



DCDSB Understanding & Supporting All Learners

What is Social Communication?

(also called Pragmatic skills, or Social Language skills)

Social Communication is the use of language or communication in a social setting. We use social communication to form and maintain relationships with others. Examples of social communication skills may include the ability to participate in group discussions, maintain conversations, adjust our language according to the situation, and the use of body language/tone of voice when communicating.

When communicating with others, we must understand the needs and feelings of our communication partner. We must understand social situations, and use language appropriate for the context.

Social Communication includes:

- using language for different reasons (e.g., greeting, sharing information, making a request)
- changing our language according to the listener or situation; choosing appropriate topics for conversation; staying on topic
- following the rules for conversation, or story telling (e.g., initiating conversation or taking turns; maintaining a conversation; ending a conversation)
- interpreting the non-verbal cues of our communication partner (e.g., facial expression, body posture)
- understanding non-literal language (e.g., figures of speech, sarcasm)

What are social communication challenges (SCC)?

Someone with Social Communication difficulties may:

- say inappropriate things or act in an inappropriate way when talking
- laugh at the wrong time
- start talking about something else
- tell stories that do not make sense
- use language in limited ways
- yell instead of asking for what they want
- interpret language literally
- misinterpret the meaning of what is said
- have difficulty understanding and using social skills appropriately including: gestures, facial expressions and body postures in order to interact with others
- have trouble making friends
- have feelings of loneliness

Challenges in Social Communication are identified by a Speech-Language Pathologist through observation and formal/informal testing. Students with SCC may also have delays in receptive and expressive language, articulation, or stuttering. Students with SCC benefit from social stories or power cards, social skills intervention, and targeted support and coaching by trained personnel.

General Strategies to support those with Social Communication Challenges

- Read your child or teen's non-verbal cues and reinforce by adding meaning
- Model the language that is appropriate for your child to use in a specific setting
- If your child is young, get down on the floor, play with you child and model language for social communication with peers
- Use age-appropriate books and resources to teach how to read social cues
- Offer collaborative learning experiences
- Demonstrate a good sense of humour
- Teach social media communication skills
- Monitor your child's self-image and encourage self-esteem building and positive social interaction activities
- Make abstract language concrete
- Maintain ongoing communication between home and school
- Review recent SLP report and ask your school team for further support, as needed

Helpful Resources:

For more information you may wish to explore the following resources:

- Let's Be Friends: A Workbook to Help Kids Learn Social Skills and Make Great Friends by Lawrence Shapiro Ph.D.
- www.socialthinking.com/ (social skills programs, eLearning and free webinars)
- <http://d2learn.com> (Social Skills section)
- www.socialskillbuilder.com/
- Things I can Say and Do
- www.asha.org/public/speech/development/Social-Communication/
- www.superduperinc.com/Handouts/Handout.aspx (type social skills in search engine)
- Use Social Narratives to teach specific social skills
- Video modelling – Model Me Kids
- Search for videos of Idioms for Elementary Kids
- Between the Lines 1 and 2 apps

This resource is not intended for diagnostic purposes. It is to be used as a reference for your own understanding and to provide information about the different kinds of difficulties you may encounter in your classroom.

