

A Multisource Exploration of the Friendship Patterns of Children With and Without Learning Disabilities

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Friendship patterns of 117 children with learning disabilities (LD) and 115 children without LD in Grades 4–8 were examined. In comparison with children without LD, boys with LD had fewer mutual friends, children with LD had more friends with learning problems and more younger friends, and children with LD in Grades 4–6 had less stable relationships. With regard to friendship quality, children with LD reported higher levels of conflict, lower levels of validation, and more problems with relationship repair than did children without LD. The findings were discussed in terms of factors that have been found to enhance friendship such as proximity and similarity, and the social skills difficulties that have been associated with learning disabilities.

KEY WORDS: learning disabilities; peer relationships; friendship; school-age children.

INTRODUCTION

According to Sullivan (1953), children acquire interpersonal sensitivity, learn new social skills and behaviors, and receive validation in intimate relationships with close friends. Although studies of peer acceptance in classroom and school groups have consistently shown that children with learning disabilities (LD) are more likely to be rejected and neglected than children without LD (e.g., Stone & LaGreca, 1990; Wiener, Harris, & Shirer, 1990), the close friendships of children with LD have been relatively unexplored. There are unequivocal reasons for suspecting that close friendship has strong implications for the well-being of children with LD. Children with LD are more likely to be lonely than children without LD (e.g., Margalit & Levin-Alyagon, 1994). Bukowski, Hoza, and Boivin (1993) and Parker and Asher (1993) found that children whose friendships are of low quality are more likely than other children to be lonely. In addition, study

of the friendships of children with LD may expand knowledge of their difficulties in social interaction and conversation: Newcomb and Bagwell's meta-analysis showed that friends talked and cooperated more with one another and engaged in more affective expression than did acquaintances (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1996). Finally, as suggested by Murphy and Schneider (1994), helping a socially rejected child with LD to enhance a friendship with another potentially compatible child may be a useful intervention modality, one that is perhaps more realistic than social-skills intervention aimed at peer acceptance in groups. Those interventions have demonstrated at best modest effectiveness with children with LD (Kavale & Forness, 1995).

This study was guided by four main objectives: (1) to determine whether children with LD are involved in as many friendships as children without LD; (2) to identify friends of children with LD in terms of age, gender, LD status, and the social settings in which they interact; (3) to determine whether LD status is predictive of the stability of the children's friendships; and (4) to compare the quality of the relationships of children with and without LD.

Number of Friends

Contradictory results have been obtained in studies comparing numbers of friends of children with and

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without LD. Several studies conducted in full-inclusion settings reported no LD/non-LD difference (Juvonen & Bear, 1992; Vaughn, McIntosh, Schumm, Haager, & Callwood, 1993). Furthermore, children with mild disabilities in special education programs have been found not to differ from children without disabilities in the number of people they consider to be part of their social network (e.g., Hoyle & Serafica, 1988; Wenz-Gross & Siperstein, 1997). Vaughn, Elbaum, and Schumm (1996), however, found that the proportion of children with LD who had a mutual friend was lower than children without LD at the beginning of the school year, although the difference decreased by the end of the school year.

One problem with the studies described above is small sample size. Two other studies featured samples large enough to detect possible LD/non-LD differences. Tur-Kaspa, Margalit, and Most (1999) found that children with LD had fewer mutual friends than children without LD at the beginning and end of the school year, and more mutual enemies at the end of the school year. Vaughn and Elbaum (1999) found that children with LD nominated fewer friends than did children without LD. Because of the contradictory results of the previous studies, in this study we made no specific predictions regarding LD/non-LD differences in numbers of friends.

Identity of Friends

As indicated by Hartup (1996), it is important not only to establish how many friends children have, but also to establish the identities of those friends in terms of gender, age, socioeconomic status (SES), ethnicity, race, level of academic achievement, and so forth. Children in general tend to select as friends others with similar academic achievement levels (e.g., Epstein, 1983), and this pattern increases with age. According to clinical reports (e.g., Osman, 1982) and information supplied by the parents of early adolescents with LD in a children's mental health center (Wiener & Sunohara, 1998), children with LD more often choose younger playmates than do children without LD. Although some studies indicate that children with LD are no more likely to have friends with LD than children without LD (Juvonen & Bear, 1992; Vaughn et al., 1993), these findings are only generalizable to children in inclusion programs and are limited by small sample sizes. We anticipated many differences between the friends of children with and without LD. Because children tend to select friends who are similar to themselves in achievement, and because propinquity is a factor in friendship formation (Epstein, 1989), we expected that children with LD would have more out-of-school friends, more friends with learning problems, and

more younger friends than would their counterparts without LD.

Friendship Stability

Epstein (1989) concluded that peer status is more stable than individual choices of best friends. This may be unfortunate because a relationship may have to survive long enough for an intimate bond to evolve (Selman & Schultz, 1990) if it is to provide support at times of stress and enhance psychosocial development. In view of the previous findings that the peer status of children with LD is less stable than children without LD over the course of a school year (Kuhne & Wiener, 2000; Vaughn et al., 1996), we expected to find that the friendships of children with LD are also relatively unstable.

Friendship Quality

Studies of children's friendship quality are generally concerned with issues such as shared activities, loyalty and commitment, validation and caring, intimacy, and conflict resolution (Furman, 1996; Parker & Asher, 1993). Children with LD have less developed concepts of friendship formation and conflict resolution than children without LD (Hoyle & Serafica, 1988). Studies investigating the self-reported quality of the relationships between children with LD and their friends have shown that their relationships involve less contact with friends, less intimacy, less validation, lower levels of loyalty (Wenz-Gross & Siperstein, 1997), less support for self-esteem, and less intimacy (Vaughn & Elbaum, 1999) than the relationships of children without LD. Vaughn and Elbaum also found that the overall self-reported quality of friendship for children with LD in elementary school is lower than that of children without LD, and that the differences between groups increased with age. Consistent with the results of these studies, we hypothesized that children with LD would report lower self-reported quality of relationships than their counterparts without LD. Because of their general difficulties with social skills (Swanson & Malone, 1992), we expected that they would report more conflict with their friends, and be less able to resolve those conflicts. We also expected less intimacy and validation in friendship reports.

The Need for Multiple Perspectives in Defining and Measuring Friendship

We adopted multiple perspectives for defining friendship. As shown by Wiener and Sunohara (1998), children

with LD, their parents, and teachers often viewed the same relationships somewhat differently. Parents sometimes did not concur with their children's nomination of a friend whom the parents viewed as exploitative, or because the relationship was restricted to playing games together at school. Teachers, on the other hand, were typically unaware of their students' relationships with children who did not attend the school. Friendship is a "co-constructed dyadic phenomenon" (Schneider, Wiener, & Murphy, 1994, p. 330) that should ideally be examined from a dyadic perspective in which the perceptions of both members of the dyad are solicited. This may not always be possible, however, because children may have friends who do not attend the same schools, or who are not consenting participants in research. Consequently, in our study, we have made every effort to involve the friends of our participants and to assess friendship dyadically. Because that frequently was not possible, we tried to get information from multiple sources by asking parents and teachers to corroborate friendship nominations of the children.

METHOD

Participants

The participants were 232 children, 117 children with LD⁴ (67 boys, 50 girls) and 115 children without LD (68 boys, 47 girls) in nine schools in two suburban school districts near Toronto, Canada. All children were in Grades 4–8, with 56 of the children with LD (27 boys, 29 girls) and 56 of the children without LD (26 boys, 30 girls) in Grades 4–6, and 61 of the children with LD (40 boys, 21 girls) and 59 of the children without LD (42 boys, 17 girls) in Grades 7 and 8. The mean age in years of the children with LD was 11.63 ($SD = 1.42$), and of the children without LD was 11.28 ($SD = 1.46$). Although children who were recent immigrants and who had insufficient English to complete the measures were excluded from the sample, English was the second language in the homes of 19 of the 117 children with LD (16%) and of 20 (17%) of the 115 children without LD. There were no significant LD/non-LD differences in the proportion of children who had English as a second language ($\chi^2_1 = 0.055, p = .815$).

We used the *Blishen Scale* (Blishen, Carroll, & Moore, 1987) to determine the children's SES. Of the

102 children with LD whose parents' occupations could be classified, 56 (55%) were of middle SES, 32 (31%) were of low SES, and 14 (14%) were of high SES. Of the 104 children without LD whose parents' occupation could be classified, 57 (55%) were of middle SES, 20 (19%) were of low SES, and 27 (26%) were of high SES. Because of the significant LD/non-LD difference in the SES distribution ($\chi^2_2 = 6.88, p < .05$), SES was covaried for the LD/non-LD comparisons.

Of the children with LD, 62% of the sample ($n = 73$) were placed in the general education classroom for the majority of the school day and received special education support by being withdrawn to a resource room or by working with a special education teacher in their general education classroom for 30–90 min per school day. Twenty percent of the children with LD ($n = 23$) were placed in self-contained special education programs for at least half of the school day. They were integrated for subjects such as physical education and music. Eighteen percent ($n = 21$) of the children spent the entire day in a general education class of 30–35 children with two teachers, one of whom was a special education teacher who was the teacher of record for the children with LD.

The children with LD were formally identified by the school district as having a learning disability on the basis of data from a psychoeducational assessment in accordance with guidelines from the Ontario Ministry of Education.⁵ No official formula or cutoff score for identifying LD exists in Ontario. Because the schools would not permit us to conduct our own assessment of the LD status of the participants, we obtained IQ and achievement test data from the school files of the children with LD. The variety of tests and administration dates precluded meaningful use of these data in any discrepancy formula to corroborate the schools' assessments, even if we were to overlook the many conceptual problems (see Beitchman & Young, 1997; Shaw, Cullen, McGuire, & Brinckerhoff, 1995; Stanovich, 1991) in using such formulae. Therefore, we used the IQ and achievement data to eliminate 26 potential participants whose LD status appeared questionable on the basis of the data we could obtain, despite the identification by the school board. In accordance with Siegel and Heaven's recommendation (Siegel & Heaven, 1986), we eliminated from the sample children whose verbal, performance, and full scale IQ

⁴The ADHD Rating Scale (Dupaul, 1990) was completed by the parents and teachers of the children with LD in order to determine the proportion of the sample of children with LD who had symptoms consistent with a possible diagnosis of ADHD. Of the 117 children with LD, 36 (31%) met the criteria for ADHD recommended by Dupaul.

⁵Learning disabilities are described as a "variety of disorders that affect the acquisition, understanding, organization, and/or use of verbal and non-verbal information" . . . and "interfere with the acquisition and use of academic skills." . . . Learning disabilities result from "specific impairments in one or more psychological processes related to learning in combination with otherwise average abilities essential for thinking and reasoning" (Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, 2001).

on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-3, 1991) were below 80 and whose academic achievement in reading, writing, and spelling on standardized achievement tests were above the 25th percentile. The mean full-scale IQ for the LD sample was 92.2 ($SD = 9.79$), verbal IQ was 92.48 ($SD = 9.72$), and performance IQ was 93.97 ($SD = 9.79$). A variety of achievement tests⁶ were used to assess reading, writing, and mathematics. The sample mean for reading decoding tests was 85.48 ($SD = 10.20$), for reading comprehension tests was 87.60 ($SD = 10.08$), for mathematics computation tests was 83.02 ($SD = 10.97$), for mathematics applications tests was 90.73 ($SD = 9.27$), and for spelling tests was 82.02 ($SD = 9.75$).

Children without LD were selected at random from the pool of consenting participants of the same gender and grade in the general education classrooms as the children with LD. For example, if a boy with LD was in the Grade 5 portion of a split Grade 4/5 class, the comparison child without LD would be a boy in Grade 5 in the same Grade 4/5 class. As IQ and standardized achievement test data were not available for the children without LD, and the school districts did not permit us to administer achievement tests to the children without LD, teachers completed the Academic Competence Scale of the Social Skills Rating System—Teacher Form (SSRS; Gresham & Elliot, 1990). Children who were not identified as LD by the school district, who scored above the 25th percentile on this scale, and who were rated as average or above average (i.e., scores of 3, 4, or 5) on three items of the scale (In terms of grade level expectations, this child's skills in reading are . . . ; In terms of grade level expectations, this child's skills in mathematics are . . . ; Compared with other children in my classroom this child's intellectual functioning is . . .) were included in the comparison group of children without LD. The mean standard score for children without LD was 102.92 ($SD = 7.94$) and for children with LD was 82.51 ($SD = 11.21$). Of the 146 children without LD who were initially selected for participation in the study, 31 did not meet the criteria on the Academic Competence Scale of the SSRS.

The 232 participants described above (including both the children with LD and the comparison group) will be referred to as the *target* sample. The target children all came from classrooms in which the consent rate of their friends was at least 50%. The consent rate was 52.6% among the 427 school friends nominated by the children with LD,

and 53.2% among the 471 school friends nominated by the children without LD. All of the target children's parents (223 mothers, 9 fathers) participated in the telephone interview, and all of their 55 teachers completed questionnaires.

Measures

Friendship Interview

Children participated in a structured individual interview adapted from Berndt (1984) and administered by a trained research assistant. We first asked the children to list their "best friends" by first name and last initial, encouraging them to consider both friends who did and did not attend their school. We allowed an unlimited number of friendship nominations because when children are asked to list up to a specific number of friends, they frequently believe that they must provide that number, even if they do not have that many friends (Furman, 1996). We asked about each nominated friend's gender, age, and whether the friend attended the children's school. Finally, we asked the children to select from the list they provided earlier the name of their single very best friend in the world. If this friend did not attend their school, they were asked to also select their single very best school friend. The same interview was given to nominated school friends of the target children if the parents of the school friends provided consent for participation in the study.

The parents of all target children participated in a telephone interview in which they were asked to provide the first name and last initial of their children's close friends and to respond to the same demographic questions about those friends as did their children. The teachers of the target children completed a questionnaire in which they were asked to list the close friends of the target children by first name and initial of last name, indicate the age and gender of the friends, whether they were in the same class as the participants, and whether the friends had learning problems. There was no limit on the number of nominations permitted for parents or teachers.

We assessed friendship selection by interviewing target children, parents, and teachers because, as suggested by Epstein (1989), it is important to cast a wide net in order to identify the friends of children with LD. This net must include younger and older children as well as peers because, as mentioned above, children with LD may be more likely to select cross-age friends. Because some children with LD are transported to schools outside of their neighborhoods for special education programs, children with LD may be more likely to have friends near their homes who do not go to their schools. Although friendship is measured best through reciprocal friendship nominations

⁶The following tests were employed: Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement (Kaufman & Kaufman, 1985), Canadian Achievement Test (1981; 16.5%), Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (1992; 11.3%), Key Math—Canadian Edition (Connolly, 1991; 11.3%), other (10.5%).

(Schneider et al., 1994), logistical problems prevented us from interviewing the friends of the target children who did not attend their school. In addition, some of the school friends of the target children did not provide consent to participate in the study. Therefore, we used parent and teacher corroboration.

Six categories of friendships were differentiated in the analyses:

- 1) *Nominated Friends* refers to the friends nominated by the target children.
- 2) *Corroborated Friends* refers to the friends nominated by the target children who were also nominated by one of the children’s parents or teacher.
- 3) *Reciprocated Friends* refers to the school friends nominated by the target children whose nomination was reciprocated by those friends.
- 4) *Corroborated or Reciprocated (CR) Friends* refers to the friends nominated by the target children whose nomination was corroborated by one of their parents, or by their teacher, or reciprocated by the friend.
- 5) *Single Very Best Friend* refers to the friend whom target children nominated as being their very best friend in the world.
- 6) *Single Very Best School Friend* refers to the friend whom target children nominated as being their very best friend at school.

Table I shows the concordance between the children’s Nominated Friends, Reciprocated Friends, and Corroborated Friends. The results detailed in the table demonstrate

Table I. Concordance Between Child Nominated Friendships, Corroborated Friendships, and Reciprocated Friendships

	LD	NLD	Total
1. Number of child-nominated school friends ^a	225	251	476
2. Number (%) of child-nominated school friends corroborated by parents or teachers	143 (64)	172 (69)	315 (66)
3. Number (%) of corroborated school friendships reciprocated by friend	94 (66)	128 (75)	222 (70)
4. Number (%) of child-nominated school friends reciprocated by friend	116 (52)	163 (65)	279 (59)
5. Number (%) of reciprocated friendships corroborated by parent or teacher	116 (81)	128 (79)	222 (80)

^aValues for only child-nominated school friends whose parents provided consent for participation in the study are included in this table.

a fairly high concordance among sources of information about the existence of friendships.

Friendship Quality Questionnaire-Revised (FQQ-R; Parker & Asher, 1993)

This is a group-administered, 40-item self-report instrument that measures various qualitative aspects of children’s relationships with their best friend. For each item, children indicate how well a statement applies to their friendship on a 1–5 rating scale ranging from *not at all true* to *really true*. Average test-retest reliabilities are .75 over a 2-week period and internal consistency reliabilities range from .73 to .90 for the six subscales. Validity of the scales is provided by data showing that they account for a substantial portion of the variance in self-reports of loneliness over and above peer acceptance (Parker & Asher, 1993).

Because several researchers who have used the FQQ-R in previous studies have reported different factor structures (Desrosiers, 1995; Philippsen, 1995; Sterling, Hymel, & Schonert-Reichl, 1995), we examined the factor structure of the data from the present study. Varimax rotation produced a nine-factor solution that was viable substantively and statistically. The intercorrelations of the factors ranged in absolute value from .01 through .67; only 7 of the 35 intercorrelations had absolute values at or above .50. The results of this factor analysis are shown in Table II.⁷ Three of the factors from our analysis, labeled *Help and Sharing*, *Conflict*, and *Disclosure*, were similar to those found by Parker and Asher (1993). In our analysis, some of Parker and Asher’s factors were divided into two factors: Parker and Asher’s *Companionship and Recreation* factor essentially became our *School Companionship* and the *Companionship* (outside of school) factors; Parker and Asher’s *Validation and Caring* factor became our *Trust and Caring* and *Validation* factors; and Parker and Asher’s *Conflict Resolution* factor became our *Relationship Repair* and *Conflict Resolution* (through talking) factors.

Social Skills Rating System—Teacher Form (SSRS; Gresham & Elliot, 1990)

The Academic Competence Scale comprises nine items on which the teacher compares the student with other class members or with grade-level expectations in terms of overall academic performance, intellectual functioning, performance in reading and mathematics, motivation,

⁷More detailed results from this analysis are available from the first author.

Table II. Factor Structure of the FQQ-R

Factor (<i>N</i> = 222)	Item	Factor loadings
1. Helping & sharing (Eigenvalue = 12.620)	6. Ian and I make each other feel important and special	.467
	10. I can always count on Ian for good ideas about games to play	.492
	17. Ian and I help each other with chores or other things a lot	.423
	18. Ian and I do special favors for each other	.524
	24. When I'm having trouble figuring out something, I usually ask Ian for help and advice	.578
	32. Ian and I always come up with good ideas on ways to do things	.582
	33. Ian and I loan each other things all the time	.716
	34. Ian often helps me with things so I can get done quicker	.637
	36. Ian and I always count on each other for ideas on how to get things done	.699
	2. Trust & caring (Eigenvalue = 3.243)	8. If Ian hurts my feelings, Ian says "I'm sorry"
12. Ian would still like me even if all the other kids didn't like me		.709
30. If I told Ian a secret, I could trust Ian not to tell anyone else		.646
41. Ian cares about my feelings		.622
3. Disclosure (Eigenvalue = 2.062)	14. Ian and I are always telling each other about our problems	.656
	16. When I'm mad about something that happened to me, I can always talk to Ian about it	.609
	25. Ian and I talk about the things that make us sad	.731
4. Conflict (Eigenvalue = 1.681)	3. Ian and I get mad at each other a lot	.680
	20. Ian and I argue a lot	.789
	27. Ian and I fight	.797
	31. Ian and I bug each other	.579
	37. Ian doesn't listen to me	.472
5. School companionship (Eigenvalue = 1.494)	2. Ian and I always sit together at lunch	.805
	7. Ian and I always pick each other as partners	.558
	23. Ian and I always play together at recess	.817
	39. Ian and I help each other with schoolwork a lot	.679
6. Relationship repair (Eigenvalue = 1.387)	26. Ian and I always make up easily when we have a fight	.738
	35. Ian and I always get over arguments really quickly	.571
7. Validation (Eigenvalue = 1.264)	4. Ian tells me I'm good at things	.726
	5. If other kids were talking behind my back, Ian would always stick up for me	.393
	13. Ian tells me I'm pretty smart	.546
8. Companionship (Eigenvalue = 1.165)	1. Ian and I live really close to each other	.754
	19. Ian and I do fun things together a lot	.557
	22. Ian and I go to each other's house after school and on weekends	.762
9. Conflict resolution (Eigenvalue = 1.039)	11. If Ian and I get mad at each other, we always talk about how to get over it	.614
	29. If Ian and I are mad at each other, we always talk about what would help to make us feel better	.607

parental encouragement, and classroom behavior. In completing the 30-item Social Skills Scale and the 18-item Problem Behavior Scales, teachers rate the children's social skills and problem behaviors on a 3-point frequency scale (*never, sometimes, very often*). Internal consistency reliability coefficients on the teacher scale range from .88 to .95, and test-retest reliability coefficients range from .85 to .93. Concurrent and construct validity are adequate: Moderate correlations with scores on behavior problem checklists, peer sociometrics, and natural classroom

observation have been reported (i.e., Gresham & Elliot, 1990).

Procedures

Friendship selection was assessed in five steps:

- 1) The target children participated in the Friendship Interview in January or February, so that school-mates would have time to know each other and

form friendships. The children were withdrawn from their classrooms individually, and interviewed by a research assistant.

- 2) Parents were given the Friendship Interview by telephone during February and March. At that time we also asked for their occupations to assess SES.
- 3) If the Nominated Friends of the target children attended the same school and if the parents of the Nominated Friends gave consent for them to participate in the study, the Nominated Friends were given the Friendship Interview during March.
- 4) The questionnaire version of the Friendship Interview was distributed to the classroom teachers of the target children in early April. For most children, the general education teachers completed the questionnaire. The special education teachers of the children with LD in self-contained special education classes and inclusion programs completed the questionnaires. At that time, the teachers also completed the SSRS and the ADHD Rating Scale.
- 5) The target children participated in the Friendship Interview a second time approximately 3 months after completion of the initial interview.

The FQQ-R was administered to the target children and to their Single Very Best School Friend in groups of 4–6 children. The name of the Single Very Best School Friend of each target child was inserted into each item on the questionnaire. Similarly, the Single Very Best School Friend received a questionnaire with the name of the target child who nominated him or her. The questionnaire was

administered by a research assistant who read questions aloud in order to accommodate the reading difficulties of the children with LD and who carefully monitored the children to make sure they were on task.

RESULTS

Number of Friends

A MANCOVA, with SES as a covariate, was performed comparing the number of friends of target children for Nominated Friends, Corroborated Friends, Reciprocated Friends, and CR Friends by gender and grade (Grades 4–6, Grades 7 and 8). Means and standard deviations are shown in Table III. Although the multivariate main effect for LD status only approached conventional levels of significance ($F_{4,194} = 2.17; p = .07$), there was a multivariate LD-Status \times Gender interaction effect ($F_{4,194} = 2.31; p = .05$). Univariate analyses revealed that boys with LD had fewer Reciprocated Friends ($F_{1,197} = 4.58; p < .05$) than girls with LD and children without LD. The LD-Status \times Gender interaction effect also approached conventional levels of significance for CR friends ($F_{1,197} = 3.86; p = .075$).

The analyses revealed multivariate gender ($F_{4,194} = 5.60; p < .001$) and grade effects ($F_{4,194} = 3.62; p < .01$). The univariate gender effect for Reciprocated Friends ($F_{1,197} = 3.81; p = .05$) should be interpreted, however, in light of the significant LD-Status \times Gender interaction. Univariate analyses also showed that boys nominated more friends than girls ($F_{1,197} = 4.53; p < .05$) and that the multivariate grade effect was specific to Nominated

Table III. Number of Friends of Children With and Without LD by Gender

	LD (n = 117)			NLD (n = 115)			Significant effects
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Nominated							
Mean	6.31	5.88	6.13	5.81	5.04	5.50	Grade**
SD	3.85	4.12	3.96	2.37	2.72	2.54	Gender*
Corroborated							
Mean	2.60	3.44	2.96	3.34	3.02	3.21	
SD	1.95	2.22	2.10	1.59	1.78	1.67	
Reciprocated							
Mean	0.90	1.60	1.20	1.51	1.49	1.50	Gender*
SD	1.03	1.26	1.18	1.19	1.35	1.25	LD \times Gender*
CR							
Mean	2.85	3.62	3.18	3.71	3.28	3.53	
SD	2.01	2.23	2.13	1.65	2.03	1.82	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Friends ($F_{1,197} = 11.92$; $p < .01$). Children in Grades 4–6 nominated more friends ($M = 6.39$, $SD = 3.68$) than children in Grades 7 and 8 ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 2.89$).

Identity of Friends

We first calculated the proportion of Nominated Friends of each target child who were of the same gender, attended the target child's school, and who were the same age, older, or younger. We then did the same for CR Friends. (We did not analyze the data for Corroborated Friends or for Reciprocated Friends separately because that would entail some cells too small for analysis.) We conducted MANOVA on these proportional data, followed by relevant univariate analyses. Second, we calculated the frequencies and proportions of Single Very Best Friends of the target children who were of the same gender, attended the same school, and who were the same age, older, or younger. As each child had only one Single Very Best Friend, we used chi-squares to examine the differences between groups of target children. Finally, we calculated the proportion of teacher-nominated friends whom the teacher indicated had learning problems.

The findings regarding Nominated and CR friends obtained from the child and parent versions of the Friendship Interview were consistent. Consequently, the data from the child version only are reported. The analyses were done twice; once on the proportions and once using arcsin transformations. Because the results were the same using both statistics, only the proportional data are reported. Results are shown for Nominated Friends and CR Friends for variables on which there were LD status main effects or LD-Status \times Gender interactions. There were no significant LD-Status \times Grade interactions on any of these analyses.

Both children with and without LD overwhelmingly had same-sex friends (Nominated Friends: $M = 94.51$, $SD = 12.81$; CR Friends: $M = 96.34$, $SD = 12.29$). There were no LD/non-LD differences on this variable. As shown in Table IV, the majority of the CR Friends of the target children were children with whom they interacted at their schools. With regard to Nominated Friends, the significant LD-Status \times Gender interaction indicated that boys with LD had proportionally fewer Nominated Friends from their schools than girls with LD, boys without LD, and girls without LD.

Younger friends were defined as two or more years younger than the participant, and older friends were two or more years older. A very high proportion of friendships for target children was with same-age children. Children with LD, however, had a lower proportion of Nominat-

Table IV. Characteristics of the Friends of Participants With and Without LD (as Percentages)

	LD		NLD		Significant effects	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	LD	LD \times Gender
Nominated friends, $F(df = 1/224)$						
Same school						
Male	69.4	25.3	79.3	22.9		7.84**
Female	77.8	23.8	74.7	24.3		
Same age	87.3	19.9	96.0	9.3	15.53***	
Older	6.6	16.1	3.4	8.8		
Younger	6.1	14.1	0.6	2.9	13.88***	
CR friends, $F(df = 1/224)$						
Same school	80.1	28.1	86.5	20.2		
Same age	91.4	19.8	97.8	8.1	8.39**	
Older	5.1	17.5	2.2	8.1		
Younger	3.5	10.3	0	0	11.48***	
Teacher nominated friends, $F(df = 1/224)$						
Learning problems	44.6	32.7	23.7	24.3	31.60***	
Single very best friends, $\chi^2(df = 2)$						
Same school	66	56	74	65		
Same age	102	87	111	97	8.91*	
Older	11	9	3	3		
Younger	4	3	0	0		

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

ed and CR same-age friends than did children without LD. They also had a higher proportion of Nominated and CR younger friends than did children without LD. No LD/non-LD differences were evident for proportion of older friends. We also examined the proportion of the children's Single Very Best Friends who were the same age, older, or younger. The Single Very Best Friends of children with LD were less likely to be the same age as them than were the Single Very Best Friends of children without LD.

The data on the proportion of children who have friends with learning problems were taken from the teacher version of the Friendship Interview, and only apply to school friends nominated by the teacher. Children with LD had a significantly higher proportion of friends who had learning problems than children without LD (see Table IV).

Stability of Friendships

Stable friends are friends whom target children nominated both when the child version of the Friendship Interview was first administered in January or February and when the interview was readministered 3 months later in April or May. Friendship stability was assessed by

calculating the proportion of Nominated Friends and CR Friends target children had on the first administration of the Friendship Interview, whom the children nominated when the Friendship Interview was administered the second time. Across the sample of target children, 69.8% of Nominated Friends and 81.8% of CR Friends were stable.

Two logistic regression analyses were conducted to predict friendship stability. LD status, gender, grade (Grades 4–6 and Grades 7 and 8), and SES were the potential predictors entered. There was a significant LD-Status \times Grade interaction (Wald statistic = 8.75; $p < .005$; OR = 2.103) for Nominated Friends; none of the other independent variables were significant predictors (model $\chi^2 = 40.64$; $p < .001$). Children with LD in Grades 4–6 were less likely to have stable friends than the other children. Although a similar pattern was evident for CR Friends, the interaction effect was not significant (Wald statistic = 3.760; $p = .0524$; OR = 2.14). Again, none of the other variables, including Gender, were significant predictors (model $\chi^2 = 11.94$; $p < .001$).

Quality of Friendships

Perceptions of Friendship Quality by Participants With and Without LD

We first compared the self-reported quality of the friendships of target children with their Single Very Best Friends, who may or may not have attended their school. Because these unilateral ratings were completed regardless of whether the best friend was available to provide information, data from the full sample were used in these analyses. This very adequate sample size permitted consideration of gender and grade effects. When target children were mutual Single Very Best Friends and rated each other on the FQQ-R, it was necessary to eliminate data from one dyad member, selected at random, in order to avoid violating the principle of statistical independence.

The MANCOVA, covarying SES, revealed significant main effects for LD status ($F_{9,187} = 3.73$; $p < .001$), Gender ($F_{9,187} = 3.12$; $p < .01$), and Grade ($F_{9,187} = 2.83$; $p < .01$). Table V contains a summary of the

Table V. Self-Reported Quality of Friendship With Very Best Friend of Children With and Without LD

FQQ-R factor	LD (n = 102)			NLD (n = 102)			Significant effects (df = 1/195)
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Help & sharing							
Mean	2.71	2.84	2.77	2.70	2.74	2.72	
SD	1.03	0.77	0.93	0.70	0.83	0.75	
Trust & caring							
Mean	3.09	3.37	3.21	3.17	3.47	3.29	Gender*
SD	0.98	0.75	0.90	0.63	0.64	0.65	
Disclosure							
Mean	2.36	3.02	2.64	2.38	2.75	2.53	Gender***
SD	1.13	0.90	1.09	1.04	1.05	1.05	
Conflict							
Mean	1.07	1.13	1.09	0.86	0.46	0.70	LD***
SD	0.90	0.90	0.89	0.66	0.54	0.64	
School companionship							
Mean	1.82	1.96	1.88	2.25	1.93	2.12	Grade*
SD	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.07	1.37	1.21	
Relationship repair							
Mean	3.01	3.01	3.01	3.28	3.34	3.30	LD**
SD	0.96	1.08	1.01	0.91	0.94	0.92	
Validation							
Mean	2.73	2.85	2.78	2.88	3.08	2.96	LD*
SD	1.02	0.86	0.96	0.73	0.72	0.73	
Companionship							
Mean	2.55	2.82	2.66	2.87	2.59	2.76	
SD	1.10	0.86	1.10	0.91	1.04	0.97	
Conflict resolution							
Mean	2.29	2.67	2.45	2.26	2.66	2.43	Gender*
SD	1.25	0.90	1.12	1.17	1.20	1.19	

Note. All scores are converted to item means to facilitate interpretability.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

follow-up univariate ANCOVA results. Children with LD perceived their best friendships as higher in conflict ($F_{1,195} = 17.86$; $p < .001$), weaker in capacity for relationship repair ($F_{1,195} = 8.65$; $p < .01$), and lower in validation ($F_{1,195} = 4.27$; $p < .05$) than children without LD. Compared to girls, boys reported less trust and caring ($F_{1,195} = 4.17$; $p < .05$) and disclosure ($F_{1,195} = 13.62$; $p < .001$) in their relationships, and that they were less skilled at resolving conflicts through talking ($F_{1,195} = 4.69$; $p < .05$). Children in Grades 7 and 8 ($M = 2.16$, $SD = 1.09$) reported more close interaction with their friends at school than children in Grades 4–6 ($M = 1.83$, $SD = 1.22$; $F_{1,195} = 6.26$; $p < .05$).

We conducted *dyadic analyses* of the ratings obtained from both members of a friendship dyad in which a child with or without LD nominated a friend as his or her Single Very Best School Friend and the nomination was reciprocated. These analyses had to be conducted with a much smaller sample than those of the unilateral ratings of quality of friendship because many of the participants' best school friends did not have parental consent to participate in the study.

There were a total of 77 same-sex dyads (39 boy dyads, 38 girl dyads) involved in these analyses. Of the 144 children in the 77 dyads, 88 were target children: 41 children with LD and 47 children without LD. The remaining 56 dyad members were the Single Very Best School Friends of the target children, but were not part of the target sample. Because none of these 56 children met the study criteria for the LD sample, we considered them to be children without LD for the purpose of the dyadic analyses. Of the 77 dyads, 37 dyads had two children without LD, at least one of whom was a target child, 3 dyads had two target children with LD, and 15 dyads had one child with LD and one child without LD, both of whom were target children. The remaining 22 dyads were composed of one target child with LD and his or her Single Very Best School Friend who was not a target child. (Because of the small number of dyads composed of two children with LD, we were unable to compare the three types of dyads in the study: two children with LD, two children without LD, and one child with and one child without LD. Instead, we compared dyads that had or did not have a member with LD.)

One potential threat to the validity of the dyadic analyses was that dyad members might be more socially skilled and have fewer problem behaviors than target children who were not dyad members. Indeed, the children with LD who were dyad members had lower scores on the SSRS Problem Behavior Scale than the children with LD who were not in dyadic relationships (Dyad members: $M = 93.09$, $SD = 10.58$; Not dyad members: $M =$

100.06, $SD = 12.39$; $F_{1,68} = 9.89$; $p < .01$). This pattern was not found for children without LD. There were no differences, however, between members and nonmembers of dyads on the Social Skills Scale.

The first set of dyadic analyses were performed to compare the friendship-quality ratings in dyads having no member with LD with friendship-quality data in dyads in which at least one of the members was a child with LD. The dyad mean was used in order to avoid inflating the findings artificially by using the two nonindependent ratings within each dyad (Kenny, 1995). MANOVA revealed significant main effects for both LD status ($F_{9,67} = 3.46$; $p < .001$) and Gender ($F_{9,65} = 3.50$; $p < .001$); the Gender \times LD-Status interaction was not significant. As detailed in Table VI, follow-up univariate ANOVAs indicated significant LD status differences for two of the nine factors: members of dyads containing at least one member with LD felt that their friendships were characterized by significantly less school companionship than dyads in which neither member had LD ($F_{1,75} = 9.19$; $p < .01$). On the other hand, dyads composed of at least one child with LD reported higher levels of disclosure ($F_{1,75} = 6.17$; $p < .05$) than dyads that did not have a member with LD. Girls reported higher levels of disclosure ($F_{1,73} = 7.80$; $p < .01$) and more conflict resolution through talking ($F_{1,73} = 6.15$; $p < .05$) than did boys.

Using the data from the 15 dyads containing one member with and one member without LD, we compared the ratings of the member with LD with the ratings of the member without LD within each dyad. Children with LD perceived their friendships with their Single Very Best School Friend to be of higher quality than did their best friend without LD on three dimensions: Help and Sharing (LD, $M = 2.78$, $SD = 0.69$; non-LD, $M = 2.43$, $SD = 0.56$; $t_{29} = 2.29$, $p < .05$), Trust and Caring (LD, $M = 3.27$, $SD = 0.85$; non-LD, $M = 2.87$, $SD = 0.91$; $t_{29} = 2.17$, $p < .05$), and Disclosure (LD, $M = 2.73$, $SD = 0.91$; non-LD, $M = 2.26$, $SD = 1.15$; $t_{29} = 2.44$, $p < .05$).

DISCUSSION

Number of Friends

Although we did not find LD/non-LD differences in terms of the number of friends the children nominated, we did find that boys with LD had fewer CR and fewer Reciprocated Friends than girls with LD and children without LD. As discussed above, previous research has been inconclusive with regard to whether there are differences between children with and without LD in terms

Table VI. Quality of Friendship of Dyads With an LD Member vs. Dyads With No LD Member

FQQ-R factor	Member with LD (<i>n</i> = 40)			No member with LD (<i>n</i> = 37)			Significant effects (<i>df</i> = 1/73)
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Help & sharing							
Mean	2.56	2.70	2.65	2.72	2.69	2.71	
SD	0.47	0.55	0.52	0.50	0.74	0.60	
Trust & caring							
Mean	2.81	3.18	3.05	2.97	3.10	3.02	
SD	0.73	0.56	0.64	0.72	0.68	0.70	
Disclosure							
Mean	2.18	2.96	2.67	2.16	2.35	2.24	LD*
SD	0.95	0.58	0.81	0.68	0.82	0.73	Gender**
Conflict							
Mean	1.02	1.33	1.22	0.93	1.24	1.05	
SD	0.66	0.70	0.69	0.60	0.86	0.72	
School companionship							
Mean	2.49	2.39	2.43	2.94	2.91	2.93	LD**
SD	0.90	0.60	0.71	0.71	0.75	0.72	
Relationship repair							
Mean	3.09	3.00	3.03	3.02	3.05	3.03	
SD	0.61	0.90	0.80	0.91	1.11	0.98	
Validation							
Mean	3.79	3.67	3.72	3.53	3.61	3.56	
SD	0.85	0.79	0.80	0.91	0.97	0.92	
Companionship							
Mean	2.26	2.78	2.59	2.86	2.29	2.64	
SD	0.95	0.82	0.88	0.87	0.90	0.92	
Conflict resolution							
Mean	1.67	2.57	2.24	2.16	2.30	2.21	Gender*
SD	0.90	0.66	0.86	0.96	0.99	0.96	

Note. All scores are converted to item means to facilitate interpretability.

p* < .05. *p* < .01.

of the number of friends they have. The studies that did not find that children with LD had fewer mutual friendships had very small sample sizes, and had samples drawn from full-inclusion settings (Juvonen & Bear, 1992; Vaughn et al., 1993). The results of several other studies, however, showed that children with LD have fewer mutual friends than children without LD (Tur-Kaspa et al., 1999; Vaughn et al., 1996). As gender differences were not scrutinized systematically in previous research, it is possible that the LD/non-LD differences in these studies were due to the preponderance of boys in the samples.

There are three possible reasons for the LD-Status × Gender interaction with regard to CR and Reciprocated Friends when there were no LD/non-LD differences in Nominated Friends. First, it is possible that the relationships with some of the friends who were nominated by the boys with LD, but not corroborated or reciprocated, were so casual that they may not actually be friendships. Second, boys with LD reported more out-of-school friendships than the other children. As we were not able to assess whether these friendships were reciprocal because we

could not contact the nominated friend, and these friendships would not likely be visible to the boys' teachers, the probability of reciprocation and corroboration was reduced. As well, the boys may have interacted most often with out-of-school friends in games or sports. As discussed by Wiener and Sunohara (1998), many mothers (it was typically mothers who responded to the interview used to corroborate friendship) see intimacy as opposed to shared activities as the cornerstone of friendship and, therefore, may not have viewed these types of relationships as friendships. Third, there is high comorbidity between LD and ADHD, and ADHD is much more common in boys than in girls (e.g., Biederman, Newcorn, & Spricht, 1991). Of our 117 children with LD, 36 (23 boys, 13 girls) had significant ADHD symptoms on the ADHD Rating Scale. Because children with ADHD tend to engage in behaviors that are disruptive, other children may be less willing to befriend them than children with LD who have academic problems but no externalizing problem behaviors. Children with ADHD, however, frequently positively inflate their self-reports of their behaviors and relationships (Diener

& Milich, 1997), which may lead them to nominate more friends who would not reciprocate the nomination than other children.

Identity of Friends

Children with LD had proportionally more friends with learning problems, fewer friends who were the same age, and more friends who were younger than them than did children without LD. Boys with LD also had more out-of-school nominated friends. As indicated in Schneider et al.'s review (Schneider et al., 1994), both proximity and similarity are important building blocks of friendship. Proximity is an obvious explanation for why children with LD reported more friends with learning problems than do children without LD. Their opportunities to interact are enhanced when they are in the same resource room or special-education class. Even children with LD who are fully integrated in general education classrooms may frequently be grouped together for learning activities. Proximity, however, may not be the only factor increasing the likelihood of selection by children with LD of friends with learning problems. Similar achievement levels may also imply, for some children, similarity of interests, attitudes, and values.

Proximity also does not fully explain why children with LD were more likely to choose younger friends than did children without LD; similarity may be a better explanation. As children in schools, including children with LD, are typically grouped with others in the same grade or with children one grade higher or lower (as in split grade classrooms), there is little opportunity to interact with children at school who are two or more years younger. Although children with LD in self-contained special-education classes may be in multiage groupings, two of the three special education classes in our study were composed of children in just two grades (Grades 7 and 8) and one of children in three grades (Grades 4–6). As we defined younger and older friends as being two or more years older or younger than the target child, it is unlikely that very many of them could be classmates. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that some children with LD likely seek out younger children as friends. Wiener and Sunohara (1998) found that mothers of children with LD thought that these choices of younger playmates were due to their children being emotionally immature and having interests that are developmentally inappropriate. The choice of younger friends may be adaptive, as suggested by Epstein (1989), in that at least these children have the benefits of a supportive friendship. However, the friendships with younger children may serve to maintain the social and emotional immaturity of the children with LD.

Stability of Friendship

The friendships of children with LD in Grades 4–6 were less stable than the friendships of children without LD, but children with LD in Grades 7 and 8 were as likely as children without LD to have stable friendships. The stability of friendships has been found to increase from Grades 1–4, but does not tend to increase in the age range of the present study—Grades 4–8 (e.g., Berndt & Hoyle, 1985). Our findings with the sample of children without LD corroborated the findings of Berndt and his colleagues. However, this acquisition of a pattern of having more stable friendships appears to be delayed in children with LD, and more typically occurs in the middle school years. These results are also consistent with findings regarding the relatively low stability of peer status and mutual liking nominations in children with LD in Grades 4–6 (Kuhne & Wiener, 2000; Tur-Kaspa et al., 1999; Vaughn et al., 1996). The friendships of children with LD in Grades 4–6 may be less stable than the friendships of older children with LD and children without LD because reciprocity or mutual social responsiveness emerge at that age as important features of friendships (Schneider et al., 1994). Stable friends report that their relationships are characterized by more closeness, companionship, help, and security than do children whose relationships are unstable (Schneider, Fonzi, Tani, & Tomada, 1997). Several studies of the dyadic interactions of elementary school children with LD on a variety of tasks have shown that children with LD are less responsive to their partners than children without LD (e.g., Bryan, Donahue, Pearl, & Sturm, 1981).

Quality of Friendship

Children with LD portrayed their friendships as more conflict-ridden than did participants without LD. Although this finding was not reported in other studies on the quality of friendship of children with LD (Vaughn & Elbaum, 1999; Wenz-Gross & Siperstein, 1997), it is not surprising. The higher self-reported level of conflict and problems with conflict resolution by participants with LD are consistent with Hoyle and Serafica's finding that children with LD have less developed concepts of conflict resolution than children without LD (Hoyle & Serafica, 1988). The parents of the children with LD in Wiener and Sunohara's (1998) study attributed the conflicts in relationships to the children's problems with social perception and self-regulation. They claimed that their children frequently unwittingly did things which would alienate their friends because of their problems reading social cues, and that their problems with impulse control also led to conflict.

The participants with LD felt that they receive less validation or positive reinforcement from their very best friends than did children without LD. Vaughn and Elbaum (1999) found that children with LD reported lower quality of friendship on a similar dimension of support for self-esteem. Paradoxically, when we analyzed our data dyadically, members of dyads containing a member with LD reported higher disclosure than dyads composed of two children without LD. We were intrigued by the finding that in mixed dyads composed of one member with LD and another member without LD, the children with LD viewed the relationships as being of higher quality than did the children without LD. It is especially noteworthy that the dimensions on which they reported the higher quality were those that the literature has shown to be the basic foundations of friendship (Schneider et al., 1994): help, sharing, trust, caring, and disclosure. On the one hand, it is possible that the dyad members with LD were engaging in wishful thinking; they perceived the relationships inaccurately and positively distorted the quality of the relationships. As discussed by Heath (1995), children with LD tend to rate their academic skills and competencies higher than observed in standardized tests. It is possible, however, that the perceptions of the children with LD were accurate. These LD/non-LD friendships, while mutual, may be somewhat unidirectional. Perhaps the dyad members with LD are more likely to confide in, trust, and seek help from their partners than the dyad members without LD. They may, however, see some of their entreaties rebuffed and thereby feel less validated.

Some caution is required in the interpretation of the dyadic data because there were too few LD/LD dyads to permit meaningful analysis, which would have completed the picture. The small number of LD/LD dyads likely occurred because there were usually only two or three participating children with LD in each of those general education classrooms. In addition, the children with LD whose Very Best School Friend reciprocated the friendship nomination and consented to participate in the study had fewer problem behaviors on the SSRS than children with LD who were not dyad members. Thus, dyadic data regarding the quality of mutual friendships of the children with LD with the most severe behavior problems were not available, assuming that they had mutual friendships.

Methodological Issues

Several methodological issues emerged that are important in studying the friendship patterns of children with

LD. As discussed previously, earlier research was plagued by problems inherent in generalizing from small samples in very specific settings, as well as insufficient statistical power to support conclusions of no differences between children with and without LD. The LD-status, Gender, LD-Status \times Grade and LD-Status \times Gender effects in our data were only detected because of the sample size and our attention to gender and developmental differences, which should continue in other research.

Our school-based sampling of the friendships of children with LD offers the advantage that our results are likely generalizable to populations of children with LD identified by school districts. Furthermore, children with LD who are school-identified and who receive special education services are more likely to be perceived by peers and teachers as experiencing social difficulties than low achievers who are identified by other means or are in other settings (Wiener, Harris, & Duval, 1993). As discussed by Keogh (1983), however, financial, political, and practical considerations may influence school system identification procedures, and inconsistent diagnostic methods may be employed. Consequently, there may be more misdiagnosed children than would be the case in a clinical sample employing stringent inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The SES differences between the participants with and without LD indicate that our results should be interpreted with caution. Even though the results of analyses covarying SES did not differ substantially from analyses in which SES was not covaried, it seems imperative to assess LD/non-LD differences in SES in studies of the social relationships of children with LD.

Our results clearly showed the limitations of relying solely on self-reports of friendship. Although we found no differences between target children in Nominated Friends, we found an LD-Status \times Gender interaction for Reciprocated Friends. Furthermore, dyadic analysis of quality of friendship data revealed that children with LD seem to overrate the degree of intimacy of their relationships compared to their mutual friends without LD. As boys with LD were found to have more out-of-school friends than girls with LD and children without LD, it is probably important to study both in-school and out-of-school friendships of children with LD. One of the threats to validity of our findings is that only 53% of the nominated school friends of the target children consented to participate in the study, and we were unable to access out-of-school friends. Although our analyses showed that reciprocation by peers can be supplemented by parent and teacher corroboration in determining mutuality of relationships, having the reciprocal nomination by the friend is closer to the basic concept of friendship.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Our findings suggest that the differences between target children in terms of friendship patterns, while subtle, are sufficiently substantial to warrant greater attention by researchers. It will be important to determine whether some of the friendship selection patterns of children with LD, such as having more friends with learning problems, more out-of-school friends, or fewer same age friends are adaptive. Longitudinal examination of the friendship patterns of children with LD is needed in order to determine whether the reduced quality of friendship they report has long-term effects on their social and emotional adjustment.

The results of this study suggest a few new directions for classroom-based intervention with children with LD in the social domain. Most interventions have been directed at individuals in the form of behavior management programs and therapy, or at groups in the form of social skills training, cooperative learning, and classroom management strategies (see Kavale & Forness, 1995, for review of this literature). The results of this study suggest that it may be appropriate to focus on dyads. Teachers should pay very close attention to seating plans and groupings in order to facilitate the formation of mutual friendships, enhance existing friendships, and facilitate friendship stability. Pairing children with LD who do not have friends in the classroom, with children who are potentially compatible friends could be useful. This could be achieved in the context of peer tutoring or assignments done in pairs. It is likely important, however, to also coach some of the children with LD on how to be responsive to their partners, and how to avoid and resolve conflicts.

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