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To Facilitate Friendships

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Abstract:

Students, teachers and parents all have a vital role to play in the successful inclusion of children with disability in regular school settings. This one-page checklist suggests ways that students, teachers and parents can facilitate friendships.

Keywords: Inclusion, friendship

To facilitate friendships...

- **Students can:**

- Arrange to join the person for lunch on certain days.
- Say hello to the student in the hall.
- Go over and talk to him or her, particularly whenever the person is alone.
- Invite her or him to join a club, or an activity.
- Call him or her on the telephone.
- Go out of the way to sit with him or her on the bus.
- Become a part of the student's 'circle' - to help make sure he or she becomes a part of the school.
- Walk with (or wheel) him or her to class.
- Arrange to sit next to the student in class and help out whenever needed.
- Encourage friends to welcome this student in the group.
- Share a locker with the student.
- Help the student get around the school.
- Learn more about the student (for example, how to communicate through sign language, how to wheel his or her chair safely, what likes/dislikes the student has).

- **Teachers can:**

- Pay close attention to seating arrangements - placing a student who is at risk of being isolated in front of the room, next to peers who will be supportive.
- Use co-operative learning groups in which students are encouraged to support one another.
- Use a partner system in class - rotating partners on a monthly basis (but carefully selecting the partner for the student with special needs).
- Conduct awareness sessions with students (helping to dispel myths about people with disabilities; helping students to see the value in each person).
- Serve as a model of how to interact with the student, demonstrating respect for the student (e.g. Avoiding talking about the student in front of him or her -and if you do so, include him or her in the conversation).
- Comment positively on any social interactions between the student and his or her peers.
- Use role playing and other techniques to help students develop needed social skills.
- Help to schedule the student into extracurricular activities. Invite the student to have lunch and have 2 or 3 other students join them.
- Recruit two or three students in the class to 'show the student the ropes' and provide support when needed.
- Help the student become part of an extracurricular activity by becoming aware of the choices and helping to arrange transportation.
- Keep in touch with other teachers - ask about potential friendships.

- **Parents Can:**

- Encourage son or daughter to invite friends to their home.
- Help their child become a part of an extracurricular activity by becoming aware of the choices and helping to arrange transportation.
- Attend events that their children are participating in - as a way of encouraging this type of social activity.
- Keep in touch with teachers - ask about potential friendships.