

Helping Students with Disabilities Develop Social Skills, Academic Language and Literacy Through Literature Stories, Vignettes, and Other Activities

A Secondary and Post-Secondary Emphasis



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**Helping Students with Disabilities Develop Social Skills,
Academic Language and Literacy Through Literature
Stories, Vignettes, and Other Activities:
A Secondary and Post-Secondary Emphasis**

By

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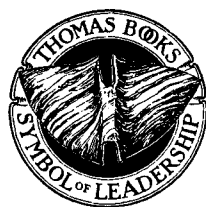
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Dr. Elva Durán would like to dedicate this social skill manual to each of her most hard working students who are studying to be teachers of special and general education students. Each of these hard working students has climbed Mount Everest and gone beyond the top of the mountain. In Dr. Durán's classes students are encouraged to climb Mount Everest and go beyond to show themselves that they are more than capable of working hard and doing the very best assignments. Many of Dr. Durán's students are most hard working and creative. They reach Mount Everest each semester and climb to the very top and beyond. Her students in her transition course throughout the various semesters were the inspiration for her to begin the work on the social skill manual. This manual is dedicated to each of her students who inspired her to move ahead and begin the much needed work in this area and present the social skill manual with the stories and other venues to do the best job teaching all the students who are in great need of social skill development.

Dr. Rachael Gonzáles would like to dedicate this social skill manual to all special educators in the field who keep working to make a difference.

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FOREWORD

It is well documented that individuals with disabilities frequently are challenged in negotiating their daily living and work tasks due either to an absence of or insufficiently developed social skills. Unfortunately, these challenges can result in problems with supervisors and coworkers at work and a lack of community integration in their lives which both contribute to a reduced quality of life. The literature on disabilities is filled with stories that reflect these themes. I have worked in the field of disabilities for over three decades and I know of no problem or issue that ranks higher in importance than this one for individuals with disabilities and their families.

Durán, Gonzáles and Park have produced a very important curricular innovation that speaks directly to this set of needs. Their comprehensive and well-designed social skills instructional program, *Helping Students with Disabilities Develop Social Skills through Literature Stories, Vignettes and Other Activities*, is a superbly developed resource for systematically teaching these critically important skills and competencies. The curriculum is quite novel in how it uses stories and situational vignettes to illustrate the importance of key social skills and what the consequences are of correct versus incorrect usage of them. In all my years of work and experience in this field, I have not encountered a curricular resource that approaches this one in scope, quality of instructional design, diversity of learning activities, along with explicit rules for teaching and implementing teaching routines. Some of these features are briefly noted following.

I would rate the content validity of this program as quite high given the listing of *generic* and *work-related* social skills that comprise it and the extensive investment by the authors in creating teaching vignettes that have been used extensively and successfully by teachers who implement it. These generic skills will enhance an individual's ability to access social contexts in which healthy engagement can occur and improve the ability to cope with challenging tasks that are encountered in daily living. The employment skills taught focus appropriately on the importance of adhering to workplace rules and expectations and on forging effective relationships with supervisors and coworkers. One feature that I think the authors should be especially commended for is where they ensure that students exposed to the curriculum have a complete understanding of the academic language used in the teaching process. So many social skills programs fail this underlying test. The diversity of instructional techniques used to facilitate content mastery include *guided and differentiated instruction, modeling, facilitating analysis and reflection of situations involving the appropriate and inappropriate use of key skills, presentation and discussion of positive and negative consequences of each skill, independent learning, and connecting lessons learned to the central idea of the skills being taught*. These strategies are arranged in a logical order wherein the material mastered via one technique builds upon prior ones and provides a context for the next one in the instructional sequence. In most cases, it seems highly likely that students who are led through this sequence could not fail to acquire important information about understanding and applying these skills to their own lives.

It should be noted that this curricular program places intense demands upon the person who is conducting the instruction. I cannot imagine that this content could be taught in a piecemeal fashion or with less than a full time effort. Successful implementation of it would require the complete focus and attention of a skilled and motivated teacher. Having said that, I think the curriculum will prove to be effective when it is trial tested under ordinary classroom conditions.

In conclusion, I believe this is an important new resource that enables professionals to be more effective in assisting students with disabilities in negotiating the many challenges in making the transition from school to the world of adult living. I think this curriculum would fit well in the post-secondary market for use with students who are in transition to employment and/or to additional schooling and training. This instructional resource is so carefully constructed and its content so on target that I think it would be highly appealing to end users. I look forward to seeing evaluation studies on its implementation and resulting outcomes.

HILL M. WALKER, Ph.D.
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INTRODUCTION

This social skills manual will present to teachers and parents lesson plans complete with literature stories, vignettes, and other activities to help students develop social skills in all their environments. The general skills and social skills at work are presented within detailed lesson plans that place emphasis on the vocabulary and the different lesson plan objectives that are essential to each lesson.

The social skills manual will further explain what social skills are. There is a review of the literature on social skill development, academic language and vocabulary development that are crucial to be taught as each lesson is presented to the students.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Meredith Charlson has been most helpful with the social vignettes, adding social validation to the contents for the targeted age group. The authors are grateful to Meredith for her hard work, creativity, and high quality work as well as for her professionalism.

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Diana Vega formatted and reviewed each of the lessons in this social skill manual. Her dedication and hard work are much appreciated by the authors who respect all that she does in editing curriculum and other materials.

The authors wish to thank the **committee of professors** in the Department of Teaching Credentials at California State University, Sacramento who worked hard to complete the lesson plan template that was used in all the lessons of the social skill manual. This work is most appreciated!

Additionally, the authors would like to thank Department head, **Dr. Stephanie Biagetti**, who shared lesson plan examples so that each heading could become clearer in order to understand each part of the lesson plan template. Thank you, Dr. Biagetti!

Dr. Hill Walker was kind enough to write the Foreword for this social skill manual. The authors are most appreciative and grateful to Dr. Walker for his commitment in taking time to write the excellent Foreword which is research based and comprehensive.

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Chapter 1

SOCIAL SKILLS INTERVENTION

Social skills are the skills needed to get along with others; they enable us to know what to say, how to make good choices, how to behave in diverse situations and how to create and maintain rewarding relationships (Gresham, Sugai, & Horner, 2001; Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995). Social skills are a set of behaviors that do not necessarily remain constant, but may vary with the social context and particular situational demands (Sterba & Dowd, 1998). The extent to which children and youth possess good social skills can influence their academic performance, behavior, social and family relationships, involvement in extracurricular activities, and later, in the workplace (Elliott, Malecki, & Demaray, 2001). The dimensions of social skills include: (1) peer relations skills (e.g., complimenting others, inviting peers to play), (2) self-management skills (e.g., controlling temper, following rules, compromising in conflicting situations), (3) academic skills (e.g., completing work independently, listening to teacher directions, producing acceptable quality work), (4) compliance skills (e.g., following directions, following rules, using free time appropriately), and (5) assertion skills (e.g., initiating conversations, acknowledging compliments, inviting peers to play) (Caldarella & Merrell, as cited by Gresham, Sugai & Horner, 2001). Unfortunately, many students with behavior and/or attention problems lack many of these social skills, which impedes both their learning and their social experiences in the school and community as well as in work settings as they later transition to work (Cook, Gresham, Kern, Barreras, Thornton, & Crews, 2008; DeBoo & Prins, 2007; White, Keonig, & Scahill, 2007). Therefore, interventions aiming at promoting their social experiences/relationships need to be part of the school curriculum. Social skills intervention is one type of intervention that has been widely implemented for students with disabilities as well as those without disabilities who can benefit from such intervention.

A systematic social skills intervention is the one in which the skills taught are those that help students initiate and maintain positive social interactions, develop friendships and social support networks, and cope effectively with the social environment (McGarth, 2005; Maag, 2005). Once the target social skills are selected, the training should focus on one social skill at a time. One cannot assume that the student knows or understands the skill, so it is critical that in teaching the skill, the teacher identifies exactly what the student needs to DO and SAY. The most common approach to social skills intervention is the direct social skills training approach in which a teacher explains the rationale for teaching specific social skills, models the desired/appropriate social behavior for students, role plays with students for them to practice the desired social behaviors, and then provides feedback on the students' performance and provides further instructions if needed.

While the direct social skills training approach has been found to be generally effective in teaching discrete social skills to students during training sessions, the authors of this social skills manual have observed several challenges in delivering this

direct social skills training. First, as documented in the literature, the direct social skills training has been unsuccessful in helping students generalize newly learned social skills to other social situations and/or maintain the learned skills over time (Matthews, Erkfritz-Gay, Knight, Lancaster, & Kupzyk, 2013). Second, social skills lessons are not always taught in the students' preferred learning style, and thus, they are less likely to learn the lessons successfully. Social skills lessons are typically taught using the verbal modality whereas many students with behavior and attention problems are found to learn the contents better using other modalities such as visual-spatial or bodily-kinesthetic modalities (Armstrong, 1994). Third, some students with disabilities and English learners have difficulty in fully understanding the language used in social skills training and thus may not be able to comprehend the social skills lessons that are being taught (Durán, 2015). Furthermore, these students may have difficulty in speaking and writing that could facilitate their interactions with others in social situations. This social skills manual attempts to address all three issues observed above in delivering typical direct social skills training.

This social skills manual presents social skills lessons utilizing three teaching strategies: (1) a social problem solving strategy using social vignettes in order to facilitate the generalization of learned social skills; (2) the integration of multiple intelligences (MI) into activities provided in the lessons in order to align the lesson delivery modes with students' preferred learning modalities, allowing them to learn the lessons more effectively, and (3) the use of literature stories in order to incorporate Language Arts (reading comprehension, speaking, and writing) in teaching the social skills and to present the model characters of the stories that students can learn from when dealing with the same types of social problems as in the stories. The remainder of this chapter discusses in further detail the use of the social problem solving approach, Multiple Intelligence, and literature stories in social skills intervention in general as well as in the lessons provided in this social skills manual.

Social Problem Solving Strategies Using Social Vignettes

The social problem solving or the social cognitive process training approach has been introduced to social skills intervention in efforts to successfully help students generalize learned social skills (Park & Gaylord-Ross, 1989; D'Zurilla, Nezu, & Maydeu-Olivares, 2004). It views social behavior as a product of the individual's cognition (McFall, 1982; Trower, 1984) and assumes that the person is able to generate his/her own socially appropriate behaviors with training. Instead of teaching discrete social skills as in the direct social skills training, cognitive process training focuses on three areas: social decoding, social decision, and social performance skills. Students are taught how to decode social situations (mostly hypothetical situations in the training), how to decide on appropriate social behaviors, and how to perform the behaviors. Throughout this problem solving process, students are engaged in self-instruction, self-monitoring and self-reinforcement (Austin & Sciarra, 2010). Therefore, they are more likely to perform the learned social behaviors in other social situations that require similar behaviors (generalizing the learned social behaviors) and maintain them over

time. The meta-analysis demonstrated the effectiveness of social problem solving skills in increasing social adjustment (Denham & Almeida, 1987).

In teaching these social problem solving skills to students with disabilities, Park and Gaylord-Ross broke down the cognitive process into seven different steps using a question and answer format: (1) *What's happening?* (2) *What choices?* (3) *What might happen if I choose...?* (4) *Which is better?* (5) *How do I do it?* (6) *Do it*, and (7) *How did I do it?* Their successful intervention strategies were successfully replicated/expanded in many studies teaching social behaviors to students with disabilities (e.g., Collet-Klingenberg & Chadesy-Rusch, 1991; Gumpel & David, 2000; McCarthy, McCarthy, Light, & McNaughton, 2007; O'Reilly & Chadsey-Rusch, 1992; O'Reilly & Glynn, 1995, etc.)

The lesson plans using social vignettes included in this social skills manual utilize these Seven Steps by Park and Gaylord-Ross (1989) in order to teach 16 selected social behaviors to students with special needs. The 16 social behaviors were selected jointly by the authors based on the literature. Through discussions, teachers can guide students to: (1) interpret the social problem situation provided in a social vignette, (2) generate possible social behaviors that they can perform in the described social situation, (3) test each of the possible choices that they have generated, (4) select the best choice from the list of possible behaviors generated, (5) think about how to perform the selected behavior choice, listing any discrete social skills such as non-verbal components (e.g., eye contact, body posture, etc.) as part of the performance, (6) perform the behavior selected, and (7) self-evaluate their own performance. Park and Gaylord-Ross emphasized that teachers utilize modeling, role play, feedback, and homework in teaching these "Seven Steps," which are all included in the lesson plans using social vignettes in this social skills manual.

Integrating the Theory of Multiple Intelligences into Social Skills Intervention

It is important for educators to recognize that Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence (MI) theory is not a set curriculum but instead an avenue that provides for different potential pathways to learning, as illustrated in Table 1 (Armstrong, 1994).

Instructions based on MI provide students with a variety of ways and opportunities to learn and demonstrate their learning. For high school students, MI provides the student with the opportunity to experience all of the intelligences, not only the most common, verbal linguistic and logical/mathematical. MI has the possibility to assist teachers in identifying students' strengths and creating different instructional pathways to facilitate the student learning.

Table I: Howard Gardner's Eight Intelligences

Disposition/Intelligence	Preference for	Classroom Activities
Verbal-Linguistic "The Word Player"	Memorizing names, places, dates and trivia. speaking persuasively	Retelling, word games, choral reading, journal writing
Math-Logic	Reasoning, problem solving,	Brain teasers, problem solving,