

SOCIAL SKILLS

IN THE CLASSROOM

WHAT'S IN THIS HANDOUT?

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WHY YOU SHOULD TEACH SOCIAL SKILLS

Developing social skills is an important part development for children, as such skills help people effectively navigate daily interpersonal interactions and improve the communities in which they play, live, and work. Teachers can play a critical role in helping students understand how to enter social situations, get along with other people (even other people who may seem different from them), develop friendships, collaborate to achieve a goal, and resolve interpersonal conflicts. Teachers can also help students gain the values and assertiveness skills to be able to say, "Hey – it's not cool to do that," when observing peers engaging in non-inclusive behaviors such as spreading rumors or bullying.

Socials skills are also complex. Just like reading and math skills, social skills need to be introduced and taught, and students need lots of practice, repetition, reinforcement, and guidance to develop the skills. Thus, we encourage teachers to regularly teach social skills. The skills to be taught can be similar each year (e.g., how to give and receive compliments), or can be selected based on the specific needs of the class (e.g., how to be a leader without being bossy), or specific problems as they emerge (e.g., teasing has increased in the last month).

EXAMPLES OF SOCIAL SKILLS

- Sharing materials
- Cooperating on a task
- Being a good winner/Being a good loser
- Calming yourself down
- Compromising
- Apologizing
- Knowing when someone else is upset
- Showing someone that you would like to be their friend
- Getting to know a new student
- Politely telling someone you don't like what they are doing
- Being patient with another child
- Complimenting others
- Receiving compliments
- Encouraging others
- Asking for help
- Respecting personal space
- Taking the perspective of someone else
- Being a good leader
- Using good manners
- Respecting personal space

HOW TO TEACH SOCIAL SKILLS

- **Introduce** the chosen social skill.
- **Discuss why** the social skill is important.
- **Discuss when** it may be relevant, helpful or important.
- **Give examples** of what that skill looks like and when children can use the skill.
- Have children **practice the skill** in a hands-on and fun way. You can have children role play the chosen social skill. Some children especially like having their picture taken (or being videotaped) when acting out the desired social skill. Another idea is to have children draw pictures of what the skill means to them, or to make the skill the topic of a writing activity.
- Even more important than teaching the skills, it is important to practice them and notice them during the school day. Throughout the day, look for times when students are displaying specific social skills and say things like, "Hey look, Darren just showed a great example of being a good sport, which is our social skill of the day." Calling the class' attention to these examples will reinforce the social skill and help children to get better at displaying the social skill in their real-life peer interactions.

Tips for Success

Remember, just like learning any new academic skill, learning new social skills is a process and children are helped by lots of practice, repetition, and reinforcement. If children are not appropriately using the social skill, you should correct the child with clear examples of the expected behavior. Try incorporating a book related to the social skill you are teaching or have students help come up with examples.

Resources

<https://www.pbisworld.com/tier-2/teach-social-skills/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwS2E1WPDlo>