CEC's DCDT FAST FACTS: Social Skills
Prepared by the DCDT Publications Committee

The National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) has identified evidence-based predictors of post-school success for students with disabilities based on a systematic correlational literature review (Test et al., 2009). Findings indicate that students with disabilities, who graduate high school with higher levels of social skills, are more likely to be engaged in post-school employment, education, and independent living experiences than those with lower levels of social skills (Benz, Yovanoff, & Doren, 1997; Halpern, Yovanoff, Doren, & Benz, 1995; Roessler, Brolin, & Johnson, 1990). Recently, Rowe et al. (2014) conducted a Delphi study to add specificity to the existing predictor definitions identified by Test et al. (2009) and operationally defined the predictors to help local educators understand the components necessary to develop, implement, and evaluate secondary transition programs based on predictor research.

Social skills have been defined as "behaviors and attitudes that facilitate communication and cooperation (e.g., social conventions, social problem-solving when engaged in a social interaction, body language, speaking, listening, responding, verbal and written communication; Rowe et al., 2014, p. 10)".

Social skills should include the following essential program characteristics (Rowe et al., 2014):
- Integrate social skills instruction across the curriculum (e.g., general education and community).
- Use a direct instruction curriculum to teach communication, interpersonal, conversational, negotiation, conflict, and group skills in context.
- Provide opportunities for students to practice communication, interpersonal, conversational, negotiation, conflict, and group skills in context.
- Assist students to use problem-solving skills when difficult interpersonal situations arise in context.
- Provide parent and school staff information and training in supporting age-appropriate social skill development for their child, taking into consideration the family's cultural standards.
- Use augmentative communication (AC) and assistive technology (AT) devices to encourage communication for students who use AC/AT.
- Use ecological assessments to identify the social skills students will be expected to perform in each context.
- Provide opportunities for students to practice social skills that foster authentic social interactions that foster development of friendships.
- Teach students to self evaluate their use of social skills in appropriate contexts.
  Teach students social expectations for various environments (e.g., church, school, work, recreation).

Application to Teachers
- Evaluate social skills instruction and experiences for students to ensure essential program characteristics are included.
- Design hands-on instruction, such as role-playing activities with performance feedback, designed to provide multiple opportunities to practice communication, interpersonal, and negotiation skills.
- Conduct ecological assessments to evaluate students' present level of performance on social, communication, and interpersonal skills.
- Adopt evidence-based interventions (e.g., response prompting, self-management, simulations) in the classroom aimed at teaching social skills to assist students with adjusting to new environments and changes in routine.
- Provide community-based instructional opportunities for students to practice social skills.

Application to Administrators
- Use the Predictor Self-Assessment to evaluate social skills instruction located here: http://psocenter.org/content_page_assets/content_page_3/Predictor_Self-Assessment.final_06_24_13.pdf
- Provide direct instruction and training for educators and support staff on using AC and AT devices to promote social skills for students with disabilities.
- Provide training to general/special educators and support staff on implementing evidence-based practices targeting specific social skills (e.g., perspective-taking, conversation skills, friendship skills, social competence, social narratives, and social training groups).

Application to Families
- Work closely with families on ways to foster social and communication skills in the home environment.
- Provide training/workshops on using AC and AT communication devices in the home environment.
- Provide parents with information on local social activities in the community (e.g., teams, social skill groups) that will provide opportunities to develop social skills in real-life settings.
- Provide training to families on age-appropriate social skills development.

Where to go for Additional Information

Websites

- National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/
- Wong, C. (2013). *Social narratives (SN) fact sheet*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders.

- Fettig, A. (2013). *Social skills training (SST) fact sheet*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders.
- Autism Internet Modules http://www.autisminternetmodules.org/mod_intro.php?mod_id=144
- National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (2012). *Comprehensive Transition Curricula Annotated Bibliography*, Charlotte, NC, NSTTAC. [Life Centered Career Education]
- NSTTAC Research-to-Practice Lesson Plan Starter: Social Skills http://www.nsttac.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdf/pdf/lesson_plans/2b/social_skills.pdf

Books, Newsletters, and Research Articles

Benz, M. R., Yovanoff, P., & Doren, B. (1997). School-to-work components that predict postschool success for students with and without disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 63, 151-165.

Halpern, A.S., Yovanoff, P., Doren, B. & Benz, M.R. (1995) Predicting participation in postsecondary education for school leavers with disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 62,* 151–164.

Roessler, R. T., Brolin, D. E., & Johnson, J. M. (1990). Factors affecting employment success and quality of life: A one year follow-up of students in special education. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 13,* 95–107.

Rowe, D. A., Alverson, C. Y., Unruh, D., Fowler, C., Kellems, R., & Test, D. W. (2014). A Delphi study to operationalize evidence-based predictors in secondary transition. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1177/2165143414526429

Test, D. W., Mazzotti, V. L., Mustian, A. L., Fowler, C. H., Kortering, L. J., & Kohler, P. H. (2009). Evidence-based secondary transition predictors for improving post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, *32*, 160-181.

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