Summer 2019

Effective Instruction Of Social Skills To Increase Student Achievement In Elementary-Aged Students

Kate Grahek

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/hse_cp

Part of the Education Commons
EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL SKILLS TO INCREASE STUDENT
ACHIEVEMENT IN ELEMENTARY-AGED STUDENTS

Kate Grahek

Hamline University

A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Arts in Teaching.

Hamline University
Saint Paul, Minnesota
August 2019

Capstone Project Facilitator: Melissa Erickson
Content Expert: Kristin Reilly
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project was created to provide more insight into the positive effects of teaching social skills to elementary-aged students. With that, this project was created to offer assistance to educators due to the lack of time during the day. The purpose was to define social skills, discuss necessary skills to teach students, and finally, different strategies of teaching the skills. It also discusses the individuals and groups that benefit when positive social skills are taught to young children. It is all in one place for teachers to browse and implement in their daily instruction. My research question is: *How can educators successfully implement social skills with elementary-aged students to increase their overall achievement?* The project is focused on the importance of implementing social skills to elementary-aged students as well as a resource for teachers that do not know where to start or what to implement.

Much of this project was inspired by my work in an elementary school setting in an urban city. I had daily experiences with students that did not have the specific skills to cope with emotions. I have seen first-hand that the students in my classroom, as well as other students in the building, could benefit from explicit social skill instruction in order to succeed in academics and peer relationships. I also have spoken to numerous educators about this issue and many times heard the response that there was not enough time in the day to teach explicit social skills. The educators barely had enough time for the core subjects such as math, reading, and writing.

I realized that this subject was important in schools and I wanted to create a project to help educators realize the importance of teaching social skills to the students in his or her classroom. I wanted one resource that was not overwhelming with research but provided enough so that teachers saw the importance.
The project created was a website with all of the relevant information. The website has the following pages:

- Home
- What Are Social Skills?
- Necessary Skills
- Delivery Methods & Strategies
- Community Benefits
- References

All of these pages cover the research discovered in the capstone paper. These pages will give educators quick information about how social skills are defined, which skills are necessary for students to have, the different ways to teach those skills, and who benefits from the students carrying those skills.
Social Skills in Elementary School Website
https://kgrahek02.wixsite.com/eledsocialskills

Homepage

SOCIAL SKILLS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Effective Instruction to Increase Student Achievement

As teachers, we spend close to nine months of the year teaching our best each and every day to shape them into intelligent and successful humans.

Along with teaching the core academics, it is our job to teach social skills to help our students navigate through life, beyond the walls of the school.

ABOUT

Based on research, this website provides ways to effectively teach basic social skills to students in elementary school.

Not only is it important for students to learn the skills, but it is crucial that they practice and implement these skills over time.

Although teachers are busy and the list of demands only seems to grow, this research highlights the importance and effort that teaching social skills has on a student’s overall achievement.
GET IN TOUCH

If you’d like to discuss social skills in elementary school, give feedback, or anything additional, please reach out.

kushnerj@emmi.org

Name
Phone
Email
Subject
Type your message here...
Submit

References
WHAT ARE SOCIAL SKILLS?

Many have heard the phrase social skills, but what are they exactly? This question is broad, and many researchers have varying definitions.

Did you know 80% of children enter school with the cognitive skills needed to succeed but only 40% of those students have the social-emotional skills to succeed in kindergarten because of their pre-schooling environment?

Habib and Serafi (2011)

SOCIAL SKILLS DEFINED

Social skills are the necessary abilities people need to interact adaptively in society (Hess, 2002).

We are constantly learning social norms and expectations in our everyday living. However, we were not born knowing how to positively interact with people around us or how to apply skills to add to our overall well-being.

Many students enter school ready to learn and start the path to academic success, but without the proper social and emotional skills, a student may find themselves struggling in one or more areas. Positive social skills and relationships are associated with a child's overall achievement in the categories of behavior, emotions, and academics.


PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Similar to adults, children have to be able to decide what they want from other people and to communicate those needs clearly (Budwin, 2003).

When students start school, they begin to form peer relationships from the start. They may share toys or converse during morning circle, or have play dates outside of school or sit closely near a peer while they work. Peer interactions are happening constantly for students.

Farkas (2002) argued that when students have appropriate social skills, they begin to feel more confident and competent in developing those relationships, building friendships, and resolving conflicts with peers and adults. When students do not carry these skills while interacting with peers, it can lead to social withdrawal (Budwin, 2003).
ACADEMIC SUCCESS

A student's academic success is also positively affected with social skill instruction. Research by suggested that a student's mastery of social skills is connected to a better school performance overall.

Flavell, Wellborn, Dornbush, Taylor, and Schellinger (2011); Casey and Poulton (2011).

Cotton and Hill (1992) stated that similar to peer relationships, when a student feels confident and competent in an area, such as academics, their academic achievement increases.

When educators promote healthy social habits such as confidence and competencies, students internalize those feelings and use them to make their lives better. Grant (2002) suggested that when students lack those skills, they are at a higher risk for academic difficulties. Students with low social-emotional competence have an overall lower reading achievement, as well as lower levels of organization and persistence.

As students progress through school and the academics become more difficult, students rely on social skills to help them through it. The ability to engage in certain social skills such as managing emotions, setting goals, making positive decisions, and maintaining positive relationships can be a strong predictor of a student's future academic achievement (National, 2003).

OVERALL WELL-BEING

Social competence: a person's ability to interact successfully with peers and adults (Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence, 2011). Children that perceive themselves as socially competent show fewer signs of depression (Nanay & Murrier, 2005).

Teaching young students confidence, persistence, organization, and emotional resilience, as well as social-emotional competence, lays the foundation for their achievement and well-being (National & Bernard, 2013).

Educators have the ability to lay the groundwork to provide students with these necessary skills and support young students when they are in and out of the classroom. Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (2009).

IN SUMMARY

The effectiveness of teaching social skills to elementary aged students contributes to their peer relationships, academic success, and overall well-being. The research confirms that the confidence and competence of a student contribute to their overall success.

Regardless of age, without intervention, children that struggle in social relationships often face an array of difficulties later on in life such as dropping out of school, drug abuse, depression, academic and behavior.

The overall purpose for educators to successfully teach social skills goes beyond helping a student for the present time. Educators are able to use their knowledge and adapt research to set students up for success for years to come.


Social Skills in Elementary School
NECESSARY SOCIAL SKILLS FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

While the purpose of teaching social skills is to increase which social skills to implement as often as possible in schools, there are two common themes: emotional skills and social development skills. These skills make up how a person functions in society and are learned by children as very young ages, contributing to their academic and personal achievement.

EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Emotional skills, sometimes referred to as social emotional skills or soft skills, incorporate the understanding, expression, expression, recognition, and management of emotions. (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning 2018)

Emotional skills are interpersonal skills that are happening within each self. Students move through the primary grades, they are learning how emotional competencies such as self-regulation and positive peer relationships (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning 2018). Although we learn a lot of these emotional skills throughout life, such as self-regulating ourselves when upset, developing empathy for others, and self-reflection, many of these skills do need to be taught to young children.

Many programs, such as You Can Do It (2015), focus on teaching confidence, organization, persistence with difficult tasks, and emotional well-being. Feeling Самі (2014), or Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2018) focus on the emotional skills that are important for all young children: self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. All of these skills require a child to be open and understanding of others and their needs.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SKILLS

Similar to emotional skills, social development skills involve understanding, understanding, and approximating skills to relate to others effectively and interact in positive ways with the people around them (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning 2018).

These skills help students with daily interactions. People learn these skills throughout life, such as becoming polite to say “please” and “thank you” or hold the door open for someone, but direct instruction is useful when students enter school.

Students that have social-cognitive abilities, or the ability to notice someone else’s emotional state and imagine ourselves in their position, have more positive social interactions (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning 2018). Self-awareness, conflict resolution, and building positive relationships are all positive social development skills that, when taught effectively, can contribute to a student’s overall achievement.
Students that have social inferential abilities, or the ability to notice someone else’s emotional state and imagine themselves in their position, have more positive social interactions. Emotional, social awareness, conflict resolution, and positive peer relationship building are all positive social development skills that, when taught effectively, can contribute to a student’s overall achievement.

**IN SUMMARY**

Both emotional skills and social development skills are used in everyday life. Humans are at their best when they can control themselves and interact effectively in society.

While these two groups of skills are extremely broad, it is clear that both should be taught when building an all-inclusive curriculum. The two groups overlap and may build upon each other so educators should aim to find balance between the two categories in order to increase student overall success.

Social Skills in Elementary School
DELIVERY METHODS AND STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS IN THE CLASSROOM

Not only do educators want to know the purpose behind effectively teaching social skills to students to increase their overall achievement and well-being, but they also need to know how to deliver these skills. There are several ways to effectively teach social skills to students and it depends on the educator’s personal needs and the students they are teaching.

THROUGH PHYSICAL MOVEMENT

Engaging students' physical senses can enhance their learning and help them better understand the concepts being taught. This can be achieved through physical movement, as students move around the classroom or participate in group activities that require physical interaction.

Through physical movement, educators can encourage students to engage in activities that require them to work together, collaborate, and communicate effectively. This not only helps students develop their social skills but also fosters a sense of teamwork and cooperation.

THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

With the rise of technology in the world, it has become more common for parents of all ages to engage with technology at some point. Children are no exception. Teaching social skills through technology can be effective because many students know how to operate cell phones, computers, and tablets.

One form of teaching social skills with technology is through online modeling. Students can observe different scenarios and learn from the behavior of others. Additionally, online training programs can be used to help students develop social skills in a safe and controlled environment.

There are two ways to teach social skills this way. The first is through role-playing, where the student watches a video that shows different ways of acting or responding. The second is through social modeling, where a social expert role-models the behavior.

Video modeling is a suitable, versatile, and requires minimal teacher assistance. In addition, it is one of the few forms of instruction that are flexible and can be adapted to suit the needs of different students.

Although teachers should be trained in how to properly set up a technology device, such as a tablet, it is mostly student-led. With that, students can use the technology to work on their social skills independently, allowing them to be exposed to a variety of social situations and learn from their mistakes.

Another way to incorporate technology in the classroom is through game-based learning. To ensure students engage with the material, game-based learning can be used to create a more engaging and interactive learning experience.

An example is a program called Tracy, an interactive social game for elementary-aged students that uses real-world scenarios to teach social skills. The program teaches students how to respond to challenging situations and helps them develop the social skills needed for successful interactions.

Technology is how many students learn to today's educational world as an engaging game-based learning strategy to deliver social skills training to students in a more immersive and engaging way.
THROUGH LITERATURE

When reading and listening to literature, it is important to use the strategies of summarizing, predicting, and questioning. Summary involves writing down the main ideas of a story or passage. Prediction involves making guesses about what will happen next based on the information given. Questioning involves asking questions about what is being read.

THROUGH CURRICULUM

Another way that educators can implement social skills instruction is through the curriculum. There are many free social skills programs available online, as well as programs available for purchase.

While the list of commonly used social skills programs is long, the methodology of programs varies greatly from one to another (Gifford et al., 2010). The goal is to teach students the necessary skills to make them successful in life. With that in mind, consider the following:

With a program called Social Thinking, which targets four skills: listening, following directions, problem-solving, and knowing when to talk. It was found that the lack of a follow-up assessment made the students' knowledge about the program less effective. Students were asked to identify the 10 things they thought the students learned. They were given a blank sheet of paper and were asked to write down as many things as they could. From this, it is clear that although curriculum-based programs are great and beneficial, they are only part of the equation.

Animal trainers and curriculum-based programs have positive results when they are taught skills and strategies of time. The animal trainers and the animal learners were asked how they thought it was going. The animal trainers taught the animal learners to do various things. The animal learners followed the instructions. The animal trainers and the animal learners had a great deal of success. It was shown that students can learn from each other.

Although some controversial and difficult to keep consistent, educators and clients can benefit from the use of explicit and direct instruction of social and emotional skills through curriculum-based instruction. Each program is unique in its own way. In terms of what target skills they choose and the duration of each lesson, the programs typically use modeling, coaching, and reinforcement from the educator (Gifford et al., 2010). These programs typically give realistic concepts and scenarios that are applicable to the students (Gifford et al., 2010). To teach, the targeted social skill is named and explained explicitly, and the educator gives the student the skill to use. For example, an educator may say that the skill is to be used in social situations, and he or she will demonstrate the skill. Then the student will practice it in similar situations. The teacher will provide feedback from the rest of the class and ask the student to demonstrate the skill.

It was found that the combined effects of teaching social skills in a curriculum-based instruction are more helpful and stronger in the long run than the education itself. The educators and clients responding to the student social and emotional abilities in less structured ways (Yates & Garver, 2012). However, it is most important to note that consistency and intensity are required to see gains.

IN SUMMARY

The four ways to teach social skills to students are: using a visual metaphor, using technology, and making the social skill instruction interesting. Regardless of how the skills are taught, educators that consistently push social skill instruction at elementary students will see a positive outcome and an increase in their achievement. Moving forward, educators should take the time to get to know their students and figure out which way of instruction best suits the students.

No matter which way the skills are taught, the idea of being respected, connected, and emotionally healthier social skills is what matters.
COMMUNITY BENEFITS

There are many individuals that benefit greatly from social skills instruction in elementary schools, most notably the students. They are able to interact with peers and adults in more mature and strategic ways. They are better able to communicate and understand social nuances in an effective manner. However, students are not the only people that benefit from positive social skill instruction. Educators also have a lot to gain when social skills are implementations into their daily life. They are able to spend more time focusing on educational and fewer time addressing behavioral issues. 

Families are also a group that gains something from social skills being taught in schools. They are able to implement useful skills at home and in the community, creating a school to home connection for the student.

STUDENTS

When discussing why social skills should be taught and how they are necessary, social skills are mentioned. Social skills are necessary to be successful in life. Social skills are necessary to be successful in life. Students who have good social skills are more likely to be successful in life. Students who have good social skills are more likely to be successful in life. Students who have good social skills are more likely to be successful in life.

EDUCATORS

For most elementary schools, the social skill instruction is a part of their curriculum. This is because social skills are necessary to be successful in life. Social skills are necessary to be successful in life. Students who have good social skills are more likely to be successful in life. Students who have good social skills are more likely to be successful in life. Students who have good social skills are more likely to be successful in life.

FAMILIES

Families are another group who benefit from good social skills. Families who have children with good social skills are more likely to be successful in life. Families who have children with good social skills are more likely to be successful in life. Families who have children with good social skills are more likely to be successful in life. Families who have children with good social skills are more likely to be successful in life.
IN SUMMARY

Social skills development is a vital aspect of learning, and educators play a crucial role in facilitating these skills. By fostering an environment that encourages collaboration and positive social interactions, educators can help students develop essential skills for success in all areas of life. This not only enhances their academic performance but also prepares them for future challenges and opportunities.
References Page

RESOURCES & REFERENCES

[List of references]

Social Skills in Elementary School
References


Intervention Program (SSIS-CIP) in first grade. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 110*(1), 1-16. doi:10.1037/edu0000191


doi:10.1177/0272431615624566


doi:10.1177/1053451216644828


Rotheram, M. J., (2013). Social skills training programs in elementary and high school


The Bernard Group Pty Ltd. (2017, November 9). YCDI! Education. Retrieved July 16,


