

# Overview

## JOB-RELATED SOCIAL SKILLS: A CURRICULUM

### Why Teach Job-Related Social Skills?

Many students, including those with special needs, are frequently at a disadvantage in competitive employment because they lack appropriate communication and social interaction skills. Students often encounter problems when initiating interactions or responding to others. Good communication and interaction skills are essential for finding, getting, keeping, and holding a job; in fact, many employers consider social behavior and good communication more important on the job than technical training.

Employers also indicate that many employees lose jobs because of personality factors and the way they relate to people rather than because of inadequate performance of the job itself. It is critical, therefore, that individuals receive instruction in the social skills necessary for job success regardless of age, gender, qualifications, disabilities, or past school and work history.

### Program Purpose

The purpose of *Job-Related Social Skills: A Curriculum* is to teach social skills that will increase the opportunity for job success. This evidence-based program is designed for a semester course and provides for the explicit instruction of 18 job-related social skills and job monitoring procedures to facilitate skill maintenance.

The interpersonal skills were identified through a literature review and conferences with employment experts (Montague, 1988). The sequence of social skills selected for the training program is as follows:

1. Ordering Job Responsibilities.
2. Understanding Directions.
3. Making Introductions.
4. Asking Questions.
5. Asking Permission.
6. Asking for Help.
7. Accepting Help.
8. Offering Help.
9. Requesting Information.
10. Taking Messages.

11. Engaging in a Conversation.
12. Giving Directions.
13. Responding to Compliments.
14. Giving Compliments.
15. Convincing Others.
16. Apologizing.
17. Accepting Criticism.
18. Responding to a Complaint.

The skill sequence is hierarchical; that is, the skills are ordered from simple to complex and easy to difficult.

The curriculum is developed around a task analysis of social behaviors to be learned, systematic instruction with repeated practice, and feedback to the learner regarding the appropriateness of responses. Self-management strategies are used to increase students' responsibility for performing on-the-job-behaviors (Montague, 1987a). Students are systematically taught the strategies of self-instruction, self-questioning, self-monitoring, and self-reinforcement. Since social skills are generally learned through observing the actions of others, students are taught to refine their observation skills as well as improving their interaction and problem solving skills—in other words, to “think” before acting.

This instructional program was validated with individuals between the ages of 15 and 22 who had mild to moderate learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, or educable mental retardation (Montague, 1985, 1987b, 1988; Montague & Lund, 1985). However, the program also is appropriate for low-achieving or low-quartile students who evidence social skill deficits.

The *Job-Related Social Skills Curriculum* provides:

- Guidelines for teaching job-related social skills and on-the-job problem solving.
- Methods to assess the performance of students on specific social skills.
- Lessons for individual and group instruction across a variety of job-related skills.
- Activities to enhance transfer of social skills to work settings.
- Strategies to promote maintenance of learned skills in the workplace.

## Program Components

Everything you need to teach the job-related social skills is found in the Instructional Guide or on the CD found inside the back cover. The materials found in the Instructional Guide and on the CD may be duplicated for classroom use only. Any other duplication of the materials is prohibited. Teachers are encouraged to copy the CD files to your computer, or double-click the “Run Job-Related Social Skills.PDF” file on the CD to navigate through the files using the displayed menu.

The Instructional Guide provides background information for teaching job-related social skills.

- **Chapter 2** discusses the types of instructional strategies that research and best practice suggest should be used for teaching social skills successfully.
- **Chapter 3** describes how the Job-Related Social Skills curriculum incorporates the instructional strategies discussed in Chapter 2 into the lessons. It also offers suggestions for organizing and leading groups during the instructional sessions.
- **Chapter 4** discusses job-monitoring procedures that help students transfer what is learned in the classroom to the work setting (Lund, Montague, & Reinholtz, 1987; Montague & Lund, 1988). It offers suggestions and recommendations for

skill maintenance and generalization into the workplace.

- **The Appendix** contains Skill Lesson 1: Ordering Job Responsibilities in its entirety. [Note: All 18 Skill Lessons and the 2 Monitoring Lessons are found on the CD.] Readers are encouraged to use it as an example as you read through Chapter 3.

There are 18 Scripted Skill Lessons in the Job-Related Social Skills Curriculum. Each Scripted Lesson contains explicit directions for facilitating individual and group instruction. The following materials are found at the end of each scripted lesson.

- **Master Class Charts.** These list anticipated student responses to be developed during the lesson and are used in guided practice. The charts introduce and reinforce each skill. They are employed by the teacher to elicit the most desired or appropriate social response.
- **Student Cue Cards.** These present an acronym to identify the skill steps. The acronym helps to facilitate memorization of a particular skill. These mnemonic devices give the students a way to organize new understandings and provide a self-check for remembering appropriate responses.
- **Role Play Activities.** The Job-Related Social Skills curriculum incorporates both scripted and impromptu role plays to engage students in active practice. They are designed to enhance skill acquisition by presenting situations that reflect typical job interactions. The Role Play Activities allow students to try out social skills in a controlled environment in which they are given immediate performance feedback.

The Role Play Observation/Feedback Worksheet is included. It is used to help guide students in preparing feedback for their peers.

- **Social Skill Assessments.** A Pretest, Posttest, and Role Play Behavioral Assessment form are included for each Skill Lesson.

The Job-Related Social Skills assessments also are discussed in the Instructional Guide and are found on the CD. There are two types of assessments.

- **The Social Skill Behavioral Checklists.** These include criterion-referenced checklists for each of the 18 social skills. The assessments include the Pretest, Posttest, and Role Play Behavioral Assessments that accompany the Role Play Activities found in each lesson. Teachers can use these checklists to monitor progress and mastery of the social skills. The CD includes the Social Skill Checklists Recording Form (in print and in a Microsoft Excel version). The Excel version has an advantage in that it creates a progress graph that can be shared with students.
- **The Social Skills Surveys** (student version, teacher version, and parent version, found on the CD). Individuals use these scales to rate a particular student's social skill performance. When three parties independently use the same instrument to rate a student's performance, a more objective perception of the student emerges and instructional needs may be further clarified. The teacher can tally the surveys on the Social Skills Surveys Tally Sheet (print or Excel spreadsheet version, both found on the CD).

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## References

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