



Friendships and social networks are important for all kids. Social relationships add substantial quality to our lives, yet the social opportunities of students with disabilities are often more limited than those of their typical peers. Understanding how a child is socially connected and gathering information about the student's attributes in the areas of social interaction and relationships and participation can help the teacher develop strategies to build on strengths and address weaknesses in this area. The benefits are tremendous. Deficits in social skills are highly predictive of difficulties in employment and community living adjustment (Gaylord-Ross, 1979). Students who are socially isolated may exhibit antisocial or aggressive behavior, age-inappropriate interests, grooming difficulties, communication difficulties, few learned skills, and poor retention and generalization of skills.

Parent \_\_\_\_\_  
 Professional \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Creating a Social Relationship / Network Profile**

Child / Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

---

**PART I: How do you know if your child/student is socially connected with his/her peers and family?**

The child/student has a range of friends.

Who are they?	What type of social experiences do they share?	How often? How long?	Identifies self as friend	Child/student Identifies him/her as a friend

---

Do these friends know one another? To what extent? Please describe:

The child/student participates in school activities involving social interaction with peers.				
Type of Activity	Extent of Participation	How often? How long?	With peers w/disabilities	With peers w/o disabilities
Summary Analysis:				

The child/student participates in activities <b>outside of the school</b> involving social interaction with peers.				
Type of Activity	Extent of Participation	How often? How long?	With peers w/disabilities	With peers w/o disabilities
Summary Analysis:				

The child/student participates in family activities involving social interaction.			
Type of Activity	Extent of Participation	How often? How long?	With Whom
Summary Analysis			

**PART II : What are the attributes of the child / student regarding skills of social interaction and relationships?**

The child / student seeks and maintains interaction with others.

Describe:

The child / student has an array of interests, talents, and skills to share with others.

Describe:

The child / student is able to achieve a **joint line of regard** with others. A **joint line of regard** is defined as an ability to achieve a shared exchange about a specific subject, item or topic.

Describe:

<p>The child / student exhibits socially enhancing and/or interfering behaviors. Describe:</p>
<p>The child / student's social interactions and relationships are influenced by cultural attributes and identity. Describe:</p>
<p>The child / student demonstrates developmentally age-appropriate expressions of affection and sexuality. Describe:</p>

What current supports / opportunities are available to the child / student that would influence the development and maintenance of social interactions and relationships?	Describe
<p>Type of Support / Opportunity (please check)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Assistive Technology</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Augmentative/Alternative Communication</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Circle of Friends</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Computer (Internet Access)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Direct Instruction in Social Mediation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Inclusion Facilitation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Medical Intervention (e.g. SRI Medication)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Peer Mentoring/Problem Solving</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Social Stories / Behavioral Rehearsal</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Transportation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (s):</p>	





Transitions are difficult for all of us, but for students with disabilities and their families they are often both more difficult and more frequent than for their peers. Research has demonstrated that transitions for children with disabilities are frequently chaotic, painful times when the children and their families suffer and struggle and all too often end up with results that can only be considered unsuccessful.

The following pages outline five statements that exemplify best practice in transition processes and eighteen critical activities that operationalize each of the best practice statements.

When implemented, these practices and critical activities allow for smooth, successful transitions whether they be from pre-school to kindergarten, middle school to high school, from a segregated to an included placement or from school to work.

## **Best Practices and Critical Activities for Planning Transitions**

**The student and members of his/her family should receive the necessary information, support, and opportunities to enable them to participate as equal partners in planning all transitions.**

1. All involved should receive information about the school's transition policies and procedures.
2. The individual's and family's goals for the transition, the types of information and support needed and their desired level of participation should be determined as part of the transition process.
3. Families and individuals should receive assistance in obtaining the desired information, support, and opportunities for participation in planning the transition.
4. The student, their family, and the school staff should identify the methods they will use to share information once the transition takes place.

**Planning for all transitions should occur in a systematic, individualized, timely, and collaborative fashion.**

5. All staff involved in the transition should be informed well in advance about students who will be entering the classroom or placement.
6. Staff who will collaborate with the student and their family to initiate and coordinate the transition planning process should be identified early in the transition process.
7. The student's potential placement should be identified early in the transition process.
8. A transition planning team should be established for each student.
9. Information about the student and the education programs important to the transition process should be identified and exchanged among transition team members.
10. The student's individual transition plan should be developed well in advance of his or her actual transition.

**The student's education program should provide opportunities for the student to learn developmentally appropriate skills, which promote his or her successful participation in the program he or she is being transitioned to.**

11. Skills for enhancing the student's successful participation in the classroom/placement should be identified early in the transition process.
12. Teaching and management practices and routines used in the entering classroom/placement should be identified.
13. If appropriate, the student should be provided with opportunities to learn developmentally appropriate skills, and routines and teaching practices of the program the student will transition to should be integrated into the student's program.

**The receiving classroom/placement should prepare to successfully integrate and educate the student in the new setting.**

14. Prior to the student's entry to the new setting, school staff should obtain necessary training and technical assistance.
15. Prior to the transition, the school should obtain necessary resources including personnel, instructional materials and adaptive equipment and should complete building improvements.
16. Prior to the transition, the transition planning team should determine strategies for promoting the student's successful participation in each school activity.

**The staff should provide necessary services to promote and support the student's placement, integration, and education in the new placement.**

17. Staff should monitor the student's participation in all aspects of the new setting.
18. Staff from the previous placement should provide the student, family and new placement staff with follow-up support.

*Adapted from TEEM, A Manual to Support the Transition of Young Children with Special Needs and Their Families from Preschool into Kindergarten and Other Regular Education Environments, Center for Developmental Disabilities, The University of Affiliated Program of Vermont, University of Vermont.*



Developed by a parent who has worked tirelessly for the full inclusion of her child with disabilities in the general education setting, this collection of simple, yet effective ideas have proven to be very successful. The collaboration of all involved in the process, including the student, his or her family, the classroom teachers and the other students are key in ensuring the most effective and positive experience.

## Tips for General Education Teachers

There are many ways to ease the transition of a student into the classroom that will help everyone be more comfortable based on the special needs of the child. If you will be working with a child with a significant disability, consider the following helpful hints:

1. Visit the child in his/her present placement, if possible. Bring any questions you might have and a notebook to write down your observations and concerns. Schedule time to speak with the teacher afterwards. It can be very helpful to know if there are key words or phrases that catch the child's attention. Also, it's equally important to know if there are any particular words or phrases that can result in an unfavorable response or behavior.

Two examples follow:

a. One student always became agitated when told he had to do a particular task later, especially if it was something that he wasn't too fond of (homework, cleaning up after himself, etc.). Even though he knew the task was inevitable and a part of his daily routine, he almost always became upset if the teacher (or anyone else) wouldn't agree to say he had to do something 'maybe later' instead of just later. Perhaps this was the student's way of asserting himself and having some control over certain situations. The point being that he almost always complied with whatever he needed to do without protest when whoever was in charge (including his parents) agreed to rephrase all requests using maybe later. So simple, yet so effective.

b. Another student disliked reading and always resisted when asked to read a short story aloud. After reading only a few sentences, he refused to continue and just repeatedly said, "no more reading". Eventually, he would begin every reading lesson with the same phrase, even if the lesson didn't include any reading on his part. Obviously, he found reading difficult and was doing his best to communicate this. His speech therapist finally came up with a simple solution that worked beautifully all the time. They took turns reading, so that he read every other sentence. Before long, they were reading two and three short stories together at one sitting and he was able to answer questions about the tales correctly. We passed this information on to all his teachers and it made reading time much less stressful. More importantly, this strategy gave the child a chance to be successful and feel good about reading.

2. Make several home visits. Depending on the child's needs, it can be extremely helpful to spend time with the child in different home settings. Many kids receive services in their home. If possible:

a. Observe a tutoring or speech session. Therapists who have an established relationship with a child can be invaluable resources.

b. Join the child for lunch or snack time. It's important to see the child in a non-stressful, undemanding situation. For many kids, this is a good time.

c. Visit with the parent when the child is not scheduled for a work session. Observing a child during free time can be very informative.

3. Make a small photo album for the child. Have some pictures of yourself taken during the school day. Include a picture of the principal, gym teacher, school nurse, etc. Write the name and job title of everyone at the bottom of each photo. Be sure to take a picture of the school building, cafeteria, gymnasium, main office and the nurse's office. If this can't be done before the new school year begins, have it ready on the first day of school.

4. If you know that you will have a child with special needs in the new school year, request that a meeting be

held at your school **before** the current year is over. Invite several of the child's teachers to meet with you and other staff members. The purpose of this meeting is threefold. First, a knowledgeable person would present an overview of the child's disability and some characteristics that are generally associated with it. Second, the child's teachers would share their own personal insights and experiences, effective teaching methods and the unique characteristics of the **individual** child. Third, all staff would have an opportunity for a question and answer session. Parents should be invited to brainstorm with the teachers. However, it's important to have a forum for all teachers to speak freely. Therefore, some teachers may feel more comfortable if the parents participate in the meeting at a specific time.

5. Arrange for the child to visit the new school while it's in session. If possible, have a friend or sibling accompany the child on a tour of the building.

6. Additional opportunities for the child to visit the new school when it is **not** in session are really important. This is a good way to familiarize the child with the school's layout. Processing information can be very difficult with bells ringing, strange voices speaking over the PA system and hallways full of children changing classes. Meeting informally with the principal a couple of times during the summer can be very helpful. Seeing a familiar face on the first day of school can really help to lessen first day anxieties.

7. Request a list of helpful hints from the child's current teachers that have been used successfully in the classroom. Some hints might be:

- a. The best way to get the child's attention. (a tap on the shoulder, bending down to eye level and speaking, using a key word, etc.)
- b. Motivators that will help the child to focus. If the child loves animals, use animal stickers and other visuals in the classroom that relate to animals and their habitats. Invest in some new books about animals for the classroom. Incorporate animal themes in a lesson whenever possible and have the librarian do a lesson about a category of animals.
- c. Repeat directions and instructions two or three times. This will probably be helpful for the whole class.
- d. Get the child up and moving if sitting for long periods is difficult. Find out what errands or jobs that the child has had success with. Ask former teachers what has worked for them.
- e. Use some materials that are familiar to the child. A notepad that is the same size and color as one previously used could be helpful. Think of using a visual schedule that follows a particular format that the child has used.
- f. What are the child's favorite/least favorite activity or subject? Get ideas from other teachers who have worked with the child. Don't forget to ask for parental input. They are experts, too!
- g. Teach a lesson using a format that a current teacher may be utilizing. Are spelling words spelled aloud on Monday and then copied on paper? Is dictation a weekly activity? Try modifying your teaching style to accommodate the student at least in one subject area.

8. Think of beginning a Lunch Club if the child has difficulty with social skills. The idea for this is to give the child with special needs an opportunity to learn and practice appropriate social skills in a small group setting. This is also beneficial to the other students in the class. They are helping a peer and in turn learning to be more empathetic. Typical kids also learn to be comfortable around kids who have disabilities, thereby enhancing their sensitivity and awareness of diverse populations. There are many variations of the Lunch Club idea. It can be adapted according to the age level of the students. An actual sample letter that was used in one school is included on the next page. A general letter was sent home to all parents asking if they were interested in having

their child participate in the club. It never singled out the child with special needs as the reason for the club. The lunch club met every Wednesday and Friday and was a big hit with everyone. Variations of the lunch club continued throughout this particular student's 4 years in elementary school.

9. A behavioral checklist, if appropriate, can be very helpful. See example.

10. Don't forget Positive Behavior Supports (PBS). There is a wealth of information and resources available about PBS.



## Connecticut Farms School Lunch Club - Room 101

We are initiating a lunch club. It will give the students a chance to eat lunch in a small group setting and have a different kind of learning experience. Four children will participate on a rotating basis twice a week. During this time the goal will be to help the children develop positive peer interactions and also to have some time for fun with educational games. Your child may bring his or her own lunch or order from the cafeteria, as usual. Once the club is set up, we will let you know what days your child is participating.

If you are interested in having your child join the Lunch Club, please fill out the bottom part of this form and send it back to Mrs. O' Grady as soon as possible.

Thanks,  
Mrs. O' Grady  
Mrs. Nemezio  
Mrs. Hrevnack  
Mr. Lopes

---

**LUNCH CLUB** - Please return to Mrs. O'Grady.

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like my child to participate its the Lunch Club program.

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's Signature



## Anthony's Behavior List and Helpful Suggestions

1. When Anthony is excited and happy or frustrated, he probably will:
  - a. Jump up and down in place - Tell him to relax, calm down and/or that jumping at this time is not appropriate.
  - b. Press his groin area (he is seeking deep pressure) - Tell him to relax, press down on his thighs instead, or quietly tell him that is inappropriate touching. (you don't want to bring attention to the behavior)\*
  - c. Press down and grind his teeth - Remind him to relax, use his words to say what's bothering him, offer him something to bite down on. Anthony has a plastic shoebox of sensory items including gum, red licorice, hard pretzels and rubber tubing very similar to a straw that he can use. He's allowed to chew four pieces of Trident at once to obtain the input he is seeking. It also contains a flexible ball and hand grip for squeezing when necessary. Anthony has learned to ask for these items as needed.
  - d. Bite down on the front of his shirt. - He can use some of the sensory items listed above.
2. When Anthony knows he is wrong or if he is uncooperative, he will repeat "Mom happy" or "Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ is happy." He can perseverate (constantly repeat) this. Remind him that repeating is not appropriate, or that you are happy when he listens, cooperates, etc. Sometimes I just say, "no repeating" once or twice and then ignore him if he continues.
3. Inappropriate use of "sorry." He will repeatedly say sorry when he really should be responding with "OK." Remind him of this and he will correct himself:
4. Volume of voice sometimes gets very loud. Model the proper tone of voice for him. Also, just ask him to speak lower.
5. Anthony responds quicker if you say "listen, Anthony" or just "listen" instead of calling him by name. He processes this instantly.
6. Hugs are allowed only at home with family. Hugs are comforting and calming. He has a weighted vest in class that he wears when needed.

It's really important to remember that every behavior is a form of communication, more so for children with limited verbal ability, It's their way of saying that they are frustrated, need some sensory input, excited or stressed out. It's very important to *replace*, not stop, the inappropriate behavior with some activity or means that will result in more appropriate responses.

\* Anthony wears spandex bike shorts under his clothes. This has been very successful in providing him with deep pressure and reducing the inappropriate touching by 50%.