

Support student friendships

A suggestion for implementing the strategy 'Identify areas to build TA understanding and confidence' from the Guide: [Teacher aide practice](#)

Includes:

- Be sensitive
- Foster peer interaction
- Leave space for peers
- Use multiple approaches to support friendships
- Useful resources

Inclusive Education

From

Guide: [Supporting effective teacher aide practice](#)

Strategy: [Identify areas to build TA understanding and confidence](#)

Suggestion: [Support student friendships](#)

Date

06 June 2026

Link

inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/supporting-effective-teacher-aide-practice/support-student-friendships

Be sensitive

Notice learners who are making friendships and learn to stand back.

... adults must quietly step into the background, camouflaging their help as a tiger who may hide in full view.

Jamie Burke, a student with autism, who now attends Syracuse University

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Foster peer interaction

Demonstrate to teacher aides the different ways they can support peer interaction.



Video hosted on Vimeo <http://vimeo.com/159138431>

Closed Captions

Source:

[Ministry of Education videos, teacher aide effective practice \(NZ\)](#)
<https://vimeo.com/album/3852400/>

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Leave space for peers



Source:

Ministry of Education | Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

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Use multiple approaches to support friendships

Consider different ways to support student friendships.

- ✓ Encourage students' attempts to make friends by offering guidance about communication approaches and talking about feelings.
- ✓ Be a positive role model and respect individual differences. Model respect, caring, patience, and positive interactions.
- ✓ Promote connections around common interests.
- ✓ Provide opportunities for ongoing student connections.
- ✓ Help students to join ongoing group activities by identifying possible roles they can take.
- ✓ Help keep student interactions going – explain the actions of students whose social skills are just developing.
- ✓ Share information about emergent friendships with parents so that they can arrange for students to get together outside class.

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Useful resources



Module 8 – Fostering peer relationships

This module from Special Education Online includes a workbook for teachers and teacher aides to work through together. It focuses on ways to foster students' connections to peers and school.

Publisher: Ministry of Education NZ

[Visit website](#)



4 Parts of a Conversation: How to Help Kids With Social Skills Issues Navigate

Read time: 7 min

This UK resource gives 4 interventions to help students join, start, maintain and end conversations.

Publisher: Understood

[Visit website](#)

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