

## Problem-Solving

**Objective:** To teach social skills (**listening, problem-solving, and negotiating**) in cooperative learning groups using teacher-directed instruction for students with disabilities.

## Setting and Materials

**Setting:** Conducted in a middle school setting. Desks are positioned in a circle in the middle of the classroom.

**Materials:**

1. Materials include a task analysis of each skill, test score sheets, skill sheets for each student, and role-play situations.
2. Task analysis, score sheets, and skill sheets are modeled after those used in ASSET (Hazel, Schumaker, Sherman, & Sheldon-Wildgen, 1981a).

## Content Taught

The following three skills are targeted for social skill instruction based on survey results comparing teacher and student ratings of importance:

1. Listening skills
2. Problem solving skills
3. Negotiating skills
4. The steps for **listening** included the nonverbal skills of:
  - a) facing the person with shoulders parallel to each other
  - b) making eye contact at least 50% of the time
  - c) using a normal facial expression that is relaxed
  - d) standing up straight with weight on both feet and shoulders back, or sitting up straight
  - e) staying near the person (within 3 feet)
  - f) appropriate responses such as head nods
  - g) responding to the person or asking for clarification, not interrupting, and being sincere

5. The steps developed by Hazel et al. (1981a) for **problem solving** include:
  - a) remaining calm
  - b) deciding on the nature of the problem
  - c) determining a solution
  - d) determining a second solution
  - e) determining a third solution
  - f) naming the pros and cons of the first solution
  - g) naming the pros and cons of the second solution
  - h) naming the pros and cons of the third solution
  - i) choosing a solution (the one with the most pros and the least cons)
  - j) deciding on a plan
  - k) if the first solution does not work, trying the second solution
  
6. The task analysis of **negotiating** is modified from Quinn, Sherman, Sheldon-Wildgen, Quinn, and Harcheck (1992). The same nonverbal skills used in listening are involved but also the following steps:
  - a) asking if you can talk with the person
  - b) stating what you want
  - c) giving a reason
  - d) if the response is negative, asking for a solution
  - e) if the response is negative, proposing a compromise
  - f) thanking the person for listening
  - g) remaining calm
  - h) not using any put-downs
  - i) not interrupting

## **Teaching Procedure**

### **Teacher-Directed Instruction of Social Skills**

Direct instruction is given for the three social skills modeled after those used in ASSET: A Social Skills Program for Adolescents (Hazel et al., 1981a).

The following elements are included in the instruction:

1. Students are asked to describe the skill, give a rationale for learning the skill, and discuss if and where they had used the skill before.
2. The teacher models the skill steps.
3. The students are asked to memorize each skill step with the help of a skills sheet (a written list of the skill steps).
4. The students are prompted to memorize one skill step at a time until all skill steps are memorized.
5. A practice session is conducted until each student reaches 100% criterion in demonstrating all steps of the skill on a novel role-play situation.
6. Each instructional session is to last 50 minutes.
7. Throughout, testing sessions are conducted.
8. These sessions consist of asking the students to recall the steps and demonstrate them in novel role-play situations.
9. Once students have mastered at least 80% of the first skill during testing sessions, the second skill is taught.
10. Likewise, the third skill is taught after the students have mastered at least 80% of the second skill during testing.
11. Each skill takes two to three testing sessions for each student to reach the 80% criterion.

### **Method of Evaluation**

1. Demonstration of skills in novel role-play situations.
2. Skill performance is scored according to the socially validated skill steps from ASSET (Hazel et al., 1981a)

3. Students are asked to rate their peers on a scale of 1 to 4 by identifying the phrase that best describes how they feel toward that peer (1=did not like, 2=liked a little, 3=liked, 4=liked very much).

**Lesson Plan Based on:**

Prater, M.A., Bruhl, S., & Serna, L.A. (1998). Acquiring social skills through cooperative learning and teacher-directed instruction. Remedial and Special Education, 19, 160-172.

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