

Social Skills for Students with Visual Impairments

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Slide 2:

Three Types of Social Skills (Adapted from Corn, 1989)

General skills – needed by all children

- Saying “Please” and “Thank you”
- Waiting for someone to finish talking before you start

Invisible skills – needed by all children but not easily observed by the VI child

- Standing in a line
- Raising one’s hand
- Keeping clothing free of spots

Disability related skills – needed by a VI child

- Storing equipment
- Asking for help when something can’t be seen
- Finding out what a potential boyfriend/girlfriend looks like

Slide 3:

Families

Bonding

- alternative signals
- misinterpretation

Opportunities

- to be with others
- to problem solve

Expectations

- realistic
- high

Exposure

- lots of activities & places

Stereotypical behaviors

- reduce IMMEDIATELY

Slide 4:

Supporting Families

- Share alternative ways to interact with the child
- Share ideas to expand conversations
- Discuss and provide strategies for decreasing stereotypical behavior
- Show families hand-under-hand, working from behind, how to describe environment, etc.
- Encourage realistic and high expectations

- Introduce families to others who have visual impairments or are parents of children with visual impairments

Slide 5:

Some of the Issues We Saw

Young children with visual impairments often:

- Explore their environment less
- Imitate other children less often
- Engage in more solitary play
- Engage in more preservative play
- Actively reject or are rejected by peers
- Spend time with adults rather than children
- Display inappropriate conversational interactions

Slide 6:

Strategies for Developing Play Skills

- Provide a description of the environment but then let the child explore on his own
- Pre-teach how to use a toy that has social appeal
- Control the play materials available
- Encourage active functional play
- Encourage imaginative and creative uses of toys
- Model appropriate social language
- Praise the child for attempts at interactions

Slide 7:

Knowledge of Visual Impairment

- Include the child in discussions / inservices etc.
- Help the child understand the visual impairment through the use of models and age appropriate readings
- Provide opportunities for the child to share information with others about the visual impairment including visual functioning

Slide 8:

Finding Role Models

- *Older students (including past graduates)*
- *Consumer organizations & parent organizations*
- *Career Connect and Listservs*
- *Summer or weekend programs*

Slide 9:

Self Advocacy

- Advocating in the school and community
- Hiring and working with readers
- Hiring and working with drivers
- Accessing adult supports upon the completion of school age services

Slide 10:

Sex Education

Education about sexuality is an attempt to redirect appropriate expression of behaviors, not to eliminate them. We are all sexual beings who need accurate information to make informed choices.

Information to Teach

- Gender differences
- Development (primary and secondary characteristics, anatomy)
- Menstruation
- Masturbation
- Sexual behaviors (kissing, petting, intercourse)
- Contraception
- Sexually transmitted diseases

Slide 11:

Where, When and How Did You Learn?

- Gender differences
- Kissing
- What menstruation is
- How to look sexy as a specific goal
- Anatomy-opposite gender
- Anatomy-same gender
- Masturbation
- Flirting
- What wear for a date
- How babies are made
- How to ask someone out on a date
- What it means to be in a committed relationship

Slide 12:

Information to Teach

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Slide 13:

The Goal

The young person grows up to be able to initiate and maintain positive dating relationships.

The process...not always easy for any young person.

Slide 14:

Strategies for Teaching Sexuality Information

- Discuss the topic with families and get permission
- Use anatomically correct models
- Role play when appropriate
- Describe what you're observing
- Menstruation
 - Practice ahead of time
 - Schedule for changing pads
 - Have an "emergency pack"

Slide 15:

The Importance of Friendship

"Good developmental outcomes depend on having friends and keeping them, friendships furnish the individual with socialization opportunities not easily obtained elsewhere (including experiences in intimacy and conflict management), and these relationships are important in emotion regulation, in self-understanding, and in formation and functioning of subsequent relationships (including romantic relationships)" (Hartup, 1993, p. 11).

Slide 16:

Does He REALLY Have Friends?

- When children get to choose who to sit with does the child have a consistent person/people?
- Is the child alone or with others during unstructured time (e.g., recess)?
- Does the child exchange belongings with other children? Is it reciprocal?
- Does the child express empathy for others?
- Does the child have a hobby he does with others?
- Does the "friend" defend the child and does he defend the friend if either is teased?

Slide 17:

Rosenblum 1997 Learned

Best friendships are more likely to develop for teens if:

- They know how to reciprocate.
- They have age-appropriate O&M skills
- They have hobbies or interests to share with others.
- They know how to laugh about their visual impairment.

Slide 18:

Friendship Building Skills to Teach Students

- Reading nonverbal cues
 - Listen for movement (e.g., finger or foot tapping to indicate nervousness)
 - Preface comments with "It sounds like you mean..."
 - Ask someone you trust for input on your observations
- Knowing how to reciprocate
 - Give back to others – even just a "thank you"
 - Offer assistance – physical or emotional

Slide 19:

Understanding a Friend's Feelings

- Remember what people tell you:
 - Plans
 - Stories
- If someone sounds sad or unhappy ask what you can do.
- Don't be afraid to ask someone how he is feeling and share how you feel.
- Keep what you're told in confidence, in confidence.

Slide 20:

Assessment Tools

- Observation
- Checklists
- Interview
- Situational Role Plays
- Problem-Solving Scenarios
- Student Self-Evaluation

Information in this section is from Sacks, S. Z. & Barclay, L. (2006). Social skills assessment. In Sacks & Wolfe Teaching Social Skills to Students with Visual Impairments, AFB Press.

Slide 21:

Observation: What to Look For

- Number of social contacts
- Behaviors that work for a student during an interaction and those that do not work for the student
- Diversity of conversation topics and strategies to maintain conversation
- Interest in peers and peer topics
- Knowledge of peer culture (e.g., dress, games, communication style)
- Awareness of nonverbal communication
- Social balance – is the student viewed as a peer or someone that needs to be cared for?
 - Sacks, 2006

Slide 22:

Assessment Checklists

- Checklists developed for the VI population
 - TSBVI Assessment (See your CD)
 - TSBVI's *Independent Living* Curriculum
- Checklists not developed for the VI population
 - Social Skills Rating System – ratings from parents and teachers used to evaluate academic performance, problem behaviors & social skills
 - ASDB is currently collecting data using this tool

Slide 23:

Interviews

- Family
- Family priorities
 - What social behaviors does your child need support in learning?
 - What do you discuss with your child about being visually impaired?
 - Dynamics among family members
- Student
 - How do people know if you need help?
 - Tell me about your friends and what you do on the playground?

Slide 24:

Situational Role Plays

- Role plays can determine the student's strengths and weaknesses in specific social situations.
- Role plays can allow the student to observe how others respond in social situations.

- EXAMPLE: "Instead of waiting your turn in the cafeteria line with the rest of your class, your teacher insists you go to the head of the line. How do you handle this situation with your teacher and with your peers?" (p. 306)

Slide 25:

Problem Solving Scenarios

- Designed for higher level students who have the skills to analyze social situations and plan strategies to utilize.
- EXAMPLE: "You are at a school dance and you are standing in a group, but none of the students have introduced themselves to you. You don't recognize their voices, and it is dark so you can't determine anyone's exact identity. What do you do?" (p. 307)

Slide 26:

Self Evaluation

- Audio tape or video tape a social interaction between the student with VI and peer(s).
- Have the student rate his/her social behaviors after listening to the tape/viewing the video.
- Have a student write an autobiographical sketch describing his/her feelings, positive attributes, weaknesses etc.
- Have the student draw pictures of himself/herself in social situations and discuss the qualities of the pictures.

Slide 27:

Making a Plan

- *Clearly define the behavior you want to increase*
 - *Billy will join a conversation by waiting to be invited or when there is a natural break in the conversation.*
 - *Samantha will talk to and interact with a classmate for 5 minutes of the 20 minute recess period.*
 - *Jose will look at a peer when speaking to him/her.*
- *Look at reinforcement:*
 - *Praise*
 - *Rewarding activity*
 - *Earning a "token" for a larger reward*
 - *Access to a special individual*

Slide 28:

The Next Steps

Identify teaching strategies

- *Modeling*
- *Role play*

- *Praise / Reinforcement*
- *Prompting schedule*
- *Peer instruction*
- *Feedback to the child from you / from peers*
- *Mentoring*

Slide 29:

Use of a Social Story

I Can be Flexible

Flexibility is when you are able to accept changes. I don't always like changes, but changes happen. Changes sometimes make me feel upset. When I feel upset, sad or worried, I can take deep breaths, tell an adult how I feel, and make new plans. I'm in 5th grade now. I don't need to cry when I feel upset. I can use my words to let other people know how I feel and get through the change.

Slides 30 and 31:

Ideas to Share with Classroom Teachers

- *Seating plans*
 - *Small groupings, change regularly*
- *Cooperative learning groups*
 - *Change partners or groups periodically*
- *Foster a sense of community and respect for all classmates*
- *Use drama & creative play*
- *Encourage the child to share his equipment and devices with others as appropriate*
- *Provide information about the child's visual impairment*
- *Use board games that are accessible to all*

Slide 32:

If We Do These Things...

- *Provide realistic feedback*
- *Have high expectations*
- *Teach emotions, nonverbal communication, and empathy skills*
- *Teach self monitoring techniques*
- *Facilitate opportunities to interact with others and build friendships*
- *Ensure communication among all who are involved with the child*