

Friendship Skills – Teaching Children Initiation and Responding skills

Summary

What are Initiation and Responding Skills, anyway?

- The actions and words children use to enter play and interact with peers, and how to respond to these requests in a positive manner.

What's the Point?

- Helps to support positive peer interactions and children's sense of belonging
- Promotes positive and effective communication among children
- Helps children interpret their peers attempts to seek connection
- Starts the foundation for empathy as children begin to take into consideration other children's wants and needs.
- Fosters children's self confidence in expressing their wants and needs to others

How Do I Do This?

- Observe children's play to get a sense of children's existing skills and opportunities for capacity building
- Teach appropriate ways to initiate and respond to peers through the use of books, puppets, role play, visuals, scripted story and other activities
- Post visual reminders of how to request and join in play with others.
- Model appropriate ways to initiate a conversation with others and how to respond to other's request
- Provide support by offering more appropriate ways to initiate interaction (e.g., look at your peer, tap on the shoulder, call by name).
- Provide support on how to respond to other's initiation (e.g., looking at peers, using name, asking other child's intent, stating own intent).

How Will the Children Participate in This Practice?

- Children model how they initiate conversations with others in group time
- Children use posted visual cue to support their independent use of skills
- Peers can support each other in their use of these skills
- Children's use of initiating and responding skills can be documented and celebrated

Checklist

Task	Complete?
Educators observe children's play to document current initiating and responding skills and potential areas to scaffold.	
Educators discuss these observations with the team members	
Educators create and gather visuals and materials to support intentional teaching of skills (e.g., tap on shoulder, say peer's name and peer respond by looking at child).	
Educators teach appropriate ways to initiate and respond to peers using books, puppets, visuals etc.	
Educators approach children in one-on-one situations to support initiating skill by offering cues, script language or using open-ended questions. E.g., "It seems you want to play with Paulo." "What can you do to get his attention"?	
Educators approach children in one-on-one situations to support appropriate responses to others requests or nonverbal action. E.g., "It seems Nicki would like to play with you.," "You could say, I want to play alone right now."	
Educators model appropriate ways to initiate interactions and respond to others with other children or other adults	
Educators give positive descriptive feedback when children use initiating and responding skills.	
Educators document children's use of skills and shares these with families.	

As an educator, you guide, scaffold, nurture, model, and facilitate children's learning.

Makovichuk, Hewes, Lirette & Thomas, 2014, p. 53

Flight: Alberta's early learning and care framework.

Retrieved from www.flightframework.ca

