

Summer 2022  
Newsletter

# FRIENDS PROJECT

Social Development Lab  
University at Buffalo, SUNY

Dear Families, Teachers, and Directors,

I hope you all had a great summer! This year was exciting for the FRIENDS project as we obtained some additional funding from NIH to study the impact of COVID-19 and masking on the social and academic outcomes for the children participating in our project! We had so much fun catching up with families and hearing all about children's adventures in kindergarten. We also greatly enjoyed meeting our new group of preschoolers virtually! We cannot thank all our participating families enough for continuing to use remote data collection procedures. We know that Zoom interviews and completing our questionnaires are time consuming and we are so grateful for families' dedication to the project! We also thank all the families who collected saliva and/or nails at home for us!

We sincerely appreciate school directors and teachers going above and beyond to recruit new preschool families when we were unable to come to the centers. This year we also had strong participation from kindergarten teachers. We could not do this project without everyone's flexibility and willingness to participate!

With gratitude,  
Dr. Jamie Ostrov  
Director, UB Social Development Lab

## Social Development Lab

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### FRIENDS YEAR THREE SUMMARY

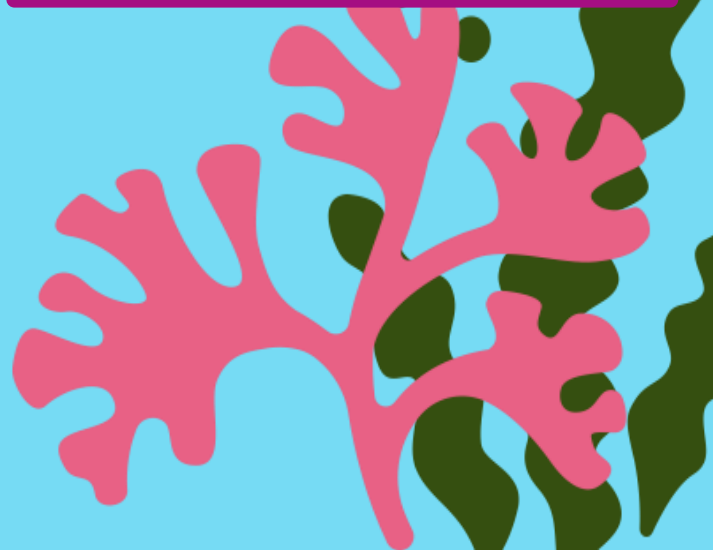
Children Participating: 200

Preschools Participating: 16

Kindergartens Participating: 40

Saliva Samples Collected: 868

Nail Samples Collected: 222



## What's new for FRIENDS!

We received a supplemental award from the NIH to learn about how COVID-19 and masking are impacting children's transition to kindergarten. This has allowed us to ask families about masking practices and collect an extra round of saliva and nails in kindergarten! We hope this gives us insight on how changes brought on by the pandemic, such as child masking, are impacting child adjustment to school during the transition to kindergarten. Thank you to all the families who collected cortisol in kindergarten last winter! We know how difficult this can be to fit into morning routines and appreciate all your efforts!

This fall we will recruit our 4<sup>th</sup> cohort of preschoolers! As winter approaches, we will be reaching out to families with children in kindergarten for parent surveys and scheduling Zoom interviews. We will also be inviting families with children in kindergarten next winter to partake in an extra round of saliva and nail collection!

If your child is transitioning to kindergarten, we will be contacting you soon for your child's teacher information. We ask for school, teacher name, teacher email and phone number, so that we may contact them for teacher surveys. You may email us this information at [devlab@buffalo.edu](mailto:devlab@buffalo.edu) or click [here](#).

## Count the fish!

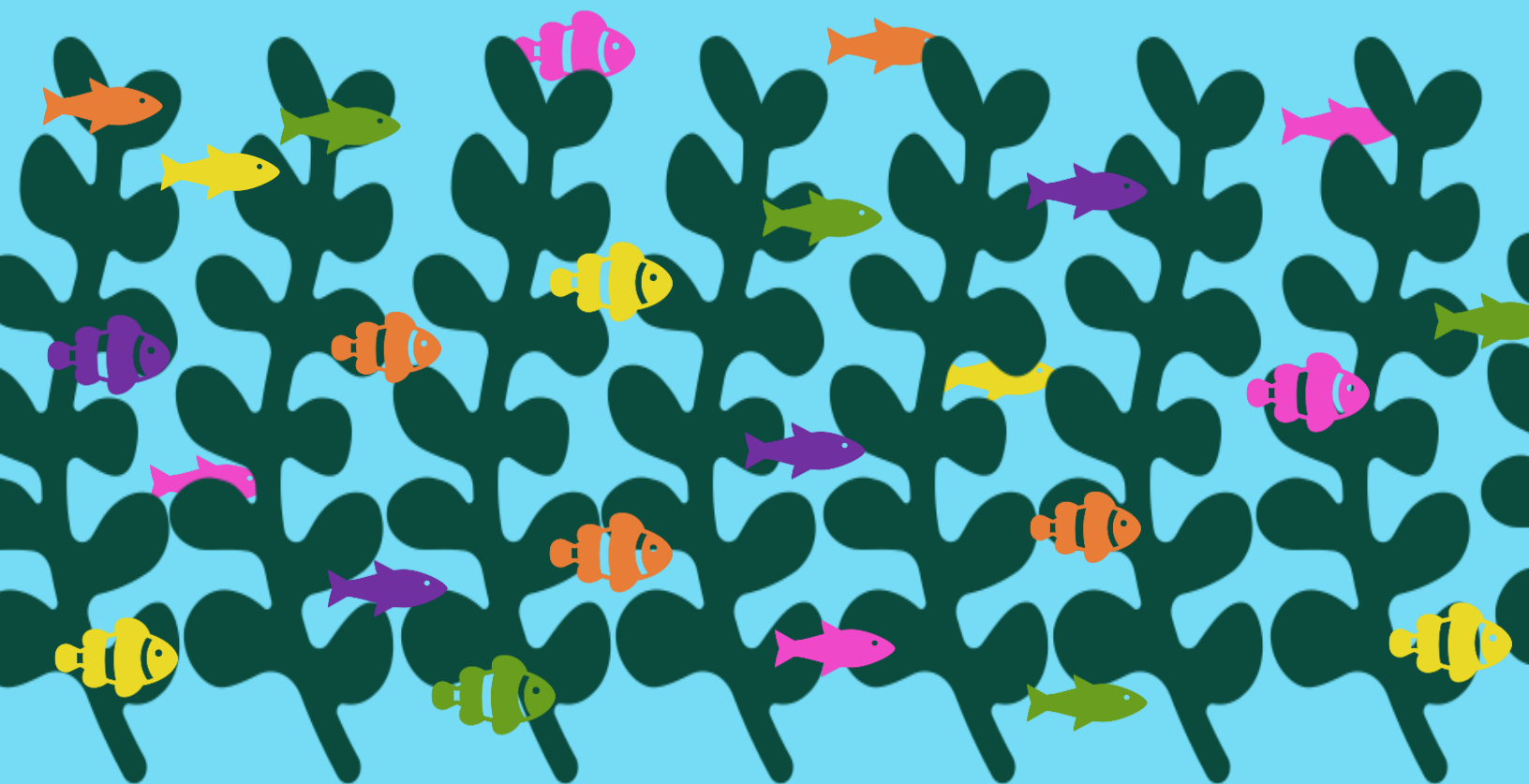
Orange: \_\_\_\_\_

Yellow: \_\_\_\_\_

Pink: \_\_\_\_\_

Green: \_\_\_\_\_

Purple: \_\_\_\_\_



### Preliminary Findings





The FRIENDS Project is interested in how children's ability to regulate emotions is associated with academic readiness, and how contextual factors, like parenting, may impact these relations. Preliminary findings suggest that children who have higher academic readiness show greater improvements in emotion regulation during preschool. Furthermore, children who had poorer emotion regulation in preschool saw improvements in academic readiness if their parents showed a good balance of warmth and demandingness.

We are also interested in children's peer relationships over the transition to kindergarten. Initial findings showed that children who experienced higher levels of relational victimization (i.e., social exclusion) from their peers in preschool showed higher levels of physical aggression (e.g., hitting, kicking) in kindergarten. This highlights the impact of children's early peer interactions on their later behavior!

Finally, the FRIENDS project is interested in how children's levels of cortisol, a stress hormone, are associated with their school readiness. Preliminary results showed that lower basal salivary cortisol (i.e., lower stress levels in the morning) was related to fewer difficulties with working memory and behavior regulation. This demonstrates how children's biology may be related to their behavior (and likely how their behavior impacts their biology).

**We sincerely appreciate your understanding and willingness to go above and beyond to continue the success of the FRIENDS project!**

### Fun summer activities!

-  Make a carton boat and watch it float in the tub or sink!
-  Add color to your sidewalks or driveways and make a sidewalk chalk mural or games!
-  Make your own sidewalk chalk!
-  Fight the summer heat with a DIY sprinkler!

### Lab Updates

- **Kristin Perry** has completed her internship at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, received her PhD. In Clinical Psychology, and has begun her Post-Doctoral Fellowship at Penn State University in the Prevention and Methodology Training Program.
- **Gretchen Perhamus** passed her dissertation proposal to become a doctoral candidate, was selected for the Young Investigators Program at the ISRA conference where she presented talks about her [two recent publications](#), and received the Murray Levine Graduate Award for Community Engagement in Psychology.
- **Bri Memba** passed her dissertation proposal to become a doctoral candidate, presented a poster on her paper at the ISRA conference, and received the Department of Psychology Excellence in Teaching award. She also received an award for her presentation at the 8<sup>th</sup> Research Conference on Relational Aggression.
- **Emily Verdaasdonk** received her Master's in Psychology from UB and will continue to work with Dr. Stephanie Godleski as a Project Coordinator at the Rochester Institute of Technology.
- **Kristin Kibler** presented a poster at the Eastern Psychological Association Conference in New York City about her independent research project on the effects of emotion regulation and parenting on academic readiness.

### Research Assistant Graduates

- **Ann Malcolm** is attending Marist College for her Master's in Clinical Mental Health Counseling.
- **Celeste Beauvillair** is working in the SUNY Binghamton Mood Disorder Institute under the direction of Dr. Brandon Gibb.
- **Kristin Kibler** is continuing at UB to receive her MA and AC in School Psychology.

### Lab Publications

Ostrov, J. M., Murray-Close, D., ^Perry, K. J., ^Blakely-McClure, S. J., ^Perhamus, G., Mutignani, L., Kesselring, S., ^Memba, G., & Probst, S. (2022). [The development of forms and functions of aggression during early childhood: A temperament-based approach](#). *Development and Psychopathology*. doi:10.1017/S0954579422000177

^Perry, K. J., Ostrov, J. M., Murray-Close, D., ^Blakely-McClure, S. J., ^Kiefer, J., ^DeJesus-Rodriguez, A., & ^Wesolowski, A. (2021). [Measurement of aggressive behavior in early childhood: A critical analysis using five informants](#). *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 209, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2021.105180>

### Principle Investigators

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### Research Technicians

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### Undergraduate Research Assistants

Hayley Feibel, Ava O'Hara, Emma Gandolfi, Ann Malcolm, Amy Maslin, Celeste Beauvillair, Kristen Kibler

### Graduate Students

Gabriela Memba  
(PEERS2K Project  
Director)

Gretchen Perhamus  
(FRIENDS Project  
Director)