



## Pupils with Intellectual Disabilities

### Social Development



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### Classroom-based tips (focus on instructional methods)

1. **Use circle time to ask pupils to tell you how they spend their day and the others will have to listen carefully.** This will encourage active listening.
2. **Encourage empathic thinking** with questions such as, “Why do you think he is crying?” This will help pupils to reflect on their own and others’ behaviour.
3. **Promote pupils’ confidence and development of new skills** by engaging them in problem-solving activities, for example by asking, “Can you think of a way to help you remember to wait for your turn?”
4. **Use a natural interaction between a pupil and an adult to practice a skill** (Elksnin and Elksnin, 2000). Naturalistic interventions refer to the creation of numerous opportunities for desired child responses. Kaiser and Grim (2006: 455-456) make the following recommendations about naturalistic interventions:
  - Teach pupils based on their interests.
  - Teach what is functional for the pupil at the moment.
  - Stop while both the pupil and the teacher are still enjoying the interaction.
5. **Read and discuss literature on social skills**, which involve topics such as dealing with new situations, dealing with bullying, making new friends (DeGeorge, 1998).
6. **Discuss what the pupil did after a social interaction:** what happened, whether the outcome was positive or negative, and what the pupil will do in the same situation in the future (Elksnin and Elksnin, 2000; Lavoie, 2005).
7. **Use multimedia to teach social skills.** A lot of pupils with learning disabilities tend to be visual learners; thus videos, simulations, virtual environments and other multimedia can be effective teaching tools (Parsons, 2006; Parsons, Leonard and Mitchell, 2006). You can also implement 4-6 (above), i.e., role-playing, social stories, observing others’ behaviour by utilising multimedia.
8. **Create your own social skills tools and adapt them to your pupils’ needs.** For instance, you can audio/video-record your pupils in class (ensuring necessary and appropriate permissions are given) and then use the video to initiate a discussion of your pupils’ social interactions (NCTI, CITED – Centre for Integrating Technology in Education).
9. **Ask from the pupils to create their own stories about social behaviour** and discuss these in class, providing feedback about these stories (NCTI, CITED – Centre for Integrating Technology in Education).
10. **Use photographs or still images from videos as ‘reminders of social behaviour.’** (NCTI, CITED – Centre for Integrating Technology in Education)

11. **Use peer-tutoring, which involves having pupils interact with one another.** For example you can pair up a more able pupil with a disabled pupil in order to share knowledge about social skills. Peer tutoring can also be a useful way to achieve social goals apart from the academic skills (e.g. during a school event or breaks a more able pupil to be paired up with a disabled pupil).
12. **Use simulations and other visual prompts to teach your pupils daily life skills.** For example, you can use your pupil's tablet to teach him/her about going to the grocery store, and how to interact with others in these and similar situations and places. (Mechling, Gast, & Langone, 2002).

### Multimedia resources

- [Choices, Choices \(K-5\)](#)  
*Choices, Choices* uses real-world scenarios to help students learn problem-solving and decision-making skills.
- [Right Choices: A Multimedia Social Skills Training Program for Adolescents \(6-12\)](#)  
*Right Choices* is a 34-week program that uses video to help pupils learn problem-solving and decision-making skills; modules focus on topics such as conflict resolution, negotiating, and dealing with peer pressure.



### School-based practical tips (focus on instructional methods)

#### Announcement / Sign at School

1. **Organise events/trainings at a local university for both teachers and pupils.** (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2004). Consider who can be responsible for this training, for example, academics specialised in the field. This will help teachers to learn about materials and practices in relation to cognitive skills and apply these with their pupils. Focus the training on specific areas of interest regarding these pupils. For instance:
  - One part of the training can be on the use of visual organisers related to social skills and timetables within the classroom and within the school areas.
  - The training may include a unit on how to use peer tutoring with your pupils in order to enhance social development.
2. **Have visual prompts within the school area,** which demonstrate appropriate social skills, for example how to queue in the school canteen and interact with their fellow peers during lunch breaks.

#### Class Divisions / Arrangements

**Ask teachers to keep a progress log regarding the specific pupils.** For instance: if a pupil has social difficulties ask teachers to keep a record of them. Arrange a meeting among teachers and the responsible for the pupil person (e.g. carer/guardian/parent) to discuss her/his progress, and design activities and interventions to offer support. Re-organise the school

schedule if needed, for allowing more time for co-teaching activities (Hoppey, & McLeskey, 2013)

## Community

1. **Organise events at your school related to social skills.** For instance, through collaboration with teachers, parents and pupils you can ask from the pupils to be part of groups and work together to achieve specific tasks (eg. To plant the garden, or mend things at school).
2. **Establish an inclusive culture within your school:** organise workshops and seminars with academics. This will help teachers to understand aspects of inclusion and raise awareness of cognitive functioning and apply inclusive practices, which will contribute in enhancing pupils' cognitive skills (Hoppey, & McLeskey, 2013). **Example of inclusive practice:** Involve all pupils in the learning process and introduce differentiation strategies into your teaching. One differentiated approach is for all pupils to create a video and make a story which depicts a social situation and how pupils would deal with it – make sure the pupil with social difficulties is involved in the task along with her/his peers.
3. **Involve parents and other caregivers,** as well as other adults that have an important role in the pupil's life. Arranging meetings between parents/caregivers and staff helps to build a rapport, which in turn helps the pupil feel supported and improve her/his social skills further.

## Curricular Adaptations

1. **Establish an inclusive culture within your school:** organise workshops and seminars with academics. This will help teachers to understand aspects of inclusion and raise awareness of cognitive functioning and apply inclusive practices, which will contribute in enhancing pupils' cognitive skills (Hoppey, & McLeskey, 2013). **Example of inclusive practice:** Involve all pupils in the learning process and introduce differentiation strategies into your teaching. One differentiated approach is for all pupils to create a video and make a story, which depicts a social situation and how pupils would deal with it – make sure the pupil with social difficulties is involved in the task along with her/his peers.
2. **Encourage and inform teachers to make curricular adaptations in terms of differentiating to the task.** For example, based on one learning objective in the curriculum, they might provide a single worksheet which gets progressively harder and responds to the various learning needs of the pupils and the severity and needs of the individual with social development differences (Hall, Meyer and Rose, 2012; BBC active, 2010).

## Discipline

1. **Be aware of the underpinning factors of these pupils' behaviour** when you are following the behavioural code at your school. Make sure that before you reach a decision about a pupil's behaviour you have consulted the pupil's parent/guardian/teacher and gained more information about her/his history. Some pupils with social development difficulties might overreact in some situations. Give them space to relax. Take time to discuss things with them, and actively listen to what they have to say.

2. **For helping pupils adapt their behaviour provide explicit and specific feedback** when the pupil demonstrates positive social skills. Follow the "I FEED" (Immediate, Frequent, Enthusiastic, Eye Contact, Describe) principle. [http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/inmdict/html/learning\\_disabilities.html](http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/inmdict/html/learning_disabilities.html)
3. **Create a monitor form with the rest of the teachers** to monitor signs of anxiety, such as restlessness, distractibility, physical tension and avoidance.

## Other (Assessment)

**Ask teachers to keep a progress log regarding the specific pupils.** For instance: if a pupil has social difficulties ask teachers to keep a record of them. Arrange a meeting among teachers and the responsible for the pupil person (e.g. carer/guardian/parent) to discuss her/his progress, and design activities and interventions to offer support. Re-organise the school schedule if needed, for allowing more time for co-teaching activities (Hoppey, & McLeskey, 2013)

## Other (Pupils' Involvement for Inclusion)

**Involve the pupils in your decisions.** This will help them nurture their social skills. For instance, in collaboration with the pupils you can decide that a specific week (eg. A week in November) will be intellectual disabilities/social development awareness week and ask from the pupils to create theatre shows, presentations and other collaborative tasks.

## Parents / Parents' Associations

1. **Involve parents and other caregivers**, as well as other adults that have an important role in the pupil's life. Arranging meetings between parents/caregivers and staff helps to build a rapport, which in turn helps the pupil feel supported and improve her/his social skills further.
2. **Provide information about social skills by arranging onsite trainings** or by using resources and materials related to the following evidence-based social skills programs:

**a) "Stop and Think" Social Skills Program:** Part of Project ACHIEVE (Knoff and Batsche, 1995). **Project ACHIEVE** is an innovative, evidence-based school effectiveness and improvement program focusing on all pupils' academic and social, emotional, and behavioural progress and success. The program uses strategic planning, professional development, and on-site consultation and technical assistance to address pupil achievement, positive school and classroom climates, effective teaching and instruction, and parent and community outreach and involvement. This program has demonstrated success in reducing pupil discipline referrals to the principal's office, school suspensions, and expulsions; fostering positive school climates and pro-social interactions; increasing pupils' on-task behaviour; and improving academic performance. [Reference: <http://www.projectachieve.info>]

b) **The EQUIP Program** (Gibbs, Potter, & Goldstein, 1995) skills. Available at: <http://www.researchpress.com/scripts/product.asp?item=4848#5134> EQUIP is a three-part intervention method for working with antisocial or behaviour-disordered adolescents. The approach includes training in moral judgment, anger management/correction of thinking errors, and pro-social skills. Youth involved in the EQUIP training program participate in two types of group sessions - Equipment Meetings (in which the leader teaches specific skills) and Mutual Help Meetings (in which the leader coaches pupils as they use the skills they have learned to help each other). The EQUIP program received the 1998 Reclaiming Children and Youth Spotlight on Excellence Award. EQUIP has been adapted for use in Canada, the Netherlands, and several other countries.

c) **The ACCEPTS Program** (Walker et al, 1994) offers a complete curriculum for teaching effective social skills to pupils at middle- and high-school levels. The program teaches peer-to-peer skills, skills for relating to adults, and self-management skills. ACCEPTS ( **A** Curriculum for **C**hildren's **E**ffective **P**eer and **T**eacher **S**kills ) is a complete curriculum for teaching classroom and peer-to-peer social skills to children with or without disabilities in Grades K through 6. The curriculum, designed for use by regular and special education teachers, cognitively teaches social skills as subject matter content. The program can be taught in one-to-one, small-group, or large-group instructional formats. ACCEPTS includes a nine-step instructional procedure based on the principles of direct instruction; scripts that teach critically important teacher-child behavioural competencies and peer-to-peer social skills; and behavioural management procedures.

Available at: <http://www.proedinc.com/customer/productView.aspx?!D=625>

**Note:** not all instruments and projects are available in all cultural contexts.

## Scheduling Events

1. **Organise events at your school related to social skills.** For instance, through collaboration with teachers, parents and pupils you can ask from the pupils to be part of groups and work together to achieve specific tasks (eg. To plant the garden, or mend things at school).
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## School Celebrations / Events / Activities

**Include the pupils into school events by differentiating their role and contribution,** for example, instead of memorising a poem, bring out other talents such as drawing or dancing. Encourage all pupils to feel they are part of a group.

## School Purchases

1. **Equip the school with tablets and computers** so as teachers and pupils can use technology for teaching/learning social skills. Most pupils are confident in using everyday technology



(mobiles, tablets) so this approach will enhance their motivation and self-efficacy beliefs.  
**Note:** Remember to use technology with all the pupils and not only with the pupils that experience social difficulties.

2. **Provide ICT training to teachers**, to empower them to be able to use the technology with their pupils. Consider appropriate organisations who can host such training, and where and when it would be suitable to schedule the sessions. (Jung, 2005). Focus the training on specific areas, such as software and applications that can assist in helping pupils with their social skills.

Some examples of applications can be found here: <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/social-emotional-apps-special-ed-jayne-clare>  
<https://glenwood.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Social-Skills-and-Autism-Spectrum-Disorders-Application-List.pdf>

## Pupil Support

1. **Involve parents and other caregivers**, as well as other adults that have an important role in the pupil's life. Arranging meetings between parents/caregivers and staff helps to build a rapport, which in turn helps the pupil feel supported and improve her/his social skills further.
2. **Avoid 'a one size fits all approach'**. Adapt the intervention to meet the individual's or particular group's needs. Pupils who speak English as a Second Language might need intensive social skill instruction to promote acculturation and peer acceptance. Pupils with disabilities might need adaptive curriculum and learning strategies. Most pupils will need a combination of different strategies that are matched to their particular deficits and backgrounds.
3. **Ensure that further provision is provided** for those pupils such as additional support in the class, for example with the presence of a teaching assistant, to keep them on track.

## Teacher Professional Development

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## Technology

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## Supportive Literature

**Definition:** Making and sustaining friendships and personal relationships present significant challenges for many children with intellectual disabilities (Guralnick, Connor, Neville, & Hammond, 2006). Poor communication skills, inability to recognise the emotional state of others, and unusual or inappropriate behaviours when interacting with others can lead to social isolation (Matheson, Olsen, & Weisner, 2007; Williams, Wishart, Pitcarin, & Willis, 2005). It is difficult at best for someone who is not a professional educator or paid caretaker to want to spend the time necessary to get to know a person who stands too close, interrupts frequently, does not maintain eye contact, and strays from the conversational topic.

**Characteristics:** Social situations that present difficulties for pupils with disabilities can range from the fairly simple (engaging in a conversation with a peer) to the extremely complex: determining whether someone who seems friendly is actually harming you (De Bildt et al., 2005).

[Reference: Heward, W. L. (2013). *Exceptional children: An introduction to special education*. Pearson College Div.]

Because of this, social skills are often broken down into categories, or types of skill, according to the level of complexity and interaction. One way of categorising social skills is as follows:

Skill Set	Used for	Examples
Foundation Skills	Basic social interaction	Ability to maintain eye contact, maintain appropriate personal space, understand gestures and facial expressions

Interaction Skills	Skills needed to interact with others	Resolving conflicts, taking turns, learning how to begin and end conversations, determining appropriate topics for conversation, interacting with authority figures
Affective Skills	Skills needed for understanding oneself and others	Identifying one's feelings, recognising the feelings of others, demonstrating empathy, decoding body language and facial expressions, determining whether someone is trustworthy
Cognitive Skills	Skills needed to maintain more complex social interactions	Social perception, making choices, self-monitoring, understanding community norms, determining appropriate behaviour for different social situations.
(Canney and Byrne, 2006; Waltz, 1999)		

**Note:** School leaders do need to remember to use the social development tips as they relate to the categories included in the table above.

## Websites and EU Reports

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/noncommunicable-diseases/mental-health/priority-areas/intellectual-disabilities>  
<http://www.enil.eu/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Intellectual-Disability-in-Europe.pdf>  
[http://www.unicef.org/protection/World\\_report\\_on\\_disability\\_eng.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/protection/World_report_on_disability_eng.pdf)  
[http://inclusion-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/SocInc\\_EUPovertyRreport.pdf](http://inclusion-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/SocInc_EUPovertyRreport.pdf)  
<http://www.disability-europe.net/content/aned/media/FI%20social%20inclusion%20report.pdf>

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