

School-Based Strategies for Building Rapport with Selectively Mute Children

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Important **ground rule** when working with a child who has SM: ask NO direct questions of the child early in the process.

Visit the child in his or her home if possible.

Meet the child after school, on the playground, one-on-one. Move into the classroom at a future meeting, when the child seems ready.

Good games to utilize within the classroom that take the pressure off speaking:

Pictionary Junior: Play in teams, team captain picks a teammate for each round.

“Getting to Know You Charades”: Have pre-printed topics on separate pieces of paper (hobby, favorite food, sport you like, favorite animal, a pet you have or have had, favorite movie, etc.). Also have blank squares so that additional topics can be created. A child can draw a topic and shows it to the group, then acting out their answer. Players guess (either verbally or by writing down their answer).

Bring in a mini tape recorder, to be used as a verbal intermediary. This is one of the last steps used in this stage and can help the child transition from the nonverbal to verbal stage.

Whenever possible, show the child a silly side of yourself. The point is to join the child in his or her world, not ask that they enter yours.