Why is Social Communication Important?

- What does it mean to be "college and career ready"?
- The top four most important skills in the workplace are critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication (American Management Association, 2012)
- Why is social communication important in a school setting?

Social Communication Part 1 and 2

Kansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association
Angie Neal, M.S. CCC-SLP
Speech-Language Pathologist
wordnerdspeech@gmail.com
or TPT as Angie Neal wordnerdslp

Reading Comprehension
- Separate important from unimportant details
- Point of view
- Inference
- Prediction
- Summarize
- Compare and contrast
- Main Idea
- Figurative language
- Cause and effect
- Ability to convey knowledge

Writing
- Content amount
- Content relevancy
- Clear referents/details
- Able to express thoughts
- Task persistence
- Working memory
- Clear sequence
- Task initiation

Functional Performance
- Clearly communicate needs and wants
- Conversational skills
- Asking for help, asking questions
- Use of appropriate physical contact
- Participating in the classroom
- Non-verbal language
- Understanding the link between behavior and consequence

Knowledge of basic social rules
- Expression of emotions
- Interacting appropriately with peers
- Taking turns
- Organizing self, materials, space
- Active listening for meaning
- Following directions

What’s The Difference?

Social Skill - a social task with a specific, expected result. (i.e. you go a restaurant and order food)

Social Communication - an understanding of WHY a skill is important and the understanding that it may be somewhat different across different contexts. (i.e. different restaurants have different methods of ordering food)
The Components of Social Communication (ASHA) and Social Communication Benchmarks

What is the recommended amount of screen time per day by the American Academy of Pediatrics?
- Less than TWO HOURS for kids age 5-18
- No more than ONE HOUR for kids age 2-5
- NONE for kids younger than 18 months

Excessive screen time can impinge on children's ability to develop optimally; it is recommended that pediatricians and health care practitioners guide parents on appropriate amounts of screen exposure and discuss potential consequences of excessive screen use. (Madigan et al., JAMA Pediatrics, 2019)

Impact of Screen Time
- Screen time negatively impacts the development of…
  - problem-solving skills
  - emotional regulation and self-regulation
  - brain development
  - reading comprehension
  - contextual and social language knowledge
  - depth of knowledge
  - Theory of Mind

It’s not that technology causes ASD, but disproportionate exposure during critical periods can negatively impact the development of social communication, social-emotional skills and behavior.

Social Communication Difficulties Are ALSO Characteristics of Other Disabilities

1. Is the child breaking social rules/expectations they do not like, do not agree with, and/or are unable to stop themselves from breaking OR are they breaking social rules that they do not know?
2. What is the pervasiveness of the difficulties – are the behaviors specific to certain topics, subjects, times of day, settings, people or locations?
3. Once they break a social rule or expectation, do they continue to break it? If so, why?
4. What opportunities has the child to be exposed to or learn social rules/expectations?
5. Are the behaviors cruel in nature (is there an intent to harm)?
**What's Below the Iceberg?**
- Theory of Mind and Empathy
- Self Regulation, Emotional Regulation and Context
- Narratives, Inference and Central Coherence
- Metacognitive Skills and Executive Functioning

**Theory of Mind**
- Defined – The ability to attribute mental states - beliefs, intent, desires, pretending, knowledge, etc. – to oneself and others and to understand that others have beliefs, desires and intentions that are different from your own (Premack & Woodruff, 1978)
- Deficits in ToM are present in a variety of disorders
- Intrapersonal and intrapersonal
- Cognitive and affective

**Deficits in ToM Result in…**
- Poor ability to consider that there are interests outside of their own
- Lack of understanding that different people, situations, and locations may have different expectations
- Poor hygiene (especially in older elementary, middle and high school)
- Poor recognition of facial expressions and understanding of emotions
- Unaware that their behavior affects how others think and feel
- Inability to identify “future self”

**Precursors to ToM (Birth – 3)**
- Verbal and nonverbal language
- Joint attention
- Early narratives
- Means-end
- Object permanence
- Following line of regard
- Self regulation
- Social reciprocity
- Initiating
- Imitation
- Play

**Development of ToM**
- Awareness of self
- First Order of ToM – 4-5 years of age
- Second Order of ToM – 6-8 years of age
- Higher Orders of ToM – 8-10 years of age

**Empathy**
- Defined – “Empathy occurs when we suspend our single minded focus of attention and instead adopt a double-minded focus of attention (Baron-Cohen, 2012)
- Empathy is connecting to the emotions that underpin experience (Brown, 2018)
- To develop empathy a person needs both the ability to recognize and respond
Emotional Regulation
- The difference between self-regulation and emotional regulation
- The ability to respond to the ongoing demands of experience with the range of emotions in a manner that is socially tolerable and sufficiently flexible to permit spontaneous reactions as well as the ability to delay spontaneous reactions as needed.
- Emotional regulation is responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reactions as well as initiating, inhibiting, or modulating one’s state or behavior in a given situation.

Note: Emotion is highly dependent on context

Context
- Context tells us what to expect
- Context helps us to recognize and find things quickly
- Context tells us where to focus and not focus our attention
- Explains things that are not directly clear or understandable
- Context makes the world predictable
- Context also relates to students’ difficulties with flexible thinking

Narrative and Inference
- Supports reading comprehension
- Establishes expectations
- Helps develop empathy
- Improves prosody
- Improves vocabulary
- The stories we tell ourselves
- “Why do you think ___?”

Central Coherence
- “Can’t see the forest for the trees”
- Central coherence is a weakness in being able to conceptualize the whole
- It is a focus on the details, but not the big picture
- Difficulty seeing the invisible relationship between all of the parts
- In conversation, it would manifest as the ability to get the point or understand the gist

Metacognition “thinking about your own thinking”
and Executive Function
- The impact of weak executive function deficits…
  - Slow processing speed
  - Weak stamina
  - Problems dealing with frustration
  - Poor self-awareness
  - Difficulty with sustained attention
  - Poor organization and planning
- Limited motivation
- Poor goal-directed actions
- Impaired attention
- Poor self-regulation
- Poor time management
- Difficulty with word finding

Metacognitive Strategies
- How important is this to you on a scale of 1-10
- How often will you use this or do you use this?
  - Some of the time
  - All of the time
  - Never
- Level of complexity:
  - This was easy
  - This was hard
  - I need help
- Sorting
Assessment
- Standardized assessments
- Non-standardized assessments
- Code of Federal Regulation 300.304
  - Use a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional, developmental, and academic information
  - Do not use any single measure or assessment as the sole criterion for determining whether a child is a child with a disability and for determining an appropriate educational program for the child
  - Use assessment tools and strategies that provide relevant information

Where Do I Begin?
- Home program
- Classroom recommendations
- Begin by targeting the areas that...
  - Improve behaviors that overtly stand out/highly visible
  - Teach what’s expected and basic social rules
  - Will improve the student’s ability to function in the school setting
  - Have a direct educational effect
  - Have a positive emotional effect
  - Eliminate frustration and/or replace negative behaviors with positive ones

Evidence-Based Practice
ASHA uses the following definition of EBP:
“The integration of research evidence with practitioner expertise and client preferences and values into the process of making clinical decisions. Note that although this is referred to as “evidence-based” practice, the roles of clinician expertise and client preferences and values are equally important. The notion that external research evidence somehow “trumps” all other considerations is one of the big myths surrounding EBP.”

A Few Evidence-Based Practices
- Cognitive Behavioral Interventions
- Social Skills Packages
- Language Training
- Modeling
- Scripting
- Story-Based Interventions

Establish the Foundation
- Theory of Mind
  - Verbs of perception
  - Verbs of intention
  - Verbs of cognition
- Play skills
- Joint attention

Developing Empathy and Conversation
- Get curious about people
  - Conversation starters
  - Conversation enders
  - Conversation continuers
  - Be interested AND interesting
- Discover things you have in common
- Empathetic imagination and the “Social Fake”
Teaching Emotion
- Label emotions – in self, others, book characters, photographs, real life situations, etc. (simple to complex)
- Teach strategies for what to do if you feel...
- Teach how to respond if someone else is...
- Teach how to recognize emotions through...
  - Body language
  - Tone of voice
  - Facial expression

Remember: Emotions are highly dependent on CONTEXT so do NOT rely on facial expressions

Dealing With Frustration
- Words to use that take away frustration
- What is a big deal, what really isn’t a big deal?
- It might not turn out like you think...
- Asking for help
- Take a break
- Teach the concept of TRY
- Offer choices
- Baby steps
- Calming strategies

Figurative Language
- No

Social Knowledge Nuggets Necessary for Success
- Manners
- Unspoken Rules
- Mobile Manners
- What is a friend?
- “The story I’m telling myself is…”
- Rules for Civility
- Being grateful

General Strategies
- Blow it out
- Blurt blocks
- Tattling vs. Telling with the 4 B’s and Me
- Teaching Scripts
- No “I don’t know”
- What you are looking at is what you are giving your attention to

Games and Activities
- Jokes
- Observation
- Cooperation activities
- Pizza Party
- Board games

Kansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2019