



## Embedding Social Skills into Daily Instruction

Early Childhood classrooms are intended to be socially rich environments which encourage development of skills in communication, motor, pre-academic, and social areas. Although social skills during activities and play can be practiced most of the day, evidence shows that children learn through direct instruction, guided practice, and support from adults, visuals, and peers. In fact, many children experience social difficulties and deficits due to lack of experiences and/or specific delays in development.

Classroom lessons should include regular social instruction that is scheduled in the daily routine as well as embedded throughout the day. An effective social skills curriculum, whether one purchased as a package with pre-planned lessons or one developed by a teacher should contain elements in key groups of skills of child development.

*When planning social lessons it is important to consider **child development milestones and factors that impact child development:***

- Experiences and/or lack of opportunities for social interactions
- Family dynamics, attitudes, cultural/ethnic background and family's attitude and experiences related to social interactions
- A child's development in all domains – motor, communication, cognitive – and any delays or disabilities which might impact social development

### ***Planning Social Lessons:***

1. Refer to Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards (FELDS) for the age level of your students. In addition, refer to FELDS expectations for younger ages if you have students who have delays. FELDS also provides examples of skills in addition to suggestions for lessons and activities.
2. Consider developmental expectations and your students' observed needs and determine a likely sequence of skills for planning lessons.
3. Plan a time in the daily schedule when social lessons will be taught – about 10 or 15 minutes – as a separate lesson. Place a visual icon for "Social Lesson" on the daily schedule that is posted in the classroom.
4. Gather materials for the lesson:
  - a. Photos and visuals
  - b. Songs and rhymes
  - c. Classroom books
  - d. Role-play, puppets, "what would you do?" scenarios
5. Teach the lesson using materials and language that are developmentally appropriate for your students.
6. Provide guided practice for the skill that was taught by setting up an activity or role-play situation.
7. Repeat the lesson during the week or add a lesson from the same skill-set.
8. Observe, reinforce, provide re-teaching or additional guided practice if needed.

## Specific Examples of Topics in the Categories of Social Lessons

from **101 Ways to Teach Children Social Skills** by Lawrence E. Shapiro, Ph.D.

Published by The Bureau for At-Risk Youth.

### Communication:

1. Something Special About Me
2. Getting to Know my Classmates
3. Giving a Compliment

### Nonverbal Communication:

1. Making Eye Contact
2. Facial Expressions
3. Personal Space
4. Identifying Emotions

### Being Part of a Group:

1. Joining a Group
2. Sharing and Cooperating
3. Following Rules
4. Being a Good Sport
5. Accepting Differences

### Expressing Your Feelings:

1. Identifying Feelings
2. Talking about Feelings
3. Empathy
4. Self-talk
5. Handling Change or Transition

### Caring About Yourself and Others:

1. Showing Interest in Others
2. Kindness
3. Being a Friend
4. Offering to Help Others

### Problem Solving:

1. Identifying the Problem
2. Finding Solutions
3. Learning from Mistakes
4. Thinking Before Acting

### Listening:

1. Listening during Conversation
2. Listening for Information
3. Following Directions

### Advocating for Self:

1. Feeling Good about Yourself
2. Dealing with others' Teasing or Bullying
3. Identifying Stress or "Upset"

### Managing Conflict:

1. What might Cause Conflict
2. Apologizing
3. Staying Calm
4. Compromising and Negotiating
5. Seeking Help

Note: The skills listed in Shapiro's program are not inclusive of all skills that might need to be taught in an early childhood setting. The list is intended to provide ideas about the kinds of skills needed by children.

**Examples of skills** included in some research-based and evidence-based curricula for social skills are listed below. This is intended to be a brief overview of social skills included in curricula.

Websites are included because most program descriptions include free downloadable ideas, copies of resources, and sample lesson plans.

Note: Although the terminology might differ among programs, most include similar skill sets for the lessons in the curriculum. Consider the standards listed in FELDS and the specific needs of the children in your classroom when determining the sequence and content of your social lessons.

Skillstreaming in Early Childhood - <https://www.researchpress.com/books/716/skillstreaming-early-childhood>

- School-related social skills
- Friendship-making skills
- Dealing with Feelings
- Alternatives to Aggression
- Managing Feelings

Second Step Social-Emotional Learning - <http://www.secondstep.org/early-learning-curriculum>

- Skills for Learning – Listening, Following Directions, Paying Attention
- Empathy
- Emotion Management and Self-regulation
- Friendship Skills and Problem Solving
- Transitioning – Kindergarten, New Friends, New Places

Conscious Discipline by Becky Bailey – <https://consciousdiscipline.com/>

- Composure
- Encouragement
- Assertiveness
- Choices
- Empathy
- Positive Intent
- Consequences

Zones of Regulation by Leah Kuypers - <http://www.zonesofregulation.com/index.html>

- Social Thinking
- Identifying Feelings
- Identifying Triggers (for stress, anger, frustration, etc.)
- Calming Strategies
- Problem Solving

The Incredible Years – <http://www.incredibleyears.com/about/incredible-years-series/program-previews/>

- Understanding feelings
- Problem solving
- Managing Anger
- Friendship Skills
- Classroom Behaviors