

Peer Relationships

Description: Positive relationships with peers involves a student having supportive and respectful connections with friends and classmates. Peer relationships are different from Child-Adult relationships in that they are often more egalitarian. Peer relationships, if positive, can provide a child with opportunities for learning cooperation, sharing, compromise, empathy, conflict resolution, assertiveness and fun. Facilitators encourage and validate efforts by the students and create a warm atmosphere for learning.

Elaboration: Signs of a negative relationship include bragging, put-downs, fighting often, gossiping, and bullying. Positive relationships are characterized by respectful interactions between students such as students' willingness to sit in close proximity with each other or students working cooperatively, sharing, respecting differences, sticking up for each other, being helpful, being honest, and listening to each other, especially during a fight.

Strategies:

Team Building: Notice if there are specific social skills your students find particularly challenging and actively encourage these. This could be sharing, teamwork, compromising etc. You can build these skills through team building activities.

Group Promises: Allow students to make decisions about how they should behave together to set up expectations for their relationships with one another, which all members of the group have agreed to. Once they have been established, make sure they are often referenced. Have posters in the room demonstrating positive social interactions, e.g. sharing. These can come from the group promises and students could work together to create these.

Positive Reinforcement: Acknowledge and appreciate positive behaviors exhibited by students, especially those that foster positive peer relationships. For example, recognizing sharing, helping one another, ensuring no one is left out, etc. Point out these positive interactions 3 – 4 times more often than one points out negative peer interactions. Allow opportunities for students to provide positive feedback to each other.

Role-Modeling: Try to work demonstrations of positive social interactions into examples in classwork.

Pairs/Small Group Work: Incorporate these opportunities for students to work together. Make sure that these groups are divided in kind ways (e.g., counting off by 4, pass out playing cards and all hearts/spades go together, birthdays Jan-March, etc.).

Acknowledging Individuals: Greet one another by name, honoring differences and unique qualities.

Mediation: If there is a conflict between students, facilitator mediates conflict. Allow both students to voice feelings and decide how to handle conflict.

Opening Circle: Give students the chance to talk about selves and learn about others.

Peer Relationships Rubric

Evidence Absent	Inconsistent Evidence	Reasonable Evidence	Compelling Evidence
There is little or no evidence that facilitators are using strategies that allow students to build skills in peer relationships.	There is limited evidence that facilitators are using strategies that allow students to build skills in peer relationships.	There is substantial evidence that facilitators are using strategies that allow students to build skills in peer relationships.	There is consistent and meaningful evidence that facilitators are using strategies that allow students to build skills in peer relationships.
1	2	3	4
<p>Facilitator doesn't use any strategies to build peer relationships.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Facilitator uses a strategy in a negative way.</p> <p>For example, during a team building activity, students may make belittling comments on multiple occasions and the facilitator fails to intervene.</p>	<p>Facilitator uses 1 (maybe 2) strategies to build peer relationships, but not consistently or effectively.</p> <p>For example, while there are no overtly negative interactions the atmosphere may be formal, polite and verging on cold.</p>	<p>Facilitator consistently and effectively uses 1 (maybe 2) strategies to build peer relationships.</p> <p>The majority of interactions are positive, however there are occasional interactions that are inconsistent with a positive environment.</p>	<p>Facilitator consistently and effectively uses 2 or more strategies to build peer relationships.</p> <p>Interactions among students and between the facilitator and students are consistently positive, creating a warm and friendly learning environment</p>