

Option 3: Online Accessible Resources for Autism Shelter-and- Play Project

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SPED 794 Socialization and Imagination: Autism (Spring 2021)

Inclusion Lesson Plan

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SPED 794



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Project Design Rationale

Research has shown that autistic children tend to engage on the fringes of peer groups (Wolfberg, 2015). This, paired with inaccurate understandings of Autism, contribute to increased marginalization of children with autism (Wolfberg, 2015). Today there are many outside programs aimed at supporting peer socialization and creative expression for autistic children. However, we wanted create a lesson that could be implemented during the school day that would benefit neurodivergent and neurotypical learners and also support peer socialization with play.

As a result, the primary objective of this project is to create a lesson plan for inclusion classrooms to introduce Autism and discuss difference to students. This plan is created for students aged 5-9 and aims to incorporate features of social play. The goal is to create an introductory awareness about Autism and teach students how to be more inclusive with friends that may have differences. This lesson is for teachers to use in their classroom to support social skills of all students (both neurotypical and neurodivergent) and introduce some of the differences that autistic students have when socializing (Wolfberg, 2015).

Project Design Rationale

We wished to incorporate what we had learned from our previous project on Social Stories (Gray & Garland, 1993). We knew that Social stories are easily adaptable and also benefit many individuals. For instance, Social Stories can support individuals who are anxious or may have behavioral or emotional needs (Gullon-Rivera, et al., 2019). This seemed like an appropriate setting to use Social Stories as a resource for *all* students.

After class discussions, all students will be able to choose a way to creatively express their understanding of the lesson in order to make a deeper connection to the lesson and engage in related play activities. This lesson aims to engage children within a culture of play in the general education classroom so that play can occur with all peers and a culture of acceptance can be formed in the classroom (Woods, n.d). In this way, all students in the class may practice and refine their communication, socialization, and imagination skills (Wolfberg, 2015).

Project Design Rationale

Primary Objectives and Goals of Inclusion Lesson Plan:

Students will:

- 1. Participate in a teacher led Interactive Read Aloud**
2. As a class, students will complete a graphic organizer about differences and similarities within friendships; engage in discussion about why difference is important within friendships
- 3. As a class, complete a graphic organizer and discuss what they had learned about Simon, the protagonist within the book.**
4. Read and color a social story that allows *all* students within the class to practice the routine of how to ask a friend to play.
- 5. Students will also be able to engage in play or other projects to practice applying their social story (acting with costumes, making a mural, putting on a puppet show, etc)**



Target Participants

This material is designed as a lesson plan for teachers in grades K-3 who are looking to introduce Autism and inclusion in their classroom. The target participants of this lesson plan are neurotypical and neurodivergent students ages 5-9. The teacher will have the role as facilitator to implement the lesson plan.





Setting

This lesson can be implemented both face-to-face and/or over a virtual platform. The lesson is created to be utilized in the general education class. However, it could be easily adapted to be used in different settings such as in Interactive Play Groups and during after-school programs. The lesson is designed to be given with students that are both neurotypical and neurodivergent.



Lesson Plan Procedure - Interactive Read Aloud

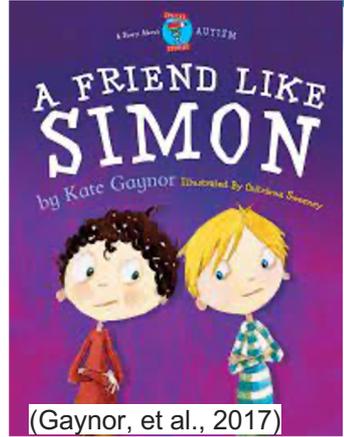
Learning Objectives:

Students will understand that it is okay to be different by identifying character differences in the story "A Friend Like Simon." Students will practice how to approach a friend to play and then engage in play.

Materials Needed:

A copy of the book "A Friend Like Simon" (Youtube linked [here](#)).

Teacher can have a hard version of the book for in person, or a digital copy of the book for Zoom.



(Gaynor, et al., 2017)

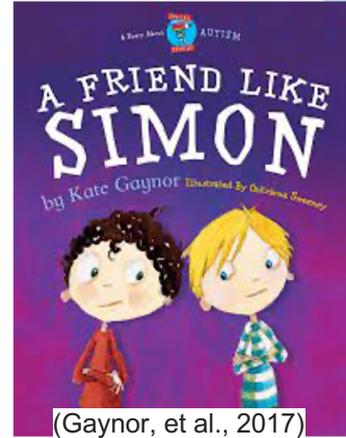
- **"A Friend Like Simon":** This is a book that introduces Autism to both neurotypical and neurodivergent children. It follows the story of Simon, an autistic child, that joins a general education classroom. The book discusses his differences throughout the school day and how his classmates learn to interact with him. Readers will be introduced to Autism differences and learn to be mindful, patient, and accepting of their autistic peers or other friends who may act differently than they do.



Lesson Plan Procedure - Interactive Read Aloud

Lesson Plan introduction:

1. Teacher will introduce the book "A Friend Like Simon" to the class. The teacher will explain that as a class, they will read "A Friend Like Simon" and be learning about how some friends are different and why that is okay
2. While reading, teacher will model think aloud questions and provide time for student Turn and Talk. Examples: ***"Wow, that is different than how I play!"***, ***"Turn and talk: How do you ask your friend to play?"***, ***"I wonder if he feels sad that Simon didn't want to play with him."***, ***"Wow, even though they're different, it seems like they are having a great time."*** ***"I can see that Simon did not like how loud the bell was!"***
3. Once the story is finished, the teacher will ask if students have any questions.
4. The teacher will then move to Activity #1



(Gaynor, et al., 2017)



Lesson Plan Procedure - Activity #1

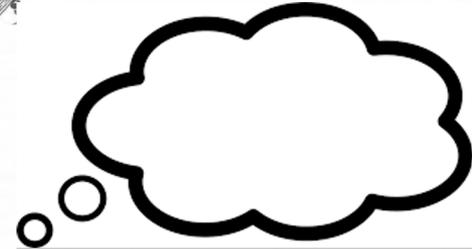
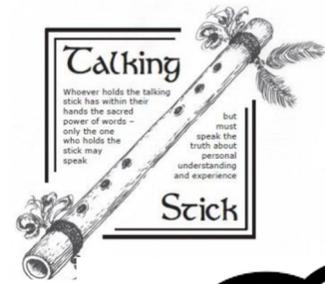
Activity #1: Whole class discussion - Different Friends

Materials needed: Alike/Different graphic organizer (can be drawn in large format on board or projected) and large thought bubble (can be drawn on board), dry erase markers, talking stick.

The teacher will facilitate a whole class discussion and write responses on the board on a large graphic organizer and a thought bubble (graphic organizer pictured above).

1. The teacher will give students time to think about the following question: *Can you think of some things that are the same and different between you and your friends?* The teacher will call on students raising their hands to share their responses. The student speaking can hold the talking stick. The teacher will write responses on the graphic organizer.
1. The teacher will ask the following question and give students time to think about their responses: *Why is it good to have friends that are different from you?*
1. The teacher will call on volunteers to share their responses. The teacher will write student thoughts into the thought bubble.

***Distance Learning Accommodations:** If on Zoom, then the teacher can share their screen and type their responses onto the document/into the thought bubble.



Alike/Different	
Let's compare and contrast _____ and _____	
Alike	Different

Lesson Plan Procedure - Activity #1

Activity #1 - Filled in *sample* Graphic Organizer and Thought Bubble for teacher reference

Alike/Different

What are some things that are the same and different between you and your friends?

Alike

We like to watch Paw Patrol!

We like the same colors!

Different

Sometimes, they want to play by themselves.

Some of my friends speak different languages.

Thought Bubble: Why is it good to have friends that are different from you?

I get to play different games because they know games that I don't know yet...

Lesson Plan Procedure - Activity #2

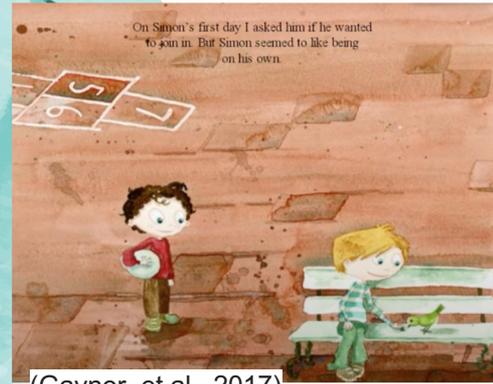
Activity #2: Whole class discussion - What do we remember about Simon?

Materials needed: “A Friend Like Simon” book, white board, dry erase markers, Simon Graphic organizer (pictured on slide, filled out sample on following slide)

The teacher will facilitate a whole class discussion and write responses on the board onto large graphic organizer.

1. The teacher will give students time to think about the following question: *What do we remember about Simon?*
2. The teacher will conduct a think aloud to guide student thinking. ***“I remember that Simon would sometimes play with his classmates and sometimes he wanted to play by himself. I remember that his friends always asked him to play though.”*** **Please note: This one should be included and introduced by the teacher since it relates to Activity #3 - Social Story
3. The teacher will call on students raising their hands to share their responses. The student speaking can hold the talking stick. The teacher will write responses on the circles in the graphic organizer.

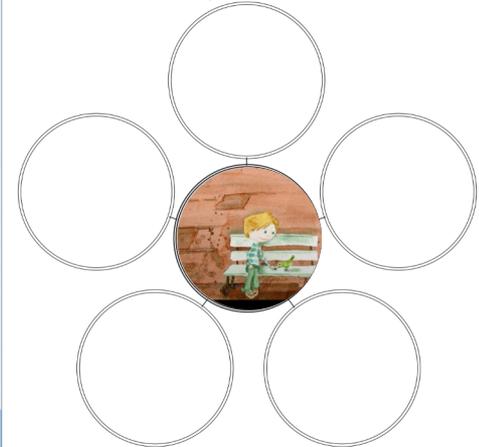
***Distance Learning Accommodations:** If on Zoom, then the teacher can share their screen and type student responses onto the document.



(Gaynor, et al., 2017)

A Friend Like Simon Graphic Organizer

What are some things we learned about Simon?



Lesson Plan Procedure - Activity #2

Activity #2 - Filled in *sample* Graphic Organizer for teacher reference

“A Friend Like Simon” Graphic Organizer

What are some things we learned about Simon?



Lesson Plan Procedure - Activity #3

Activity #3: Social Story and Play Application

Social Story

Materials: Blank copies of social story (linked on following slide), markers/crayons/pencils.

If facilitating lesson online, students can use Jamboard/Google Whiteboard to draw in their copy.

1. Students will be given a copy of a social story that discusses asking friends to play.
2. The teacher will read through the social story once with the class
3. Students will then be asked to draw/color something that represents each square on their own copy
4. After students have completed coloring their social story, students will be able to join different groups to practice their social story asking "Do you want to play?"



Lesson Plan Procedure - Activity #3

Activity #3: Social Story and Play Application

After completion of Social Story coloring, this is the time that students can utilize the most creative expression and engage in play while also connecting to the lesson. This will provide students to play and engage in meaningful peer socialization while practicing being understanding of differences and practicing a social skill.

Sample group ideas:

Group A - This group can put on a skit or play that demonstrate their social stories. They can dress up and rehearse their presentation and present to the class.

Group B - This group (likely for older grades) could make a video recording or a commercial for a movie that integrates asking a friend to play.

Group C - This group could paint a mural of their social story.

Group D - This group could put on a puppet show.

Group E - Let the Children Lead the way! Students can choose any other way to demonstrate their understanding of the lesson!



Activity #3 - Social Story Blank Template - Asking a Friend to Play

Sometimes I want to play
with friends.

If I want time with my friends,
I need to ask nicely.

I can tap my friend on the
shoulder and say, "Do you
want to play?"

Sometimes, my friends will
be different than I am, and
that's okay!

I say nice words to my
friends.

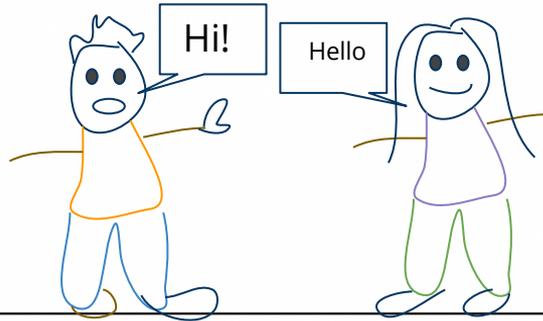
It's okay if my friend does not
want to play with me.

Activity #3 - Social Story Sample - Asking a Friend to Play

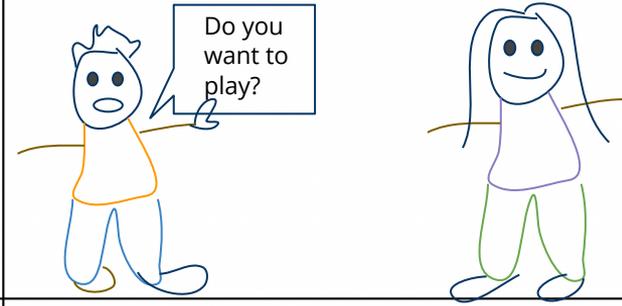
Sometimes I want to play with friends.



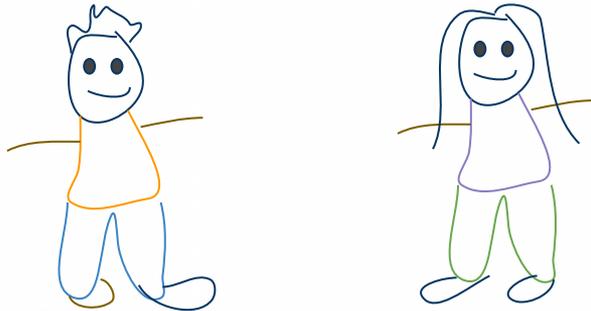
If I want time with my friends, I need to ask nicely.



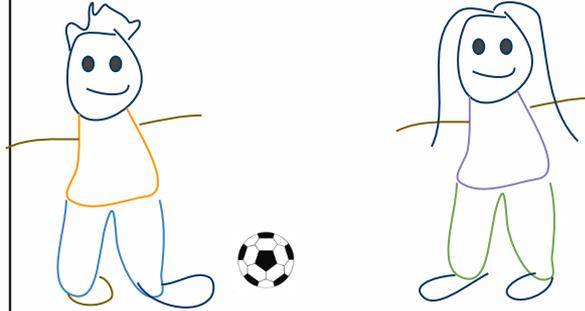
I can tap my friend on the shoulder and say, "Do you want to play?"



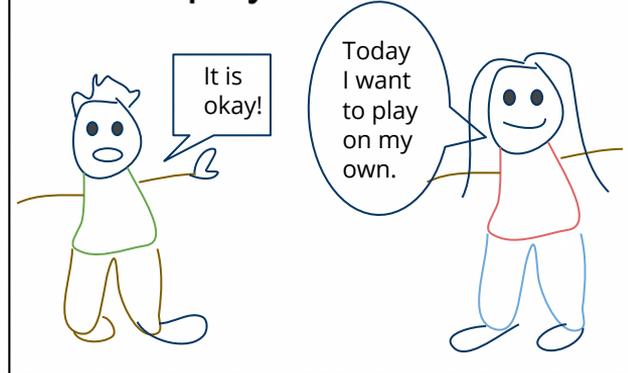
Sometimes, my friends will be different than I am, and that's okay!



I say nice words to my friends.



It's okay if my friend does not want to play with me.



Evaluation

There are many possible ways that the effectiveness of this lesson can be evaluated. The first way to evaluate if the lesson plan was effective is through observation of student engagement throughout the story and activities. If the students are more engaged and participating, there is a higher chance that they are reaching the learning objectives. Next, a teacher can evaluate the student's understanding of the lesson by looking at their completed social story. This is an artifact that will be collected that allows for greater independent creative expression through art. Next, the effectiveness of the lesson could be evaluated through the final presentations that were completed in small groups. Here, students have the choice to practice their social story through acting it out, making a movie, putting on a puppet show, or in any other way they prefer. The creative expression is at its peak during this portion of the lesson. Lastly, teachers can continue to build on the concepts of friendship, differences, and inclusion by observing students and their interactions with each other. Reminders of students' social stories can be effective when students are playing together and in future lessons.



Caro's Reflection:

This material was incredibly fun to create once we decided on wanting to create something that teachers can use to introduce inclusion and differences into the classroom. One success of the lesson plan was finding the book *A Friend Like Simon*. This book introduces inclusion and play differences in a simple way that will be effective for students to understand. The main challenge of creating this lesson plan was creating it for both in person and distance learning. There were plenty of ideas that would only work for in person teaching, so we needed to modify a few of the activities that we originally had to fit a distance learning platform.

This was designed as a material that teachers will be able to use in the future, so it is still unknown what successes will be like for each individual class. Some anticipated successes are rich discussions with students, social skills practice for all students, and an overall better understanding of inclusion in a classroom. Challenges that could occur would be different in every classroom.

Changes to the lesson plan would mainly be made if a teacher was implementing this lesson in person rather than through distance learning. The discussions could be more interactive and the students could work in groups. For the social story, one change that could further evaluate the effectiveness of the lesson would be to have students create their own social stories. This would need scaffolded supports for all students.

Jamie's Reflection

When working on this project, we aimed to create a lesson that could bridge what we had learned about Integrated Play Groups and other play based programs to the general education classroom. We considered the understanding of play as a universal right and phenomenon for all children (Wolfberg, 2015). The project allowed us to think about how to thoughtfully incorporate more play within traditionally structured lessons in the classroom.

Throughout the semester, we were able to see many incredible programs and play groups in action that allowed autistic individuals to creatively express themselves and to build on their personal affinities and strengths. When thinking about the general education, inclusion classroom, there tended to be fewer opportunities for those kinds of culturally valued, play based activities.

As a result, the idea of this lesson was to think about how a teacher can find a balance within a lesson plan. We wanted to integrate features from the Integrated Play Groups model that highlighted freedom, choice, and aimed to facilitate high engagement (Wolfberg, 2003). Within the plan are some more traditionally structured, teacher-led activities at the start of the lesson but then there is a portion of the lesson where students can lead the way and there is greater freedom and opportunity for peer socialization. Allowing for costume play, puppet shows, artistic expression as a way to both support socialization while also deepening the learning of the lesson.

Jamie's Reflection cont.

All learners in the class can therefore attend to the more structured curriculum or lesson for the day but then also have the space to creatively connect and express their understanding of the lesson. Thus, an intentional space can be created for students to connect and meaningfully socialize within the class lesson. It was important that this lesson plan was catered to both neurodivergent and neurotypical learners. Facilitating greater peer acceptance within the classroom and engaging in discourse about difference from a young age was key when designing the plan.

I do not yet have experience working with autistic students. As a result, this final project allowed me to connect the material we had learned throughout the course and to really consider how I could link the content to my current (and future) work as a special educator. For instance, the project that we completed about Social Narratives allowed me to broaden my understanding of that tool and think about how to apply it more broadly. I was able to see how understand more deeply how beneficial Social stories can be for children with autism. However, I also got to see that social stories can benefit all individuals; it can support students who are anxious or may have emotional or behavioral needs (Gullon-Rivera, et al., 2019).

I think some challenges within the plan is that it might take more adult facilitators within the class to implement with fidelity. Or the general education teacher who plans to implement this plan would likely need to have some knowledge of how to successfully support play based activities in the class and to provide supports to facilitate meaningful interaction between neurotypical and neurodivergent learners. This lesson could be refined further following observations after implementation. This could mean cutting a certain activity or stretching the lesson over a multiple days. Modifications can be made based on the age group. For younger students, the teacher would likely fill in the graphic organizer as a class. However, for older grades, students could work together to fill in a graphic organizer together, further facilitating social interaction.



**Thank
You!**

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Alike/Different

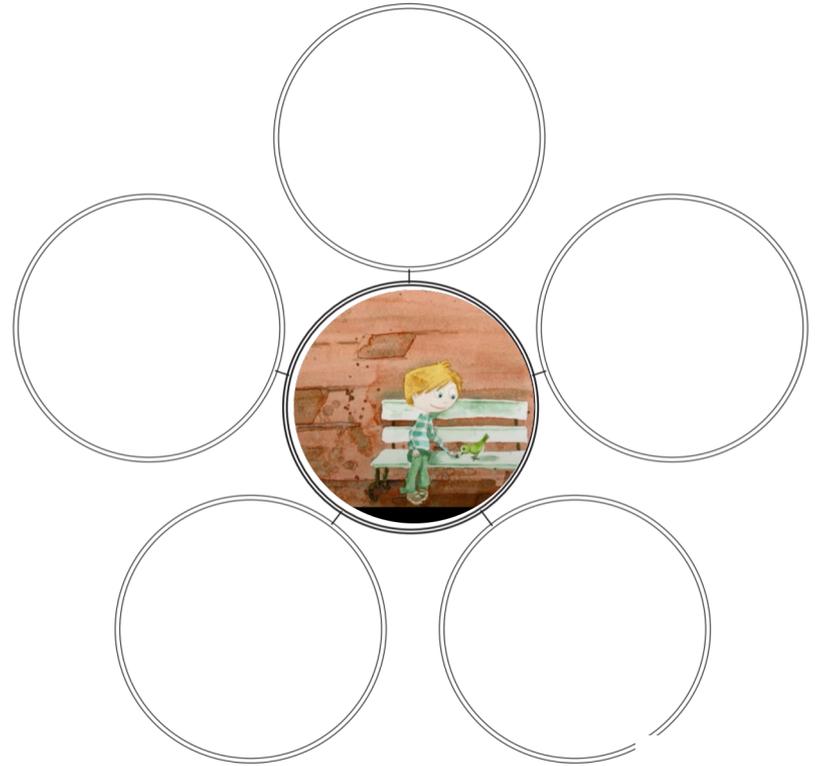
What are some things that are the same and different between you and your friends?

Alike

Different

A Friend Like Simon Graphic Organizer

What are some things we learned about Simon?



Larger set for use during distance learning.

THANKS



Do you have any questions?
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