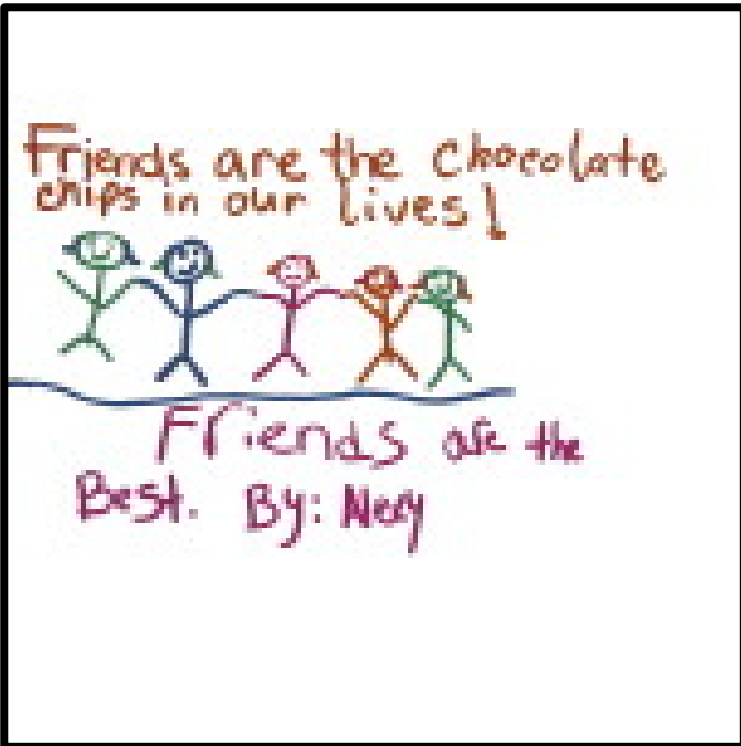


An aerial photograph of Boston, Massachusetts, showing the city skyline across the harbor. The harbor is filled with water and small boats. A bridge spans the harbor in the middle ground. The foreground shows dense urban development with various buildings and green spaces. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

Friends Matter

MAIPSE Education Coach Orientation
Bristol Community College
September 3, 2026

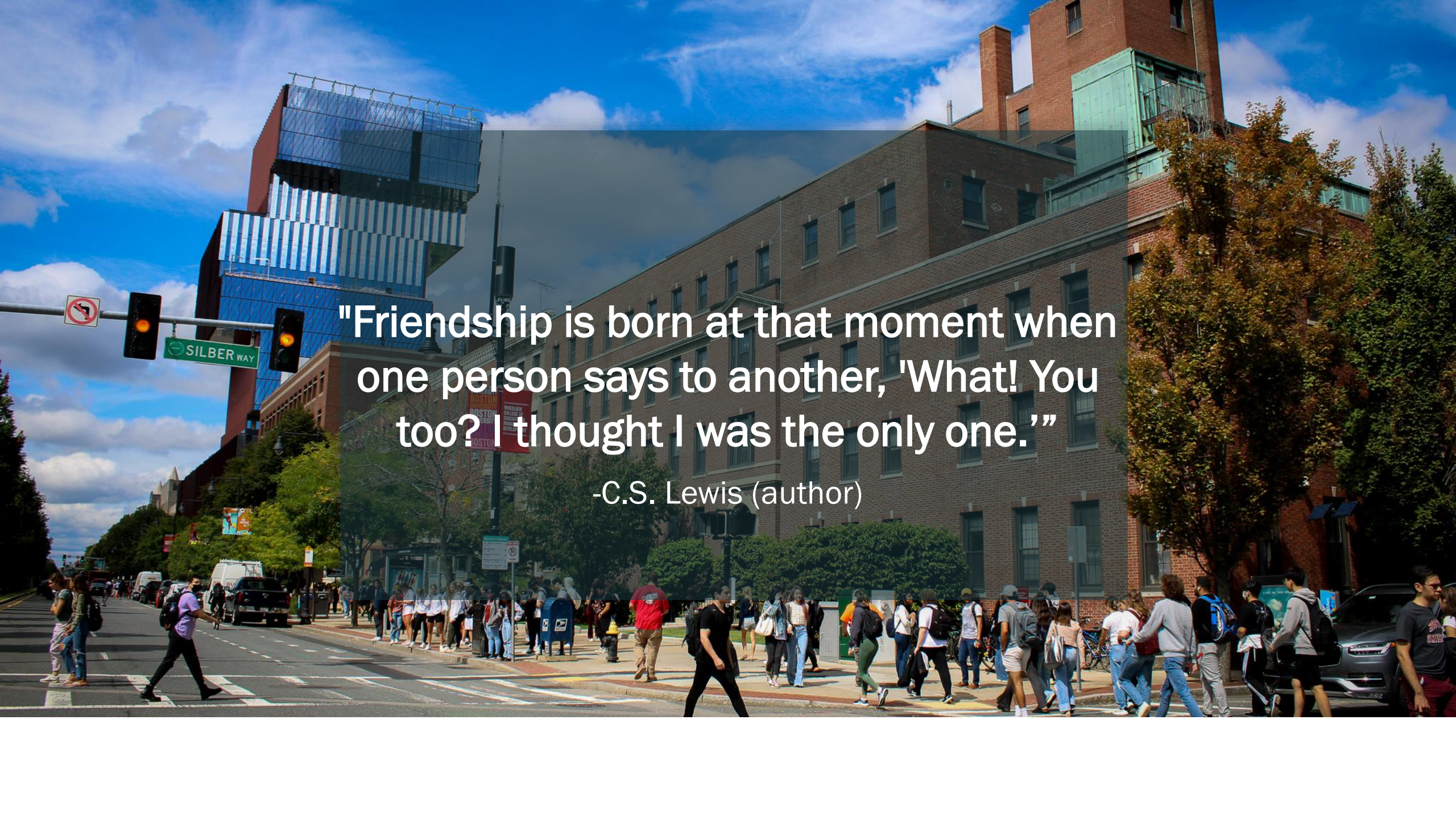
Today's Plan



- Core Characteristics of Friendship
- Foundational Concepts
- Roles for Education Coaches
- Strategies to increase and improve social opportunities
- Brainstorming and Goalsetting

Personal
pictures...

A thick, hand-drawn style orange line underlining the text.



"Friendship is born at that moment when one person says to another, 'What! You too? I thought I was the only one.'"

-C.S. Lewis (author)

Core Characteristics of Friendship

Friendship Characteristic	Description
Proximity	Proximity provides the initial opportunity. Students befriend those they see regularly.
Similarity	Likeness (e.g., age, interests) often leads to the initial connection.
Transcending Context	Friends spend time together in multiple settings.
Companionship	Friends share experiences and do things together.

Matheson et al., 2007

Core Characteristics of Friendship, cont.

Friendship Characteristic	Description
Reciprocity	Friendship is a give-and-take relationship in which there is a balanced exchange of social interactions.
Mutuality	Friends choose to be with each other and nominate each other as friends.
Help/Support	Friends provide each other with informational support (e.g., advice), emotional support, and instrumental (or tangible) support.
Conflict Management	Friends may disagree, but they can resolve their differences.
Stability	Stability develops from a conflict-free relationship over time, which is important for maintaining friendship.
Trust/Loyalty	Friends can share things with each other without judgment; friends will not betray each other.
Intimacy/Disclosure	Friends feel an emotional bond and can disclose personal information, which deepens the relationship beyond mutuality.

Foundational Concepts

- **Normalization**
 - “Utilization of means which are as culturally normative as possible...”
 - Emphasized community-based opportunities instead of segregation
- **Social Role Valorization**
 - Enhancement of people’s social image in the eyes of others
 - Enhancement of their competencies
- **Dignity of Risk**
 - Everyone has the right to make their own choices, take risks, and learn from their experiences.
 - Challenged the idea that people with IDD had to be protected from the harms one faces in daily life



Educational Coach Roles to Promote Friendship

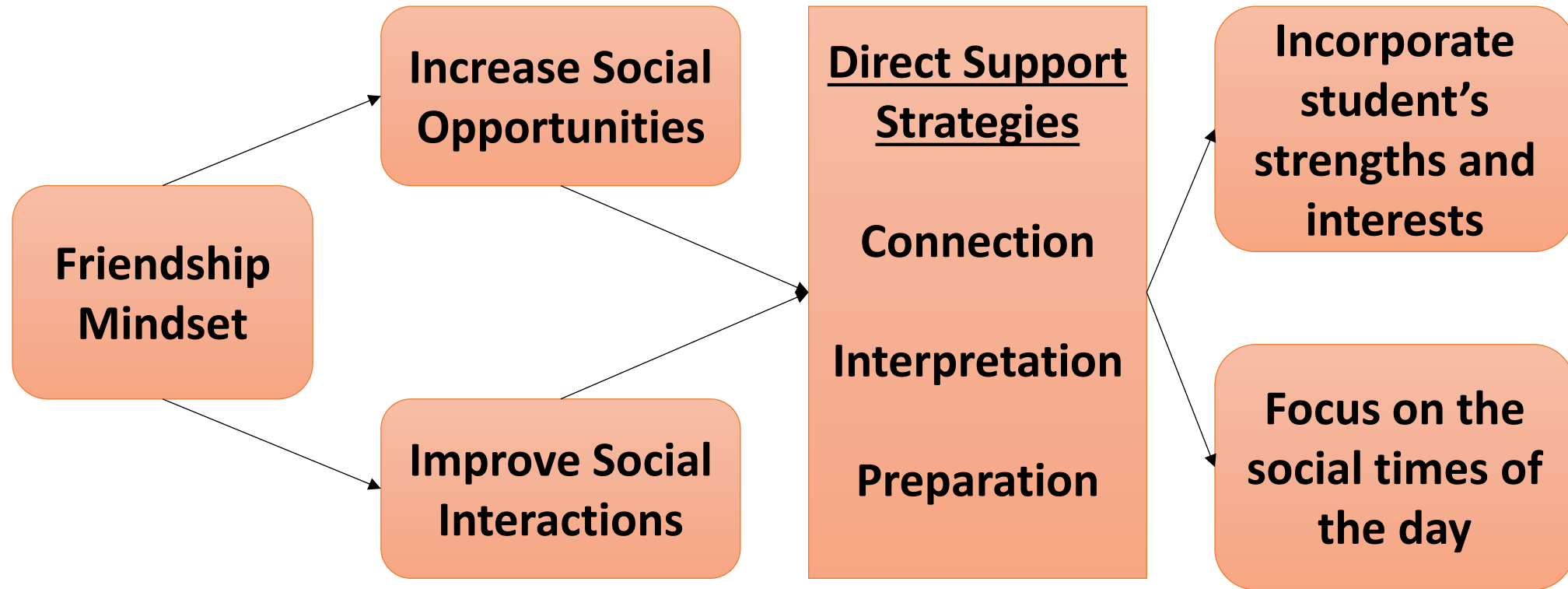
- Social Coordinator
- Interaction Facilitator
- Interpersonal Connector
- Campus Networker
- Introducer
- Prompter
- Others?



“Friendships seem to require only a mutual desire and a heart open enough to a great new opportunity. It seems a simple statement. We are willing and ready to connect with other kids, and adults must quietly step into the background, camouflaging their help as a tiger who may hide in full view. It's the needed disguise of the adult who smooths the way with the friendship, then stands back in the shadows, observing the complicated dance of steps taking you to the feeling of confidence.”

– Autistic 12th grader

Social Facilitation Framework



Develop a Friendship Mindset

- Recognize the importance of friendship.
- Believe he/she would make a wonderful friend.
- Think constantly about social interaction opportunities.
- Consider the social implications of decisions.



Increase the Quantity of Opportunities

- Maximize school/home/community inclusion
- Develop a common vision of social goals
- Engage in facilitation as a team
 - Create new social opportunities.
 - Identify missed opportunities that could be utilized.
- Build bridges (based on shared interests, similarities)
- Decrease adult proximity, increase peer proximity
- Take risks

Improve the Quality of Opportunities

- Highlight students' similarities
- Interpret student behaviors
- Convey student strengths
- Teach students how to interact.
- Prepare students with and without disabilities for social interactions
- Structure interactions
- Provide individualized supports before/during interactions
- Start where the student is and build from there

Direct Support Strategies

Connection

- Performing actions that help to connect students who are not doing so on their own

Interpretation

- Presenting students to each other in positive and enhancing ways

Preparation

- Providing environmental accommodations and individual skill development

Adapted from Schaffner & Buswell, 1992

Participation matters...

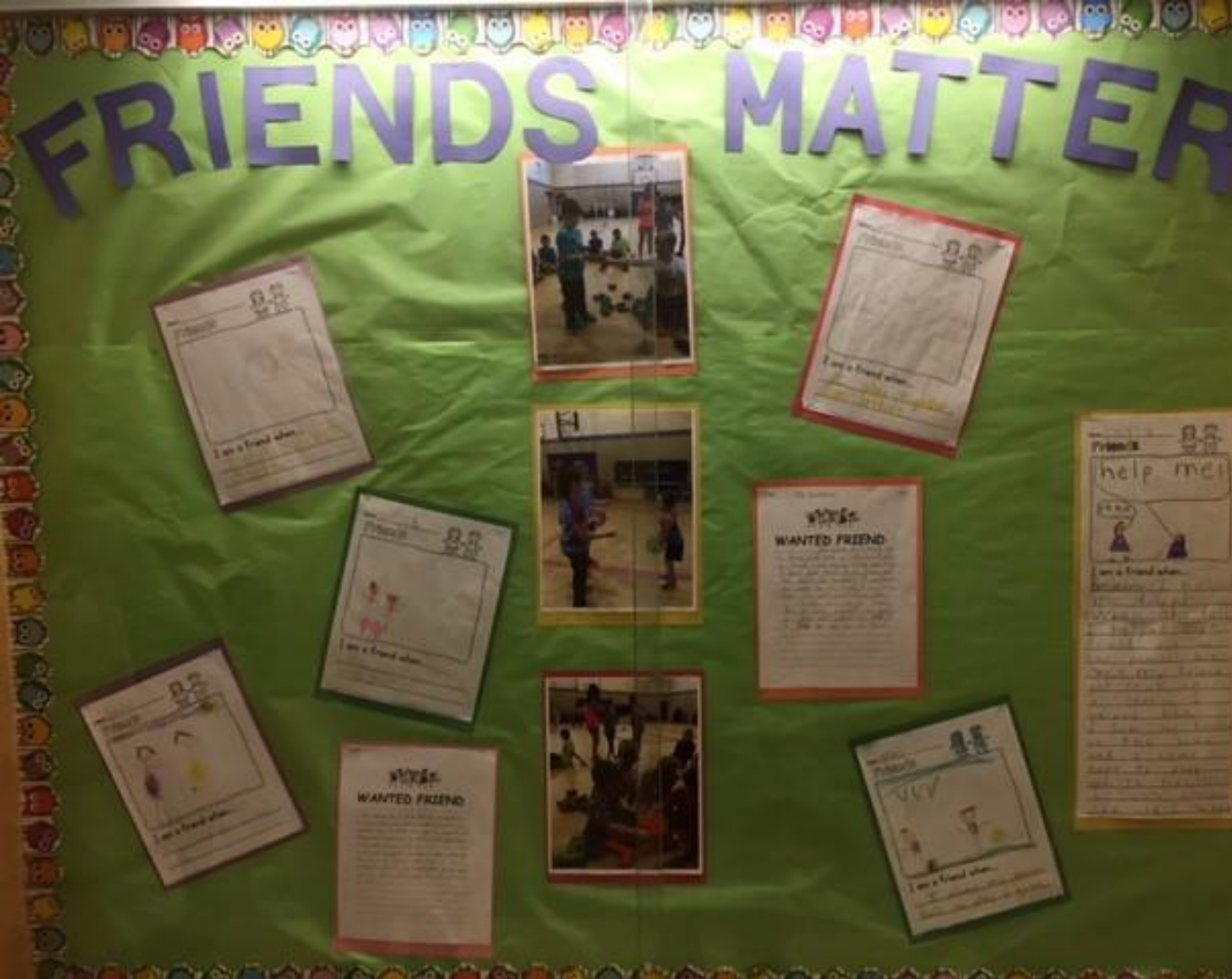
What results in friendship?

- Regular contact in integrated environments...
- ...with opportunities for meaningful and enjoyable interaction

Two types of community participation

- Surface-level recognition
- Known member who belongs

Amado et al., 2013; Carter et al., 2013; Rossetti et al., 2015



Resources

- “[Making Friends With and Without Disabilities in School](#)”
- Other toolkits:
<https://thearcofmass.org/friendship/#circle>

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