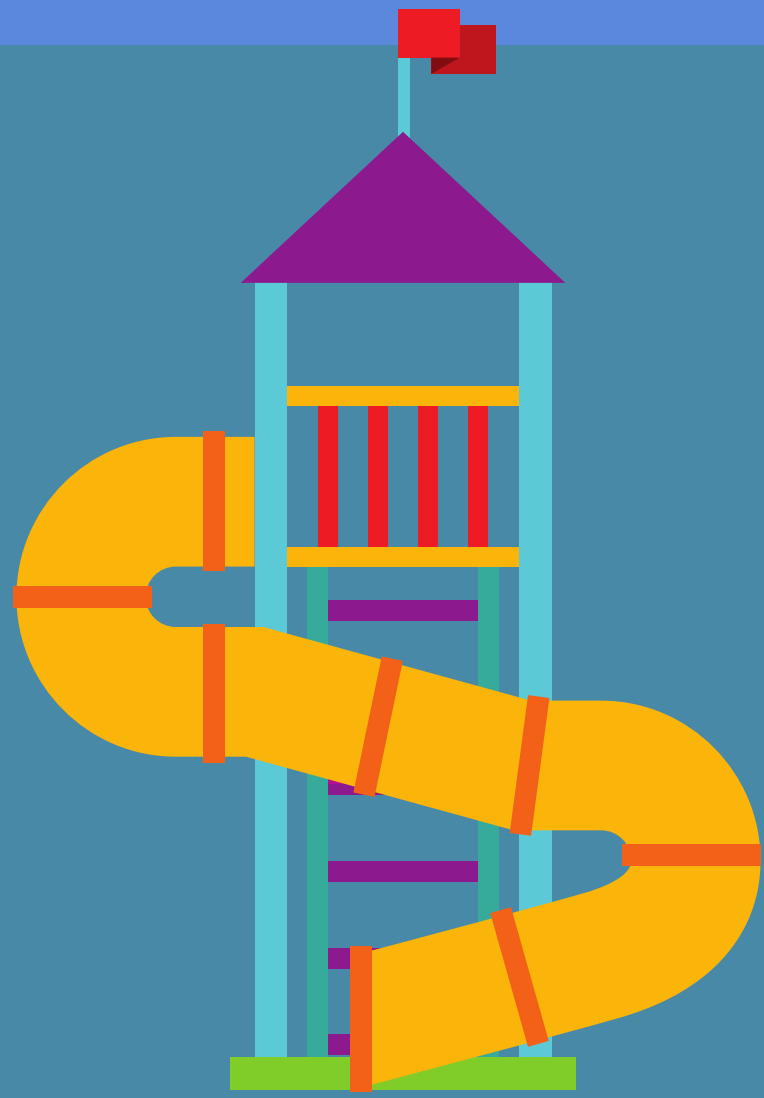


PROMOTING SOCIAL SKILLS IN THE TIME OF SOCIAL DISTANCING: OUTDOOR PLAY

WHY OUTDOOR PLAY IS GREAT FOR PROMOTING SOCIAL SKILLS

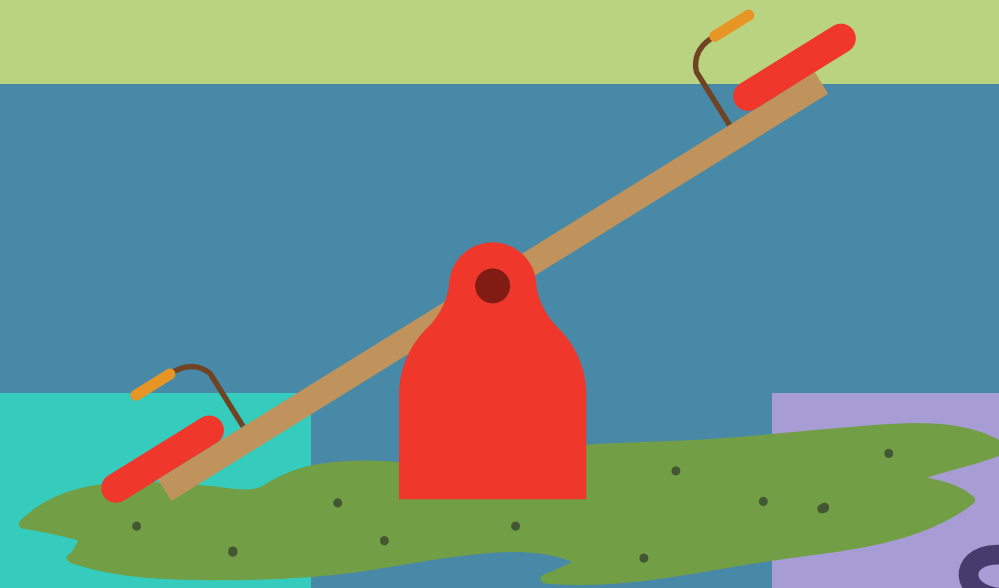
Outdoor play involves children playing structured or unstructured games and activities outside (or inside in the event of inclement weather, etc.). Outdoor play is important for children's physical health and provides many opportunities for children to interact with each other to develop social skills. The best part about outdoor play is children can interact from a distance in a meaningful way to build social skills such as turn-taking, problem solving, sportsmanship, and more!



COOPERATIVE GAMES



PLAY ZONES AND ROTATIONS



PROXIMITY



SAFETY EXPECTATIONS

SUPPORTING CHILDREN

See the pages that follow for tips on promoting social skills through outdoor play.

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COOPERATIVE GAMES

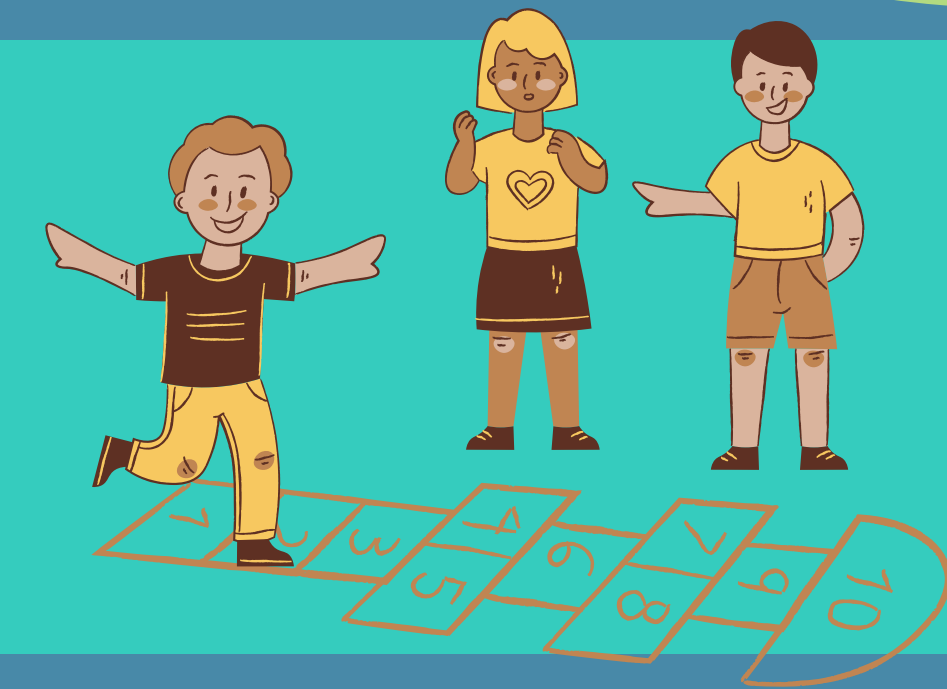
What are cooperative games?

Cooperative games are games that children can play together to accomplish a shared goal or outcome. They provide children with the opportunity to work together and build friendships.

Obstacle course: Use the school's existing playground or help children build their own course using other outdoor play objects. Model the course with the children a few times and then encourage them to complete it!



Hopscotch: Children can work together to outline their own hopscotch pattern. As one child hops, the other children can cheer them on to promote confidence and support friendships.



Red light, green light: Have a child be the "stoplight" calling out red light and green light. Children can run and wiggle for green light but should stop moving for red light. Create red and green laminated visuals for children who may need additional support.



These are a few examples of cooperative games children can play outdoors while remaining safe.

Sock toss: Give each child a couple of tube socks filled with rice or beads tied off with a string. Write children's names on the socks so children aren't sharing. Make "targets" using chalk or tape. Have children try to toss their balloons into the target. Support children in encouraging each other when they toss.



(Kostelnik, 2019)

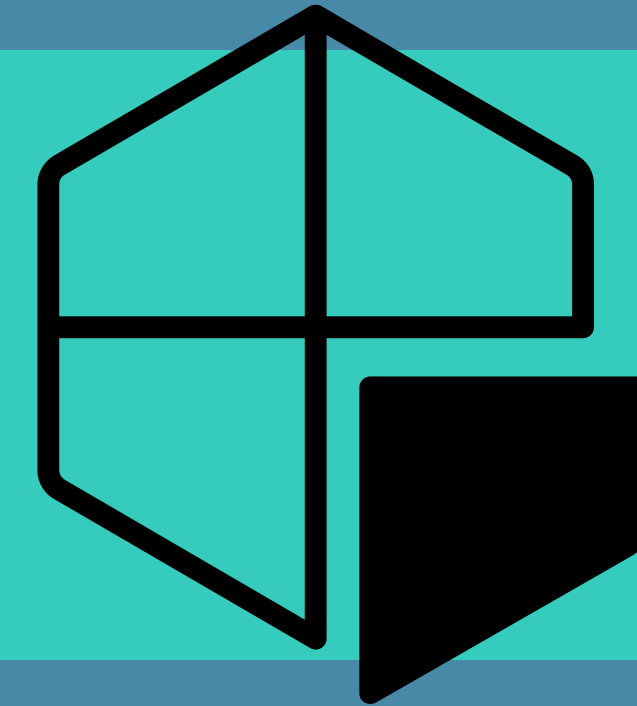
See next page for tips on creating play zones and play rotations.

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PLAY ZONES AND ROTATIONS

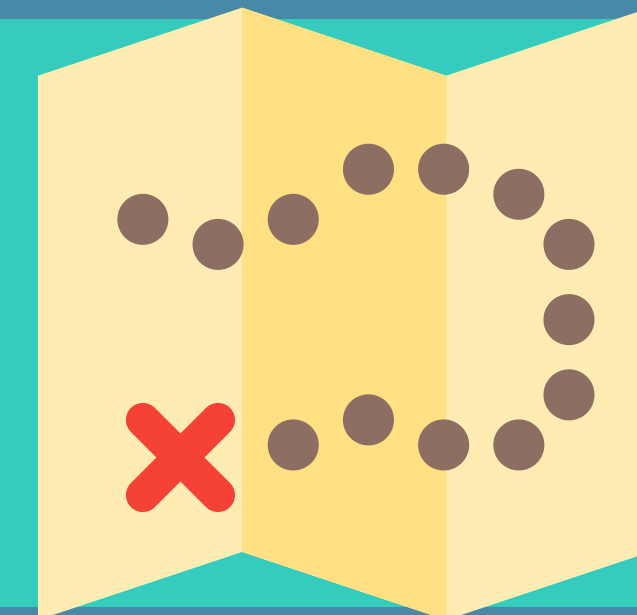
Divide the playground/outdoor area into zones and assign small groups of children to each zone. This helps keep children at a safe distance from each other.



Rotate children through the created zones or activities to allow children to engage in a variety of games. Rotate available games to increase engagement.



Make sure zones are clearly marked in a way that all children can see. Review the created zones at the start of outdoor play so children know where they should go.



Before rotating children between zones/stations, help the children disinfect any materials or equipment used. Place any materials that contacted children's mouths in a separate bucket for later sanitization.



Placing children in small group zones minimizes contact between children and equipment.

Rotating children through play zones allows children to play a variety of games to increase engagement.

PROXIMITY

Remain close to the children as they play to support interactions between children and to problem solve when issues arise.



Be responsive to children's communication attempts and initiations. Provide positive descriptive feedback when children engage in social interactions.



Play with the children! Follow their lead and have some fun. Playing the games with them lets children know you are there for them and helps build positive relationships.



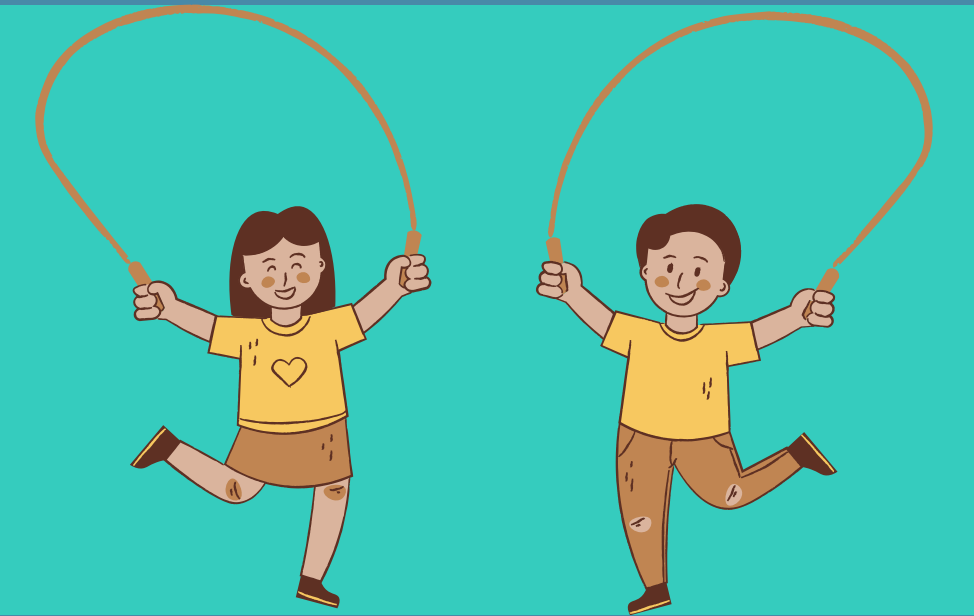
Place children who may need more support engaging in social interactions or playing games next to a strong peer model and an adult so support can be more easily provided.



Proximity involves being close to children while interacting with them and being on their level to promote joint attention.

SAFETY EXPECTATIONS

Review expectations when outdoor play begins. Include examples, non-examples, and modeling to help children understand the new expectations and how they apply to outdoor play (i.e., rules).



Give positive descriptive feedback and reinforcement often for following safety expectations during outdoor play.



Bring hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes, or other hand cleaner outside for children to wash their hands before moving to another activity.



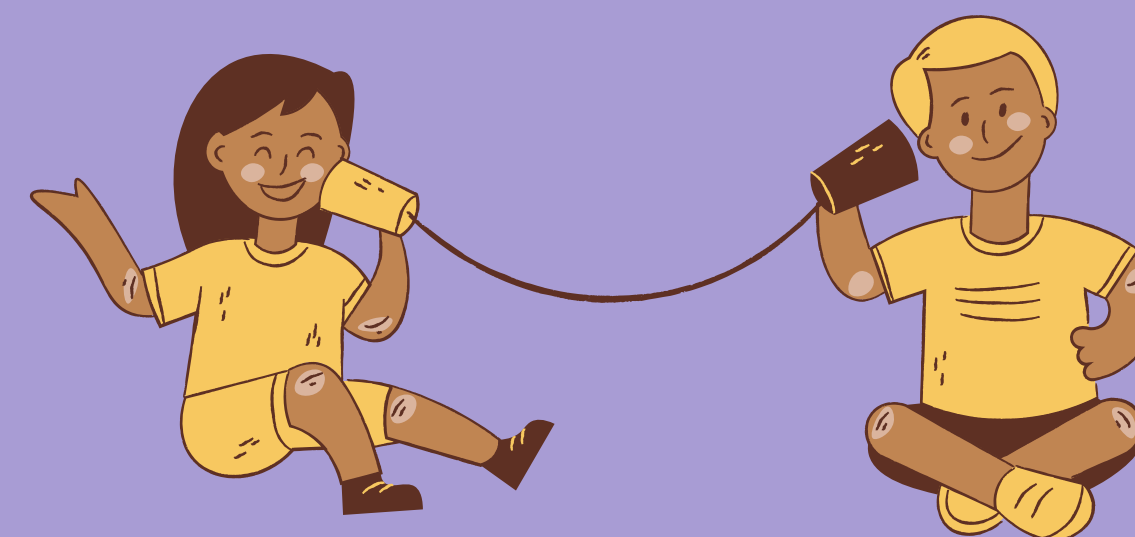
Disinfect all equipment and materials used. Designate a couple children as a "super cleaner" to help disinfect. While the super cleaners disinfect, have the other children engage in a transition activity to reduce idle wait time.



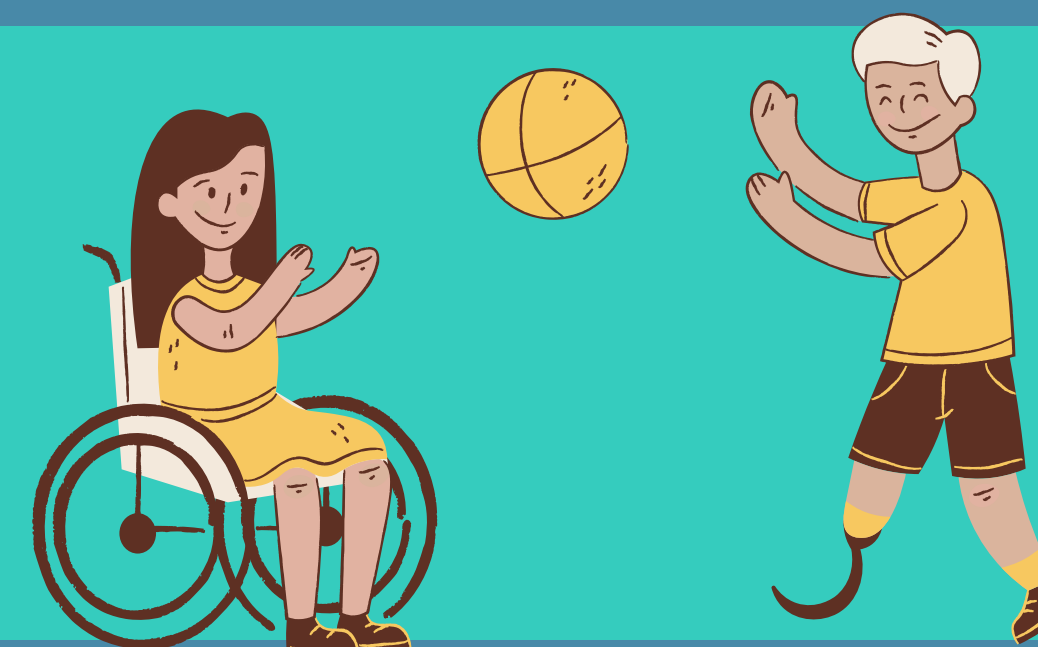
Build safety expectations into daily behavior expectations (ex: "be safe" now includes staying far from your friend) and remind children of these expectations and how to engage in expected behaviors often.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN

Some children may need additional support engaging in social interactions or participating in the games. Use prompts to help children initiate and sustain interactions.



Provide positive descriptive feedback when children interact positively with each other. Provide noncontingent reinforcement often to build positive relationships.



Create laminated visuals of rules and expectations to remind children of the behaviors they should engage in. Example visuals might include gentle hands, kind words, safe feet.



Avoid using "don't", "stop", and "no." Instead support children by positively letting them know what they should do instead.



See next page for additional resources.

RESOURCES

BUILDING POSITIVE CHILD-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS



EXPRESSING WARMTH AND AFFECTION TO CHILDREN

ACKNOWLEDGING CHILDREN'S POSITIVE BEHAVIORS



SUPPORTING FAMILIES, EDUCATORS, AND CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

