

Enhancing Social Competence for
Students with Visual Impairments &
Multiple Disabilities

Session #1

Importance of Teaching Social Skills

- Students with visual impairments & multiple disabilities mediate the environment through alternate sensory channels other than vision.
- Socially competence behavior allow students to be engaged in more inclusive settings.
- A repertoire of social skills provide students with greater access & support with peers & caring adults.
- Socially competence allows students to engage in a vareity of vocational & independent living experiences.

Differences in Social Development

- The impact of a visual impairment & other disabilities impacts the way in which students develop & maintain social skills
 - Physical Disabilities impact motor development & an ability to explore
 - Hearing Impairments impact a student's ability to initiate, engage, or interact with others
 - Intellectual Challenges impact students ability to problem solve & master developmental milestones in a sequential manner
 - Neurological Disabilities impact behavioral & emotional stability

Additional Factors

- Extended Hospitalizations
- Impact of Medication
- Neurological Stability
- Biobehavioral States
- Family Support & Education

Levels of Social Development

- Awareness
 - Self-Identity + Social Awareness
- Interactive
 - Awareness of other's needs + Strategies for positive interactions
- Evaluative
 - Interpretation of social situations + Understanding of social rules

Defining Social Skills

- Social skills are a set of components & behaviors that allow individuals to engage in a positive manner with others.
- Defining what is considered socially acceptable behavior is based on cultural values, family values, and societal norms.
- Social skills are defined by the rules established within a specific environment.

Essential Social Skills

- Appropriate body language
- Communication skills
- Cooperative skills & play skills
- Social interaction skills
- Social etiquette
- Development of relationships & friendships
- Knowledge of self & disability
- Interpretation & monitoring of social behavior

Social Skills Assessment

Why is Social Skills Assessment Important?

- Social skills assessment provides a baseline for determining a student's strengths & limitations.
- Social skills assessment allows professionals & family to objectively examine students' social abilities.
- Social skills assessment provides formative data over time.
- Social skills assessment provides a vehicle for prioritizing skills for instruction.

Social Skills Assessments

- Observation
- Interviews
- Social skills checklists
- Situation role plays
- Problem-Solving Scenarios
- Assessing social thinking
 - Expected & Unexpected behavior
 - Assessing non-verbal behavior & facial expressions

Individual Strengths & Skills Inventory

- Social
 - Awareness of others
 - Engagement with adults & peers
 - Can initiate
 - Can engage in a short reciprocal activity
- Behavior, Interests, Activities
 - Can regulate behavior in quiet & noisy environments
 - Show interest in specific activities
 - Can select a favorite activity
 - Responds positively to tangible rewards & praise
- Communication
 - Demonstrates communicative intent
 - Expresses needs
 - Demonstrates & expresses emotions
 - Has a communication mode
 - Demonstrates a long wait time to respond to a request
 - Uses tactile cues for schedules & routines
- Emotions
 - Ability to regulate self when the environment is consistent & calm
 - Ability to demonstrate flexibility in behavior across environments

Assessing Executive Functioning

- Executive functioning is the ability to problem solve & think critically, organize one's environment, & regulate one's emotions & behaviors.

*Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Functioning
(BRIEF)*

Areas of Executive Functioning

- Ability to control impulses & to stop engaging in inappropriate behavior
- Ability to move from one activity or situation to another
- Ability to regulate emotional responses.
- Inventory Categories
 - Initiate
 - Working memory
 - Plan/organize
 - Organization of materials
 - Monitor

Cognitive Behavioral Assessment

- Cognitive behavioral assessment examines an individual's ability to problems solve & understand how social rules impact positive interactions & relationships.
- Elements of Social Thinking
 - Interpreting social cues & behavior of thers
 - Understanding the social situation accurately
 - Having a repertoire responses or interacttions that promote positive outcomes
 - Understanding the big picture or the gestalt of the social situation
 - Gathering information about the social situation with all available senses

Social Thinking Model

- Winner Garcia presents a social thinking model that asks students to examine these elements
 - I-Initiation of language or action
 - L-Listen with all of your available senses and brain
 - A-Abstract & inferential language
 - U-Understanding perspective-taking
 - G-Getting the big picture, gestalt processing
 - H-Humor & human relatedness

Strategies to Support Social Competence & Emotional Stability

Considerations

- Developmental level of the student
- Physical ability to engage with toys & people
- Desire or motivation to engage with others
- Activities that promote or stimulate play & engagement with others

Social Skills Strategies

- Behavioral Strategies
- Strategies to Promote Joint Attention
- Strategies to Facilitate Play & Engagement with Others
- Scripts & Social Stories
- Identifying & Communicating Emotions
- Teaching Personal Space
- Personal Safety
- Social Etiquette

Behavioral Strategies

- Introduce the social behavior & define it.
- Demonstrate or model the intended social behavior.
- Use physical modeling & descriptive verbal information to demonstrate the intended behavior.
- Ask the student to perform the behavior.
- Provide verbal feedback & physical modeling
- Provide role play scenarios where the student can practice the behavior.
- Invite competent peers to practice with the student.
- Provide positive feedback.
- Have the student practice the social behavior in a real environment.

Teaching Joint Attention

- Joint attention is the ability to orient & attend to a social partner, shift one's gaze from one person to another, sharing emotion or affect when engaging in a social interaction.
- Strategies
 - When students elicit verbal utterance, respond with similar verbal responses.
 - Observe a student's facial expressions & eye movements during an interaction, and respond with physical cues & verbal modeling to reinforce the interaction.
 - Model & co-act with a student when engaged in a social exchange.
 - During snack or mealtime have students pass food, encouraging interaction.
 - If students are unable to respond verbally, facilitate & model responses to encourage social engagement.
 - Create games & activities that promote partnering & encourage social proximity.

Facilitating Play

- Design & facilitate reciprocal activities.
- Give the student the opportunity to take the lead in an activity.
- Find toys & activities that have the potential to motivate the student.
- Find toys & activities that are age appropriate, but developmentally appropriate
- Structure play activities in real environments.

Facilitating Play Continued

- Provide students with the opportunity to engage in a range of experiential activities.
- Provide students with choices for play activities.
- Organize environments to promote & facilitate play with others. Model socially appropriate behavior within each play activity.
- Assist students' understanding that play activities begin, end, and shift .
- Through modeling, teach students to pretend play.

Teaching Social Skills with Scripts

- Social scripts provide a structured way for students to engage with others.
- Create scripts that meet the needs of the student, & support initiation with others.
- When designing scripts, observe the social language of same aged peers.
- Create scripts that are no more than two to three exchanges.
- Allow students to practice the script in a safe & comfortable environment.
- Teach students to have alternative responses when scripts

Social Stories

- Social stories are designed by teachers to assist students toward understanding the use of specific social skills with others.
- Social stories allow students to evaluate & discuss strategies for engaging with others, or solving an uncomfortable social situation.
- Create or search for social stories that the student can relate to & understand.
- Provide opportunities for asking clarifying questions to make sure the student understands the concepts outlined in the social story.
- Provide opportunities for students to create their own social stories.

Identifying & Communicating Emotions

- Observe students' behavior. Verbalize the emotion & check for clarity whenever possible.
- Identify a variety of emotions & feelings, & pair them with appropriate facial expressions. Use audio or video clips of people demonstrating a variety of emotions. Have students guess the emotion & discuss. Develop brailled cards or tactile symbols that represents a range of emotions or feelings.

Facilitating Emotions & Feelings

- Collaborate with an SLP to create communication boards or AAC devices that allow students to communicate their feelings.
- For students with low vision, use picture cards that depict a variety of emotions. Help students to identify each emotion illustrated in a variety of pictures.

Teaching the Concept of Personal Space

- Teach the concept of an imaginary fence.
- Teach students to ask if they can stand or sit in close proximity to another person.
- Teach students to shake hands with others rather than hugging another person.
- Physically model appropriate & inappropriate personal space for students.
- Help students to understand how others feel when another person infringes on physical space.

Teaching the Concept of Public & Private

- Assist students toward understanding the difference between a friend, acquaintance, or stranger, & what information can be shared with each individual.
- Assist students toward identifying environments that are public, & those that are private.
- Teach students to identify specific social behaviors that can be done in private, but not in public. Have students create a list of the type of information they would provide a friend, an acquaintance, or a stranger.

Teaching Personal Safety

- Assist students toward developing strategies to keep track of personal belongings in community settings.
- Have students develop a checklist of ways to protect oneself with social media.
- Role play scenarios in which students are asked to provide personal information to a stranger or acquaintance.
- Teach strategies to access social media safely & effectively

Teaching Social Etiquette

- Teach students social amenities such as please, thank you, excuse me.
- During snack or mealtime, teach students to use a variety of eating utensils.
- Provide students with a variety of community eating experiences to practice ordering food, and eating it.
- Help students understand that there are social rules governing specific social situations.
- Model for students when to interrupt a conversation.

Teaching Social Etiquette Continued

- Teach students the concept of reciprocation.
- Teach students to reach beyond themselves & learn to help & support others.
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- Teach the concept of volunteerism & altruism by having students engage in community projects.

Self- Determination

- Self-determination is a combination of skills, knowledge, & beliefs that allow students to develop skills in knowing one's strengths & limitations, together with a belief in oneself as capable & productive. (Wolffe & Rosenblum, 2014).
- Self-determination is a set of skills that allow students to live & work in their communities (Cleveland et al., 2007)

Strategies to Support Self-Determination

- Create activities & instructional opportunities where students have to make choices & decisions. Encourage problem solving by giving students real experiences.
- Provide opportunities for students to select peers for specific activities.
- Provide honest & accurate feedback regarding a range of social & academic situations.
- Have students create a list of their strengths and limitations.
- Have student create a list of the activities they do well.
- Assist students with developing appropriate goals for themselves.
- Assist students in understanding & articulating their visual impairment & other disabilities.