Building Your ASD Toolbox - Social Skills

Georgia Department of Education
Autism Academy
June 2011

Amy C. Zaring
Autism Intervention Specialist
Fayette County School System
Building Your ASD Toolbox

Instructional Planning and Teaching of Social Skills
Domains of Development

• Cognitive Attainment and Educational Achievement
• Health and Safety
• Social and Emotional Development
• Self-Sufficiency
Social and Emotional Development

• Characteristics of Well Adjusted Children
  – Physical
  – Intellectual
  – Psychological
  – Social
  – Personal and Social Assets
Social and Emotional Development

• 5 Qualities Needed for Success
  – Patience
  – Self-Reliance
  – Responsibility
  – Relationships
  – Self-Control
Social Emphases

- Enhancing Social Awareness
- Resisting Provocation
- Avoiding Provoking Others
- Reading and Interpreting Social Cues
- Experiencing Positive Peer Relations
- Demonstrating Empathy
Emotional Emphases

• Acquiring Emotional Literacy
  – Identifying and Labeling Feelings
  – Expressing Feelings
  – Assessing Intensity of Feelings
  – Managing Feelings

• Tolerating Frustration
Cognitive Emphases

- Reorienting Self-talk
- Exercising Self-control
- Manifesting Impulse Control
- Engaging in Productive Problem Solving
- Seeking Alternative Solutions to Interpersonal Problems
- Delaying Gratification
Social and Emotional Development

- External Assets
  - Support
  - Empowerment
  - Boundaries and Expectations
  - Constructive Use of Time
  - Commitment to Learning
  - Positive Values
  - Social Competencies
  - Positive Identity
Acknowledgements

• Dr. Kristin Moore
• Camille Smith
• Jacquelynne Eccles
• Dr. Marc Mannes
Where are the deficits?

- Reading social cues and body language
- High stress levels
- Expressing/modulating emotions
- Reading others’ emotions
- Strong moral code and sense of justice
- Controlled play
Deficits, cont.

- Unwritten social rules for interaction
- Social conventions and codes of conduct
- Empathy
- Play skills
- Friendship skills
Deficits cont.

- Conversation skills
- Narrow range of interests
- Using and interpreting nonverbal language
- Don’t see the point in socialization
- No interest in competitive sports, games, and activities
Social Skills

What are they?
Why do we need them?
How do we acquire them?
What happens if we don’t have them?
Social skills instruction should include -

- giving students the rationale – convincing them!!!!
- stress management
- self-esteem
- self-confidence
- listening skills
- coping with bullying, teasing, criticism
- how to play games
- recreational/leisure skills
- understanding family dynamics
- protecting ourselves
- advocating and seeking help
- developing positive character traits
A lack of social skills leads to difficulties in school, peer rejection, academic failures, and depression!!!
What are our goals?

• increase functional social skills to be used in a variety of settings
• provide a safe environment to practice newly learned skills
• understand a variety of feelings
• communicate feelings
• develop ways to control feelings
• improve problem solving – predicting, understanding, reading social situations
To provide the necessary skills so that our students with ASDs can choose to be social
- without changing who they are
- while still having personal time away from the demands of our neuro-typical world
- and maintaining their areas of interest and expertise
Lessons will be learned

- How do typical kids learn social skills?
- How do kids with Asperger’s Syndrome and High Functioning Autism learn social skills –
  - Missed lessons – deficits
  - Wrong lessons – maladaptive behavior

WE HAVE TO TEACH THE SKILLS ! ! !
Determining What To Teach - The Big Picture
Self-Awareness and Self-Management
  Emotional Skills
  Stress Management

Decision Making and Responsible Behaviors
  Community/School Survival
  Problem Solving

Social Awareness and Interpersonal Skills
  Communication
  Peer Relationships
Goal areas for Social/Interpersonal Skills

- Identify and understand your *emotions*, know how to manage them, and express them appropriately.
- Use effective *language and communication* to interact with others.
- Establish and maintain *peer relationships* by respecting others and using good friendship skills.
• Use **problem solving techniques** (conflict resolution, handling peer pressure, etc.) in social situations.

• Use **survival skills** (advocating, monitoring progress, functioning within a group, goal setting, following rules, etc.) to manage daily responsibilities.
Goal areas for Behavior/Self-Management Skills

- Respond appropriately to routine and new expectations
- Respond with self-control and seek to be successful
- **Personally manage your stress/anxiety**
- Interact appropriately with others in social and task situations
- Engage in learning tasks and activities that are assigned by teacher
- Engage in dialog to resolve issues, develop skills, build self-worth, and accept consequences
Determining What To Teach - The Individual Student

Assessment Tools

Ms. Moyes reviews –
- the *Skillstreaming Curriculum* checklist
- the “Observation Profile” outlined in *Aspgerger’s Syndrome, A Practical Guide for Teachers*
- the *Walker Social Skills Curriculum: The Accepts Program*
Ms. Moyes notes the following about social skills assessments:
- need to be measurable
- allow for teacher input
- easy to administer
- should take place across several days in a variety of settings
- parents should be able to provide information
- older students should be able to offer perceptions/feelings about peer relationships
- obtaining peer input can be useful
- the goal should be to obtain an accurate picture of areas of the most concern
To assess the skills your student(s) have, the following books have an assessment tool -


*The Skillstreaming series includes book, student handbook, skills cards, skills posters, program forms, etc.*
Let’s look at some!
Direct Instruction

Students with AS and HFA must be taught the specific skills directly in a safe environment – then taught to generalize the skills.
Teaching/Lesson Plan Format
The Teaching Interaction

Task Analysis

Break down the skill into teachable parts. Choose the part(s) to be taught.

Establish Need
Teaching/Lesson Plan Format
The Teaching Interaction

Label the Skill

Tell the student(s) what you are going to be working on.
Clearly introduce and define the skill.
Explanation of the skill steps.
For younger students, stories, poems, puppets, and questions are used to make the social skill more concrete.
Teaching/Lesson Plan Format
The Teaching Interaction

Rationale

Tell the student(s) why it is important to work on this issue (must be meaningful to the individual student).

Rationale for the new behavior.

What benefits will learning the skill provide?
Teaching/Lesson Plan Format

The Teaching Interaction

Describe/Demonstrate

Explain to the student(s) what you are going to do and what you want her/him to do; you might choose to model first before having the child practice the skill.

Model the skill and sequence the steps student must use to perform the skill.

Describe the new behavior.

Identify the skill components.

Modeling of Skill Steps
Teaching/Lesson Plan Format

The Teaching Interaction

Practice/Role Play

Complete the role play and have the student follow his/her part.

Rehearse/role play the behavior MANY times.

Behavioral Rehearsal
Teaching/Lesson Plan Format

The Teaching Interaction

Feedback

Give the student positive feedback and social praise based on 2-3 things the student did correctly. You may then label one aspect that the child should do differently.
Teaching/Lesson Plan Format
The Teaching Interaction
Repeat As Necessary
Complete Demonstration, Practice, and Feedback phases again.

Practice in and outside the group
Social praise and tangible reinforcement when necessary should be provided for participation in the teaching/role play session.
Teaching/Lesson Plan Format
The Teaching Interaction

Generalization of Skill
Natural Setting Practice
Independent Practice Assignments
Independent Use

Make adults across settings aware of new skill learned in order to provide praise and feedback for skill use.
Generalization, cont.

- **Settings**
  - Recess
  - Cafeteria
  - Hallway
  - Classroom
  - At Home
  - Community
  - After School Activity
  - Other
• Generalization, cont.
Some sources say observe students during the day, provide feedback when student attempts new skill, reinforce use of new skill. Interrupt the problem behavior with a positive or empathic statement, ask the student to name a positive alternative, ask the student to practice the alternative, give positive feedback, set up further practice in the natural environment.
What is really involved in holding a conversation?

- Initiation
- Topic choice
- Reciprocal - Turn taking
- Expanding
- Joining in
- Active listening
- Reading nonverbal cues

- Ending
- Changing topics
- Appropriate language
- Disagreeing
- Persuading
- Negotiating
- Handling interruptions
Communication with Parents
Structuring Your Instruction

Social Skills Groups
Social Skills Classes
Social Skills Lunch Meetings
Emotions

- Teach the words with the corresponding feelings.
Social Autopsy

• The social autopsy is a strategy to help students with social cognition deficits learn to interpret social and behavioral situations and understand social mistakes.
Social Autopsy

• The social autopsy is particularly effective in helping a student with AS see the cause/effect relationship between his social behavior and the reactions of others. The success of the autopsy strategy is due to the consistent structure of practice, immediate feedback, and positive reinforcement.

• Social Autopsies are a positive and nonjudgmental strategy that can be verbal or written. (Remember, that students with an ASD need visual paired with verbal. And a written autopsy can be reviewed again and again.)

• Remember, social perspective taking is a true deficit for students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.
Social Autopsies

• Take apart a situation with a student who is upset by something that happened or confused by something that happened
• Can be done through discussion when student is not upset
• Goal is to help student understand what happened and PERSPECTIVE TAKING
• Can be done in writing
The autopsy allows for analyzing a social skills problem by dissecting social incidents. When a social error occurs, the student with AS works with an adult to (a) identify the social error or mistake, (b) determine who was harmed by the mistake, (c) decide how to correct the mistake, and (d) develop a plan to ensure that the mistake does not reoccur.
The Do’s and Don’t of Social Autopsies

• Don’t make filling out an autopsy sheet a punishment.
• Don’t do a social autopsy when the student is upset.
• Don’t make writing a problem; the adult can do the writing.
• Individually decide if a written autopsy should be done before discussion or during discussion.
• Reinforce a student’s willingness to analyze and discuss his/her mistakes and take the necessary action.
• Do not make the purpose of your autopsy to prove to the student that he or she did something wrong.
• Try to use social autopsies for situations that do not require a consequence/punishment. If appropriate to do both, make sure the consequence is discussed separate of the autopsy and its results.
References for Social Autopsies


These books include teaching ideas and a form.


The **Social Autopsy** is now a very popular strategy for use with students with social cognition deficits. You can search the internet and find many resources and samples of social autopsy forms.
Comic Strip Conversations


• Teach the student the symbols to use – the simple drawings

• A difficult situation is the focus of the drawn conversation.

• Adult guides the drawings to help formulate the social picture.
• The adult shares their perspective at natural “opportunities” in the drawn conversation.
• The adult asks questions regarding the thoughts and feelings of the others in the drawing/conversation.
• The conversation is summarized.
• New solutions to the situation are identified.
• Upcoming conversations/future events can be drawn.
• Colors are introduced to identify the emotional content – the motivation – behind the statement, thought, or question.
• What the student learns is PERSPECTIVE TAKING.
Generalization – the hardest part!

• Lunch Groups
• Skill of the Week
  – Make sure all staff know!
• Game Clubs
The Hidden Curriculum


“We are surrounded on a daily basis by such unstated rules or customs that make the world a confusing place. This is known as the hidden curriculum.”

Page 3
Social Games

• To promote social situations between children with disabilities and typical peers
• Short activities – 10 to 15 minutes in length
• Structured activity – groups assigned prior to lesson
• Any activity that will promote interaction between peers
  – Jump rope
  – Play catch
  – Duck, duck, goose
  – Toss bean bags
Keychain Rules

- Keychain rules are rules written individually on a 3x5 card. The rules are those the student has difficulty following or remembering.

- Example: Rule #8 – *Teachers can call on other students even if you know the answer. In fact, it is her job to call on a variety of students.*”
T-chart

• Appropriate
  – Follow the teacher’s directions

• Inappropriate
  – Calling the teacher a name when I don’t want to do something
Incorporate social reminders throughout child’s day -

- On the schedule “Greet people with pleasant voice”
- Checklists, reminders, visual cues, and social cards
- Incidental teaching
Video Detective

• Watching videos or television sitcoms can be a great way to teach body language, emotions, and social skills. Choose carefully – you don’t want students to learn negative skills. (Example: Shrek)

• This works with home videos also!

• You can also use videos/movies to teach sarcasm, and teasing (funny vs putdown). (Example: “Santa Claus” with Tim Allen)
Social Coaching

• A powerful intervention that has been used successfully for social skills is the use of someone who is a role model for the student.

• Think carefully about possible role models. Confidentiality is important.

• This works really well for topics such as dating, having a girlfriend, etc.
Power Card Strategy

• The power card strategy uses the student’s special interest or favorite character as a motivator for appropriate behavior.

• Written in first person, it is a brief account describing what how the student’s hero, who is associated with his special interest, solves a problem that is similar to an issue experienced by the student.

• There should be an accompanying power card as a reminder of the steps the student should follow to solve a similar problem himself.
Power Card examples:

• The tiger… I might get some surprises at school or at home… I will be like the tiger and be adaptable to change.

• Tiger Woods began playing golf at an early age… I will try to be like Tiger and work hard at what I want to accomplish.

• Bob the Builder…. I will be like Bob the Builder. I will be pleasant to people. Even when it is the truth, I will remain silent because it may hurt that person’s feelings.
Several strategies in the presentation were adapted from a presentation by Kathy Morris and the accompanying conference resource handbook “Practical Strategies for Working With Students with Asperger’s Syndrome and High-Functioning Autism (Grades K-12).”

kkmorris@aol.com
Social Stories™

- Developed by Carol Gray
- Provide clear and relevant information about social situations
- Are written in a positive manner
- Present appropriate social behavior in the form of a story
- Answer general questions that many persons may need to know to interact appropriately with others – or a specific question for a specific student
• A social story is a process and a product.
• Social stories are written in response to a troubling situation, a student’s specific behavior or obsession, or to celebrate a student’s specific achievement.
• Social stories should have a positive, patient, reassuring quality.
• Social stories are written with a specific student in mind; the language should be literally accurate and the vocabulary and examples should be pleasing to the specific child. The student’s interest(s) should be incorporated when possible.
• A plan should be developed for when and how often social stories are read.
• **Social stories provide for repetition, visual and auditory instruction/review, and perspective taking!**
Social stories, cont.

- Ask who, what, when, where, and why in social situations
- Reduce anxiety; teach coping skills
- Prepare for an upcoming event; teach new skills
- Increase appropriate behaviors
- Minimize verbal prompting
Social stories, cont.

• Written in response to …
  – Observations of situations which are difficult for students
  – Student’s responses to questions about social situations which indicate student is “misreading” a given situation
  – Social skills assessments and curriculums
Social stories, cont.

• Social story may . . .
  – Personalize/emphasize social skills
  – Translate goal into understandable steps
  – Explain fictional qualities of a story, video, movie, or TV show
  – Teach a routine, as well as helping student accommodate changes in routine or “forgetting”
  – Address wide variety of behaviors including aggression, fear, obsessions/compulsions
Social stories, cont.

- Specific guidelines
  - Explain extensive details
  - Information includes where, who, how long, how it begins and ends, what occurs
  - Observe student in target situation
Social stories, cont.

• 3 basic types of sentences
  – Descriptive
  – Perspective
  – Directive

Most common mistake is including too few descriptive and perspective sentences and too many directive sentences!

Ratio: 0-1 directive sentences
   2-5 descriptive/perspective sentences
Social Story Reference


This book includes detailed directions on writing a social story, guidelines for implementing a social story, and a social story checklist.
Websites

- [www.thegraycenter.org](http://www.thegraycenter.org)
- [www.speakingofspeech.com](http://www.speakingofspeech.com) (go to Materials Exchange, then Social/Pragmatics)
- [www.sandbox-learning.com](http://www.sandbox-learning.com)
- [www.polyxo.com](http://www.polyxo.com)
- [www.socialstories.com](http://www.socialstories.com)
- [www.insideautisticminds.com](http://www.insideautisticminds.com)
Social Skills for Teens

- Learn more scripts for conversation starters
- Ask more questions
- Make better eye contact
- Scan and ask questions more
- Use more compliments
- Compromise better
- Remember more things about others
- Listen more carefully
- Advocate for myself more effectively
Social Skills in the Middle and High School General Education Setting

• Lessons on working in groups
• Lessons on classroom discussion
• Lessons on interacting with teachers
• Skill of the week – use a “cue” that fits the subject area
• Citizenship training
• Expand on County/School word of week or thought for the day
• Individual conferences
Use literature
to teach social skills!!

This article discusses using a book to teach objectives in the areas of social skills, social studies, and literacy. One sample lesson is given; sample lessons may be accessed by request to the authors.
• **Examples include:**

  How to Accept Responsibility
  
  *Sometimes I’m Bombaloo.* Rachel Vail.
  
  *Big Bad Bruce.* Bill Peet.

  How to Make Good Choices
  
  *My Rotten Readheaded Older Brother.* Patricia Polacco.
  
  *Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters.* John Steptoe

  How to Show Gratitude
  
  *The Rag Coat.* Lauren Mill.
  
  *My Great Aunt Arizona.* Gloria Houston

*This article discusses pairing the instruction of a social skills strategy lesson with a picture book about emotions.*
• Examples include:

  Anger
  - Sometimes I’m Bombaloo (Vail, 2002).

  Anxiety
  - Wemberly Worried (Henkes, 2005).

  Fear
  - There’s a Nightmare in My Closet (Mayter, 1968).

  Pride
  - Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon (Lovell, 2001).
Other Resources
Any book by
Jed Baker
or
Michelle Garcia Winner


A Good Read!