

PEER PAIRING- Older Toddlers



What You Need to Know

Peer Pairing in the toddler years means intentionally structuring children's environment (i.e., classroom, routines, activities) in ways that promote peer interaction. Toddlers are just beginning to engage in cooperative play. Playing near each other, copying one another, playing cooperatively just for a few moments, and even carefully watching other children are all examples of positive infant and toddler peer behaviors. The more opportunities that toddlers have to interact with one another, the better prepared they are for learning and developing social skills.

What You Need to Do

- ◆ **Physically structure your classroom** to encourage positive peer interactions. Clustering tables together in groups or intentionally placing objects near one another are examples of things you can do to make it more likely that children will engage with one another.
- ◆ **Look for opportunities throughout the day** to encourage and facilitate peer interactions. When children are interacting with or are near one another, join in the play and encourage peer engagement. As you do this, be sure to acknowledge positive peer interactions when they occur ("You are building together! Nice work, friends!").
- ◆ **Intentionally group children.** To promote collaborative play, for example, you might pair two children who have similar interests. Or, to promote peer engagement for a toddler who is shy, you can pair them with a toddler who is both sociable and accepting of other children.

When/Ways to Use

- ◆ Structured activities that explicitly require peer interaction:
 - Pass the beanbag/ball/stuffed animal
 - 'Duck, Duck, Goose'
 - Music circle
 - Parachute play
 - Name games
- ◆ As part of regular classroom routines:
 - Greeting and goodbye songs
 - Partner children in transitions (e.g., move from the classroom to the playground with linked arms).
 - Shared book reading (look at books together – maybe the same one with your help).
 - Classroom jobs (e.g., clean something up together).