

Research Highlights

Topic: Person-Centered Planning and Friendships

Turnbull, A. P., Blue-Banning, M., & Pereira, L. (2000). Successful friendships of Hispanic children and youth with disabilities: An exploratory study. *Mental Retardation*. 38(2), 138-153.

BOTTOM LINE

In group and individual interviews, Hispanic children with disabilities, their friends, family members and teachers talked about the children's friendships. Their discussions indicated that these friendships are characterized by three relationship components—companionship, instrumental support, and emotional support. Information shared in the interviews suggests that each of these relationship components is distinguished by one of three levels of intensity or depth—acquaintance, casual, and intimate. Within each relationship component, participants' also spoke about the support that the children with disabilities gave to and received from their friends.

TIPS

- Increase the quantity and quality of friendships for children with disabilities by facilitating a broad range of friendship possibilities including (a) children with and without disabilities, (b) children of similar and different ages, and (c) children who are related as well as those who are not related.
- Use person-centered planning groups such as Making Action Plans (MAPS) to facilitate reciprocal friendships.
- Emphasize companionship and emotional support in friendships in addition to instrumental help.
- Emphasize the support that children with a disability *give to* as well as receive from friends.

KEY FINDINGS

- Friendships can be characterized by three relationship components—companionship, instrumental support, and emotional support and each of these components can be distinguished by one of three levels of depth—acquaintance, casual, and intimate.
- Participants placed greater emphasis on companionship and emotional support in friendships than they did on instrumental support.
 - *Companionship:* The majority of participants' comments (56%) were related to the companionship component. Participants' comments on companionship fell into one of six types: engaging in sports and physical activities, visiting and talking, going places, playing, engaging in artistic expression and participating in school and community activities. Companionship comments emphasized the importance of having fun together, rather than on giving and receiving support.
 - *Instrumental Support:* 18% of participants' comments focused on instrumental support. Instrumental support was characterized by four types: providing information, providing assistance with school tasks, providing practical help, and providing advocacy. A small number (3%) of the instrumental support comments were ones in which the child with the disability was giving support to the friend.
 - *Emotional Support:* One fourth (26%) of participants' comments were about emotional support. Emotional support included three types: attending to feelings, expressing affection and caring, and enhancing self-esteem. The children with disabilities gave the same amount of emotional support to their friends (13%) as they received from their friends (13%).
- A key Hispanic cultural value is familism, which emphasizes the interdependence of extended families. Family member participants' comments indicated that members of their extended family contributed positively to the friendship network of the child with a disability.

METHOD

- In four states, Hispanic children with disabilities and one or more of their friends, as well as parents and teachers participated in individual and group interviews.
- The 56 participants talked about the children's successful friendship and about the influence of Hispanic cultural values on friendships.

METHOD

cont.

- A Hispanic community leader within each community served as a research site coordinator. The site coordinators had many responsibilities including assisting in the identification of participants and finding a location for and scheduling the interviews.
- A participatory action research committee provided advice and guidance to ensure that the research outcomes would be relevant for children with and without disabilities, family members, teachers, and researchers.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

- Blue-Banning, M., Turnbull, A.P., & Pereira, L. (2000). Group Action Planning as a support strategy for Hispanic families: Parent and professional perspectives. *Mental Retardation*, 38(2), 262-275.
- Pray, B.S., Hall, C.W., & Markley, R.P. (1992). Social skills training: An analysis of social behaviors selected for individualized education programs. *Remedial and Special Education*, 13(5), 43-49.
- Sowers, J.A., Glang, A.E., Voss, J., & Cooley, E. (1996). Enhancing friendships and leisure involvement of students with traumatic brain injuries and other disabilities. In L.E. Powers, G.H.S. Singer, & J.A. Sowers (Eds.), *On the road to autonomy: Promoting self-competence in children and youth with disabilities* (pp. 347-372). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.
- Turnbull, A.P., Pereira, L., & Blue-Banning, M. (1999). Parents' facilitation of friendships between their children with a disability and friends without a disability. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 24(2), 85-99.
- Turnbull, A.P., Pereira, L., & Blue-Banning, M. (2000). Teachers as friendship facilitators. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 32(5), 66-70.

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