

Social Skills 101: Ideas for IEPs

TRAINING SUMMARY:

In recent years the autism field has moved far beyond the “readiness model” of social skills development to new insights and supports based on inclusive practices, reciprocity, mutual engagement in the student’s preferred interests and passions, the use of social and environmental accommodations that respect sensorimotor differences, and an emphasis on building social motivations rather than relying on artificial rewards. Educators have developed many positive and practical means for including students with developmental differences in typical social groups and activities, both during the school day and extracurricular. Students who learn social skills in natural school settings are better able to transfer them to the community at large, and tend to have better outcomes in employment and the achievement of maximum adult independence.

TRAINING GOAL:

The goal of this training is for teachers and other school staff, as well as parents, to become aware of the challenges and barriers to social participation that students with autism might experience, and to become familiar with a range of strategies and supplemental aids and services for addressing them effectively through an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

TRAINING OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of the training are for the participants to:

1. Understand how to use the four key social skills interventions for classroom use: priming, self-monitoring, peer mentoring, and decoding the hidden curriculum
2. Gain insights into why reciprocity is preferable to one-way “helping,” and why making appropriate accommodations is preferable to “forced compliance”
3. Appreciate the importance of presuming intelligence and capacity, and keeping social activities age appropriate
4. Consider how the emotional and sensory sensitivities of autism impact classroom activities, and how to effectively accommodate those differences
5. Understand how to find and utilize the motivational value of a student’s key interests
6. Explore desirable, “high status” school activities which can be utilized to help students with autism take on valued roles and be recognized as contributing members of the class

METHODS TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES:

Training content can be delivered via webinar incorporating lecture and discussion (app. 1½ hours). This training also can be delivered in person in a traditional training or classroom setting incorporating lecture, videos, discussion, and interactive group exercises (2-3 hours).