



## WHAT IS IT?

**SOCIAL SKILLS** refer to a child's developing capacity to work together with other children and adults and form positive relationships. These skills include making and keeping friends, as well as working through conflicts.



Key skills and concepts	Definitions
Cooperation	The capacity to work together with others. In the classroom this includes sharing, taking turns, waiting patiently, following rules, and helping others.
Problem Solving	The skill to recognize when disagreements or conflicts arise, come up with solutions to resolve them, and then try out a solution. For example, children use problem solving when deciding whose turn it is to play a game or how to share when more than one child wants the same toy.
Emotion Regulation	The skill to manage one's own emotions. This includes being able to calm down after a frustrating event, persisting during a frustrating task, and handling disappointment. This is especially important during social interactions.



## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Social skills are foundational skills that...

- Allow children to develop and maintain close relationships with others
- Are related to children's enjoyment of the school environment
- Predict future academic and school success



## HOW DOES IT DEVELOP?

At this age	Children can typically:
<b>4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate and enjoy interactions with trusted adults</li> <li>• Demonstrate prosocial behaviors with other children with/without prompting from adults</li> <li>• Recognize and describe social problems, suggest solutions to conflicts, and compromise when working or playing in a group</li> <li>• Begin to notice and use words to describe more subtle or complex emotions in self and others</li> <li>• Begin to manage emotions independently through an expanding range of strategies</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a variety of skills for entering social situations and sustaining interactions with other children</li> <li>• Engage in joint play (e.g., using coordinated goals, planning) with at least one other child at a time</li> <li>• Use basic strategies for dealing with common conflicts (e.g., sharing, taking turns, compromising)</li> <li>• Express feelings, needs, and opinions in conflict situations</li> <li>• Use a range of coping strategies to manage emotions with the support of adults</li> </ul>
<b>6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate needs and feelings verbally in a socially appropriate manner</li> <li>• Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others</li> <li>• Show awareness of socially acceptable behavior</li> <li>• Recognize individual and group similarities and differences</li> <li>• Demonstrate ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways</li> </ul>

## SKILL: SOCIAL SKILLS

## USING THE CHILD BEHAVIOR RATING SCALE DATA

## WHAT CAN THE CBRS TELL ME?

The CBRS is a useful screening tool. Data from the Social Skills Subscale can help you identify students who are struggling to display the cooperation, problem solving, and emotion regulation skills that they need to be successful in your classroom. However, the CBRS is just one brief measure—it is not sensitive enough to comprehensively assess a student's social skills. And, importantly, it does not provide information as to why a student might be struggling.

For example, a child could be struggling to play cooperatively with peers because:

- *They have difficulty understanding the need to share*
- *They are unaware and unable to detect others' feelings*
- *They struggle to effectively communicate their wants and needs*
- *Something stressful is happening at home and it's affecting the child's emotional expression*

The CBRS is a tool that can guide next steps. However, it needs to be combined with other information in order to best support a student's social skills. Below are some other things to consider as you examine your students' CBRS data:

- *Are there students who you are particularly concerned about?*
- *Why do you think they might be struggling?*
- *Are there some simple things you can do in your classroom to support their developing skills?*
- *What is happening right before and right after they are struggling?*
- *What other information would be helpful to better understand why this student is struggling?*

## COMBINING THE CBRS WITH OTHER INFORMATION

It is important to **GATHER MORE INFORMATION** in order to better understand how to best support social skills for a particular student, a group of students, or all of the students in your classroom. You can start by talking with other individuals who interact with the students (e.g., parents, other teachers), but the most important information is likely to come from observations of student behavior in your own classroom.

When you intentionally **OBSERVE** students, you can gather critical, objective information about their behavior. For example, you can identify when and where certain behaviors are most likely to occur and what happens before, during, and after the behavior. This information will help you to determine the best strategies to use to support students' skills.

Please see [Guide to Observing Children's Behavior](#) for more information.

## STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S SOCIAL SKILLS

USE REINFORCEMENT	Reinforcement is providing something (praise, rewards) after a student displays a desired behavior that makes the behavior more likely to happen again. Reinforcers come in many forms; for example, labeled praise, actively observing a student's actions, a hug, stickers or stamps, a special activity, or a smile.
USE EFFECTIVE COMMANDS	Effective commands are simple and clear directives given to a student to increase his or her compliance. They: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Obtain the student's attention,</li><li>✓ Are stated specifically and assertively,</li><li>✓ Provide one directive at a time, and</li><li>✓ Are stated positively</li></ul>
ALLOW CHOICE	Choice is providing a student the opportunity to indicate what he or she would prefer to do at a given moment during the day. Teachers decide on a set of activities (usually two) that are appropriate for the student to engage in at a particular time and then encourage the student to choose between activities.
PEER PAIRING	Peer pairing involves purposefully setting up interactions between a student who is struggling to engage successfully with other students in the classroom and a peer in the classroom who does this well.
SUPPORT FRIENDSHIP SKILLS	You can help facilitate students' ability to make and maintain friendships through the teaching of social skills. Skills are taught through the use of books, puppets, and other materials.
PROMOTE PROBLEM-SOLVING	You can promote problem-solving by teaching students specific steps to resolve disagreements and conflicts. These include teaching how to recognize a problem, come up with a set of solutions, understand the consequences of solutions, mutually agree on a solution, and give the solution a try.
HANDLING EMOTIONS	You can help children handle their emotions by encouraging students to recognize emotions, calm down, and regain control of emotions in order to rejoin classroom activities or make a positive behavior choice. Methods include using books, a feelings chart or thermometer, songs/games, and "Tucker Turtle" technique.
USE A SOCIAL SKILLS CURRICULUM	You can use an evidence-based social skills curriculum designed specifically to support the development of students' social skills. These include things such as modeling social skills with students, explicit teaching of social skills, and providing repeated opportunities for students to practice these skills (e.g., through routines and games, prepared role-play, and real world experiences as they arise).

**SOCIAL SKILLS RESOURCES**

STRATEGY INFORMATION GUIDE	FOCUS	ASSOCIATED RESOURCES
<a href="#">Guide to Observing Children's Behavior</a>	Observing Children's Behavior	N/A
<a href="#">Guide to Using Reinforcement</a>	Use Reinforcement	<a href="#">Examples of Reinforcers</a> (LOOK ©) <a href="#">Labeled Praise</a> (LOOK ©) <a href="#">Reinforcement Systems</a> (LOOK ©) <a href="#">Visual Reinforcement Boards</a> (LOOK ©)
<a href="#">Guide to Using Effective Commands</a>	Use Effective Commands	<a href="#">Communication is the Key</a> (TACSEI ©)
<a href="#">Guide to Allowing Choice</a>	Allow Choice	<a href="#">Using Choice Brief</a> (CSEFEL ©) <a href="#">Using Choice Handout</a> (CSEFEL ©)
<a href="#">Guide to Peer Pairing</a>	Peer Pairing	<a href="#">Buddy System</a> (TACSEI M/S ©) <a href="#">Peer Pairing Activity</a> (CASTL ©)
<a href="#">Guide to Supporting Friendship Skills</a>	Support Friendship Skills	<a href="#">Book Nook: The Rainbow Fish</a> (CSEFEL ©) <a href="#">I Can Be a Super Friend</a> (CSEFEL ©) <a href="#">Super Friend Activity</a> (CASTL ©) <a href="#">You've Got to Have Friends</a> (CSEFEL ©)
<a href="#">Guide to Promoting Problem-Solving</a>	Promote Problem-Solving	<a href="#">Solutions Kit Cards I or II</a> (CSEFEL ©) <a href="#">Problem Solver</a> (CSEFEL ©) <a href="#">Solution Kit Activity</a> (CASTL ©)
<a href="#">Guide to Handling Emotions</a>	Handling Emotions	Book Nook: (CSEFEL ©) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">On Monday When It Rained</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Glad Monster, Sad Monster</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Hands Are Not For Hitting</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Sometimes I'm a Bombaloo</a></li> </ul> <a href="#">Feelings Chart</a> (CSEFEL ©); Activity (CASTL ©) <a href="#">Feelings Thermometer</a> (CASTL ©); Activity (CASTL ©) <a href="#">Turtle Technique Materials</a> (TACSEI ©); Activity (CASTL ©) <a href="#">Control Anger and Handle Disappointment</a> (CSEFEL ©) <a href="#">Emotional Vocabulary</a> (CSEFEL ©)
<a href="#">Guide to Using a Social Skills Curriculum</a>	Use a Social Skills Curriculum	<a href="#">How to Choose a Social-Emotional Curriculum</a> (CSEFEL ©) <a href="#">Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning</a> (CASEL ©)

**REFERENCES**

Administration for Children and Families Office of Head Start  
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL©)  
Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL©)  
Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL©)  
Learning to Objectively Observe Kids (LOOK ©)  
Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children (TACSEI ©)