision Impairment Specialist

Social skills are often something that most of us take for granted. It is just something that we do. We can walk into a room, look at the people in it, read their body language, and immediately know if they are interested in talking to us because they make eye contact or wave their hand. Or, maybe they do not want to talk to us, so they avoid eye contact and sit with their arms crossed. These are visual cues that a person with a visual impairment does not see.



"When you have a visual impairment, social situations don't happen automatically. It is a loss of what is called incidental learning. Most social skills are learned by repeated visual observation and connecting visual images. It's estimated that 75 - 80 percent of everything we learn, we learn visually. "

Listed below are a few tips to helping a student with a visual impairment be successful while playing with others in a social situation:

- Explain to the student what the other students are doing. Let them decide what they want to do and whom they want to play with. Once you have helped them initiate the contact, you can back away and let them play.
- Help students learn how to approach their peers. Try practice questions they can ask about familiar games, television shows, etc. Model asking the questions and then listening to the other person's answer before responding. This may take some practice and that is ok. Encourage them to listen to what other students are saying to each other to provide some ideas about how to start a conversation with someone.
- **There might be moments when the student with the visual impairment will miss a friendly cue.** They may not see another child smile and wave, or motion for them to come over and play. Explain to your students that they need to verbalize the invitation.
- If the student is still having difficulties socially, practice together in imaginative scenarios. Modeling behaviors, things to say, sharing, playing, and being a friend. The old adage is certainly true in this circumstance . . . you have to be a friend to get a friend.
- And possibly one of the most important things to do for your student with a visual impairment is to foster the development of self-esteem that is grounded in a sense of self-confidence and self-respect. By doing this, you might be surprised at how much easier engaging in social situations will be for that student.

A Conversation Teaching Sequence for Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

By Olivia Yancey, SESA Deaf and Hard of Hearing Specialist

Students who are deaf or hard of hearing are often identified with areas not mastered in pragmatic language development. According to *The Missing Link in Language Development of Deaf and Hard of Hearing: Pragmatic Language Development*, by Dianne Goberis, Dinah Beams, Molly Dalpes, Amanda Abrisch, Rosalinda Baca, and Christine Yoshinaga-Itano (2012), items not mastered on the questionnaire by children age 7, included: ends conversations, interjects, provides information on request, and makes promises. Reasons for this delay may include students with hearing loss often do not have the opportunity for incidental learning (i.e., learning through observation) due to limited access to fluent language models (i.e., American Sign Language and/or English).

Consider the following conversation teaching sequence when introducing a social conversational skill:

- Create a video-model of the social exchange (e.g., PowerPoint with recorded video clips) with the student's communication mode (e.g., American Sign Language, closed captioned videos, etc.).
- Review the social exchange using the video model.
- Role play the exchange with the student.
- Select conversation partners in the school to practice the new conversation strategy.

Play Skills for Students with Multiple Disabilities

By Julie Burger, SESA Multiple Disabilities Specialist

Playing is a skill that may seem to come as natural to children as breathing, but for students with multiple or unique disabilities, these skills need to be taught, modeled, and facilitated. Students with multiple disabilities pose a unique set of needs and challenges. It is important to acknowledge the students' medical and physical conditions, as well as social-emotional needs and develop both structured and unstructured play experiences with those in mind.



Structure play groups with your student in mind.

- Include peers to help model play, interact, and bond, even when that means pulling in students from the general education classroom.

Be sure to have accessible materials during play time.

- Students with various needs may have motor delays or vision impairments that would require play adaptations to be in place.

Teach and incorporate communication into play.

- Playtime is a great time for students to ask questions, communicate with peers, and express themselves, as well as using AAC devices in a fun and non-structured setting.

Allow play to be self-directed and expose students to multi-sensory fun!

Play Skills and Social Skills for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

By Kendra Wolf, SESA Autism Specialist

Autism spectrum disorder affects a child's development of social and communication skills, important skills that are necessary for playtime. Children with autism may have difficulty with turn-taking, engaging in their environment, sharing objects, and socializing with peers and adults. Many children play with only one or two different toys, not using them for their specific function. It is not necessary to change the toys or materials children with autism play with, but focus on the items they find engaging in order to incorporate skills in social interaction, imagination, and communication. By facilitating a child's playtime, they can learn and develop the skills needed for play while connecting with the people and world around them.



- They may not enjoy using objects to discover their function. It is common for children with autism to have a very limited play, select only a few toys, and play with them in specific or repetitive ways.

- Join in with the child as they play, begin by copying the child's actions. Add a step to the activity, modeling what they can use the item for and encourage them to copy you.
- If the child does not follow, do not be discouraged. Use this opportunity to practice turn-taking. Start with prompts: "My turn!" then "Little Susie's turn!"

- It is important to recognize the child's sensory needs.

- Auditory: Music Toys or Singing Songs.
- Visual: Mirrors or Sensory Bottles
- Tactile: Play-Doh or Fidgets.

- Preference for routine and fear of change can make a new game or toy daunting.

- Providing choices between activities or toys allows the child to maintain control.
- Use visuals to assist the child in using toys correctly. These can include social stories, videos, or simple visual cue cards.

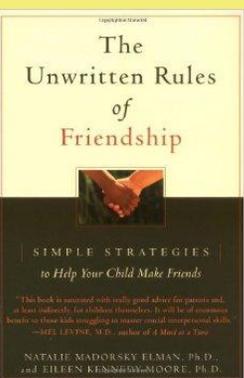
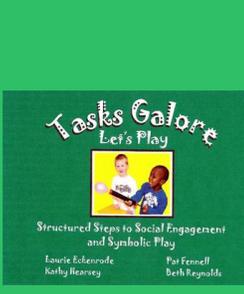
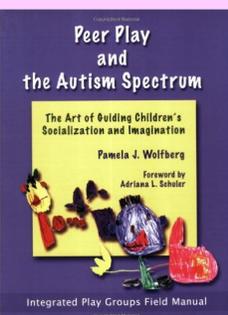
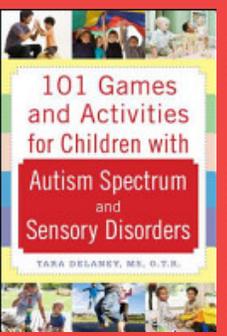
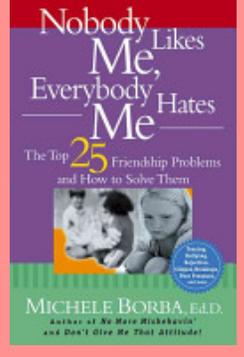
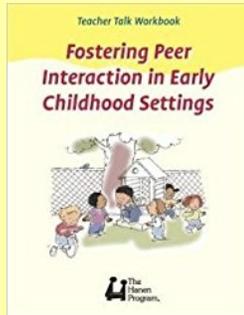
- Communication difficulties can make it difficult for a child to play with their peers.

- Break play routines into smaller steps, giving simple instructions.
- Keeping structured games with adults or peers short and using preferred items to accommodate a child's attention difficulties or distractibility.

Play and Social Skills Materials and Resources

By Anne Freitag, SESA Librarian

To access the following resources in the SESA Library, click on the book title and enter the bar code number shown.

 <p>The Unwritten Rules of Friendship</p> <p>Simple Strategies to Help Your Child Make Friends</p> <p>NATALIE MADORSKY ELMAN, Ph.D., and EILEEN KENNEDY-MOORE, Ph.D.</p>	 <p>Tasks Galore Let's Play</p> <p>Structured Steps to Social Engagement and Symbolic Play</p> <p>Laurie Schenrode, Kathy Henesey, Pat Finnell, Beth Reynolds</p>	 <p>Peer Play and the Autism Spectrum</p> <p>The Art of Guiding Children's Socialization and Imagination</p> <p>Pamela J. Wolfberg, foreword by Adriana L. Schuler</p> <p>Integrated Play Groups Field Manual</p>	 <p>Skillstreaming</p>	 <p>101 Games and Activities for Children with Autism Spectrum and Sensory Disorders</p> <p>TARA DELANEY, M.Ed., O.T.R.</p>
<p><u>The Unwritten Rules of Friendship</u> 15846</p>	<p><u>Tasks Galore Let's Play</u> 15962</p>	<p><u>Peer Play and the Autism Spectrum</u> 13797</p>	<p><u>Skillstreaming</u> 18746</p>	<p><u>101 Games and Activities for Children with Autism</u> 18865</p>
 <p>Nobody Likes Me, Everybody Hates Me</p> <p>The Top 25 Friendship Problems and How to Solve Them</p> <p>MICHELE BORBA, Ed.D.</p>	 <p>Fostering Peer Interaction in Early Childhood Settings</p> <p>The Hanen Program</p>	 <p>Hand-in-hand (Visual Material)</p>	 <p>The Autism Social Skills Picture Book</p>	 <p>Real-world Social Skills (Realia)</p>
<p><u>Nobody Likes Me, Everybody Hates Me</u> 14069</p>	<p><u>Fostering Peer Interaction in Early Childhood Settings</u> 14478</p>	<p><u>Hand-in-hand (Visual Material)</u> 15044</p>	<p><u>The Autism Social Skills Picture Book</u> 13811</p>	<p><u>Real-world Social Skills (Realia)</u> 17378</p>

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