Teaching social skill strategies to elementary level students with autism

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TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS STRATEGIES TO ELEMENTARY LEVEL STUDENTS WITH AUTISM

Kristina A. Sordelet – Hans

A Special Project
Submitted to the Faculty of the Office of the Graduate School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Masters of Science in Education with a Major in Special Education
in the department of Professional Studies
Indiana University – Purdue University Fort Wayne
May 2014
Accepted by the Graduate Facility, Indiana University – Purdue University of Fort Wayne, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education with a major in Special Education.

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Abstract

With the recent increase of children with autism receiving education in the regular education classes, teachers are required to be knowledgeable about autism and about evidence-based strategies to include students effectively. Individuals with autism have impaired communication and social interaction skills, which makes teaching in an inclusive environment challenging. This Special Project emphasizes how important social skills are for individuals with autism and provides guidance for teachers to teach social skills to students with autism. According to research, social stories, social cue cards, social scripts, and peer role-play within the classroom are effective strategies to teach all aspects of communication, behavior issues, and play skills. For this project, teachers were surveyed to identify their understanding of autism and how they currently teach social skill strategies within their classroom. The findings from the literature review and the data analysis from the survey supported the need for a handbook that emphasizes on social skills and social skill strategies that can be implemented in an elementary classroom setting. The handbook created is aimed at providing guidance for teachers who are seeking information about autism, and how to teach social skills within their classroom using the above four evidence-based strategies.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank committee members Dr. Cho, Dr. Cousik, and Dr. Leatherman for their guidance and direction throughout this Special Project, the assistance of my friends, and the support from my family. Without them, I would have never been able to finish this project.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation and gratitude to my advisors Dr. Cho and Dr. Cousik for their guidance, support, and patience. This project could not have been completed without their leadership and expertise. Thank you for being patient with me.

I would also like to thank my mom, dad, sisters, and my in-laws for their encouragement and moral support to finish my Special Project.

I would like to thank my mom for reading, and rereading my Special Project and acting as my editor. She never gave up on me and my project, even though I wanted to give up on it all.

I would like to thank my loving, supportive husband, Adam, for never letting me give up. His love, support, and encouraging words kept me going through this difficult time. I love you!

Finally, I would like to thank my daughter Makynley for understanding that mommy was busy and couldn’t always play. Thank you for understanding that I completed this Special Project and my Master's in Special Education for you. I want to be a role model that you can be proud of, and I want to show you that ALL things are possible through hard work and dedications. Mommy loves you Makynley!
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Autism is one of the fastest developmental disabilities in the United States (Kabot, Masi, & Segal, 2003). With as many as 1 out of 66 children diagnosed with autism, there is an increased need for general education teachers and special education teachers to be aware of and understand the characteristics of autism, as well as strategies that could be used within their classroom to help children with autism succeed (Laursen & Yazdgerdi, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

According to a study recently released from the Center for Disease Control, one in 66 children in the United States has been diagnosed with autism, which is a 78% increase over the past decade (Laursen & Yazdgerdi, 2012). The sudden rise in autism challenges teachers everywhere. Teachers are told to include all students, even those diagnosed with disabilities, into an inclusive learning environment where students can learn, grow, and succeed along the sides of their developing peers (Vakil, Welton, O’Connor, & Kline, 2009). However, individuals with autism often have impaired communication and social interaction skills, which makes teaching in an inclusive environment challenging (Bellini & Hopf, 2007). Therefore, educators need to know social skill strategies that can be implemented within the classroom for students with autism.

Significance of Project

This project is significant for all teachers because it briefly explains autism in a comprehensive manner and describes effective social skills strategies for teachers to implement within their classroom with students diagnosed with autism. This handbook
will help teachers understand the importance of social skills for all students and provide guidelines on how to improve social interactions among others. This handbook can improve, not only the method(s) by which a teacher implements social skills strategies, but also help students diagnosed with autism communicate, connect with others, and gain life-long skills that will increase the quality of that student’s life needed to succeed as a citizen.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to identify a teacher’s understanding of autism and how they currently teach social skill strategies to their students with autism. The study also indicated which evidence-based research strategies they currently implemented among students with autism in their classroom and which strategies teachers need further information and training on.

**Research Approach**

This project was created using a qualitative study format. To assess the teacher’s responses and needs, data was gathered through a needs assessment survey (Appendix A). The teachers at the elementary were asked to complete a one-time survey consisting of two demographic questions and ten short answer questions. The survey inquired teachers’ knowledge and understanding of autism and how they currently utilize social skills strategies among their students with autism in their classroom. The survey questions were created based on information gathered through peer-reviewed articles. The survey was confidential. The teachers were contacted through a recruitment email (Appendix B). The principal of Haverhill Elementary gave permission for this survey (Appendix C).
Literature Review

Autism

Autism is a neurological disorder that affects the Central Nervous System. Autism ranges from mild cognitive, social, and behavioral discrepancies to severe cognitive, social, and behavioral discrepancies (Ryan Hughes, Katsyanns, McDaniel, & Sprinkle, 2011). Impaired communication, social interaction issues and highly repetitive behaviors are common characteristics that are associated with an individual that is diagnosed with autism (Bellini & Hopf, 2007). A person with autism may also struggle with interpreting nonverbal social cues and gestures, and may not interact while in a group of people due to limited communication and social skills. Many factors contribute to social deficits among individuals with autism. They typically lack knowledge of social skills, opportunity, reinforcements, practice, and feedback (Elliot & Gresham, 1993).

What are Social Skills and Why are Social Skills Important to Teach?

Social skills are described as behaviors learned that enforce communicating, expressing, understanding, dealing, and establishing a good relationship with others and the environment (Samanci, 2005). Social skills are necessary because most school activities require some social interaction due to the requirement of providing educational services to students in the least restrictive environment (Vakil, Welton, O’Connor, & Kline, 2008). Furthermore, if social skills are not taught to individuals with autism, social deficits may lead to social exclusion, difficulty maintaining friends and employment, and depression (Parsons & Mitchell, 2002).

Methods for Teaching Social Skills
According to research there are four social skills strategies that have been proven to be effective within the classroom for students with autism: social stories, peer tutoring or peer role-play, scripts, and cue cards. Social stories, written scripts, and cue cards portray social situations using appropriate social cues that distinguish applicable responses for individual students (Hagiwara & Myles, 1999; Charlop – Christy & Kelso, 2003). These strategies are used to prepare, preview, prompt, and review social skills and expectations (Quill, 2000). Cue cards are often used to remind students what to do by replacing verbal prompts (Quill, 2000). Social scripts are used to clarify choices by presenting two or more options in social situations (Quill, 2000). Social stories are used to explain expectations and describe what may occur in a social interaction (Quill, 2000).

Furthermore, since social skills are behaviors that are learned, peer tutoring, or role-play, is another social skills strategy that provides an opportunity for students with ASD to interact with peers in the classroom (Welton, Shernavaz & Carasea, 2004).

Research Questions

1. What do general education teachers know and need to know about autism?
2. Why are social skills important for students with autism to learn and exhibit among their peers within the classroom and throughout their life?
3. What social skill strategies are successful and helpful to general education teachers when teaching children on the autism?

Methodology

Participants and Setting

Participants contacted for this study were staff members that teach and interact with students with autism at Haverhill Elementary. The staff included teachers and aids: kindergarten through fifth grade, and music, art, gym, and special needs. The data for this study was collected at Haverhill Elementary, which is located at 4725 Weatherside
Run, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 46804. Haverhill Elementary, which affiliates grades kindergarten through fifth grade, is in a suburban setting and part of M S D Southwest Allen County School District. It is a full-accredited school, which educates around 420 students.

**Recruitment and Data Collection Procedures/Methods**

Participants were contacted through a recruitment email requesting their assistance in completing a survey. The short-answer survey was attached to the email. Once the survey was completed, participants were asked to print off the survey, place the survey in a sealed envelope, and place it in the investigators mailbox that is located in the school office.

**Data Analysis Procedures/Methods**

Once all completed surveys were collected, the investigator analyzed their responses. The information was categorized according to response and later used to determine the information was produced for the teaching handbook about Autism and effective social skills strategies.

**Timeline**

Recruitment letters and survey questions were administered three weeks before the participants were asked to respond. Once all surveys were completed and collected, the survey questions were analyzed and used to develop the teaching handbook. The results of the survey are displayed in Chapter 4 – Results of the Needs Assessment. A more detailed time line is defined in Appendix D.
Outline for Development of the Special Project

This special project handbook was created for elementary teachers, including general classroom setting, special area setting, and special needs setting, to utilize with their students with autism. This handbook included evidence-based social skills strategies and examples on how to implement them with their students with autism in their classroom, information about autism, and the importance of social skills. This handbook was intended to assist all elementary teachers and students with autism, but may also be utilized to help typically developing peers improve their social skills as well. The teacher’s handbook is divided into seven sections. For a complete description and outline, refer to appendix E.

Definition of Terms

These terms are frequently used by educators and have been accepted as commonplace in educational settings. While discussing autism and social skills, the following terms should be noted.

Asperger Syndrome – “A condition characterized by being literal and fact orientated, having rigid verbal skills and narrow range of interests, and adhering strictly to routines, which weakens one’s social functioning and ability to understand the viewpoints of others” (Salend, 2008).

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) – “A broad continuum of cognitive and neurobehavioral conditions that typically include impairment in socialization and communication coupled with repetitive patterns of behavior” (Salend, 2008).

Cue - is anything that triggers response.
General Education Classroom - classrooms that teach typically developing students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

High-functioning autism disorder – (See Asperger Syndrome)

Inclusion – “An educational philosophy for structuring schools so that all students are educated together in a general education classroom” (Salend, 2008).

Individualized Education Plan (IEP) – “A written, individualized plan listing the special education and related services students with disabilities will receive to address their unique strengths and challenges” (Salend, 2008).

Least Restrictive Environment – “An individually based principle that calls for schools to educate students with disabilities as much as possible with their peers who do not have disabilities” (Salend, 2008).

Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS) – “A condition that resembles autism but is usually not as severe or extensive” (Salend, 2008).

Plug – In Services – “A program structured so that students receive services from ancillary support personnel in the general education classroom” (Salend, 2008).

Pull – Out Services – “A program structured so that students receive services from ancillary support personnel in a location outside the general education classroom” (Salend, 2008).

Social Deficits – Unable to interact effectively with others.

Socialization – “Systematic efforts by other people and by institutions to prepare youngsters to act in ways deemed by society to be appropriate and responsible” (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2007).
Social Skills – “Strategies used to interact effectively with others” (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2007).
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Social skills are described as behaviors learned that enforce communicating, expressing, understanding, dealing, and establishing a good relationship with others and their surroundings (Samanci, 2005). Social skill development is as important as any other development phase in a child’s life (Samanci, 2010). Social skills are the foundation of the socialization process and begin at the birth of the child (Samanci, 2010). Children with autism characteristically display a deficit in socialization with peers and often isolate themselves (Laushay & Hefflin, 2000). Therefore, implementing social skill strategies within the classroom is an essential component in improving social interaction with peers (Laushay & Hefflin, 2000). Early detection and intense intervention provide greater opportunities for improving developmental delays among individuals with autism (Robinson, 2011). Based on research on practices for children with autism there are four social skills strategies that have been proven to be effective within the classroom for students with autism: social stories, peer tutoring or peer role-play, scripts, and cue cards (Ganz, Kaylor, Bourgeois, & Hadden, 2008; Welton, Vakil, & Carasea, 2004; Kalyva & Avramidis, 2005).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project is to identify a teacher’s understanding of autism and how they implement social skills strategies within their classroom with students with autism. This project offers guidance to teachers by briefly explaining autism in a
comprehensible manner and describing effective social skills strategies that can be implemented within their classroom with students diagnosed with autism.

**Autism**

Autism is defined as “a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before the age of three, that adversely affects the child’s educational performances” (34 Federal Code of Regulations). According to a study recently released from the Center for Disease Control, 1 in 66 children in the United States has been diagnosed with an autism Spectrum Disorder, which is a 78% increase over the past decade (Laursen & Yazdgerdi, 2012). Autism ranges from mild cognitive, social, and behavioral discrepancies to severe cognitive, social, and behavioral discrepancies (Ryan Hughes, Katsyanns, McDaniel, & Sprinkle, 2011) and can differ widely among individuals (Welton, Vakil, & Carasea, 2004). According to Laushey and Heflin (2000), there are often more differences among those diagnosed with autism than similarities.

Autism is considered a spectrum disorder, meaning that, although all children diagnosed with autism will have certain characteristics of the core features, such as lack of social skill, the degree of each of these core areas defines where on the spectrum a child is placed (Robinson, 2011). The autism spectrum disorder includes autistic disorder, Asperger’s Disorder, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS) (White, Keonig, & Seahill, 2006). These disorders are characterized by deficits in three domains: (a) social interaction, (b) communication, and (c) receptive, repetitive, or stereotypes behaviors (American Psychiatric Association,
2000). Therefore, the term spectrum refers to the range of developing impairments among these disorders (Miller, 2006).

Impaired communication, social interaction, and high # of repetitive behaviors are common characteristics that are associated with an individual that is diagnosed with autism (Bellini & Hopf, 2007). A person with autism may have no language and/or have difficulty with expressive language and language comprehension. They may also struggle with nonverbal social cues and gestures, and may not interact while in a group of people due to limited communication and social skills. Individuals with autism often exhibit many social challenges, such as limited eye contact during requests, poor turn-taking skills, deficits in play imitation, less peer interaction, immature play skills, and theory of mind deficits (Anderson, A, et al., 2004). Many factors contribute to social deficits among individuals with autism. They typically lack knowledge and opportunity, as well reinforcements, practice, and feedback (Elliot & Gresham, 1993). However, the lack of skills associated with each of these disorders is pervasive and usually continues throughout the person’s life (Nikopoulous & Keenan, 2007).

**Prevalence of Autism**

Autism Spectrum Disorder is one of the fastest growing disabilities in the United States (Kabot, Masi, & Segal, 2003). ASD was once thought to be a low -incidence disability appearing in approximately 5 per 10,000 births; however, according to Center of Disease Control, ASD has increased to 1 in 88 births in the United States (Lauren & Yazdgerdi, 2012). Furthermore, between the years of 1993 and 2008, there was a 1,779% increase in the number of students receiving special education services under the autism category of autism category of the Individual with Disabilities Education
Improvement Act (IDEIA; Fighting Autism, 2009). With an increase of students diagnosed with autism, a greater demand has been placed on the educators, as they must provide school-based services for these students. From 1990 – 2009, the percentages of students spending more than 80% of their day in general education setting increased by 30% (Office of Special Education Programs, 2010). Therefore, as the demand of all educators increase, the need to better understand how to effectively implement evidence-based strategies within an inclusive classroom setting increases as well (Sansosti, 2010; Stahmar & Aarons, 2009).

**Social Skill Behaviors of Individuals with Autism**

According to White, Keonig, and Scahill (2006), social deficits are the most critical element in the definition of autism. Regardless of a child’s cognitive or language ability, the profound deficit in social skills is the underlying impairment for those diagnosed with ASD (White, Keonig, & Scahill, 2006). Even individuals who have above – average intelligence and do not possess communication discrepancies may experience significant challenges in demonstrating appropriate social behaviors and processing social information (Miller, 2006). Therefore, while there are many differences among individuals with autism, one of the few shared characteristics is the lack of socialization skills (Laushey, Heflin, 2000). Accordingly, the lack of social skills has been implied to be the defining characteristics of autism (Laushey, Heflin, Shippen, Alberto, & Fredrick 2009).

Social skills are described as behaviors learned that require communicating, expressing, understanding, dealing, and establishing a good relationship with others and the environment (Samanci, 2005). Social skills involve the ability to relate to others in a
reciprocally reinforcing manner, and the ability to change social behaviors to different contexts (DiSalvo & Oswald, 2002). Social Impairments are typically present across many different environments; home, school, community setting, etc. (Reichow & Sabornie, 2009).

An early sign of autism is typically the absence of, or lacking of, normal developing behaviors. As infants, these individuals are less likely to make eye contact, express spontaneous imitation, or respond to their name (Anderson, Oti, Lord, & Welch, 2009). By approximately 18 months, children with autism typically achieve significantly lower on measures of gaze/point follow, eye gaze shift, and acts for joint attention. Children showing signs of autism also typically express lower measures with their rate of communicating and using conventional gestures. The First Word Project researched early indicators of autism by studying videotaped communication samples of children who were two years of age. Results of the investigation indicated that there were four “red flags” that identified children with autism from typical developing peers and peers who were developmentally delayed. These “red flags” displayed a lack of pointing, not playing with a wide range of toys, lack of responding to contextual cues, and the absence of consonants in their vocalizations (Wetherby, Wyatt, Morgan, & Shumway, 2007).

As early as preschool, children with autism can be consistently discriminated from typically developing peers as a result of lacking social and communication skills (Rao, Beidel, & Murray, 2008). Children with autism are less likely to participate in symbolic play, use toys appropriately, imitate others and their actions, and communicate for social interactions (Wetherby et al., 2007). Children with autism are unable to interpret social cues such as facial expressions, gestures, and body language and often
display a lack of eye contact (Adams, Gouveiosis, VanLue, & Waldron, 2004). They also lack the skills that are needed to greet others, share, take turns, ask for help, request things, and follow instructions. In addition, children with autism display characteristics that make it difficult for their peers to interact with them, such as leaving the situation or avoiding social contact, disturbing or distracting behaviors, such as tantrums, aggression, and destruction (Gonzalez-Lopez & Kamps, 2007). Children with autism typically fail to make initiations such as “look” or “what’s that?” and miss the learning opportunities that normally follow. They become limited to the information that others explicitly provide, and they miss the opportunity to learn and the ability to obtain information (Loftin, Odom, & Lantz, 2008). Furthermore, these children isolate themselves from those around them, which discourages others from trying to interact with them, further reducing their learning opportunities (Liber, Frea, & Symon, 2008).

In elementary school, children with autism typically experience problems with initiating and maintain friendship (Rao et al., 2008). These children are less likely to initiate or respond to social interactions, more likely to spend time playing independently, and might interact with peers for a limited (if any) amount of time (McConnell, 2012). Since children with autism often misunderstand social cues, they may behave inappropriately by becoming aggressive towards others or withdrawing from others (Adams, Gouveiosis, VanLue, & Waldron, 2004). Children with autism are at a greater risk for adverse reactions due to the lack of being able to imitate and understand social behaviors involved in joining and organizing play activities, and their lack of interpreting social initiations made by others (DiSalvo & Oswald, 2002).
By adolescent the display of inappropriate or awkward behaviors of those with autism usually results in rejection or bullying by their peers (Rao, et al., 2009). As the child with autism ages, the persistent social impairment and suffering from others may increase their risk of psychiatric problems, such as loneliness, depression, and anxiety (Anderson et al. 2008). Furthermore, additional challenges continue as the adolescent begins preparation for their transition to adulthood (White, Keonig, & Scahill, 2006). As the child ages, the social deficit and the suffering may increase as the social ambiance becomes more complex and they become more aware of their social impairment (White, Keonig, & Scahill, 2006).

The lack of social skills prevents the development of interpersonal relationships, including relationships with peers (Laushey & Heflin, 2000), increases the chances for behavior problems (DiSalvo & Oswald, 2002), and decreases the positive developmental support and learning opportunities found in successful peer relationships (DiSalvo & Oswald, 2002).

**The Need for Social Skills Training**

According to White, Keonig, and Scahill (2006), it can be argued that social deficits are the most critical element in the definition of autism. For teachers to provide effective educational services to students with autism it is essential that they understand the social characteristics of these students. In any society, social skills play an integral part of everyday life. In establishing and fostering relations, social rules are adhered to as norms for communicating both verbally and non-verbally (Samanci, 2005). Moreover, social rules form the basics of an individual’s interpersonal skills. These interpersonal skills are used to interact with others at home, in-group settings, and in the workplace.
Social skills and the ability to interact with people are fundamental to developing society’s definition of appropriate communication, listening, and leadership skills (Laushey & Heflin, 2000). Based on this argument, interventions specific to social skills should play an essential role for treatment (Caballero & Connell, 2010).

From infancy stage and onward, parents provide cues as to acceptable forms of communication and behavior. The cues can be in the form of a smile, a frowning look, a spoken suggestion, or form of punishment such as time-out on a chair. As the child matures, lessons learned are incorporated and built upon (White, Keonig, & Scahill, 2006). However, a child with autism is unable to retain the necessary information to sustain ongoing social relationships; and is thus deemed to be socially deficit (Werherby, Watt, Morgan, & Shumways, 2007).

Social skills are necessary because most activities require some social interaction; such as working with peers, eating at a restaurant, buying items at a store, and visiting a doctor’s office. Furthermore, if social skills are not taught to individuals with autism, social deficits may lead to social exclusion, difficulty maintaining friends and employment, and depression (Parsons & Mitchell, 2002). Oak and Schreibman (1990) indicate that teaching a child with autism to initiate social interaction with their peers can reduce problem behaviors and increase positive interaction with others in an educational setting.

Given that long-term social adjustment is directly related to the development of social competency, interventions addressing social needs of these individuals are critical to help them overcome many of the negative effects of this disorder (Cotugno, 2009). However, while lacking social skills has been noted as a core characteristic of autism, the
majority of the research has focused on decreasing behavior issues or increasing communication among others (Webb, Miller, Pierce, Stawser, & Jones, 2004). Therefore, lacking social skills remain a major treatment challenge (Webb et al., 2004; White et al., 2007).

**Strategies for Social Skill Training**

There are more differences among those with autism than there are similarities. However, one common deficit among those with autism is socialization or the lack of social skills (Laushey & Heflin, 2000). Therefore, social skills’ training, or intervention, is a significant element for treatment for children with autism (Laushey & Heflin, 2000). With the push for inclusion in the general education classroom, there is a greater need for effective interventions in order to develop the social skills of children with autism (Vakil, Welton, OConnor, & Kline, 2008). Social stories, social cue cards, social scripts, and peer role-play are intended to help in many different situations and for a variety of purposes. They are specifically helpful in facilitating the inclusion of students with autism into a general education classroom. Social stories, social cue cards, and social scripts are used to prepare, preview, prompt, and review social expectations (Welton, Shernavaz, & Carasea, 2004). Information presented in visual form clarifies social and language information. According to Ganz and Flores (2007), an individual with autism processes visual information easier than processing auditory information. Therefore, visual cues are one way of assisting children with autism to attend, organize, and understand social expectations more readily (Welton, Shernavaz, & Carasea, 2004).

Children diagnosed with autism have been receptive to various interventions and educational programs that have been developed and implemented (Caballero & Connell,
However, social stories, social cue cards, social scripts, and peer role-play are four evidence–based strategies that are the easiest for teachers to implement and practice within an educational setting. They are also generally inexpensive and do not require special equipment, excess training, or additional personal for implementation (Charlop-Christy & Kelso, 2003). Furthermore, research indicates that utilizing social stories, social cue cards, social scripts, and peer role-play within the classroom are proven to be effective and successful strategies for in teaching aspects of communication, behavior issues, and play skills (Ganz, Kaylor, Bourgeois, & Hadden, 2008; (Welton, Vakil, & Carasea, 2004; Kalyva & Avramidis, 2005).

**Social Stories.** Researchers have demonstrated that using social skill stories has improved communication and modified unacceptable social behaviors in individuals with autism. Social stories were first created by Carol Gray to help those with autism interpret social interactions, social behaviors, and to increase social interactions (Hanley – Hochdorfer, Bray, Kehle, & Elinoff, 2010).

Social stories portray social situations using appropriate responses and relevant cues (Adams, Gouvouis, VanLue, & Waldron, 2004). Social stories consist of short, written sentences or pictures that describe a detailed sequence of events for situations or activities that the child will likely encounter. Social stories typically include information about the participants, setting, and action, directive sentences that state an appropriate social behavior, and perspective, which describes reactions and feelings of others (Hanley – Hochdorfer, Bray, Kehle, & Elinoff, 2010). According to Gray and Garand (1993), in order for social stories to be effective, they should be individualized for each child. Furthermore, stories should be written, using a specific combination of descriptive,
perspective, affirmative and coaching sentences that are combined to form the story and are not meant to persuade or influence an individual to use a behavior. In fact, the social story is typically written to describe a situation or skill (Delano & Snell, 2006).

Using social stories prior to field trips or social situations often decrease the anxiety and improve behavior (Welton, Vakil, & Carasea, 2004) since children with autism look for settings that are predictable and are of a routine. According to Welton, Vakil, and Carasea (2004), social stories have been proven to assist with various types of transitions and increase the child’s predictability for what is to come. Social stories are also used to decrease the confusion of verbal instructions and social interactions for children with autism (Hanley – Hochdorfer, Bray, Kehle, & Elinoff, 2010).

Studies have shown that social stories are most effective and appropriate for children diagnosed with high-functioning autism disorder (Gray & Garand, 1993). According to Reichow and Sabornie (2009), their study indicated that using social stories with individuals with autism increased verbal greeting initiations among their typically developing peers. Furthermore, individuals with autism have shown an improved understanding of taking turns, game playing skills, classroom protocol, and appropriate behaviors from the use of social stories within their classroom (Delano & Snell, 2006).

Social Scripts. According to Caballero and Connell (2010), research shows that when children with autism are instructed with social scripts through modeling, prompting, and reinforcement, their social interaction with others have improved. Using scripts as a visually – based strategy has led to an increase in communication, social skills, and language development for those with autism (Ganz & Flores, 2008). Social scripts help individuals with autism to see how he or she is expected to behave by
providing a clear visual of interaction in a social situation (Charlop – Christy & Kelso, 2003). By using social scripts to practice social interactions, it has been shown that their development of language skills and peer interaction is enhanced (Goldstein, 2002). According to Ganz and Flores (2008), scripts can be used within an educational setting for many different reasons: to improve conversational skills, social interactions, and play ability, as well as, decrease aggressive behaviors.

Written scripts, with or without pictures, have been reported to be an effective strategy with individuals with autism (Ganz & Flores, 2008). However, visually based scripts are documented as being more efficient with younger children, especially those in preschool and early elementary age, as well as individual with autism that cannot read well (Ganz, Kaylor, Bourgeois, & Hadden, 2008). The use of social scripts tend to be less disturbing to the student with autism, as well as other students, and less socially stigmatizing than that of verbally prompting cues (Caballero & Connell, 2010). Therefore, social scripts are often used to prompt conversation and increase communication skills for children with autism (Sarokoff, Taylor, & Poulson, 2001).

In one study completed by Ganz, Kaylor, Bourgeois, and Hadden (2008), each of the participants in the study increased significantly by displaying independent initiations and responses to scripted and unscripted prompts. Prior to this study, each participant displayed very few, or none at all, independent initiations and responses to typically developing peers. Furthermore, a study completed by Krantz and McClannahan (2003), indicated that all children using the written script strategy increased initiations, and increased initiations among generalized settings, activities, teachers, and time. Krantz and McClannahan (2003) has provided a promising method for using scripts to assist
social interaction for those with autism within an elementary classroom, which has been proven effective by their study.

**Social Cue Cards.** Social cards are also used to prompt conversation and increase communication skills for children with autism (Sarakoff, Taylor, & Poulson, 2001). The primary function of cue cards is to prompt a child with autism to behave in a socially accepted manner. The uses of social cards tend to be less disturbing to the student with autism, as well as other students, and less socially stigmatizing than that of verbally prompting cues (Ganz, Kaylor, Bourgeois, & Hadden, 2008). Therefore, cue cards are often preferred over verbal instructions (Ganz & Flores, 2008).

Cue cards can contain singular or multiple pieces of information that replace other social prompts such as body language, tone of voice, or observation of group norms such as being quite in a group setting (Ganz & Flores, 2008). According to Charlop – Christy and Kelso (2003), cue cards are typically highly motivating to a child with autism who lack conversational skills, but demonstrates competence with reading.

Cue cards are predominantly useful in circumstances where the child is displaying anxious behavior. Having a conversation and remaining on topic can be a difficult task for a child with autism (Tissot & Evans, 2003). Therefore, cue cards are used to prompt specific verbal phrases that can be utilized at appropriate times, such as conversation starters and greetings. This can help with the difficulty of prompting the individual to focus on the topic and to use appropriate comments and questions (Ganz, Kaylor, Bourgeois, & Hadden, 2008). In addition, cue cards can remain with the student as a reminder of appropriate social behavior in the future (Sarakoff, Taylor, & Poulson, 2001).
According to Ganz and Flores (2008), previous research indicates that visually-based strategies, such as cue cards, lead to an increase in social skills, communication, and language skills. Charlop–Christy and Kelso (2003), completed a study with six and seven years old boys with autism and their use of cue cards. The purpose of their study was to see if using cue cards would improve their conversational skills on topics they were not immediately engaged in. The baseline phase indicated that the children did not acquire conversational speech; however, after the study, the children reached criteria using cue cards and maintained their conversational speech once the cue cards were faded out overtime (Ganz, Kaylor, Bourgeois, & Hadden, 2008; Charlop–Christy & Kelso, 2003).

Cue cards can take several different forms. For example, random lists of reminders, index cards with simple social rules, or a card with a singular message in written, drawn or cut-out pictograph or a group of messages in random order. Regardless of the form utilized, cue cards allow teachers to gradually fade their presence over time (Stevenson, Krantz, & Mcclannahan, 2000).

**Role Play and Peer Tutors.** Social skills are behaviors that are learned (Cotugno, 2009). Therefore, individuals with autism must be given the opportunity to interact with peers in the classroom during cooperative learning sessions, teacher-structured peer interactions, and modeling (Welton E., Shernavaz, V., & Carasea, C. 2004). One approach to foster interaction is role-playing. Role-playing, or peer tutoring, allows children with autism to observe peer interaction, which then provides a unique social learning opportunity (Gonzalez-Lopez & Kamps, 1997). The use of role-playing also allows the teacher to use peer tutoring to help children with autism reduce social
deficits in either a small or larger group setting. However, the first challenge the teacher must overcome is how to get typical developing students (non-autistic students) to openly interact and not fear, or ridicule, students with autism. Interaction with typical peers is necessary because students with autism must have some exposure to typical developing peers in order to promote the learning of appropriate social skills within their inclusive classroom (Laushay & Helfin, 2000).

However, according to Laushay and Heflin (2000), merely putting children with autism in the same setting with typical developing peers is not enough to provide and teach the necessary acquisition to develop proper social behaviors and skills. In addition, their studies indicate that children with autism and typical peers do not always interact without prompting from an adult. Children with autism must first be taught to understand how to imitate others before they can be expected to imitate others (DiSalvo & Oswald, 2002). Therefore, as encouraging peer effort is an important part of the role-playing strategy, the teacher must not only determine how the role-playing should be staged, but which typical developing peer should be selected as a role model (Kabot, Masi, & Segal, 2003).

According to DiSalvo and Oswald (2002), peer related strategies involve students who are socially competent to model and reinforce appropriate social behaviors. In addition, teacher involvement is necessary for success. Teachers must plan, teach, and monitor social interaction in order to increase the child’s social connections between others (Oak & Schreibman, 1990). In addition, direct instruction is practical for teaching specific social skills since children with autism do not tend to acquire skills through incidental learning (Laushay & Heflin, 2000).
Modeling can also be used as an additional tool in assisting a child with autism. As such, the teacher should consider modeling the part of the second child utilizing proper social skills. As further reinforcement, the teacher should then request, and carefully select based on past-observed behavior, a volunteer to model the role paying he or she just demonstrated. This will not only allow the child with autism an opportunity to further reinforce the correct social behavior, but will also allow the typical child to feel more comfortable interacting with the child with autism (Loftin, Odom, & Lantz, 2008).

Role-playing can be used to develop many different social norms between peers. The key is to first help both the child with autism and the typical student to visually and verbally understand the social setting and then practice the correct behavior. In order to reinforce the correct social norm in a more controlled setting, the teacher should begin by playing the part of a friend, an unknown peer or an antagonist. Next, a child without autism should be encouraged to volunteer to model the teacher’s demonstrated actions. This will further reinforce the correct social norm and foster trust, understanding and acceptance between the child with autism and the typical student (Laushey & Heflin, 2000). Finally, the teacher should look for opportunities for practice sessions throughout the school day. The lunchroom or various routine activities will provide further role-playing opportunities to reinforce a host of social norms commonly used among peers (Kamps, Royer, Dugan, Kravits, Gonzalez-Lopez, Garcia, Carnazzo, Morrison, & Kane, 2002).

Summary

Social skill development is as important as any other development phase in a child’s life. Based on research on practices for children with autism there are four social
social strategies that have been proven to be effective within the classroom for students with autism: social stories, peer tutoring or peer role-play, scripts, and cue cards. The purpose of this project is to identify a teacher’s understanding of autism and how they implement social skills strategies within their classroom with students with autism.

Many factors contribute to social deficits among individuals with autism. As early as preschool, children with autism can be consistently discriminated from typically developing peers as a result of lacking social and communication skills. As the child ages, the social deficit and the suffering may increase as the social ambiance becomes more complex and they become more aware of their social impairment. In any society, social skills play an integral part of everyday life. Moreover, social rules form the basics of an individual’s interpersonal skills. Furthermore, if social skills are not taught to individuals with autism, social deficits may lead to social exclusion, difficulty maintaining friends and employment, and depression.

Social stories, social cue cards, social scripts, and peer role-play are intended to help in many different situations and for a variety of purposes. Social stories, social cue cards, and social scripts are used to prepare, preview, prompt, and review social expectations. Information presented in visual form clarifies social and language information. Furthermore, research indicates that utilizing social stories, social cue cards, social scripts, and peer role-play within the classroom are proven to be effective and successful strategies for in teaching aspects of communication, behavior issues, and play skills. Researchers have demonstrated that using social skill stories, scripts, cue cards, and peer tutor, role – play have improved communication and modified unacceptable social behaviors in individuals with autism.
Since social skills are behaviors that are learned, role-playing, or peer tutoring, allows children with autism to observe peer interaction, which then provides a unique social learning opportunity. In order for these strategies to be effective, teachers must plan, teach, and monitor social interaction in order to increase the child’s social connections between others. In addition, direct instruction is practical for teaching specific social skills since children with autism do not tend to acquire skills through incidental learning. Furthermore, visually cued instruction is an important tool for assisting children with autism in attending, organizing, and understanding social expectations more readily.

Research Questions

1. What do general education teachers know and need to know about autism?

2. Why are social skills important for student with autism to learn and exhibit among their peers within the classroom and throughout their life?

3. What social skill strategies are successful and helpful to general education teachers when teaching children on the autism?
Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this project is to develop a handbook that informs teachers about autism and social skills deficits, and how to successfully teach social skills strategies to children with autism within an elementary classroom setting. In order to achieve this purpose, a survey was conducted to identify teacher’s understanding of autism and how they implement social skills strategies with students with autism. The organization of this study was based on literature published in peer-reviewed, scholarly journals, and books relating to autism and social skills. Information for this study was also collected from elementary education teachers using a needs assessment survey. The survey assessed teacher’s understanding of autism and how they currently utilize social skills strategies with their students with autism. This project offers guidance to teachers by briefly explaining autism in a comprehensible manner and describing effective, evidence based social skills strategies that can be implemented within their classroom with students diagnosed with autism.

This project was created to help answer questions concerning autism as well as, questions on how to effectively teach social skills strategies within their elementary classroom.

1. What do general education teachers know and need to know about autism?

2. Why are social skills important for student with autism to learn and exhibit among their peers within the classroom and throughout their life?
3. What social skill strategies are successful and helpful to general education teachers when teaching children on the autism?

Participants

Participants contacted for this study were staff members that teach and interact with students with autism at an elementary school. The staff includes teachers and aids: kindergarten through fifth grade, as well as, music, art, gym, special needs, and the counselor. There are two male teachers and 21 female general education teachers. The staff includes three special needs teachers, who hold mild to severe teaching licenses. To assist the teachers at this school, there are eight paraprofessionals that work with special needs children and learning center children. There is also a building principal, two secretaries, and a school nurse. The staff at this elementary school range from two years to 35 years of experience teaching at the elementary level.

Setting

The survey that was collected was from an elementary school that is located in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The elementary school, which includes grades kindergarten through fifth grade, is in an urban setting and part of M S D Southwest Allen County School District. It is a full-accredited school, which educates around 420 students. The population of students that receive free or reduced lunch is 38%. About 363 students are white, 14 black students, 6 Hispanic students, 7 Asian students, 3 Native American students, and 25 multi-racial students at the elementary school. There are 32 students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). All 32 receive at least 30 minutes a day of plug – in services from a special needs teachers or a paraprofessional. Out of the 32 students with an IEP, 16 students have been diagnosed with autism.
Recruitment and Data Collection Procedures/Methods

To assess the teacher’s responses and needs, data was gathered through a needs assessment survey (Appendix A). Therefore, the teachers were contacted through a recruitment email (Appendix B). The short – answer survey was attached to the email. The survey took 10 to 30 minutes for the teachers to complete. Teachers were asked to return the survey within a week after receiving the recruitment email. Once the survey was completed, participants printed off the survey, placed the survey in a sealed envelope, and placed it in the investigators mailbox, which was located in the school office. The needs assessment surveys were then collected by the investigator and kept confidential for the duration of the study. The teachers were not asked to convey any identifiers or personal information on the survey. The principal at the elementary school gave permission for this survey (Appendix C).

Once the data was gathered, the results for each question were transcribed and organized into a Microsoft Word document. The data collected from the surveys was then reviewed to verify teacher understandings of autism and effective social skills strategies, and then compiled into major themes and areas of concerns. The data and information from the needs assessment survey was used to design a resource handbook about autism that provided guidance on how to effectively implement social skills strategies for children with autism within the elementary classroom.

The IRB board at Purdue University and the Special Education committee at Indiana – University, Purdue - University, Fort Wayne, granted approval for this study (Appendix H). Required courses from the Nuts and Bolts Training (Appendix F) and CITI Training (Appendix G) have also been passed.
Measure: Social Skills Survey

The purpose of the survey was to collect data on teacher’s knowledge and understanding of autism and how they currently use social skills strategies with their students with autism in their classroom. The teachers at this elementary school were asked to complete a one-time survey consisting of two demographic questions and ten short answer questions.

The needs assessment survey consisted of three sections. The first section included detailed instructions for the participants to follow:

Instructions:

Please complete the following questions in a comprehensive manner to the best of your knowledge and ability. You will not be asked to share any personal information. When you have finished the survey, please put it in Kristina Hans’ mailbox in the school office in order to protect your identity. All completed surveys will be kept confidential. Thank you for your participation and time completing this survey.

The second section of the survey included a demographic section. The demographic section provided valuable information referring to a teachers experience teaching students with autism and how many students they have taught with autism. The information in this section does not contain any identifiers; however, the information provided is important because it does generate background information for each teacher and their familiarity working with students on the autism spectrum. Demographic questions listed below.

Table 1: Demographics of Needs Assessment Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How many students are diagnosed with autism in your class?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How many students, in previous years, have you taught with autism?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The third section of this survey consisted of ten short – answer questions. The questions in this section referred to a teachers’ knowledge about autism and social skills, past experience working with students with autism and implementing social skills strategies, and their attitude towards including students with autism into their classroom. The questions for the needs assessment survey were based on information gathered from peer-reviewed, scholarly literature pertaining to autism and social skills strategy (Steyaert & Marche, 2008; Cassaday, 2011; Vakil, Welton, O’Connor, & Kline, 2008; Bellini & Hopf, 2007; Tissot & Evan, 2003; Delano & Snell, 2006; Bass & Mulick 2007; Hopf, 2007). The survey also asked elementary teachers what additional information they would like to obtain about autism and social skills. Table 2: Categories of Needs Assessment Questions below implies various themes of the survey.

Question one of the survey asked teachers to define autism, as they perceive the term. This question is important to the handbook because it validates the fact that different teachers perceive autism differently. Many teachers often incorrectly define autism (Vakil, Welton, O’Connor, & Kline, 2008); therefore, this question supports the need for guidance and the presentation of accurate autism information. For teachers to fully utilize the handbook, it must clearly state the definition of the complex disorder, as well as, the characteristics seen in those diagnosed with autism (Steyaert & Marche, 2008).

Question two of the survey was created to ask teachers their opinion and thoughts about including students with autism into their elementary classroom. This question is important because a teacher’s attitude towards a student can impact how he / she utilizes social skills strategies within their classroom (Cassady, 2011). A teacher’s attitude can
also affect how a student succeeds and how other students perceive a student with autism (Vakil, Welton, O’Connor, & Kline, 2008). This survey question may also identify that some teachers are reluctant to teach students with autism in their classroom; therefore, additional resources can be aimed towards these teachers to help them understand more about autism and how to effectively use social skills strategies (Cassaday, 2011).

Question three of the survey asked teachers to explain their experience working with and teaching students with autism. This question is important because it identifies if teachers need additional guidance in order to successfully implement social skills strategies within their classroom. Knowledge and experience of the elementary teachers helped determine the information that would be most beneficial in the handbook (Vakil, Welton, O’Connor, & Kline, 2008).

The next question asked teachers their opinion about social skills. This question was important to ask because if a teacher feels that social skills are not important to be taught directly in the classroom, then they are not likely to apply the social skills strategies from the handbook. However, once the question was asked, the teacher may re-think their position on the topic. In this way, the teacher could be encouraged to use the handbook as a reference, which provides additional strategies to help ensure social skill strategies are properly understood and utilized. The proper teaching of social skill strategies to those with autism provides opportunities for the student to appropriately interact and demonstrate positive behaviors with others, and offers the best opportunity to succeed academically and socially (Bellini & Hopf, 2007).

Questions five, six, and seven of the survey were created to ask what additional information teachers would like to know about autism and social skills. In creating the
handbook, it was important to include information that the teachers wanted to understand more about and what they believed to be helpful and useful in their classroom. Elementary education teachers are the audience for the handbook; therefore, this question ensures that the content reflects what additional information teachers would like to know (Steyaert & Marche, 2008; Hopf, 2007).

The next two questions, questions eight and nine of the survey, asked about the implementation of social skills strategies. Teachers were asked to identify if they have utilized the following social skills strategies within their classroom: social stories, cue cards, scripts, and role-play. This question provided the foundation for the handbook. By knowing what teachers already know, what strategies they are currently using, and what they would like to know more about, the handbook is more precise to what the teachers need and want to know and how to implement the four evidence-based social skills strategies listed in question seven and eight (Tissot & Evan, 2003; Delano, & Snell, 2006; Bass, & Mulick, 2007).

The final question of the survey was created to distinguish the assessment tool teachers are currently utilizing in their classroom to measure or evaluate students’ success. Effective assessment tools are fundamental to successfully evaluate the strategies implemented in teaching autism students. This question helped determine the assessment tools included in the handbook. The questions of the needs assessment survey were created to gather information from teachers about their experience, understanding, and knowledge of autism and social skills strategies. In addition to the literature gathered, the survey questions were used to create the foundation of content in the social skills handbook.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Theme</th>
<th>Survey Question(s) and Resources</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ knowledge of autism</td>
<td>1. How would you define Autism (Steyaert &amp; Marche, 2008)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ attitudes towards autism and inclusion</td>
<td>2. What is your attitude / thoughts about including students with Autism into your classroom / everyday teaching (Cassaday, 2011)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers’ past experience working with students with autism</td>
<td>3. Please explain your experience working with / teaching students diagnosed with Autism (Vakil, Welton, O’Connor, &amp; Kline, 2008)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ opinion about social skills</td>
<td>4. Do you feel that social skills are important? Why or why not (Bellini &amp; Hopf, 2007)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What teachers want to know about autism and social skills</td>
<td>5. What additional information would you like to know about Autism (Steyaert &amp; Marche, 2008)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. What additional information would you like to know about social skills and Autism (Hopf, 2007)?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. If you were given a handbook detailing how to use social skill strategies in your classroom, what information would you like to include?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of social skills</td>
<td>8. What social skill strategies are you currently using with students diagnosed with Autism (Tissot &amp; Evan, 2003; Delano, &amp; Snell, 2006; Bass, &amp; Mulick, 2007)? (Check all that apply) Social Narratives (story), Scripts Cue Cards, Role Play with Peers, Role Play with Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. What social skills strategies have you used in the past while working with students diagnosed with Autism (Tissot &amp; Evan, 2003; Delano, &amp; Snell, 2006; Bass, &amp; Mulick, 2007)? (Check all that apply) Social Narratives (story), Scripts Cue Cards, Role Play with Peers, Role Play with Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessing the strategies</td>
<td>10. What assessment tools have you used to track if your social skills strategy is working?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Description of Handbook

The purpose of this project was to determine what teachers know about autism and social skill strategies, what they want to know, and how to effectively implement social skills strategies in their classroom. The information gathered through the needs assessment survey and research articles published in peer-reviewed, scholarly journals was used to create a handbook. The handbook explains autism in a comprehensible manner and describes four evidence-based social skills strategies for teachers to implement within their classroom with students diagnosed with autism. The handbook also provides examples on how to implement the strategies with their students with autism in their classroom, as well as explains the importance of social skills. The handbook can be used to help students diagnosed with autism to communicate, connect with others, and gain life-long skills needed to succeed as a citizen.

The special project handbook was created for elementary teachers, including those who teach in the general classroom setting, special area setting, and special needs setting, to utilize with their students with autism. This handbook is intended to assist all elementary teachers and students with autism, but may also be utilized to help typically developing peers improve their social skills. The handbook is divided into six chapters and they are as follows.

Chapter one, the introduction to the handbook, entails three sections: dedication, about the author, and definition of key terms that are used throughout the handbook. The section about the author includes experiences as a general education teacher, as well as experiences working with and teaching students with autism. It further explains why autism is important to me and why I decided to create a handbook about autism and
social skills. This chapter also explains key terms that are used throughout to ensure accurate understanding of the term and how it is used.

Chapter two of the handbook identifies the five subgroups of Autism Spectrum Disorder. This section also explains each of the various developmental profiles within the subgroups: Autistic Disorder, Asperger’s Disorder, Pervasive Development Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified, Rett Syndrome, and Child Disintegrative Disorder. The chapter also exemplifies how social skills are impacted by the disorder; as well as, how overall growth development of elementary education students is affected.

Chapter three of the handbook provides a detailed explanation of social skills and the importance of learning them to successfully function within today’s society. The chapter also provides examples of how students with autism can benefit from controlled positive reinforced social skills development.

Chapter four describes four evidence – based social skills strategies: Social Stories, Scripts, Cue Cards, and Role-Play. In addition, this chapter explains the various strategies, how to utilize them correctly, and explains why teachers should utilize them in working with students with autism. This chapter also gives practical recommendations that will help teachers implement social skills strategies for students with autism. This chapter gives teachers step-by-step details on how to implement each strategy properly, as well as, when to use it. Finally, this chapter includes diagrams and templates that can be easily read, reproduced and modified to fit their student and the situation.

Chapter five includes detailed information about the importance of assessing a strategy as the teacher is implementing it. This chapter explains how to assess and evaluate the success of the specific strategy that is being utilized. The chapter will also
explain if, or why, the strategy is effective. Assessment tools are listed and reproducible checklists are provided.

Chapter six assists teachers by answering commonly asked questions and providing a list of self-help references.

**Analysis of Commercially Available Handbook**

For the purpose of this study six social skills handbooks were reviewed. Out of those six, two were chosen as a good representation of commercially available handbooks that are offered for teachers, parents, and health care professionals to utilize. These handbooks were chosen because of the overall presentation and representation of each. These two handbooks have been evaluated to determine their strengths and weaknesses. *Do-Watch-Listen-Say: Social Communication Intervention for Children with Autism* by Kathleen Ann Quill and *Social Skills Solution: A Hands-on Manual for Teaching Social Skills to Children with Autism* by Kelly McKinnon and Janis L. Krempa were used for this evaluation.


According to Quill (2000), this handbook was written as a guide to encourage communication and socialization skills in children with autism. This handbook explains teaching strategies that can be utilized in a school setting or home setting. This handbook was created to expand and refine the approach to intervention. The author intended that the information in this handbook be a guideline, and that the assessment and curriculum be used with flexibility and not a “must do” philosophy. This handbook was created as a resource for teachers, parents, and mental health professionals.
Strengths of the handbook. This handbook begins with a discussion about the
developmental characteristics of autism. By explaining the cognitive, communication,
and social, and ritualistic behaviors in autism at the beginning of the handbook, the reader
is able to understand and effectively use the assessment and intervention guidelines listed
later the handbook. The layout of this handbook is easy to navigate. After each chapter,
an appendix is provided with additional resources, such as reproducible checklists and
glossary of terms. Overall, this handbook provides important information about autism
and social skills strategies that can be used with a variety of children.

Weakness of the handbook. This handbook was not designed with visual aids to
assist the reader with understanding each strategy and how to appropriately implement it.
This handbook contains a lot of information in paragraph form; therefore, it makes it
difficult for the reader to locate information on a particular strategy to fit the child in
need. This handbook seems to be an informational-packed handbook that should be read
thoroughly first, instead of a “use as you go” handbook.

Book # 2: Social Skills Solution: A Hands-on Manual for Teaching Social Skills to
Children with Autism Handbook.

According to McKinnon and Krempa (2002), this handbook was written to
provide many practical and useful strategies that are intended to teach social skills to a
wide range of children diagnosed with autism. This handbook focuses on using strategies
based upon the broad ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) approach. The authors focus on
the significance of using data-driven strategies by beginning with the initial assessment,
then defining a goal, implementing the strategy, and then evaluating the strategy using an
assessments. This handbook was created as a resource for teachers, parents, and mental health professionals.

**Strengths of the handbook.** This handbook comprehensively explains why social skills are important and necessary, as well as, various strategies to use to increase social skills with students with ASD. This handbook is easy to read, with some professional terminologies, which are defined in the glossary at the end of the handbook. This handbook has reproducible checklists that can be used to evaluate the strategy and to ensure the strategy is being implemented correctly.

**Weakness of the handbook.** The information in this handbook is scattered throughout the book. For example, the information about social stories is presented in the beginning of the handbook as a possible strategy, but the justification and explicit details for this strategy is presented later in the book. The organization of this handbook is unclear and hard to navigate. It would benefit the reader to read the entire handbook before selecting what social skills strategy to implement. As with the Do-Watch-Listen-Say: Social Communication Intervention for Children with Autism Handbook, this handbook seems to be an informational-packed handbook that should be read thoroughly first, instead of a “use as you go” handbook.

**Need for a New Social Skills Strategy Handbook**

With the rising number of children diagnosed with autism and the emphasis of inclusion in special education, there has been an increase of young children with autism included in a general education classroom with typically developing peers. Therefore, many teachers want to know more about autism and understand how autism affects social skills. A social skills handbook is needed to address the concerns that a teacher may have.
about autism. The Social Skills and Autism Handbook that I have produced explains autism in detail and provide strategies that will help increase social skills in the classroom.

The previously published handbooks failed to provide a reader friendly guide that provides visuals and charts that assists the reader with understanding each strategy and how to appropriately implement it. They also provided an overwhelming wealth of information on many different strategies that teachers may not have time to read to see which strategy may work best for their one student. The previously published handbooks are lacking the “use as you go” method and the lack the organization that makes it easy for teachers to select the one strategy that may be successful. However, the previously published handbooks also provide reproducible checklists to confirm that the strategy is being implementing correctly.

These strengths and weaknesses have been considered in the design of my social skills and autism handbook. Therefore, my handbook includes visuals, charts, and reproducible that teachers can have easy access to. I organized my handbook by sections, which explains the strategy and then provide all information (examples, charts, reproducible) within that same section. My handbook is easy to read and all terminology is defined.

**Summary**

Social skills strategies have been proven to be an effective way to teach children diagnosed with autism to communicate, connect with others, and gain life-long skills
needed to succeed as a citizen. Although many teachers are educated about autism and social skills, many still ponder the true definition of autism and the exact characteristics that play a role in their classroom. Research was conducted through a needs assessment survey, a comprehensive literature review, and commercially available handbooks, which then guided the design of the handbook for elementary education teachers pertaining autism and social skills.
Chapter 4

Results of the Needs Assessment

Introduction

To enhance and add to the research component of the special project handbook, a needs assessment survey was conducted with elementary education certified staff. The assessment needs survey exemplified an effective way to communicate with teachers and assess their knowledge of autism and social skills training. The certified staff members were asked questions about their understanding of autism and social skills to further assist the researcher for the handbook. The information obtained through this survey was used as a basis for the autism and Social Skills handbook. A transcript of the survey responses can be found in appendix K.

Needs Assessment

The needs assessment survey included two demographic questions followed by eleven questions that required a short – answer written response. The questions were designed to inquire a teacher’s knowledge of Autism Spectrum Disorder, experiences with students with autism, attitudes about inclusive classrooms, and knowledge of social skills and social skill strategies. The questions were divided into six sections based on the criteria of the question. Questions one and two were created to assess the teacher’s knowledge and understanding of autism. Question one asked the teacher to define autism, as question two asked to list additional information they would like to know about autism. The next two questions in the survey asked about their experience working with or teaching students diagnosed with autism and their attitude or thoughts about including students with autism into their classroom. Questions six and seven
asked teacher to explain their experience utilizing four social skills strategies in their classroom to help students with autism interact with peers, participate in conversations, and exhibit proper behaviors. The next question was asked to inquire what assessment tools teachers have used to assess the effectiveness of their social skill strategy. The last question of the survey indicated what teachers would like a handbook about autism and social skills strategy to include. The responses from the needs assessment survey specifically state the teachers’ knowledge of Autism Spectrum Disorder, and four social skill strategies: social narratives, cue cards, scripts, and peer role play, as well as their experiences, attitudes about ASD and social skills.

**Demographic Information**

The needs assessment survey contained a short two question demographic section. This section provided background information indicating how many students, currently, were diagnosed with autism in their classroom and how many students, in previous years, were included in their classroom. Participants in this survey consisted of 23 staff members and aids: kindergarten through fifth grade, as well as music, art, gym, special needs, and counselor. The survey was distributed to all 23 staff members in a suburban K – 5 schools. Out of the 23 surveys distributed, 9 staff members participated, which is a 39% return rate. The survey indicated that an average of 1.9 students that were diagnosed with autism were currently participating in their classroom. Two participants indicated that they currently have four students with autism in their classroom. Two teachers indicate that they currently have two students with autism in their classroom, and two teachers indicate that they currently have one student with autism in their classroom. One teacher indicates one student with autism and two
teachers indicate they currently have zero students with autism in their classroom. The survey also indicated that teachers, in previous years, have taught an average of 5 students diagnosed with autism. One teacher indicated that in previous years teaching he/she taught a total of 20 students with autism. Three teachers indicated that in previous years of teaching they have taught two students with autism. One teacher indicated that he/she has taught one student with autism, another teacher indicated three students with autism, another teacher indicated four students, another teacher indicated five students with autism, and the last teacher indicated that in previous years of teaching he/she has taught a total of 6 students with autism.

The Knowledge of Autism

Figure 1 indicates how the participants responded on question one: ‘How would you define Autism?’ The total number of participants in this study is nine. Responses to this question varied among participants. The participants indicated that there were four common characteristics in defining autism: neurological, social skills, communication, and restricted interest. Many responses indicated more than one characteristic. Twenty-nine percent of their responses stated autism is defined by a neurological deficit. Twenty-eight percent of their responses indicated that autism is defined by the lack of social skills. Twenty-four percent of their responses identified restricted interest, such as repetitive behaviors, flexibility, and being “with themselves.” Nineteen percent of the participants indicated that autism is defined by impeding communication skills.
Figure 2 demonstrates how the participants responded to question two: ‘What additional information would you like to know about autism?’ There were two common responses among the nine participants. Three participants responded with the need for further knowledge. They indicated that they would like additional information explaining the most recent research on the cause, parts of the brain associated with autism, and types of autism. Three participants indicated that they would like additional information on strategies to use within the classroom to decrease interruptions, and strengthen skill deficits. Four participants did not respond to question two. Out of the nine participants, one indicated that they would like further information on autism (knowledge) and on strategies.
Summary of Knowledge. The participants in this study stated their knowledge of autism and indicated four common characteristics or indicators of autism: neurological, social skills, communication, and/or restricted interest. According to American Psychiatric Association (2000), Autism Spectrum Disorders can be characterized by deficits in three domains: (a) social interaction, (b) communication, and (C) receptive, repetitive, or stereotype behaviors. Therefore, the participants do not fully understand autism and the characteristics of autism. Furthermore, because of their lack of knowledge, they also indicated that they would like additional information about autism to better understand the causes and the characteristics. Three participants also indicated that they would like additional information on strategies that can be utilized within the classroom that will benefit their students with autism. The handbook addresses these specific needs to assist teachers with additional knowledge of autism and different strategies to utilize in the classroom.

Experience, Attitude, and Feelings

Figure 3 shows how the participants responded to question three: ‘What is your
attitude / thoughts about including students with autism into your classroom and everyday teaching? Two participants indicated that they feel including students with autism into their classroom is important. They stated that it is imperative to their ability to learn, and that they add to conversations and discussions within the classroom. Two participants indicated that they are against including students with autism in their classroom. They specified that it is hard to keep students with autism ‘going’ along with typical developing peers, and that is extremely distracting because of interruptions and bad behavior choices. One participant stated that other students are losing out on instructional time. Four participants expressed mixed feeling, or views, about including students with autism in classroom. One participant stated, “It can be difficult to give adequate support to students with autism while not disrupting other students learning and experiences, but including these students is very beneficial because it causes the students with autism to learn valuable social skills too.” Other participants indicated that students with autism should only be included when appropriate with accommodations and support, and that it is important to include these students, but can be a challenge. They state that students with autism require one on one attention, which takes away from other students, but the inclusion is good for individuals with autism to learn from typically developing peers even though it can ‘hold’ peers back. One participant also stated, “I have had rewarding and challenging experiences. I’ve had to learn through trial and error. When a student causes major interruptions to the class it is horrible, but I’ve found it good when other students showed empathy.”
Figure 4 indicates how the participants responded to question 4: ‘Please explain your experience working with / teaching students diagnosed with autism?’ Two participants stated they have had positive experiences while interacting or teaching students with autism in their classroom. Two participants indicated that they have had negative experiences teaching students with autism in their classroom. They stated that it is difficult, requires ample amount of their attention, tough, and not fair to other students. Three participants reflect mixed experiences with interacting and teaching students with autism. One participant stated, “Can be enjoyable and can be very trying, which can change daily or hourly.” One participant did not respond and the other had no specific indicator of their experience.
Figure 5 reflects how the participants responded to question 5: ‘Do you feel that social skills are important? Why or why not?’ Out of the nine participants surveyed, each participant indicated that social skills are important. Many participants feel that social skills are important because students with autism need to know what is expected while interacting in social situations and are necessary to survive in the ‘real world.’ One participant stated, “Students with autism are often resistant to social situation; however, after repeated events with consistent results, these students start to respond appropriately. It is the constant, consistent practice that is challenging, but very worthwhile at end. Social skills are important for all students.”

**Summary of Experience, Attitude, and Feelings.** The participants in this survey indicate their experience interacting and teaching students with autism and their attitude towards including students with autism in their classroom. The participants also reflected if social skills are, in fact, an important skill to acquire. Participants that indicated negative experiences also indicated negative views or attitudes about including students. The participants that stated that they have had positive experiences with autistic
students also stated that they feel it is important to include students with autism in their classroom. However, no matter their responses about experience and attitude, they all felt that social skills are indeed important. With an increase of students diagnosed with autism, a greater demand has been placed on the educators, as they must provide school-based services for these students (Cassady, 2011). Therefore, teachers simply cannot afford to have negative experience and feelings towards inclusive classrooms. The handbook addresses these common experiences and provides information and strategies that will improve deficits seen in students with autism that cause negative experiences. The handbook also includes why social skills are important as well as effective ways to help teach students social skills so all experiences will be positive.

![Bar chart showing importance of social skills]

**Social Skill Strategies**

Figure 6 indicates how the participants responded to question 6: 'What social skill strategies are you currently using with students diagnosed with autism?' Four participants stated that they are currently using social narratives in their classroom. Five participants indicated that they are utilizing cue cards to help students with autism in their...
classroom. One participant indicated that they are using scripts to assist students, as another participant stated that they are using peers to role-play appropriate social skills. Three participants are not currently implementing social skills strategies within their classroom.

Figures 7, 8, 9, and 10 further explain how teachers are currently utilizing social skills strategies within their classroom. 56% of participants are utilizing social narratives (stories), while forty-four percent are not. 56% of participants are also using cue cards with students diagnosed with autism and 44% of participants are not currently using cue cards. Eleven percent of participants indicated that they are using social scripts to increase social skills, while eight-nine percent are not. Eleven percent of participants are also using role-play with peers to demonstrate proper social skills, as eighty-nine percent of participants are not using role-play as a strategy.
Figure 11 states how the participants responded to question 7: ‘What social skills strategies have you used in the past while working with students diagnosed with autism?’ Six participants noted that they have previously used social narratives in their classroom to help students with autism. Four participants indicated that in previous years they have utilized cue cards to signify social skill behaviors in the classroom. Three participants stated that they have implemented scripts, in previous years of teaching, to increase social skill behaviors in their classroom. Only two teachers indicated that have practiced role – playing to discuss and practice proper social skills within their classroom. Three participants stated that they have not used any of the four social skills strategies in previous years of teaching.
Figures 12, 13, 14, 15 provide additional information indicating how participants previously utilized social skills strategies within their classroom. Seventy-six percent of participants mentioned that in previous years of teaching they have used social narratives (stories) to increase social skill behaviors in their classroom, as thirty-three percent mentioned they have not used it before. Forty-four percent of participants indicated that they have previously used cue cards with autistic students, while fifty-six have not. Thirty-three percent of participants specified that in previous years of teaching they have implemented scripts as a social skill strategy, as sixty-seven percent of participants have not used scripts. Twenty-two percent of participants have tried role-play with peers to demonstrate proper social skills, as 78% percent of participants have not used this strategy in previous teaching years.
Summary of Social Skills Strategies. The participants in this study indicated which social skill strategies that they have previously used in their classroom, as well as the strategies they are currently using with students diagnosed with autism. The data indicates that all participants are utilizing at least one type of strategy in their class. However, the data indicates that not all strategies have been utilized by each participant; therefore, it suggests that there is a need for general education teachers to have clearly defined strategies that all know how to utilize. The data reflects that some participants are unsure what strategies may be used within their classroom to help students with autism communicate. Therefore, as the demand of all educators increase, the need to better understand how to effectively implement evidence-based strategies with an inclusive classroom setting increases as well (Sansosti, 2010; Strahmar & Aarons, 2009). The handbook addresses the four social skill strategies, and how to follow the steps to implement the strategies. With the handbook, teachers have knowledge and with knowledge, comes the willingness to use and accept each strategy in their classroom.

Assessment Tools

Figure 16 reflects how the participants responded to question 8: ‘What assessment
tools have you used to track if your social skills strategy is working?' Five participants indicated that they have used informal assessment to track if their social skill strategy is effective. The participants of this survey mentioned two types of informal assessments: checklists and observations. Two participants stated that they have used formal assessments to keep record of the outcome. Formal assessments, such as AIMSWEB Behavior and VBMAPP that were mentioned by the participants, are two types of assessments that use standardized measures and the data is mathematically computed and summarized. One participant mentioned the use of a Token Economy. One participant indicated that they use their students Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to measure their students progress. Three participants did not respond to this question on the needs assessment survey.

Summary of Assessments. The participants in this study indicate their method of tracking the effectiveness of a social skill strategy and behaviors. Each of the participants’ answers varied, indicating that there is more than one way to track a student’s progress. In addition, three participants did not respond to this survey
question, which may indicate that they have not had experience tracking student’s behaviors or may not know how to track a student’s progress. Chapter 6, in the handbook, provides assessment tools that are intended to assist teachers while implementing a social skill strategy.

**Handbooks and Social Skills Format**

Figure 17 indicates how the participants responded to question ten: ‘If you were given a handbook detailing how to use social skill strategies in your classroom, what information would you like it to include?’ Three participants stated that they would prefer a handbook that provided examples with step – by – step instructions that are easy to follow. Three participants indicated that they would like a handbook that included pictures with simple, clear wording. One participant stated, “a handbook that includes quick and easy steps that could be implemented immediately after reading.” Another participant mentioned, “a handbook of strategies that include pictures and simple, clear wording. I do not have a lot of time to read the entire book.”
**Summary of Handbook Format.** The participants in this study stated what they thought would be important to include in a handbook detailing social skill strategies. The mentioned that they would like a handbook that included pictures with simple, clear wording, as well as step-by-step examples indicating how to use the strategies. Chapter 4 and 5 of the handbook include pictures of each strategy, as well as easy to follow steps for implanting the strategy with those diagnosed with autism. The handbook also includes how to implement the strategies during possible scenarios and behaviors.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, teachers understand and perceive information about autism, social skills, and social skill strategies differently. Therefore, additional information about social skills and autism is imperative to help teachers understand the characteristics of autism and how to utilize strategies within the classroom. Teacher’s knowledge of autism and social skill strategies is imperative for the success of their students. Many teachers indicated they have had negative experience working with students diagnosed with autism; however, all teachers felt that social skills are important and necessary. If teachers do not have the information to effectively improve social skills and behaviors within the classroom, then they will continue having negative experiences with students diagnosed with autism.

Limitations of the results in regards to the methodology of the research are that the sample size of participants was less than anticipated. Out of 23 possible participants, only 9 responded to the needs assessment survey due to the participant’s time restraints. The survey was given to participants at the end of a school year, which is a very busy time for teachers. Out of the nine participants, some chose to indicate no response to a
particular question. Many survey questions were left unanswered by the participant due to the lack of understanding, or not having previous experience.

The handbook includes a cohesive look at autism, social skills, and social skill strategies. The handbook shows how to effectively implement each strategy by providing pictures, and step-by-step instructions. Many indications from this survey indicate that teachers need additional information pertaining social skill strategies, as well as an effective tracking method to ensure they are utilizing it correctly. The handbook acts as a guide to use with all students lacking social skills in their classroom, which if utilized correctly, will improve academic and social success in the classroom.
Autism and Social Skills

A handbook to implement social skill strategies for individuals with autism

Kristina Sordelet – Hans
SOCIAL SKILLS STRATEGIES

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Section One
Chapter One

Introduction

Welcome

Welcome to the Social Skills and Autism Handbook that assists teachers implementing social skills strategies for students with autism. Thank you for taking interest in the handbook and for reading the information presented in this book. This handbook was created to support teachers instructing students with Autism.

Autism is defined as “a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before the age of three, that adversely affects the child’s educational performances” (34 Federal Code of Regulations). Impaired communication, social interaction, and high repetitive behaviors are common characteristics that are associated
with an individual that is diagnosed with autism (Bellini & Hopf, 2007). Individuals with autism may not be able to communicate and/or have difficulty with expressive language and language comprehension. They may also struggle with nonverbal social cues and gestures, and may not interact while in a group of people due to limited communication and social skills.

Lacking social skills is the most critical element in the definition of autism. Regardless of a child’s cognitive or language ability, the profound deficit in social skills is the underlying impairment for those diagnosed with autism (White, Keonig, & Scahill, 2006). Therefore, while there are many differences among individuals with autism, one of the few-shared characteristics is the lack of socialization skills (Laushey & Heflin, 2000).

For teachers to provide effective educational services to students with autism it is essential that they understand the social characteristics of these students. Social skills are necessary because most activities require some social
interaction; such as working with peers, eating at a restaurant, buying items at a store, and visiting a doctor’s office. Oak and Schreibman (1990) indicate that teaching a child with autism to initiate social interaction with their peers can reduce problem behaviors and increase positive interaction with others in an educational setting.

Social skills strategies, or interventions, are a significant element for treatment for children with autism (Laushey & Heflin, 2000). With the push for inclusion in the general education classroom, there is a greater need for effective interventions in order to develop the social skills of children with autism (Vakil, Welton, OConnor, & Kline, 2008). Social stories, social cue cards, social scripts, and peer role-play are intended to help in many different situations and for a variety of purposes. They are specifically helpful in facilitating the inclusion of students with autism into a general education classroom.

This handbook will assist you as you implement social skill strategies within your classroom. By utilizing this
handbook, you can see an increase in social skills, and communication, and a decrease with behavior issues.
KRISTINA SORDELET – HANS

I graduated from Indiana University – Purdue University Fort Wayne in May 2009 with a degree in Elementary Education. I began my teaching career as special education teacher and a literacy assistant. With this experience, I developed a passion for students with special needs. In fall of 2011, I made the decision to continue my education and concentrate on earning a Masters in Special Education. I am currently teaching third grade in Huntington County Corporation and one day hope to be a special education teacher again. I am married to a loving and supporting husband and have a very lovable, energetic one-year-old daughter.

Autism has always been intriguing to me. With the number of
children diagnosed with autism increasing, I feel that autism needs to be recognized, understood, and accepted by all. I feel that I can spread my love for children with autism by creating this handbook for all teachers to utilize within their classroom. The strategies provided in this handbook will help improve social skills for children with autism. Thus, leaving an everlasting impression for all children. My hopes in providing this handbook is that all children will be accepted, understood, and loved!
Definition of Terms

**Autism:** “A condition marked by significant difficulties in verbal and nonverbal communication, socialization, and behavior that typically occurs at birth or within the first three years of life” (Salend, 2008).

**Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD):** “A broad continuum of cognitive and neurobehavioral conditions that typically include impairment in socialization and communication coupled with repetitive patterns of behavior” (Salend, 2008).

**Cognitive:** “The language skills that relate to literacy, cognitive development, and academic development in the classroom” (Salend, 2008).

**Fidelity:** Faithful to a person, cause, or belief, demonstrated by continuing with loyalty and support.

**Genetic Disorder:** A disease that is caused by an abnormality in an individual’s DNA.
Immunological: A branch of biomedical science that covers the study of all aspects of the immune system in all organisms.

Inclusive classroom: “An educational philosophy for structuring schools so that all students are educated together in a general education classroom” (Salend, 2008).

Interventions: The action or process of intervening.

Mainstreaming: “The partial or full-time programs that educate students with disabilities with their general education peers” (Salend, 2008).

Neurological Disorder: Any disorder of the body nervous system. Structural, biochemical, or electrical abnormalities in the brain, spinal cord, or other nerves can result in a range of systems.

Peer Tutor, Role-Play: Peer tutor, role – play involving students who are socially competent to model and reinforce appropriate social behaviors. Individuals with autism are given the opportunity to interact with peers in
the classroom during cooperative learning sessions, teacher-structured peer interactions, and modeling.

Social Cue Cards: Cue Cards are described as visual prompts that remind appropriate behavior.

Social Imitative Play:

Social Narrative (Stories): Social Stories describe a situation, skill, or concept in terms of relevant social cues, perspectives, and common responses to a specifically defined style and format.

Social Scripts: Social scripts describe a social skill or situation, and are used to prompt communication skills for children with autism.
Chapter Two

Autism

What is autism?

Autism is a neurological disorder that can range from mild to severe. Autism affects the Central Nervous System and the way an individual interprets and interacts with their environment. Autism is a developmental disorder that lasts throughout a person’s life. It is called a developmental disability because it usually starts before age three, in the developmental period, and because it causes delays or problems in many different skills that arise from infancy to adulthood.
What causes autism?

 Scientists don’t know exactly what causes autism at this time. However, current research indicates that autism is a genetic disorder with an environmental trigger. Much evidence supports the idea that genetic factors – that is genes, their function, and their interactions – are one of the main underlying causes of Autism Spectrum Disorder. But, researchers are not looking for just one type of gene. Current research indicates that scientists are looking at as many as 10 or more genes on different chromosomes that may be involved in causing autism to different levels.

- Some genes may indicate that a person is at a greater risk for autism.
• Some genes may cause specific symptoms or determine how severe those symptoms are.

Researchers also show that environmental factors, such as viruses, may cause autism.

Because the disorder is so complex, and because no two individuals diagnosed with autism are exactly alike, autism is probably a result of many causes. Therefore, researchers continue to study genes and environmental factors, as well as infectious, metabolic, and immunological factors that may be involved in causing autism.
What are characteristics of autism and how are individuals with autism diagnosed?

Individuals with autism are described by the presence or absence of certain characteristics, behaviors, and developmental delays. There are three categories manifested when determining the diagnosis of autism for an individual.

- Impairment in social interaction
- Impairment in communication skills.
- Restricted, repetitive, and stereotypic patterns of interest, activities, or behaviors.
Characteristics of impairment in social interaction - individual diagnosed with autism displays at least two of the following:

- Lack of social or emotional reciprocity.
- Lack of spontaneous seeking to share enjoyment, interest, or achievements with other people (e.g., by a lack of showing, bringing, or pointing out objects of interest).

- Failure to develop relationships appropriate to developmental level.
- Lack in the use of multiple non-verbal behaviors, such as eye-to-eye gaze, facial expression, body posture, and gestures to regulate social interaction.
Characteristics of impairment in communication - individual diagnosed with autism displays at least one of the following:

- Lack of adequate speech, impairment in the ability to initiate or sustain a conversation with others.
- Delay in, or lack of the development of spoken language.
- Stereotyped and repetitive use of language.
- Lack of varied, spontaneous make-believe play or social imitative play appropriate to developmental level.
Characteristics of restricted, repetitive, and stereotyped patterns of interest, activities, and behavior - individual diagnosed with autism displays at least one of the following:

- Persistent preoccupation with parts of an object.
- Stereotyped and repetitive motor mannerisms (e.g. hand or finger flapping or twisting, or complex whole-body movements)
- Apparently inflexible adheres to specific nonfunctional routines or rituals.
- Encompassing preoccupation with one or more stereotyped and restricted patterns of interest that is abnormal either in intensity or focus.
There are five disorder categories under the label Pervasive Developmental Disorder*

- Autistic Disorder** (Autism)
- Asperger’s Disorder**
- Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)**
- Childhood Disintegrative Disorder
- Rett’s Disorder

*PDD: Pervasive Developmental Disorders: The clinical or medical term for a constellation of 5 diagnoses listed in the DSM-IV-TR with core difficulties in social communication.

**ASD: Autism Spectrum Disorder: An increasingly used term for three most common PDD diagnose.

(www.HANDSinAutism.org)
What should I be looking for in my students diagnosed with autism?

(These are just a few of the traits that students with autism may display)

- Delayed or lack of speech
- Toe Walking
- Echolalia (repeating words or phrases)
- Doesn’t respond to name when called
- Plays with toys in an unusual way: spins wheels on cards, lines up blocks instead of stacking
- Unable to point to an object
- Has repetitive behaviors such as turning on / off switches or opening / closing doors
- Becomes overwhelmed by noises, crowds, or lights
- Shows extreme dislike for certain sounds, texture, or smells
- Repetitive body movement such as hand flapping, flicking fingers in front of eyes, spining in circle

(Easter Seals Arc of Northern Indiana)
Autism Facts

- One in 66 children are diagnosed with autism.
- Males are 4 times more likely to have autism.
- A child can be accurately diagnosed within 15 months.
- Autism does not discriminate. It affects all socio-economic groups, races, and geographical areas.
- Autism is a spectrum disorder. The autism spectrum ranges from mild to severe. Every child diagnosed with autism is different.

(Easter Seals Arc of Northern Indiana)
What are social skills?

Having good social skills allows individuals to have positive relationships with others. The term “social skills” includes communication, problem solving, decision-making, self-management and control, and relationships with classmates and friends. Difficulties with social skills may interfere with learning, teacher acceptance, and/or exclusion from peers (Spivey, 2007).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Social Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>taking turns</td>
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<td>staying on task</td>
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<td>helping others</td>
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<td>active listening</td>
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<td>praising (no put downs)</td>
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<td>using quiet voices</td>
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<td>team player</td>
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<td>patient waiting</td>
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Why teach social skills?

Social skills should be taught because most activities require some social interaction.

- Classroom / school activities
- Going to a restaurant
- Going to a doctors office
- Shopping at a store

Why are social skills hard to learn?

Most of us learn to use many of our social skills automatically. We do not have to think a lot about what we do and say; it just seems to come naturally. Individuals with autism, however, do not know which social skills to use in a particular situation or how to best apply them. Individuals with autism who lack communication skills have difficulty understanding other people’s nonverbal behaviors (Spivey, 2007).
Why are social skills hard to teach?

- Motivation may not be inherent
- Learning style considerations
  - Some children may learn better visually
  - Generalization may not occur naturally
- Complexity of material
  - Social expectations change in various situations
  - Social expectations change over time
  - Social interaction is confusing and demanding; it involves judging nuances and abstract concepts.

(Weiss & Harris, 2001)

What can happen if we do not teach social skills?

- Social exclusion
- Difficulty maintaining friends
- Difficulty maintain employment
- Feelings of depression

(Parson & Mitchell, 2002)
Factors Contributing to Social Deficits

Lack of Knowledge
Lack of Opportunities
Lack of Reinforcement
Interfering Problem Behaviors
Lack of Practice or Feedback
(Elliot & Gresham, 1993)

What are common social skill deficits of individuals with autism?

Poor social skills are common in individuals with autism.

- Less eye contact during requests
- Poor turn-taking skills
- Deficits in play imitations
- Less Peer interaction
- Immature play skills

Section Two
Social Skill Strategies and Implementation

Individuals with autism often repeat lines from movies, commercials, or television shows with keen accuracy and ease. They may also perseverate, or get “stuck” saying things over and over, which often makes functional communication and social skills a challenge. Research explains that individuals with autism have a great memory!

Therefore, it would make sense to phrase words into “chunks” of words that can be easily memorized and recited.

So this is why social narratives, social scripts, social cue cards, and peer tutor, role-play are effective strategies for teaching communication and social skills.
Strategies for Teaching Social Skills

Social Narratives
Social Scripts
Social Cue Cards
Peer Tutor, Role – Play

Individuals with autism identify with three major components of each strategy –

(1) Love Structure
(2) Love Sequence, or Order
(3) Amazing Memorization Skills

Children with autism like predictability and are resistant to change. They have the ability to remember steps, schedules, and phrases. Therefore, each strategy allows children with autism to focus on memorizing steps or phrases to overcome many social situations.
There are four effective strategies that can be used with individuals to explain social situations. These strategies are presented in a clear, visual method that can be returned to again and again if needed. By setting the explicit rules and explanations of a particular situation down as a social story, social script, social cue card, and peer tutor, role-play it can make it clear to a person with autism exactly how he or she is expected to behave.

Social Stories, Social Cue Cards, and Social Scripts are VERY SIMILAR in their purpose, creation, and implementation. The only difference is the complexity of the material presented - which is differentiated for each individual learner based on their ability. Peer Tutor, Role Play is useful when presenting and practicing each strategy.
Visually based Social Stories, Social Scripts, and Social Cue Cards are documented as being more effective with younger children, especially those in preschool and early elementary age, as well as individual with autism that cannot read well (Ganz, Kaylor, Bourgeois, & Hadden, 2008).

Being teased at school

1. When I go outside at break time I play with my friends. Sometimes I like to play football.

2. Sometimes other children say nasty things to me that upset me.

3. I must remember not to hit the children who are teasing me, and that the bravest thing to do is walk away to another place in the play ground.

4. I will try to be the bravest in the playground and to always walk away when I am being teased. This way, I will have lots of friends at school.
Social Narratives (Stories)

Social Stories describe a situation, skill, or concept in terms of relevant social cues, perspectives, and common responses to a specifically defined style and format.

What are social stories?

- A personalized intervention.
- Information presented in a story format.
- Content that is physically, socially, and mentally safe.
Why should I use social stories?

- To teach social skills.
- To facilitate mainstream inclusion.
- To reinforce correct behaviors.
- To reduce challenging behaviors.
- To help teach routines, expectations, and behavioral standards in an alternative way.
- To help cope with change and teach new routine.
- To provide visual examples of behavior expectations.
- To explain people's behaviors.
How do I create a social story?

1. Begin by observing the child in the situation you are addressing. Try to take the child’s perspective and include aspects of his or her feelings or views in the story. (Very similar to a task analysis)

2. Create a list or an outline of the steps needed for appropriate social skills, routines, or procedures that the student needs work or reinforcement on, like taking turns, communicating, or participating equally.

3. For each step of the process, develop a simple sentence to explain appropriate behaviors, or change in a routine. **Write on the child’s developmental skill level.**
   - Using first-person text, describe the context of the situation in a few sentences (e.g., Sometimes people have to wait in lines. People wait in lines at school, stores, and even at restaurants).
   - Using first-person, describe the emotions/common responses of the individual during the situation.
in 2-3 sentences (e.g., Waiting in lines can be hard. Sometimes I want to skip to the front of the line or I want to yell and cry about having to stand in line).

- Using first-person, describe the appropriate responses to the situation and various options the individual has (e.g., I will try my best to wait my turn and stand in line. I will try to remember not to yell and cry about the line. If it is really hard for me to wait in line, I can tell my teacher and he/she will try to help me).

- Using first-person, give 2-3 finishing sentences (e.g., Waiting in lines is something I will have to do sometimes. It can be hard to wait in line, but I will try my best to wait).

4. Next to each step and sentence, utilize a picture to represent the action, either a generic image or a graphic, or an actual picture of the student performing that step.
5. Reread it to ensure it makes sense.  
*You may also look for pre-made social stories in the resources listed in chapter 6.

**What do I do after I create a social story?**

1. Read the narrative (or have the individual read the narrative).

2. Review it with the student daily before they perform that routine, procedure, or activity.

3. After the student learns the social story well, have them review it on their own before they perform the routine, procedure, or activity.

4. Have the narrative available for reference during challenging situations.

5. Slowly wean the student off the social story as they consistently perform the task correctly.
Social Story Example: # 1 – It’s okay if others win!

It’s okay if others win!

Sometimes when I play games, I win. Sometimes I do not win.

It is okay. No one wins all the time.

If I see that someone else has won, I will try to stay calm.

I will try to take a deep breath. This will help me stay calm.

I can also use words to tell my parents or teachers that I am upset.

I can say, “That makes me mad!” or “I’m upset!”
Social Story Example: # 2 – I Can Be a Super Friend

Pg. 1
I Can Be a SUPER FRIEND!

Pg. 2
I like talking and playing with my friends at school.

Pg. 3
Sometimes, I want to play with what my friends are playing with.
When I play, I sometimes feel like taking toys, using mean words, or hitting and kicking.
My Friends get sad or mad when I hit, kick, use mean words, or take toys.

Pg. 4
If I want to join in play, I need to join nicely or ask to play with my friends’ toys.
I can say, “Can I play with that toy?” or “Can I play with you?”

Pg. 5
First I stop, then I think about what a Super Friend would do.
Super Friends use:

- Use nice talking,
- Gentle hands and feet,
- Look with their eyes,
- Listen with their ears, &
- Take turns with toys.

Pg. 6
I can try to be a SUPER FRIEND.

Pg. 7
Taking turns can be fun!
My friends and I get to play with toys we like.
My friend can take a turn, then I can take a turn.
If I want to play with my friend’s toy, I can say “Can I please play with that toy?”

Pg. 8
After I ask my friend for a turn,
sometimes I might have to wait for my turn, but I will get a turn soon.

Pg. 9
My friends and I like playing together.
Sometimes when my friends play, I get upset, I may want them to play with the toys my way.
But my friends can play with toys their way and I can play my way, as long as we all play nicely together.
My friends get sad when I use mean talking, hit, kick, or hurt toys.

I can try to go with the flow instead.

I can stop, take 2 deep breaths, and say to myself: "I can go with the flow."

I like going to school and playing with my friends and teachers. I also like playing with friends at home.

But sometimes I have a hard time and feel frustrated or angry. If I feel this way, I need to STOP, THINK, and DO.

I can also remember that a Super Friend can stop, take 2 deep breaths, and say: "I can go with the flow."

If I am still having a hard time, I can ask an adult for help. I can go to the adult and say: "Can you please help me?"

Super Friends use:
- Use nice talking.
- Gentle hands and feet.
- Look with their eyes.
- Listen with their ears.
- Take turns with toys.
- Go with the flow.

Everyone is happy when I am a Super Friend.
### Social Story Example: #3 - What Do We Do In Circle?

**Adapted from: Rochelle Lentini (Google)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pg. 1</td>
<td><strong>What Do We Do In Circle?</strong>&lt;br&gt;Sometimes it is hard for me to sit. But I can look at my “sit picture” and try to remember to sit, like all my friends, at my seat. If I get up off my seat, it is hard for my friends to see and have fun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pg. 2</td>
<td>Everyone can go to circle and sit on their seat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pg. 3</td>
<td>I can sit nicely and look at the teacher. I can also listen with my ears and try to do what the teacher says.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pg. 4</td>
<td><strong>When we are in circle, I need to have nice hands and try to keep my hands to myself.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pg. 5</td>
<td>The Circle Rules are:&lt;br&gt;1. I sit on my seat.&lt;br&gt;2. I look at the teacher.&lt;br&gt;3. I listen, then do.&lt;br&gt;4. I have nice hands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pg. 6</td>
<td>Circle is fun when we all try to follow the rules.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Scripts

Social scripts describe a social skill or situation, and are used to prompt communication skills for children with autism.

What are social scripts?

- Guides intended to teach social skills and communication skills within real-life situations.
- A written script can be used to show sequence of conversation or to provide topics for discussion.
- They can involve conversation starters, responses, and ideas to connect conversation or change the topic.
- Simple, structured way to have a conversation – to initiate, maintain, and to end.
- Sequenced messages for conversations.
- A way to practice communicative functions within a natural setting.
Why should I use a social script?

- It is an effective strategy for individuals with autism (Ganz & Flores, 2008).
- To teach social skills and proper communication skills.
- To facilitate mainstream inclusion.
- To reduce stress associated with social interaction and assist the child with understanding the perspective of others.
- To reduce challenging behaviors.
- To explain people's behaviors.
- To help cope with change and teach new routine.

Social scripts are sequenced, structured, and easy to memorize!
How do I create a social script?

1. Begin by observing the child in the situation you are addressing. Try to take the child’s perspective and include aspects of his or her feelings or views in the story.

2. Create a list or an outline of the steps needed for appropriate social skills, routines, or procedures that the student needs work or reinforcement on, like taking turns, communicating, or participating equally.

3. Social scripts should contain *descriptive sentences, *directive sentences, and *perspective sentences.

4. Write in first person.

5. Write on the child’s developmental skill level

6. Avoid using words such as will; use might or may instead.

7. Try to keep a positive tone (Kristina walks, instead of Kristina does not run).
8. Use as few directive sentences as possible; use 3 or 4 descriptive sentences or perspective sentences to 1 directive sentence if possible.

9. Next to each step and sentence, utilize a picture to represent the action, either a generic image or a graphic, or an actual picture of the student performing that step.

10. Reread it to ensure it makes sense.

****You may also look for pre-made social scripts in the resources listed in chapter 6.

*Descriptive Sentences:* objectively define anticipated events where a situation occurs, who is involved, what they are doing, and why. (When people are inside, they walk.)

*Directive Sentences:* are individualized statements of desired responses stated in a positive manner. They begin “I can try...” or “I may work on...” Try to avoid sentences starting with “Do not” or definitive statements – “I will try to walk inside.”
*Perspective Sentences:* describe the internal status of the person or persons involved, their thoughts, feelings, or mood. (Running inside could hurt me or other people.)

(Broek, Cain, Dutkiewicz, Fleck, Grey, et al, 1994)

What do I do after I create a social script?

1. Read the script (or have the individual read the script).

2. Review it with the student daily before they perform that routine, procedure, or activity.

3. After the student learns the social script well, have them review it on their own before they perform the routine, procedure, or activity.

4. Have the narrative available for reference during challenging situations.

5. Slowly wean the student off the social script as they consistently perform the task correctly.
Social Script Examples: # 1 – Conversations

My name is _______.

I like to watch movies. I like to laugh.

What do you like to do?

I like listening to stories.

Will you read me a story?

Next Page

Adapted From Beth Lyons (TeachersPayTeachers)
Social Script Example: # 2 - Conversations

When I have a conversation...

I listen to who is speaking.

I wait my turn to speak.

I may talk about ________.

I listen to what others say and share my own connections.

Adapted From Beth Lyons ( TeachersPayTeachers)
Social Script Example: #3 - Conversations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image</th>
<th>Script</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>Sometimes I like to play with other kids.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>I can ask, “Do you want to play with me?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>If they say “yes”, I can play with them. I will have fun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image4.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
<td>I can ask someone else to play or play by myself.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Created by Kristina Sordelet - Hans (Google Image)
Social Cue Cards

Cue Cards are described as visual prompts that remind appropriate behavior.

What are social cue cards?

- Cards used to prompt specific verbal phrases (conversations, greetings, etc.), gestures (sit, line up, etc.), or social skills (suggestions for interactions in inclusive play).
- One prompt per card.
- A quick, nonverbal reminder of appropriate behavior.
- Visual prompt that can remain with the student as a reminder of appropriate behavior in the future.
Why should I use social cue cards?

- To prompt a child with autism to behavior in a socially accepted manner – to teach social skills.
- To reduce challenging behaviors.
- To provide visual examples of behavior expectations.
- Pictures cue proper behavior for non-verbal or younger non-literate children.
- To help cope with change and teach new routine.
- To generalize skills such as “Hi”, “Thank You”, “Welcome”.

Google Image
How do I create social cue cards?

1. Observe the child in the situation you are addressing.

2. Create a list of commonly used phrases, situations, or questions the child may have difficulty with.

3. Use a word document, or blank piece of paper – write one gesture, social skill, or phrase on the card.

4. Include a picture that associates with the gesture, social skill, or phrase for non-verbal and non-literate children.

5. Cut into square cards (2in by 2in, 3in by 3in, 4in by 4in, etc.).

6. Hole punch and hook to a ring.

OPTION: For easy access, glue tabs onto each card so you can easily find each picture.
What do I do after I create social cue cards?

1. Read and review the cards with the student.
2. Show each symbol one at a time and demonstrate what is on the card.
3. Display the card to the student so they know what activity is about to take place.

Goal: to have student imitate what is on each card to display appropriate behavior.
Social Cue Card Examples # 1

Quiet

Criss-Cross-Applesauce

Sit in Chair

Work at Desk

Examples created from Word Document and Google Images
Social Cue Card Examples # 2

Take Turns

Share

Clean Up

Choose

Found on Google search – social cue cards for autism
Social Cue Card Examples # 3

- Sit in Chair
- Sit on Floor
- Line Up
- Hands Down
- Wait
- Look

Victoriesnautism.com
Peer Tutor, Role – Play

Peer tutor, role – play involves students who are socially competent to model and reinforce appropriate social behaviors. Individuals with autism are given the opportunity to interact with peers in the classroom during cooperative learning sessions, teacher-structured peer interactions, and modeling.

What is peer tutor, role – play?

- A group of 2 – 8 students, with an adult facilitator, role-playing appropriate ways to interact with peers and appropriate social skills, communication skills, and procedures.
Why should I use peer tutor, role – play?

- To teach social skills, conversational skills, appropriate greetings, etc. to students with autism.
- To reinforce appropriate behaviors.
- Allows student with autism to observe peer interaction.
- Allows student with autism to practice behavior.
- Provides feedback to help student learn appropriate behaviors.
- To explain people’s behaviors.
How do I prepare for peer tutor, role – play?

1. Use a social story, social script, or social cue cards previously made for your student and act out using the strategy and peers.

OR

1. Begin by observing the student in the situation you are addressing. Try to take the child’s perspective and include aspects of his or her feelings or views.

2. Create a list or an outline of steps needed for appropriate social skills, routines, or procedures that the student needs work or reinforcement on, like taking turns, communicating, or participating equally.

Now what? Role Play!

- Act out scenarios that focus on specific skills.
- Use several different students and adults in several different settings.
Assessments

Checklists serve as an important assessment tool to ensure that the social skill strategy is, in fact, an effective strategy for distinctive individuals. It is important to assess the individual before and after the strategy to evaluate student's social skills and behavior before and after implementing the strategy.

Observation forms help identify which behaviors should be addressed. The forms should then be used to create the appropriate strategy based on the information gathered from the child.
Teachers should also use a checklist to check for fidelity on their part. Teachers should assess whether they are utilizing and implementing the strategy correctly and in a positive manner.

Forms provided are intended to assist the teachers in correctly implementing each strategy and ensuring that the strategies are effective for each individual.

- Pre and Post Assessment: Checklist for Student Skills
- Observation Form: Informal Observation Assessment
- Teacher Checklist: Am I Implementing the Strategy Correctly?
Pre and Post Assessment: Checklist for Social Skills

The teacher should assess the student before utilizing the strategy. After several weeks of consistently using the strategy, the teacher should complete the same assessment checklist to see if there was a change in the behaviors in the classroom. If the behaviors improve, and the strategy was done with fidelity, then the chosen strategy may be the contributor to the success of the student.
Pre and Post Assessment: Checklist

Name of Student: __________________
Grade: ___________ Age: __________
Pretest Date: ________ Posttest Date: ______
Name of Strategy: ______________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre Strategy Behaviors</th>
<th>Post Strategy Behaviors</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conversational Skills</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes eye contact</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responds to others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speaks clearly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stays on topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Takes turns (talking)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Talks about ideas, not facts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smiles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes topic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Says “excuse me”</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperates with group</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows interest in others</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tries to finish game/activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Management</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manages anger (doesn’t yell)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Accepts change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accepts correction</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-</td>
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Created by Author: Kristina Sordelet - Hans
Pre and Post Assessment: Checklist

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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows an interest in others</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
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Observation Form

A behavior observation form is also important to use to assess which type of behaviors or social skills a specific individual may lack or need further teaching of using a strategy. In order to create a social story, social script, social cue cards, or a script for role-playing, you must first fully understand what skills the individual is lacking. You must observe the individual in the situation you are addressing, such as interacting with peers, or circle time, and take the child’s perspective into thought while observing. This observation form should then be used to develop appropriate social skills, routines, or procedures that the individual needs additional work or reinforcement.
Observation Form: Informal Observation Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students Name:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time/Location:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Observing:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What Behavior is Occurring? Or not Occurring?

What May Be Causing the Behavior?

Other students? Other staff member? Change in routine?
**Sample**

Observation Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students Name: John Smith</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date: 1/20/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time/Location: Circle Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Observing: Listening Skills, Patience,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What Behavior is Occurring? Or not Occurring?

- took longer than others to join circle
- sat in the middle of the circle
- hit Jane while stepping to the middle of the circle
- did not look at me when explaining directions
- kept spinning on knees during circle time

What May Be Causing the Behavior?

- new routine for circle time
- transition time

Other students? Other staff member? Change in routine?
Teacher Checklist: Am I Implementing the Strategy Correctly?

Am I Implementing the Strategy Correctly? is a checklist for teacher to use as they plan, create, and implement each strategy for each distinctive individual. Teachers should use this checklist to check for fidelity on their part and to assess whether they are utilizing and implementing the strategy correctly and in a positive manner. If teachers start to notice that the checklist contains mostly “no” then they need to revisit Chapter 4: Social Skill Strategies and Implementation to see what they need to do further assist each child.
Teacher Checklist: Am I Implementing the Strategy Correctly?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did I complete the social skill checklist?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I observe the child’s behavior?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I complete the observation form?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I find an area of weakness that should be addressed?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I think one of the strategies could benefit this child? Which one:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I create a list of steps needed for appropriate social skills?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I create a simple sentence or word to explain appropriate behavior?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I represent each sentence or word with a picture?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I write in first person?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I write it on the child’s developmental skill level?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I review it with the child daily before they performed that routine, procedure, or activity?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I have the child review it on their own?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I slowly wean the child off the strategy as they consistently performed the task?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Created by Author: Kristina Sordelet - Hans
Teacher Checklist: Am I Implementing the Strategy Correctly?

***SAMPLE***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Checklist</th>
<th>Am I Implementing the Strategy Correctly?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Strategy: Social Scripts</td>
<td>End Date: 3/20/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Name: John Smith</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start Date: 1/20/14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I complete the social skill checklist?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I observe the child’s behavior?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I complete the observation form?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I find an area of weakness that should be addressed?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I think one of the strategies could benefit this child? Which one: SOCIAL SCRIPT</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I create a list of steps needed for appropriate social skills?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I create a simple sentence or word to explain appropriate behavior?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I represent each sentence or word with a picture?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I write in first person?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I write it on the child’s developmental skill level?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I review it with the child daily before they performed that routine, procedure, or activity?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I have the child review it on their own?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I slowly wean the child off the strategy as they consistently performed the task?</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section Three
Conclusion

Frequently Asked Question

Do you have any recommendations for teaching social skills and communication to students with autism?

Yes!

- Establish consistent routines to help individuals know what to expect - prepare ahead for transitions. Individuals with autism often have difficulty adjusting to changes and tend to be more successful when given time to prepare, and given support during the transition. Use social stories, scripts, or cue cards to let the individual know a transition is coming as well as to let them him/her know what to expect after the transition.

- Use simple, short sentences - be clear and concise. Long sentences require longer processing
times, and individuals with autism often have difficulty processing verbal information.

- **Limit verbal instruction, present information visually.** Individuals with autism generally have strengths in visual processing; verbal information can be difficult for them to process. Use visual supports, modeling, and physical prompts to help ensure understanding.

- **Use concrete language.** Individuals with autism have difficulty understanding figures of speech, analogies, sarcasm, and exaggerations. Be careful to say exactly what you mean as your words may be taken literally.

- **Break complex routines into series of simple steps when teaching these routines.**
Where can I find more information about autism?

- HANDS in Autism Program & Resource Center:
  www.HANDSinAutism.org

HANDS in Autism is a website to search information about Autism Spectrum Disorder, instructional strategies, and implementation.

- Autism Speaks:
  www.autismspeaks.org

Autism Speaks in an online advocacy for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. It provides additional information about autism, as well as different ways to help support autism.

- Sensory Critters:
  www.sensorycritters.com

Sensory Critters is an online store that provides sensory items, games, instructional strategies, and different therapy items for those diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

- Autism Society of America:
  www.autism-society.org

Autism Society of America in an online advocacy for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. It provides additional information about autism, as well as different ways to help support autism.
Where can I find additional materials for social stories, cue cards, and scripts?

- Teachers Pay Teachers (search social skills, social stories, cue cards, scripts, autism)
  www.teacherspayteachers.com

Teachers Pay Teachers is an online tool for teachers to purchase premade social stories, cue cards, and scripts.

- Pinterst (search social skills, social stories, cue cards, scripts, autism)
  www.pinterst.com

Pinterst is an online tool for teachers to make or copy premade social stories, cue cards, and scripts.

- Hands in Autism: How To – Templates
  www.HANDSinAutism.com

Hands in Autism provides a growing library of DIY (Do It Yourself) visual strategies and supports for working with individuals with autism.
- Practical Autism Resources

http://www.practicalautismresources.com/printables

Practical Autism Resources allows you to browse through more than 100 pages of free printable items suitable for task creation such as social stories, cue cards, and scripts.
Conclusion

Using social skill strategies can help a child with autism develop social skills and appropriate behaviors in an elementary classroom. Research shows that using these strategies with students with autism may increase communication, behavior issues, and play skills. With the push for inclusive classrooms, teachers are looking for effective interventions that are generally inexpensive and do not require special equipment, excess training, or additional personal for implementation. Therefore, social narratives, social scripts, social cue cards, and peer tutor, role-play is your answer to helping individuals with autism succeed in your classroom.
References


Chapter 6

Conclusion

For this project, two major parts were involved: the needs assessment survey and the creation of the handbook, “A handbook to implement social skill strategies for individuals with autism.” The purpose of the survey was to find out how comprehensively teachers understand autism, social skills development in children with autism, and social skill strategies that can be implemented within their classrooms. The needs assessment survey also provided information on what additional information teachers would like to know about autism and how to implement the social skill strategies. The results of the survey were used to create the handbook. The purpose of the handbook is to provide a clear understanding of autism, social skills, and social skill strategies for children with autism. There is a correlation between the success of students with autism in an inclusive classroom and utilizing strategies to increase skills. The handbook is designed to guide teachers on how to effectively teach social skill strategies and explain why they are important for their students with autism.

Needs Assessment

The results of the needs assessment suggested that teachers do not fully understand the definition of autism nor are they aware of evidence based social skill strategies that can be utilized for their students with autism. The results indicated that teachers have tried at least one strategy; however, that one strategy may not be equally effective for all students. In the survey, the teachers stated that they would like additional information about different strategies to teach social skills. By using this handbook, teachers have access to four evidence-based strategies that can be implemented in their
classrooms to improve communication and social skills, and decrease inappropriate behaviors.

**Strengths of the Handbook**

The handbook provides information about evidence-based social skill strategies that teachers can use within their elementary classroom for students with autism. The research that supports the creation of the handbook originated from many resources, and is connected to the needs assessment survey. The handbook provided is a guide that provides strategies to teach communication and socialization skills. The most important strength of this handbook is that all strategies are easy to reproduce and can be tailored to students’ needs. Social narratives (stories), scripts, and cue cards are easy to make and there are readily available printables, through the websites provided. In addition, this handbook provides assessment tools that can easily assess the progress of the student, as well the teacher’s efforts in implementing it correctly. All assessment tools are reproducible and easy to monitor behaviors. Examples of completed assessments are also provided to assist teachers.

This handbook is intended to be used as a resource to implement social skill strategies for students with autism; however, teachers may use the same strategies from this handbook on typically developing peers as well if those children are lacking common social skills. In the current research, many teachers did not fully understand each strategy and how to implement them properly within their classroom. Therefore, the newly produced “A handbook to fully implement social skill strategies for individuals with autism.” is the tool for these teachers who are lacking the knowledge and understanding of autism, and who are seeking additional information on how to create a positive
learning environment for all – student with autism, typically developing peers, and the teacher.

**Limitations of the Handbook**

The literature review proved to be a difficult process due to an abundant amount of information on autism and social skills. Therefore, it was difficult to summarize the most important and most relevant information for this handbook. Furthermore, as autism continues to increase, more and more literature and studies are being published; therefore, the information in this handbook that is relevant now may not be as relevant 10 years from now once newer information is presented.

Writing this handbook was a limitation. Since no two children with autism are exactly the same, it was very hard to provide examples of each strategy that teachers could simply grab and use. The examples provided are just that – examples. Teachers may modify or recreate the strategy as suitable to their students. The information presented in this handbook is valuable and should be implemented in their classroom, but teachers should understand that the information may need to be tailored to fit their students needs.

**Recommended use of the Handbook**

The use of this handbook is intended for elementary education teachers that teach in inclusive classrooms with one or more students diagnosed with autism. Many teachers can benefit from the information gathered for his handbook to help them understand autism, social skills, and social skill strategies. The easy-to-use format provides information that is concise and to the point. The format is easy to read for teachers that
would like to try new strategies to facilitate children with autism to successfully learn and use social skills within their classroom.

**Implications for future studies and strategies**

As the number of children diagnosed with autism continues to increase, teachers will notice an increase of individuals with autism in their class as well. Therefore, studies will continue to be conducted in order to develop a greater understanding of autism and the best possible solutions for their success in the classroom and throughout their life.

**Reflection**

This handbook is very helpful to elementary teachers with an inclusive classroom that may not understand autism and the importance of the social skills that are necessary for success. It is important for students with autism to learn how to communicate and interact with their peers in an educational setting and throughout their adult life. Students with social skills have a greater chance of succeeding within the classroom, as well as throughout their adult life.

Throughout the process of creating this handbook, a few thoughts occurred about what I should have done differently. One thing that I would have done differently would have been the approach I took to reach the participants taking the needs assessment survey. I should have presented my survey in an online format through an email, which would have made it easier and quicker for them to respond. I would have also chosen a different time period to ask for completion of the survey as well. I believe the reason that I did not have many participants contribute to the survey is because it was given out at
the end of the school year, which is a demanding time for teachers. The paper – pencil format may have piled up on their desk and then forgotten about.

The biggest hurdle of completing this task was not giving in to myself and giving up. The creation of this handbook acquired a year of my life. A year of weekends away from my husband and my daughter, and a year of many other memories that were put on hold so I could finish this special project. However, I never gave in to the thoughts of quitting and now I am at the end of this journey, with not one beautiful baby, but now two – my daughter and this handbook.

Throughout the process of creating this handbook, there were many emotional ups and downs. However, I take great pride in this handbook knowing that I created it for my colleagues in order to assist and encourage their teaching in inclusive classrooms. The creation of the handbook, Autism and social skills – A handbook to fully implement social skill strategies for individuals with autism, was an encouraging, inspiring, and creative end to all the research that was conducted. Without the support of my classmates, professors, and my family, this creation may not have ever happened. Thank you for encouraging me to never give up and persevere through all downs. Pride, success, and achievement from sticking with it feel AMAZING!
References


Appendix A: Needs Assessment Survey

Instructions:
Please complete the following questions in a comprehensive manner to the best of your knowledge and ability. You will not be asked to share any personal information. When you have finished the survey, please put it in Kristina Hans’ mailbox in the school office in order to protect your identity. All completed surveys will be kept confidential. Thank you for your participation and time completing this survey.

Demographic Questions:

How many students are diagnosed with Autism in your class? _________________

How many students, in previous teaching years, have you taught with Autism? ______

Short Answer Questions:

How would you define Autism? ____________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________


What additional information would you like to know about Autism? _______________

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________


What is your attitude / thoughts about including students with Autism into your classroom / everyday teaching?

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

Please explain your experience working with / teaching students diagnosed with Autism?


Do you feel that social skills are important? Why or why not?


What social skill strategies are you currently using with students diagnosed with Autism? (Check all that apply)

Social Narratives (story): ________ Example: ________________
Scripts: ________ Example: ________________
Cue Cards: ________ Example: ________________
Role Play with Peers: ________ Example: ________________
Role Play with Other: ________ Example: ________________
Other: ________________
I have not used any social skill strategies:


What social skills strategies have you used in the past while working with students diagnosed with Autism?

Social Narratives (story): ________ Example: ________________
Scripts: ________ Example: ________________
Cue Cards: ________ Example: ________________
Role Play with Peers: ________ Example: ________________
Role Play with Other: ________ Example: ________________
Other: ________________
I have not used any social skill strategies:


What assessment tools have you used to track if your social skills strategy is working?

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

What additional information would you like to know about social skills and Autism?

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________


If you were given a handbook detailing how to use social skill strategies in your classroom, what information would you like it to include?

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

Additional Notes and Comments:

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________________________________
Appendix B: Recruitment Letter

Information withheld for privacy
Appendix C: Support Letter From Principal

Information withheld for privacy.
Appendix D:

Spring Semester 2013

January 2013
• Discuss Topic Options
• Complete Rational for Topic
• Search, Read, and Summarize Articles
• CITI Training
• Nuts and Bolts Training
• Print off IRB
• Recruitment Letter
• Assessment Needs Survey
• Timeline for Special Project Completion

February 2013
• Search, Read, and Summarize Articles
• Support Letter from Principal
• Draft IRB Application
• Literature Review
• Proposal
• Literature Review
• Complete IRB and Submit Application
• Methodology

March 2013
• Literature Review
• Completed/Rough Draft Methodology
• Continue reading articles on the aspects of Autism
• Plan chapter 1 – 3
• Review project and plan for Chapter 4-6 of Special Project

April 2013
• Completion of Chapter 1 – Introduction
• Completion of Chapter 2 – Literature Review
• Completion of Chapter 3 – Methodology
• Plain/Create PowerPoint slides Chapters 1 – 3
• Share PowerPoint with classmates and professor
• Distribute Needs Assessment to Staff
• Analyze data from the Needs Assessment survey

May 2013
• Analyze data from the Needs Assessment survey
• Plan/Design Special Project
• Begins Chapter 4-6 of Special Project

January 2014
• Complete draft of Chapter 4-6 of Special Project
• Review/Edit/Improve Chapter 1-3 of Special Project

February 2014
• Complete Chapters 1-6 of Special Project
• Edit and Improve Chapters 1-3 of Special Project

March 2014
• Create Special Project Handbook
• Edit/Improve Chapter 1-6

April 2014
• Submit Chapters 1-6 and Special Project to board
• Present Chapter 1-6 and Special Project to classmates/Professors

May 2014
• Graduate with Master’s Degree in Special Education
• CELEBRATE and RELAX!
Appendix E: Needs Assessment Survey Time Line

February 3, 2013 – Ask permission from Jeanine Kleber, Principal at Haverhill Elementary, to survey her staff.


February 21, 2013 – Submit IRB Application

2013 – Email recruitment letter and survey to all Haverhill Elementary participants.

2013 – Collect all completed surveys and begin to analyze data gathered.

2013 – Organize data.

2013 – Use results of data to complete Chapter 4 – Results.
Appendix F: Special Project Table of Content

Chapter 6

Special Project Table of Content

~ Table of Contents ~

Section 1
Chapter 1: Introduction

Welcome
About the Author
Definition of Terms

Chapter 2: What is Autism?

Chapter 3: What are Social Skills?

Section 2
Chapter 4: Social Skill Strategies and Implementation

- Social Stories
- Scripts
- Cue Cards
- Role Play, Peer Tutored

Targeted Population: Autism

Chapter 5: Assessments

- Student Pre and Post Assessment: Checklist for Social Skills
- Observation Form: Informal Observation Assessment
- Teacher Checklist: Am I Implementing the Strategy Correctly?

Section 3
Chapter 6: Conclusion

Frequently Asked Questions
Conclusion
References
Appendix G: Nuts and Bolts Exam

Information withheld for privacy.
## Appendix H: Needs Assessment Survey Transcript

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>When a person lacks skills socially with language receptive and expressive, and/or display repetitive behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>A social disability that effects a students ability to engage society with peers and complete daily tasks with flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>Those needing to learn differently, short attention span, hard time relating to others, sensory issues, hard time moving on with next assignment if first isn’t completely done, need to know what is going to happen next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>A problem with the brain that effects the way children are able to communicate verbally and behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>Challenges with communication and explaining to others what the diagnosed person desires, generally high capability and creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 6</td>
<td>A disability that affects how a person processes incoming information to determine an output</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 7</td>
<td>A condition where students think and act differently from the norm. Sometimes learning is affected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 8</td>
<td>A condition that affects a child’s social and learning capabilities. Children usually are “with</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
themselves,” have difficulty communicating, and lack of social skills.

Malfunction of the brain, repetitive behaviors, social deficits, various ranges of ASD
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>I would like to know hat part of the brain is associated with autism and how can interventions help strengthen skill deficits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>Classroom strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 6</td>
<td>The most recent research on causes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 7</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 8</td>
<td>Since my license didn’t require any special education training, I feel like I’ve been “thrown into this” without much knowledge so I guess I’d like to know a lot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 9</td>
<td>Strategies to help the class “flow” better with fewer interruptions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 3: What is your attitude / thoughts about including students with ASD into your classroom and every teaching?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>It is imperative to their ability to learn how to function within the general population of people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>It can be a challenge to give adequate support to students with autism while not disrupting other student learning experiences, but including these students is very beneficial because it causes the students with autism to learn valuable social skills too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>Patience, calm atmosphere, structure and consistency, not a loud voice or loud classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>It is hard to keep them going along with regular students. If not for aids in the classroom, it would be very difficult to keep a class moving if the autistic student is having a fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>These students add to conversations and discussions within the classroom. The students should be included in every aspect that is appropriate. When situations arise, there needs to be a plan of action agreed upon by all parities involved, and this must remain consistent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 6</td>
<td>Students with autism should be included when appropriate with needed accommodations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 7</td>
<td>It is extremely distracting because of interruptions and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
bad behavior choices. Other students in my classroom are losing out on instructional time.

Teacher 8
I have had rewarding and challenging experiences. I’ve had to learn through trial and error. When a student causes major interruptions to the class it is horrible, but I’ve also found it good when other students showed empathy.

Teacher 9
Important to include, but can be a challenge. It requires one on one attention, which takes away from other students. The inclusion is good for autistic students to learn from their ‘normal’ peers, but sometimes holds ‘normal’ peers back.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>I work within classroom settings promoting social skills taught and also one on one teaching behaviors that need to be taught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>Schedules are not as flexible, rules and firm reminders were necessary daily. Tough because most students do not response well to this type of firm management so at time I felt mean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>Can be enjoyable and can be very trying – can change daily or hourly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>Students have certain characteristics that are stronger than the “norm.” These students need guidelines specific to the child. Classroom behaviors heighten when normal schedules are interrupted. Something like a fire drill may cause exceptional outcomes. Schedules are very important. Consistent is key.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 6</td>
<td>Since college: in home ASA provider, mild disability teacher, moderate and severe teacher 16 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 7</td>
<td>Difficult, always disrupting (depending on child), asked to ignore behaviors that are completely unacceptable while regular education students watch and wonder why (even though it has</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
been explained to them many times), it requires much extra time away from other students in the classroom, meetings, and record keeping

Teacher 8

I have had rewarding and challenging experiences. I’ve had to learn through trial and error. When a student causes major interruptions to the class it is horrible, but I’ve also found it good when other students showed empathy.

Teacher 9

Experience with high-functioning Autism: very smart, repetitive behaviors, does not do well with change, very few friends and usually does not engage the interaction.

Experience with low-functioning Autism: repetitive behaviors, does not like loud noises, screams, low communication skills, does not have friends, understands something one day but does not the next.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Teacher Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Very important because they are a part of allowing a child to function in society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Social skills are the only way for students with autism to learn how to engage with and make peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>They need to learn what others can pick up on their own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Very important. They need to know that the real world won’t tolerate off the wall behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Very! These students learn by doing; sometimes extremely resistant to social situations. However, after repeated events with consistent results, these students respond appropriately. It’s the constant, consistent practice that is challenging, but very worthwhile at the end. Interacting with others to have needs and wants met and to receive a response that is needed. To interact with others and learn to perform skills to be independent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Students are going to have to get along with every one in life as they get older.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Absolutely! They are necessary to survive in the real world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Students need to know what is expected of them in social situations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 6: What social skill strategies are you currently using with students diagnosed with ASD?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>• Social Narratives</td>
<td>• “When a teacher tells me no”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cue Cards</td>
<td>• Picture cards of student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>• Social Narrative</td>
<td>• Counselor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>• Cue Cards</td>
<td>• Gem Cards on desk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>• I have not used any social</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>skill strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>• I have not used any social</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>skills strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 6</td>
<td>• Social Narratives</td>
<td>• For conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Scripts</td>
<td>and identifying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 7</td>
<td>• Cue Cards</td>
<td>• Schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Role Play with Others</td>
<td>• Verbal prompts at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>grade level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 8</td>
<td>• I have not used any social</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>skills strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 9</td>
<td>• Social Narratives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cue Cards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOCIAL SKILLS STRATEGIES
Question 7: What social skills strategies have you used in the past while working with students diagnosed with ASD?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>Social Narratives</td>
<td>“If I lose…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scripts</td>
<td>Student Checklists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>Statements</td>
<td>“The rule is…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Behavior checklists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>I have not used any social skill strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>I have not used any social skill strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>Social Narratives</td>
<td>These are constant and consistent. I have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scripts</td>
<td>placed magnets on the board to “play” out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cue Cards</td>
<td>each of these when necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role Play with Peers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role Play with others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 6</td>
<td>No Response</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 7</td>
<td>Social Narratives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scripts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cue Cards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 8</td>
<td>Social Narratives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cue Cards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 9</td>
<td>Social Narratives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cue Cards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Question 8: What assessment tools have you used to track if your social skills strategy is working?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Teacher 1 | Frequency count of inappropriate behaviors  
             VBMAPP  
             AIMSWEB Behavior |
<p>| Teacher 2 | I have no had a concrete assessment tools. I have just relied on observations and made changes when necessary. |
| Teacher 3 | When all gems are moved up – he gets “Lego – time” at the end of that day (15 – 20 minutes) |
| Teacher 4 | No Response |
| Teacher 5 | Daily checklists |
| Teacher 6 | Specific goals / objectives on IEP – data collection daily and weekly |
| Teacher 7 | No Response |
| Teacher 8 | No Response |
| Teacher 9 | Checklists |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>No response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>More strategy ideas to add to my 'toolbox' so that I could use them as needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 6</td>
<td>Current information on effective strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 7</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 8</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 9</td>
<td>Strategies that work well! How can I improve their social skills and know that they are improving?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 10: If you were given a handbook detailing how to use social skill strategies in your classroom, what information would you like to include?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>Short key word steps to teach and then a way to teach self-monitoring skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>Quick and easy to take away ideas that I could try to implement immediately after reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>Understanding how different these students are and how I do not believe they can be grouped together. Each child has his/her strengths and weaknesses and must be dealt with on the individual basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 6</td>
<td>List of strategies with examples and step by step implantation and teaching to mastery for student's independent use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 7</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 8</td>
<td>Behavior management! How to deal with interruptions that distract other students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 9</td>
<td>Strategies to use with pictures and simple, clear wording; I do not have a lot of time to read an entire book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>I’m sure a handbook may come in handy to most people. I don’t have any formal training and would enjoy looking at something instead of guessing what I may be able to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>I attended seminars in Indianapolis, which were very effective. The outbreak sessions were amazing with discussions of how to communicate. A child of mine loved Mario. As a simple reward for completing works was to place a photo of Mario on the blackboard. This was earned. A rocking chair was also effective. Removal was used only when all other interventions were not effective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 6</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 7</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 8</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 9</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I: Resume

Kristina Sordelet - Hans

Information withheld for privacy.