

# Promoting Associative & Cooperative Interactions

## Social Learning Interactions in the Classroom

While Parten's stages of play were originally developed to describe very young children's interactions on the playground, similar definitions can be applied to the types of interactions we typically see in preschool classrooms. Children's interactions are determined by individual preference, developmental competence, and opportunities provided by adults. **These different types of interactions require increasing amounts of self-regulation, language skills, and social-emotional competence.**

**Associative and Cooperative** interactions require higher levels of participation and engagement with peers.



### COOPERATIVE EXAMPLES:

- Acting out a story or scenario with roles and role speech
- Children and teacher play a game according to its rules (turn-taking, strategy)

### ASSOCIATIVE EXAMPLES:

- Claire and Byron brainstorm an alternate ending for their story
- Max and Keisha work together on a puzzle
- Blake helps Bobby spell his name.

### Cooperative

Organizing toward a shared goal with clear roles and structure

### Associative

Using shared materials to co-construct an idea or experience

### Unoccupied

Not attending to any activity

## Stages of Play

### Parallel

Playing near other children with similar materials

### Solitary

Playing alone with unique materials

### Onlooker

Observing other activities without participating

### SOLITARY EXAMPLES:

- Sara is the only one working on the computer during Choice Time
- Trevor is at the front of the class presenting or playing the role of the "Teacher" during Morning Meeting.



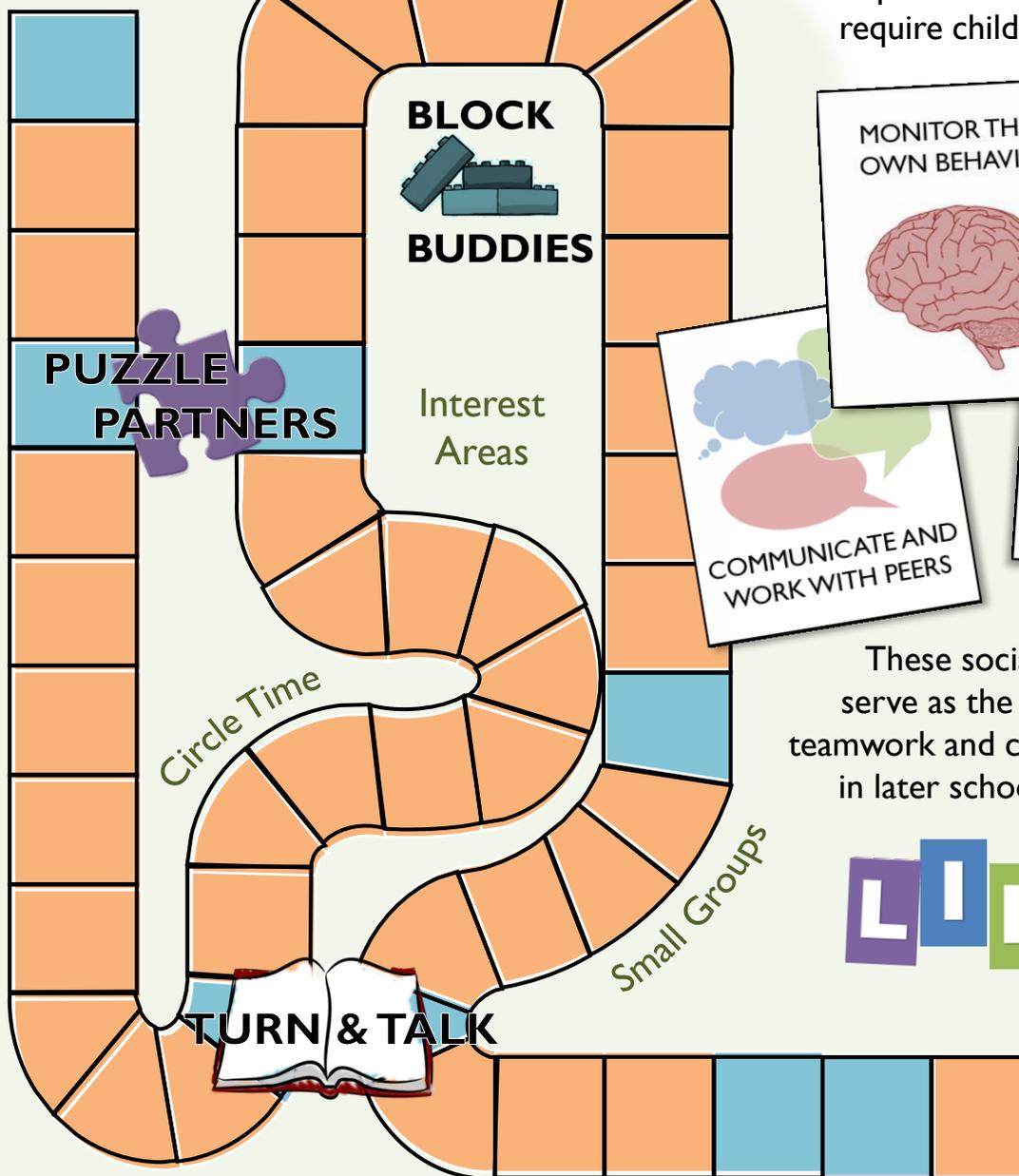
### PARALLEL EXAMPLES:

- Sean and Nicole are working individually on similar activities while discussing the Olympics
- The whole class is listening to a book during Circle Time
- Aiden and Stacy are in the Block area building separate structures

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## Importance of Social Learning Interactions

Start of  
Pre-K



Associative and Cooperative interactions require children to...

MONITOR THEIR OWN BEHAVIOR



COMMUNICATE AND WORK WITH PEERS

ADAPT TO OTHERS' NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

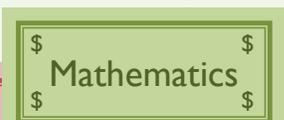
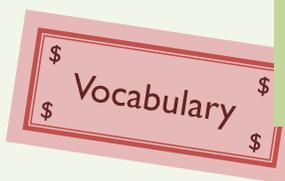
These social skills serve as the basis for teamwork and collaboration in later schooling and

**LIFE**

End of Pre-K  
(and beyond)



Children observed more frequently learning through social interactions made greater gains in:



They also had better social competence and fewer problem behaviors in 1<sup>st</sup> grade!

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## Strategies for Supporting Associative & Cooperative Interactions

Adults play an important role in creating opportunities for social learning interactions. They set expectations (whether explicitly or implicitly) for the ways in which children can/should interact and learn from each other.

### Model the **interpersonal skills** required

#### for social learning interactions

- Teach **respectful** talking and listening skills
- Encourage children to **express how they are feeling** when interactions don't go as planned
- Give **positive feedback** when things are going well
- **Demonstrate** good sportsmanship



I'm NEVER going to win at this game!

I didn't win either, and it doesn't feel very good...but we still had fun! Maybe one of us can be a winner next time.

### Set up **spaces & activities** to encourage interaction between children



These new puzzles are tricky! Try working with a Puzzle Partner to put them together. You might try taking turns to find the edge pieces.

- Balance the number of children in each center
- Encourage **partner** work and discussion
- Limit similar materials and encourage **sharing**
- Suggest different **roles for contributing** to an activity

### Join in on the fun!

- **Participate** in the first few rounds of a game to make sure everyone understands the rules
- Gracefully **enter** and **exit** children's play
- Use **language facilitation** strategies to help children understand each other
- Help children who have a **hard time engaging** with others feel included



She might not realize you want to play with her. Try asking, "Can I be your assistant?"