



Bringing It All Together

Lucas stands close to his caregiver, Ms. Mai, who is sitting in the block area. Ms. Mai observes Lucas watching his peers at play as they build a large train. "This train is getting really big," she comments to Lucas with a soft smile and a gentle hand on his back. Lucas nods his head slowly. "I wonder if Martin needs a helper. He said he is the engineer, but an engineer needs a conductor. Would you like to hand out and collect tickets?" Lucas nods his head again and reaches for Ms. Mai's hand as she gets up to move closer to the train. Ms. Mai provides Lucas her hand and another reassuring smile. "You could let Martin know you want to help. Tell Martin 'I can collect the tickets.'"

Lucas pauses and then mumbles (or signs), "Martin, I can collect tickets."

"You all look like you are having fun over here. Lucas wants to help too. Where are the tickets for Lucas to pass out to your riders?" restates Ms. Mai.

"Oh! Over there," responds Martin, pointing over to the basket of torn pieces of paper.

"Thanks, Martin, for your help. Lucas, let's go get the tickets and hand them to our friends. I think these builders will want to fill the train with passengers," observes Ms. Mai excitedly.

This anecdote illustrates the importance of quality teacher-child relationships as a foundation for interaction with

peers and group participation. A warm, caring adult can serve as a model for exploring social skills and as a reassuring presence. Providing prompts, narrating social experiences, and participating as a co-explorer in children's play all support social interactions.

Engaging Families

The following ideas may be suggested to families in newsletters or parent-teacher conversations as ways of helping their children learn and practice skills for constructive interaction and cooperation.

- ✓ Have conversations with children about things they are thinking, planning, and doing. Offer specific comments or questions about children's activities and ask children to describe in more detail things they bring home.
- ✓ Encourage children to work out a disagreement with a sibling or friend by suggesting to each other ideas for solving the problem. Remind children to consider each other's needs and feelings as they choose a solution to try. Stay close by to help children as they practice using words to resolve a conflict.
- ✓ Ask children for help with household chores or projects. Discuss, while working together, some things each person can do to help the family.
- ✓ Emphasize to children the family's values about such things as cooperation, teamwork, good manners, and kindness toward other people.



Questions for Reflection

1. How do you help a child who has trouble entering a group already at play?
2. What kinds of social skills have you been able to effectively help children learn by modeling for them?
3. What are your most difficult challenges when you try to support children during their dramatic play?