

The Palm Beach School for Autism

Bear Givers Program, “Give a Bear to Show I Care”

In 2002, Bears4Kids was formed as a non-profit committed to bringing joy to the lives of children in need with a huggable, lovable teddy bear. Bears4Kids, now operating as Bear Givers, has created the Empowerment Program which provides grants to organizations, such as ours, to teach our students the joys of giving to a child who may be experiencing difficulties in their lives. We are excited to be a part of this program as it will teach our children with autism the meaning of empathy and the pleasure of giving.

The Palm Beach School for Autism wants to empower our students with the idea that they can make a difference in the lives of others. Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder often lack the ability to identify and express their own emotions as well as understand the perspective of others. The Speech and Language Department at The Palm Beach School for Autism has developed a curriculum to teach our students the concepts of friendship and compassion. Bear Givers has donated 250 bears. Our students will distribute the bears to other children in need, with the hope that this small act of kindness will lead to lasting relationships.

Long Term Goal: The students will be able to demonstrate empathy towards others

Short Term Objectives:

1. The students will acknowledge their own feelings as well as the feelings of others
2. The students will identify things in their lives that they are thankful for
3. The students will recognize those less fortunate
4. The student will understand the aspects of giving and receiving
5. The students will identify characteristics of being a good friend

Activities:

1. A. Through the use of pictures and role-playing activities, the students will learn to identify and express their own emotions and the emotions of others.
B. When a peer is feeling upset/sad; the students will show them that they care by giving a hug or saying encouraging words.
2. A. The students will bring in pictures of family members and favorite items and discuss with therapists and peers that they are “thankful” for them and that they make them feel “happy”.

- B. The students and therapists will make a collage of all of the things they are thankful for “I am thankful for.....they make me feel happy”.
3. The students and therapists will look at pictures of children less fortunate (inadequate housing, minimal clothing, and unhealthy appearance) and compare and contrast the differences between those children and themselves.
4. A. The students will pick a peer from another class and share a favorite toy/item.
- B. The students will pick a student from another class to make a craft for (friendship heart, card, etc.) and express how giving and receiving makes them feel.
5. The students and therapists will discuss what being a good friend is:
A good friend listens
A good friend shares toys
A good friend has good eye contact
A good friend plays with others and takes turns
A good friend gives hug and says “I’m sorry”
A good friend gives compliments
- And talk about what a good friend is NOT:
A good friend does not hit
A good friend does not bite
A good friend does not push
A good friend does not yell
A good friend does not take before asking

Outcomes:

The children will be able to identify with and understand somebody else’s feelings or difficulties.