

Teacher's Guide

Supporting the wellbeing of primary school children

Social skills training



Learning about and practicing social skills in small groups provides opportunities for social interactions and opportunities to manage interactions.

Students who have difficulty developing and maintaining friendships may benefit from activities where their social interaction with classmates is planned for and guidance is provided to build confidence and self-esteem, improve communication skills, increase self-awareness and awareness of others and reduce anxiety and stress related to social interaction.

Peer education

Sensitive and non-judgemental education can improve student's capacity to accept differences and understand and tolerate the challenging behaviours of their classmates.

Whole of class lesson plans could focus on topics such as; emotions, conversational skills, social etiquette, friendship skills, relationships or conflict resolution.

Initiate and support social interactions

During episodes of free play, for example, a teacher can suggest and supervise games from a distance, initiate conversations and withdraw once the conversation has started, or make compliments or comment positively on an ongoing game or activity.

Cooperative learning and peer tutoring

Involve pupils in small learning groups with a mix of student abilities, to promote working together to maximise their own and each other's learning.

Alternating the role of tutor and tutee can help give some students a voice and build their confidence.

Cooperative learning and peer tutoring can have a positive impact on the social interactions, social acceptance and academic outcomes.

Interest clubs

During lunch or recess offer students fun activities related to a common topic of interest, for example: an organised sport, music or computer games. Interest clubs have a positive effect on interactions with peers as they realise they have things in common.

Praise

Always respond positively to appropriate behaviour, praise attempts to communicate appropriately, encourage the student to persevere and follow through with the set activity and always be aware of the 'right level of challenge' for each student to facilitate task completion and confidence levels.

Peer modelling

Encourage all students to offer praise and reinforcement to each other when class rules are followed, and offer encouragement and assistance to peers who are experiencing difficulty completing tasks or who require re-direction. The teacher should monitor to ensure that the peer reinforcement is genuine.

Peer reinforcement is in addition to and does not replace teacher direction, praise and reinforcement.

Peer reinforcement encourages students to manage their own and each other's behaviour through a process of group reinforcement and mutual self-interest.

If the behaviour persists despite trying a number of interventions, discuss the student's situation with a supervisor or member of the learning and wellbeing support staff at your school.

<https://www.islhd.health.nsw.gov.au/services-clinics/school-link-teachers-guide>