



Teaching Early Social-Communication Skills to Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

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Maureen A. Conroy, Ph.D.
Abigail Vo, M.Ed.
Department of Special Education & Disability Policy
Virginia Commonwealth University



Key Components of Joint Attention

- *Orienting toward a social partner:* Turning toward a social partner to initiate or respond to a bid for joint attention
 - *Focusing on faces:* The child looks at a social partner's face to initiate or respond to a bid for joint attention
 - *Eye contact:* The child looks at the eyes of a social partner to initiate or respond to a bid for joint attention
 - *Imitation:* The child copies the actions or gestures of a social partner
 - *Turn-taking:* The child performs at least one of three or more actions in a turn-taking routine, the child participates in a reciprocal social interaction
 - *Gaze Shifting:* The child shifts his or her gaze between a social partner and an object or event
 - *Gaze coordination:* The child coordinates his or her gaze with a social partner by making eye contact simultaneously and looking at an object or event simultaneously
 - *Conventional joint attention gestures:*
 - *Pointing:* Using the index finger to draw a social partner's attention to an object or event
 - *Bringing:* Moving an object into proximity of a social partner to share interest and elicit joint attention
 - *Showing:* Holding an object out to a social partner to share interest and elicit joint attention
 - *Coordination of attention and affect:* Combining shared attention to an object or event with the expression of emotion for the purpose of sharing interest
 - *Sharing Interest:* Using social interactions for the purpose of sharing attention and emotions related to an object or event with a social partner
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Tips for Promoting Joint Attention

- *Work on precursor skills:*
 - Orienting toward a social partner, focusing on faces, eye contact
 - Imitation and turn-taking
- *Interpret the child's behaviors as intentional and meaningful*
 - Behave as if the child is responding to and initiating joint attention
 - Imitate the child's behavior
 - Sustain and lengthen interactions
 - Provide the child with time to respond
- *Model joint attention behaviors/competencies*
 - Exaggerate/emphasize your affect, facial expressions, gestures and simple language
 - Use conventional joint attention behaviors including gaze shifting, pointing, bringing, and showing accompanied by consistent language
- *Arrange the environment to support joint attention*
 - Carefully select toys/objects/activities that are conducive to interaction and of interest to the child
 - Draw the child's attention to naturally occurring objects and events
- *Follow the child's lead*
 - Use the child's interests
 - Enter into the child's play
- *Make interactions fun and engaging*
 - Play games
 - Incorporate sound and music
 - Create a positive atmosphere
 - Express pleasure in the interaction



Promoting Joint Attention Across Natural Environments

Use the table below to consider the natural environments in which the child participates and opportunities for promoting joint attention

Natural Environment	Joint Attention Strategies (objects/events that could be the focus of JA, games you might play, language you might use, songs, etc.)



Promoting Joint Attention During Daily Routines

Use the table below to consider the daily routines in which the child participates and opportunities for promoting joint attention

Daily Routine	Joint Attention Strategies (objects/events that could be the focus of JA, games you might play, language you might use, songs, etc.)



Critical Peer-Related Social Skills & Competencies

- *Eye contact:* Looking at another child to initiate or respond to a social behavior
- *Joint attention:* Initiating to another child so both children are attending to the same object, toy, or activity
- *Responding to initiations:* Once an initiation occurs, the target child responds appropriately within several seconds
- *Repeating, expanding, or clarifying a comment:* Target child or peer verbally responds to the other child's initiation by repeating the comment or asking questions
- *Suggesting joint activity (play organizer):* When one child asks another child to play with him/her and suggests play activity
- *Taking turns:* Two or more children are playing with the same toys or in the same activity. Each child is waiting and taking his/her own turn
- *Maintaining a topic of conversation:* When two or more children are having a conversation and they are talking about the same topic
- *Redirecting social activity:* When two or more children are playing together, one of the children re-organizes the play activity
- *Prompting requests:* A child repeatedly initiates a social interaction with another child to engage the child in an activity
- *Describing a social activity:* Two or more children are playing with the same materials or participating in the same activity and one child describes their play



Peer-Related Social Goals

- *Obtaining Social Attention or Tangible Items*
 - Expressing a need or a want to socially interact or obtain items
 - Transferring information to another person
- *Escaping Social Attention or Activity*
 - Expressing a need or want to be left alone
 - Expressing a need or want to escape a particular activity
- *Escaping and Obtaining Together*
 - Expressing a need or want to leave a situation to go to a preferred situation

Reciprocity of Social Interactions

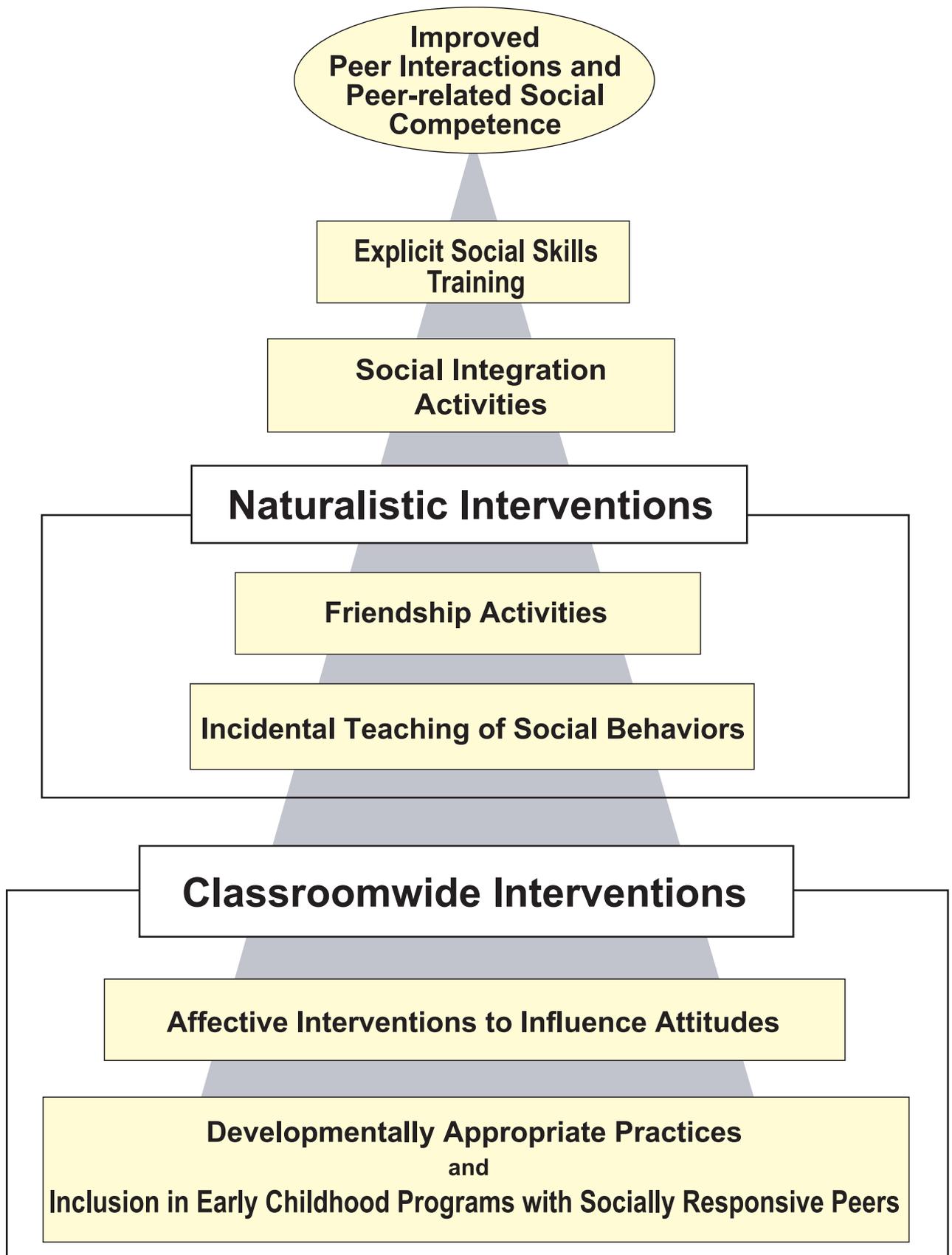
- *Initiations:* Verbal or motor behaviors that start a social exchange. Examples include greetings, expressing a need, establishing eye contact, suggesting joint play.
- *Responses:* Verbal or motor behaviors that respond to an initiation. Examples include responding appropriately to an initiation by saying “yes,” saying “no,” commenting or engaging in a behavior that acknowledges the other person’s initiation.
- *Maintenance Strategy:* Verbal or gestural behaviors that assist in maintaining the interaction. Examples include: redirecting play activities, verbally describing play, prompting requests, taking turns, maintaining a topic.
- *Termination Strategy:* Verbal or gestural behaviors that terminate the interaction between peers. Examples include social etiquette behaviors (e.g., saying “bye”).



Assessing Physical Contexts for Social Opportunities: A Discrepancy Analysis

- (1) What social activities take place?
 - (2) Who participates in those activities?
 - (3) What are the social expectations of the activities?
 - (4) What social skills are required for students to be successful in the activity?
 - (5) How do the target child's social skills compare to those that are required for success?
 - (6) What social skills does the target child need to learn to participate successfully?
 - (7) How will you arrange the context to facilitate the target child's social behaviors?
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Hierarchy for Promoting Young Children's Peer Interactions





Individual Follow-up Plan

What is one thing that you learned today that you will take back with you?

Who will you use it with?

How will you use it?

When will you use it?

What will you do differently?

What supports do you need?

How will you know it is effective?

