Social Skills in Early Childhood Webinar
Questions and Answers

Q: I support many Early Childhood Special Education classrooms. Is this program at a level that can be used for 3 year old special education students?
A: Yes. The SSIS program can be used for 3 year old special education students unless they have serious cognitive disabilities or deaf. Students with special needs may require more support, more practice trials, and more feedback with reinforcement to acquire each social skill that is developmental relevant for a preschool setting. The same SSIS resource materials would be used by either a general educator or special educator to teach or increase the selected social skills and to possibly decrease inappropriate competing behaviors.

Q: How effective is the SSIS rating scales as a research tool?
A: The SSIS Rating Scales should be very effective as a research tool. The SSIS RS were published in late 2008, so research using the scales is just starting to be published in the literature. The SSIS Rating Scales are a revision of the most widely used social skills measure called the SSRS, which has been widely used in research for the past 35 years. A recent article in the Behavior Disorders identified the SSRS, the predecessor to the SSIS as the most frequently used measure of social skills in the research literature.

Some recently published articles in APA’s premier assessment journal on the SSIS Rating Scales include:


Q: Are cut-off scores provided for the preschool Performance Screening Guide?
A: The Preschool level of the Performance Screening Guide does not have cut off scores. The PSG evaluates students using 4 performance levels. Each level is presented with a description defining the kinds of behaviors or skills at that level. For each skill area, the teacher chooses the performance level that best describes each student’s current level of functioning.

The Performance Screening Guide is a criterion-referenced tool. A color-coded system facilitates scoring and interpretation (e.g., on the preschool form, Level 1 is red, Level 2 is yellow, and Levels 3 and 4 are green). Students who are described as being at Level 1 would benefit from intensive and direct social skills training. Students at Level 2 also would benefit from intervention, but can be easily accommodated in the natural classroom setting with increased opportunities to practice social skills and receive feedback. Students at Levels 3 and 4 serve as excellent peer models and can thus be helping in improving the social skills of classmates.

Q: Are these assessments and tools being used in schools today? If not, why? If so, is it school by school or are they part of a curriculum?
A: Yes, they are being used in schools today. Uses have included preschool and head start programs, pre-k programs (as part of kindergarten readiness screening), individual classrooms, grades and entire schools (for example, as part of a positive behavior support program initiative). The materials are primarily purchased on a school by school basis, though there have been larger purchases by districts, typically as part of large, multi-school pilot programs.
Q: What is an appropriate age to really work with preschool aged child on social skills and social skills development?
A: Children are learning social skills by watching and listening to others as early as 18 months of age. Successful social skills interventions can be started for most children a few months after they have begun to talk. So, one can really focus on teaching several fundamental social skills during the period of 30 to 36 months, and expand to all the top 10 social skills by age 4.

Q: Do you feel, in your experience, this is a program that a speech/language pathologist could implement with a pragmatic language group?
A: At the heart of social skills is communication. Given that speech and language pathologists are skilled at improving children’s language skills, they are ideal social skills interventionists. The use of a pragmatic language group is entirely consistent with the implementation structure of the SSiS.

Q: How would you suggest doing such a program in a play-based pre-kindergarten program? It’s 3 half days per week.
A: Play is young children’s primary approach to learning and learning play with others well is an important outcome of a play-based-approach. The time allocation of 3 half-days per week is also entirely consistent with the recommended delivery of the SSiS CIP where about 25-30 minutes 3 days a week be allocated to teaching a single social skill. Once a skill is introduced on the first class day of the week, it is a skill that students are reminded of -- prompted, cued, and reinforced -- throughout each class day during the rest of the week. In summary, the SSiS CIP naturally fits into a play-based pre-kindergarten program that is part-time throughout the week.

Q: We do at our program....any research/tools on use of visuals to teach ECSE?
A: Visuals are an important part of the SSiS CIP resources, starting with Student Booklets that have a number of visuals to communicate key skills and to stimulate progress monitoring to Cue Cards that can be posted to remind students of the key steps needed to perform a social skill. Perhaps the most powerful visual component of the SSiS program are 26 brief video clips that provide students models of appropriate social skills to emulate and also some negative examples of social skills to fulfill an effective positive example / negative example approach to teaching a new concept.

Q: What if the three year old has NO social skills....?
A: I have never met a 3-year old who doesn’t have some social skills. Admittedly, some young children have a number of inappropriate behaviors and limited social skills, but if they can verbally communicate, make some eye contact, and respond to reinforcement, they can learn social skills. The first step is creating opportunities to exhibit social skills and providing positive peer models. The second step is breaking the desired social skill down into small steps and teaching each step, along with clear feedback, and repeated practice opportunities. The third step is to make sure to reinforce the student when he/she exhibits a desired step. These fundamental teaching tactics are embedded in the SSiS CIP’s six step -Tell, Show, Do, Practice, Progress Monitor, and Generalize - instruction approach. When used consistently and implemented approximately 90 minutes each week, all students can improve their social behavior.

Q: Can you calculate the standard scores for the SSIS rating scales manually?
A: Yes, the standard scores for the SSIS Rating Scales can be calculated manually. Self-contained hand scoring forms and materials are available to assist you. These materials are published by Pearson and can be found at the following link: http://psychcorp.pearsonassessments.com/SSIS Rating Scales or by calling toll-free (800) 627-7271

Q: Where can you purchase these testing manuals?
A: The testing materials are published by Pearson and can be found on the Pearson website: www.psychcorp.com or by calling toll-free (800) 627-7271.