



Carol's Club

*Custom Social Stories™ Resources
Created by Carol Gray for Members*



Friendship Is Like That:

Connecting Kids with a Classroom Catalog

Requests at the start of the year for Social Stories to explain the shifting alliances of childhood launched a three-part project, “Friendship is Like That.” We started with a collection of Social Stories (“Social Stories About How Friendships Change”) that introduced new vocabulary to describe how the social connections in childhood often shift, and why. That was followed by “The FriendShip,” a strategy to help a child or adolescent identify, sort, and understand the different types of friends, while at the same time learning basic concepts and skills that foster healthy friendships.

This final segment describes the “Classroom Catalog,” an all-class activity to help children identify peers who enjoy similar activities. The premise of The Classroom Catalog is simple: friendships are based on similar interests and it’s okay for a student to learn about others via an alternative route. It’s a social registry of ‘who’s who’ on the playground; helpful for any child and a social support for a child with autism.

A typical child observes, listens, and gradually learns about the children who surround them; their preferred activities, likes and dislikes, and weaknesses and strengths. According to Kenneth H. Rubin, author of “The Friendship Factor” (Viking Press, 2002), by about the age of seven children include references to someone likes to do the same stuff in their definitions of friendship. Our assessment of others becomes increasingly detailed as we grow with considerations like values, personality, temperament, character emerging with advancing years.

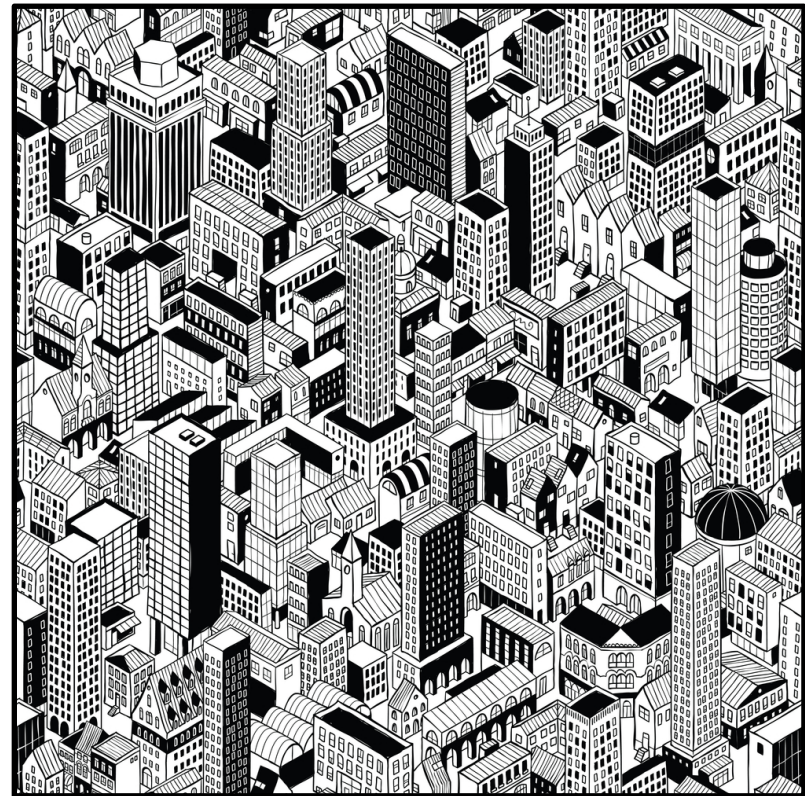


A social-communication delay or difference makes it difficult to pick up the often-subtle cues, statements, facial expressions, gestures that hold clues to this type of information. As if socially and emotionally negotiating through a day at school isn't challenging and attention-consuming enough, there may be an exhausting gap between desiring a friend and finding one.

Even the most socially adept may fail to detect the "invisible" interests and talents of their classmates. Not many children have the resources to ride

their horse to school or demonstrate their love of drawing detailed city maps! Knowing how someone spends their time outside of school holds valuable keys to getting to know them better.

The Classroom Catalog shares factual information about others in a relaxed, visual, and meaningful format. It's a "who's who and what do they do?" social registry - a catalog of potential playground comrades.





This isn't a ground-breaking concept. Adults are using similar tools with increasing frequency. Finding compatibility often requires a little support. Consider for example, "Match," "It's Just Lunch," and for those with the most experience, "Silver Singles." Whether you are a child on a playground or an adult who enjoys golf or a night on the town, it's nice to have someone who enjoys the same activities - and a little social streamlining can be a helpful support.

Not only does the catalog help kids identify interesting classmates, it provides an opening to initiate the contact. For example, "I was looking in the catalog and I saw that you like flags from other countries. Me, too. I like flags. I draw a lot of them." Getting past the first words can make those that follow a little easier - especially if driven by a shared interest!

How it Works

To create a Classroom Catalog, each child completes a form with their photo, a self-drawing, and fill-in-the-blank statements about their personality, free time choices, pets, likes and dislikes, favorite (and non-favorite) subjects, and more. The original form was one page; the updated version is two pages placed back to back in plastic sheets. Completed forms are housed in a three-ring notebook with a clear plastic cover.



Nothing is set in (social) stone! Classroom Catalog items may be developed by a teacher or as a group activity that recruits ideas from students.

To renew attention to the Catalog throughout the year:

- the catalog is kept in one easily accessible place with one or two chairs for comfortable review;
- students may take turns designing a cover once a week throughout the year;
- a teacher may use it to select students to answer questions by randomly opening to a page;
- forms may be updated at any time as student interests or preferences change or new talents are identified;
- a “questions box” near the catalog may recruit ideas for items for the next form;
- new updated forms may be completed mid-year; and
- several classrooms may rotate their catalogs.

One final note. The research on the social connections in childhood reveals something we’ve known all along as adults. Friendship has a mind of its own. All we can reasonably do is foster opportunities for friendship and teach the component concepts and skills that support it. After that, it’s important to know when it’s time to get out of the way!

A sample blank Classmate Catalog form follows.



My name is _____. I am _____ years old.

My birthday is every year on _____. This year my birthday will be on a (circle one below)

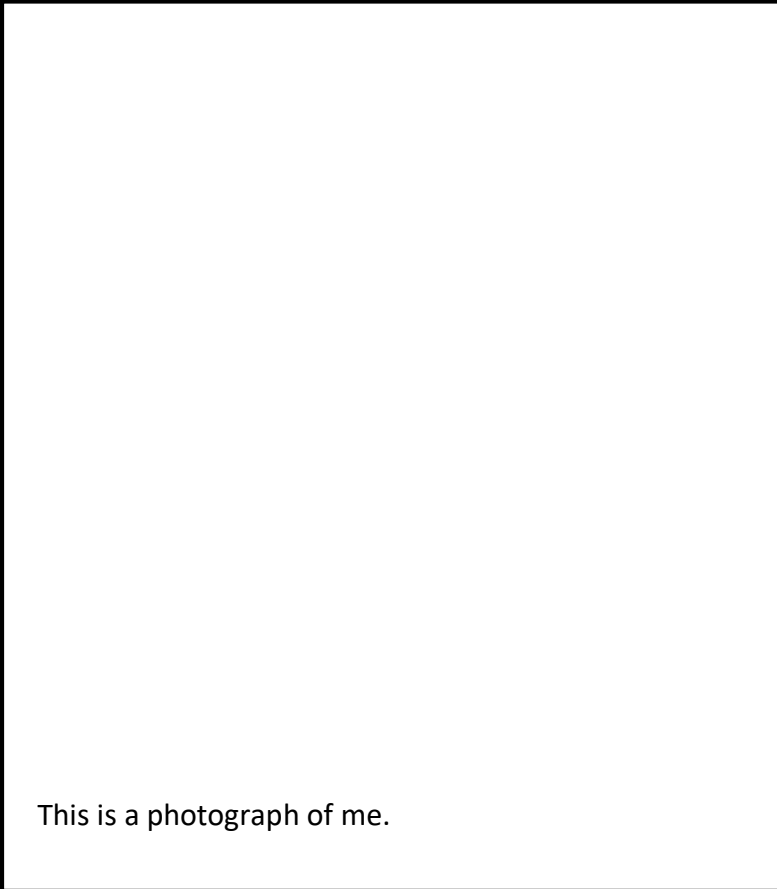
MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY



This is a photograph of me.

I am an important member of my class. In my class, students help one another succeed. One subject that I really enjoy is

_____. A subject that is usually easy for me is _____.

A subject (or subjects) that I might be able to help others with is _____.

Others in my class may be able to help me with my difficult subjects.

I asked my parent/caregiver to tell me one word that describes my personality. That word is _____.

After school or on the weekend, one thing that I really like to do is _____.

This is a picture that I drew of myself on the playground. I like to _____ on the playground.

One book, magazine, website, or story that I really like is

_____.

In my opinion, the best movie or television show is

_____.

Check the sentences below that are true about you.

_____ I have a pet. It is a _____. My pet's name is _____.

_____ I do not have a pet.

_____ Someday, I'd like to have a _____ as a pet.

When I grow up, I'd like to be a _____.

One thing I'd like others to know about me is that _____

_____.