



# TATS Guide



## Essentials for Teaching Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Skills

Link to video tutorial [Link here for tutorial of this document](#)

### **Contents:**

**Universal Skills and Supports** – includes skills that service providers and classroom staff should teach and facilitate for all children

#### **Specific Behaviors and Skills**

- Possible reasons (broadly described)
- Preventative
- Individualized strategies (what to do when a certain behavior occurs)

#### **Take a Closer Look**

- Sensory
- Intellectual – cognitive
- Communication
- Emotional
- Development, lacking skills and unmet expectations

#### **Communication with Family**

**Staff Collaboration** (consistency of responses)

#### **Appendix of Resources and Strategies**

- Florida Early Learning and Developmental Strategies
- Building Relationships
- Supporting Sensory Needs
- Teaching Problem-solving Skills
- Social Scripts
- Strategies for Calming-down



**Proactive:** *Set up an environment that supports children* in their social-emotional development, as well as in their needs for understanding the structure and routines of their day. Support needs for modes of communication. [TATS - Classroom Spaces \(includes visual supports\)](#)

**Proactive:** *Develop activities that are developmentally appropriate* and individualized for varying developmental levels and needs. Provide time for movement and songs, plan lessons that relate to real life and incorporate hands-on activities. [TATS - Embedding Instruction in Developmental Domains](#)

**Proactive:** *Teach social skills and self-regulation* through direct instruction and planned lessons. Provide guided practice and facilitate interactions. Teach and model calming strategies along with strategies for identifying and understanding emotions. [Developing and Teaching a Social Skills Lesson](#)

**Proactive:** *Determine what to teach.* Examine children's unmet expectations in relation to skills that they have not yet learned. Social-emotional and behavioral skills should be addressed through direct instruction and guided practice. Don't assume that all children enter pre-k with knowledge and practice of social behavior skills. Just like literacy, social-emotional skills need to be taught and practiced.



## **Be Proactive: Start with a Close Look**

### ***Essentials for Supporting Young Children***

### ***Influences on Children's Behavior***

**Start with the essentials** that address the needs of young children. These essentials will establish a foundation for learning that will enable children to learn, practice, and remember the skills that you are teaching. Be sure that supports from the Essentials for Supporting Young Children are in place, taught, and used consistently (see attached link). Essentials described in this document are universal design strategies and should be implemented for every child.

[Essentials for Supporting Young Children](#)

**Consider underlying causes of behaviors.** Early childhood professionals must consider many possibilities when a child is exhibiting behaviors of concern. Reflecting on possible underlying causes behind the behavior, or the influences on the behavior, is essential to establishing and maintaining a healthy experience for each child. See attached link: Tips to Consider: Reflecting on Challenging Behavior.

[Tips to Consider - Reflecting on Challenging Behavior](#)



## Considerations for Supporting Children's Social Behavioral Development



Increasing desirable behaviors = Decreasing challenging behaviors  
Teach replacement skills - Provide preventative strategies - Address individual needs

**Vary the methods you use for re-directing.** Maintain physical proximity so that you can speak calmly and quietly when re-directing. Use visual prompts and visual reminders to redirect.

**Teach, model, and provide practice** on Alternate Behaviors (often referred to as Replacement Behaviors or Desirable Behaviors). When you are trying to reduce the frequency of an undesired behavior, it is important to introduce and teach children a behavior they can use instead and still get the same result (attention, an item, or reward).

**Provide descriptive feedback** to let children know exactly what they did that you are praising. Give encouragement along with praise when children attempt a task, even if it is not perfect; praise the attempt and improvement.

**Keep in mind the differences in "Won't Do" and "Can't Do".** Don't assume that children know emotional and social skills or assume that they have had practice using them. Begin from the point of view of "What do I need to teach?"

**Important Note: Plan ahead and be prepared so that you are able to respond to behaviors consistently.** Plan your first statements as well as physical reactions when behaviors occur (calming, redirecting, safety for all). Developing a plan for consistency will help staff avoid inadvertently reinforcing behaviors that you are trying to reduce. "Responding to behaviors" also includes reinforcing behaviors that you and the family want to increase.

### Staff Collaboration and Consistency

Consistency of preventative and individualized strategies is a vital aspect in planning and implementing lessons and interventions. Staff collaboration is the key to providing children with the consistency needed to improve their skills.

Staff should train and plan together in order to maintain consistency. Each staff member should have information about sensitivities, needs, and goals of each child in order to help make their actions consistent with children's needs.

- Develop a consistent response to a child's behavior
- Plan actions to maintain safety without escalating a situation
- Calming and self-regulation words and actions
- Facilitating play
- Prompting and redirecting during activities.

**Include related service providers and seek their assistance in making plans.**

### Communication with Families

Communication with children's families will help you learn information and assist in collaborating on strategies. It is important that you discuss families' goals for their children and that they know how to participate in following up on the strategies used in the classroom. Provide families with information about child development and help them set reasonable expectations for their children.

Emphasize to classroom staff the importance of maintaining consistent communication with families. Communication should be honest but focus on positives, such as "social lessons we are teaching" and "what you can practice at home."

Families should be involved in the planning and should be included, along with related service providers, in meetings related to their child's needs.

Important: Although family involvement contributes significantly to children's success, it is important to remember that families are varied in their capabilities, schedules, and backgrounds. Teachers can best meet the needs of children by respecting all families and working to include them in the best possible ways.

## Universal Strategies to Support Young Children

**Consider these components of addressing social behavior for all children and all causes and levels of behaviors. Universal strategies should be provided to all children, all day, every day.**

<i>Behaviors to Decrease</i>	<i>Instructional and Preventative Strategies</i>	<i>Individualized Strategies</i>
<p><b>Possible reasons to examine:</b>  <i>Doesn't know the skill</i>  <i>Hasn't had practice</i>  <i>Unable to communicate</i>  <i>Activity too long</i>  <i>Trouble attending</i>  <i>Changes in schedule</i>  <i>Needs environmental support</i>  <i>Wants attention</i>  <i>Disabilities and health</i></p>	<p><b>Universal Strategies for Support</b>            Build a relationship with each child            Model and provide modes of communication            Provide multiple means for children to respond            Provide multiple types of experiences for learning            Help children build relationships with each other            Teach, practice, model calming techniques            Teach, practice, model social interactions            Visual structure and support            Reteach, remind, review            Guided practice            "Catch them being good" – focus on praise and reinforcement</p>	<p><b>Individualized Strategies</b>  <b>Follow-up, Re-teach, Reactions</b>            Address needs for trusting relationships            Remain calm            Model calming techniques            Remind of safe area for calming            Redirect with individual visuals            Re-teach, model, and facilitate problem-solving and calming skills            Teach skill of asking for help            Facilitate and guide play skills            Individualized communication strategies</p>

## Targeted Skills to Teach and Support

Skills listed below are those that are considered vitally important to young children. The skills are important because they are those that impact children's success in school as well as in friendships and personal development. Children need direct instruction and guided practice of these important skills. They also need opportunities to practice these skills in environments that are designed to facilitate their success and with adults who plan and develop support strategies.

### ***Participation, classroom skills, and safety***

Listening and Watching  
 Following Directions  
 Waiting for attention, delaying rewards  
 Following routines  
 Asking for help  
 Participating in activities  
 Safe behaviors for self and others

### ***Friendship and peer-related skills***

Sharing and Taking Turns  
 Cooperating – working together  
 Acknowledging another's request  
 Joining in group activities  
 Respecting others' materials and areas  
 Developing play schemes  
 Interacting, communicating with peers

### ***Personal and emotional skills***

Self-regulation  
 Calming down  
 Recognizing and identifying emotions  
 Dealing with emotions  
 Empathy, understanding, compassion  
 Requesting, accepting help  
 Problem-solving

## Classroom Participation and Safety

<i>Behaviors to Decrease</i>	<i>Instructional and Preventative Strategies</i>	<i>Individualized Strategies</i>
<b>Leaving the area</b> <i>Avoid activity (too difficult, doesn't know skills)</i> <i>seek preferred activity</i> <i>attention</i>	Use visuals for mini-schedule of activity Provide movement breaks at specific points in activity First-then schedules to show preferred activity next Timer, countdown steps Teach asking for help Restate rules before beginning <a href="#">Social Script for staying in area</a>	Provide individual practice to increase comfort with activities Allow for part of activity – shorter time, fewer steps Individualize social story and first-then with photos Reduce distractions Have child verbalize and pre-plan actions Physical cue for area (carpet square, photo of area)
<b>Refusing to participate</b> <b>Saying “no” to requests</b> <b>Pushing activity away</b> <i>Avoid, doesn't have skills</i>	Remind of expectations prior to beginning Use positive words to encourage to begin and praise during Praise participation and effort, not product Show finished product and steps to completion Model and support various modes of communication	Start task in different area and transition to group Social scripts and first-then with photos Limit number of steps, materials presented Do first few steps and then fade prompt Individualize communication strategies
<b>Running ahead or away instead of staying with the group</b> <i>Attention from adults and peers</i> <i>Uncertain of opportunities</i>	Designate classroom jobs – show them on calendar Teach and remind of rules for lining up, staying with group Pair with a peer buddy for walking, playing with group First-then to show a time for running Attention and praise for staying with group	Assign to be adult's “helper” Provide heavy work, vary motor movements Focus on imitation of motor actions First-then with photo of destination Give the child errands to run with adult
<b>Climbing on furniture</b>	Rule reminders, first-then for climbing on playground later Photos of classroom areas with statements about actions Teach self-monitoring and awareness of body in locations	<a href="#">Social book for Safety</a> Tape shoeprints on floor for placement of feet Monitor closely and reward for “feet on floor” Photo of child sitting, standing, playing paired with a sticker chart for reinforcement
<b>Hitting, Kicking, Pushing, Throwing items at others</b>	Direct instruction lessons for problem solving “What to do if” lessons and role play Adjust environment for safety of adults and children Identify triggers and warning signs, redirect <a href="#">How to Help a Child Stop Hitting and Pushing</a>	<a href="#">Tactics for Tantrums in the Classroom</a> Attend to children who might be or were hurt, move them to another area Use plans for calming Follow up with lesson and reminders about emotions when child is calm
<b>Biting</b> <i>Development</i> <i>Communication</i> <i>Sensory input</i>	Stick to a schedule, consistent routines, prepare for changes Allow for visual exploration in new activities. Provide relaxing and soothing activities Teach problem solving skills Provide modes and strategies for communication <a href="#">How to Help a Child Stop Biting</a>	<a href="#">Stop the Fighting and Biting - scripts included</a> Provide items for chewing and reminder to use Attention, praise, reinforcement for desirable behaviors in situations where biting occurs Provide lessons that encourage impulse control and self-regulation



**Take a Closer Look ...** Children's *disabilities and delays* often impact their patterns of behavior. Disabilities might contribute to a child's difficulties in learning and remembering information from lessons. [The Impact of Disabilities and Delays on Behavior](#)

Offering choices is an important strategy for helping children decrease avoidance-type behaviors and increase participation. Making choices can develop problem-solving skills and at the same time give them some control over a situation. [Guidelines for Giving Children Choices](#)

## Friendship Skills

<i>Behaviors to Decrease</i>	<i>Instructional and Preventative Strategies</i>	<i>Individualized Strategies</i>
<p><b>Grabbing items from others</b> <i>(difficulty sharing, taking turns)</i></p>	<p>When you see a child trying to share or take turns, make sure you give lots of praise and attention Play games with children that involve <b>sharing</b> and turn-taking Provide multiples of same items/activities that are high preference Use a timer when necessary to indicate turns (preferably one that indicates time passing in a visual manner) Anticipate when the child wants an object/activity, and cue to ask/gesture to join in play (“Can I play?” or “My turn”) Teach children common class language to use when they want a turn. Examples: “<i>I want to play alone right now.</i>” “<i>Can I have a turn when you’re done?</i>” “<i>Can I use this if I give it right back?</i>”</p>	<p>Offer alternate activity/toy Use <b>first-then visual cue</b> “first ask, then play” Use a “my turn” visual cue chart for highly preferred objects/activities Validate and label children’s emotions: “<i>You are frustrated because you want ____.</i>” Use neutral words, such as “<i>You both want to use that firetruck.</i>” Talk children through the conflict: “<i>What are you going to do?</i>” “<i>Tell me some ideas.</i>” “<i>How could you solve this conflict?</i>” Offer children more than one solution so they can choose one by themselves.</p>
<p><b>Dumping out toys or materials</b> <i>Doesn’t have play skills</i> <i>Gain attention from peers</i></p> <p><b>Throwing items instead of playing</b> <i>Attention, Frustration, Avoidance</i></p>	<p>Include a large variety of highly preferred, highly motivating materials in play areas – remember to include a wide variety of developmental levels Provide visual scripts and guided interactive play to assist children who need support in understanding how to use some toys and <b>visuals</b> that are specific to toys and materials Increase engagement for all children through the use of peer buddies</p>	<p>Provide visual choice board of a limited number of toys for play Help the child learn to play by using least-to-most prompting (verbal, gesture/model, physical assist) to teach play scheme Introduce a limited number of play schemes at a time Prompt the child to ask/gesture for “help”</p>
<p><b>Upsetting peers’ play, destroying their products</b></p>	<p>Provide a distraction with an appropriate activity - offer a different toy or game Play along to promote complete engagement Provide toys that can be put together and taken apart again and again</p>	<p>Set clear limits in very concrete terms – provide a visual depicting that destruction is not acceptable Say “<i>knocking down your friend’s tower is not okay, but you can build and knock down your own.</i>” Provide praise for positive behavior, rather than punishment for undesirable behavior</p>
<p><b>Speaking (signs, gestures, noises) rudely to others</b></p>	<p>Stay Calm, Decode the behavior, and provide empathy Do not try to teach during a heightened state – wait until you and the child are calm Model respectful communication and strategies to deal with feelings of anger and frustration</p>	<p>Offer choices of acceptable alternatives and be sure to respect the choice once it’s made Once the child is calm, provide a social story that explains theirs and others’ feelings and suggests appropriate behaviors</p>



**Take a Closer Look...** Children’s **communication skills** are the key to developing (and keeping) friendships and to building a strong **social** support network. Check out these resources for [building communication skills](#) and providing a strong foundation for developing relationships and [facilitating peer interaction](#).

It is important to teach social skills when children are calm and engaged. Take a look at [Teaching Before the Peak of the Storm](#) for more information.

## Emotional Awareness and Self-regulation

<i>Behaviors to Decrease</i>	<i>Instructional and Preventative Strategies</i>	<i>Individualized Strategies</i>
<p><b>Avoiding participation (<i>moving away, crying, aggression to avoid activity</i>)</b>  <i>Over or under reactions to the environment</i></p>	<p>Provide sensory experiences that are calming            Make adaptations that will support the activity            Teach, practice, and model <b>belly breathing</b>.            Create, teach, and practice a social script on how to tell someone you need help/a break/something            Model telling the children that you are feeling over/underwhelmed, need help, or need something and how you resolve it</p>	<p>Make a point to connect with the child one-on-one throughout the day (build trust and relationship)            Keep the child and others safe during upset            Remain calm and model calming techniques            Ask the child what would help their body feel calm and give two positive choices if they need help (hug, breathing)</p>
<p><b>Having frequent tantrums with difficulty calming down</b></p>	<p>Be mindful of the environment and factors that may triggers for the tantrum.            Explain different things to children; tell them what you are doing and why            Help the child find a way out of the tantrum            Look for physical signs that a tantrum is about to occur and teach them to the child so that <i>they</i> begin to notice the signs            Use books, stories, and social scripts to teach emotions and calming strategies            Role-play, model, and practice self-calming techniques</p>	<p>Remove barriers or stressors from a situation and allow them to feel supported            Build connection with the child, remind them that you will keep them safe            Provide opportunities for brain breaks-whatever type of movement or sensory input is helpful for the child            Create a calm space in the room and teach the child to go there and use calming techniques when they feel the tantrum coming            Have the child help others do calming activities</p>
<p><b>Resisting help or failing to accept help</b></p>	<p>Provide visuals that break down tasks and show expectations            Model and provide time to practice expectations (group and individual) and asking for/accepting help            Read books, stories, and social scripts about needing, asking for, and accepting help (everyone needs help sometimes)</p>	<p>Build relationship with the child (connection and safety)-consider that the child may have to do things for themselves at home and needs to learn to trust that someone will be there to provide help            Acknowledge that the child would like to do it themselves            Let them know you are right there if they need help</p>
<p><b>Making negative statements about self and others</b></p>	<p>Model and practice making positive statements about self and others (make sure you are not modeling the negative)            Read books, stories, and social scripts about how words can help or hurt and about self-image            Make it a point to acknowledge kindness in your class  <b>Relationship building</b> activities between the family, teachers, and children-class family</p>	<p>If the child says something negative about someone else, ask them how that might make the other person feel. Follow with examples from books and social scripts describing kind words            Make sure to counter the negative statement with something positive            Have that child notice helpful/kind acts in the class (kindness recorder)</p>



### Take a Closer Look ...

Differences in Tantrums and Sensory Overload are often difficult to distinguish. In both situations, children need assistance in staying safe and in calming their bodies.

## Emotional Awareness and Self-regulation (continued)

<i>Behaviors to Decrease</i>	<i>Instructional and Preventative Strategies</i>	<i>Individualized Strategies</i>
<b>Difficulty showing or lacking empathy or understanding of emotions</b>	<p>Consider the developmental age (not chronological) of the children in your class-empathy isn't able to happen until after about 36mo developmentally but can be taught long before</p> <p>Teach emotional skills-what do they look like/feel like/mean</p> <p>Read books, stories, and social scripts about emotions</p> <p>Role-play emotions, what they mean, and how to handle them</p> <p>Teach empathy by practicing caring for baby dolls</p> <p>Model talking about emotions and being empathetic</p>	<p>Build relationship with the child (examples below)</p> <p>Use a mirror to talk about/teach emotions</p> <p>Notice-your mouth is going like this, your eyebrows are going like this, your hands are in a fist like this, you seem angry (this should be in a calm and non-judgmental way)</p> <p>Model empathy with the child</p> <p>Help the child notice how they affect others- look at their face, their face is saying that they do not like it when you take the toy</p>
<b>Difficulty waiting for attention or reinforcement</b>	<p>Consider the developmental age of the children and set expectations that are appropriate for each child's developmental level</p> <p>Model, teach, and practice how to gain the attention of others</p> <p>Use social scripts and role-play to practice gaining attention</p> <p>Make time throughout the day to connect with each child</p> <p>Have pictures of each child's family available for the children to access when they are missing someone</p> <p>Greetings and goodbyes built into the daily routine</p>	<p>Specifically build times throughout the day to make a one-on-one connection with the child</p> <p>Have that child be a helper to others and provide attention and praise for helpful actions.</p> <p>Join in play with the child and invite them to enter a play scheme with you and peers.</p> <p>Gently remind (verbally and visually) the child about "waiting", then make sure the wait time is short and that attention is positive and rewarding</p> <p>Express understanding that waiting is hard, praise efforts, and make sure that wait time is reduced</p> <p>Talk to the child and initiate conversations and activities based on the child's interests, family, pets</p>

### Take a Closer Look ...



The ideas in the attached document are based on Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (FELDS) and provide information about specific topics related to building relationships and provide information to further your understanding of developmental and emotional needs of young children.

[Addressing Social Skills in the Classroom](#)

### Strategies for Building Teacher-child Relationships

- Get to know each child individually
- Express empathy, comfort, and safety
- Have a positive attitude
- Set expectations, encourage, and support
- Join in activities and play



## **Essentials for Teaching Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Skills**

### **Appendix of Resources and Strategies**

#### ***Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (FELDS)***

include objectives and benchmark skills for ages and levels Birth – Kindergarten. FELDS is an excellent source of information for scaffolding activities to address a range of needs. Additional links included here provide resources and ideas for addressing social skills in these FELDS component areas

- Emotional Functioning
- Managing Emotions
- Building and Maintaining Relationships with Adults and Peers
- Developing a Sense of Identity and Belonging
  
- [Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards](#)
- [Addressing Social Skills - TATS - Tips correlated with FELDS](#)
- [Embedding Instruction of Social Skills \(from Rock Your Classroom\)](#)
- [Foundations of School Readiness: Social and Emotional Development \(from Head Start\)](#)

#### ***The Importance of Building Relationships***

Children need to **feel safe** before a relationship can be built with them. They need to trust that your responses will be consistent and that they will not be hurtful.

Make a point to do something one on one with the child several times throughout the day when in the "building" process (remember that this takes time and must be consistent). When engaging the child for connection, make sure you are playful, present in the moment, making eye contact (or attuned if eye contact is not comfortable for the child), and that there is some sort of touch/physical contact (again, at the child's comfort level).

Greetings, goodbyes, reading a book, singing a song, doing a hand game, diaper changing, playing with a toy, peek-a-boo, and fun sensory activities can all be opportune times for one-on-one connection.

- [Video Example: Building Positive Relationships](#)
- [Healthy Relationships: The Key to Building Resilience](#)

#### ***Providing Supports for All Children's Sensory Needs***

Help the children in your class find ways to self-regulate that work for them. Examples: yoga, quiet time, sensory tools/fidgets, gross motor play/exercise/jumping/dancing, listening to music, hugs/squeezing/smooshing, singing, and breathing exercises.

Setting up the room environment should involve consideration of each of the senses:

- Visual organization, lighting variations, spaces in the room to reduce visual input if needed
- Allow for headphones if needed to address echo/reverb, startling noises, environmental noises (lights, ac, fans from electronics)
- Reduce/avoid strong smells if possible (perfume, food, cleaning products)
- Allow access to water/hydration, have healthy snacks in classroom for children who require additional snacks or oral motor breaks
- Provide different types of seating and positioning (beanbag chairs, small rocking chairs, cushions, boxes, sit disks, weighted lap pads, standing)
- Provide sensory tools whenever needed (chewies, stuffed animals, weighted objects, fidgets, sensory bottles)
- Create micro-environments in the room that allow for varying levels of sensory input and varying needs for stimulation (quiet zones, lower-lighted areas, active areas that may house materials for gross-motor movement)

### ***Teaching Problem-solving Skills***

Along with problem-solving process, use specific activities that are designed to teach self-regulation.

**Important:** Model and provide guided practice.

**Important:** Teach and support the language and vocabulary along with the problem-solving steps. Be certain that modes of communication are modeled and supported.

Problem-solving process for identifying feelings:

1. THINK about what happened
2. THINK of how your body feels.
3. RECOGNIZE the feeling.
4. SAY, "I feel \_\_\_\_\_"

Problem-solving:

1. RECOGNIZE that you are angry or upset (or other feeling)
  2. COUNT, BREATHE, JUMP (appropriate action)
  3. THINK about your choices: Examples: Walk away, take deep breaths, get help from teacher or parent
  4. ACT out your choice
- [Problem solving Steps - visual](#)

Additional Resources for Teaching and Supporting Problem solving:

- [Turtle Technique](#)
- [Tucker the Turtle Songs and Finger plays](#)
- [Book Nook Activities based on I Have a Little Problem](#)
- [We Can Be Problem-solvers \(social script in book form\)](#)
- [Peer-mediated Social Skills \(posters and scripts for peer interactions\)](#)

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### ***Social narratives***

Social narratives are important as a strategy for both helping children understand social situations and providing consistent reminders of appropriate social behaviors. A social script of narrative should focus on one behavior; state facts about a situation; and provide ideas for what the child should do in specific situations.

- [Tips for Writing Scripted Stories \(from Vanderbilt Center for Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning\)](#)

Links to examples

- [Social Script with Self-monitoring example](#)
- [Individualized Rules and Self-monitoring](#)
- [Social script for problem-solving](#)
- [Social narratives from Head Start Inclusion site](#)
- [Using Kind Words](#)

### ***Strategies for Calming and Self-regulation***

Providing and teaching strategies for calming and self-regulation are vital components in teaching social behavior. The keys to enabling children to best use calming strategies are following:

- Direct instruction
- Modeling
- Guided practice

Links to resources follow:

- [Strategies for Supporting Self-regulation \(Rock Your Classroom\)](#)
- [Teaching Young Children Self-control Skills \(includes scripts for specific skills\)](#)
- [Help Us Calm Down poster](#)
- [How to Teach Calming Strategies \(includes examples of strategies\)](#)