

# Social Thinking for General Education Students

Integrating Social Thinking Into the General Education Setting

Sharon Bradley, School Psychologist  
[Sharon.Bradley@rsd.edu](mailto:Sharon.Bradley@rsd.edu)  
 Katie Pardini, School Psychologist  
[Katie.Pardini@rsd.edu](mailto:Katie.Pardini@rsd.edu)  
 Kelly Bolson, Behavior Interventionist  
[Kelly.Bolson@rsd.edu](mailto:Kelly.Bolson@rsd.edu)

## Learning Objectives

- ▶ Learn the difference between social skills and social thinking
- ▶ Learn basic social thinking vocabulary
- ▶ Learn how to apply social thinking concepts to everyday classroom lessons

## What is Social Thinking?

- ▶ Social Thinking is a curriculum designed to:
  - help students develop understanding of social relations and communities
  - learn to decode and encode related social skills
- ▶ The strategies teach individuals:
  - How their own social minds work – why they react and respond the way they do
  - The behaviors that make others feel good and bad
  - How these behaviors are affecting their own emotions, responses to and relationships with others across different social contexts

## What is Social Thinking?

- ▶ The objectives of these strategies include the ability to:
  - Recognize the different levels of their own and others' social minds
  - Navigate their behaviors while considering how others perceive and respond to them
  - Adapt to the people and situations around them – even in casual settings (hanging out, etc.)

## What is Social Thinking?

- ▶ Core philosophies:
  - We “think with our eyes”
  - Thoughts and emotions are connected
  - We think about people all the time
  - We avoid other’s “weird thoughts”
  - Constantly evolving
  - Always using Social Thinking
  - Follows us into adulthood

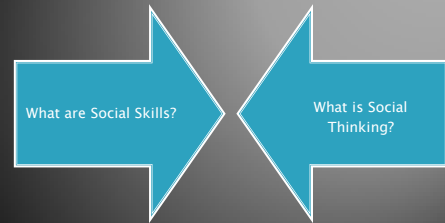
## Benefits for the Classroom

- ▶ Doesn't make students stand out
- ▶ Creates a basic level of social expectation and vocabulary (Tier 1)
- ▶ Reinforces perspective taking
- ▶ Supports reading comprehension
- ▶ Increases appropriate behavior in a group
- ▶ Increases ability to apply social concepts in novel situations

## ST Across the Tiers

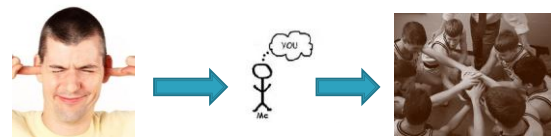
- ▶ Tier 1 – all students receive instruction in vocabulary and behavioral expectations
- ▶ Tier 2– small groups for additional instruction in social thinking for target population
- ▶ Tier 3– additional instruction in social thinking, individual or small group, possible individual behavior management plan

## Social what?



Social Skills Approach	Social Thinking Approach
We teach students particular behavioral sets; tell kids what to do, and expect them to go and do it	We understand that our kids cannot produce the skills because they lack the social knowledge that helps them understand the purpose of the social skills
Eye contact is expected; students are taught to “look at me”	Eye contact is used to teach understanding of eye gaze to figure out what others are thinking

## A Continuum of Abilities



## Basic Vocabulary *Behavior in a Group*

- ▶ **Expected and Unexpected Behavior**
- ▶ Expected = behaviors that make others feel safe or have good thoughts about you
- ▶ Unexpected = behaviors that lead to “weird” thoughts about you.
- ▶ “Hidden” expectations for behavior in a group.
- ▶ Typical children learn intuitively. Others need direct instruction.
- ▶ **Applications**– Teach To’s, processing behaviors with students (i.e. refocus forms).

## Basic Vocabulary *Feelings connect to Thoughts*

- ▶ **“You can change my feelings”.**
- ▶ Others are thinking about us constantly
- ▶ Our behaviors affect how others feel. We can help keep others feeling positive and having good thoughts by choosing expected behaviors.
- ▶ **Applications:** Refocus forms, processing behaviors, giving direct feedback when student behaviors affect your feelings about a student.

## Basic Vocabulary *Problem Solving*

- ▶ **Big Problem vs. Little Problem**
- ▶ Problems require different reactions, emotions and solutions based on their size.
- ▶ Determine the size of the problem (1-5)
- ▶ Emotional responses and reactions should correspond ("expected")
- ▶ Applications: Processing problems, playground monitors, catching escalating behaviors
- ▶ The Incredible 5 Point Scale (uses are many)

Rating	Type of Problem	Possible Responses
<b>5 (RED)</b>	Catastrophe Brother gets hurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Might cry or yell</li> <li>• Take a few deep breaths</li> <li>• Go to a person who can help me now</li> </ul>
<b>4 (ORANGE)</b>	Big Problem • Argument with family member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a few deep breaths</li> <li>• Take a break</li> <li>• Say to myself, "I can get help with this."</li> </ul>
<b>3 (YELLOW)</b>	Medium Problem • Lost homework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a few deep breaths</li> <li>• Take a break</li> <li>• Say to myself, "I had this problem before. I can work it out."</li> </ul>
<b>2 (BLUE)</b>	Little Problem (Annoyance) • Missing lego	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a few deep breaths</li> <li>• Take a break</li> <li>• Say to myself: "I can get through this"</li> </ul>
<b>1 (GREEN)</b>	Glitch • Friend is late coming over	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a few deep breaths</li> <li>• Say to myself, "It's OK", "It's a glitch", "Oh well"</li> </ul>

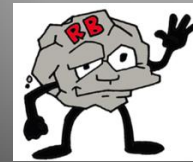
## Basic Vocabulary *Staying On Topic*

- ▶ **Whopping Topic Change:** When a comment is made and the listener cannot determine the thread of information that connects this comment to what was previously said, thereby providing a response that is off topic or so far removed from the main concept that it is off topic.
- ▶ **Topic Twister Meister**



## Basic Vocabulary *Coping*

- ▶ Flexible Thinking (vs. Rock Thinking)
- ▶ Flexible: "Moves" their brain around the problem. Thinks of solutions while thinking of others
- ▶ Rock: Only thinks of themselves, can't move brain around the problem.
- ▶ Rock Brain– One of the Superflex "Unthinkables".



## Basic Vocabulary *Clues to Understanding*

- ▶ **Whole Body Listening**
- ▶ Listening is more than hearing words.
- ▶ Hidden social rules-keeping thoughts about us positive
- ▶ **Keeping Eyes, Body, Brain in the Group** to listen and figure out what others are thinking (all 3 are needed).



## Basic Vocabulary *Hidden Curriculum*

- ▶ **Social Fake:** Demonstrate an interest in someone else's topic that you do not find inherently fascinating by looking interested and adding your thoughts to the conversation.
- ▶ **Boring Moment:** A set of socially acceptable behaviors that one uses when he is not interested in what the group is doing at that moment.



## The Unthinkables

- ▶ Superflex: A Social Thinking SuperHero Curriculum
- ▶ Superflex (SuperHero)
- ▶ "Unthinkables"
  - Glassman
  - Rock Brain
  - Space Invader
- ▶ Applications: Create your own "unthinkable" character and ways to "defeat" them.
- ▶ Examples of new "unthinkables": Blurt Kurt, Unpersistent Penny, High Head, Purrfectocat
- ▶ Connect to character traits in reading



## Strategies for Classroom Teachers

- Blurting
- The Know-It-All
- Hygiene Issues
- Black and White Thinkers
- The Arguer (monopolizing conversations and class time)

## Strategies for Classroom Teachers

- ▶ **Blurting:** Say, "Whoops! It's not your turn to talk right now." Then move on. The more attention you give it the longer it will last and the less other kids are learning.
- ▶ **The Know-It-All:** Let them know right off the bat that they will get to answer one question today so that all the other students will have a chance to share their learning too.
- ▶ **Poor Hygiene:** A referral to the School Nurse or Case Manager may be appropriate.
- ▶ **Black and White Thinkers:** Give choices.
- ▶ **The Arguer:** Know their bottom line. For example, if you know that this particular student wants to become an architect, you could remind them that being argumentative is not a desirable trait to most bosses.

## Strategies for Classroom Teachers

- Communicate behaviors you are seeing in your classroom with the Case Manager and/or School Psychologist.
- If it's applicable in your building, refer the student to a Social Thinking group.
- Be patient. Be consistent.

## GLAD Strategies

- ▶ **Interactive Journal**
  - Give students a safe place to open up
  - Reinforce social thinking concepts
  - "Was this a big problem or a little problem?"
  - "Did your behavior make anyone think weird thoughts about you?"
- ▶ **Teacher Made Big Book**
  - Reinforce social thinking concepts
  - "The most important thing to remember is...."

## GLAD Strategies

- ▶ **Chant about Social Skills**
  - Reinforce social thinking concepts and vocabulary
- ▶ **Personal Interaction**
  - Demonstrates that words and actions matter
  - "Suzy's Heart"
- ▶ **T Graph for Social Skills**
  - Reinforce expected vs. unexpected behavior
  - What does it look like and what does it sound like?

## Guidelines for Teaching

- ▶ Do not assume prior social knowledge
- ▶ Realize students will have different abilities in perspective taking.
- ▶ Use vocabulary in the classroom and with all students.
- ▶ Share vocabulary with all adults working with the students, including parents (newsletter?)
- ▶ Realize deficits in language: inference, idioms, metaphors, indirect language.
- ▶ Allow for Boring Moments and Uncomfortable Situations.

## Final Thoughts

- ▶ Write down one idea that you can take back to your classroom
- ▶ Name one person in your building that can support your application of social thinking concepts
- ▶ Be prepared to share!

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- ▶ *Thinking About YOU Thinking about ME* by Michelle Garcia Winner
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- ▶ *Should I or Shouldn't I? What Would Others Think?* By Dominique Baudry. A game to encourage Social Thinking and social problem solving
- ▶ *SuperFlex: A Superhero Social Thinking Curriculum* by Stephanie Madrigal and Michelle Garcia Winner
- ▶ Project GLAD

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- ▶ *Social Thinking Worksheets for Tweens and Teens: Learning to Read In-Between the Social Lines* by Michelle Garcia Winner
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