

SOCIALIZATION – What’s It All About?

Socialization is an aspect of education, and educational benefit, far too often ignored by school districts and IEP teams to the detriment of a child’s short term well-being and long-term happiness.

This is a result of the notion or mistaken belief that “education” relates only to academics, and the failure to recognize that as children progress through their education the academic curriculum is increasingly delivered in and through cooperative/collaborative groups, which require ALL students to learn to communicate and work with each other, as well as understand, tolerate and accept one another. (See NICHCY article “Social Skills and Academic Achievement,” below). Best practices and IDEA’s “Findings and Purpose,” including the principle of “least restrictive environment” (LRE),¹ contemplate schooling delivered using an inclusive, community-based model.

IDEA’s “Findings and Purpose” recognizes the importance of students with disabilities integrating into their school communities and communities at large and receiving a free appropriate public education emphasizing special education and related services, not only to meet their unique needs, but to prepare them for further education, employment and independent living in the community. (See 20 U.S.C. §1400 et seq., IDEA’s “Findings and Purpose” excerpted below which support the integration of socialization into the overall school-wide curriculum and program of students with disabilities, and which recognizes that socialization and tolerance/acceptance curriculum and activities not only provides educational benefit to students with disabilities, but to their typical peers. See also excerpted regulations beginning at 34 CFR § 300.1)

IDEA’s definition of a “child with a disability” (see 34 CFR §300.8 excerpted below) and an **“infant or toddler with a disability”** (see 34 CFR §300.25 excerpted below) reference all aspects of a child’s disability, including behavioral, socialization impact and issues that derive from same, including language and communication and how well students get along with their peers (or don’t get along), communicate and integrate (or don’t integrate) into one’s school community and the community at large. **IT IS NOT LIMITED TO ACADEMICS!** The definition of “child with a disability” goes into specifics with regard to children with developmental delay and autism, who best practices show are typically identified as in need of social interventions.

¹ The concept of LRE itself shows the importance of socialization interaction, for it states (5) Least restrictive environment.-- (A) In general.--To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

IDEA’s definition of “related services” (34 CFR §300.34) includes recreation and therapeutic recreation, as well as “(10) Psychological services” which includes “(iii) obtaining, integrating, and interpreting information about child behavior and conditions relating to learning; (iv) Consulting with other staff members in planning school programs to meet the special educational needs of children as indicated by psychological tests, interviews, direct observation, and behavioral evaluations; (v) Planning and managing a program of psychological services, including psychological counseling for children and parents; and (vi) Assisting in developing positive behavioral intervention strategies.” All such services really relate to and support socialization interventions. Also, “social work services” is defined as “(iii) working in partnership with parents and others on those problems in a child's living situation (home, school, and community) that affect the child's adjustment in school; (iv) Mobilizing school and community resources to enable the child to learn as effectively as possible in his or her educational program; and (v) Assisting in developing positive behavioral intervention strategies.” This language clearly supports socialization interventions a child needs to learn effectively as possible in his or her educational program. (See 34 CFR §300.34 excerpted below).

IDEA’s evaluation process alludes to a child’s need to be assessed in ALL areas related to the suspected disability, including “social” and “communicative” status, which can clearly be construed as related to a child’s ability to socially interact and communicate. (See 34 CFR §300.304(c)(4) excerpted below). If a child is to be assessed in “all areas of suspected disability” it goes without saying that whatever needs are identified need to be addressed to ensure progress.

IDEA’s IEP process, in its implementing regulations and comments, specifically discusses “special factors” the IEP team “must” consider in the development, review and revision of the IEP. (See 34 CFR §300.324) In the case of a child whose behavior is impeding his or her learning or that of others, the IEP team must consider the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports, and other strategies to address that behavior. (34 CFR §300.324(a)(2)(i)). Clearly, a child with socialization challenges is having his/her behavior affect learning. The regulations also require consideration of the communication needs of the child. (34 CFR §300.324(a)(2)(iv)). Unfortunately, some school districts believe that considering these issues means it is sufficient to talk about and then ignore them in documenting interventions in the IEP. Again, this is often because, as parents soon discover, districts don’t believe they are obligated to address anything other than “academics”.

NOTICE!! The U.S. Department of Education’s comments issued August 14, 2006 as guidance when IDEA 2004 regulations were issued provides clarifying language regarding 34 CFR §300.324, clearly stating that socialization interventions are contemplated as part of a student’s overall education. The Department’s comments for 34 CFR 300.324 – Development, Review and Revision of IEP (excerpted below) stated:

“In addition, § 300.324(a)(1)(iv) requires the IEP Team to consider, for all children with disabilities, the academic, developmental, and functional needs of the child, which could include, as appropriate, the child’s need to develop skills in the areas of socialization, independent living, and orientation and mobility. (See comments at Fed Register, Vol. 71, No. 156, at page 46684).

A Few Case Law Citations related to Socialization

The following are citations to case law which show how courts have interpreted “educational benefit” as not limited to academic progress, but to include other aspects of disability.

County of San Diego v. California Special Education Hearing Office, 93 F.3d 1458 (9th Cir. 1996):

"educational benefit is not limited to academic needs, but includes the social and emotional needs that affect academic progress, school behavior and socialization."

Seattle School District No. 1 v. B.S., 82 F.3d 1493, 1500 (9th Cir. 1996):

"everyone agrees that A.S. is exceptionally bright and thus able to test appropriate on standardized tests. This is not the sine qua non of 'educational benefit,' however. The term 'unique educational needs' [shall] be broadly construed to include academic, social, health, emotional, communicative, physical and vocational needs."

Babb V. Knox County Sch. System, 965 F.2d 104,109 (6th Cir. 1992), cert.denied, 113 S.Ct. 380:

"education under IDEA encompasses 'both academic instruction and a broad range of associated services traditionally grouped under the general rubric of treatment.'"

Timothy W. v. Rochester School District, 875 F.2d 954, 962 (1st Cir. 1989), cert. denied, 493 U.S. 983:

'the Act's concept of special education is broad, encompassing not only traditional cognitive skills, but basic functional skills as well.'

Kruelle v. New Castle County School District, 642 F.2d 687, 693-94 (3rd Cir.1981):

"the concept of education is necessarily broad [w]here basic self-help skills..are lacking, formal education begins at that point."

Mr. & Mrs. I v. Maine School Administrative District 55:

"The only reason the PET did not find L.I. IDEA-eligible was because of its unfounded belief that academic performance had to be affected." "Need for special education can exist in any area of educational performance adversely affected by the disability, not just academics[For example,] attendance and behavior are educational performance that must be addressed despite good academic performance. They are not merely means to the end of academic achievement, but are themselves educational ends."

Other Resources re: Socialization

NICHCY stands for the *National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities* and serves the nation as a central source of information on:

- disabilities in infants, toddlers, children, and youth,
- IDEA, which is the law authorizing special education,
- No Child Left Behind (as it relates to children with disabilities), and
- research-based information on effective educational practices.

NICHCY provides information which specifically ties social skills to academic skills and progress. <http://www.nichcy.org/research/evidenceforeducation/pages/socialskillsintro.aspx>

[Note: the left hand bar on this page has extensive information for parents about all aspects of educating children with disabilities, including best practices, legal issues, etc.]

NICHCY also provides a PDF booklet on Social Skills and Academic Achievement at:

http://www.nichcy.org/Research/EvidenceForEducation/Documents/NICHCY_EE_Social_skills.pdf

TEACHING TOLERANCE – A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center – provides resources for teachers, parents, etc., related to tolerance and acceptance aimed at race, disability, etc.

<http://www.tolerance.org/index.jsp>

Classroom Activities

<http://www.tolerance.org/teach/activities/index.jsp>

Kits and Handbooks

<http://www.tolerance.org/teach/resources/index.jsp>

Article entitled “Does This Child Have a Friend?”

<http://www.tolerance.org/teach/rintar.jsp?p=0&ar=844&pi=ttm>

WWW.SOCIALTHINKING.COM - developed by Michelle Garcia Winner focused on the importance of social thinking (part of the core deficit in children who struggle with social understanding, often due to language-based learning challenges).

The website lists the following accessible subject matter resources:

- **Introduction**
- **Core Facts & Theories**
- **Academics & Mental Health**
- **Related Diagnoses**
- **The ILAUGH Model**
- **Evaluation & Assessment**
- **Crisis Situations**
- **Treatment**
- **Academic Issues**
- **Adults & Social Thinking**
- **Evidence-Based Practices**
- **Social Thinking At School**
- **Social Thinking Challenges**
- **The Rubber Chicken Story**
- **Social Thinking Fact Sheet**
- **Four Steps of Perspective Taking**
- **Four Steps of Communication**
- **Social Thinking Research**
- **Published Articles**

<http://www.socialthinking.com/what-is-social-thinking/published-articles.html>

(A recent article by Michelle was published in the Third Edition 2008 of “Autism Advocate” entitled “On the Road to Adulthood – You’ve Gotta Be a Social Thinker.”)

SOCIALIZATION

Social rejection is often a problem for learning disabled children. They have trouble interpreting other people's body language and facial expressions, so they can't tell when their classmates are angry or kidding, playing or serious. As a result they often give inappropriate responses that irritate their peers.

- Encourage your child to spend time with peers in controlled situations such as scouting and camps that stress cooperation, not competition.
- Arrange social situations for your youngster. Observe your child with others. Later, use role-playing to teach your child correct behaviors.

<http://www.coping.org/specialneeds/learndis.htm#SOCIALIZATION>

Social Fitness for Students with Asperger's Syndrome **A Classroom-Based Program for Secondary Schools**

<http://www.asha.org/about/publications/leader-online/archives/2007/071226/f071226b.html>

Four Steps to Communicative Competence

<http://www.asha.org/about/publications/leader-online/archives/2007/071226/f071226b2.htm>

Jarvis Clutch - Social Spy

by Melvin D. Levine, M.D., F.A.A.P.
Grades 5–8

Social interactions are often the most stressful aspect of adolescent life. In *Jarvis Clutch—Social Spy*, Dr. Mel Levine teams up with fictitious eighth-grader Jarvis Clutch to offer insight and advice on the middle school social scene. Jarvis's spy notes provide a bird's eye view of the often traumatic social experiences that middle school students are bound to encounter. His wry perspective is alternated with commentary and wisdom from Dr. Levine, who provides an analysis of social situations from an expert's perspective and shares the terminology that students need to understand what it is that makes social interactions so difficult.

The cornerstone of the book is the concept of *social cognition*, or your skills and ability in interacting with others. Through this lens of this concept, students examine the social challenges they face daily at school and at home. At the end of each chapter, discussion questions and "Jarvis Activities," offer an opportunity to continue conversations on social interaction, and a glossary at the end of the books serves as a helpful reference to "tech talk" presented by Dr. Levine. Throughout, the text is peppered with diagrams and hip, modern illustrations to appeal to visual learners. The book concludes with a self-assessment questionnaire that gives students an outlet to evaluate their own social strengths and weaknesses and think about ways to refine their social skills. Guidelines for Use are available.

<http://www.epsbooks.com/dynamic/catalog/series.asp?seriesonly=2620M>

Research, Theory and Articles of Interest

Infusing Tolerance, Diversity, and Social Personal Curriculum into Inclusive Social Studies Classes Using Family Portraits and Contextual Teaching and Learning

In an effort to develop lessons that facilitated acceptance and respect for diversity, family photos were used to initiate a Contextual Teaching and Learning approach that infused tolerance and diversity education along with Social Personal Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals and objectives for students with disabilities in middle school inclusion social studies classes.

<http://escholarship.bc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1077&context=education/tecplus>

Rejection Really Hurts, UCLA Psychologists Find

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2003/10/031010074045.htm>

Social Exclusion Change Brain Function and Can Lead to Poor Decision-making

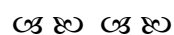
<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2006/11/061108154256.htm>

Social Fitness for Students with Asperger's Syndrome

<http://www.asha.org/about/publications/leader-online/archives/2007/071226/f071226b.html>

Why Choose Separation? By Kathie Snow

<http://ftp.disabilityisnatural.com/articles/documents/Separation.pdf>



Resources compiled by Deborah Blair Porter for
October 27, 2008 Advocates for Special Kids Meeting

IDEA Statute and Regulation Excerpts re: Socialization

20 U.S.C. 1400 (c) Findings.--Congress finds the following: (Excerpted)

(1) Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities.

(5) Almost 30 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by--

(A) having high expectations for such children and ensuring their access to the general education curriculum in the regular classroom, to the maximum extent possible, in order to—

- (i) meet developmental goals and, to the maximum extent possible, the challenging expectations that have been established for all children; and
- (ii) be prepared to lead productive and independent adult lives, to the maximum extent possible;

(D) providing appropriate special education and related services, and aids and supports in the regular classroom, to such children, whenever appropriate;

(E) supporting high-quality, intensive preservice preparation and professional development for all personnel who work with children with disabilities in order to ensure that such personnel have the skills and knowledge necessary to improve the academic achievement and functional performance of children with disabilities, including the use of scientifically based instructional practices, to the maximum extent possible;

(F) providing incentives for whole-school approaches, scientifically based early reading programs, positive behavioral interventions and supports, and early intervening services to reduce the need to label children as disabled in order to address the learning and behavioral needs of such children;

(14) As the graduation rates for children with disabilities continue to climb, providing effective transition services to promote successful post-school employment or education is an important measure of accountability for children with disabilities.

34 CFR Sec. 300.1 Purposes. (Excerpted)

The purposes of this part are-- (a) To ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living; . . .

Sec. 300.8 Child with a disability. (Excerpted)

(a) General. (1) Child with a disability means a child evaluated in accordance with Sec. 300.304 through 300.311 as having mental retardation, a hearing impairment (including deafness), a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disturbance (referred to in this part as "emotional disturbance"), an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, another health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities, and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services. . .

(b) Children aged three through nine experiencing developmental delays. Child with a disability for children aged three through nine (or any subset of that age range, including ages three through five), may, subject to the conditions described in Sec. 300.111(b), include a child--

(1) Who is experiencing developmental delays, as defined by the State and as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures, in one or more of the following areas: Physical development, cognitive development, communication development, social or emotional development, or adaptive development; and

(2) Who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services.

(c) Definitions of disability terms. The terms used in this definition of a child with a disability are defined as follows:

(1)(i) Autism means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences.

(ii) Autism does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance, as defined in paragraph (c)(4) of this section.

(iii) A child who manifests the characteristics of autism after age three could be identified as having autism if the criteria in paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section are satisfied....

300.25 Infant or toddler with a disability. (Excerpted)

Infant or toddler with a disability--

(a) Means an individual under three years of age who needs early intervention services because the individual--

(1) Is experiencing developmental delays, as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures in one or more of the areas of cognitive development, physical development, communication development, social or emotional development, and adaptive development; or

(2) Has a diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay;. . .

Sec. 300.34 Related services. (Excerpted)

(a) General. Related services means transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education, and includes speech-language pathology and audiology services, interpreting services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, including therapeutic recreation, early identification and assessment of disabilities in children, counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling, orientation and mobility services, and medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes. Related services also include school health services and school nurse services, social work services in schools, and parent counseling and training...

(c) Individual related services terms defined. The terms used in this definition are defined as follows:

(1) Audiology includes--

(2) Counseling services means services provided by qualified social workers, psychologists, guidance counselors, or other qualified personnel...

(8)(i) Parent counseling and training means assisting parents in understanding the special needs of their child;

(ii) Providing parents with information about child development; and

(iii) Helping parents to acquire the necessary skills that will allow them to support the implementation of their child's IEP or IFSP...

(10) Psychological services includes--

(i) Administering psychological and educational tests, and other assessment procedures;

(ii) Interpreting assessment results;

(iii) Obtaining, integrating, and interpreting information about child behavior and conditions relating to learning;

(iv) Consulting with other staff members in planning school programs to meet the special educational needs of children as indicated by psychological tests, interviews, direct observation, and behavioral evaluations;

(v) Planning and managing a program of psychological services, including psychological counseling for children and parents; and

(vi) Assisting in developing positive behavioral intervention strategies.

(11) Recreation includes--

(i) Assessment of leisure function;

(ii) Therapeutic recreation services;

(iii) Recreation programs in schools and community agencies; and

(iv) Leisure education.

(12) Rehabilitation counseling services means services provided by qualified personnel in individual or group sessions that focus specifically on career development, employment preparation, achieving independence, and integration in the workplace and community of a student with a disability. The term also includes vocational rehabilitation services provided to a student with a disability by vocational rehabilitation programs funded under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, 29 U.S.C. 701 et seq...

(14) Social work services in schools includes--

(i) Preparing a social or developmental history on a child with a disability;

(ii) Group and individual counseling with the child and family;

(iii) Working in partnership with parents and others on those problems in a child's living situation (home, school, and community) that affect the child's adjustment in school;

(iv) Mobilizing school and community resources to enable the child to learn as effectively as possible in his or her educational program; and

(v) Assisting in developing positive behavioral intervention strategies.

(15) Speech-language pathology services includes--

(i) Identification of children with speech or language impairments;

(ii) Diagnosis and appraisal of specific speech or language impairments;

(iii) Referral for medical or other professional attention necessary for the habilitation of speech or language impairments;

(iv) Provision of speech and language services for the habilitation or prevention of communicative impairments; and

(v) Counseling and guidance of parents, children, and teachers regarding speech and language impairments . . .

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1401(26))

300.304(c)(4) – Evaluation process – (Excerpted)

(4) The child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability, including, if appropriate, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities;

Sec. 300.324 Development, review, and revision of IEP. (Excerpted)

(a) Development of IEP--(1) General. In developing each child's IEP, the IEP Team must consider--

(i) The strengths of the child;

(ii) The concerns of the parents for enhancing the education of their child;

(iii) The results of the initial or most recent evaluation of the child; and

(iv) The academic, developmental, and functional needs of the child.

(2) Consideration of special factors. The IEP Team must--

(i) In the case of a child whose behavior impedes the child's learning or that of others, consider the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports, and other strategies, to address that behavior;

(ii) In the case of a child with limited English proficiency, consider the language needs of the child as those needs relate to the child's IEP;

(iii) In the case of a child who is blind or visually impaired, provide for instruction in Braille and the use of Braille unless the IEP Team determines, after an evaluation of the child's reading and writing skills, needs, and appropriate reading and writing media (including an evaluation of the child's future needs for instruction in Braille or the use of Braille), that instruction in Braille or the use of Braille is not appropriate for the child;

(iv) Consider the communication needs of the child, and in the case of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, consider the child's language and communication needs, opportunities for direct communications with peers and professional personnel in the child's language and communication mode, academic level, and full range of needs, including opportunities for direct instruction in the child's language and communication mode.