



**Fostering Peer Play and Friendships in Children on the Autism Spectrum
Blending the Integrated Play Groups and Friend 2 Friend Models**

Presented by Pamela Wolfberg and Heather McCracken

Play and Friendships, Blending IPG and F2F Models



"All children regardless of their unique challenges or gifts have the intrinsic need to play and make friends. Children with autism are no different; they just express this need differently."

The Integrated Play Groups (IPG) and Friend 2 Friend (F2F) models come together in this two-day seminar to address the unique social, play and friendship needs of children with autism spectrum and related disorders. These complementary models draw on best practices to support children on the autism spectrum develop to the best of their ability through play and socialization with their peer group.

This seminar uses lecture, demonstrations, and activities to introduce the IPG and F2F models as a means to foster peer play and friendships in the school, home and community.

This seminar is suitable for parents, educators, therapists and other practitioners supporting children with autism spectrum and related disorders. Participants may choose to attend one or two days.

Join us to discover:

- The importance of play and friendships in childhood
- The nature of play and friendships in children on the autism spectrum
- The principles and practices of the Integrated Play Groups Model
- The principles and practices of the Friend 2 Friend Model
- How to assess children's social, communication, play and friendship skills
- How to enhance peer socialization, communication, play and friendship skills
- How to design quality programs to support peer play and mutual friendships

Integrated Play Groups



“Play experiences are essential for every child to learn, develop and fully participate in the culture of childhood. In play, children create social and imaginary worlds that are uniquely their own. It is through active participation in children’s play culture that meaningful friendships emerge and fully form.”
Pamela Wolfberg

The Integrated Play Groups (IPG) model is designed to support children of diverse ages and abilities on the autism spectrum (novice players) in play with typical peers and sibling (expert players) in schools, home and community settings. Based on award-winning research, the IPG model has been adopted by numerous schools and programs at the local, national and international level, and is widely recognized as among best practices for children with autism spectrum disorders. IPG seminars and related services are offered through the *Autism Institute on Peer Relations and Play*.

IPG offer natural opportunities for children to have fun and make friends while engaged in socially and culturally meaningful activities. Children meet regularly in small groups led by a qualified adult facilitator (play guide). Each group is customized as a part of the child’s individual education / therapy program. Through a carefully tailored system of support, emphasis is placed on maximizing each child’s developmental potential as well as intrinsic desire to play, socialize and form meaningful relationships with peers. An equally important focus is teaching peers empathy, social responsiveness and acceptance of children who relate, communicate and play in different ways.

Guided Participation is used to support players in mutually enjoyed play experiences that encourage social interactions, communication, play and imagination - such as pretending, constructing, art, music, movement and interactive games. Play guides incorporate routines, rituals and visual supports while monitoring initiations, scaffolding and guiding social-communication and play geared to each child’s unique interests, ability and experience. Gradually, the adult withdraws support as the children learn to mediate their own play activities.

Friend 2 Friend Programs



"The key to friendships for children with ASD is to foster understanding, acceptance and empathy in their peers, siblings and classmates in an age-appropriate and sensitive manner."
Heather McCracken

The Friend 2 Friend Social Learning Society provides performance-based autism demystification and education programs for children and adults throughout Canada, the US and abroad. Friend 2 Friend offers unique and innovative programs that include *Puppet Presentations* for children ages 3 to 8, *Simulation Game Presentations* for children ages 9 and up, and seminars for parents and professionals. Friend 2 Friend programs work to promote mutually rewarding friendships between children with autism spectrum and related social-communicative disorders and their peers, siblings and classmates.

Using a fun and interactive approach, Friend 2 Friend programs help support children to understand, accept and empathize with their peers on the autism spectrum. This is achieved by **Modeling, Labeling, Explaining and Normalizing** the sensory and communicative characteristics of autism, while teaching the peers social communication skills called **The Seven Basic Friendship Tips**. These skills will support peers successfully in interactions with their classmates on the autism spectrum.

With the help of Friend 2 Friend Programs, children enjoy learning about disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder and how they can be an important part of the social success of their peers, siblings and classmates on the autism spectrum.

Schedule Day One



In this first session, participants will become familiar with the principles and practices comprising the Integrated Play Groups and Friend 2 Friend models. These complementary models are designed to support children of diverse ages and abilities on the autism spectrum in mutual friendships and play with typical peers and siblings. The typical peers learn to understand, accept and empathize with children who have autism.

- 8:00-8:30 Registration
- 8:30-10:00 **Phase I - Embracing Play and Friendships - Conceptual foundation of IPG and F2F**
- Nature of play and friendships in children with autism
 - What does it feel like to have autism F2F
 - Importance of play and friendships in childhood
 - The Key features of IPG and F2F models
- 10:00-10:15 Break
- 10:15-11:45 **Phase II - Setting the Stage for Play and Friendships**
- Gathering the players
 - Preparing the players
 - Designing spaces for play and friendships
 - Structuring sessions for play and friendships
- 11:45-12:00 Questions and Answers
- 12:00-1:00 Lunch Break
- 1:00-2:00 **Phase III - Assessing Children's Play and Friendships**
- Fundamentals of the IPG assessment approach
 - IPG observation framework
 - IPG assessment tools
- 2:00-2:15 Break
- 2:15-3:30 **Phase IV - Guided Participation in Play and Friendships**
- Monitoring initiations in play and friendships
 - Scaffolding play and friendships
 - Social-communication guidance
 - Play and friendship guidance
- 3:30-4:00 Questions and Answers
- 4:00 Adjourn

Schedule Day Two



The second day session is arranged in advance to involve a core group of participants interested in initiating the practice of IPG or F2F model in a home, school or community setting. Participants may choose to attend either the IPG - Day 2 training or the F2F - Day 2 session.

IPG - Day 2 presented by Pamela Wolfberg

8:30-9:00	Breakfast
9:00-10:00	Phase I - Recap Overview
10:00-10:15	Break
10:15-11:45	Phase II - Planning Integrated Play Groups for your Children
11:45-12:30	Lunch
12:30-2:00	Phase III - Practice in Assessment Methods
2:00-2:15	Break
2:15-3:00	Phase IV - Practice in Intervention Methods
3:00-4:00	Phase V - Wrap Up

F2F - Day 2 presented by Heather McCracken

8:30-9:00	Breakfast
9:00-10:00	Phase I - Recap Overview
10:00-10:15	Break
10:15-11:45	Phase II - Planning a Friend 2 Friend Satellite
11:45-12:30	Lunch
12:30-2:00	Phase III - Fundamentals in delivering the F2F model
2:00-2:15	Break
2:15-3:00	Phase IV - Practice in F2F Model
3:00-4:00	Phase V - Wrap Up

About The Speakers



Pamela Wolfberg and Heather McCracken

Pamela Wolfberg, Ph.D is assistant professor of special education at San Francisco State University and co-founder of the *Autism Institute on Peer Relations and Play* in California. As creator of the *Integrated Play Groups* model, she leads efforts to develop inclusive peer play programs worldwide. Pamela is widely published and the recipient of several distinguished awards for scholarship and research. Her books include *Play and Imagination in Children with Autism* (1999) and *Peer Play and the Autism Spectrum: The Art of Guiding Children's Socialization and Imagination* (2003). For more information, visit www.AutismInstitute.com

Heather McCracken is a mother of three. One of her children is diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Heather is the creator of the Friend 2 Friend program model and the founder and executive director of Friend 2 Friend Social Learning Society, a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering friendships for children with ASD. Heather is a published author on the importance of fostering mutual friendship for children with ASD and the Friend 2 Friend model. For more information, visit www.friend2friendsociety.org