

Introduction

Strong interpersonal relationships characterize a successful school and define what it means to be a successful family or community. Traditionally schools have focused on academic skills and not intentionally taught social skills; however, the youth of today are too important, their families and communities are too important, to leave social skills training to chance. Proven social skills curricula and strategies are abundant; they simply need to be adopted.

Therefore, the purpose of this manual is to introduce successful social skills training methods and programs so that readers may improve their teaching, counseling, mentoring, and parenting skills. Such improvements may result in individuals having more socially appropriate skills today, as well as passing positive social skills on to the next generation.

How To Teach Social Skills is dedicated to my closest circle of friends—my parents, Margaret and Gerald Veeneman; my husband, Steve; and our son, Eric.

Rationale

Several trends in society and schools signal a need for social skills training. First, schools are called upon to provide more comprehensive services than ever before in addition to the traditional teaching-learning activities.

Second, more and more adults are adopting teaching roles as parent tutor, big brother or sister, or business mentor for a school-to-work program. People are recognizing and realizing the power of one-on-one relationships for the individual, especially during challenging times or transitional years.

Third, psychologists have given renewed attention to the importance of social skills. In his treatise on multiple intelligences, Gardner (1983) included intrapersonal and interpersonal areas as two of the intelligences. Schools based on this model recognize the priority of these skills in the design and implementation of new curricula (Boggeman, Hoerr, & Wallach, 1996). Goleman (1995) articulated the critical nature of everyday social interactions and the contributions of early emotional learnings to lifelong habits in his text, *Emotional Intelligence*.

Marion V. Panyan, PhD, is Professor and Department Chair, Department of Special Education, Counseling, and Rehabilitation at Drake University, Des Moines, IA. She has developed graduate programs for teachers serving students with special needs in collaborative ways at all levels both at Drake and Johns Hopkins University. Her current research examines instructional practices to advance each child's multiple intelligences.