

Teach and practise interpersonal skills

A suggestion for implementing the strategy 'Embed social and emotional learning' from the Guide: [Behaviour and learning](#)

Includes:

- Respond to needs
- Teach how to use an I-message
- Social stories and scripts
- Explore ways to respond
- Provide opportunities for success
- Useful resources

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From

Guide: [Behaviour and learning](#)

Strategy: [Embed social and emotional learning](#)

Suggestion: [Teach and practise interpersonal skills](#)

Date

21 April 2025

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Respond to needs

Sometimes students may need targeted teaching of interpersonal skills. For example, autistic students often need specific teaching to learn how to initiate interactions, share, and take turns.

Decide on goals and values with the student and their team.



Describe the goal in measurable terms.



Use a range of teaching techniques (for example, structured discussions, social stories).



Support mastery and generalisation through role-playing and applying skills in different scenarios.



Transition from structured teaching to everyday situations – the student may need support to achieve this.



Check for social validity – can the student use the new skills in different situations?

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Teach how to use an I-message

An I-message is a de-escalation strategy that supports self-expression and conflict resolution.

Instead of saying, “You stole my pencil” or “Give me back my pencil”... try an I-message.

- I feel anxious that I won’t be able to finish my work on time when you borrow my pencil.
- I would like you to give me back my pencil.

Practise by writing or performing short plays, drawing cartoons, making posters, writing dialogue.

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Social stories and scripts

Create multiple opportunities for students to practise how to communicate and manage themselves in social situations.

Repetition helps embed skills and builds confidence and understanding.



Video hosted on Youtube <http://youtu.be/HOekiyPk2pM>

No captions or transcript

Source:

[POPFASD \(Canada\)](#)

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWRoE1YnO371Fc_hWx6Pnhg

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Explore ways to respond

Provide multiple opportunities for students to explore and discuss situations they find challenging.

- Practice using a variety of scenarios
- Ensure equal practice time



5. Practice the skill (role-playing)

The image shows two young men in a school hallway lined with lockers. One student, wearing a blue t-shirt and plaid shorts, is facing the other student, who is wearing a red t-shirt with a lightning bolt design and black shorts. They appear to be engaged in a conversation or role-play. The lockers are green and red.

Video hosted on Youtube <http://youtu.be/HOekiyPk2pM>

Closed Captions

Source:

[POPFASD](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOekiyPk2pM>

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Provide opportunities for success

Celebrate diversity by providing opportunities for ākongā to work with others, using their strengths.

Carefully design group or pair-based activities to suit learners and maximise productive interactions.

- Encourage tuakana-teina relationships and create a culture where students provide support for each other.
- Develop cross-cultural communication skills, learning about how conventions for conversation vary across cultures and contexts.
- Teach specific speaking and conversation skills. For example, rehearse ways to start and close a conversation, and to keep the conversation flowing.
- Practise conversation skills, where appropriate for the students, such as maintaining personal space between people, using eye contact, facial expressions and taking turns.
- Provide strategies to help students to listen actively to each other, share ideas, and recognise different points of view. For example, use thinking tools such as De Bono's thinking hats.
- Create social stories that break down a task or social situation into small and easy-to-understand steps, accompanied by descriptive pictures.
- Monitor discussions to ensure that all students understand the task and have opportunities to participate.

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Useful resources



Kindness and friendship activities

The Sparklers website offers a range of free activities for kindness and friendship.

Publisher: Sparklers

[Visit website](#)



Understanding social and emotional learning

Health and PE curriculum resources to support social and emotional learning. Includes Ata and Oho cards and activities.

[Visit website](#)



He Māpuna te Tamaiti

Resources to help teachers support social and emotional competence in early learning.

[Visit website](#)

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