

Introduction

The ability to interact well with others is very important for a number of reasons. First, a school environment characterized by positive and prosocial interactions allows students to feel safe and secure. When students feel safe and secure, they can excel in their development and learning. Second, appropriate interactions are the building blocks that allow people to establish and maintain friendships. Conversely, children who are not able to interact well with others tend to be rejected by their peers. When children are rejected, they are more likely to withdraw and become socially isolated or to act out in coercive or bullying ways. Poor social adjustment also is associated with serious long-term problems, including poor academic performance, depression, phobia, aggression, violence, and difficulty maintaining a job.

Although the outcome for those with poor social interactions is dim, the good news is that effective interactions can be learned. Appropriate interactions consist of discrete skills that can be taught just as academic skills are taught. This book focuses on specific strategies to teach children to play and work together productively. The first three sections provide an overview of general strategies for promoting positive interactions. The final section provides specific approaches to remedy student difficulties.

Setting the Stage for Positive Interactions

How Children Learn Social Skills

In order to understand how to teach appropriate social behaviors, it is important to first be familiar with the ways that interactions are learned. There are three primary means of learning social interactions. The first is through observational learning. Simply put, children observe others