



# Playground Programming

to Foster Friendships Through Inclusive Play



Developed in partnership with the  
National Lekotek Center.

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*The purpose of this activity book is to raise awareness and provide education about some considerations to promote inclusive play on playgrounds; it is not considered as an all-encompassing resource. Please refer to manufacturer specifications and safety warnings, which are supplied with playground equipment, and continue to provide normal safety inspections. While the intent is to provide general resources for inclusive play, the authors and program sponsor disclaim any liability based upon information contained in this publication. Lekotek, PlayCore, and its family of brands provide these comments as a public service in the interest of inclusion while advising of the restricted context in which they are given.*



## Fostering Friendships Through Inclusive Play

Play is fundamental to child development and building a healthy, happy society. As opportunities for meaningful play are often limited for children with disabilities, inclusively designed play environments, programs, and services are critical to creating a community that values play for everyone. Community playgrounds are natural settings in which children choose and select activities with which to participate, as well as peers with whom to socially interact.

Contact among children with different abilities is often not enough to get children independently playing together or to create true meaningful play experiences. An in-depth review of the literature indicates that social intervention strategies positively impact the inclusion of children with disabilities in play activities with their peers. Educators and programmers that use intentional strategies to help children with and without disabilities understand how to successfully play together, equip children with the tools to ask questions, get accurate information, explore their feelings, and learn how to positively interact with their peers.<sup>1</sup> The Joint Position Statement of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) state that the desired results of inclusive experiences for children with and without disabilities and their families include a sense of belonging and membership, positive social relationships and friendships, development, and learning to reach their full potential.<sup>2</sup> High-quality inclusive programs include access, support, and

participation by using a variety of instructional approaches to promote engagement of play and learning activities to create a sense of belonging for every child.<sup>3</sup>

Outdoor inclusive play destinations in schools and parks can be important assets to communities in promoting meaningful play, healthy physical activity, and learning for all children. Applying the 7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design™, developed by PlayCore and Utah State University's Center for Persons with Disabilities, to outdoor play environments is a critical first step in offering high-quality spaces where both physical and social inclusion can occur. However, teaching children about how to successfully play together can take inclusive play to the next level by celebrating similarities and differences and supporting character education initiatives.

- 1 Schwartz, I. S., Billingsley, F.F. and McBride, B. (1998). Including children with autism in inclusive preschools: Strategies that work. *Young Exceptional Children*, 2(1), 19-26.
- 2 Wolery, M. (1994). Designing inclusive environments for young children with special needs. In M. Wolery & J.S. Wilbers (Eds.), *Including children with special needs in early childhood programs*. National Association for the Education of young Children: Washington, D.C.
- 3 DEC/NAEYC. (2009). *Early childhood inclusion: A summary*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute.
- 4 Cooper, D.G. (2003). *Promoting disability awareness in preschool*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Purdue University, W. Lafayette, IN.

**Research** shows that disability awareness intervention has significant and positive effects on children's understanding and attitudes toward people with disabilities.<sup>4</sup>



# Inclusive Communities with Character

Schools and parks & recreation programs can foster inclusive friendships by intentionally offering inclusive play programming in which children of all abilities are taught the skills to play together successfully. Children will come to understand and appreciate each other's strengths and challenges, and they will feel nurtured, encouraged, respected, and active, both physically and socially during play – creating a deep sense of community among all children.

*2 Play Together*® strives to make a positive difference in inclusive play on the playground by creating communities that care through character education. *2 Play Together* offers playground activities and tips for educators and programmers to promote social inclusion between children of all abilities outdoors. Often children with and without disabilities need strategies that help them better understand how to play together successfully, even if there are differences in how they play, communicate, and engage. Teaching children about how they can actively play together takes inclusion to the next level and can be critical for creating truly meaningful play experiences between all children.

The inclusive playground activities, created by experts from the National Lekotek Center, were field tested during family outdoor playground events and included children with and without disabilities. Family play specialists observed how children naturally played together and incorporated considerations into the activities based on their observations of how children initiated interaction, communicated, and then applied strategies that fostered social inclusion. Additionally, Lekotek collected numerous testimonials from children, parents, and professionals to gain a comprehensive look at the positive outcomes that resulted when children successfully played together freely, by choice, creating fun and memorable experiences for all!

With thoughtful planning and programming, outdoor play environments can provide the perfect setting to create awareness, break down barriers, and foster friendships between children of all abilities.



# Breaking Down Barriers to Inclusion



## Inclusive Community:

Creating  
Awareness

Breaking  
Down  
Barriers

Fostering  
Friendships



# Character Matters

## be Respectful

All children want to play, make friends, and have fun! We all have many similarities and differences that make us unique. Children who have disabilities may not look or act just like you. A wheelchair, hearing aids, or glasses are other aspects that make us unique. Remember to RESPECT similarities and differences, and celebrate the different ways people play and learn.

## be Kind

Create an atmosphere of acceptance by introducing yourself, offering a warm and welcoming smile, or giving a high five to celebrate accomplishments. Choosing an activity next to a friend with a disability demonstrates that you care about their feelings and that you genuinely enjoy their company. Some children will have difficulty approaching you to ask you to play, but that doesn't mean they don't want to be included or make a new friend. Other children will see how you acted with compassion and KINDNESS and may follow your lead, encouraging more children to play together.

## be Patient

It feels good when we can do things by ourselves and all children like to show others how they can do things on their own. Before assisting others in play, ask them if they need help and wait for a response. Some children might look like they need help or may do things at a slower pace, but they may be working on a skill or waiting until they are ready to participate. Sometimes this will take PATIENCE, but remember to let everyone do as much as they can as independently as possible.

## be Responsible

You may see something that may be considered challenging for some players on the playground. Some children with special needs may not see or fully understand these potential risks. Act with RESPONSIBILITY, and signal an adult verbally or through gestures and tell your friend you are going to get help.

## be Trustworthy

In order to develop new friendships, it is important to gain the trust of others. All children want friends that they can rely on when they need someone to talk to, hang out with, or just feel comfortable around. TRUSTWORTHINESS means you are a dependable and honest friend that others can count on.

# Creating a caring community through Character Education



## be Fair

Be creative to find new ways to include others so that everyone can play together and have equal opportunities during play. For example, if you want to play in the sand with a friend who uses a wheelchair, let them use an accessible digger or fill up a container with sand to play with on their lap or tray. When you demonstrate FAIRNESS, it shows that you care about everyone's right and ability to play.

## be Persevering

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again! Accommodating individual differences and learning how others play and communicate may take practice. Some children with disabilities may act or talk in different ways such as with their hands, pictures, facial expressions, vocalizations, or communication systems. Don't give up. Over time, you will begin to understand one another and it will be easier to play together. The sense of achievement you experience when you accomplish your goal will be well worth your efforts. Your desire to be friends will show PERSEVERANCE and will help you through any difficulties you first experience.

## be A Leader

Sometimes children who have disabilities have trouble processing the environment and understanding the people around them. Sometimes difficulty communicating or overstimulation may result in behaviors such as tantrums, flapping hands, turning away, hiding, etc. Don't take it personally. They may not be ready to engage in play or respond to your requests quite yet. Show LEADERSHIP and be a good sport by remaining friendly, giving them some space, and allowing time for them to work it out.

## be Courageous

Meeting, including, and playing with new people can be intimidating, especially if initially there are no clear similarities or interests. It takes COURAGE to step outside your comfort zone, but inviting all children to play will feel good, especially when you experience how it makes others feel to be included.

## be A Good Citizen

Citizenship is about embracing all members of the community and going out of your way to do nice things for other people. By demonstrating CITIZENSHIP and being a good friend to others, you are setting an excellent example of showing that children of all abilities are valued members of your community and that you believe they can play, make friends, and have fun just like you!





# Disability Awareness 101

Familiarizing children with disabilities can help resolve questions they may have, change attitudes, and break down barriers such as misunderstandings or fear. Use these disability categories to have conversations with children, provide accurate information about disabilities, and create understanding about challenges that children may have as well as what their unique strengths are. A brief summary of disability categories, examples of some of the specific disabilities that fall in these areas, and discussion tips can provide programmers and educators with simple tools to get started. It is important to remember that every child is unique and special. Children with special needs can be at various levels of development and/or may experience disabilities in more than one category.

## Disability Categories

<b>Physical</b> 	<p>Relates to issues that affect a child's motor system. These include orthopedic impairments that involve bones, muscles, and joints or neurological impairments that involve the nervous system, brain, and spinal cord, which make it difficult to move, stand, sit, walk, play, or reach. Some people may use adaptive equipment and/or mobility devices to help them be more independent.</p>	<p><b>Some disabilities include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cerebral palsy</li> <li>• Muscular dystrophy</li> <li>• Traumatic brain injury</li> <li>• Spina bifida</li> <li>• Spinal cord injury</li> </ul>	<p><b>Discussion example:</b> Cody has difficulty using his legs to run, but he can still race using his wheelchair. Watch how fast he is!</p>
<b>Sensory</b> 	<p>Relates to a child's inability or difficulty gathering, understanding, and processing information from the environment through any of the senses including sight, touch, smell, hearing, taste, vestibular, and proprioception.</p>	<p><b>Some disabilities include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hearing</li> <li>• Vision</li> <li>• Sensory processing</li> <li>• Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Discussion example:</b> Melissa reads books in a different way. She uses her fingers and sense of touch instead of her eyes and sense of sight.</p>
<b>Communication</b> 	<p>Relates to difficulties a child has communicating verbally due to limited comprehension, use of language, and/or oral motor development. Communication consists of expressive language (what you say) and receptive language (what you understand).</p>	<p><b>Some disabilities include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speech (Ex. articulation, abnormal voice, fluency)</li> <li>• Voice (Ex. abnormal pitch, volume, quality)</li> <li>• Language (Ex. receptive, expressive)</li> <li>• Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Discussion example:</b> Kelly uses a communication system to let us know what she wants to play, tell us how she feels, and to participate in games.</p>
<b>Social-Emotional</b> 	<p>Relates to a child's inability to effectively manage behavior which may result in social or emotional outbursts or reactions to situations, or cause difficulty interacting with others in developmentally appropriate ways.</p>	<p><b>Some disabilities include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional (Ex. depression, bipolar, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorders)</li> <li>• Behavioral (Ex. oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder)</li> <li>• Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Discussion example:</b> When Dante is in a new place, he needs time and space to adjust to his environment. He likes to observe others first, but will be ready to play soon.</p>
<b>Cognitive</b> 	<p>Relates to a child's difficulty in processing information, reasoning, comprehension, memory, expressing information/emotions, and/or ability to control attention or impulses.</p>	<p><b>Some disabilities include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intellectual or developmental disability</li> <li>• Learning disability</li> <li>• Down syndrome</li> <li>• Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)</li> <li>• Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Discussion example:</b> Sometimes James may need extra time and help learning new things, but he loves to play and have fun with you.</p>



## Talking Disability

It is critical for adults and children to feel comfortable talking about disabilities in order to promote positive awareness and convey messages of empowerment. Remember to use **“people-first”** language in which the person is always placed before the disability and to keep the emphasis on what they can do. People are complex and unique – a disability is just one aspect of who they are. For example:

• Do Say:	Instead Of:
• Child with autism	Autistic child
• Friend who uses a wheelchair	Friend who is bound or confined to a wheelchair
• Children with disabilities or special needs	Disabled children or special needs children
• Accessible buses, bathrooms, reserved parking	Handicapped buses, bathrooms, parking
• People with cognitive or developmental disabilities	Delayed, slow, mentally retarded

## To further promote disability awareness, try some of the following ideas:

- Use children’s literature that includes positive stories and images about individuals with disabilities.
- Invite adults with disabilities to come visit your class or program so children can ask them questions in a safe and inviting atmosphere.
- Use disability simulation activities to discuss how people with disabilities can still do the same things – just differently.
- Teach children sign language.
- Set up a supervised time when children can explore and use adaptive equipment or assistive devices.
- Include books, dolls, puzzles, photos, and other toys that are diverse and include people with disabilities.

## Additional Resources

**Center for Disease Control and Prevention** [cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth](http://cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth)

**Character Counts!** [charactercounts.org](http://charactercounts.org)

**Character Education Partnership** [character.org](http://character.org)

**Council for Exceptional Education**  
[exceptionalchildren.org](http://exceptionalchildren.org)

**Friends Who Care** [easterseals.com](http://easterseals.com)

**Friendship Circle** [friendshipcircle.org](http://friendshipcircle.org)

**Kids Included Together** [kitonline.org](http://kitonline.org)

**National Inclusion Project** [inclusionproject.org](http://inclusionproject.org)

**Special Olympics** [specialolympics.org](http://specialolympics.org)

**Spread the Word Inclusion** [spreadtheword.global](http://spreadtheword.global)

**Parks for Inclusion** [nrpa.org/our-work/partnerships/initiatives/parks-for-inclusion](http://nrpa.org/our-work/partnerships/initiatives/parks-for-inclusion)

"Play is fun, everyone needs it, and it should be available to all people everywhere."

Jordan Thomas

Founder and President of the Jordan Thomas Foundation, providing prosthetics for children in need



# Inclusive Playground Activities that Promote Character Development

A balance of free, guided, and facilitated play is important for child development. The inclusive playground activities are not designed to replace children's free play on the playground, but provide ways to promote character development and create a more inclusive community at your school, church, camp, park, or special events. Each activity focuses on providing fun opportunities for educators and programmers to create awareness, break down barriers, and foster friendships among children of all ages and abilities through the magical and intuitive behavior of play!

## Each activity card includes:

### 1 AGE APPROPRIATE ACTIVITY AND DISABILITY AWARENESS CATEGORY:

The Inclusive Play Activities are divided into three color-coded sections, each containing five activities that promote awareness of the disability categories for that specific grade span: PreK - 1st; 2nd- 3rd; 4th - 5th.

### 2 INTRODUCTION:

The introduction provides facilitators information to promote awareness about the specific disability category that the activity focuses on. By promoting understanding, facilitators can encourage inclusion and provide strategies for how children can play with each other.

### 3 DIRECTIONS:

Simple directions for facilitators to use that introduce activities to children, encourage inclusive play, and are easy to follow and implement.

### 4 MORE FUN INCLUSION TIPS:

Most importantly, each activity provides several additional activities that further address individualized needs and provide various challenge levels for different players. These tips also offer adaptations and modifications to address the unique needs of every child and extend the learning of all children through play.

### 5 CHARACTER EDUCATION:

Each activity is designed to promote important character development traits that you can tie into their play and learning experience.

### 6 DEVELOPMENTAL BENEFITS:

Many developmental benefits for children of all abilities occur naturally through each inclusive play activity.

### 7 ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

Some of the activities encourage the use of additional materials to promote best practices in loose parts play and further encourage social interactions between peers.



## 1 Special Delivery

Grades PreK - 1st  
Disability Awareness: PHYSICAL

Sliding and catching was fun to do with other children!  
Michelle, 5 years old

### 2 Introduction

Children move and play at different speeds and in a variety of ways. Some children may use special equipment to help them move around their environment. Wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, and braces are some examples of adaptive equipment that people may use to be more independently mobile. Children transfer out of their mobility devices to do things like sleep, take baths, swing, and slide. Some people can do this on their own and others may need assistance. The purpose of this activity is to promote direct interaction between children, solicit a reaction and response to another person through the use of an object, and create awareness about how everyone moves and participates in physical activity in different ways.

### 3 Directions

Ask children to choose an item. One child will be positioned at the top of the slide and the other child waits at the base of the slide - standing, kneeling, or sitting. The child at the top of the slide "delivers" the item by rolling it down the slide. Encourage children to communicate through eye contact, gestures, or words when they are ready to send and receive the object. After the child delivers the "delivery" at the bottom, they switch roles and go to the top of the slide, as the other child slides down the slide to take the position to be the receiver. The pair continues to take turns delivering and receiving. This constant movement and exchange of items helps keep the game interesting, while promoting patience, physical activity, and cognitive anticipation.

### 4 More Fun Inclusion Tips

- Alter the type of object to be delivered to meet the individual needs of the child. For example, a scarf or stuffed animal will slide slower than a ball. Add multisensory features to the items (Ex. balls can be different sizes, textures, colors, and densities). Larger items may be easier to see, visually track, and grasp than smaller items.
- Limit the number of objects children are presented with based on the children's abilities and attention levels.
- A basket or bag at the bottom may be useful for children with difficulties processing and reacting to the speed of the sliding item, and/or assist children who have difficulties with hand grasp, fine motor skills, or who use mobility devices.
- Pockets, baskets, and bags can help carry items if necessary.
- Children that use mobility devices may require additional assistance from caregivers with transferring to go down the slide, or may choose to remain at the bottom or top of the slide.
- Challenge the children to see how many times they can exchange an item within one minute or two minutes.

### 5 Character Education

- Respect
- Trustworthy
- Patience
- Perseverance

### 6 Developmental Benefits

- Social skills
- Expressive and receptive language
- Gross motor development
- Physical Activity
- Cooperation and turn-taking
- Visual tracking
- Grasping, reaching, and arm extension

### 7 Additional Equipment Needed

A variety of small soft items to send down the slide (Ex. bean bags, stuffed animals, balls, natural loose parts such as leaves, pine cones, or recyclables such as toilet paper tubes, paper, or small plastic bottles).

# Special Delivery

Grades PreK - 1st  
Disability Awareness:  
PHYSICAL



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Variety of small soft items to send down the slide (Ex. bean bags, stuffed animals, balls, natural loose parts such as leaves, pine cones, or recyclables such as toilet paper tubes, paper, or small plastic bottles).

"Sliding and catching was fun to do with other children!"

Michelle, Age 5

## Character Education

- Respect
- Trustworthiness
- Patience
- Perseverance

## Developmental Benefits

- Social skills
- Expressive and receptive language
- Gross motor development
- Physical activity
- Cooperation and turn-taking
- Visual tracking
- Grasping, reaching, and arm extension



# Monkey See, Monkey Do

Grades PreK - 1st  
Disability Awareness:  
COMMUNICATION



"I liked to play with  
the other children."

Emily, Age 5

## Character Education

- Respect
- Kindness
- Fairness
- Leadership

## Developmental Benefits

- Receptive and expressive language
- Leadership and decision making
- Self-esteem and confidence
- Motor planning
- Listening and following directions
- Social skills
- Creativity

## Introduction

Children communicate in a variety of ways. Some speak, some use sign language, some use gestures or eye movements, and others might use special communication devices or pictures. Sometimes it is necessary to pay close attention to how children communicate. You may need to give them extra time, or watch their facial expressions or movements. It is okay if you can't understand a friend at first. Let them know you need to get help to understand and find an adult to assist. Ask children to experiment communicating using sign language, pictures, or other communication aides to help them understand how all people communicate; they just might do it in different ways.

## Directions

This is a game of follow the leader. Children take turns being the leader, communicating what to do and where to go in their own way. Actions can include clapping, climbing, stomping, sliding, swinging, etc. All children can interpret and copy the leader's actions at their own ability level.

## More Fun Inclusion Tips

- Provide verbal and/or physical guidance for places to go, movements to do, or for children that need reinforcement.
- Ask children to modify their actions to allow all children access to play. For example, if a child uses a wheelchair they might choose activities other than going down the slides.
- Encourage children to verbalize and/or make sounds during this activity, such as animal noises, singing a repetitive song like Row, Row, Row Your Boat as they act out the motions, or saying funny words like "Boing" "Zap", "Boom", "Zip", "Pow". If the child is nonverbal they can use musical instruments, vocalizations, communication devices, or picture symbols to participate successfully.
- Ask the leader to say a letter and every child takes a turn to say or sign a word starting with that letter.
- Pair children up in teams of two – a child with and a child without a disability. The pairs can move through the game together, helping each other along.
- Follow the leader but when the leader shouts out a piece of playground equipment, all children have to move towards it to play. This adds a sense of excitement and anticipation to play. A new child becomes the leader and play starts over.

## Additional Equipment Needed

Children may enjoy incorporating items such as small scarves, musical instruments, costumes, music, or other toys/objects into the game.



# Sand Dig

Grades PreK - 1st  
Disability Awareness:  
SENSORY



## Introduction

What we see, hear, touch, taste, and feel helps us learn about the world around us. Some people have one or even more senses that they have difficulty using. If someone has difficulty seeing, they may have a vision disability or be blind and use their sense of touch to read and their sense of hearing to help them. People with hearing disabilities may have hearing loss or be deaf and speak sign language with their hands, or wear hearing aides to help them hear sounds better. Other people may need quiet places to go to get away from all the sounds and activity, or others may seek out movement that swinging and spinning activities can provide. Each of us is unique in that we use different senses to explore, play, and have fun!

## Directions

Sand play provides a rich multisensory experience around a common area where children naturally gather and engage in parallel play in close proximity to one another. In this activity, children work in pairs to find small treasures in the sand. Hide small objects or natural loose parts in the sand for each pair to locate. Children can simply collect all the items hidden or instruction can be given to find specific items one at a time. For example, the facilitator says, "Find a bug" and each pair locates a plastic toy bug. Next the facilitator says, "Find something red," etc. so that everyone remains a winner. If a different item is found, ask the child to re-bury it and remember where it was, turning play into a memory-matching game.

## More Fun Inclusion Tips

- Use a shallow plastic tub or bucket that is sized appropriately for a child's wheelchair tray or accessible table. Accessible sand tables, diggers, or adaptive gardening tools can provide comfortable ways for children with physical disabilities to participate.
- Provide items that have different textures, colors, or that offer sound characteristics to accommodate children who have sensory disabilities.
- Ask children to close their eyes and use their sense of touch to locate specific items.
- Gloves, spoons, or shovels can help children who have tactile sensitivities to sand.
- The size of the items or depth they are buried can offer various challenge levels.
- Children can take turns burying and finding the items and/or giving the directives.
- Have one "special" item buried that allows the finder to bury all of the items for the next round.
- Small buckets or baskets can help children collect, count, or categorize items.
- Use photographs, objects/picture symbols, or other visual cues when giving directions.
- Bury several of the same items for each child to collect (Ex. child A collects sticks, child B collects leaves, child C collects shells, etc.).
- Children can use sticks or their finger to write or draw in the sand. Write letters or simple words: draw an object and have the others guess what it is; create a cooperative drawing by creating a simple shape and then have each child add to the picture; have the children close their eyes and feel an object then have the child draw what they remember feeling.

## Additional Equipment Needed

Small toys, objects, or natural loose parts (acorns, pinecones, rocks, shells, sticks, etc.) Be sure the items used are non-poisonous and do not pose a choking hazard.

"I watched as one girl helped another using hand over hand assistance. She didn't know this was a real method for teaching. She just saw what needed to happen and did it."

Teacher, Evanston, IL

## Character Education

- Respect
- Kindness
- Patience
- Perseverance

## Developmental Benefits

- Cooperation and teamwork
- Fine motor control and strength
- Turn-taking
- Receptive and expressive language
- Cause and effect
- Memory skills

# I'm Home!

Grades PreK - 1st  
Disability Awareness:  
SOCIAL- EMOTIONAL

"It was amazing to watch. When the children began to play house, a little girl taught one of the boys how to pretend. It was a defining moment in play."

Mother of two, Chicago, IL



## Introduction

Some children have difficulty playing and interacting with others. They may not know how to approach a group playing a game, communicate what they want to do, or engage in play for long periods of time. Others may be shy or just need time to watch until they are ready to join in. It is important to make sure all children know that they are welcome to join in play with others at their own level of engagement. Inviting a friend that is playing alone to join in the fun or saying kind words to someone about how they participate, even if it is somewhat different than how you would play, can help all children feel included and accepted. Dramatic play experiences allow children to transfer knowledge of real life, while expanding language, creativity, and relationships with others and can result in some of the most memorable play experiences in childhood.

## Directions

Ask children to assume different roles and play house, recreating a world using pretend play. Under deck spaces, playhouses, or other cozy areas are perfect spots for children to engage in dramatic play experiences. Using their imagination, children can create "rooms" or make up scenarios from a home environment (Ex. cooking dinner, working in the garden, celebrating a special occasion, etc.).

## More Fun Inclusion Tips

- Provide actual items to make this abstract activity more understandable. For example, offer adaptive planting tools, costumes to wear, or pretend food/cooking items.
- Incorporate other dramatic play scenarios such as pretending to be pirates on a ship, animals/people at a zoo, ocean life around a coral reef, going camping, etc. Encourage children with disabilities to serve in leadership roles like captain of the ship.
- Allow a child to observe until they become comfortable joining in play.
- Model how to engage other children that have difficulty initiating play or communicating.
- Provide encouragement and positive reinforcement for simple interactions such as playing near peers, exchanging objects, following directives of peers, eye contact, and short durations of interactions for children with social-emotional disabilities.
- To get children to try out new roles, ask them to draw the role they will play from some picture cards.

## Additional Equipment Needed

Dramatic play props such as costumes, pretend food, cookware, etc.

## Character Education

- Respect
- Leadership
- Citizenship
- Kindness
- Courage

## Developmental Benefits

- Cooperation and teamwork
- Imagination and creativity
- Turn-taking
- Receptive and expressive language
- Abstract thinking
- Object representation
- Self-concept
- Understanding and expression of feelings

# I Spy

## Grades PreK - 1st Disability Awareness: COGNITIVE



### Introduction

Everyone learns and develops differently. Sometimes we understand things very easily and sometimes it takes us longer to understand certain things. Give examples and ask the children to name some things that are easy and difficult for them to do. We all have strengths and challenges that are unique. It makes us feel good when our friends are patient and helpful when we need more time to understand or complete a task. Everyone likes to show their friends what they know and what they are good at doing. We can all be good friends by making all of our friends feel smart and successful in completing an activity at their own level.

### Directions

Children take turns being the “caller” or an adult gives directives to the group. The caller verbally states one shape, color, letter, or object and the rest of the children have to search the playground to find and touch the designated item or attribute. For example, a child may yell out, “I spy a rectangle.” Children may touch items such as steps, a swing seat, or a bench seat. They can search for objects that begin with certain letters, equipment that is a certain color, and/or objects in specific categories. Each child yells out, “I found it” and shares where and what it is. Once all children have a turn finding, they get ready for the next item to be called to continue in the activity.

### More Fun Inclusion Tips

- Pair children to work together in teams.
- Contain play to one area (Ex. ground level, on a play structure, etc.) to simplify the task.
- Physically demonstrate how the game is played with visual cues.
- Increase the challenge by incorporating “20 Questions” type hints on what to find.
- Incorporate the use of “hot” and “cold” to give auditory or visual cues and to help children gauge their success.
- Call out colors or other characteristics for children to find on each other. For example, find a child who is wearing blue, wears glasses, is a girl, etc. Anyone with that characteristic can then slide down the slide, touch their nose, walk across a balance beam, etc.
- Hide concrete objects or tape pictures of shapes, letters, colors, etc. around the play environment for children to locate.
- Ensure that the items being called are located on and around a variety of inclusive playground equipment, as well as at ground level to encourage climbing, sliding, and movement around the play space.

“Using hot and cold hints gave some of the children the motivational boost to keep looking.”

Teacher, Chicago, IL

### Character Education

- Patience
- Perseverance
- Responsibility
- Leadership

### Developmental Benefits

- Shape, letter, object, and color recognition
- Self-esteem
- Gross motor development
- Cooperation and team building
- Receptive and expressive language
- Physical activity





"I can do the same things all  
my friends can do, I just do it a  
little bit different - that's all."

Sam, Age 9



# Yes, No, Maybe So

Grades 2nd - 3rd  
Disability Awareness:  
PHYSICAL



## Introduction

Children may have reservations about including children with physical disabilities in play due to fears of not knowing what the child can and cannot do. Facilitators can help break down these barriers to inclusive play by allowing children opportunities to understand similarities and differences of all children. Creating opportunities for children with physical disabilities to show their peers what they can do as well as share their likes and dislikes, can help anxiety, change misconceptions, and answer questions about friends with physical disabilities. Seeing shared interests, children are more likely to feel comfortable using what they know about their friend to help them initiate interactions and include them in play activities by choice and without prompting.

## Directions

This activity will help children get to know each other better in a fun way outdoors. Choose three different pieces of playground equipment to represent answers of yes, no, and maybe/sometimes. For example, the swings would correlate to the answer yes, the slide would be no, and the overhead climber would be maybe. It may be helpful to label these areas with simple signs to provide a visual reminder. Ask yes/no questions that are tailored to promote awareness of similarities and differences, demonstrate strengths, and provide opportunities for children to find out about one another in a positive way. As questions are given to the group, the children “answer” by moving to the piece of playground equipment that corresponds with how they want to answer the question, yes, no, or maybe. Once they get there, they may participate in the playground activity together until it is time for the next round. For example, the facilitator asks, “Do you like to go swimming?” Children that do would move to the swing area to swing to answer yes, go down the slide to answer no, and across the overhead climber to answer sometimes. By participating in this group activity, children share information about themselves, maintain their individuality, and find out new things about their friends. They might be surprised about some of their friends’ answers!

## More Fun Inclusion Tips

- Use visual cues, pictures, gestures, or sign language to help communicate the request.
- Children using mobility devices may need assistance from friends moving from area to area.
- Provide word cards, photos, or communication devices to allow children to communicate their answer if needed.
- Children can use the playground equipment after they move to that area (Ex. sliding down the slide, climbing the climber, swinging on the swings). Children with physical disabilities may demonstrate how they transfer out of their wheelchair or how they might modify an activity in order to participate.
- Incorporate charades into play. Rather than verbally asking “do you like...” questions, ask children to take turns acting out an activity such as fishing, dancing, or painting and then answer by moving to corresponding area.
- Ask children to summarize what they learned about each other. Were they surprised by how their friends answered? Ask each child to share something they learned about others, focusing on similarities.
- Allow children to take turns asking questions they are curious to know about their friends.
- Ensure that the items being called are located on and around a variety of inclusive playground equipment as well as at ground level to encourage active participation by everyone.

“It was fun to answer all of the questions by moving to different places! I thought all of our answers would be different, but they weren’t!”

Stephanie, Age 8

## Character Education

- Respect
- Trustworthiness
- Courage

## Developmental Benefits

- Physical activity
- Memory and recall
- Auditory processing
- Attention
- Following directions
- Gross motor development
- Receptive and expressive language
- Confidence
- Understanding and expression of feelings

# Story Starter

Grades 2nd - 3rd  
Disability Awareness:  
COMMUNICATION



"I was Thomas (Thomas the Tank Engine) and I helped the runaway trains!"

Alex, Age 7

## Character Education

- Respect
- Patience
- Leadership
- Kindness
- Fairness
- Citizenship

## Developmental Benefits

- Sequencing
- Dramatic play
- Memory and recall
- Receptive and expressive language
- Self-esteem
- Creativity and imagination
- Teamwork and cooperation
- Understanding and expression of feelings

## Introduction

Children communicate in a variety of ways - through vocalizations, pictures, sign language, gestures, communication devices, or speech. Some children with communication and language disabilities may need extra time to communicate an idea or thought or they may use special equipment to assist them. Don't take it personally if a child doesn't always answer you or respond verbally - it doesn't mean they don't want their friends to talk and interact with them. If a friend is trying to tell you something that you can't understand, it is ok to ask an adult for help. Pay attention to how friends communicate their feelings, needs, and ideas and help others understand what they are trying to communicate. It may take practice, but you can learn how to communicate with friends in different ways, include them in conversations, and serve as a positive language model to others.

## Directions

Storytelling can be an outlet for children to share what they know, be creative, and/or encourage both receptive and expressive language. Children can practice interacting with children that communicate in different ways, and develop appreciation of how they can contribute. Ask children to act out or retell their favorite stories using puppets at a stage, theater panel, or other chosen space. Providing a story starter for children to create their own story helps them get started while encouraging children to communicate, practice conversational turn-taking, and incorporate their own creative ideas, changes, or expansions to the story. Using puppets can help children with communication disabilities feel comfortable participating and motivate children to be part of the storytelling experience. Children can be paired with one another or put into small groups. Challenge each pair/group to find ways for every child to participate at their own level - using music or sounds along with the narration, making vocalizations or sounds, assuming a the role of a certain character, or leading the direction of the story. Stories can be performed for others if desired.

## More Fun Inclusion Tips

- Musical panels, instruments, and communication devices can provide ways for children who are nonverbal to contribute to the story.
- Create a recorded message of things a character would say or sounds that may occur in the story so that a child who is nonverbal can press a voice output switch to participate.
- Using sign language can help children learn new ways to interact and communicate.
- Provide a variety of picture symbols or visual supports for children to engage in communicative exchanges with one another.
- Have children who are nonverbal be the puppeteer and another child interpret the puppet's actions and provide the voice for the puppet.
- Rather than using puppets, children can be the characters of the story and physically act out the story using the entire playground as their stage.
- The facilitator or students can write story starters on a note card for the groups to draw from.

## Additional Equipment Needed

Puppets, instruments, music, costumes, props, etc.

# Sensory Spin

Grades 2nd - 3rd  
Disability Awareness:  
SENSORY



## Introduction

We all learn through our senses, but may prefer to learn through a specific sense over another. For example, you may learn best when you can hear the information, while kinesthetic learners prefer to move their bodies to learn. Some children with sensory disabilities enjoy activities that provide movement such as spinning, swinging, sliding, or rocking. Movement activities encourage children to work together to spin one another, take turns sharing a rocking playground activity, or push one another on a swing. Incorporating a variety of textures, contrasting colors, visual boundaries/cues, and auditory cues can assist children who are blind or have low vision, or help those who are deaf play more independently. Ask children to discuss how they like to learn and how this is similar and/or different than their friends. Discuss ways the play environment offers sensory considerations and how they might be helpful to someone with a hearing, vision, or other sensory disability.

## Directions

Create a simple game spinner or a bag/basket with playground action words, such as, "slide," "swing," "climb," "hang," "slide," "spin," etc. Children take turns spinning the spinner or drawing words, and finding various areas on the playground to complete the action in their own way. After each round, ask them to identify the various ways they completed the activity, what sense they used, and special considerations or modifications that were used or could be used for people who have vision, hearing, or other disabilities.

## More Fun Inclusion Tips

- A double action can be incorporated, such as, "swing and then hop" or "slide and then pose."
- Add additional directives, such as, "hang for 10 seconds," or "spin 5 times."
- Pair up in teams to assist one another and discuss how the movement made them feel.
- Lead a friend by using your voice or by walking in front with their hand on your shoulder; verbally indicate any potential obstacles, and describe your movement and location in relation to other objects. This can also be used to help children simulate how children who are deaf or have difficulty seeing use their other senses to help them maneuver through their environment.
- Use and encourage simple sign language to indicate the different pieces of playground equipment and/or actions.

## Additional Equipment Needed

Homemade spinner, modified game spinner, or playground actions written on pieces of paper in a bag/basket.

"When I fly down the slide,  
I pretend I'm a bird flying  
out of a tree!"

Claire, Age 8

## Character Education

- Respect
- Fairness
- Citizenship
- Kindness
- Leadership

## Developmental Benefits

- Kinesthetic awareness
- Understanding of speed and force
- Self-esteem and confidence
- Gross motor
- Turn-taking
- Receptive and expressive language
- Social interaction
- Understanding and expression of feelings



# Playmate Puzzle

Grades 2nd - 3rd  
Disability Awareness:  
COMMUNICATION



The first time we played this, it was like an Easter egg hunt. All the children were trying to get the most pieces. The next time, we changed the rules to have each child find the same number of pieces. This was fun because all children were successful.

Teacher, Evanston, IL

## Character Education

- Respect
- Fairness
- Patience
- Perseverance

## Developmental Benefits

- Sequencing
- Dramatic play
- Memory and recall
- Receptive and expressive language
- Self-esteem
- Creativity and imagination
- Teamwork and cooperation
- Understanding and expression of feelings

## Introduction

Just like we all learn in a variety of ways, children also play a little differently and at their own pace. Children with cognitive disabilities benefit from activities which allow them to show their friends what they know at their own level. Children can understand how everyone contributes to play experiences, how to focus on the strengths and abilities of their friends, and ways to support the development of and skills of others. Fun activities that include only a few steps help to ensure that everyone can feel and be successful, leading to heightened self-confidence and esteem. When games are cooperative instead of competitive in nature, children will strive to reach a common goal through teamwork.

## Directions

This activity encourages children to cooperatively find hidden puzzle pieces within the play environment and then complete a puzzle as a team. A child or facilitator hides the individual puzzle pieces on and around the playground. After telling how many pieces are hidden, the children are given the "green light" to start searching. Children make a pile of the pieces as each piece is found. Once all the pieces have been located, the children work together to complete the puzzle.

## More Fun Inclusion Tips

- Modify where the pieces are placed to keep this activity challenging, yet not overwhelming or frustrating.
- Label two or more puzzles with the same number of pieces by adding a shape or identifying symbol to the backs of each piece. Divide the group into two teams. Each team will locate the pieces to their designated puzzle and work as a team to complete it.
- Choose the puzzle based on the abilities of the players. Hard piece puzzles made of wood or pressboard can be more durable and often contain fewer pieces.
- Hide the pieces at levels all children can find and reach.
- Use thick wood-board puzzles or puzzles with knobs for easy grasping.
- Modify the number of pieces that need to be found and assembled. Either use puzzles with fewer pieces, or assemble the entire puzzle, leaving out several pieces that need to be found to complete the puzzle.
- Use puzzles that have photos of interest. For example, if a child is particularly fond of animals, use a puzzle that includes them.
- Provide verbal clues, gestures, or physical guidance to assist children in finding the puzzle pieces.
- Hide the pieces to two different puzzles. After children find all the pieces, they must sort the pieces into two piles and then complete the puzzles.
- Predetermine how many puzzle pieces each child needs to find. This will make sure that all children are successful in their search, rather than one child finding all the pieces and the other children left empty-handed.
- Have children pair up to find the pieces together before completing the puzzle.
- Create two teams. One team is responsible for hiding the puzzle pieces and the other team finds them. The team who hides the pieces can give the other team clues in the form of hot, warm, and cold to help them locate the pieces.

## Additional Equipment Needed

Puzzle(s) (number of puzzle pieces or skill level can be determined by abilities or skills of children participating).





# Swing Time

Grades 2nd - 3rd  
Disability Awareness:  
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL



## Introduction

Sometimes children want to run, jump, play, and be loud! Other times they want to observe quietly or play alone. Children with social-emotional disabilities may need encouragement to participate in play with their friends. They may be motivated to join an activity when it includes their interests and meets their individual emotional needs of security and comfort. Appropriate social interactions between peers and desired behaviors can be positively reinforced through the sheer enjoyment of the activity or by words of encouragement from their friends. Everyone can play a key role in making sure each child feels part of the group and will be welcomed into conversations or play when they are ready. Look for opportunities to play side-by-side with your friends. Activities such as swinging can provide soothing and calming sensations to children who may be anxious about unfamiliar people and new surroundings. Swinging also can promote communicative exchanges, pretend play, understanding of social boundaries, and games between children of all abilities.

## Directions

This activity offers a unique challenge to the familiar and relaxing activity of swinging. Swinging also offers opportunities for children to engage in parallel play experiences that are developmentally appropriate. Ask children to swing side-by-side in sync with one another. They can experiment with speed and height but they should try to keep their movements similar. Encourage communicative exchanges between the players as they swing together in unison.

## More Fun Inclusion Tips

- Add in pretend play. Friends can pretend to be an astronaut, bird, or their favorite superhero while swinging.
- Riding toys, whirls, and other movement play activities can be also be used to promote social interactions between children.
- Have children take turns to create the pace, speed, and force of movement.
- Ask the pair to count or sing a song together, or spell familiar words by taking turns saying each letter.
- If a child is using an adaptive swing seat, they may want to ask a friend to assist by pushing them.

"We flew into outer space together!"

Shane, Age 7

## Character Education

- Respect
- Patience
- Kindness
- Perseverance

## Developmental Benefits

- Social skills
- Core development
- Receptive and expressive language
- Gross motor development
- Teamwork and cooperation
- Strategic thinking
- Whole-body awareness
- Vestibular and proprioceptive movement





"We laugh and run around together. Jake is one of the fastest children in our grade, so it's fun to race him."

Carlos, Age 10





# Relay Pass

Grades 4th - 5th  
Disability Awareness:  
PHYSICAL



## Introduction

Through play, children can realize that physical limitations should not prevent anyone from being a part of a team or contributing to an activity. Sometimes a little extra thought needs to be given to which locations on the playground would be best for each team player. Teams can work together to discuss each player's needs, abilities, and interests. For instance, if there is a child who uses a wheelchair or walker, children will need to work together to decide the best places to play so that they can actively participate as independently as possible and/or strategize to determine any modifications or different ways a friend can participate in equal play opportunities with their friends. As children work together, they will strengthen their bonds, resulting in more meaningful friendships. No matter the ability, all children have a role as a part of an inclusive play community.

## Directions

Children station themselves at different locations throughout the playground. One player begins with a small item or natural object readily found in the environment. The player moves through the playground to the second person, passes the item to him and remains in that new location. That second person takes the next "leg" of the relay and moves through the playground to player three. Player three takes it and continues, etc. Play continues until all children have had a chance to hold and take the item to a friend, eventually ending at the starting point. Children can incorporate movements such as sliding down the slide to pass off to someone waiting near the exit, or climbing up a climber from ground level to pass off to someone waiting at the top of the structure, etc.

## More Fun Inclusion Tips

- Rather than relaying an object around the playground, pass along a word or phrase similar to the game of "telephone." This modification can be helpful to children who have difficulty with grasping and releasing physical objects.
- Each person who begins the relay says something about themselves. For instance, "I have 3 brothers" This helps children get to know one another and further develop understanding of similarities and differences.
- Provide baskets, containers, or a bag for children who need assistance or have difficulty grasping or carrying objects.
- Create two teams with players positioned in the same locations to race.
- Add a sound element to play. Have one child play a musical instrument or say a fun phrase (Ex. Cowabunga!) as children pass the object from player to player.
- Incorporate the game of "categories" into play by calling out a category as the relay beings. As the object is passed the child handing off the object has to say something that relates to the category.

## Additional Equipment Needed

Small toy/object, ball, or natural loose parts (leaves, shells, acorns, pinecones, rocks, sticks, etc.). Be sure the objects used are non-poisonous and do not pose a choking hazard.

"Passing it on was fun for the children, and they learned each other's names during the game, which was a bonus."

Instructor, Evanston, IL

## Character Education

- Respect
- Responsibility
- Leadership
- Kindness
- Fairness
- Citizenship
- Patience

## Developmental Benefits

- Physical activity
- Memory and recall
- Auditory processing
- Attention
- Following directions
- Gross motor
- Development
- Receptive and expressive language
- Confidence
- Understanding and expression of feelings



# Treasure Hunt

Grades 4th - 5th  
Disability Awareness:  
COMMUNICATION

One of the children started giving everyone high fives each time something was found. Then after each find, everyone gave everyone high fives. It was really nice to see everyone playing together and encouraging one another.

Teacher, Chicago, IL

## Character Education

- Patience
- Perseverance
- Trustworthy
- Courage

## Developmental Benefits

- Confidence and self-esteem
- Expressive and receptive language
- Visual tracking and scanning
- Auditory processing
- Gross motor development
- Sequential thought
- Physical activity
- Problem solving



## Introduction

True friendships need communication, trust, and interaction. If a child doesn't talk using words or speech, they can still communicate their thoughts and feelings using gestures, signs, pictures, or other communication systems. Give children opportunities to practice how to communicate a thought or word using a form of communication other than speech. This can help them appreciate similarities and accept differences, while helping them understand how to communicate and interact with friends that may communicate in a different way.

## Directions

The purpose of this activity is for children to play simultaneously with each other as they work to reach a common goal. Create a list of items or clues for children to find in the play environment. The facilitator shouts out the first item or clue on the list to locate. The children move around the playground in search of the item. After it is found, they report back to the facilitator to share where the item was located and then they are given the next clue. Play continues until all the items have been found. Instructions can be given verbally or visually using pictures or drawings. Pairing children in small teams can promote one-on-one interaction and opportunities to practice communicating with their friends.

## More Fun Inclusion Tips

- Ask children to work together in teams to make a list of clues or items to find. They may choose to write the list or create their own picture symbols/drawings. The teams exchange lists and work together to find all of the items.
- Hide "treasures" along the way or at the final destination to add elements of discovery (stickers, flowers, interesting rock, etc.).
- Provide children with visual assistance in the form of photos, laminated line drawings, or written words to help keep children on task and lessen the need for memory recall.
- Adjust the area used to hunt for the treasures to keep play more confined (Ex. use only the area under the playground structure, only on the rubberized surface area, only on the playground equipment, etc.).
- Provide instruction in a number of ways for children to process input by using their sense of sight, hearing, and touch.
- Some children may need one object at a time to maintain attention to the task, while others may prefer the challenge of being given several items to locate all at once.
- Give children cameras to take pictures of the intended objects. This leaves less mess to clean up and won't disturb any natural surroundings.
- Incorporate fun questions or clues that the children can use to solve where the hidden treasure is. For example, "Something that hangs from two chains." (answer: swings) "Orangutans or chimpanzees would love this because it's similar to how they move in the treetops" (answer: monkey bars). After the team solves the clue, they move to that playground component to receive their next clue, until they solve all the clues and locate the treasure.

## Additional Equipment Needed

List of clues for items in the play environment to create a treasure hunt (Ex. Circle on the top level of the play structure, three stairs, a red maple leaf, picture of an animal, something that begins with the letter "A," nine rails in a line.)

# Midas Touch

Grades 4th - 5th  
Disability Awareness:  
SENSORY



## Introduction

All children play differently on the playground. Children have favorite activities and games that others may not prefer. Children with sensory disabilities may seek out certain activities that provide spinning or rocking movements, deep pressure to the lower body, or even cozy spaces away from action and sounds. Some children may experience sensitivities to certain sounds, sights, smells, or tactile experiences they may encounter on the playground, while others may seek out these multisensory experiences. Children can choose how to participate and interact with the environment according to their own sensory needs and preferences.

## Directions

This is a unique interpretation of the classic game of tag. One person is "Midas." All other children move around the playground or engage with a play activity of choice. When Midas touches them, they freeze into a statue. Only a second touch by Midas can turn the statue "back to life." Once all players are statues, Midas looks at each statue to determine which one will come back to life. When Midas makes a decision, he/she will touch that "statue" and immediately switch places with the chosen player. Children begin to move again and the chosen "statue" takes on the role of Midas.

## More Fun Inclusion Tips

- Have Midas interpret the statues and give the statue a name, such as, "bear eating a peanut butter sandwich," or "a person who just ate a sour lemon."
- Pair a child with a vision disability with a friend to help him move safely around the playground. Give verbal cues, provide assistance, and offer directives as needed.
- Encourage side-by-side play experiences that lead children to cooperate rather than compete.
- Provide props, adaptive equipment, or pair children together to assist with communication or to help tag their friends.

## Additional Equipment Needed

Objects and/or pictures.

We got to stand in crazy positions! I was an eagle with a broken wing and I stood on one leg because the eagle thought he was a flamingo!

Miguel, Age 9

## Character Education

- Respect
- Patience
- Leadership
- Kindness
- Responsibility

## Developmental Benefits

- Gross motor development
- Dramatic play
- Following directions
- Creativity and imagination
- Social skills

# Seek and Hide

Grades 4th - 5th  
Disability Awareness:  
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

"When the children were waiting to be found, they started giggling and just couldn't stop!"

Teacher, Chicago, IL

## Character Education

- Respect
- Perseverance
- Kindness
- Leadership
- Patience
- Courage
- Trustworthiness
- Citizenship

## Developmental Benefits

- Social skills
- Self-esteem
- Visual scanning
- Problem solving



## Introduction

There are many different ways for children to interact with each other during play experiences outdoors. Some children may enjoy playing around the structure by themselves, others may enjoy parallel play in close proximity to others, and some may like working closely and cooperatively with others. Some children who want to play may be apprehensive about the amount of sound and activity on the playground, or they may not be as comfortable with approaching others to initiate play with friends. Providing motivating and fun activities that are adapted to meet the individual needs of children with social-emotional disabilities can help encourage children to play in close proximity to others and to feel included in a group. Children can learn how to be patient and use strategies to communicate and interact with a friend to provide the emotional security, encouragement, and comfort they may need to play along.

## Directions

In this game of backwards hide and seek, one person hides on, around, or under the playground equipment. All the other children take on the role of the "seeker." The children search to find the friend who is hiding. When he is found, rather than shouting it out, the seeker joins the child in hiding. As play continues, more children squeeze together in the hiding spot until all children find it. The last person to find it starts the next game by being the person who hides while others count.

## More Fun Inclusion Tips

- Provide guidelines where children can hide (Ex. only on the ground level, only where the rubberized surface is located).
- Auditory, verbal, or "hot" and "cold" clues can be given for children who begin to show signs of frustration or need cues to help stay on task.
- Hide an object on the playground and ask all the children to locate it when a child may not be comfortable hiding alone.
- Be flexible if a child needs to watch or observe first before engaging in play or if they need to take a break until they are ready to join in the fun.
- Model and encourage children to provide words of encouragement to their friends to positively reinforce social interactions (Ex. "I had fun playing with you today Sally." "You found such a awesome spot for all of us to hide. Good job!").



# Shout 'n Slide

Grades 4th - 5th  
Disability Awareness:  
COGNITIVE



## Introduction

Children can demonstrate what they know in a variety of ways! Not all children learn the same way, and individualized instruction gives everyone the opportunity to be successful and show off their strengths. The purpose of this activity is to provide strategies on how to include everyone in play by tailoring activities to meet the individualized needs of their friends. They will also learn to give positive reinforcement through their words and actions, celebrating success, no matter how big or small the achievement.

## Directions

This activity brings learning outdoors to reinforce academic concepts while encouraging children to individualize the activity so that all their friends can be successful. As children slide down a slide, ask another child to shout out one word as their friends are sliding. Children learn to control the speed of their descent so that they can spell the whole word before reaching the end. The “shouter” modifies their directives to meet the individual needs of players. For example, beginners would be asked to say a word starting with the letter shouted, intermediate players would be asked to spell the word, and advanced level players would be given more challenging and longer words. Adult facilitators may need to model how to apply these strategies at first. Try incorporating academic concepts such as states and capitals, multiplication problems, or planets for even more challenge, variety, and fun.

## More Fun Inclusion Tips

- Using fun categories such as naming favorite television shows, foods, or singing songs from favorite musical artists can help children get to know each other and create a game where there is no right or wrong answer.
- Ask children to take turns giving high fives/words of encouragement near the slide exit.
- Have children help each other think of words and practice spelling them in pairs.
- For children that have difficulty with spelling or communicating, ask them to demonstrate other skills as they slide, such as sliding fast or slow, pretending to be an object or person, or striking a pose as they slide down. They could use pictures, gestures, and/or communication devices to “shout” out the directives if needed.
- Children that are unable to slide independently can be the “shouter” of directives or given assistance if requested.
- Wide slide bedways, slide transfer steps, and/or side-by-side slides further promote independence and social interaction.

“There were four slides on this playground, so all the children could enjoy going down at the same time with their friends!”

Child Development  
Specialist,  
Chicago, IL

## Character Education

- Character Education
- Respect
- Fairness
- Leadership
- Patience
- Perseverance

## Developmental Benefits

- Listening
- Self-esteem
- Memory skills
- Turn taking
- Motor planning
- Body and spatial awareness
- Receptive and expressive language
- Balance, core stability, and flexibility



# Flip and Start from the Beginning for Me2

7 Principles of Inclusive Playground Design

