II. TOOl TWo:  "What’s a Teacher to Do?"

Introduction

Throughout the first part of Tools for Teachers: Tool One, we focused upon preparing you to teach social skills according to the Social-Cognitive Theoretical model. In Tool One, we describe the model, present an observational assessment, highlight examples of social thinking skills objectives, and provide ways in which to align your social thinking skills objectives with the learning standards from your state.

In Tool Two: “What’s a teacher to do?”, interventions are the primary focus. Throughout Tool Two we share instructional practice suggestions based upon the social-cognitive model presented in Tool One and in doing so we demonstrate what the model would “look like” in the classroom.

In Tool Two: “What’s a Teacher to Do?” the following questions are addressed:

- What does a socially competent student look like?
- What IS a teacher to do?
- How can he use existing resources, as well as his own ideas, to increase students’ social competencies?
- How can she apply the social-cognitive model?
- Beyond managing social interactions in his classroom, how can he create practice opportunities that result in better social thinkers?

Below, we present answers to these questions. With different learning styles in mind, we are presenting the information in a series of complementary sections, each with a different format and unique “slant” on the material. Hopefully, you will find the format that works best for you, or even benefit from the diverse modes of presentation. You may notice some overlap among the sections, but that’s part of the process!
Attributes of the Socially Thinking Student

To illustrate the characteristics of a socially thinking student, we approached teachers and asked them to describe the attributes of students they consider to be socially competent, and of students they feel would benefit from additional social skills instruction. We have taken these attributes mentioned by teachers and applied them to a fictitious student.

Below we present a description of what a student without social competence looks like (“Lucas Looking for Relationships” and conversely, what a socially competent student looks like (“Lucas Finally Gets It”). As you read about this student, think about how he resembles some that you know. Think about how you would characterize students who you feel are not yet competent social thinkers as well as those students that you feel are competent social thinkers within your classroom or school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Lucas Looking for Relationships”</th>
<th>“When Lucas Finally Gets It”</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher descriptions of students who are not proficient with using social thinking skills</td>
<td>Teacher descriptions of students who use social thinking skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Foundations of Social Cognition

#### Emotional Regulation
- Blurs out
- Panics
- Unduly upset by small negative things
- Easily distracted
- Physically retaliates
- Easily upset with limited physical space

#### Social Knowledge
- Unaware of social boundaries
- Unaware of who has authority
- Does not know how to enter a group
- Does not know how to take turns, listen to others
- Unaware of norms/expectations
- Does not understand classroom and school rules

### Foundations of Social Cognition

#### Emotional Regulation
- Shows emotional self-control; stays in emotional control
- Shrugs off small negative things
- Doesn’t bring up distractions
- Inhibits physical impulse to retaliate
- Copes with limited physical space
- Can get angry or upset, but then cools down before yelling

#### Social Knowledge
- Is aware of authority
- Has a sense of what is “right”
- Notices when others are upset and responds
- Understands/is aware of norms/expectations
- Understands reasons for following routines
- Understands classroom and school rules
### Tool 2: Attributes of the Socially Thinking Student

#### Social Perception (Noticing, Interpreting)
- Insensitive to others’ feelings
- Ignores teacher’s signals
- Does not notices how her behavior affects others
- Unable to see from another’s point of view
- Interprets laughing “with” as laughing “at” (and vice versa)
- Does not listen
- Misreads situations
- Brags

#### Social Perception (Noticing, Interpreting)
- Notices how her behavior affects others
- Attentive to others
- Takes another’s perspective
- Distinguishes playful jokes from insults
- Notices when others want to have a turn
- Is aware of who is left out
- Reads situations
- Maintains eye contact

#### Problem Solving (Goals, Strategies…)
- Excludes classmates from joining activities
- If others are complimented, tries to claim compliments as well (“I have a nice …too.”)
- Sets goals of escape, self-gratification, and power
- Teases peers about differences
- Gossips
- Intimidates, insults
- Interrupts
- Only deals with conflicts by turning to adults
- Expresses her feelings in socially inappropriate ways
- Participates begrudgingly
- Reacts physically, rather than verbally
- Does not initiate or sustain conversation
- Rejects corrective feedback

#### Problem Solving (Goals, Strategies…)
- Apologizes for inconveniences to others
- Waits her turn; waits for another person to finish
- Negotiates conflicts, working out solutions with peers
- Expresses her feelings in socially appropriate ways
- Generates more than one strategy for solving problems
- Uses tactful language
- Show sympathy toward others
- Supports participation by classmate with a disability
- Shows appreciation
- Respects others’ personal space
- Talks positively to others
- Takes her time to finish work
- Uses words; good verbal skills
- Accepts corrective feedback

When you think about the attributes of students that you consider competent social thinkers, it is also important to consider the role that social thinking skills play in their behavior. For example, why is Lucas getting into conflicts with other students? It is quite possible that he has not yet acquired basic Social Knowledge such as how to take turns, or has not yet been taught Social Perception skills such as how to pay attention to the messages others give through facial expressions. It is also possible that he may lack the confidence to Problem Solve socially, for example, by asking a classmate to return his pencil instead of relying on the teacher to do so.
When Lucas “Finally Gets It” this means that he has acquired the social thinking skills necessary to become socially competent. For example, perhaps Lucas’ teacher gave him a small Stop Light card for his desk and helped him practice stopping, calming down and then responding to his classmate as a way for him to Regulate Emotions. Perhaps Lucas’ teacher worked with him on “reading” the cues that reveal others’ feelings and intentions. Maybe role playing situations where students followed class rules taught Lucas enough Social Knowledge so that he could take turns and listen to others.

In the following sections of the Tools for Teachers guide, you will be provided with several different ways that you can promote social thinking skills that fit your personal teaching style.
Words and Phrases Bank

The Words and Phrases Bank provides questions to ask your students in an effort to promote social thinking. As a teacher, you will be able to grab a quick phrase that suits your own teaching style and also promotes student thinking during social conflicts that inevitably occur or while thinking about planning more explicit social-cognitive lessons. (We’ll get to that later!) The language is provided as a shortcut to help focus students on the relevant social thinking skills needed to resolve a social problem more appropriately. They also give your students the opportunity to practice and become better social thinkers!

FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL COGNITION

Social Knowledge

As you may recall from Tool One, social knowledge is the foundation to all social-cognitive processes. Questions and phrases in this section aim at helping a student understand basic social vocabulary and concepts such as social norms. For example, “What does it mean to be a friend?” and “What is the difference between something happening by accident or on purpose?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“What’s likely to happen?”</th>
<th>“What might go wrong?”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Does this follow/break any school/class rules?”</td>
<td>“What do you already know about how to be a good friend?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Can you remember a time when something like this happened before?”</td>
<td>“Can you remember feeling that way?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“When do people get in trouble?”</td>
<td>“What do you think makes people grumpy?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Do people who are kind usually act this way?”</td>
<td>“Is this respectful?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“How do you know when someone …..?”</td>
<td>“What are some fair ways to decide whose turn it is?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Do you thing this is important?”</td>
<td>“Would this be right in every situation?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Can you ever get what you want and make a friend, at the same time?”</td>
<td>“What does it mean when words are different from someone’s tone of voice/body language?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“How do you decide which goals are most important?”</td>
<td>“What’s worked in the past?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“How do compromises work?”</td>
<td>“What did you learn from this, for next time?”</td>
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Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation is also a foundation to learning and using all social cognitive processes. Questions and phrases in this section aim at guiding a student to remain calm when frustrated with others and to calm him or herself after becoming upset.

| “How do you feel right now?” |
| “How can you calm down, before you decide what to try?” |
| “Should you take a deep breath? Count to ten?” |
| “Do you feel calm enough to figure this out right now?” |
| “Are you too upset to……right now?” |
| “Would it be a good idea for you to cool off first?” |
| “Do you want to deal with this tomorrow morning, after you’ve had a good rest?” |
| “Would that be too impulsive?” |
| “Do you feel you can think that through while you are upset/angry/frustrated/excited/tired?” |

Social Perception
(Noticing, Interpreting)

Social perception includes the social-cognitive process of noticing and interpreting social cues. Questions presented in this section aim at helping a student focus upon the context of a social problem in order to better understand what has occurred and why. More specifically, can a student encode social cues (e.g., facial expression, tone of voice, body language) that indicate another person's intentions? Finally, can a student use this information to accurately interpret available social cues regarding another person's intentions?

| “Did you notice how she was looking?” |
| “Did you pay attention to what was going on?” |
| “What just happened?” |
| “Do you feel comfortable?” “Do you think they do?” |
| “Were his words the same as his tone of voice and the way he moved?” |
| “How do you think she feels?” “When do you feel…?” |
| “Does she like that?” |
| “Did you mean to…..?” |
| “Pay attention to your body. What is it telling you?” |
| “Do you think she is being sincere?” |
| “What was his face telling you?” |
| “What made you think ….?” |
| “That student was smiling on the outside, but do you think he was smiling on the inside?” |
| “Do you think she thinks that was funny?” |
| “How would you have felt if someone talked to you that way?” |
| “Why do you think he said/did that?” “Why do you think that student…?” |
| “What do you think she wants to happen?” “What else…?” |
| “Do you think there’s something she wants to keep from happening?” |
| “Do you think that was on purpose, or was it an accident?” |
Social Problem Solving
(Setting Goals, Generating and Selecting Strategies, Reviewing Outcomes)

Questions and phrases in this section help a student to set multiple goals that can be pursued in a social problem situation and to select socially adaptive goals. The questions can serve as a scaffold to support the student as he or she generates a variety of strategies that are potentially appropriate for resolving social problems (for example, can a student modify a strategy from one situation to another based on the type of social problem, the other person's intentions, etc.?). After identifying these strategies, the questions can assist the student to anticipate the consequences of carrying out different strategies, and reflect upon the results of using a strategy to achieve a goal.

“What do you want to happen?”
“Why do you want to do that right now?”
“Why you? Why not let someone else do that?”
“Would that be safe?”
“Would you get in trouble if you did/said that?”
“Is it more important to do ….. or to make a friend right now?”
“Is it more important to get. .., or to avoid. .. right now?”
“What are your obstacles in reaching that goal?”
“What would be a friendly thing to say/do?”
“What are some other ways you can be a friend?”
“How can you solve this problem?”
“Could you do .. by yourself, without the help of an adult?”
“What would happen if you…..?”
“Did this turn out the way you expected?”
“Would that strategy be direct? Assertive? Polite?”
“Can you think of a compromise?”
“If you did that, would it cause even more problems?”
“Were there any results beyond what you expected?”
We recognize three ways in which teachers might best give their students opportunities to practice social thinking. The following section provides specific suggestions for social-cognitive instructional practices teachers might utilize. The recommendations have been divided into three sections that seem most compatible with the way teachers actually set up their classroom and progress through the school day.

The first section, “Classroom Environment and Routines” deals with how the school environment is set up in terms of time and place. Suggestions are provided for ways in which you might change the physical setup of your classroom and building, as well as your daily schedule/pacing, in order to stimulate practice in social thinking. The second section revolves around “Planned Instruction” or the intentional curricula by which you introduce and help students to practice social skills. The third section, “Impromptu Responses,” involves how you might give your students opportunities for social thinking as social situations arise throughout the day.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AND ROUTINES

This section is about time and place. It is how you set up your classroom and your schedule so that your students have opportunities to become better social thinkers. Here are some suggestions for your classroom:

Θ At the beginning of the school year, work with your students on devising a list of ground rules for the classroom. Have each student sign these rules, sign them yourselves, and send them home for parent/guardian signatures. Make a large copy and post it in a prominent position in your classroom. During the first days of school, review these rules with your students frequently.

Θ Along with a school psychologist or guidance counselor, parent, and other stakeholders, develop behavior intervention plans for specific students. Involve the student as much as possible. Build in a self-recording form so that the student can assume responsibility for recording his or her improvements.
Tool 2: Recommendations for Teachers

- Identify social and academic goals or standards for the day. Post these on the wall.

- Before novel situations like field trips or having a guest in the classroom, review classroom and school-wide rules. After these events, invite the class to review how well they followed these rules.

- Create a system to reinforce desired social behavior for your full class. Agree on a few simple social goals, and then review them with the class each day around dismissal time. Put stickers on a chart, or marbles in a marble jar, to represent each part of the day when these goals were met. When the sticker chart is complete or the marble jar is full, reward the class with a pizza party, a pajama read-a-thon, or some other group reward.

- Name a Star of the Day, or Student of the Month, for a boy or girl who has been doing good social thinking.

- Choose social cognition words/phrases (see Word and Phrases Bank, pg. 59) for monthly character trait programs or for words-of-the-week. For example, the character trait for November might be “Generating strategies.” Mention these traits in newsletters or emails sent to parents.

- Create a box in your classroom where students can anonymously describe social problems they are experiencing and where the teacher can anonymously describe problems. Use a class-wide meeting for problem-solving about concerns submitted to this box.

- Schedule a weekly, full class meeting as a forum to discuss social situations. Choose a Topic of the Week for this, based on teacher observation.

- Have students keep social journal entries. Write your own responses to their entries using the Social Cognition model. (For example, write “Do you think of any other strategies you could have used?” or “Good idea, counting to ten before you said something to your friend.”)

- With students’ help, generate and post a list of places students can go, or activities they can do, when they need to calm down before they do their social thinking.

- Hang posters in the classroom with labels and photographs to show a range of emotions such as fear, happiness, and sadness, and emotional states such as fatigue and being upset.

- Arrange in advance a support system among staff. Mutually agree how you will collaborate when students are fighting. For example, one staff person may help a student to calm down, while the other staff person discusses social thinking with the other student.

- Create a hand signal for “Stop.” Use it to remind students to regulate their emotions when they are in volatile situations.
Tool 2: Recommendations for Teachers

Θ Take photographs of students practicing exemplary social behaviors. Display these pictures in the classroom.

Θ Draw a “Strategometer,” with an arrow to indicate various social problem solving strategies such as “find a compromise,” “just walk away,” and “talk it out.” When students are trying to generate strategies, cue them with this graphic. Have them point an arrow toward the strategy they have selected to try implementing first.

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Jot down additional “Classroom Environment and Routines” you have tried in the past, or ones you’ve seen teachers down the hallway using with success:

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PLANNED INSTRUCTION

Sound social thinking does not happen automatically, even when a supportive social environment is in place. Alongside having a physical space that provides opportunities for students to practice social skills, and alongside daily routines and rhythms that elicit these skills, students benefit from receiving direct, intentional, and validated instruction. These lessons will help your students to understand the components of social cognition, to recognize when they should use them, to know child-friendly vocabulary for these components, and to practice them in a structured setting.

In this section, we will help you to develop this curriculum. A wide range of sources and methods for this curriculum development already exists so rather than re-inventing the wheel, you may well choose to use curricula that are already on your shelves. The guidelines presented below will assist you as you work to locate lessons that align with social-cognitive theory from the social skills curricula you already may have or be familiar with.

http://www.csde.umb.edu/tools
Guidelines for Locating Lessons in Existing Social Skills Curricula

When selecting lessons, it is important to remember that the essential ingredient in any lesson that is social-cognitive in nature is that the students themselves are called upon to think about, or learn to think about, an aspect of their social world in order to understand and solve a social problem.

There are several existing curricula that were developed with the social thinking skills in mind. A few that you might be most familiar with are, “Promoting Social Success” (Siperstein & Rickards, 2004), “PATHS” (Kusche & Greenberg, 1994), and “Skillstreaming” (McGinnis & Goldstein, 1997). However, lessons for teaching students to use social thinking skills can be found in most social skills curricula if you know what to look for. Below are hints for locating lessons in ANY existing curricula that are social-cognitive in nature:

- In the Introduction of the curriculum, search for mention of the underlying theory or premise of the curriculum. If you find terms such as “social learning theory,” “social cognition,” or “social problem solving,” or “social thinking skills” you may assume that the lessons ask students to think, to analyze and to make decisions about their social interactions and problems.

- In the Table of Contents of the curriculum, lessons might be categorized according to phrases that are consistent with a social-cognitive model. For example, you might find “Understanding Feelings and Actions” as a chapter heading in the table of contents, suggesting that lessons on social knowledge and social perception might be included.

- Social thinking skills might be scattered throughout a curriculum in lessons that were not specifically designed to develop social thinking skills. When skimming through lessons, look for words and phrases indicating social thinking skills. For example, the lessons, “Assertive Problem-Solving Strategies”, “What to do when you’re teased?”, and “Applying the Problem-solving Steps” could each potentially contain a sequence of steps for student to follow. The key is to make sure that you also teach students to think about when to use the steps, or how to think about what will happen if they use the steps. Be sure to add the “thinking part” if it is not built into the lesson already.

- Search for the following words and phrases in BOTH the table of contents and within the lessons themselves that teach students to actively think and act upon their own thinking to achieve the following:

  Build Social Knowledge:
  - Expand students’ awareness of what makes a good friend, how to communicate about your feelings and what you want, when to compromise, ways to show empathy.

  Use Problem Solving Meetings:
  - Practice identifying and solving social problems
Use Social Information: Noticing and Interpreting:
- Realize when a social problem occurs, and their role in it.
- Observe and understand the meaning of verbal and non-verbal signals
- Examine situations that elicit various feelings, and think about ways to alter the situations or feeling, or view the situation in a different way if they want to.
- Recognize the intentions of others.

Plan What to Do - Problem Solving:
- Think and plan how to resolve a social situation, try it out, and decide whether the plan was successful.

Caution! While some curricula contain lessons that teach students to generate various ways to solve a problem, very few lessons in commercial curricula help students first learn to identify their own goals or what they want to accomplish.

Regulate Emotions:
- Learn to manage their own emotional responses
  understand emotional intensity
- Express feelings in appropriate ways know how to calm down

Below we present a chart containing a sampling of lessons from commercial social curricula. At the end of the chart is space to add the lessons you have identified within your own social skills curricula. Jot them down so that you can access them when you are ready to teach.

For more suggestions of available social skills curricula, please refer to the extensive Bibliography located in Appendix E. In the bibliography you will also find an annotated listing of materials and games.
## Instructional Planning Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Curriculum</th>
<th>Notice Cues</th>
<th>Interpret cues</th>
<th>Consider goals</th>
<th>Generating Strategies &amp; Deciding on a Strategy</th>
<th>Review Outcomes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Promoting Social Success (Siperstein &amp; Rickards, 2004)</td>
<td><strong>Using Feeling Words</strong> (Unit 2, page 53) <strong>Focus:</strong> Generate examples of feelings words in books and real life.</td>
<td><strong>Accident or On Purpose?</strong> (Unit 3, page 225) <strong>Focus:</strong> Identify intent using cues in pictures.</td>
<td><strong>What Does it Mean to Have Goals?</strong> (Unit 4, page 285) <strong>Focus:</strong> Recognize a goal presented in a photograph. Identify personal goals.</td>
<td><strong>Generating Strategies to Solve a Problem</strong> (Unit 4, page 307) <strong>Focus:</strong> Provide at least one strategy to solve a problem.</td>
<td><strong>Practicing Strategy Selection</strong> (Unit 4, page 345) <strong>Focus:</strong> Predict possible consequences to generated strategies.</td>
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<td><strong>Interpreting Body Language</strong> (Unit 3, page 209) <strong>Focus:</strong> Identify emotions in photographs.</td>
<td><strong>How to Tell When Someone is Busy</strong> (Unit 3, page 256) <strong>Focus:</strong> Recognize whether or not someone is busy and judge when and how to approach someone.</td>
<td><strong>Practicing Identifying Goals</strong> (Unit 4, page 301) <strong>Focus:</strong> Develop goals appropriate for both real life and observed situations.</td>
<td><strong>Using Compromise as a Strategy</strong> (Unit 4, page 331) <strong>Focus:</strong> Generate problem-solving strategies that involve compromise.</td>
<td><strong>How Did it Go?</strong> (Unit 4, page 355) <strong>Focus:</strong> Evaluate the success of problem-solving plans.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skillstreaming the Elementary School Child (Kusche &amp; Greenberg, 1994)</td>
<td><strong>Offering to Help</strong> (Skill 20, page 110) <strong>Focus:</strong> Determine whether or not a person needs help, then offer to help.</td>
<td><strong>Show Understanding of Another’s Feelings</strong> (Skill 29, page 119) <strong>Focus:</strong> Identify another person’s feelings based on nonverbal cues and act appropriately based on cues. <strong>Relaxing</strong> (Skill 56, page 146) <strong>Focus:</strong> Recognize bodily cues of tension and practice relaxing through breathing.</td>
<td><strong>Setting a Goal</strong> (Skill 13, page 103) <strong>Focus:</strong> Set realistic goals and decide on steps for attaining goal.</td>
<td><strong>Dealing with Your Anger</strong> (Skill 31, page 121) <strong>Focus:</strong> Generate alternatives to acting out when angry.</td>
<td><strong>Deciding on Something to Do</strong> (Skill 13, 103) <strong>Focus:</strong> Create a list of possible activities. Select one most appropriate for present setting.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Knowing Your Feelings</strong> (Skill 26, page 116) <strong>Focus:</strong> Identify your emotions based on bodily cues.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Dealing with Being Left Out</strong> (Skill 51, page 141) <strong>Focus:</strong> Discuss possible strategies that may be used when left out of a group or activity.</td>
<td><strong>Making a Decision</strong> (Skill 59, page 149) <strong>Focus:</strong> Generate solutions to a problem, evaluate consequences, and select the best alternative.</td>
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### Tool 2: Recommendations for Teachers

<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Esteem Builders: A K-8 Self Esteem Curriculum for Improving Students Achievement, Behavior and School Climate. (Bruba, 1989)</td>
<td>Books on Belonging and Acceptance (EB #1 p.165) <strong>Focus:</strong> Identify how character in book is feeling, and problem character is facing. Connect feeling and problem to students’ lives.</td>
<td>Rules (Security (S) 15 p 57) <strong>Focus:</strong> Familiarize students and parents with class &amp; school rules</td>
<td>Problem-Solving Report (Mission (M) M5, p. 225) <strong>Focus:</strong> Identify their own problems and generate their own solutions</td>
<td>Help Each Other A18 p. 178 <strong>Focus:</strong> Increase awareness of ways to respond to a friend who needs help.</td>
<td>Add your own curriculum here (Identify lessons that help you teach students to use the Social-Cognitive Processes in the boxed to the right.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add your own curriculum here

(Identify lessons that help you teach students to use the Social-Cognitive Processes in the boxed to the right.)

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DEVELOPING YOUR OWN SOCIAL SKILLS LESSONS

Rather than, or in addition to, using published curricula, you may choose to develop your own social skills lessons. A skillful teacher can add the “social thinking” aspect to many lessons that already occur throughout the day.

For example, classroom rules appear on many classroom bulletin boards. In some cases, the teacher might post her own list of class rules that students must follow. In another case, students generate their class rules together. In the latter instance, students are forced to think about how they and their classmates should act in the classroom rather than being told by the teacher. Creating the classroom rules in this case becomes a social-cognitive lesson. While in both instances a set of class rules end up on the wall in the classroom, only one set of rules was the result of social thinking skills.

In this section we present suggestions for planned instruction to get you started in developing your own social skills lesson. The section is dividing up into the following categories:

- videotapes/scripts
- role playing
- children’s literature
- sentence starters/artwork
- social cognition vocabulary
- development and discussion of class rules

Video Vignettes of Social Problems in the Classroom

One way you can teach social thinking is through videotapes and/or scripts of social situations. When students watch stories of other students, they may be able to relate with the actors, yet at the same time have enough distance that they can analyze the social perception, social problem solving, emotional regulation, and social knowledge without feeling threatened or defensive. We include two videotaped vignettes as part of Tools for Teachers, with scripts and suggested follow-up discussion questions. Show your students these videos or have them read the scripts, then follow-up with the discussion questions. After you feel comfortable with this format, add any video which you think might show effective or ineffective social thinking. Structure your discussion questions around social cognition skills.
Vignette #1. The Lunchroom

Setting: Hallway (Hillary and Lisa are walking to the cafeteria.)

Hillary: Lisa, do you want to sit with me at lunch today?

Lisa (excited comment): Sure! (Or Yeah!)

Setting: Cafeteria
Now they are in the cafeteria, walking with their trays. Some friends at a table call to them. There is only one seat left at the table. We see that there are spaces at other tables.)

Hillary: (puts her tray down at the one place on the table and then says, apologetically) I’m sorry, Lisa. There’s only one seat left. How about if we sit together another time?

(Discussion Questions can be found in Appendix F)

Vignette #2: The Book Bag

Setting: In a classroom, during recess, a book bag is on the floor by a desk. Mike and Danny come in.

Mike: “Hey look Danny, someone left their bag. I’m going to see if I can find something fun in there!”

(Mike starts looking through the bag, but does NOT take stuff out of the bag. Tony (the owner of the book bag) comes in)

Tony: “Hey! That’s my bag!”

Mike (apologetically): “Oh, sorry Tony. I thought it was my bag and I was looking for my pencil. I guess we both have the same book bag.”

(Discussion Questions can be found in Appendix F)
Role-Playing Social Scenarios

Role playing is another way in which students can acquire social thinking skills with the advantage of a little bit of distance from their own lives. There are a number of advantages to using Role Playing as one of the techniques for teaching social thinking skills to your students.

Can you imagine how useful seeing and hearing “pretend” situations such as these might be?

Θ A dramatic enactment of a student unintentionally knocking over a pile of books on a classmate’s desk.

Students can decide whether the incident was an “accident” instead of a deliberate, “on purpose” incident, and interpret how the participating students were feeling, based upon body language, facial expression and voice tone. Having seen the scene, they will be more able to provide specific examples as to why they think it was an accident, and that the students were surprised or even angry.

Θ Students acting out a way to solve the problem of what to do if you really want to pick the same single remaining blue highlighter as your friend does to mark “nouns” on the language worksheet.

Such a challenging role play activity would provide the opportunity to talk about what to do when one has conflicting goals—to be a friend, and to use the highlighter. Conflicting goals occur fairly often throughout each week at school and home, and can cause frustration for a student who only considers one goal at a time.

Θ Young readers can predict what will happen if a character makes a different choice, and act it out for classmates to see. All can guess what the other choice was, and whether it would be as effective as what the character decided to do.

Fiction can be an ideal medium for trying out new strategies and working through the possible consequences of each possible selection. For example, what might have happened if Bradley, in There’s a Boy in the Girl’s Bathroom, hadn’t given Jeff his dollar back if Jeff would be his friend?

Role Play offers models of real life situations for students who benefit from actually “seeing” an interaction so that they can better understand what occurred. And, as an actor in a role play, a student can practice using language for new strategies such as, “I don’t like it when you take my lunch” and “Do you want to play together at recess?”

You might have students write their own scripts, making up vignettes where characters initially don’t notice social cues, or interpret them correctly, or select appropriate goals, or generate multiple and effective strategies, or appropriately evaluate what happened and make adjustments.
Perhaps they would like to begin by using the script about Brenda and Eddie at the Lockers. We introduced these two students as one of the modes for educators to learn about the social-cognitive processes. Their social problem progresses through each of the processes, followed by questions to ponder about what they “got right” and where they just didn’t think socially. Look in Appendix G for the script and questions.

The description of “Lucas Looking for Relationships”: What does a student without social competence look like?” (see Tool Two: pg. 56) may be helpful in generating role-playing themes. For example, you might ask students to tell you stories about when students followed the class rules, such as when working together in a literature circle group, and when one literature group classmate did not. Or, ask students to tell about a situation when one student becomes angry, cools herself down, and tells her offending classmate that she didn’t like what she did. Then, play the same scene again when the same girl blurts out angrily and frightened her classmates. Students can discuss the different ways the role playing students acted, suggest different ways to act, pick the one each thinks is the best solution, and tell why.

To generate role play material, you may want to give students a “story starter” topic, such as “A Misunderstanding Between Classmates” or “An Argument That was Hard to Stop”, or just ask for the group to generate a list of situations in which social skills were lacking. The list below provides illustrations of situations that could be acted out and questions that can be posed to process the scenes. For additional ideas, check back to Tool One starting on page 5 at the Individual Descriptions of Processes.

- **Noticing social cues:** What do student who are not “Paying attention to what’s going on” look like?”
  
  Continuing to tell the ever-so-long story about going to the zoo when classmate is yawning and looking away frequently.

- **Interpreting social cues:** What do students who don’t “Understand what’s going on” look like?
  
  Thinking a 6th grade student spilled his milk in the cafeteria on purpose when it was really an accident.

- **Setting goals:** “What do students who don’t know “what I want to happen” look like?”
  
  Young eager student who wants to play with classmates keeps cutting in line on the ladder to the slide, and walking up the slide backwards.

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➢ Social problem solving: “What does a student who might not consider “What could I do?” or “What would happen if I tried…?” or “What will I actually decide to do?”

Shy girl who sits on the bench during recess, thinking nobody likes her, when her classmates think she is a real “snob” who considers herself too good to play with them!

➢ Evaluating results: “What do students who won’t consider, ‘Did it work?’ look like?”

A student tells the teacher each time a classmate makes a mistake, doesn’t follow a class rule, or isn’t kind. When his classmates don’t pick him anymore for their math team, he just cannot figure out why.

Beyond these lists, include role-playing themes where characters neglect to use emotional regulation, and where they don’t know or don’t tap into social knowledge. After students role-play these scenarios, discuss how they could replay them using good social thinking. End lessons by having them role-play these effective skills.

Teaching Social Skills through Children’s Literature

Another way to teach social thinking in a non-threatening way is through children’s literature. We believe that when teachers use children’s literature to teach social skills this stimulates growth in both social skills and academic learning. Teaching social skills through literature has four advantages:

Advantage #1: Combining instruction in children’s literature and social skills is a great idea because the literature/language arts and social thinking skills subject areas share an overlapping body of skills. Children’s literature is rich with opportunities for children to practice social thinking skills. For example, literature can:

➢ Expand students’ emotional vocabulary.

➢ Help students to identify and describe social problems.

➢ Provide students with the opportunity to practice empathy.

➢ Provide students with practice in identifying peoples’ goals, the obstacles that arise to attaining them, and the varied ways in which they respond to obstacles

➢ Provide students with practice in social problem-solving.

➢ Provide students with opportunities to consider consequences of social situations.

➢ Provide students with practice in noticing and thinking about important details that help people understand what has happened and what another is thinking and feeling.
Advantage #2: Children’s literature provides numerous jumping off points for children to practice thinking about their own social world. For example, while reading a story, a child might keep a journal in which she records the different emotions that a character experienced and identifies examples of times that she experienced similar emotions. Children might also write about times that they have been in a similar situation to a story character and to describe the situation and how they dealt with it. Alternatively, after talking about characters’ motivations and goals, children can identify goals that they have pursued in social situations and describe how they dealt with obstacles that they encountered. The events and interaction described in a story might also serve as a catalyst for a brief writing passage (possibly with an accompanying illustration) about what the child has learned from his/her own experiences about friendship, or about dealing with situations involving borrowing, or teasing, or peer pressure.

Advantage #3: Sometimes it is easier (and safer) for children to begin talking about familiar social problems in relation to fictional characters than it is to talk about themselves and their classmates. They may be able to recognize skills in social perception, social problem solving, emotional regulation, and social knowledge in these characters, even when they might not recognize them in their own lives. With our guidance, they may then be able to bridge from these characters’ social situations to their own. Thus, literature can:

- Expand the number of people in the social community of the classroom to include fictional and non-fiction characters.
- Provide a set of characters that the class can feel safe about using when they talk about familiar social problems.

Advantage #4: Using literature as a jumping off point for exploring social situations and practicing social thinking skills enhances children’s motivation to engage in language arts learning and appreciation of literature! Often, the literature seems a little less remote and much more meaningful when children have the opportunity to connect what is going on in a story to their own life experiences. In addition, the activities and exercises that connect literature to life experiences and provide practice in social thinking are often quite enjoyable and provide children with much-needed practice in oral and written expression skills.

When teaching literature and social skills as an integrated area of study, we recommend that you continually going back and forth, back and forth between the text and children’s social world. Explore the social thinking skills (which are identical to reading comprehension skills and appreciation of themes, language, and other elements of the story) in relation to the text. Then use this as a jumping off point for children to act out situations from the story and then to write, draw, and/or dramatize situations and examples from their own experience. Then, after the children have gained a richer understanding of the situations described in the text by making connections to their life experiences, go back to the text for a
while.

Below you will find tools to use as you expand the way you currently use literature to teach both social thinking skills and English/Language Arts skills. First, you will find some suggestions from two talented teachers about how they select children’s literature when infusing social thinking skills. Next, we list some children’s literature that may be particularly conducive to this approach, along with some sample discussion questions couched in social-cognitive language. Add these questions to the questions that you already ask students when stimulating discussion of concepts through literature. Additional questions tied to specific books are found in Appendix H.

**Selecting literature conducive to developing social thinking skills.** Kathleen Lenaghan and Denise Ford, two engaging and committed educators from an urban school district, offer these suggestions for selecting and introducing literature for English/Language Arts and Social Thinking Skills instruction. We thank these teachers for their willingness to share!

### Guidelines for selecting literature

1. Has dialog—a Must!
2. Passes the “5-finger” rule—students stumble on pronunciation or meaning of fewer than 5 words per page.
3. Contains pictures or drawings
4. Focuses upon a complex theme about real life situations written in simple language.
5. Represents different genres, including poetry and myths.

### Before reading the literature

1. Decide on the social thinking skills theme you wish to teach, just as you do with the English/Language Arts themes.
2. Ask consistent questions about the theme (e.g., deciding whether problem solving strategies were effective in reaching social goal, using better strategies to solve a problem, noticing how to be a good friend).
3. Make predictions based upon the cover.
4. Ask if students notice characters’ feeling states (happy, sad, angry).

### During the reading of the literature

1. Ask students if they can make a “personal connection” to a character or situation.
2. Describe that connection to classmates.
3. Play charades to act out what the character will do next, and have others guess their recommended problem-solving strategy.
4. After conflict has been presented, ask students to write or draw their own “last page” of the literature, ending with what they predict will happen.
5. As students to write or draw about social intentions—was the character acting mean or not mean, friendly or not friendly, fair or not fair.
Favorite Books to Use for Literature and Social Thinking Skills Instruction

**Amber Brown Goes Fourth**
by Paula Danzinger and Tony Ross
- Long distance relationships
- Friendship
- Lessons
- Sharing
*(...and other Amber Brown books)*

**In the Smelly Yellow School Bus**
by Jamie Jones
- Dangerous situations arise because she takes risk
- Look at things that appear to be safe but could cause problems
- Assignment – Have you ever been in a similar situation?

**Puffin Chapters - Paperback**
by Suzy Kline and Song Lee
- Lessons in diversity
- Tolerance
- Prejudice
- Acceptance

**My Rotten Red-Headed Brother**
by Patricia Polacco
- Sibling Rivalry
- Temper Control
- Younger sibling

*Additional books they use when teaching English/Language Arts and social thinking skills*

**Books by Judy Blume**
- *Classroom at the End of the Hall*
  By Douglas Evans and Larry DiFiori

**Arthur and the Big Blow-Up: A Marc Brown Chapter Book 20**
(Arthur Chapter Books) paperback, 2000
- *Guiding Readers and Writers (Grades 3-6)*
  *Teaching Comprehension, Genre, and Content Literacy*
  by Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnel

**Looking After Louis**
by Lesley Ely and Polly Dunbar
- *What’s so Great About Fourth Grade*
  by Ellen Kahaner and Paul Henry

**School Mouse**
by Dick King-Smith
- *Horrible Harry and the Green Slime*
  by Suzy Kline and Frank Remkiewicz
  *(and other Horrible Harry books)*

**Nellie Jo’e Friends**
by Patricia McKessack
*(and other books by McKessack)*
- *Feeling Good About Yourself*
  by Debbie Pincus

**The Best School Year Ever**
by Barbara Robinson
Keep track of the books *you* like to use for English/Language Arts and Social Thinking Skills Instruction.

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The following are examples of notes used by teachers to teach social thinking skills during English/Language Arts instruction. These are designed as “starter” questions, thoughts and assignments to stimulate your own thinking as you begin to add social thinking skills instruction to your own English/Language Arts instruction. (Note: In Appendix H you will find complete “Teacher Notes, Discussion Points and Assignments” for three books: Amber Brown Goes Fourth by Paula Danzinger, Looking after Louis, by Lesley Ely and Polly Dunbar, There’s A Boy in The Girls Bathroom by Louis Sachar.)

### EXAMPLES OF TEACHER NOTES

#### Amber Brown Goes Fourth
by Paula Danzinger

**Preview cover:**

- **Notice cues:** Does she look happy? Shoulders slumped, sad face/body language etc.
- **Read back blurb:** Amber has everything she needs for fourth grade except a best friend-
- **Make predictions:** Why doesn’t she have a best friend, what can she do to find a best friend.

**Chapter 1:** Ambers best friend Justin Daniels moved away

- **Discussion:**
  - “it’s not going to be easy without Justin”
  - shoe salesman uses pans etc. – explain joke
- **Assignment:**
  - How does having a best friend make the first day of school better?

**Chapter 2:**

- **Discussion:**
  - Amber’s parents recently divorced
  - Mom has new boyfriend
  - How does Amber feel?
- **Assignment:**
  - Talk to me without saying a word
  - Let me know how and what you are feeling

**Chapter 3:**

- **Discussion:**
  - Amber is very depressed about mom’s boyfriend
  - Worried
  - Stressed about starting school without best friend
  - Dad calls –Amber happy
- **Assignment:**
  - What makes you sad?
  - What strategies do you know to help you get through difficult times?
Next follows questions and activities aligned more specifically with each social skills process. The following questions are for use when focusing upon specific aspects of the social-cognitive model through discussions of fiction. Below is a brief description of each social-cognitive process are questions and activities designed to address that process. Look for situations within any story that lends itself to the social-cognitive process you wish to teach.

To better illustrate, the following examples refer to a specific book, There’s a Boy in the Girl’s Bathroom by Louis Sacher. This humorous story about Bradley and Jeff, written by Louis Sacher, received 19 state and national awards. The synopsis that follows is offered by the publisher gives us a hint that this humorous story contains many opportunities to discuss social thinking skills that occur in the familiar school setting.

“Bradley Chalkers IS the oldest kid in the fifth grade. He tells enormous lies. He picks fights with girls. No one likes him—except Carla, the new school counselor. She thinks Bradley is sensitive and generous, and knows that Bradley could change, if only he weren’t afraid to try. But when you feel like the most-hated kid in the whole school, believing in yourself can be the hardest thing in the world.”


**Guide Questions for Focusing upon Social Thinking Skills through Discussions of Fiction**

**Social Knowledge:** Social Knowledge includes the rules and expectations for different types of situations, roles, and relationships. It is the raw material that children call upon when they perform each of the other processes in our Social-Cognitive model. Any processing of stories that students do as they read or in their own personal stories contributes to social knowledge.

**For example:** When Carla, Bradley’s counselor, explains the “rules” of confidentiality, students can learn what it means to keep information private.

Social knowledge includes exploring social concepts like:

- What does it mean to be someone’s friend?
- What are the expectations for how to act in different types of situations?
- What does it mean to treat people respectfully, or to be responsible for your actions?

**Emotion Regulation:** Emotional regulation describes the degree of strong emotion that characters experience. Part of learning to regulate emotions is learning to gauge the socially appropriate type and amount of emotion to attach to an event. Through stories student can learn what characters do to help themselves regulate their emotions.

**For example:** Talking to toy animals as Bradley did when confused or lonely.

- Connect a character’s level of emotional arousal to specific events that occur in story.
- How do different characters deal with emotionally upsetting experiences?
- If you were a friend, what advice would you give (an upset) character in the story?
Notice and Interpret Social Cues (Social Perception): Social perception begins with our ability to take in the social cues around us and to make them part of our awareness. These cues can come from people and the environment. Then we learn to assign meaning to them.

For Example: How should Jeff interpret the social cues from Bradley—first spitting on him and then chasing after him ready to pay a dollar for friendship?

- How did the character feel? How can we tell that the character feels this way?
- What kind of colorful language does the author use to communicate the emotion? e.g., “his legs were like jelly” “butterflies in one’s stomach” “heart in her throat”.
- Relating feelings to the situation:
  - How do you think (character in story) felt when this happened?
  - Can you remember a time when you felt that way?
- Double or pretend feelings: He may have been smiling on the outside but do you think he really was smiling on the inside?
- Inferring feelings from behavior: What does this tell us about this character?
- Embarrassment (e.g., when teacher introduces Jeff to class and asks him to talk about the monument).
- Fear: When Bradley lies about the note the teacher gave him to take home.
  - When Bradley says that his mother promised to take him to the zoo (to try to keep her from talking to his teacher.)
  - When Bradley didn’t want to see the counselor.
- Anger: Dad’s reaction when Bradley says his mom is lying
- Loneliness: Bradley having pretend friends.
- Teacher saying, “Unfortunately, you have to sit here.”
  - What does it mean to sit in the last seat in the last row? (How did he feel?)
  - How would you have felt if the teacher talked to you like that?
  - Can you think of a time when you felt like that?
- Interpreting Motivation: Why does Bradley keep telling his sister that he doesn’t care about his animals (pretend friends)?
  - Why does Bradley’s dad come home grumpy?
  - Why did mom say the teacher said Bradley is doing well? (Why did she lie?)
  - How come at a later point in the story, we no longer see Bradley playing with his stuffed animals?

Consider/Set Goals: Once we notice social cues and interpret meaning to a social situation, we need to clarify for ourselves what we want to happen. Setting the goal for what we want to occur is essential for deciding what to do to reach the goal.

For Example: One might imagine that Bradley’s goal was to be Jeff’s friend when he lied and told Jeff that he, too, went into the girl’s bathroom. But unlike Jeff who entered by mistake, Bradley further boasted that he entered the girl’s bathroom “...all the time. I like to make them scream.”

- Is a goal the same as wanting or hoping for something, like wanting a certain video
game for a birthday gift? What would make it clear that it’s a person’s goal?

- Identifying characters’ goals and students’ own goal(s): Does the character have a goal in this story? What is it? How do we know it’s his/her goal?
- Sometimes people can have more than one goal. Besides the goal just mentioned, is there anything else that he wants to happen?
- Sometimes a person’s goal might also be to keep something from happening, something that he/she doesn’t want to happen.
- Is there anything that (story character) is trying to prevent/keep from happening?
- Did he/she accomplish his/her goal by the end of the story?
- What happened to the goal? (Did he/she still have the same goal towards the end of the story? Did he/she change his/her goal?).
- What were the obstacles to reaching his/her goal? (Obstacles are part of what makes stories interesting.)

**Generate Strategies:** A challenge to solving social problems is having a choice of possible solutions, or strategies, to select from. Stories can offer examples of strategies a character selected, providing opportunities for discussions about what other strategies could have been used, and what would have happened if another strategy were selected. This level of analysis, called predicting outcomes, is helpful to keep in mind when preparing to make the best choice.

**For Example:** The out-of-the ordinary strategies Bradley selects provide ample opportunity for readers to predict outcomes and generate more typical alternative strategies. Bradley proposed that they beat the girls up so that they would stop saying hello. “You just have to hit them once, and they cry and run away.”

- Predicting outcomes: What do you think will happen next in the story?
- Generating different solutions: Brainstorm alternative strategies that the story character could use.
- If you were this character, what could/would you do?
- How else could you have done it? What could you do? What would you do?
- How would you respond to teasing by Bradley’s sister Claudia? To teasing by classmates?

**Decide On a Strategy:** Deciding on the best strategy for a social situation requires matching knowledge about one’s goal, or what we want to happen in the situation, with what we think will occur for each of the possible strategies we might pick. A further complication occurs when one has multiple goals, such as being hungry and wanting to keep a friendship by sharing the last cookie.

**For Example:** Bradley doesn’t want classmates to know that his black eye was planted by a girl, and he wants Jeff to be his friend. He tells the Principal that Jeff gave him the black eye.

- Evaluate different brainstormed strategies according to the character’s goal(s).
- What’s the other character like?
- Based on what we know about the other character, what would be the best way for this character to deal with him/her to get what he/she wants to happen? What will
Tool 2: Recommendations for Teachers

happen if the character tries this?

- Evaluate the characters’ strategies according to an evaluative standard such as: “friendly/unfriendly”, “safe/risky”, or “respectful/disrespectful”
  - Was this a friendly/safe thing to do?
  - What would have been friendly/safe?
  - What will happen if…?
- Regarding rule violations: What do you think will happen if Bradley says, “Give me a dollar or I’ll spit on you?”
- What will happen after Bradley says that his mother is lying?
- Regarding catastrophic/exaggerated expectations: What do you think will happen if Bradley goes and talks to the counselor?
- What do you think about the teacher who talked to Bradley (in a disrespectful way)? If you were the teacher how else could you have said it?

Evaluate Results: Stories can offer students the emotional distance from their own social situations so that they can more easily reflect upon whether the strategy they or the character selected actually helped them reach their goal. In other words, did the strategy help them get what they wanted from the social situation.

For example: Jeff no longer plans to do homework with Bradley after school, and he plays basketball with other guys. Is this what Bradley wanted to happen?

- Did it turn out the way you expected?
- Did it turn out the way the character expected?

Sentence Starters/Artwork

Using sentence starters to write or draw responses is another way in which students can acquire social thinking skills. Many teachers we have worked with like to use this format with their planned lessons as a scaffold to focus the student’s attention and thinking on a specific aspect of their own social behavior.

The following are examples of how a teacher used the same sentence starter to generate both written and drawn responses. By using this structure, the activity actively engaged a wide range of students.

Students can express themselves verbally or through artwork to answer statements such as:

- To know what’s really going on, you should look at/listen to _______________” (noticing social cues.)

- “I feel (angry/sad/happy/upset/afraid, etc.) when _______________” (interpreting social cues.)

- “I like having you in my class because _______________” (goal setting.)

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• “I want to be a good friend so I will…__________________” (goal setting.)

• “I can let a friend know I did something by accident, rather than on purpose, by ___________________” (selecting strategies.)

• “When I’m too upset to do good social thinking, I can first ________________” (emotional regulation.)

• Something I already know about (sharing/turn-taking/being a good friend, etc.) is ___________________” (social knowledge.)

Students may understand social cognition in unique ways and can express this understanding through their artwork. Have them draw or photograph facial expressions and body language to show emotions and emotional states. Or, they could draw a strategy that works for them when they themselves are feeling sad, or happy or frustrated or angry. Have them sketch out entire social scenarios, much as they scripted in role-playing exercises.

Here are a few examples students wish to share with you about their own social skills writing and artwork.

![Drawing of a person reading a book: When I'm sad, I can...]

I think friendship is sharing toys together. I will help them to stand up for themselves. If they do something wrong, I will tell them not to do that because they might get in trouble.

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Expanding Social Vocabulary and Concepts

Another way to enhance your students’ social thinking is to provide them with a vocabulary for such concepts. Depending on the ages of the students, introduce them to standard social cognition terms such as those suggested below. Present these words/phrases formally during planned instruction, so you can refer to them throughout the school year. Teachers have also used some vocabulary in spelling units and in “word/phrase of the week.”

Social Vocabulary A Starting Point

**Basic Emotions:** happy, sad, surprised, embarrassed, frustrated, angry

**Basic Emotional States:** lonely, confused, nervous, scared, calm, excited

**Basic Acts of Social Competence:** compromise, express feelings, forgive, empathize, compliment, calming down

**Noticing:** paying attention to what’s going on

**Intentions:** accident or on purpose, mean or not mean, friendly or not friendly

**Goals:** What do I want to happen?

**What could I do?:** Think about several possible strategies

**What will I actually do?:** Picking the best strategy

**Did it work?:** Reviewing what happened

Additional Social Vocabulary you want your students to know:

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
Establishing Class Rules

You might recall that earlier we discussed setting up a classroom environment that provides your students opportunities to become better social thinkers. To give your students opportunities to apply their social thinking, involve them in the development and discussion of class rules. You might start out with a question, or a problem statement that you need their thinking to resolve. For example:

- How should we treat each other to show respect in our classroom?
- What rules shall we make for ourselves to follow so that our classroom is the best place for everyone to learn?

Classroom Rules

1. Walk and move safely
2. Be kind to others
3. Use quiet voices
4. Be respectful
5. Listen while others are talking
6. Keep hands and all other objects to yourself
7. Raise your hand before talking

BE HAPPY
IMPROMPTU RESPONSES

Assume at this point that you have set up the school environment and routines to facilitate practice in social thinking, and assume that you have planned a series of lessons that systematically introduce your students to social perception, social problem solving, social knowledge, and emotional regulation. You will still, most likely, have some days when all you seem to do is put out fires. But we want you to become more and more skilled and comfortable in using research-based intervention techniques to handle social situations on-the-spot. We want you to capitalize on instances of appropriate and inappropriate social thinking, whenever they arise, by turning them into opportunities to help your students become better social thinkers.

Previously, we provided a Word and Phrase Bank consisting of examples of questions that you can ask and prompts you can offer, during everyday interactions, to prompt students to practice social thinking skills in real-life situations. We urge you to print out this Word and Phrase Bank and practice using these questions and statements in the “rough and tumble” of interaction with students. Below, we give additional examples of students’ social behaviors and effective teachers’ on-the-spot responses. After each event, we describe how these teachers’ responses align with the social-cognitive model. Even if some of the strategies that follow are as old as the hills for you, we want you to be able to comfortably re-think them within this social cognition model. Teachers have told us that when they frame their Impromptu Responses to Spontaneous Situations as instructional opportunities to practice social thinking skills, they feel more calm themselves.

"It’s becoming more natural to infuse these (social thinking skills). The only person who was getting upset (with student arguments and disagreements) was me! Now I ask them to give alternate choices of what to do, what you could have done, and what is expected of you because I know you can. I see real progress (in the students), and I feel like a better person, too."

Event: Three students are gossiping about who has a “crush” on another.

Teacher Response: The teacher uses humor to show them that someone overhearing their conversation might think that their intention was to be mean. She’s helping them to be aware of what other students may be noticing and interpreting.

Event: A boy brushes past another student in the cafeteria and accidentally knocks her lunch tray off the table.

Teacher Response: Their teacher happens to witness the incident, explains to the first boy that the other student may misunderstand and become upset, and she helps the boy to find words to explain that this was not on purpose. She’s guiding his social perception and helping him to generate some strategies.
**Event:** Two boys are fighting over books.

**Teacher Response:** The teacher asks them, “What is it you want to happen here?” “What do you need to do so that can happen?” She’s making them more aware of goal setting.

**Event:** A student is making negative comments about a peer in her work group who is having difficulty learning.

**Teacher Response:** The teacher senses that this student is frustrated because the task is going slowly. She helps the student to express this frustration by asking “How do you wish this task was going?” She encourages her to set different goals by asking, “What might be even more important than getting this done quickly?” She’s giving them opportunities to set goals.

**Event:** A student is grumbling that he didn’t get his first choice of partners for writing a book review.

**Teacher Response:** The teacher brings in her own life experience as an example, describing a job situation where she was assigned to work alongside someone she didn’t care for. She’s helping to understand that goal setting can involve practical as well as social goals.

**Event:** The students enter the classroom too noisily.

**Teacher Response:** The teacher asks them what class rule they need to work on, and asks them to re-enter the room again, keeping the class rule in mind. She is teaching them a social strategy.

**Event:** Class members have been supporting a classmate with physical challenges during physical education classes.

**Teacher Response:** The teacher acknowledges their selecting the goal of including the whole class, and their creativity in choosing strategies to make this happen during P.E. She reinforces their selection of goals and their generation of strategies.

**Event:** A girl takes one glance at a worksheet which overwhelms her and she bursts into tears.

**Teacher Response:** The teacher gives her a previously established “count to ten” cue to calm down a little bit. She’s helping her to practice emotional regulation.
Event: A young child brings in cupcakes for his birthday, but a friend refuses to sing “Happy Birthday” with the class when it’s time to pass them out.

Teacher Response: The teacher asks the second student about birthday traditions, reminding him that singing this song makes the birthday boy/girl feel special. She is helping him to tap into his social knowledge.

Event: A boy storms in from recess, yelling at another student for something that happened on the climbing structure.

Teacher Response: The teacher helps him to process what had happened, and to evaluate what he could have done differently. The incident has already happened, and she’s helping him to evaluate whether the strategies he chose “worked.”

Event: Some students have been doing some good social thinking.

Teacher Response: The teacher compliments them in front of the class. She is selectively reinforcing their social perception and problem solving, their use of social knowledge, and their emotional regulation.

- “You were so quick to notice that.”
- “You really knew how to interpret that information, didn’t you.”
- “I notice that you didn’t decide what to do right away. First, you calmed yourself down.”
- “I like it that you chose goals which would help you to be a better friend.”
- “That was terrific the way you used ideas you already know to handle that situation”
Throughout Tools for Teachers you have been presented with ideas that other teachers are implementing as part of their instructional practice to address social thinking skills through classroom environment and routines, planned instruction and impromptu responses to spontaneous social situations. As you navigated through these different sections, you might have begun to recall more of what you are already doing to foster social thinking with students. At this point, you are probably ready to analyze your own teaching practices.

In this section of Tool Two, we again provide examples of what other teachers are doing, but with the aim of empowering you to analyze and “tweak” your own instructional practices. We start by presenting examples of how other educators analyze their own instructional practices that address social thinking skills. We then provide an empty chart for you to analyze what you are already doing in your instructional practices to foster socially thinking students. Doing so will allow you to make sure you are addressing the social thinking skills you feel your students need to master. After identifying any gaps that exist in your instructional practices, we will guide you through a process for making decisions about how you can add to what you are already doing.

Learning from the Instructional Practice of Colleagues and Identifying Your Own Instructional Practices

The ideas presented in the following chart are organized by specific social thinking skill as well as by the three types of instructional practice opportunities that occur throughout the school day. The blank chart that follows is for you to map your own social thinking skills instructional practices so that it is easier for you to identify those aspects of your instructional practices where more attention could be paid to social skills teaching. These “teaching gaps” can be filled by using the materials provided.

In the following chart, teachers from various grade levels and educational environments have jotted down the instructional practice ideas they use to help their own students notice and interpret social cues. The chart is actually three pages long so it might be easier to print it all out and then tape them together.

Perhaps their ideas will stimulate your own thinking!
### Instructional Practice Opportunities (throughout the school day)

- **Noticing Social Cues**
  - Paying attention to what’s going on…
  - *Brenda didn’t notice Eddie’s wink.***

- **Interpreting Social Cues**
  - Understanding what’s going on…
  - *Brenda didn’t understand that Eddie’s wink meant he was kidding.***

### Classroom Environment and Routines

- **Classroom Environment and Routines**
  - Identify other ways you teach social skills, such as through posters, bulletin board displays, classroom routines, etc.

- **Classroom Environment and Routines**
  - Post list of acceptable behaviors, class rules, school Code of Conduct
  - Line-up/dismissal according to who was following directions
  - Positive reinforcement by naming the behavior (“thank you for raising your hand, let me answer your question.” or “I noticed that ___ is ___.”) (throughout the school day)

- **Classroom Environment and Routines**
  - Behavior chart written with positive language and stickers, “I Helped a Friend Today” Chart
  - Traffic light poster for calming down
  - Traffic light poster song

### Planned Instruction

- **Planned Instruction**
  - If you currently teach social skills lessons, what do you teach?

- **Planned Instruction**
  - English language arts literature, ask students to tell how the character feels, and how they would feel if they were the character….

- **Planned Instruction**
  - Ask students to tell what the character feels, what clues did the author give us about how the character feels, what clues we notice in ourselves and classmates about how we feel.

### Impromptu Responses to Spontaneous Situations

- **Impromptu Responses to Spontaneous Situations**
  - Tell the ways you respond to social situations as they arise throughout the school day.

- **Impromptu Responses to Spontaneous Situations**
  - Point to children, praising them when on task.
  - Ask students if they understood what happened in a difficult unresolved situation—help them explain if necessary.
  - Ask students to explain the situation before trying to solve it.
### Considering a Goal

**What do I want to happen?**

*Brenda wanted her hat back AND she wanted to play with Eddie.*

### Generating Strategies & Deciding on a Strategy

**What could I do? What would happen if I tried…? What will happen if I decide to do…?**

*Brenda thought she could tell on Eddie, look sad, or yell, or pull Eddie’s hat off.*

### Evaluate the Outcome

**Did it work?**

*The teacher made them stay in for recess, but Brenda was pleased. She got her hat back and played with Eddie.*

### Classroom Environment and Routines

**Begin certain activities by asking students to articulate the goals, as part of classroom routing for certain activities.**

### Classroom Environment and Routines

**Have students make rules for how to work in a collaborative group themselves, (with teacher assistance).**

### Classroom Environment and Routines

**Ask student to look at the class rules and remind each other which ones they needed to follow to prevent the inappropriate behavior that occurred (such as groups talking too loudly).**

### Planned Instruction

**Teachers presents the goal (of a given activity or lesson) and then at end of activity the group of students reflects upon how they did or did not accomplish goal, such as what they accomplished by listening, paying attention, completing an assignment.**

**Help students learn to articulate the goals for classroom activity before it begins.**

**Teach what “goals” means, and practice setting goals before recess.**

### Planned Instruction

**Brainstorm strategies. (What will happen if we don’t complete the assignment?) (use prediction)**

**Have students make inferences on what they read in class (what was the person doing/ why did they make that choice?)**

**Tell them your expectations (goals) and ask them to generate ways to meet those expectations. (e.g., since we expect the cooperative groups to work together but not be disruptive, what can your group do to be working together)**

**During reading group, predict what the character will do and why. Ask students to act out each strategy. Have class vote on preferred strategy.**

### Planned Instruction

**Write situations down and have class write goals and better responses for the situation.**

**Examine what happened when the character used the strategy, and evaluate whether it was an effective strategy to get what the character wanted.**

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<tr>
<td>Ask particular students who have been having difficulty during unstructured recess time to decide upon the a goal for having fun and select the “fun” recess activity before going outside.</td>
<td>Write a situation that occurred on a card and ask students to generate ideas about how to handle it. Ask what they think would happen with each idea about how to handle the situation, and then pick the “best idea.”</td>
<td>Ask students if they did followed classroom rules—and tell them the consequences of their actions. Ask them what they will need to do in the future for better consequences.</td>
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<td>Ask students why they are doing a certain behavior, --a positive or negative behavior.</td>
<td>Ask student if there is a better choice to make. (What do you think you should do?)</td>
<td>Ask students if their choice worked, had positive results.</td>
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<td>Ask students what they want to have happen?</td>
<td>Work with student to decide how to tell another student that he is bothering him, and practice ahead of time.</td>
<td>Ask the student how he/she felt about the outcome or felt about what happened</td>
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<td>Walk students through the strategies by asking questions such as “what could you do…, what do you think would happen if…”</td>
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<td>Brenda doesn’t realize that some games are “inside games” and some games are “outside games.”</td>
<td>Brenda took a breath and counted to five. That made it possible for her to think about what to do when Eddie took her hat.</td>
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**Classroom Environment and Routines**

Students assemble a collage of magazine pictures depicting the social theme they are learning, such as friendship, mean vs. not mean, personal goals. Teacher and students post and refer to bulletin board throughout the week.

Provide a student with a card-size traffic light to keep on his desk to remind him how to calm down.

Give a “special bracelet” to a student as a reminder to remain calm. Student can finger the beads as a calming down strategy.

**Planned Instruction**

During English/Language Arts lesson, ask students to think about what the characters did to be “good friends.”

Ask a parent, principal or guidance counselor to speak with the students about several ways to respond to being bullied or teased.

Watch an appropriate video such as of a book (e.g., To Kill a Mockingbird.) Ahead of time, distribute a Video Guide sheet for jotting down when a character felt strong emotions, and what the character did to express those emotions. Debrief about what happened in the story because of how the person expressed emotions, and what might have happened if emotions were expressed in a different way.

**Impromptu Responses to Spontaneous Situations**

Ask student, “What do teammates do?”

Prompt student to use their personal calming down strategy before a potentially stressful situation or activity.
Mapping SOCIAL SKILLS Chart: Analyzing Your Own Instructional Practice

Instructions: Please jot down the ways you currently teach social skills. Consider any planned instruction, any ways you respond to social problems when they occur throughout the day, and any classroom routines in place in your classroom. This guided reflection will help you to identify the resources and practices you currently use to teach the social-cognitive processes, and to notice where “gaps” in your instructional practice appear.

| Instructional Practice Opportunities (throughout the school day) | Noticing Social Cues  
| Paying attention to what’s going on… | Interpreting Social Cues  
| Understanding what’s going on… |
| Brenda didn’t notice Eddie’s wink. | Brenda didn’t understand that Eddie’s wink meant he was kidding. |

| Classroom Environment and Routines | Classroom Environment and Routines | Classroom Environment and Routines |
| Identify other ways you teach social skills, such as through posters, bulletin board displays, classroom routines, etc. |  |  |

| Planned Instruction | Planned Instruction | Planned Instruction |
| If you currently teach social skills lessons, what do you teach? What materials do you use for each of the social processes listed? What ways do you teach those particular skills? |  |  |

| Impromptu Responses to Spontaneous Situations | Impromptu Responses to Spontaneous Situations | Impromptu Responses to Spontaneous Situations |
| Tell the impromptu responses you provide to social situations as they arise throughout the school day. |  |  |
### Considering a Goal
What do I want to happen?

*Brenda wanted her hat back AND she wanted to play with Eddie.*

### Generating Strategies & Deciding on a Strategy
What could I do?
What would happen if I tried…?
What will happen if I actually decide to do…?

*Brenda thought she could tell on Eddie, look sad, or yell, or pull Eddie’s hat off.*

### Evaluate the Outcome
Did it work?

*The teacher made them stay in for recess, but Brenda was pleased... she got her hat back and played with Eddie!*

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Where Do I Go From Here?

With your own students in mind, follow the flow chart below to examine your own instructional practice opportunities for students to improve their social thinking skills. Start by deciding which social thinking skills you wish to teach your students to use or use more consistently. Once you have answered “Yes” for a particular skill, proceed to the page indicated. There you will jot down examples of how you may already be addressing that particular social thinking skill. You will also be directed to examples of additional ways that you can create a “social skills enriched” classroom and school, through your classroom environment and routines, direct instruction, and impromptu responses to spontaneous social situations.

Also, remember that it is important, whenever we teach social skills, to attend to a student’s social knowledge and emotional regulation ability. Social knowledge is embedded within each of the six social-cognitive processes presented below. Emotional regulation will be addressed separately since it is a prerequisite for effective use of each of the six social-cognitive processes.

1. Do my students need to learn **Notice Social Cues**? (paying attention to what’s going on.)
   If no, continue to box below
   If yes, proceed to page 102 and answer the questions in that area

2. Do my students need to learn **Interpret Social Cues**? (understanding what’s going on.)
   If no, continue to box below
   If yes, proceed to page 102 and answer the questions in that area

Do my students need to learn **Emotional Regulation**? (calming down)
If no, continue to box below
If yes, proceed to page 101 and answer the questions in that area
3. Do my students need to learn to **Goal Consideration**? (determine what they want to happen.)
   If no, continue to box below

4. Do my students need to learn to **Generate Strategies**? (What could I do?)
   If no, continue to box below

5. Do my students need to learn to **Evaluate Strategies** and
   **Decide on a Strategy**? (What would happen if I tried…? What will I decide to do?)
   If no, continue to box below

6. Do my students need to learn to **Evaluate the Outcome**? (Did it work?)

If yes, proceed to page 103 and answer the questions in that area

If yes, proceed to page 104 and answer the questions in that area

If yes, proceed to page 104 and answer the questions in that area

If yes, proceed to page 105 and answer the questions in that area
Emotional Regulation
Calming down

**What planned lessons** do you ALREADY teach in this area? (e.g., using videotapes or scripts, children’s literature, role playing, etc.)

**Additional ideas for planned lessons?** (See “Find What You Need” chart for more ideas.)

**What classroom environment & routines** are ALREADY in place in your classroom? (e.g., sticker charts, reward systems, class meetings, social journals, posters, etc.)

**Additional classroom environment & routines?** (See "Find What You Need" chart for more ideas.)

**What impromptu responses** to spontaneous social situations do you ALREADY use (e.g., What just happened? How do you think she feels? What was his face telling you?)

**New ideas for impromptu responses** to spontaneous social situations? (See “Find What You Need” chart for more ideas.)
### Noticing and Interpreting Social Cues

**Paying attention to and understanding what’s going on**

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Setting Goals
Determine what they want to happen…

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Generating and Selecting Strategies
What could I do? What would happen if?

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Additional ideas for **planned lessons**? (See “Find What You Need” chart more ideas)

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http://www.csde.umb.edu/tools
## Tool 2: Where Do I Go From Here?

### Reviewing Outcomes

**Did it work?**

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