

Identifying Play Materials for the Peer Network

Identifying things that students with disabilities AND their peers enjoy can be challenging! A play menu is a visual way to get input from peers about toys they would enjoy playing with during a play-based intervention such as a peer network. The play menu itself is a “list” of 10-12 toys or toy sets, each with a label and a visual. The peers then circle the toys they think they would have fun playing with.

Educators make the play menu by first identifying toys that the student with a disability is likely to enjoy playing with. Then, they give the play menu to peers!

Sample play menu:

See the toys below. Circle all the toys you would have fun playing with during the Peer Network.

Name: _____



Cars and monster



Animals



Kinetic sand



Playdough



Dinosaurs



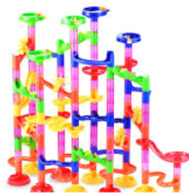
Water beads



Microphones



Play food



Marble tracks



Legos



Magnet tiles

Steps to Identify Toys for a Intervention such as a Peer Network:

1. Collect data about the focus students' play preferences and tendencies

Data can be collected in many ways! Collect data using at least a few of the following strategies:

- An interview with the parent
- An interview with another educator
- Observation of how the focus student plays during a play-based language sample
- Other observations of the focus student
- Formal preference assessments (e.g., paired stimulus preference assessment)

2. Make the play menu

Each play menu should have approximately 10-12 toys sets. Toy sets can be things that are already available in the classroom, but we can also get additional toys. Choose toys or toy sets that:

- The focus student enjoys and plays with when given the opportunity (or are similar to other toys they play with or enjoy)
- Are likely to support social play
- Are age-appropriate for same age peers
- Represent each of the following 'categories' of play: (a) exploratory/sensory play (e.g., cause and effect toys, sensory toys), (b) constructive play (e.g., blocks, magnet tiles), and (c) pretend or functional play (e.g., cars, figurines)
- Fit with the anticipated setting (e.g., typically not gross motor play, nothing too messy)

3. Give the play menu to peers

Have peers circle all of the toys that they think they would have fun playing with during the peer network. You can also ask them in-person if there are other toys they would enjoy playing with during the Peer Network.

4. Identify toys for baseline and Peer Network sessions

Each session, there should be at least two available toys sets that represent two different categories of play from the following categories:

- **Exploratory/sensory play:** cause and effect toys, sensory toys such as water beads or fidgets, musical instruments, play doh, kinetic sand, etc.
- **Constructive play:** blocks, magnet tiles, legos, marble tracks, etc.
- **Pretend and functional play:** Animal or people figurines, cars and roads, dolls, pretend food, etc.

Try to identify toys that could pair to be played with together. For example, you might bring play doh and a set of cars (and students can make car tracks on the play doh, etc.). Each session, the facilitator should try to have at least one of the toy sets be something that was noted as preferred by one or more peers. However, the facilitator does not have to use *only* toys that peers marked as preferring.