

Research Highlights

Topic: Person Centered Planning and Friendships

Turnbull, A.P., Pereira, L., & Blue-Banning, M. (2000). Teachers as friendship facilitators. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 32(5), 66-70.

BOTTOM LINE

Hispanic children with disabilities, their friends, family members and teachers were interviewed to gain understanding about the friendship strategies of three teachers identified as active facilitators of friendships for students with disabilities. Information shared highlights the teachers' use of three facilitation strategies—finding opportunities, providing interpretations, and making accommodations. Specific examples of these strategies are discussed.

TIPS

- Allocate specific times for friendship development in educational planning for students with disabilities.
- Emphasize *reciprocal* friendships in social relationship development.
- Use the following strategies from the Schaffner and Buswell (1992) framework to facilitate friendships: (a) finding opportunities, (b) providing interpretations, and (c) making accommodations.
- Use the Hispanic cultural values of *respeto* (respect for human dignity) and *personalismo* (valuing personal integrity and personal attributes that make an individual a good person) to create a classroom environment conducive to friendship development.

KEY FINDINGS

- All three teachers built upon the Hispanic cultural values of *respeto* (respect for human dignity) and *personalismo* (valuing personal integrity and personal attributes that make an individual a good person) in their classrooms.
- Using *respeto* and *personalismo* in the classroom provides opportunities for multiple friendship facilitation strategies regardless of how busy we are.
- The teachers used individually or a combination of the Schaffner and Buswell (1992) friendship facilitation strategies: (a) finding opportunities—bringing children and youth together, (b) providing interpretations—acknowledging individual strengths and commonalities among peers, and (c) making accommodations—introducing necessary changes to enhance participation and interaction.
- Teachers' specific friendship facilitation included encouraging students with disabilities to join extracurricular activities, organizing nonschool activities to enhance bonding, highlighting students' strengths, involving many people to achieve the goal of friendships for students with disabilities, and putting a student's behavioral challenges in the most positive light.
- Teachers' facilitation of friendships for students with disabilities leads to more enriching educational experiences for all students.

METHOD

- Hispanic children with disabilities and one or more of their friends, as well as parents and teachers participated in individual and group interviews.
- The participants talked about the children's successful friendships and about the role of teachers in facilitating those friendships.
- Three teachers were identified as actively facilitating friendships for students with disabilities.
- Interview data were analyzed to gain information on each teacher's friendship facilitation strategies.

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.

RELATED
PUBLICATIONS
cont.

- Hamre-Nietupski, S. (1993). How much time should be spent on skill instruction and friendship development? Preferences of parents of students with moderate and severe/profound disabilities. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation*, 28(3), 220-231.
- Hamre-Nietupski, S., Hendrickson, J., Nietupski, J., & Sasso, G. (1993). Perceptions of teachers of students with moderate, severe, or profound disabilities on facilitating friendships with nondisabled peers. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation*, 28(2), 111-127.
- Hamre-Nietupski, S., Hendrickson, J., Nietupski, J., & Shokoohi-Yekta, M. (1994). Regular educators' perceptions of facilitating friendships of students with moderate, severe, or profound disabilities with nondisabled peers. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation*, 29(2), 102-117.
- Schaffner, C.B., & Buswell, B.E. (1992). *Connecting students: A guide to thoughtful friendship facilitation for educators and families*. Colorado Springs, CO: PEAK Parents Center, Inc.
- 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., & Ruef, M. B. (1997). Family perspectives on inclusive lifestyle issues for individuals with problem behavior. *Exceptional Children*, 63, 211-227.

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