There is a current trend to include students with or at risk for learning and behavior problems in the general education curriculum (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). Typically, in general education classrooms, the focus is on remediating academic skill deficits rather than social behavior problems (Colvin, Kameenui, & Sugai, 1993). Although students with social skills deficits are increasingly participating in the general education curriculum, teachers are hesitant to devote academic time to social skills development (Korinek & Popp, 1997). The result is a reliance on pull-out programs that occur in isolation, which rarely result in successful generalization and maintenance of target skills (Forness & Kavale, 1996; Lewis, 1994). Many researchers believe that the key to promoting appropriate social behaviors is to incorporate social skills instruction in the academic curriculum (Korinek & Popp, 1997). Teachers in inclusive settings can achieve this by monitoring the social contacts of students with disabilities, implementing activities that develop positive peer relations, and explicitly instructing children in need of further social skills development (Ramsey, 2004). Instructional strategies that combine social and academic learning in a meaningful way can help students who are at risk for school failure (Korinek & Popp, 1997). The following strategies can be used to embed social skills instruction in inclusive settings.

**Embed Social Skills Instruction in Inclusive Settings**

Nicole S. Fenty, Melissa A. Miller, and Andrea Lampi
Assessment

Identify skill vs. performance deficits. Begin by deciding on the behavioral expectations you have for your students, then identify which students exhibit behaviors that deviate from those expectations. For each of these students, you will need to determine whether he or she lacks the skill or possesses the skill but doesn’t perform it (Gresham, Sugai, & Horner, 2001; Patterson, Jolivette, & Crosby, 2006). By informally interviewing other adults who interact with the student, you can find out whether the student has demonstrated the appropriate behavior in other settings. If the behavior is not a part of the student’s repertoire, you will need to provide formal instruction. If the student has previously demonstrated the behavior, intervention will still involve instruction, but the focus will be on when and why rather than how to demonstrate the behavior. Formal and informal data collection procedures can help determine the severity of the skill or performance deficit.

Monitor behavior. Because problem behavior disrupts teaching, the frequency or duration of such behavior sometimes seems greater than it actually is. The best way to be sure is to monitor the occurrences of the behavior (Vincent, Horner, & Sugai, 2002). In addition to frequency and duration, you must also identify the factors that trigger or maintain the behavior. Knowing when and why a behavior is likely to occur is critical to developing prevention efforts (O’Neill et al., 1997). For example, Mrs. Jenkins believes that Susie, a student in her third-grade class, exhibits frequent outbursts during instruction. She uses word processing software to create a table that allows her to check off how often Susie has an outburst (see Figure 1). Because she would also like to know what might be causing Susie’s outbursts (attention, escape, or avoidance), Mrs. Jenkins includes an anecdotal section that allows her to record the events that occur right before and right after the outbursts. Mrs. Jenkins then invites Mr. Tebs, the exceptional student education teacher at the intermediate level, to come and collect data while she is teaching. Mrs. Jenkins’s table indicates that Susie has seven outbursts during a 20-min instructional period. The anecdotal data indicates that just before Susie has an outburst, Mrs. Jenkins asks the class a question. Mrs. Jenkins’s question is followed by Susie raising her hand and then immediately shouting out the answer. Susie’s outbursts are always followed by a reprimand from Mrs. Jenkins. Based on the data, Mrs. Jenkins is certain that Susie’s outbursts are frequent and occur because she seeks attention. Mrs. Jenkins must now decide on a replacement behavior for Susie. The biggest challenge to monitoring behavior is finding the time. Try to designate a day or two when you have 15 to 20 min to observe the student. To hold yourself accountable, write the times into your lesson plans. Like Mrs. Jenkins, you may also want to consider making use of other members of your school faculty (interns, guidance counselors, and fellow teachers) to assist you with data collection.

Select and prioritize replacement skills. Before you can begin instruction, you must decide what you want the student to do instead of the inappropriate behavior (O’Neill et al., 1997).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Check One Box for Each Instance of the Problem Behavior</th>
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<tr>
<th>What happened before?</th>
<th>Target Behavior</th>
<th>What happened after?</th>
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Make sure the behavior you choose is relevant (looks normal in the environment), reasonable (can be done by the student), and reinforceable (can be observed and acknowledged by the teacher). Also, when thinking about a replacement skill, don’t forget to set a timeline for how long you expect it to take for the student to master the new skill. It might be a good idea to plan for students to acquire new skills in stages or steps. For instance, you might expect students who have trouble raising their hands to be raising their hands more often after a week of instruction and practice and then to be consistent after a month. You may also find that one or more of your students have deficits in a number of skills. You should introduce one new skill at a time to students, but how do you decide which skills to focus on first? Prioritize the skills that are most crucial to the academic and social success of both the student and your class as a whole. For instance, if you find that your students are having trouble with calling out, bullying, and tattling, you might choose to focus on bullying because it could have a detrimental impact on both the academic and social success of your students.

Conduct reinforcement surveys. To effectively shape student behavior, you need to recognize and reinforce appropriate behaviors. Some students want to be praised publicly for their appropriate behavior, but others do not. To discover what is reinforcing to students, you may observe them and their responses to naturally occurring reinforcers. You may also use reinforcer surveys (available on the Internet and in a variety of texts) to ask students what they want. You can conduct surveys during the first week of school and again periodically throughout the school year. Provide younger students with a list of activities (e.g., recess, lunch with the teacher, good note or phone call home). Students can then write a “yes” or “no” or a smiley face or sad face to indicate their preferences on the list. For older students, cloze statements might be more appropriate. These students can complete statements such as the following: “The best compliment my teacher can give me is . . .” “I like to use my free time in school to . . .” “When I do a good job, I like it when my teacher . . .”

Develop a plan. Meet with your students to discuss a plan for behavioral issues (O’Neill et al., 1997). For an example of this, let us return to Susie, Mrs. Jenkins’s third-grade student, who has trouble calling out. Mrs. Jenkins decides to talk with Susie about the importance of waiting her turn. She reminds Susie that outbursts are unfair to other students and are distracting. Mrs. Jenkins asks Susie how she can help her remember to remain quiet when she raises her hand. When Susie is unsure, Mrs. Jenkins suggests that before she asks questions, she will provide the entire class with a reminder to “raise your hand and wait to be called on.” She then tells Susie that she will provide her with a silent signal acknowledging that she has seen that Susie has raised her hand. Mrs. Jenkins also suggests that they make a small sign for Susie’s desk that states, “Wait for the signal.” Susie agrees to give the plan a try. Mrs. Jenkins and Susie write up the plan and they both sign it.

Instruction

Engage in daily morning meeting activities. Morning meeting, which involves greeting, listening to, and responding to members of the group, provides one way to build community within the classroom. During morning meeting, the social and academic curricula are equally important. Morning meeting should occur at the beginning of each day and last approximately 10 to 20 min. It consists of four steps: greeting (children greet and welcome one another by name), sharing (encouraging children to value the opinions of others while learning to articulate their thoughts), activity (a fun way of fostering participation by encouraging cooperation rather than competition), and news and announcements (ensuring that children know about special events or changes in the class routine). Greeting time is a perfect opportunity for students to practice social skills, such as appropriate ways to greet classmates or adults. Use sharing time as an opportunity to showcase skill use in the classroom or at home by asking children if they had the opportunity to use social skills learned in previous lessons and discussing their use of the skill as well as the outcome. Another time to emphasize social skills during morning meeting is during the activity. The teacher can model such skills as taking turns, cooperative play, and problem solving. For more information on morning meeting, consult The Morning Meeting Book (Kriete, 2002).
Take advantage of teachable moments. When the students are lining up to go to lunch and they are yelling and roughhousing in the process, take advantage of this teachable moment by involving those students who do not have severe social skills deficits. Acknowledge the actions of students who are following the correct lining-up procedure and use this as a positive teachable moment. Have students return to their desks and review the expectations, and have a few students model the correct behavior for the whole class. Students are most likely to remember expectations when they are taught them immediately instead of hours or days later.

Teach social skills the same way you teach academics. Social skills should be taught in the same way as academic skills: by using effective instructional strategies (Sugai, 1996). Imagine teaching how to elicit teacher attention in the same way you would teach addition. Start by explaining why the lesson is important; then explain the skills involved in mastering the lesson. Show students how they can exhibit skill mastery. Finally, have students practice the new skill with supervision and feedback.

Connect social behaviors to academic skills. Academic skills include a set of social behaviors necessary to the learning process (Sugai & Lewis, 2004; Williams & Reisberg, 2003). For example, during guided reading students take turns reading, so it becomes necessary for others to wait their turn. This creates an opportunity to teach the skill of “waiting your turn” and to practice it frequently. When planning your academic lessons, consider the social behaviors essential to student learning. Try to incorporate instruction in the skills necessary for demonstrating those social behaviors into your academic lessons.

Teach social skills in context. The most effective method of promoting skill acquisition is to provide the opportunity to actually perform the skill in context (Chen & Bullock, 2004; Elk-snin, 1996). For example, the lunch monitor has been complaining about the behavior of Mr. Sanders's fourth graders in the lunchroom, who have been kicking each other under the table. Mr. Sanders chooses to teach and practice the skill of keeping feet to self in the lunchroom because he feels students are more likely to transfer what they have learned to real situations when they have practiced in real contexts.

Role play. After a skill has been explained and modeled by the teacher, the students can practice it through role play (Sugai & Lewis, 2004). This is yet another instance during which you can encourage the participation of other students who have less trouble with social skills. While two to three students role-play the social skill, the other students in the class can act as judges for specific parts of the skill. For example, while Jimmy and Bobby are role-playing how to listen appropriately during a conversation, divide the class into three groups. One group would watch to see if Jimmy's eyes were on Bobby, another group would watch to see if Jimmy listened quietly by not talking, and the third group would watch to see if Jimmy answered after Bobby finished talking. Remember to be positive, reinforce appropriate responses, and incorporate student examples.
Provide both examples and nonexamples. When teaching a social skill for the first time, demonstrate examples and nonexamples (Sugai, 1996). Examples model the appropriate skill, while nonexamples show the inappropriate skill. Nonexamples are useful for clarifying the difference between what you want students to do and what you do not want them to do. Only the teacher models nonexamples; you do not want students practicing what they should not do. In addition, when students are practicing, provide them with a variety of positive examples so that they will be prepared for the range of potential occurrences in the natural environment. For example, Mr. Frank is working with his second graders on how to solicit help. His examples include students physically raising their hands or placing a sign that says “Help” on their desks. Because help cannot always be immediate, Mr. Frank gives students options for what to do while they wait for help, such as moving on to a different question. Mr. Frank then demonstrates some nonexamples for students, such as calling out for help or throwing work down on the floor in frustration. Mr. Frank ends the lesson by having students demonstrate some correct ways to solicit help.

**Maintenance**

Use self-monitoring. Allow students to help you keep track of their own behavior and progress. When students are able to see how their behavior has improved, it helps to motivate them (Gumpel & David, 2000; Kern, Dunlap, Childs, & Clark 1994). Just as students can track their own academic progress, they can monitor their behavioral progress. Self-monitoring can occur in a number of ways. Students can record their behavior during a short period of time, or you can create a chart for them to record their daily or weekly progress. It is probably best for you to scaffold this process by first monitoring the behavior with the student. Based on readiness, you can slowly relinquish the responsibility of monitoring to the student.

Provide reinforcements. The best reinforcer is one that is natural. After determining the function of the behavior during the data collection stage, select a reinforcer that matches the function (Sugai, 1996). Using reinforcement surveys can provide insights into how to reinforce students. The most important factor is to be sure that you are consistently pairing reinforcers with desired behaviors. In the beginning, the ratio of reinforcement to desired behavior might be high. As time passes and students begin to master skills, you should consider fading the number of reinforcers.

Provide prompts and cues. A great part of students’ success comes from reminders of classroom and schoolwide expectations. Prompts and cues help to set students up for success (Colvin, Sugai, & Patching, 1993; DePry & Sugai, 2002). They should occur directly before a possible bad situation. To provide prompts and cues, you must be able to anticipate the potentially bad situation and curb that behavior with a reminder. This awareness comes from prior careful observation of student behaviors. In the earlier example with Mrs. Jenkins’s student Susie, Mrs. Jenkins decides to provide the entire class with a “wait your turn” prompt before she asks a question, which helps prevent outbursts from Susie and other students.

Provide feedback. Feedback should occur after formal instruction and practice and after real and contrived tests of skill acquisition. Feedback should involve acknowledgment of success, reference to what the student did correctly, and mention of areas needing improvement (Elliot & Gresham, 1991; Lane, Menzies, Barton-Arwood, Doukas, & Munton, 2005).

**Generalization**

Involve other members of the school faculty. One of the most difficult aspects of social skills instruction is getting students to generalize appropriate behaviors beyond the classroom or a specific teacher. One way to help them do this is to inform other members of your school faculty (teachers, administrators, etc.) of the type of skills you are working on in your classroom. Encourage other faculty members to look for students who exhibit the desired behaviors and reinforce them for doing so. This will increase the likelihood that students’ appropriate behaviors occur even when you are not around. For example, Mr. Smith, the school’s art teacher, knows that Ms. McPhee is working on hand raising with her second-grade students. He can help to ensure that Ms. McPhee’s students acquire and generalize this skill by
acknowledging and reinforcing appropriate hand-raising behavior. Mr. Frank can provide a simple comment, such as, “Johnny, I know Ms. McPhee is working with you on raising your hand when you need help. I like the way you are raising your hand to ask for help.” Skill acquisition and generalization will increase as the number of school faculty members who are aware of Ms. McPhee’s target skills increases.

Involving parents. Parents are key to helping students maintain and generalize their target behaviors across people and across settings. Inform parents of the skills you are working on in your classroom. Encourage them to work on skills that are appropriate in the home setting. During morning meeting, students can share how they practiced some of their skills at home.

Evaluate. Students need opportunities to practice skills in contrived and real situations (Sugai, 1996). Contrived situations can occur after instruction and practice and should be followed by immediate feedback. Real situations can occur at any time, which is why it is important for other adults (school faculty and parents) to be aware of students’ target skills. Error analysis can be used to determine if and where instruction needs to be refocused.

Involving all students. Not all students may require remediation of all social skills, but every student in the class can participate by providing feedback and reinforcing peers for using appropriate social skills. Encourage students to look for their classmates who exhibit positive behaviors. Peers can acknowledge and reinforce appropriate social behaviors, for example, by offering verbal praise or filling out “caught you being good” cards. Cards should include the target student’s name and what the student was doing when he or she was “caught.” They can be deposited into a “caught you being good” box, which can be emptied daily or weekly. Students whose names appear in the box can be reinforced according to their responses to reinforcement surveys.

By embedding social skills in everyday practices in general education settings, students with behavior problems are successfully included. Assessment strategies allow teachers to determine student needs and develop appropriate intervention plans. Instructional strategies facilitate the teaching of essential social skills. Maintenance strategies promote continued use of the new social skills. Generalization strategies encourage the expansion of acquired social skills to new settings. Used together, these strategies have the potential to improve student behavior and increase academic work time. This list is a framework of essential techniques for successfully embedding social skills in inclusive classrooms.

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