

IDEAS TO MAKE SOCIAL SKILLS PART OF YOUR CLASS ROUTINE

Social Skill of the Week: Pick a social skill and use it for the focus of the week. For instance, if your skill of the week is showing responsibility, the word responsibility goes on the board. The teacher introduces the words and talks about what it means to be responsible. Students brainstorm ideas of what it means to be responsible. Throughout the week, students are given opportunities to comment on responsible behavior as they see it. At the end of the day or for bell work, have students talk about what they've been doing or what they did that showed acting responsibility.




Social Skill Weekly Goals: Have students set social skill goals for the week. Provide opportunities for students to demonstrate and tell how they're sticking to their goals. Use this as the exit dismissal key each day. For instance, each child states how they met their goal that day "I cooperated today by working well with Sean on my book report".

Good Character Submission Box: Keep a box with a slot in it. Ask students to put a slip in the box when they observe good character. For instance, "John tidied up the coat room without being asked". Students that are reluctant writers will need to have their complement scribed for them. Then the teacher reads the slips from the good character box at the end of the week. Teachers should also participate.

'Social' Circle Time: At circle time, have each child say something pleasant about the person next to them as they go around the circle. This too can be themed (cooperative, respectful, generous, positive, responsible, friendly, empathetic etc.)

Mystery Buddies: Put all the student names in a hat. A child draws a student name and they become the student's mystery buddy. The mystery buddy then offers compliments, praise and does nice things for the student. The students can then guess their mystery buddy at the end of the week. See also the worksheet on 'Wanted: Friend



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Good Solutions: This activity takes some help from other teaching staff members. Have teachers leave you jot notes of the conflicts that have arisen on the yard or in the classroom. Collect these as often as you can. Then within your own classroom, present the situation that has happened, ask the students to role play it or to come up with positive solutions and practical advice to avoid repeats of the incidents. See problem solving.

The Button Jar: For this activity, you ask the students to catch somebody exhibiting great social skills. When students see another student sharing or helping out, they will ask if a button can be put in the jar. Likewise, the teacher puts buttons in the jar for targeted behaviors. There should be a small celebration each time the class reaches a defined number of buttons within a time period. For instance when a teacher says "Oh, I really like the way Jenny is cooperating". A button then goes into the jar. This strategy really hooks kids providing they have an opportunity to celebrate.


Good News Box: A box is displayed prominently in the classroom. You explain to the students that each time you see acts of kindness, consideration, patience, cooperation, encouragement, helping hands etc. the student writes a praise note stating who and what and then places it in the box. At the end of the week, the teacher reads out the praise notes to the classmates and gives them their praise notes. Teachers need to make sure that all students at some point receive a praise note for the desired behavior.

Character Trait of the Week: Each week introduce a character trait. (Loyalty, responsibility, caring, cooperation, perseverance, courage, fairness, respect, integrity, trust, patience etc.) Remind children to demonstrate the trait as often as possible. Find storybooks that help introduce the different character traits. Discuss and role play various character traits in action. For instance, ask what an act of kindness would be to a child new to your school? What does courage look like? If you see somebody doing something harmful or wrong, how could you display courage? (Moral courage)

Secret Pal: This is a great activity to help all students get along in the classroom. Each week let all students draw the name of a classmate. They commit to doing acts of kindness to this secret pal for the week. At the end of the week, everyone gets a chance to guess who their secret pal is.



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Set Goals: After you've reviewed the essential character traits. Ask students to set goals about improving the traits they feel they need the most improvement in. Have each student fill in a goal sheet that identifies at least 3 steps that they will take to improve the goal. At the end of each week, review the goals and steps with students. Have students revise and edit goals as necessary.

Seize the Moment: During lineup times for recess or lunch or other times when you have a few minutes to spare, have students select something nice to say about other students and why. For example: "Tara was helpful today because she lent me a pencil when I couldn't find mine". Sometimes start at the back of the line, sometimes at the front.

Random Acts of Kindness: At the beginning of the week, tell students to watch for random acts of kindness. Brainstorm acts of kindness to ensure all students understand. At the end of each week have a vote for the best random act of kindness.


Conflict Resolution: Give students the opportunity to be mediators in conflict resolution. Teach the value of give and take. Have a role-play each week on conflict resolution which enables you to have a different child act as mediator.

Newspaper Scrounge: The newspaper is a great source to find both good and bad character traits. Have students work in pairs to locate various articles about good and bad character. Have them explain why the article shows good character traits and what they are, and for the articles that demonstrate inappropriate traits, decide how they could have been prevented.

Teaching Good Character: Good character doesn't come naturally, children with Asperger's, mild autism, behavior disorders and some developmental delays will often be the ones that really benefit from teaching social skills and character development. Make sure the activities done accommodate the child with mild disabilities. Character education is a yearlong endeavor, although the focus on traits may change month to month, it should nonetheless be an ongoing project for the entire academic year.



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