
Teaching social skills: How to maximize success for those who are not responding

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* Some slides adapted from a 2008 presentation by Sarup R. Mathur

Goal of this workshop:

This presentation will review the components of social skills instruction. We will also address how to make existing social skills programs functional for students who are not responding to universal interventions.

Introduction

- What are some social skills YOU find difficult to learn?
- What types of skills do YOUR students find difficult to learn?

Small Group Activity

What social skills are the most important in your school setting?

Responses.....

- What group of social skills did you rate the highest?
- What were some of the social skills you wanted your students to learn?
- Is there a match between the social skills you view as important and the skills that your students are lacking?

What is Social Competence?

- Not synonymous with the term social skills
- Refers to an individual's overall social functioning
- Hops (1983) – “competence is a summary term which reflects social judgment about the general quality of an individual's performance in a given situation”

What are Social Skills?

- Refers to an individual's situation specific behaviors that enhance social functioning
- Hops (1983), “. . . The concept of social skills from a behavioral perspective is based on the assumption that specific identifiable skills form the basis for socially competent behavior.”

There are two general approaches to teaching Social Skills:

- Cognitive approaches - emphasize teaching metacognitive skills and social cognitive processes (i.e. Merging Two Worlds)
- Social skills training approaches - emphasize direct and systematic teaching of prosocial behaviors (i.e. Skillstreaming)

The Purpose of Social Skills Training

- To promote the overall social effectiveness of students with exceptionalities by teaching them acceptable social behavior skills

The Rationale for Social Skills Training

- Children with special needs have many difficulties establishing and maintaining adequate interpersonal relationships
- The assumption is that many of these children exhibit social skills deficits
- Many have not had the opportunity to learn and practice more desirable behaviors
- Deficits can lead to negative outcomes, including psychiatric problems, self-regulation problems, behavior disorders, contact with law enforcement, and incarceration
- Limited positive social experiences leave kids with special needs and greater risk for negative cyclical relationships that hinder adequate social development

Questions...

- Can students be socially competent and also lack certain social skills?
- What are some of the programs you use in your setting(s) to teach social skills?
- What are some questions that come to mind while you are teaching social skills?
- What are some problems you experience when teaching social skills?

Instructional Components for Teaching Social Skills (Whole or Small Group)

- Recognize inappropriate social behaviors
- Identify prosocial behaviors and strategies
- Explain, demonstrate, or model the identified behaviors
- Practice the new behaviors and strategies in role-play situations
- Provide feedback
- Promote generalization

Teaching Social Skills (Individual or Small Group)

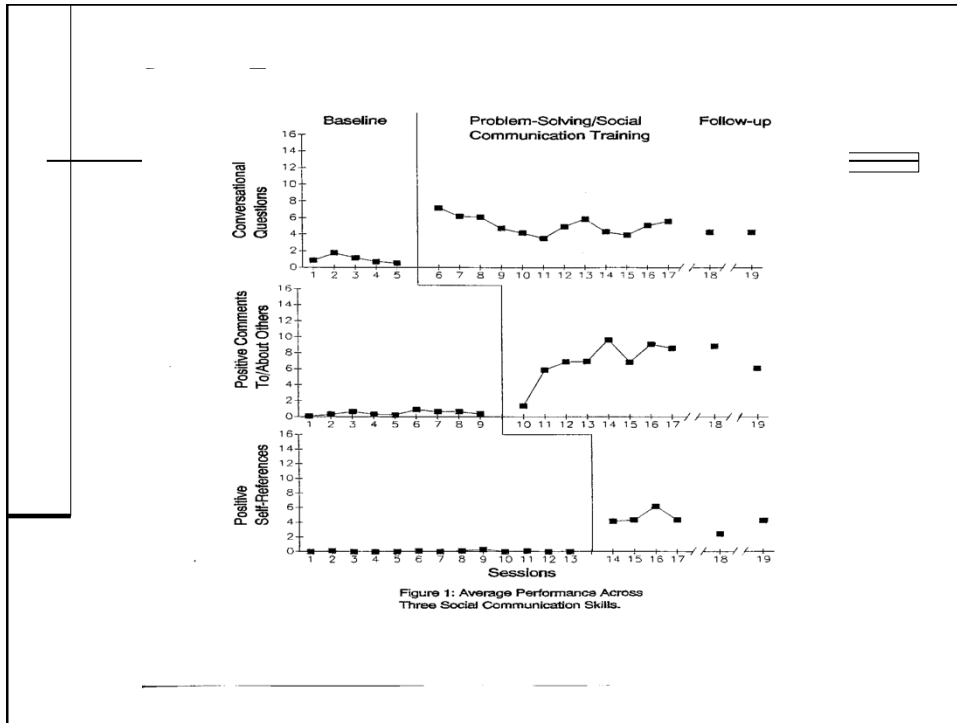
- Select target student(s)
- Identify problem behavior
- Identify desired social skill
- Determine whether the student has a skill deficit or a performance deficit
 - Skill deficit = can't
 - Performance deficit = won't
- Either provide instruction or motivation
- Assess



*See flowchart

Assessment of Social Skills

- Interviews - formal or informal interviews give you a sample of the student's interpersonal behavior
- Self-reporting Inventories - require an accurate self-appraisal, responses may influence expectations
- Ratings - a number of performance ratings that provide standardized data
- Direct observation - event, duration, time sampling, interval recording



Effectiveness of Social Skills Training: A Summary of the Research

- Social skills training may be more effective in promoting prosocial behaviors
- However, it does not appear to be as effective in reducing disruptive or maladaptive behaviors
- Alternate treatment, or a combination of treatments, appears to be necessary when trying to develop social competence

If it doesn't work...

- Enhance clarity
 - Definition - aggressive vs hitting
 - Measurement – how are you collecting the information?
 - Design – is instruction long enough, setting?
- Did you follow the components of the program?
- Handout – things to consider & things to avoid
- Try social problem solving

What is social problem solving?

- Identify problems
- Generate solutions
- Evaluate solutions
- Implement solutions

The Prepare Curriculum

Why Social Problem Solving May Work...

- Social-cognitive problem-solving skills are found to relate significantly to delinquent behavior.
- One study suggests some positive benefits of social problem-solving and cognitive-behavioral interventions with aggressive boys as much as 3 years after treatment (Lochman, 1992).
 - Participants who receive training in social problem solving had significantly better vocational outcomes than those who received only the traditional skills training module without elements of social problem solving.

Conclusions

- Could this work in your setting(s)?
- Did you derive new ideas from today's discussion?
- Resource handout

