**Promoting Friendship Skills: Professional Development Module**
**Transcript for Slide 12 – Before Play: Planning Peer Pairing**

Narrator: One of the best ways for children to learn friendship skills is by practicing

with other children. The typical preschool day is filled with many moments where children need to figure out how to share toys, take turns, and play nicely with each other. But it's also useful when you as a teacher, can structure opportunities for children to practice these skills, especially for children who may not engage with their peers as easily as others. Peer Pairing is a great way to do this. It's a technique adapted from the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning's You've Got to Have Friends handout, and the Taxi Buddy System. Using Peer Pairing, a teacher matches up children and encourages them to play together during a designated time. It's one of the most effective ways for a child to learn critical friendship skills, because it gives them a chance to practice these play skills, and the opportunity to learn from watching another child, who may already be more successful at navigating social interactions. And it can be used in so many ways. You can implement this technique for just one pair of peers, within a certain center, or with the whole class, as this teacher does by pairing students for a reading activity.

Teacher: So you have the puppet and then you gonna switch, okay?

Narrator: So, let's talk about how to plan and implement Peer Pairing effectively. When it comes to planning, there are three important things to consider. One, what skills do my students need to work on? Answering this question will help you intentionally select an activity that matches those needs. So, if you've noticed children are struggling with taking turns, you can set up an activity lets them practice this skill. While you want to gently push children to develop their skills, it's also important to consider, how will the experience be a positive one for both children? This will help you plan activities that children can be successful with. This may mean choosing certain materials, times of day, or limiting the amount of time spent in the pairing. For some children, a manageable timeframe for keeping an interaction positive, may only be ten minutes or less, and that's okay. Finally, consider, how will I pair students? For some situations, it could work to pair students randomly, perhaps by drawing names from a friendship can. In other situations, it might work best to strategically pair children, based on their skill level and play style. For example, you can pair a child who's struggling with sharing, with a peer who's good at this skill. Often we see teachers encouraging children to select their own partners.

Teacher: Okay. Ah Jason, who's gonna be your partner for sharing the book?

(Students respond)

(Teacher speaks Spanish)

Narrator: But, it's not a great approach for a couple reasons. First, children tend to pick the same friends to play with, which limits their opportunities to try out their skills in new situations. And children who struggle with friendship skills are less likely to be chosen as partners, by their more successful peers. So, they miss out on the chance to learn from them. So, it's really important that you pair children intentionally, and switch up pairings over time. This gives children the chance to practice and negotiate friendship skills with lots of peers, who may have different styles of play, different preferences, and different levels of social skills.