

## ASSESSING SOCIAL SKILLS

### WHAT ARE SOCIAL SKILLS?

From the standpoint of everyday life... there is one thing we do know; that man is here for the sake of other men—above all, for those upon whose smile and well-being our own happiness depends, and also for the countless unknown souls with whose fate we are connected by a bond of sympathy. Many times a day I realize how much my own outer and inner life is built upon the labors of my fellow men, both living and dead, and how earnestly I must exert myself in order to give in return as much as I have received.

—Albert Einstein (*scientist and philosopher*)

Success in life depends on social skills. An example is Abraham Lincoln. During his four years as president, Lincoln spent most of his time interacting with the people he believed were going to get the job done—the troops. He met with his generals and cabinet members in their homes, offices, and in the field. He toured the Navy Yard and the fortifications in and around Washington and conversed with the troops. He inspected new weaponry and discussed its use with the soldiers in charge. He visited key individuals in government, such as members of Congress, and toured hospitals to visit and interview the sick and the wounded. He virtually lived in the War Department's telegraph office so he could communicate with individuals in every part of the war. Lincoln even went with the troops into several battles, coming under fire at least once (one of the few American presidents to do so while in office).

In establishing human contact with the individuals actually carrying on the war effort, Lincoln was able to provide extraordinary leadership. One hundred years later, Lincoln's philosophy became part of the revolution in modern leadership and was named MBWA (management by wandering around) by Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman in their 1982 book, *In Search of Excellence*. Without valuing relationships and his high level of interpersonal skills, Lincoln may not have been such a success.

Individuals learn social skills to gain social competence (Johnson, 2000). **Social competence** is the extent to which the consequences of a person's actions match his or her intentions. Individuals who are socially competent have acquired a broad range of interpersonal and small group skills that they can apply appropriately in interactions with others, thereby creating the joint outcomes they intend. The use of social skills in a fluent and flexible way help people establish positive relationships with others and successfully achieve joint outcomes. Social skills range from simple (i.e., making eye contact with the person to whom you are talking) to complex (i.e., criticizing ideas while confirming the competence of the person). Students' interpersonal and small group skills determine their ability to initiate, develop, and maintain

caring and productive relationships and their ability to work effectively with others. Social skills can be classified in a number of ways.

The small group skills students need to master include setting goals, communicating effectively, providing leadership, making effective decisions, managing conflicts constructively, and using power appropriately (Johnson & F. Johnson, 2000). Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (1998a) classify social skills students need to work together in cooperative groups as *forming*, *functioning*, *formulating*, and *fermenting* skills.

1. **Forming skills.** Skills needed to establish a cooperative learning group, such as members staying with their group and not wandering around the room, using quiet voices, taking turns, and using each other's names.
2. **Functioning skills.** Skills needed to manage the group's activities in completing the task and maintaining effective working relationships among members, such as sharing one's ideas and conclusions, providing direction to the group's work, and encouraging everyone to participate.
3. **Formulating skills.** Skills needed to build deeper-level understanding of the material being studied, to stimulate the use of higher-quality reasoning strategies, and to maximize mastery and retention of the assigned material. Examples are explaining step by step one's reasoning and relating what is being studied to previous learning.
4. **Fermenting skills.** Skills needed to stimulate reconceptualization of the material being studied, cognitive conflict, the search for more information, and the communication of the rationale behind one's conclusions. Examples are criticizing ideas (not people) and not changing your mind unless you are logically persuaded (majority rule does not promote learning).

Interpersonal skills individuals "dare" to learn follow (Johnson, 1991; 2000):

- D** Disclosing ourselves to and trusting each other. Openness in letting others get to know you is based on self-awareness, self-acceptance, and the willingness to take the risk of trusting others.
- A** Accurately communicating with each other. You must be able to send messages that are phrased so that the other person can easily understand them and listen in ways that ensure you fully understand the other person.
- R** Resolving conflicts and relationship problems constructively. The more committed the relationship is, the more frequently conflicts tend to occur. When conflicts are managed by engaging in problem-solving negotiations or smoothing, the relationship tends to be strengthened.
- E** Encouraging and appreciating diversity. There is strength in diversity. You encourage others to be themselves and you appreciate the wide variety of attitudes and perspectives brought to the relationship. It takes considerable skill in building and maintaining relationships with individuals from backgrounds and cultures different from yours.

## WHY TEACH AND ASSESS SOCIAL SKILLS?

I will pay more for the ability to deal with people than any other ability under the sun.  
—John D. Rockefeller

Social skills are the connections among people. They are key to all aspects of our lives. Any time students talk to, play with, interact with, or work with others, they are using social skills. Increasingly, however, large numbers of children, adolescents,

and young adults do not possess the social skills necessary to establish and maintain positive relationships with their peers. Because of changes in the structure of family, neighborhood, and community life, many students have never been taught how to interact effectively with others. Without direct instruction many students may never become socially competent. The severity and persistence of social problems among children, adolescents, and young adults necessitate that schools become more involved in teaching social skills. Yet in many classrooms, social skills are neglected and almost never taught.

Social skills are not a luxury, to be learned when time allows. They are necessary to all aspects of living. The importance of social skills cannot be overstated, as they are related to the following issues (Johnson, 2000; Johnson & F. Johnson, 2000; Johnson & R. Johnson, 1999):

**1. Personal development and identity.** Our identity is created out of relationships with others. As we interact with others we note their responses to us, we seek feedback as to how they perceive us, and we learn how to view ourselves as others view us. Individuals who have few interpersonal skills have distorted relationships with others and tend to develop inaccurate and incomplete views of themselves.

**2. Employability, productivity and career success.** Social skills may be even more important than education and technical skills for employability, productivity, and career success. Recent national surveys found that (a) when hiring new employees, employers value interpersonal and communication skills, responsibility, initiative, and decision-making skills and (b) 90 percent of the people fired from their jobs were fired for poor job attitudes, poor interpersonal relationships, inappropriate behavior, and inappropriate dress. In the real world of work, the heart of most jobs, especially the higher-paying, more interesting jobs, is getting others to cooperate, leading others, coping with complex power and influence issues, and helping solve people's problems in working with others.

**3. Quality of life.** There is no simple recipe for creating a meaningful life, but the research indicates that for almost everyone a necessary ingredient for a high quality of life is some kind of satisfying, close, personal, intimate relationship.

**4. Physical health.** Positive, supportive relationships have been found to be related to living longer lives, recovering from illness and injury faster and more completely, and experiencing less severe illnesses. Physical health improves when individuals learn the interpersonal skills necessary to take more initiative in their relationships and become more constructive in the way they deal with conflict. Loneliness and isolation kill. High-quality relationships create and extend life.

**5. Psychological health.** When individuals do not have the interpersonal skills to build and maintain positive relationships with others, psychological illness results. The inability to establish acceptable relationships often leads to anxiety, depression, frustration, alienation, inadequacy, helplessness, fear, and loneliness. The ability to build and maintain positive, supportive relationships, on the other hand, is related to psychological health and adjustment; lack of neuroticism and psychopathology; reduction of psychological distress; coping effectively with stress; resilience; self-reliance and autonomy; a coherent and integrated self-identity; high self-esteem; general happiness; and social competence.

**6. Ability to cope with stress.** Positive and supportive relationships help individuals cope with stress by providing caring, information, resources, and feedback. Supportive relationships decrease the number and severity of stressful events, reduce anxiety, and help with the appraisal of the nature of the stress and one's ability to deal with it constructively. Discussions with supportive peers help individuals perceive

the meaning of the stressful event, regain mastery over their lives, and enhance their self-esteem.

Overall, social science research indicates that life without a modicum of social skills is not much of a life. The inability to relate to other people leads to loneliness and isolation. Loneliness and isolation can stunt growth, spark failure, make life seem meaningless, create anxiety and depression, result in an obsession with the past, increase fragility, increase inhumaneness, and even shorten life.

## HOW TO ASSESS SOCIAL SKILLS

To assess students' social skills, you engage in the following tasks (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1998a, 1998b):

1. Review the assumptions that underlie teaching social skills.
2. Teach the targeted social skills to students.
3. Structure a cooperative learning situation in which the targeted social skills can be observed. Observe students working in cooperative learning groups (see Box 9.1).
4. Intervene to ensure appropriate use of social skills.
5. Assess knowledge of social skills.
6. Facilitate self-diagnosis of social skill mastery.
7. Set goals for continuous improvement.
8. Report on students' social skills to interested stakeholders, such as students, parents, and potential employers.

### Basic Assumptions

The assumptions underlying the assessment of students' social skills follow (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1998a).

1. **Social skills must be learned.** Placing socially unskilled students in a group and telling them to cooperate does not guarantee that they will be able to do so. We are not born instinctively knowing how to interact effectively with others. Interpersonal and small group skills do not magically appear when they are needed. You must teach students the social skills required for interacting effectively with others and motivate students to use the skills if students are to become socially competent.
2. **Every cooperative lesson is a lesson in social skills as well as academics.** Students must learn both academic subject matter (taskwork) and the interpersonal and small group skills required to work with classmates (teamwork). Coopera-

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#### BOX 9.1 GROUPS

When we work in groups, we

- **G** Give encouragement.
  - **R** Respect others.
  - **O** Stay on task.
  - **U** Use quiet voices.
  - **P** Participate actively.
  - **S** Stay in our group.
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tive learning is inherently more complex than competitive or individualistic learning because students have to engage simultaneously in taskwork and teamwork. If group members are inept at teamwork, their taskwork tends to be substandard. The greater are the members' teamwork skills, the higher is the quality and quantity of their learning. Ways of deciding which interpersonal and small group skills need to be emphasized include

- a. Observing students at work to determine which social skills they lack.
  - b. Asking students which social skills would increase their productivity (see Box 9.2).
  - c. Drawing a flow chart of how the group actually completes the assignment. On the basis of the process required, certain social (and cognitive) skills may be suggested or even required.
3. You must understand what teamwork skills to teach and how to teach them.
  4. You must follow the three rules of teaching teamwork skills:
    - a. **Be specific.** Operationally define each social skill with a T-chart.
    - b. **Start small.** Do not overload your students with more social skills than they can learn at one time. Emphasizing one or two skills for a few lessons is enough. Students should not be subjected to information overload.
    - c. **Emphasize overlearning.** Having students practice skills once or twice is not enough. Keep emphasizing a skill until the students have integrated it into their behavioral repertoires and do it automatically and habitually.

## TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS

When police evaluate potential suspects, they look for the joint presence of three characteristics: opportunity, motive, and means. Engaging in an interpersonal action requires the opportunity of contact with other people for the act to occur, a reason sufficient to motivate the act, and access to a method or procedure whereby the act can occur. For students to work as a team, they need (a) an opportunity to work together cooperatively (where teamwork skills can be manifested), (b) a motivation to engage in the teamwork skills (a reason to believe that such actions will be beneficial to them), and (c) some proficiency in using teamwork skills. After providing students with the opportunity to learn social skills in cooperative groups, you must provide students with the motive and means for doing so. There are five steps in teaching social skills (Johnson, 1991, 2000; Johnson & F. Johnson, 2000; Johnson & R. Johnson, 1999; Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1998a, 1998b).

The first step is to ensure that students see the need for the teamwork skill. To establish the need for the teamwork skill, you can

1. Ask students to suggest the teamwork skills they need to work together more effectively. From the skills suggested, choose one or more to emphasize.

### BOX 9.2 KISSES

- K Keep on task.
- I Include everyone.
- S Speak in 6-inch voices.
- S Stay with your group.
- E Encourage everyone.
- S Share ideas.

2. Present a case to students that they are better off knowing, than not knowing, the chosen skills. You can display posters, tell students how important the skills are, complement students who use the skills.
3. Setting up a role play that provides a counterexample in which the skill is obviously missing in a group is a fun way to illustrate the need for the skill.

The second step is to ensure that students understand what the skill is, how to engage in the skill, and when to use the skill.

1. Operationally define the skill as verbal and nonverbal behaviors so that students know specifically what to do. It is not enough to tell students what skills you wish to see them use during the lesson ("Please encourage each other's participation and check each other's understanding of what is being learned"). What is encouraging to one student may be discouraging to another. You must explain exactly what they are to do. One way to explain a social skill is through a **T-chart** (see Box 9.3). You list the skill (e.g., encouraging participation) and then ask the class, "What would this skill look like [nonverbal behaviors]?" After students generate several ideas, you ask the class, "What would this skill sound like [phrases]?" Students list several ideas. You then display the T-chart prominently for students to refer to (see Figure 9.1 for further examples of T-charts).
2. Demonstrate and model the skill in front of the class and explain it step by step until students have a clear idea of what the skill sounds and looks like.
3. Have students role play the skill by practicing the skill twice in their groups before the lesson begins.

The third step is to set up practice situations and encourage mastery of the skill. To master a skill, students need to practice it again and again. You can guide their practice by doing the following (see Box 9.4):

1. Assign the social skill as either a specific role for certain members to fulfill or a general responsibility for all group members to engage in. You may wish to introduce one or two new skills each week, review previously taught skills, and repeat this sequence until all the skills are taught.

#### BOX 9.3

#### T-CHART FOR ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION

##### Encouraging Participation

Looks Like	Sounds Like
Smiles	"What is your idea?"
Eye contact	"Awesome!"
Thumbs up	"Good idea!"
Pat on back	"That's interesting"

FIGURE 9.1 Examples of Other T-Charts

**Checking for Understanding**

Looks Like	Sounds Like
Eye contact Leaning forward Interested expression Open gestures and posture	"Explain that to me please." "Can you show me?" "Tell us how to do it." "How do you get that answer?" "Give me an example please." "How would you explain it to the teacher?"

**Contributing Ideas**

Looks Like	Sounds Like
Leaning forward Open gestures and posture Taking turns Member talking while others listen	"My idea is..." "I suggest..." "We could..." "I suggest we..." "This is what I would do..." "What if we..."

**Summarizing**

Looks Like	Sounds Like
Leaning forward Pleasant expression Open gestures and postures	"Our key ideas seem to be..." "Let's review what we have said so far..." "At this point, we have..." "The points we have made so far are..." "Our thinking is..."

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**BOX 9.4**
**STERN**

- **S** Show need for skill.
  - **T** Teach T-chart skill.
  - **E** Engage students in practice.
  - **R** Reflect on success.
  - **N** Practice until using skill is natural.
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2. Observe each group and record which members are engaging in the skill with what frequency and effectiveness. Utilize student observers as soon as possible. You may want to begin with a simple observation form that only has 2 to 4 skills on it. When you become used to the observation process, you may expand to an intermediate observation form that has 6 to 8 actions listed and then to an advanced observation form that has 10 to 12 actions on it (see Figure 9.2). Student observers are trained in the same sequence of simple to intermediate to advanced observation forms. The procedures for observing may be found in Chapter 8.

**FIGURE 9.2 Examples of Observation Forms, from Simple to Advanced**

Jose	Tia	Helen	Total
Who Talks			

**(a) Simple Observation Form**

	Dale	Frank	Edythe	Total
Contributing Ideas				
Encouraging Participation				
Total				

**(b) Intermediate Observation Form**

	Frances	Juan	Gia	Total
Contributes Ideas				
Checks for Understanding				
Encourages Participation				
Supporter, Praiser				
Total				

**(c) Advanced Observation Form**



3. Cue the use of the skill periodically during the lesson by asking a group member to demonstrate the skill.
4. Intervene in the learning groups to clarify the nature of the social skill and how to engage in it.
5. Coach students to improve their use of the skill.

The fourth step is to ensure that each student (a) receives feedback on his or her use of the skill and (b) reflects on how to engage in the skill more effectively next time. Practicing teamwork skills is not enough. Students must receive feedback on how frequently and how well they are using the skill. Organize the observation data into bar graphs and run charts and report the data to the class, groups, and individuals. Help students analyze and reflect on the data. The observer reports the information gathered to the group and group members report their impressions as to how they behaved. The observer shows the observation form to the group, holding it so every group member can see it. He or she then asks the group, "What do you conclude about (a) your participation in the group and (b) the group functioning in general?" The observer ensures that all group members receive positive feedback about their efforts to learn and help their groupmates learn. (Activity 9.1 offers suggestions for ensuring positive feedback.) After small group processing, there is whole-class processing in which the teacher shares his or her feedback to the class as a whole.

Reflection is needed to discover what helped and hindered students in completing the academic assignment and whether specific actions had a positive or negative effect. The observer helps group members process how well the group functioned, how frequently and well each member engaged in the targeted skill, and

## ACTIVITY 9.1 ■ ENSURING EVERY GROUP MEMBER RECEIVES POSITIVE FEEDBACK

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1. Each group focuses on one member at a time. Members tell the target person one thing he or she did that helped them learn or work together effectively. The focus is rotated until all members have received positive feedback.
2. Members write a positive comment about each of the other member's participation on an index card. The students then give their written comments to each other so that every member will have, in writing, positive feedback from all the other group members.
3. Members comment on how well each other member used the social skills by writing an answer to one of the following statements. The students then give their written statements to each other.
  - a. "I appreciated it when you..."
  - b. "I liked it when you..."
  - c. "I admire your ability to..."
  - d. "I enjoy it when you..."
  - e. "You really helped out the group when you..."

This procedure may also be done orally. In this case students look at the member they are complimenting, use his or her name, and give their comments. The person receiving the positive feedback makes eye contact and says "Thank you." Positive feedback should be directly and clearly expressed and should *not* be brushed off or denied.

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how the interaction among group members should be modified to make it more effective. On the basis of the feedback received and their own assessment of skills used, the students reflect on how to use skills more effectively in the future and set improvement goals. Finally, the groups should celebrate their hard work in learning and using the targeted social skills. Play Mystery Person in Activity 9.2 to highlight how well students analyze and reflect on each other's social skills learning.

The fifth step is to ensure that students persevere in practicing the skill until the skill becomes a natural action. With most skills there is a period of slow learning, then a period of rapid improvement, then a period where performance remains about the same, then another period of rapid improvement, then another plateau, and so forth. Students have to practice teamwork skills long enough to make it through the first few plateaus and integrate the skills into their behavioral repertoires. Most skill development goes through stages:

1. Self-conscious, awkwardly engaging in the skill
2. Feelings of phoniness while engaging in the skill. After a while the awkwardness passes and enacting the skill becomes more smooth. Many students, however, feel inauthentic or phony while using the skill. Students need teacher and peer encouragement to move through this stage.
3. Proficient but mechanical use of the skill
4. Automatic, routine use where students have fully integrated the skill into their behavior repertoire and feel like the skill is a natural action to engage in.

Encourage students to improve continually their teamwork skills by refining, modifying, and adapting them. See Box 9.5 for a recap of the five steps in teaching social skills outlined in this section.

## CREATING COOPERATIVE SITUATIONS IN WHICH SOCIAL SKILLS CAN BE USED

To assess students' social skills, a situation must be created in which students work together to achieve a common goal. Cooperative learning situations are structured so that students can learn social skills and demonstrate their level of mastery of the skills. While the students learn together, you observe to assess the quality and quantity of their use of the targeted social skills. You can adopt the verbal responses to appropriate and inappropriate group work detailed in Activity 9.3.

### ACTIVITY 9.2 ■ MYSTERY PERSON

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1. Inform the class that you will be focusing on one student whose name will be kept secret.
  2. Select a student randomly or select a student who will be a positive role model or who could benefit from some recognition.
  3. Observe during the lesson without revealing whom you are observing.
  4. Describe to the whole class what the person did (frequency data) without naming the person.
  5. Ask students to guess who the mystery person is.
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**BOX 9.5****FIVE STEPS OF TEACHING SOCIAL SKILLS**

STEPS IN TEACHING A SKILL	TEACHER ACTIONS
Step 1. Establish the need for the skill.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students choose needed skills.</li> <li>2. You choose and persuade.</li> <li>3. Role play the absence of skill.</li> </ol>
Step 2. Define the skill.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Define with T-chart.</li> <li>2. Demonstrate, model, explain.</li> </ol>
Step 3. Guide practice of the skill.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assign the social skill as a role.</li> <li>2. Record frequency and quality of use.</li> <li>3. Periodically cue the skill.</li> </ol>
Step 4. Guide feedback and reflection.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Structure feedback sessions.</li> <li>2. Structure reflection (processing).</li> </ol>
Step 5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 repeatedly.	Emphasize continued improvement while proceeding through the stages of skill development.

**INTERVENING TO IMPROVE USE OF SOCIAL SKILLS**

While observing students engage in learning activities, you may see patterns of behavior interfering with learning or teamwork. You may then wish to intervene for the following reasons:

1. To correct misunderstandings or misconceptions about task instructions and the academic concepts and procedures being learned
2. To correct the absence, incorrect use, or inappropriate use of interpersonal, small group, and cognitive skills
3. To reinforce, encourage, and celebrate the appropriate or competent use of skills and procedures

Teachers decide when and at what level they want to intervene:

1. Should I intervene now or wait for group processing time? You may want to stop the group's work and intervene immediately, or you may want to wait until processing time and then intervene.
2. Should I intervene in this group or should I have the entire class focus on the issue? Sometimes the problem is specific to a group and sometimes it is a generic problem that all groups may be experiencing.

Teachers have to decide how to intervene effectively. Ineffective or weak interventions include (a) telling students how to be more effective, (b) solving the problem for the group, (c) rescuing floundering groups. Instead, you should highlight the problem for the group to solve and guide them to a solution that they themselves discover and implement (see Box 9.6). You teach students how to diagnose and solve their problems in group functioning by

1. Using the language or terms relevant to the learning. Instead of saying, "Yes, that is right," you should say something more specific to the assignment, such

**ACTIVITY 9.3 ■ IDEAS FOR MONITORING AND INTERVENING**

Check for...	If Present...	If Absent...
Members seated closely together	"Good seating."	"Draw your chairs closer together."
Group has correct materials and are on correct page	"Good, you are all ready."	"Get what you need—I will watch."
Students who are assigned roles are doing them	"Good! You're doing your jobs."	"Who is supposed to do what?"
Groups have started task	Good! You've started.	"Let me see you get started. Do you need any help?"
Cooperative skills being used (in general)	"Good group! Keep up the good work!"	"What skills would help here? What should you be doing?"
A specific cooperative skill being used	"Good encouraging! Good paraphrasing!"	"Who can encourage Lamar? Repeat in your own words what Lamar just said."
Academic work being done well	"You are following the procedure for this assignment. Good group!"	"You need more extensive answers. Let me explain how to do this again."
Members ensuring individual accountability	"You're making sure everyone understands. Good work!"	"Juan, show me how to do #1. Keisha, explain why the group chose this answer."
Reluctant students involved	"I'm glad to see everyone participating."	"I'm going to ask Helen to explain #4. Get her ready and I will be back."
Members explaining to each other what they are learning and their reasoning processes	"Great explanations! Keep it up."	"I want each of you to take a problem and explain to me step by step how to solve it."

Check for...	If Present...	If Absent...
Group cooperating with other groups	"I'm glad you're helping the other groups. Good citizenship!"	"Each of you go to another group and share your answer to #6."
One member dominating	"Everyone is participating equally. Great group!"	"Sarah, you are the first to answer every time. Could you be the accuracy checker?"
Groups that have finished	"Your work looks good. Now do the activity written on the board."	"You are being very thorough, but time is almost up. Let's speed up."
Group working effectively	"Your group is working so well. What behaviors are helping you?"	"Tell me what is wrong in the way this group is working. Let's make three plans to solve the problem."

#### BOX 9.6

#### INTERVENING IN COOPERATIVE LEARNING GROUPS

- **O** Observe.
- **IDQ** Intervene by sharing data and/or asking a question.
- **SP** Have students process and plan how they will take care of an issue.
- **BTW** Tell students to go back to work.

as, "Yes, that is one way to find the main idea of a paragraph." Using the more specific statement reinforces the desired learning and promotes positive transfer by helping students associate a term with their learning.

2. Interviewing members of a cooperative learning group about their reasoning processes. Ask,
  - a. "What are you doing?"
  - b. "Why are you doing it?"
  - c. "How will it help you?"
3. Showing group members the observation data and asking them to identify the problem. Often just the awareness of the recorded information (for example, showing data that indicates group members are not sharing or helping) will get group members back on the right track.
4. Guiding them towards several alternative courses of action when group members cannot identify a clear procedure to correct the problem. Highlighting a problem may only create helplessness, demoralization, and frustration if students believe

nothing can be done to solve it. In such a case, giving them several strategies will empower them.

5. Joining the group and
  - a. Having group members set aside their task ("pencils down, close your books")
  - b. Point out the problem ("Here is what I observed")
  - c. Asking them to create three possible solutions
  - d. Asking them to decide which solution they are going to try first
6. Having students role play the situation and practice new behaviors that can solve the problem

## ASSESSING KNOWLEDGE OF SOCIAL SKILLS

To assess students' knowledge about the social skills being taught, objective tests may be given. Such a test on leadership skills is provided in Activity 9.4.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL SKILLS MASTERY

A self-diagnosis questionnaire for leadership skills is provided in Activity 9.5. Students complete a checklist or questionnaire about their actions in the group to assess how often and how well they individually performed the targeted social skill and other small group skills. Students can diagnose the level of their social skills in at least two ways. You may have students complete a self-diagnosis questionnaire or engage in a learning activity as a participant-observer to diagnose their social skills.

Each group member can complete a checklist or questionnaire. The focus of the questions could be on what the member did (*I, me*), what other members did (*you, they*), or what all members did (*we*). Self-assessments ("I" statements) are gathered from group members about how often and how well they individually performed the targeted social skills and other expected behaviors. The "you" statements give students an opportunity to give other group members feedback about which actions were perceived as helpful or unhelpful. The "we" statements provide an opportunity for group members to reach consensus about which actions helped or hurt the group's work. The results are used to help analyze how well group members worked together. For each question the frequencies can be summed and divided by the number of members to derive an average.

Or each group member can publicly share his or her answers in a "whip." The group whips through members' answers, one question at a time, by giving each group member 30 seconds to share his or her answer to each question with no comment allowed from other group members.

A third procedure is having each group member name actions he or she performed that helped the group function more effectively, and then name one action the member to his or her right (or left) performed that also helped the group. Another procedure is to have students (a) complete the self-assessment, (b) engage in a cooperative learning activity in which they have the opportunity to use the skills (the activity is observed and feedback is given to each student), and (c) compare their self-perceptions of how they used the skills with the data gathered by the observer on how they actually behaved in the situation.

## SETTING GOALS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Group members need to set goals for improving their competence in engaging in social skills during the next group meeting. Members discuss the goals and publicly

## ACTIVITY 9.4 ■ TEST FOR UNDERSTANDING FUNCTIONING (LEADERSHIP) SKILLS

Task and maintenance leadership skills are listed in column 1; statements that reflect expressing the skills appear in column 2. For each task or maintenance action, indicate which statement (a through j) expresses it.

Task Actions	Task Statements
_____ 1. Information and opinion giver	a. "Julie, my understanding of you is that you are suggesting that we define the problem before we try to solve it."
_____ 2. Information and opinion seeker	b. "How about giving our report on yoga while standing on our heads?"
_____ 3. Direction and role definer	c. "Dale thinks we should play football, Jose thinks we should go to lunch, and Tai believes we should write a story."
_____ 4. Summarizer	d. "I think we should help resolve the conflict between David and Linda."
_____ 5. Energizer	e. "George Washington was the first president of the United States and, in my opinion, the best one."
_____ 6. Checker for understanding	f. "Francene has not said anything for the past 5 minutes. Is there a problem?"
Maintenance Actions	Maintenance Statements
_____ 7. Encourager of participation	g. "That is an important insight Roger. It indicates you have really worked hard on the homework."
_____ 8. Communication facilitator	h. "Fire up! We can find a good solution. Let's put a little more effort into it."
_____ 9. Tension reliever	i. "Frank, explain to us step by step how to solve question 12."
_____ 10. Process observer	j. "We should first define the problem and second suggest solutions. We can then decide which solution to adopt."

(continued)

**ACTIVITY 9.4** *Continued*

Maintenance Actions	Maintenance Statements
_____ 11. Interpersonal problem solver	k. "Jim, do you know who the fourth president of the United States is and what he is famous for?"
_____ 12. Supporter and praiser	l. "Meisong, I would like to hear what you think about this; you have good ideas."

Answers: 1. e, 2. k, 3. j, 4. c, 5. h, 6. i, 7. l, 8. a, 9. b, 10. f, 11. d, 12. g.

commit to achieving them. The observer helps the group set a growth goal by asking, "What could you add to be even a better group tomorrow than you were today?" The continual improvement of students' competencies and group effectiveness is emphasized. The procedures for setting goals are detailed in Chapter 2. A goal-setting form is included at the end of this chapter.

**REPORTING ON STUDENTS' SOCIAL SKILLS**

Besides reporting the results on assessing students' social skills to students during and immediately following the lesson to help students improve their skills, periodic summaries of students' social skills may need to be reported to other interested stakeholders, such as parents and potential employers. Students, for example, will want to include data on their social and teamwork skills in their portfolios and discuss them in student-led conferences and employment interviews. Teachers may summarize social skill data on charts and graphs, write a narrative on each student's social skills, or complete a checklist for a parent conference or report card. An example of a social skills report card is given at the end of this chapter.

**SUMMARY**

One of the most important student performances to assess is students' social competence. **Social competence** is having the consequences of your actions match your intentions. Your social competence is determined by your ability to use social skills appropriately in interactions with others. One of the most useful ways of classifying social skills is to divide them into forming, functioning, formulating, and fermenting skills. Assessing social skills is important as they largely determine personal development and identity, employability and career success, quality of life, physical health, psychological health, and ability to cope with stress. The inability to relate to others stunts growth, sparks failure, makes life meaningless, kills, creates anxiety and depression, and makes one more fragile, lost in the past, and inhumane.

The assessment of social skills consists of several steps. First, you review the assumptions underlying the teaching of social skills. Social skills must be learned. Every cooperative lesson is a lesson in social skills as well as academics. You must



## ACTIVITY 9.5 ■ UNDERSTANDING YOUR LEADERSHIP ACTIONS QUESTIONNAIRE

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A group member provides leadership any time he or she engages in an action that (a) helps the group complete its task or (b) helps the group maintain effective working relationships among its members. When you are a member of a group, which leadership actions do you engage in? How do you influence other group members to complete the task and work together effectively?

### RANKING THE QUALITY OF YOUR LEADERSHIP ACTIONS

Each of the following items describes the quality of a leadership action. For each leadership action listed below, rank from 1 to 5 the quality of that action using the following scale.

- |                                       |                                 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 5 if you always behave that way       | 2 if you seldom behave that way |
| 4 if you frequently behave that way   | 1 if you never behave that way  |
| 3 if you occasionally behave that way |                                 |

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I offer facts and give my opinions, ideas, feelings, and information to help the group discussion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I warmly encourage all members of the group to participate. I am open to their ideas. I let them know I value their contributions to the group.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I ask for facts, information, opinions, ideas, and feelings from the other group members in order to help the group discussion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. I help communication among group members by using good communication skills. I make sure that each group member understands what the others say.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I give direction to the group by planning how to go on with the group work and by calling attention to tasks that need to be done. I assign responsibilities to different group members.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I tell jokes and suggest interesting ways of doing the work to reduce tension in the group and to increase the fun we have working together.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I pull together related ideas or suggestions made by group members and restate and summarize the major points discussed by the group.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. I observe the way the group is working and use my observations to help discuss how the group can work together better.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I give the group energy. I encourage group members to work hard to achieve our goals.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. I promote the open discussion of conflicts among group members to resolve disagreements and to increase group cohesiveness. I mediate conflicts among members when they seem unable to resolve them directly.

(continued)

**ACTIVITY 9.5** *Continued*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. I ask others to summarize what the group has been discussing to ensure that they understand group decisions and comprehend the material being discussed by the group.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. I express support, acceptance, and liking for other members of the group and give appropriate praise when another member has taken a constructive action in the group.

**SCORING THE QUALITY OF YOUR LEADERSHIP ACTIONS**

Each numbered item below corresponds to the leadership actions in the list above. The actions are categorized as task actions or maintenance actions. To obtain a total score for task actions and maintenance actions, write the score for each item in the appropriate column and then add the columns.

**TASK ACTIONS**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Information and opinion giver
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Information and opinion seeker
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Direction and role definer
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Summarizer
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Energizer
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Comprehension checker
- \_\_\_\_\_ Total for task actions

**MAINTENANCE ACTIONS**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Encourager of participation
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Communication facilitator
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Tension reliever
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Process observer
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Interpersonal problem solver
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Supporter and praiser
- \_\_\_\_\_ Total for maintenance actions
- 

understand which social skills to teach and how to teach them. When teaching social skills, be specific, start small, and emphasize overlearning.

Second, you teach students each social skill. You show the need for the skill, define it with a T-chart, set up practice situations in which students can use the skill, ensure that students receive feedback on their use of the skill and reflect on how to improve, and ensure that students persevere in practicing the skill until it becomes automatic.

Third, as part of teaching students social skills, you structure cooperative learning situations so students can use social skills and you can observe them doing so. Fourth, you intervene in the cooperative learning groups to ensure that members are using social skills appropriately and to reinforce them for doing so. Fifth, you facilitate students' self-diagnoses of their level of mastery of the targeted social skills. Students can complete checklists or questionnaires to do so.

Sixth, you assign students the task of setting improvement goals to increase their social competence. Seventh, you assess students' knowledge of social skills. Finally, you report on the level of students' social skills to interested stakeholders, such as students, parents, and potential employers.

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### CONTINUALLY IMPROVING MY SOCIAL SKILLS

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Skills Targeted	Checklist	Questionnaire	Observed Behavior
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

Conclusions:

Plan for improving my social skills:

The timeline for achieving my goals:

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## SOCIAL SKILLS REPORT FORM

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### DIRECTIONS:

For each of the social skills below, rank the student's performance using the following scale:

*N* = Needs improvement    *P* = Making progress    *S* = Satisfactory    *E* = Excellent

#### Cooperative Attitude (Forming) Skills

- \_\_\_\_\_ Moves into group quietly
- \_\_\_\_\_ Stays with group; no wandering
- \_\_\_\_\_ Uses quiet voice in group work
- \_\_\_\_\_ Takes turns
- \_\_\_\_\_ Uses others' names
- \_\_\_\_\_ Respects rights of others
- \_\_\_\_\_ Positive about working in group
- \_\_\_\_\_ Is willing to help others
- \_\_\_\_\_ Follows directions
- \_\_\_\_\_ Shows courtesy toward others

#### Leadership (Functioning) Skills

- \_\_\_\_\_ Clarifies goals
- \_\_\_\_\_ Gives direction to group's work
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contributes ideas, opinions
- \_\_\_\_\_ Requests others' ideas, opinions
- \_\_\_\_\_ Summarizes, integrates
- \_\_\_\_\_ Encourages others' participation
- \_\_\_\_\_ Supports; gives recognition, praise
- \_\_\_\_\_ Paraphrases
- \_\_\_\_\_ Facilitates communication
- \_\_\_\_\_ Relieves tension

#### Facilitating Understanding (Formulating) Skills

- \_\_\_\_\_ Summarizes, integrates
- \_\_\_\_\_ Seeks accuracy (corrects)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Relates new learning to old
- \_\_\_\_\_ Helps group recall knowledge
- \_\_\_\_\_ Checks for understanding
- \_\_\_\_\_ Makes covert reasoning overt

#### Intellectual Challenge (Fermenting) Skills

- \_\_\_\_\_ Criticizes ideas, not people
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Differentiates members' ideas
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Integrates members' ideas
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Asks for rationale, justification
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Extends others' reasoning
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Probes, asks complex questions
-

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## WORK HABITS AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT FORM

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### DIRECTIONS:

For each of the work habits below, rank the student's performance using the following scale:

*N* = Needs improvement    *P* = Making progress    *S* = Satisfactory    *E* = Excellent

Work Habits	October	February	May	Total
____ Completes work on time				
____ Uses time wisely				
____ Checks work				
____ Welcomes challenges				
____ Listens carefully				
____ Takes risks in learning				
____ Makes effort needed				
____ Meets responsibilities				
____ Strives for high-quality work				
____ Appropriately asks for help				
____ Appropriately uses materials				
____ Participates in discussions				
____ Seeks extra credit, extensions				
____ Follows rules				

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