

5. SOCIAL SKILLS INSTRUCTION

“Education is not preparation for life, education is life itself.”

—John Dewey

Social skills are essential to the effective functioning of any individual, group, or community. All Manitoba students, including those who come to school with appropriate social skills, benefit from social skills instruction and ongoing reinforcement of their performance of social skills.

Current research indicates that

- there is a strong correlation between social adjustment and acceptance or rejection by peers
- social skills are a predictor of future academic and social adjustment
- without intervention, social skill deficits increase with age
- teaching social skills, problem-solving skills, and coping skills enhances resilience

In a safe and caring classroom, students can interact comfortably with peers, and learn and practice social skills. Manitoba students come to school with varying backgrounds and experiences. Many are uncertain about what the social expectations really are, and they need direct assistance to identify and learn social skills. This is as true for high school students as it is for Middle and Early Years students. Students who have behavioural challenges (or who are at risk of developing such difficulties) have a particular need for specific social skills instruction and ongoing coaching to help them connect with peers and feel that they belong to the school and classroom community.

Social skills are also an integral part of learner outcomes across subject areas.



Manitoba Education has developed two sourcebooks on guidance and counselling that cross-reference the K-12 social studies, physical education/health education, and English language arts social skills outcomes. For example,

- Social skills development is addressed in **GLO 4: Personal and Social Management** in *Senior 1 and Senior 2 Physical Education/Health Education: A Foundation for Implementation* (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2004).
www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/9to12.html
- Opportunities for students to develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will help them become engaged and responsible citizens are included in **GO 5: Celebrate and Build Community** in *Kindergarten to Grade 8 English Language Arts: Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes and Standards* (Manitoba Education and Training, 1998).



There are many other ways educators can integrate social skills development within curricular areas. For further information, please see:

<http://www3.edu.gov.mb.ca/cn/index.jsp>



Manitoba Sourcebook for School Guidance and Counselling Services: A Comprehensive and Developmental Approach (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2007)

www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/mb_sourcebook/index.html



Manitoba Sourcebook: Guidance Education: Connections to Compulsory Curriculum Areas (Kindergarten to Grade 12) (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2007)

www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/mb_sourcebook/outcomes/index.html

Skillstreaming Curriculum

Some Manitoba schools use tools such as the skillstreaming curriculum to teach specific skills. Goldstein and McGinnis outline the following specific skills for each of five major skill groups:

Group I. Classroom Survival Skills

1. Listening
2. Asking for Help
3. Saying Thank You
4. Bringing Materials to Class
5. Following Instructions
6. Completing Assignments
7. Contributing to Discussions
8. Offering Help to an Adult
9. Asking a Question
10. Ignoring Distractions
11. Making Corrections
12. Deciding on Something to Do
13. Setting a Goal

Group II. Friendship-Making Skills

14. Introducing Yourself
15. Beginning a Conversation
16. Ending a Conversation
17. Joining In
18. Playing a Game
19. Asking a Favour
20. Offering Help to a Classmate
21. Giving a Compliment
22. Accepting a Compliment
23. Suggesting an Activity
24. Sharing
25. Apologizing

Group III. Skills for Dealing with Feelings

26. Knowing Your Feelings
27. Expressing Your Feelings
28. Recognizing Another's Feelings
29. Showing Understanding of Another's Feelings
30. Expressing Concern for Another
31. Dealing with Your Anger
32. Dealing with Another's Anger
33. Expressing Affection
34. Dealing with Fear
35. Rewarding Yourself

Group IV. Skill Alternatives to Aggression

36. Using Self-control
37. Asking Permission
38. Responding to Teasing
39. Avoiding Trouble
40. Staying Out of Fights
41. Problem Solving
42. Accepting Consequences
43. Dealing with an Accusation
44. Negotiating

Group V. Skills for Dealing with Stress

45. Dealing with Boredom
46. Deciding What Caused a Problem
47. Making a Complaint
48. Answering a Complaint
49. Dealing with Losing
50. Showing Sportsmanship
51. Dealing with Being Left Out
52. Dealing with Embarrassment
53. Reacting to Failure
54. Accepting No
55. Saying No
56. Relaxing
57. Dealing with Group Pressure
58. Dealing with Wanting Something That Isn't Mine
59. Making a Decision
60. Being Honest

Prosocial Skills: From *Skillstreaming the Adolescent: New Strategies and Perspectives for Teaching Prosocial Skills*, pages 108–109, by Arnold Goldstein and Ellen McGinnis, Champaign, IL: Research Press, 1997.

Another model that some Manitoba schools may use is “Developmental Assets.”

Search Institute has identified **40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents (ages 12 to 18)**, which are building blocks of healthy development that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. The 20 external assets need to be provided to adolescents by families and community, including schools, and are not listed here. The 20 internal assets from this list (Benson 33) have been included below.

Internal Assets

Internal assets focus on the competencies and passions that young people need in order to make responsible decisions and principled commitments.

Commitment to Learning

21. Achievement motivation – Young person is motivated to do well in school
22. School engagement – Young person is actively engaged in learning
23. Homework – Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day
24. Bonding to school – Young person cares about her or his school
25. Reading for pleasure – Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week

Positive Values

26. Caring – Young person places high value on helping other people
27. Equality and social justice – Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty
28. Integrity – Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs
29. Honesty – Young person “tells the truth even when it is not easy”
30. Responsibility – Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility
31. Restraint – Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs

Social Competencies

32. Planning and decision making – Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices
33. Interpersonal competence – Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills
34. Cultural competence – Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people from different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds
35. Resistance skills – Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations
36. Peaceful conflict resolution – Young person seeks to resolve conflicts nonviolently

Positive Identity

37. Personal power – Young person feels he or she has control over “things that happen to me”
38. Self-esteem – Young person reports having high self-esteem
39. Sense – Young person reports that “my life has a purpose”
40. Positive view of personal future – Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future

Five Steps in Teaching Social Skills

1. Identify/Prioritize School or Classroom Needs

Based on informal and formal data collection (see key element #8 on page 61), identify the specific social skill(s) to be taught. Social skills are best taught one at a time in the environment in which they will be used.

2. Demonstrate Skills

- Work with students to identify the steps involved in demonstrating a skill.
- Record a specific step-by-step description of the skill on chart paper and post it in the classroom for students to refer to.
- Discuss the skill before demonstrating it.
 - Be sure each step is identified and that the steps are presented in the correct sequence, and are clear and unambiguous.
 - Help students to observe the cognitive process involved in carrying out the skill.
- Demonstrate at least two different scenarios using the same skill, always ensuring that the scenarios have positive outcomes.

3. Practice with Role-Play

In role-play, students practice a skill by acting out situations without costumes or scripts. Set the context for role-play and allow students to choose their roles. Give them a minimal amount of planning time to discuss the situation, choose different alternatives or reactions, and plan a basic scenario. At the conclusion, ask students to discuss how they felt and what they learned. The most important part of role-play is the reflection and discussion that follows.

As students participate in role-play, they are able to

- practise communication and social skills in a safe, non-threatening environment
- consider different perspectives and develop empathy by seeing how their decisions might affect others
- solve social problems and explore new ideas

Sample Strategies for Using Role-Play in Social Skills Instruction



- Always have students role-play the positive side of a skill or situation.
- While it may be helpful to discuss negative situations, it is best not to role-play them. The negative role could be inadvertently reinforced if peers find that acting out negative behaviour is funny or entertaining.
- Provide a specific situation.
- Limit the time students have to develop and practise (5 to 10 minutes is usually sufficient).
- Provide tips for students (refer to boxes on the following page).
- During the role-play, observe how students handle the situations represented and consider the following types of questions:
 - Are concepts expressed accurately in language and action?
 - Are any students confused or uncertain about the purpose of the role-play, the situation, or their roles?
- Provide time for reflection and discussion as soon as possible.
 - What issues were clarified?
 - What misconceptions might have been presented?
 - What questions did the role-play raise?
 - What new information is needed?



Tips for Students for Participating in Role-Play

- Face the audience, and speak loudly and clearly.
- Use body language to communicate your message instead of relying on props or costumes.
- Focus on your role-play partners and the message you want to communicate.
- Assess your participation by asking yourself these questions:
 - How am I demonstrating that I understand this role?
 - Are we showing all important aspects of the situation?
 - Are we showing all of the ideas from our planning session?
 - Am I using new skills or concepts correctly?



Tips for Students for Observing Role-Play

- Demonstrate good listening by being quiet and attentive.
- Laugh at appropriate moments.
- Do not laugh at the role-play participants.
- Show support by clapping and using positive words of encouragement when the role-play is finished.
- Reflect on the social skill that is being role-played.
- Consider how you might use this skill in your own life.

4. Teach Self-Monitoring

To help students generalize and transfer the social skills they are learning to their daily lives, it is essential that the teacher teach students how to self-monitor.

When students regularly practise skills and monitor how well they do, they gradually become more independent.

Self-monitoring begins when the social skill has reached an acceptable level with the teacher managing/monitoring it.

1. Identify the social skill to be monitored in measurable terms.
2. Provide students with a form of data collection designed by the teacher (e.g., checklist or self-recording form).



See **Tool 4: Student Skillstreaming Checklist**. The simpler the data collection method, the more accurate the student is likely to be in counting and recording the behaviour.

3. Organize a variety of lessons/scenarios during which students can practise monitoring their use of that social skill.
4. Initially, monitoring may be shared between the teacher and students, with the teacher gradually releasing the ownership to the students themselves.

Tip for Teacher: You may want to randomly check on students' accuracy by looking at the recording document or self-reflection sheet. After the students have practiced self-monitoring several times in class with positive and corrective feedback, you may want to select a social skill that the students are doing well and ask them to practise the skill in a specific situation at home or in a different area of the school, and then have them complete a self-reflection rating scale.



- **Student Skillstreaming Checklist** (pp. 292-295) and **Chapter 9** of *Skillstreaming the Adolescent (Revised Edition): New Strategies and Perspectives for Teaching Pro Social Skills* (Goldstein and McGinnis)



- **Chapter 4: Cooperative Learning Strategies** (pp. 94-98) in *The Tough Kid Book: Practical Classroom Management Strategies* (Jenson et al.)



- **Reflection Sheet** (p. 5.25) in *Towards Inclusion: Tapping Hidden Strengths: Planning for Students who are Alcohol-Affected* (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth)



- *How Does Your Engine Run?: The Alert Program for Self-Regulation* (Williams and Shellenberg)

5. Teach Problem-Solving Approaches

Problems that arise in the classroom can provide opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own behaviour. When students try to solve their problems themselves, they develop confidence and acquire valuable skills that they can use throughout their lives.

Sample Strategies for Teaching Problem-Solving Approaches

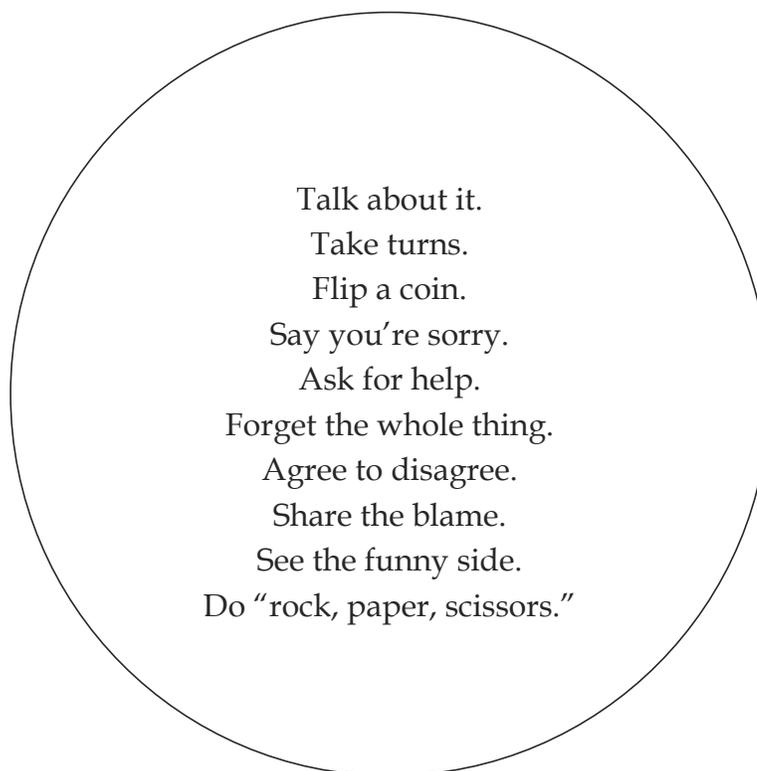


■ Solution Wheel

The Solution Wheel is a strategy that encourages students to take responsibility for their behaviour and find solutions. It is typically used in Early Years, but may be adapted for older students.

Have the class generate a list of solutions that can be used in any number of different conflicts (e.g., apologizing, talking it through, taking time to calm down, using an “I” message, or choosing something else to do). Once the list is generated, mark a star on all suggestions that are respectful and helpful, and work together to select suggestions that everyone can agree on. Students can draw a symbol or picture to represent each solution. Record each of the solutions on the circle and add the symbols. Post the wheel in a visible spot in the classroom.

When a problem arises, ask students to try at least two solutions from the wheel before asking an adult to help solve the problem. Tell school staff, including other teachers, support staff, and lunchroom supervisors, about the Solution Wheel so they can remind students to use it when a problem arises.



Real-Life Situations

Prompt personal problem solving through questioning, modelling, providing helpful language, and reinforcing students' efforts. Use real-life social situations in the classroom to teach social skills through a series of guided questions. For example,

- What do we need to do first?
- What do we need to get before we can start?
- What would happen if you _____?
- Who could we ask?
- Where should we go to _____?
- What would be better, _____ or _____?
- Where did we find _____ last week?
- Where do you need to look for _____?
- Who would be best to help with _____?
- Why would _____ be better than _____?

Problem-Solving Cards or Questions

Use problem-solving cards or questions to help students find new solutions to specific social situations that are causing difficulties in the classroom. Start with easy-to-solve situations. Ask students to answer questions, such as the following:

- What is the difficulty?
- Why could this be a problem?
- What are some possible choices or solutions?
- What are the pros and cons of the choices?
- What might be best and why?
- How could you _____?



Problem-Solving Guide (p. 5.23) and **My Picture Plan** (p. 5.29) in *Towards Inclusion: Tapping Hidden Strengths: Planning for Students who are Alcohol-Affected* (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2001)

Using RID to Reduce Your Anger (p. 5.31) in *Towards Inclusion: From Challenges to Possibilities: Planning for Behaviour* (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth, 2001)
www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/documents.html