

Social Skills

Background Information

Social skills are important for everyone and critical to successful functioning in life. Though the debate goes back and forth—is it the family or the school’s job to teach a child social skills?—the reality is that educators and mental health professionals in schools need to be continually reinforcing positive social skills through direct and indirect instruction (NASP, 2002). An increased number of children are coming to school without the adequate repertoire of social skills required to help them strengthen interpersonal relationships and facilitate success in school (Knoff, 2002; MASP, 2002).

What are the elements of effective social skills interventions?

To begin with, the most effective social skills programs are comprised of two key elements: “a teaching process that uses a behavior/social learning approach and a universal language or set of steps that facilitates the learning of the new behavior” (NASP, 2002). In addition, a systematic approach is also essential to the social and emotional learning process, and it is critical that supportive and responsive relationships are in place to help the student as they learn the skills (Hemmeter, 2005).

Other key elements to keep in mind when looking at social skills programs are training and support for parents and the comprehensiveness of the program. In research, programs with a parent education/support component have been shown to be more effective, and interventions that are adapted and targeted to meet individual or group needs have shown the most success (Hemmeter, 2005; NASP, 2002).

The matrix on the following pages contains evidence-based programs and interventions targeting Social Skills instruction in schools.

This CDE guidance document is meant for clarification, is not legally binding, and is not to be confused with legal advice. This guidance reflects CDE's recommendations, but Administrative Units (AUs) may have developed their own policies or procedures that differ from those described herein. Be sure to refer to your local AU's policies and procedures through the Director of Special Education. If you are seeking legal advice, please contact your legal counsel.

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Programs and Interventions for Teaching Social Skills in Schools					
Program	Publisher	Level of Intervention	Target Population	Type of research conducted (Stringent research-research design, random assignment; Research – mixed method, random sampling; Applied with Fidelity – outcome measures)	Research Sample
S.S. Grin (Social Skills Group Intervention) <i>Summary:</i> This intervention is designed to be a general social skills intervention for small groups that can be applied to many social concerns.	3-C Institute for Social Development: http://www.3cisd.com/what-we-do/evidence-based-interventions/ssgrin/	Targeted	Grades Pre-K through 11 th	Stringent Research	3 rd graders with significant peer relationship difficulties
Social Stories <i>Summary:</i> A social story is a short story that has been written to help a person with Autism understand social situations.	The Gray Center for Social Learning and Understanding: http://carolgraysocialstories.com/	Intensive	Children diagnosed with Autism	Applied with Fidelity	Children diagnosed with Autism
Incredible Years: Dina Dinosaur Curriculum <i>Summary:</i> The Dinosaur child training curriculum strengthens children's social and emotional competencies such as understanding and communicating feelings, using effective problem solving strategies, managing anger, practicing friendship and conversational skills, as well as appropriate classroom behaviors.	Incredible Years: http://www.incredibleyears.com	Universal Targeted Intensive	Grades Pre-K through 3 rd	Stringent Research	Multiple studies with ages 4-8 with varying levels of conduct disorder; Prevention studies also completed for ages 4-8
Learning for Life <i>Summary:</i> Learning for Life uses role-playing, small-group discussions, reflective and moral dilemma exercises, online interactive lessons and hands-on activities to build and	Learning for Life: www.learning-for-life.org	Universal/ Targeted	Grades Pre-K through 12 th	Research	2,500 2 nd , 4 th , and 6 th graders across the United States

strengthen character development skills in conflict resolution, decision making, interpersonal relationships, practical life skills and self-esteem.					
Skillstreaming <i>Summary:</i> Addresses the social skill needs of students who display aggression, immaturity, withdrawal, or other problem behaviors. It is designed to help youngsters develop competence in dealing with interpersonal conflicts, learn to use self-control, and contribute to a positive classroom atmosphere.	Research Press: http://www.skillstreaming.com/	Targeted/ Intensive	Grades Pre-K through 12 th	All levels of research: Stringent Research Research Applied with Fidelity	Multiple studies over 30 years with all age groups and grades focusing mostly on students with problem behaviors
The EQUIP Program <i>Summary:</i> The EQUIP Program is designed for use with students who exhibit antisocial or disordered behaviors. The program includes training in moral judgment, anger management/correction of thinking errors, and prosocial skills.	Research Press: https://www.researchpress.com/books/528/equip-program	Targeted	Grades 6 th -12 th	All levels of research: Stringent Research Research Applied with Fidelity	Multiple studies over 20 years with middle and high school students primarily in alternative education settings with challenging behaviors.



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Program/Intervention References

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