



Regions 5 & 7 Autism Community of Practice E-Letter June 2015

A resource for districts and families across the regions

The mission of the Regions 5 & 7 Community of Practice is to support children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, their families, schools, and communities by providing resources, consultation, and training
Focus on Social Skills

[Silke Heyer | ~~Autism Chalk Festival](#)

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🎨 **IN COOPERATION WITH THE AUTISM PROJECT** <http://toyboxtools.hasbro.com/> *Children*

ToyBox Tools is a collaboration between Hasbro and The Autism Project helping families, teachers and professionals make the most of playtime.

At the Charting the C's workshop, a web site that uses Evidence Based Practices to teach play skills to kids (visuals, video modeling etc.) was presented. It is specific to Hasbro toys and games for kids (Trouble, Mr. Potato Head, Elefun, Busy Ball Popper, Sorry, Playschool Heroes, Connect 4). It teaches step by step, with visuals.

Downloading all of the available visuals for each of the 3 levels (Basic Play, Expanding Play, Social Play) for all of the toys took about 10 minutes to them. Happy Playing!!

🎨 **Think Safety** http://www.thinkautismsafety.org/wordpress_d/ *Parents/Children*

Welcome to Think Safety, a project led by the [Organization for Autism Research](#)! This website is a place where members of the autism community can interact with other parents, family members, friends, educators, and law enforcement officials to build a sense of community and knowledge-sharing centered on the individuals with autism in their lives.

🎨 **Great Ideas for Teaching in Elementary Autism** *Elementary*

This is a collaborative board for ideas in teaching students with autism in the elementary grades. Feel free to post TPT stores and products, indicating if they are free or the cost as well as other ideas from around the web. Please pin about 4-5 ideas that are not from your TPT store for each one of your own you pin. If you would like to be added as a contributor to the board, email me at drchrisreeve@gmail.com. I will delete pins

that do not follow the guidelines. <https://www.pinterest.com/drchrisreeve/great-ideas-for-teaching-in-elementary-autism/>

Top 10 tips for families with a new diagnosis

<http://www.thinkingautismguide.com/2010/06/what-now-ten-tips-for-families-with-new.html?m=1>

Kansas Institute for Positive Behavior Support – Toolbox

Parents and Professionals

http://www.kipbs.org/new_kipbs/fsi/toolbox.html

The purpose of the KIPBS Toolbox is to provide easy access to information related to topic areas in positive behavior support and person-centered planning. Each topic area listed below contains brief summaries, troubleshooting guides, tools, and resource links that can assist in the problem solving process.

Preschool Activities for Children with Autism

Preschool

http://autism.lovetoknow.com/Preschool_Activities_for_Autistic_Children [Kate Miller-Wilson](#)

Preschool is part of the golden window of opportunity for working with children on the autism spectrum. During the early childhood years, kids are growing and developing at an amazing rate, and this is the ideal time to help your child learn to connect with others, regulate his or her senses, improve communication, and practice many other skills. Whether you're a parent of a child with autism or a teacher of a special needs classroom, there are activities that can help.

The Recipe for Improving Social Skills Begins with Social Thinking

Michelle Garcia Winner, January 19, 2015

Parents, professionals and students (who are high school age or older)

www.socialthinking.com/what-is-social-thinking/michelles-blog/775-the-recipe-for-improving-social-skills-begins-with-social-thinking

If a 4-year old child has a tantrum in a classroom, we barely blink an eye. If a 10-year old child has the same tantrum; we are likely to call it a behavior problem.

If a 4-year old child calls the person they just met for the first time their "best friend", we think it's adorable.

If a 10-year old child calls the person they just met their best friend, we think they have a social problem.

Parents of children with social learning challenges in mainstream education who have behavior and/or social problems are often told that their children need to learn better "social skills". In "social skills" treatment, the child often participates in behaviorally-based programs that focus on teaching specifically how to behave in different social situations at school, at home and in the community. For example, while in the doctor's waiting room: sit relatively still on a chair, keep yourself occupied with a quiet activity such as by reading a magazine, don't talk to the other patients beyond possibly greeting them, don't ask the receptionist personal questions... etc. But in reality, is the solution so simple as to teach the child a manual of how to behave in each situation?

When I was working as a speech language pathologist in a high school district in 1995 and most of the students on my caseload were those with "social skills problems", I had to re-think what I understood about teaching social skills. My students were worn out and frustrated after years of ineffective treatment. They told me that the "skills" that I, and many others before me, had taught were not helping them become more socially savvy in the real world.

They were right.

This dilemma led me to ponder fundamental questions: "what are social skills" and "what do we need to know to determine how to behave across different social contexts"? Without this knowledge, I felt ill equipped to teach my students the critical information they needed to learn in a manner that was acceptable to them.

Now, after working on these problems for the past 20 years, I wish I could have taught my old students what I know now.

"Social skills" are typically thought of as the behaviors a person demonstrates in a social context. Whether or not that set of behaviors is expected or unexpected (appropriate or inappropriate) in that context affects if others will judge that person as having "good" or "poor" social skills.

Our social behavior is the end result of a complicated and very fast thought process called social thinking. Our behavioral response in every social context is informed by our consideration of the thoughts and feelings of the people around us as well as how we intend to influence them. This means that in the context of going to the doctor's office (to use the previous example), our behavior may be slightly different each time depending on who is around us and what we perceive they are thinking and feeling in that moment. There is no one correct way to act in a doctor's waiting room because the social context is always a little bit different! Sometimes the receptionist may be happy to answer personal questions about herself, especially if you notice a new engagement ring on her finger. Sometimes you can converse with other patients, if they are showing certain signs that they are interested in talking to you. With this in mind, it suddenly becomes clear that for students to "behave well" requires that they be sensitive to the situation and the people in the situation in order for them to socially problem solve how to produce the "expected behavior".

3-step process to teaching social thinking and related skills:

For parents, professionals and students (who are high school age or older) we explain that there are three distinct parts to the process of socially engaging or sharing space well with others:

1. Engage in social thinking:

Social thinking is the ability to consider your own and others thoughts, emotions, beliefs, intentions, knowledge, etc. In other terms, it is the culmination of executive functioning, perspective taking, and self-awareness that enables you to interpret and understand the social situation and what behaviors are expected of you.

Remember that your behavioral-response is directly influenced by your social thinking. Social behaviors that align or fail to align with what other people expect in that situation determines how others judge your "social skills". Improving your social thinking ability is a life-long learning process, and the key to developing chameleon-like social skills.

2. Adapt your behavior effectively (social skills):

Based on the results of your social thinking, adapt your behavior to consider the thoughts and feelings of others, as well as to communicate your intentions in the situation. By doing so, people are more likely to react and respond to you in the manner you had hoped (see below).

3. Be aware of others' reactions:

People emotionally respond to our behaviors very quickly. If we feel a person has good social skills we may describe them as "polite" and "friendly"; if person has weak, awkward, or poor social skills we often describe them as "rude", "odd" or "impolite". The terms "polite", "rude", "friendly", "impolite", etc., represent how we emotionally perceive another's behavior. We are far better at summarizing our feelings (emotional response) than we are at describing intellectually the behaviors a person produced that swayed how we felt. How people respond to our behavior often leads to how they treat us in return.

In short, our social skills influence how people feel about us and how we, in turn, feel about them. This cycle also influences how we feel about ourselves and can directly impact our confidence and mental health!

Social Thinking encourages social problem solving:

As complex as all this is, we can drill this down to say that social skills are not simply rehearsed, memorized and produced based on a singular stimulus or context. Having good social skills simply means one is able to adapt effectively based on the situation and the people in the situation. Our social skills are part of our social problem solving. We use them when we are simply sharing space with others, as when we may be quietly sitting together in a room, or when engaged in more direct social interactions. We use our social thinking and related social skills any time we are around people, whether we plan to interact or not. We also use our social thinking even when we may not be in the active presence of others, such as when we are watching movies, shows, sports, the news, driving our cars, writing an essay, a text, an email, or reading a novel – all of which require you to think about other peoples' perspectives about the situation.

Social thinking impacts not only a student's social success, but his/her academic success, too. Classroom academic assignments frequently tap into our social knowledge, often without our noticing. It would be impossible for a student to meet academic standards (Common Core or State based) related to reading comprehension and written expression; or participate in group-based learning activities if they didn't have adequate social thinking skills to accurately interpret instructions or take the perspective of others.

Our social skills are not directly taught as much as they are a by-product of our considering our own and other's perspectives and our related social goals. Our ability to synchronize all this information impacts others' impressions of us as well as how they treat us. How people treat us, in turn, affects how we feel about ourselves.

My students in 1995 were right to be frustrated. They intuitively understood that being taught how to behave in social contexts was not adequate; they needed to learn how to think socially based on the situation and the people in the situation. In effect, they needed to learn social thinking. The work I have created over the past 20 years is to honor all that they taught me.



By the Way, You're Autistic

Parents and young adults

<http://notapuzzlepiece.blogspot.com/2015/04/by-way-youre-autistic.html?m=1>

From the blog "Not a Puzzle Piece" Tuesday, April 21, 2015

– a frank sharing about when to tell your child about his or her disability

Every time I hear a parent worrying about how to tell their child they're autistic, or worse, announce that their kid doesn't need to know yet, I cringe a little. Although they may mean well, it all comes from the same thought process: that being autistic is bad, that it's at the center of all their problems.

It's not. Autism is just autism. If you're looking for a sign, this is it: let your child know they have autism. Today. [\(Continued at link\)](#)



'You Don't Outgrow Autism': What Happens When Help Ends at 21?

Transition

<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/you-dont-outgrow-autism-what-happens-when-help-ends-21-n340066>

Federal law guarantees an education for children with developmental disabilities like autism until the age of 21. But after turning 21 (each state determines the exact date), those young adults lose the specialized help and structure they've had for most of their lives. And there is no equivalent state or federal support required to take over. *Parents of children with autism compare it to falling off a cliff.*



As More With Autism Near Adulthood, Clues To Success Emerge

Teen/Adolescent

By [MICHELLE DIAMENT](#) May 14, 2015

<http://www.disabilityscoop.com/2015/05/14/as-autism-adulthood-clues/20299/>

What's the biggest predictor of success for individuals with autism in adulthood? Researchers say it might not be what you'd expect.

The ability to do everyday, self-care activities like bathing, cleaning and cooking trumped other factors like symptom severity and intellectual functioning, according to findings from a new study being presented this week at the International Meeting for Autism Research in Salt Lake City.

Researchers looked at the experiences of 152 people with autism who were diagnosed between 1970 and 1999 at the University of North Carolina TEACCH Autism Program.

Now that the individuals are adults — with an average age of 35 — the researchers surveyed their caregivers about their current status. Overall, 44 percent of the adults with autism live with family members and 55 percent are unemployed, the study found. About 1 in 5 had been employed but were no longer working at the time of the survey.

Significantly, those with the highest self-care skills — whether as adults or in childhood — were most likely to maintain employment, work more hours and need fewer supports on the job, researchers said. Conversely, the study found that adults with autism who had the most difficulty keeping a job were those who exhibited self-care abilities as children that were significantly lower than their IQ.

Traditionally, more emphasis has been put on teaching social communication skills, but researchers said that might need to change in order to appropriately prepare the growing number of people on the spectrum for adulthood.

“We can expect a 230 percent increase in the number of individuals with autism transitioning to adulthood in the next eight years,” said Laura Klinger of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill who led the study. “These results provide a wake-up call to parents and professionals alike of the importance of teaching self-care skills.”



Teaching life skills improves future prospects for young adults with autism

Young Adult

<http://www.examiner.com/article/teaching-life-skills-improves-future-prospects-for-young-adults-with-autism>

For many teens with autism, the transition to adulthood is difficult and leads to unemployment and isolation. However, the future prospects for these children improve when they learn practical life skills, according to research presented at the [International Meeting for Autism Research](#) in Salt Lake City.

Children and young adults with [adaptive behavior skills](#) have higher levels of employment, less social isolation and better quality of life. “...We found that among adults with autism who were diagnosed as children, the biggest predictor of gaining employment as an adult is having good independent daily self-care skills. Because while we can't change intellectual functioning -- and it's very difficult to change symptom severity -- these skills are something very practical that we can work on to try and improve the prospects of adults with autism,” said study lead author Laura Klinger of the TEACCH Autism Program. This research suggests that parents, teachers and clinicians should work together to teach adaptive behavior skills including:

- Personal hygiene and grooming
- Taking care of their health
- Shopping for groceries, clothes, household goods and other items
- Running a household including cooking, cleaning, setting the table, doing laundry
- How to act in different environments including restaurants, cinemas, churches, libraries, public transportation, post offices, banks, shops, etc.
- Social skills - how to interact in groups, during conversations
- Personal safety
- Managing their finances
- Looking for jobs
- Applying and interviewing for jobs

When teaching adaptive behavior skills to young adults with autism, break each task down into individual steps. To figure out each step, do the task while writing down every step.

More information about teaching adaptive behavior skills is available on the websites of the Interactive Autism Network <http://iancommunity.org/ssc/autism-adaptive-skills> and [Connectability](http://connectability.ca/2011/06/13/supporting-children-with-asd-module-6/). <http://connectability.ca/2011/06/13/supporting-children-with-asd-module-6/> [Preparing Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder for Adulthood](http://connectability.ca/2011/06/13/supporting-children-with-asd-module-6/) has extensive resources on teaching independent living skills.

Moving Toward Functional Social Competence

Professional

http://region10projects.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Social_Skills_Checklist.pdf

This scope and sequence assessment of social skill development for students with challenges in social cognition was compiled by Heather Hanzlick, Lynne Petersen, and Laurie Rogers. It is a free resource that can be shared by a team through Google Docs or other means. It includes a cumulative Student Record, Data Collection Recording Sheets, a Student Summary Page, and Instruction Priorities. The information generated through the team's ongoing observations leads to a comprehensive view of the child's social-emotional development and a fuller understanding of the necessary foundation skills for mastery and generalization of these skills.

"...because children and youth with AS (Autism Spectrum Disorders) exhibit an uneven profile of social skills, it is important to understand the sequence in which these skills develop. Without an understanding of scope and sequence, it is possible to overlook that a child may be missing an important prerequisite skill that might make a more advanced skill rote-based instead of a usable asset. For example, if a student does not understand that tone of voice communicates a message, teaching the more advanced skill of using a respectful tone of voice to teachers may have little or no meaning. If the student learns by rote to use that tone of voice, it will likely not generalize" (*Children and Youth with Asperger Syndrome* by Brenda Smith Myles, p. 80)

REPRODUCING THIS GUIDE: The "Moving Toward Functional Social Competence" guide and student record forms are reproducible in their entirety. Follow the hotlink to download a copy of the assessment: http://region10projects.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Social_Skills_Checklist.pdf

Early Childhood Special Education programs are for children from ages 3 to 5

The children in these classrooms demonstrate developmental delays, including [difficulty with speech](#), [cerebral palsy](#), [Down Syndrome](#), [sensory processing difficulties](#), and other delays that impact their learning. The focus of the programs is to teach children the skills they will need to succeed in school. The classes often have many adults in the classroom. There is always the teacher and should be an assistant. There should also be a speech therapist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, and social worker who service the program. These individuals may work with children in the classroom or may pull one or more children out of the classroom to work on the goals for that child. The teacher and therapists work together to plan how to best support each child. Therapist services within the classroom are frequently the best way for each child's goals to be addressed because they are then working on the skills within the context of how they will be using them. At this age, one skill often impacts another, so the approach of working on improving a skill while working on general learning of all skills is often the most effective.

Each child in the classroom will have an **Individualized Educational Plan**, or **IEP**. This is a plan that is written with the parents, teacher, therapists, and administrators. The plan lists the goals and objectives that the team wants to help the child work on. It also includes the services (time in the classroom and the time that each therapist will work with the child) the child will receive. Teachers and therapists use the [IEP](#) to plan for the child.

Early Childhood Special Education classrooms implement a preschool curriculum to build preacademic skills in all of the children. These skills include learning colors, numbers, letters, counting, patterning, and shapes. Preschool curriculum also includes learning how to participate in group learning experiences, fine motor skills (beginning writing, cutting, etc.), sharing, and other skills to help prepare children for school. The activities should be hands on and play oriented. Play time, games, and interactive activities are the best

for helping young children learn. These are the most motivating for young children and lead to the mastering skills.

Early Childhood Special Education classes are positive environments to support young children's learning to help them prepare for Kindergarten (its a german word which is translated: "childrengarden") and future school experience.

 [AuSM Social Skills https://www.ausm.org/ausm-social-skills.html](https://www.ausm.org/ausm-social-skills.html)

For elementary-age students, teens and adults

Every young person deserves the chance to take advantage of all summer has to offer. AuSM Social Skills classes provide these opportunities – each one tailored to give youth with autism a fun, safe and exciting experience while they increase self-esteem, expand knowledge and build friendships that last a lifetime. AuSM also welcomes individuals with other learning differences who can benefit from skills including sensory integration, executive functioning, theory of mind, self-regulation and emotional regulation.

Led by ASD experts, AuSM Social Skills help participants build skills through special interests, including plants, animals, crafts, community attractions, nature, and more, AuSM Social Skills summer classes offer low-stress environments that encourage learning and growth.

Participants in all AuSM Social Skills classes must be group ready: able to demonstrate self-care skills without assistance; able to follow adult direction; show readiness for large group participation, including the ability to remain with the group at all times; and able to follow safety rules independently.

AuSM Summer Social Skills

<http://ausm.org/images/docs/Education%20PDFs/CatalogParts/AuSMSumCat2015final.pdf>

AuSM Como Zoo Skills

AuSM's Outdoor Adventure Skills with Eastman Nature Center

AuSM's Camps with the Minnesota Zoo

AuSM on the Town

NEW! Children's Theatre Company Early Childhood and Autism Workshops

NEW! AuSM Artists with the Minneapolis Institute of Arts

NEW! AuSM Social Connections in the West Metro

NEW! Islands of Brilliance

AuSM's education team continues to plan for the summer of 2015, creatively engaging other community organizations to develop programming for youth and adults with autism. Please visit this page for additional activity offerings and sign up for the AuSM Connections e-newsletter so you're the first to know when new classes are added to the summer schedule.



Saturday June 27th, 2015

<http://camsride.com/>

RAFFLE DRAWING & SILENT AUCTION

CAM's RIDE T-SHIRTS FOR SALE

OFFICIAL STOPS

- The Junction/Cave Liquors
- Harding Sportsman's Bar & Grill
- The Green Lantern
- Aitkin American Legion
- Food for sale and give-aways at each stop

<https://www.facebook.com/CAMsRide>