

63RD CONFERENCE ON EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

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SHERATON FOUR SEASONS | KOURY CONVENTION CENTER | GREENSBORO, NC



Social skills & Life success

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Importance

- Bonding with parents and siblings provides a social safety net for children.
- Engagement with peers and acceptance in social groups provides age-appropriate feedback and opportunities to develop relationships.
- When other people like you, they are more inclined to support and encourage you as well as help when necessary.
- Social skills are part of the soft skills battery that employers covet in prospective employees and they set the stage for job maintenance and career advancement.

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Need

- Sighted children learn social skills incidentally – through observation and imitation of others.
- Visually impaired children may have difficulty interpreting non-verbalized cues and many people are reluctant to say how they feel in social situations.
- Nondisabled people make excuses for inappropriate behaviors and mannerisms from disabled children – leading to misunderstanding on their part of what's acceptable.

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Adaptations

- Since visual monitoring and modeling is at risk, use verbal descriptions and hand-under-hand or hand-over-hand instructional approaches, working from behind the child to demonstrate gestures.
- Allow additional time for learning to take place and be sure the child can perform in a variety of settings with different people.
- Verbalize what you see happening in the environment, particularly activities among others – label feelings, affective expressions and gestures, and other visual cues that help you interpret behavior and responses from afar.
- Discuss social situation outcomes with students privately to analyze results.

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Help instructional staff understand that children develop self-esteem by expecting them to:

- Follow classroom rules and procedures (lining up to move from classroom to lunchroom or playground, listening to a story without interruption and then asking questions about it, raising one's hand for permission to speak, etc.).
- Participate in routine classroom activities (circle time, show and tell, group projects) in meaningful ways.

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Help parents understand that their children develop self-esteem by expecting them to:

- Learn to groom and dress – do *for* themselves.
- Perform chores appropriate to their ages.
- Actively engage in family activities (playing board games, listening to radio or television shows or going to a film or event and discussing it, doing things together like decorating cookies, cakes, or the like).

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Help both parents and staff understand that children do *not* develop self-esteem by:

- Praising them indiscriminately.
- Doing things for them that they can do (even if it takes them a bit longer or don't perform as well).
- People make excuses for their misbehavior or oddities.



Intervention Tips

- To determine if a student is engaged in age- appropriate behavior, you need to observe same-aged peers without disabilities to ascertain what they are doing and compare.
- Encourage children to participate in activities of interest to sighted peers (pep club, hand-held computer games, iPods...).
- Provide tutoring or hand-under-hand instruction to teach the skills and movements needed to participate in activities other children are doing
- Encourage children to demonstrate their competence with adapted games (Monopoly, Scrabble, Candy Land, Beep Baseball, Goalball, braille or large print playing cards)

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Teach social skills in natural environments:

- Games and play activity (make believe)
- Cooperative learning activities
- Supportive extracurricular groups (toddlers babysitting coop, swimming lessons)
- Snack time, cafeteria, playground
- In the community – shopping, visiting friends, going to the library...



Reinforce positive social behaviors

- Smiling and orienting toward others
- Initiating & maintaining conversations with peers
- Actively engaging with others – playing in the sandbox or at the water table, interactive songs and rhymes, simple games – rolling a ball or hide and seek.
- Sharing appropriately with others

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- Use of social amenities (following social rules)
- Use of gestures, body and facial expressions
- Overt demonstrations of reciprocity (thanking others for their assistance, offering assistance to others...)
- Active participation in group projects, extracurricular activities, school clubs or sports, volunteer work...
- Effective listening and speaking skills

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- Proactive problem solving in social situations
- Use of assertive communication skills
- Overt demonstrations of understanding of levels of relationships between people
- Appropriate acceptance and/or rejection of assistance
- Evidence of an array of relationships (acquaintances, friends, professional helpers, family, etc.)

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For students with multiple disabilities



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Instructional tips

- Give students time to respond to greetings.
- Model the social behaviors you expect of students.
- Demonstrate common gestures (hand-under-hand).
- Reinforce positive social behaviors consistently, then intermittently over time.
- Use a team approach, include parents/caregivers...

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Instructional tips

- Select one or two behaviors to work on at a time.
- Always use the same language with students.
- Ignore, when possible, negative social behaviors; when not possible, redirect the student's behavior.
- Identify socially appropriate behaviors to substitute for inappropriate behavior.
- Encourage students to only perform socially inappropriate behavior in private locations rather than publicly.



Instructional tips

- Provide opportunities for students to choose between social activities.
- Use calendar boxes to set up and follow routines.
- Encourage the use of “All about Me” books to give students information to share with others.
- Encourage families to dress students in age-appropriate and popular garments, to have stylish haircuts and accessories, be properly groomed, and to carry backpacks and such like those used by their classmates.
- Write scripts for students to follow in conversations.

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impact of social skills instruction – the evidence





Articles of interest

- The digital social interactions of students with visual impairments: Findings from two national surveys (Kelly & Smith, 2008).
- Predictors of employment for youths with visual impairments: Findings from the second national longitudinal transition study (McDonnall, 2011).
- Instruction in areas of the expanded core curriculum linked to transition outcomes for students with visual impairments (Wolffe & Kelly, 2011).
- An examination of characteristics related to the social skills of youths with visual impairments (Zebehazy & Smith, 2011).
- Factors affecting the successful employment of transition-age youths with visual impairments (McDonnall & Crudden, 2009)

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Result

- Wolffe & Kelly analyzed reports of social interactions and Zebehazy & Smith used direct social skills measures. Both studies reported positive correlations between youths' social interactions and two ECC instructional areas (technology, orientation and mobility).
- McDonnall reported a small-to-moderate positive correlation between social skills and transition outcomes across all waves of NLTS2 data collection.
- McDonnall & Crudden reported that youth with self-determination skills and an internal locus of control were more likely to be closed as competitively employed from the rehabilitation rolls.

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Alert

- Research has also shown us that little instructional time is devoted to teaching social skills (Wolffe et al., 2002) and few IEP goals are written to include social skills (Wolffe, Blankenship, & Hatlen, 2010; Wolffe, 2012)
 - TVIs report that social skills instruction occurs as a secondary activity.
 - Nationally, only 9% of non-transition students' IEPs (n=217) and 7% of transition students' IEPs (n=66) included social skills goals.
 - This pattern was repeated, albeit in a slightly more positive direction, in a single state sample: 18% of non-transition students' IEPs (n=103) and 14% of transition students' IEPs (n=61) included social skills goals.



Bottom line

Transition outcomes for students with visual impairments (NLTS2, 2009):

- Currently working - 41.5%
 - Less than 20 hours/week – 19.6%
 - 20-34 hours/weeks – 28.8%
 - More than 34, less than 40 hours/week – 38.7%
 - More than 40 hours/week – 12.9%
 - **Mean – 31.1 hours/week**
 - Less than \$7.25/hour – 22.0%
 - \$7.26-\$8.50 – 22.5%
 - \$8.51-\$10.50 – 15.5%
 - \$10.51-\$14.50 – 19.7%
 - More than \$14.50/hour – 20.3%
 - **Mean – \$11.00/hour**

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What to do

- Make social skills instruction a primary area of focus throughout students' academic careers – infuse into all areas, but incorporate specific social skills competencies into IEP goals.
- Determine what social skills are critical to success at each stage of students' careers – think next environment – from bonding as infants with parents and other caregivers to establishing relationships outside of their families (classmates, friends, intimates...) – and teach those skills in a structured way.
- If there is content that you are uncomfortable with such as human sexuality, co-teach or find someone else to instruct your students – don't ignore need!



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What to do

- Assess students' social skills and document your results consistently.
- Encourage others (families, general education personnel, therapists) to work with you to reinforce and build positive social skills.
- Encourage students to participate in group activities – both in school and in the community. Think of ways to help students connect with other youngsters who are visually impaired nationally (NAPVI, NOPBC, ACB, NFB) and locally at residential schools or through rehabilitation agencies.
- Support students investigation into careers and help them discover the necessary soft skills to be successful.



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Resources - tools





Assessment

- Informal teacher checklists such as the handout you've received, *NC-CEC Critical Social Skills*.
- Informal student checklists such as the handouts you've received, *Social Skills Student Checklist*, in standard and large print as well as text formats .
- More formalized checklists such as *Social Skills Assessment Tool (SSAT-VI)* from *Teaching Social Skills to Students with Visual Impairments* (Sacks & Wolffe, 2006).
- Observation with your own teacher-generated protocol...

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Books

- *Focused On: Social Skills Curriculum Series* (Wolffe & Sacks, 2000)
- *Teaching Social Skills to Students with Visual Impairments* (Sacks & Wolffe, 2006)
- *Skills for Success* (Wolffe, 1999)
- *Independent Living: A Curriculum with Adaptations for Students with VI* (Loumiet & Levack, 1993)
- *Promoting Acceptance of Children with Disabilities: From Tolerance to Inclusion* (MacCuspie, 1996)
- *Get out of my life but first could you drive me and Cheryl to the mall?* (Wolf, 1991)
- *Socialsklz:-) for Success: How to give children the skills they need to thrive in the modern world* (Muyshondt, 2013)



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Articles

- Defiers of negative prediction: A 14-year follow-up of legally blind children (1991)
- The lifestyles of blind, low vision, and sighted youths: A quantitative comparison (1997)
- Best friendships of adolescents with visual impairments: A descriptive study (1998)
- The personal networks and social supports of blind and visually impaired adolescents (1997)
- Enhancing the social interaction skills of preschoolers with visual impairments (2002)
- Social acceptance of adolescent mainstreamed students with visual impairments (2002)
- Self-esteem and empathy in sighted and visually impaired preadolescents (2005)
- Play behaviors and social interactions of a child who is blind: In theory and practice (2006)
- The social lives of Canadian youths with visual impairments (2010) [all from *JVIB*]





Websites

www.familyconnect.org

www.careerconnect.org

www.tsbvi.edu/recc

www.dcmp.org

www.projectaspiro.com

- Social media site for parents, which includes professional content
- Video & audio media for adolescents
- Teaching resources for ECC
- Social skills lessons (teachers & students)
- Career Education content

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Age-Appropriate Chores for Children and Youth with Visual Impairments

Children will need to do the listed chores first as helpers and slowly graduate to performing independently; however, younger children and children with multiple disabilities may require closer supervision and take longer to achieve independence. Children without vision may require hand-under-hand or hand-over-hand instruction and it's usually better for the parent or teacher to work from behind the child. If a child is unable to perform a chore due to physical limitations, find out if there is a "work-around" or tool that can make the task doable.

For example, mopping a floor without vision can be accomplished using a grid pattern and working in a consistent pattern. The person without vision may start on the north wall in the northwest corner and mop to the northeast corner, take one or two steps away from the north wall and mop from the east wall to the west wall, take another step or two away from the north wall and repeat the pattern until arriving at the south wall. To ensure full coverage, the pattern can be repeated on the east or west wall, starting on the northeast (or northwest) corner and mopping to the southeast (or southwest) corner. If there is furniture such as a dining table and chairs impeding access, the blind person would move the furnishing to a "quadrant" and mop first in the other areas, then move the furnishings to the mopped area and complete the task in the unmapped quadrant.

If a child uses a wheelchair and is unable to physically reach for and pick up clothes or toys that have been left on the floor or fallen, a reaching or grabbing tool with a telescoping arm may be appropriate to use when performing chores. Likewise, dusters with telescopic handles can be used to reach shelves, blinds, or ceiling fan blades that are too high for a wheelchair user to easily access. The key is to find tools and techniques that will enable children to perform tasks as independently as possible.

It is important to understand that cultural mores and family values or socioeconomic status also dictate the kinds of chores that children will perform in their homes. The following list is not definitive – it is meant as a guide. To determine what chores are most appropriate, it is important to either visit the child's home and observe or interview the parents or caregivers to determine the types of tasks that children in the home without disabilities are performing and help them understand how a child with vision loss or multiple disabilities may do so as well. Encourage parents to provide real cleaning and organizing tools – play tools should only be used for play.

When a child becomes proficient at a chore, it is time to give the chore to a younger child in the household. Many families will have the youngest child who is able to do a chore perform that job. When the child is learning a chore, he or she needs to be supervised by an older sibling or a parent. When possible, it is a good idea for children to work together to keep the house clean and organized. If there is only one child or a wide age spread between children, the parents

may want to consider a “job jar” or “chore chart” to facilitate the coordination of responsibilities. For children who are visually impaired, the jobs in the job jar can be brailled and/or written out with a bold-line pen or marker so that they can read them independently. A chore chart can be set up with a bulletin board (cork or foam, for example) with “daily” boxes framed with yarn or string, painted on raised lines (you can use puff or 3-D paint), or something like Wikki Stix (waxed strings). The month and days of the week can be brailled or printed with a bold marker or in a large size font such as Arial, Tahoma, or Verdana and laminated to preserve them. Chores can be brailled or printed on slips of paper much as described for a job jar. Children without the ability to read may benefit from calendar boxes or the use of tactually representative items on a chore chart such as a piece of a sponge to represent cleaning the sink, a small sock to represent the laundry basket and a dryer sheet to represent the laundry room, or a small spoon to represent the dishwasher.

Rather than visual-only evidence of successful chore completion (stickers on a calendar, for instance), use raised-line stickers (happy faces) and puffed stickers (stars) or punch-outs (you can literally use a hole-punch or purchase punches in shapes such as stars) on the family wall calendar or a special calendar with raised lines and braille or large print demarcations for the child with a vision loss. If families are comfortable with monetary rewards or an allowance that is contingent upon completion of chores, encourage them to set the rules for their children with visual impairments to match what they’ve done for their typically sighted children.

Parents and older siblings must remember that they are modelling for younger children what’s important to them. If younger children see their parents and siblings consistently doing their chores, chances are they will learn to do the same. It may be helpful to have a family discussion before implementing any new chore responsibilities or system. Adults need to allow some decisions to be made by the children. The more children feel they are involved in making decisions, the more they will feel ownership of those responsibilities.

Parents may want to consider setting a specific time of the day when most of the chores are performed. Keeping in mind that children have other obligations besides chores is also important. It’s critical to make sure there is plenty of time for homework and other mandatory activities. Parents will want to supervise closely to determine if children can handle the work they have from school and at home without struggling under the weight of all they have to do. If it’s too much, consider removing some responsibilities or activities to relieve the burden.

However, if expectations are reasonable and children fail to complete their chores there need to be consequences. Sometimes the consequences happen naturally. For instance, if a child has a uniform for sport or a special activity, but fails to collect all the laundry, he or she may have to go out of uniform. Other times parents may have to take away rewards, an allowance, or other activities that are enjoyable. If an extenuating circumstance has kept a child from performing a job well, a parent may want to offer assistance to help the child or ask another to do so (this should be an occasional, not recurring, occurrence).



Parents typically have expectations of how a job should be performed. Teaching children how to perform chores and showing them what is expected when the chore is completed can go a long way to ensure success. Adults unfamiliar with techniques for completing home and personal management tasks without vision may want to view videos or read descriptions of how certain chores are accomplished with impaired sight on websites such as Washington State School for the Blind's **Blindness Tips**

(<http://www.wssb.wa.gov/content/offcampus/video.asp>) or tips for independent living (<http://www.visionaware.org/section.aspx?FolderID=8&SectionID=140>) from VisionAware.

Finally, it's also important to schedule time for breaks. Allow children to break up or divide long chores. Parents may want to surprise their children by including fun activities in the job jar or planning a treat like a trip to the beach or public library on their chore charts. Slipping in such surprises among the routine chores can delight and encourage children to actively check the chart or visit the job jar. Families should not feel they must lock in to one system – changing up the routine, the presentation, or the rewards can help prevent boredom.

Toddler (ages 2 and 3)

- Pick up and put away toys (have a designated box or shelf available that is easily found – don't move it, use a bright colour that contrasts with the wall, or provide tactual cues for a child without vision).
- Unload the dishwasher or drying rack (place silverware – not knives in a section that the child can easily reach, use plastic plates and cups, include plastic storage containers in the drying rack as well) or let the child sort silverware into the drawer compartments as you hand items to him or her)
- Help dust with a feather duster, a microfiber rag, or with socks on their hands.
- Sweep the floor using a child-sized tool (you can either cut down a wooden or metal handle on a broom or sweeper – some brands actually come with handle segments that are screwed together or telescope to give the length needed).
- Put used (worn) clothes in the dirty clothes hamper or a laundry basket.
- Collect dirty clothes from other family members' rooms and common areas such as kitchen and bathrooms.
- Take laundry to the laundry room or washing machine. Or, help "bag" laundry for a trip to the Laundromat.
- Help get clothes from washer to dryer or from dryer to clothes basket for folding.
- Put his or her clothes away and deliver other family member's folded clothes to them or to common household areas.
- Make bed (this may only be pulling up a sheet or duvet, putting pyjamas under a pillow, or fluffing pillow initially)



- Wipe cabinets (this is another task that's easily accomplished with a sock on the dominant hand, if the child tolerates such well – teach the child to use the bare hand to “check” for stickiness or crumbs and use the hand with the dampened sock to wipe up).
- Wipe baseboards with soapy water or polish (use the sock technique).
- Put napkins on table (an older child or parent places silverware, plates, etc.).
- Help feed, water, and exercise pets.

Preschool (ages 4-5)

- Perform all toddler chores with greater competence and confidence.
- Load the dishwasher or bring dirty dishes to the sink.
- Vacuum couch, chairs, or cushions with hand vacuum cleaner tool or a handheld vacuum (such as a Dustbuster).
- Rinse cans, collect in bins or bags for recycling.
- Collect newsprint, magazines or other paper products for recycling.
- Take out recycling for collection.
- Set the table (may initially just put out silverware and/or glasses – work toward inclusion of plates and condiments).
- Fill salt and pepper shakers.
- Clear table and put things away such as condiment containers.
- Wash dishes with supervision (you may want to start with plastic dishes and graduate to breakables – consider the use of surgical gloves to protect hands).
- Clean windows, storm doors, and mirrors.
- Wipe out bathroom sinks.
- Fold dish towels, washcloths, and small bathroom hand towels.
- Water plants and/or garden.
- Rake with child-sized rake.
- Help plant flowers, seed, or vegetables.
- Help strip bed.
- Help wipe up messes.
- Help put away groceries.

Early Elementary (ages 6-8)

- Perform all toddler and preschool chores competently.
- Make bed.
- Help with meal preparation (wash produce, find ingredients, simple cutting)
- Wipe bathroom sinks, counters, toilets.



- Hang out laundry or load dryer.
- Sweep.
- Vacuum.
- Collect garbage and consolidate to be taken out for collection.
- Get mail.
- Fold and hang laundry.
- Put away laundry for self and other family members.
- Clean microwave (wipe out with soapy water and dry).
- Rake and bag leaves.

Elementary (9-11)

- Perform all previous chores competently.
- Make simple meals (lunch for school, snacks, etc.).
- Help make desserts (cookies, cakes, brownies, etc.)
- Tidy bedroom and/or play or study room with direction.
- Take garbage and recycling to the curb or prepare for delivery to a collection site.
- Wash and dry clothes (by this age, children should have a system for marking their clothes to sort by colour and laundry type).
- Clean toilets using appropriate chemicals and tools.
- Mop, sweep, vacuum floors and/or carpets.
- Water plants.
- Help wash, vacuum, and wax the car.

Middle School (12-14)

- Perform all previous chores competently.
- Clean bathtub and/or shower stall.
- Help plan meals and shop for ingredients.
- Put away groceries.
- Help make full meals (this may start with a simple breakfast or luncheon, then progress to dinner)
- Help clean out refrigerator and/or freezer.
- Mow yard and/or shovel snow.
- Wash, vacuum, and wax the car.
- Supervise younger children's chores

High School (15-18)

By the time children reach late adolescence, they should have the ability to do almost everything around the house. While they don't necessarily do everything, they should be capable of performing competently and as independently as possible in all areas of home and personal management.

Remember that children mature at their own pace and not all children will be capable of advanced chores at the same age, just as some children may be ready for more difficult chores at a younger age. The most important guidelines are supervision and evaluation of children's needs and abilities. Children need to advance to more challenging chores as they master the basic ones. It can be easy to let children keep performing the same chores because they are good at them, but introducing new chores at regular intervals will actually benefit them in the long run. Be sure to encourage parents to implement training periods with new chores and to intersperse "easy" or learned tasks with "harder" or new tasks.

Many of the chores listed in this handout were captured from websites dedicated to listing age-appropriate chores for children without disabilities. My thanks to the following authors: Joanne McNulty and Sarah Aguirre.

Wolffe, 2012



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Critical social skills children and youth with visual impairments, including those with multiple disabilities, need to demonstrate as they are able to do so...

Students need to:

- Be polite and follow social rules, by
 - Using social amenities (please, thank-you, you're welcome, excuse me, may I please...).
 - Evidencing an absence of socially inappropriate behaviors (in other words, no coughing or sneezing without covering mouth, chewing or speaking with mouth open, rocking, eye gouging, flicking...).
 - Assisting others (holding doors, carrying packages, giving up seat on bus...).
- Initiate greetings and interactions, by
 - Speaking when they hear someone or sense that someone may be present (e.g., in an elevator or a room they enter).
 - Asking leading questions such as "Have we met?" or make comments "Your voice sounds familiar to me." to maintain conversations.
 - Extending a hand to shake when greeting an adult.
- Maintain eye contact or facial orientation – (youngsters need to look toward conversation partners, when feasible – even if they can see better "out-of-the-corner" of an eye or if they have no functional vision).
- Keep their chins parallel to the ground throughout a conversation (not look skyward or rest chin on chest).
- Show evidence of interest in following a conversation, by
 - Paying attention only to the person talking (don't answer the phone, text, listen to music, read braille or print notes, look around, etc.).
 - Responding to what the other person says.
 - Asking pertinent questions and adding relevant comments when there is a pause in the conversation.
 - Knowing when to "let go!" – listening for others' hints, "Okay!" "All right!"
 - Attending to others (not refocusing conversation on personal interests or stories).

- Maintaining orientation & personal space (arm's length, in most instances).
- Smiling or using other facial expressions appropriately (happy, serious, sad, grim...).
- Nodding one's head to indicate agreement or shaking one's head if one disagrees.
- Leaning in toward the speaker.
- Taking notes, when they're in class or attending interviews.
- Attend to impact of their behaviors on others, by
 - Apologizing if they sneeze, cough, bump into someone, or step on a toe!
 - Thanking others when they offer or provide assistance.
 - Describing the feelings of others and how their actions have impacted those feelings).
 - Listening closely to how others respond to their questions or comments: Do they sound happy, sad, angry, or fearful?
 - Understanding how to use "I" and "You" messages to converse with others about their feelings and others' feelings toward them.
- Cooperate, evidenced by
 - Playing with other children (sans aide!).
 - Joining groups, clubs, or teams.
 - Participating with others in group learning experiences (study groups, for example).
 - Participating in extracurricular activities (scouting, for example).
 - Helping to plan and coordinate activities (parties, shopping expeditions, going to events, etc.).
- Demonstrate effective listening and speaking skills, by
 - Hearing what is said (evidenced by being able to repeat what others have said either verbatim or by paraphrasing).
 - Listening to conversations and responding consistently to content shared.
 - Being able to identify the speaker's feelings.

- Being able to guess at what speaker means (listening for what's not said).
- Asking appropriate questions for clarification.
- Responding with care rather than hatefully.
- Speaking carefully so as not to harm others who may be in the vicinity (avoiding gossip).
- Use gestures appropriately, by
 - Understanding and using common hand signals (hello, good-bye, I-give-up, I-don't-know, stop, come, thumbs-up, thumbs-down, etc.).
 - Understanding rude hand signals.
 - Understanding subtle nuances of gestures (hand-glued-to-forehead, fed-up, hands-on-hips, arms-crossed, thinker-pose).
 - Understanding local hand signals.
- Solicit help, only as needed, by
 - First trying to do tasks themselves.
 - Asking for assistance only when unable to complete a task, get somewhere independently, or solve a problem.
 - Paying attention so that help isn't needed repeatedly (demonstrate competence in following directions).
 - Asking for help politely – not making demands.
 - Thanking the person who's given them assistance.
- Understand the different kinds of social interactions or levels of engagement, by
 - Recognizing levels of relationships (public, acquaintances, friends, intimates, and private self).
 - Adjusting interactions to situations (asking for street directions vs. asking for a date).
 - Understanding where to find people to solicit aid (store clerks vs. street people).
 - Knowing how to avoid dangerous situations (for example, walking in lighted areas, staying in well-traveled areas, avoiding dangerous neighborhoods, etc.)
- Complete social interactions, by



- Finding out when they may meet or call the other person again.
- Saying farewell, good-bye, see you later, or some other variation!
- If formal, shaking hands and using an individual's correct title.
- Waving good-bye...repeatedly if the person is driving or walking away.
- Smiling appropriately.
- Problem solve social dilemmas, by
 - Recognizing that there is a problem (noting a feeling of discomfort).
 - Exploring the problem to identify what's bothering them.
 - Understanding the problem (how they contribute, how others contribute, how the environment/society contributes, and what's kept them from solving the problem to date).
 - Brainstorming solutions to the problem and generating a list of possible actions with pros and cons for options.
 - Developing an action plan to achieve a solution.
 - Implementing their action plans.
 - Evaluating their plans and adjusting them, if necessary.

Supports for students with multiple disabilities who are unable to do all of the above:

- Give them time to respond to greetings. If a student doesn't respond, move closer or touch the student's arm or shoulder to get his/her attention and try repeating the greeting. As soon as you get a response (head movement, smile, flicker of attention...), reward that response!
- Model the response you hope for with others in the student's vicinity so that he/she can hear what's expected.
- Show the student common greeting gestures, using hand-under-hand technique from behind, when the opportunity to greet others presents. Once you've shown the student, use tactual prompts to see if he/she can replicate the action (for instance, gently lift the student's hand up from below to wave).



- Reinforce positive social behaviors consistently (smiling, orienting toward a speaker, waving “hello” or “good-bye”) when the behavior is first evidenced and then intermittently to encourage it over time.
- Use a team approach (student, parents, caregivers, educational professionals, therapists, rehabilitation or habilitation professionals, etc.) to identify social skills of critical importance to next environment.
- Select one or two behaviors to work on together (reach consensus with the team) and break the skills down into identifiable steps (task analysis of behavior sought).
- Always use the same language (spoken, signed, tactual or pictorial cues) to reference the behavior and the steps to achieve the behavior.
- Ignore, when possible, negative social behaviors; when not possible, redirect the student’s behavior.
- Identify socially appropriate behaviors to substitute for inappropriate behavior; for example, rocking in a rocking chair rather than rocking on the playground or in the hallway.
- Provide opportunities for students to choose between social activities, beginning with only two activities and adding more as allowable.
- Encourage students to only perform socially inappropriate behavior in private locations rather than publicly.
- Write scripts for students to follow in simple conversations and practice them as role-plays in the classroom. Or, integrate the conversational scripts into the students’ augmentative communication devices or other alternative tools for communicating with others.
- Provide peer supports, when possible, to encourage participation in school-based and community-based activities.
- Encourage the use of “All about Me” books to give students information to share with others.
- Encourage families to enter information and/or provide representative items to chronicle their social activities and events in a way that students can follow (for instance, a large

print or braille calendar that can be used to glue on a birthday candle for each family member's birthday or a ticket from a theater that can be glued on to a day they went to see a film together).

- Use calendar boxes to set up and follow routines, including social activities.
- Help students produce simple crafts items that they can give family members and friends as gifts.
- Teach students how to operate (at a minimum, on and off) the devices they need to use for communicating with others.
- Encourage students to play with age-appropriate games and toys or things.
- Encourage families to dress students in age-appropriate and popular garments, to have stylish haircuts and accessories, be properly groomed, and to carry backpacks and such like those used by their classmates.

Wolffe, 2013

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Believing In Achieving



Follow these simple social rules to help you make a positive impression and have friends:

- Be polite (for example, say: please, thank-you, you're welcome, excuse me, sir, miss, missus, may I please...).
- Wait your turn in games.
- Do not interrupt conversations.
- Add to conversations when there is a pause in others' comments, but stay on-topic – don't change the topic to something of more interest to you!
- Raise your hand in class to be recognized.
- Do not jump in line or go to the head of the line.
- Push in your chair when finished at a table or desk.
- Eat with a knife & fork – not your fingers, unless appropriate (sandwiches, for example).
- Eat with your mouth closed.
- Use a napkin when eating, as necessary.
- Do not talk with food in your mouth.
- Do not slurp drinks.
- Cover your mouth if you sneeze or cough.
- Do not pick, poke, or scratch inappropriately.
- Do not burp or pass gas intentionally; if you do so accidentally, say "Excuse me."
- Do not rock, eye gouge, or flick in public!
- Smile when you meet people.
- Face people when you talk with them (chin parallel to earth, face oriented toward their voices).
- Wave to greet people.
- Respond to others when they speak to you.
- Help others (hold the door for other students or shoppers, carry packages for your parents or others, give up your seat on a bus or train to someone older, pregnant, or unable to stand easily...).

Wolffe, 2013

Believing In Achieving



Follow these simple social rules to help you make a positive impression and have friends:

- Be polite (for example, say: please, thank-you, you're welcome, excuse me, sir, miss, missus, may I please...).
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Note: In addition to the resources listed above, there are numerous pamphlets available from Channing L. Bete Company 200 State Road, So. Deerfield, MA 01373-0200 (800/628-7733) or www.channing-bete.com in easy-to-understand language on topical areas, such as interpersonal skills, assertiveness, self-esteem, communicating effectively, understanding yourself and others, developing friendships, respecting differences, and the like.

The Described Caption Media Program (DCMP) (www.dcmp.org) partnered with the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Students Advisory Committee to produce a series of lessons on social skills with student- and teacher-made videos:

Game Night	http://www.dcmp.org/Catalog/TitleDetail.aspx?TID=6771
My Dream Night Out	http://www.dcmp.org/Catalog/TitleDetail.aspx?TID=6772
Rewind Button	http://www.dcmp.org/Catalog/TitleDetail.aspx?TID=6773
Great Cup Stack Challenge	http://www.dcmp.org/Catalog/TitleDetail.aspx?TID=6774
Raising Cane!	http://www.dcmp.org/Catalog/TitleDetail.aspx?TID=6775



Believing In Achieving



Social Skills Assessment Tool for Children with Visual Impairments (SSAT - VI)

Student:

Assessor:

Date:

Rate each item as: 1 = absent; 2 = poor; 3 = fair; 4 = adequate; 5 = good; 6 = excellent

BASIC SOCIAL BEHAVIORS

A. Body Language

1. _____ Maintain appropriate eye contact.
2. _____ Demonstrate appropriate body posture.
3. _____ Maintain appropriate personal body space.
4. _____ Utilize and respond to gestures and facial expressions.
5. _____ Refrain from engaging in socially unacceptable mannerisms.

B. Communication Skills

1. _____ Initiate interactions positively with others.
2. _____ Exhibit age-appropriate interactions and conversations.
3. _____ Expand conversations.
4. _____ Listen well.
5. _____ Take turns and share.
6. _____ Compliment.
7. _____ Interrupt appropriately.
8. _____ Demonstrate empathy and sympathy.
9. _____ Respond appropriately to positive & negative feedback from peers & adults.

C. Cooperative Skills

1. _____ Demonstrate cooperation and understanding of group dynamics.
2. _____ Demonstrate respect for group leader.
3. _____ Sustain group involvement.

4. _____ Share in group activity.
5. _____ Initiate joining a group.
6. _____ Lead group activity.

Social Skills Assessment Tool for Children with Visual Impairments

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

A. Interactions

1. _____ Interact appropriately with others: ___ adult ___ disabled peer
___ nondisabled peer ___ younger children ___ older children.
Comment on type and style of interaction:

2. _____ Play with others: ___ one ___ small group ___ larger group.
Comment on quality of play:

3. _____ Demonstrate ability to engage in a variety of play activities.
4. _____ Can compromise.
5. _____ Show awareness of common activities and interests.
6. _____ Encourage the efforts of others.
7. _____ Demonstrate gratitude towards others.

B. Sustaining Relationships

1. _____ Demonstrate an understanding of differences between family, friends,
acquaintances, and strangers.
2. _____ Develop friends and be liked by peers.
3. _____ Demonstrate appropriate behaviors for attending social events.
4. _____ Interact with peers outside of school.
5. _____ Understand the needs of others.



6. _____ Demonstrate an age-appropriate awareness of human sexuality including concepts of public vs. private, and societal values and attitudes.
7. _____ Demonstrate an age-appropriate awareness of job related concepts including assuming responsibility and relating to others in work situations.

Social Skills Assessment Tool for Children with Visual Impairments

COGNITIVE SOCIAL BEHAVIORS

A. Self-Identity

1. _____ Demonstrate understanding of visual impairment.
2. _____ Demonstrate awareness of personal competencies and limitations.
3. _____ Demonstrate awareness of possible adaptations.
4. _____ Advocate for self in school, home, and community environments.
5. _____ Demonstrate assertiveness in appropriate manner.

B. Interpreting Social Situations

1. _____ Observe and identify opportunities for social interactions.
2. _____ Interpret social cues and generates strategies for interaction.
3. _____ Anticipate consequences of strategies and select most desired.

C. Performance of Social Skills

1. _____ Initiate and perform appropriate behaviors.
2. _____ Generalize social skills to a variety of situations.
3. _____ Sustain social competency over time.

D. Self-Evaluation

1. _____ Demonstrate ability to evaluate and monitor own social performance realistically.
2. _____ Demonstrate ability to adjust own behavior accordingly.

Adapted from the *Santa Clara Social Skills Assessment for Children with Visual Impairments* (McCallum & Sacks, 1994). Revised and published in *Teaching Social Skills to Students with Visual Impairments: From Theory to Practice* (Sacks & Wolfe, 2006).



Believing In Achieving



Follow these simple social rules to help you make a positive impression and have friends:

Be polite (for example, say: please, thank-you, you're welcome, excuse me, sir, miss, missus, may I please...).

Wait your turn in games.

Do not interrupt conversations.

Add to conversations when there is a pause in others' comments, but stay on-topic – don't change the topic to something of more interest to you!

Raise your hand in class to be recognized.

Do not jump in line or go to the head of the line.

Push in your chair when finished at a table or desk.

Eat with a knife & fork – not your fingers, unless appropriate (sandwiches, for example).S

Eat with your mouth closed.

Use a napkin when eating, as necessary.

Do not talk with food in your mouth.

Do not slurp drinks.

Cover your mouth if you sneeze or cough.

Do not pick, poke, or scratch inappropriately.

Do not burp or pass gas intentionally; if you do so accidentally, say "Excuse me."

Do not rock, eye gouge, or flick in public!

Smile when you meet people.

Face people when you talk with them (chin parallel to earth, face oriented toward their voices).

Wave to greet people.

Respond to others when they speak to you.

Help others (hold the door for other students or shoppers, carry packages for your parents or others, give up your seat on a bus or train to someone older, pregnant, or unable to stand easily...).