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## Summer Vacation: An OT Program to Address Social Participation

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# Summer Vacation: An OT Program to Address Social Participation

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## Background

With the onset of summer vacation, children and adolescents lose one of their main sources of social engagement. Summer break makes up 23% of the school year in America and is the largest consecutive out-of-school period during the school year (Park & Lee, 2015). This means children and adolescents have significantly fewer opportunities to work on developing their social skills. Developing social skills through social engagement is a large part of children and adolescents learning how to form relationships (Maich et al., 2015). It is within the scope of occupational therapy (OT) to address social engagement in all populations. Through social skills interventions, individuals can demonstrate increased appropriate social skills behaviors (Gutman et al., 2010). An accessible summer program that takes a specifically OT-based approach to social skills would benefit children and adolescents in continuing to develop social skills for continued social engagement throughout their summer break from school.

## Problem

When school is out for summer vacation, children and adolescents lose an important source of social skills development (John-Akinola & Gabbainn, 2014).

## Purpose

This program aims to create a summer program that addresses the development of social skills in children and adolescents who demonstrate difficulties with social engagement. The program will focus on initiating, building, and maintaining friendships with peers to encourage increased social engagement.

### Objectives:

#### Learning Objectives

1. Determine the need for an occupation-based summer program for children and adolescents with social engagement goals in the summer.
2. Explore options for outpatient clinics where the program would be most impactful.
3. Develop an occupation-based summer program to address social skills development to maintain positive social engagement.
4. Assess social skills using social skills standardized assessment/questionnaire to determine competence in social skills.
5. Employ occupational therapy skills to create a program to help children and adolescents with social engagement.

#### Outcome Objectives

1. Explain how the program was able to positively benefit social skills in children and adolescents in the outpatient pediatric OT setting.
2. Program participants will describe how the program impacted their social skills and engagement through self-report assessment.

## Methods

### Participants:

Children and adolescents ages 8-12 who demonstrate difficulties with social skills.

### Assessment:

- Clinical observation
- Parent/caregiver report questionnaire

## Program

### Program Themes:

- Identifying the qualities of a good friend
- Developing the skills to approach new friends
- Working together with friends
- Using non-verbal communication
- Sharing
- Turn-taking

### Program Challenges:

- Working with participants' parents on program times
- Attendance to the program and attempts to make up sessions
- Adjusting program activities to fit each child and any diagnoses that can make social skills more difficult

## Program Outcomes

- 3 participants completed the program
- Parents reported satisfaction with exposure to social engagement opportunities.
- Positive feedback from treating therapists on improved social skills during regular OT sessions.



## References



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