SOCIAL SKILL TRAINING INTERVENTIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN THE PRIMARY GRADES (GRADES 1-3)

By

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PART THREE

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

According to the Learning Disability Association of Ontario (LDAO), in Canada, 1 in 10 people have a learning disability (LDAO, 2001). As an educator, I am aware of how this statistic significantly shapes and alters the classroom environment. According to the LDAO, a learning disability refers to a variety of disorders that affect the acquisition, retention, understanding, organization or use of verbal and non-verbal information. A learning disability may also cause difficulties with organizational skills, social perception, and social interaction (LDAO, 2001).

Most children with a learning disability (LD) face problems in their interpersonal understandings, specifically when compared to their typically developing (TD) peers (Agaliotis & Goudiras, 2004). Since the early 1970’s, research has documented the social difficulties encountered by many individuals with learning disabilities (Bryan, 1974; Cartledge, 2005; Gresham & Elliot, 1989; La Greca, 1981). However, most classroom social intervention approaches tend to focus on individualized support for the student outside of the regular classroom (Kavale & Mostert, 2004).

As interpersonal conflicts constitute an integral part of a child’s social experience, individuals with LD require help in resolving interpersonal conflict in an appropriate and socially acceptable manner (Kalyva & Agaliotis, 2009). Although practitioners have struggled with the best way to alleviate these problems, social skill interventions are considered to be an evidence based-method that offers hope in supporting students’ social progression (Kavale & Mostert, 2004). Students with learning disabilities do not learn through observation of their peers or implicit teaching. Instead, these skills must be taught directly, extensively, and explicitly.
This project is organized into three chapters. Following the introductory chapter, a chapter that reviews research studies that examine social skills in students with learning disabilities is included. Particular themes found within the articles, such as interpersonal conflict, social perception, and social interventions that relate to specific social skill deficits and LD are explored.

In the third chapter, I present a curriculum unit that I have designed for primary students, for both those who are typically developing and those with a learning disability. As the unit is meant to be used in a classroom setting, I chose to include lessons for typically developing students and those with learning disabilities using an inclusive approach to introduce these skills. In addition, at the primary level of development, the explicit teaching of social skills can enrich the early social experiences of all students, not just those with LD.

The curriculum unit is designed to meet three goals: to have the student: (1) manage and appreciate the components that make up the context of interpersonal conflict; (2) devise alternative solutions to resolve a conflict; and (3) appreciate the consequences of the solutions they propose. After this unit has been completed, the primary students will be able to independently use their learning to identify and respond to interpersonal conflict with a variety of strategies. There are ten activities in this module, all designed to increase student competence in resolving interpersonal conflict. Both typically developing students and students with a learning disability will participate in all of the activities in an inclusive setting.
Chapter 2
SOCIAL SKILLS AND CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Since the late 1960’s, research has documented the social difficulties experienced by many individuals with learning disabilities (LD). Johnson and Myklebust (1967) presented the socially imperceptive child, described as having difficulty with the perception of the total social field, such as perception of oneself in relation to the behaviour of others as well as in relation to events and circumstances with others. For Johnson and Myklebust (1967), these social imperceptions were viewed as a specific LD. In this pioneering work, Johnson and Myklebust assumed that these social skill deficits represented a neurological learning disorder specific to learners with LD.

Since Johnson and Myklebust (1967), understanding of the challenges experienced by children and adolescents with LD has increased exponentially over the past 45 years. Although the field of learning disabilities has primarily concerned itself with the identification, instruction, and evaluation of academic deficiencies, a shift towards understanding these social skill deficits has also occurred (Bryan, 1974; Gresham & Elliot, 1989). In the mid 1980’s, this interest in social skills was prompted by the growing realization that students with LD were often poorly accepted or even rejected by their peers. As well as a shift toward understanding the role of social skills, the question of whether social skills are a primary deficit for those with LD becomes significant (Gresham & Elliot, 1989).

The development of social skills among children with learning disabilities has long been a concern among educators, parents and researchers (Smith & Wallace, 2011). First, given the
recognized importance of social skill development in enhancing a child’s subsequent quality of life, social skills and the development of healthy peer relationships in childhood are recognized as valuable predictors of community participation among children with disabilities (Bryan, 1997; Gresham, 1981; Smith & Wallace, 2011).

According to Gresham and Elliot (1989), if social skills were considered a primary area of deficit for those with an LD, there would be profound implications for assessment, classification, and intervention with students classified as LD. Specifically, this might involve ensuring that individualized education program/plan (IEP) goals for children with LD address specific social skills, such as cooperation with peers, approaching conflict with a variety of strategies, and initiating conversations. It is also imperative that educators and parents increase their awareness of the potential for these social skill deficits among those with LD, effectively communicating and understanding the unique social skill challenges that their children may experience, and how these challenges might be effectively addressed in environmental situations (Smith & Wallace, 2011). Regardless of whether or not social skills are considered a primary deficit in the identification of LD, the role social skills can play for students with learning disabilities has significant implications for teaching within the classroom.

In this chapter, research conducted over the past 20 years on the social skills of children with LD is reviewed. All studies serve to highlight social skills as a deficit for those with a learning disability. In any discussion of social-emotional issues, it is critical to define social skills and social perception. According to Kavale and Mostert (2004), the term social skill identifies the specific skills used by the child in social situations. Social skills can be further described as the ability to interact with people and to function in groups (Topping, 2007). As this definition is fairly consistent throughout the research, this understanding of social skills will
be used. Social perception, for this project, will be understood as the interpretation of behaviour in order to understand the thoughts and feelings of others. According to Bauminger, Edelstztein, and Morash (2005), social perception is considered multidimensional with its components related to different types of social skills. Particular themes found within the articles, such as interpersonal conflict, social perception, and social interventions that relate to specific social skill deficits and LD are explored. Throughout each theme, important considerations implications from the reviewed articles are discussed in terms of the development of the Managing Interpersonal Conflict for Everyone (MICE) curriculum unit found in chapter three.

Interpersonal Conflict

Individuals with LD have been characterized as a population at risk for developing interpersonal problems (La Greca, 1981; Smith & Wallace, 2011). According to Agaliotis and Goudiras (2004), social situations presuming the activation of a large portion of an individual’s social skills, such as interpersonal conflict, place considerable stress on the overall social competence of children with LD. Although children with LD have been characterized as a population at risk for developing interpersonal problems, a critical evaluation of available research shows that there are many differing views regarding the ways in which children with LD negotiate interpersonal problems, specifically in comparison to their typically developing peers.

Children with LD, compared with typically developing peers (TD), manifest more difficulties in understanding social situations. In a meta-analytic review of social skill deficits and LD, Kavale and Forness (1996) found that approximately 75% of students with LD received lower ratings of their social skills when compared with peers without LD. Across 152 studies analyzed by Kavale and Forness (1996), students with LD were at approximately the 25th
percentile in terms of social skills. For those with LD, a lower quality and quantity of spontaneous strategies for tackling social situations and social problems occurs more frequently than for their TD peers (Kavale & Mostert, 2004; Swanson & Malone, 1992). Most children with LD, compared with TD peers, manifest more difficulties in understanding social situations (Kavale & Mostert, 2004). Overall, attempts to explain the social skill deficits of children with LD have focused on the social-cognitive processes utilized by these children in comparison to their TD peers.

**Children with Learning Disabilities Compared With Typically Developing Peers**

Agaliotis and Goudiras (2004) sought to explore the significant differences between those with LD and their TD peers, demonstrated in interpersonal conflict. In doing so, Agaliotis and Goudiras (2004) delineated a profile of children with LD regarding the performance of social-cognitive processes underlying interpersonal conflicts. With a sample of 30 children with LD and 30 TD children, attending the 5th and 6th grades at 12 different primary schools in Greece, data were collected through personal interviews. Within these 45 minute interviews, three interpersonal conflict problems were presented to both the LD and TD children in pictorial and verbal forms by researchers. Agaliotis and Goudiras revealed significant insights regarding interpersonal social skill deficits for those with LD. Interestingly, the notion that children with LD differ from their peers in terms of the type of strategy used to resolve interpersonal conflict was rejected (Agaliotis & Goudiras, 2004).

Based on these findings, children with LD differed from their TD peers in terms of their ability to choose different strategies in response to the requirements of the conflict situation they faced. Agaliotis and Goudiras (2004) highlighted how the participants with LD demonstrated using the hostile strategy as well as the assertive strategy over the assertive or compromise
strategy. In addition, Agaliotis and Goudiras (2004) illustrated how children with LD are at a different development level from TD with respect to interpersonal negotiation.

In the interpersonal conflict study explored by Agaliotis and Goudiras (2004), the means to present the social conflict scenarios should be considered. As children with LD do not process verbal and pictorial material the same way as their TD peers, the measurement may actually reflect differences between the two groups in understanding the verbal and pictorial material rather than the conflicts presented. After the reading and pictorial presentation, students with learning disabilities were asked: to identify the behavior goals and emotions of the parties involved, to suggest solutions, to define the consequences of the solutions, and to state the way in which they themselves would act in a similar situation.

In addition, a general problem of research in the field of behaviour also applies to the content of this method of data collection. Often, the formulation of a view on the resolution of hypothetical situations may not coincide with the actual behaviour of a subject when faced with a real problem in everyday life.

In order to extend the findings from Agaliotis and Goudiras (2004), Kavale and Mostert’s (2004) meta-analysis should be considered. Because a meta-analysis allows conclusions to be drawn from a pattern of findings across several studies, it provides stronger evidence for its conclusions than a single study (Johnson, Humphrey, Mellard, Woods, & Swanson, 2011). In Kavale and Mostert’s (2004) meta-analysis of structured social skill training approaches, the increased difficulties experienced by children with LD in solving social and emotional problems in general and in interpersonal conflict, in particular, have been a consistent finding and focus for interventions. According to Kavale and Mostert (2004) these difficulties are associated with the inability of children with LD to process verbal and non-verbal information and to empathize with
others (Agaliotis & Goudiras, 2004). Consequently, these social skill deficits have become a primary target for remediation and a major intervention activity for students with LD (Kavale & Mostert, 2004).

Agaliotis and Goudiras’ (2004) study seemed to effectively test and highlight the potential differences between children with LD and their TD peers. This study revealed that despite a difficulty in appreciating situations and producing and assessing solutions, children with LD appear to understand the existence of different requirements in each situation and the need to use a variety of strategies in interpersonal conflict. On the issue of the ability of children with LD to use a variety of strategies, the study by Agaliotis and Goudiras extends and coincides with the finding in literature supporting the view that children with LD change their strategies from situation to situation and that they do not tackle every social problem with the same predetermined set of behaviour patterns (Tur-Kaspa & Bryan, 1994).

A study by Olivia and La Greca (1988) suggested how children with LD may be aware of what do in social situations, but they may not fully understand the reason or goal behind the behaviour. Olivia and La Greca (1988) sought to test the hypothesis that LD boys differ from TD boys in the strategies and goals that they independently formulate in interpersonal conflict. With 60 subjects, each subject met individually with the experimenter participating in a 30 minute session. Within the session, the experimenter administrated an open-ended social interview, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test Revised (PPVTR) and a multiple choice social interview. Although differences did emerge regarding the social goals independently formulated by children with LD, the strategies did not differ from those formulated by the TD.

Olivia and La Greca (1988) highlight a critical understanding of interpersonal conflict issues for LD. According to Olivia and La Greca (1988), although children with LD can generate
appropriate social strategies, it may be that without the understanding and recognition of an appropriate underlying goal, they experience more difficulty than TD children if their initial social strategy does not succeed.

**Friendship**

Participants with LD in the studies by Agaliotis and Goudiras (2004) and Olivia and La Greca (1988) demonstrate an inability to recognize social goals. As a result, this inability may cause those with an LD to experience more difficulty in interpersonal conflict than TD children and more difficulty adjusting to the changing behavioral demands that comprises these social interactions. To further emphasize the prevalence of interpersonal conflict for those with LD, Wiener and Schneider (2002) sought to study the friendship patterns of 117 children with LD and 115 TD children from grades 4-8 in Toronto, Ontario. They assessed friendship selection by children with LD by interviewing target children, and their parents, and teachers. Through the use of the Friendship Quality Questionnaire-Revised, as well as the Social Skills Rating System-Teaching Form, friendship selection and interaction were assessed. Weiner and Schneider (2002) assessed friendship selection by interviewing target children, parents, and teachers in order to identify all and any possible friendships maintained by the children with LD.

Children with LD portrayed their friendships as more conflict ridden then did participants without LD. Wiener and Schneider participants with LD reported higher levels of conflict and problems with conflict resolution. This finding, according to the literature, is consistent with the notion that children with LD have less developed concepts of conflict resolution than TD children. Within Wiener and Schneider’s (2002) study, the methodology requires consideration. For Weiner and Schneider’s (2002), the samples of children with LD were identified by a specific school district. Because the population for this specific study is contained within one district, we
should think about the student who is diagnosed with LD. Some of these children with LD may be misdiagnosed because inconsistent diagnostic methods may be employed within the identification process of schools in the school board. By restricting their sample to a specific school district, Weiner and Schneider (2002)’s study only reflects the friendship patterns of those within stringent inclusion and exclusion criteria of LD for that board. As a result, the findings of this study may not translate easily to individuals diagnosed with LD in other locations or in other studies.

For understanding interpersonal relationships in individuals with LD, longitudinal examination would be helpful. By approaching this issue longitudinally, the differences between LD and TD individuals may illustrate whether or not these interpersonal conflict issues have long-term effects on their social and emotional adjustment over time (Weiner & Schneider, 2002). Despite these limitations, studies and findings described here have significant implications for social skills intervention programs for children with LD.

**Implications for MICE**

The studies I have reviewed suggest that the children’s ability to increase the quality and quantity of solutions produced for interpersonal conflict should be a focus for educational programs such as MICE. As children with LD have a less developed concept of conflict resolution than TD children, exposing students to authentic conflicts as well as explicit resolution strategies is a key component of the MICE unit. As highlighted, children with LD have more difficulties in understanding social situations and are at a different developmental level from TD with respect to interpersonal negotiation (Agaliotis & Goudiras, 2004). Within MICE, students are immersed in explicit authentic activities that involve understanding interpersonal conflict problems as well as the generation of solutions and assessment of consequences.
Children with LD may be aware of what to do in social situations, but they may not fully understand the reason or goal behind the behavior. Agaliotis and Goudiras (2004) highlighted how participants with LD used the hostile strategy as well as the assertive strategy over the assertive or compromise strategy. Without the understanding and recognition of an appropriate underlying goal, they experience more difficulty than TD children if their initial social strategy does not succeed (Olivia & La Greca, 1988). In order to address this, MICE discusses the positive and negative outcomes of four specific strategies used for resolving conflict, compromise, hostility, negotiation, and avoidance. Although the teacher and students discuss all four strategies, it does not encourage the use of hostility and avoidance. Instead, it allows for the students to recognize the negative consequences of using these strategies in interpersonal conflict.

**Social Perception**

In investigating possible social skill deficits in students with LD, researchers have examined social perception (Cartledge, Stupay & Kaczala, 1986; Reiff & Gerber, 1990). Social perception, the interpretation of behaviour in order to understand the thoughts and feelings of others, is considered multidimensional with its components related to different types of social skills. According to Bauminger et al. (2005), social perception involves the ability to not only recognize social and emotional information, but the knowledge of different social behaviors and their consequences in diverse social tasks. Bauminger et al. (2005) emphasize that social perception can be considered one of the most difficult areas for children with LD, as it involves linking cognitive and social emotional difficulties in the process of making adequate attributions about another person’s mental state.
Prior to Reiff and Gerber (1990), research in LD tended to address psychological factors such as poor self-concept, depressed mood, and inadequate motivation to learn as a basis for social perception deficits. However, Reiff and Gerber’s (1990) study raised a significant alternative to these psychological factors. For Reiff and Gerber (1990), the cognitive correlates of social perception in individuals with LD were examined. Thirty-two students with LD in elementary grades completed the Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity (PONS) which consisted of videotaped segments. For the 220 two-second videotaped segments, the participant selects one of two choices that best describes the affect portrayed in the scene. They also completed three cognitive tasks, a picture arrangement, comprehension and digit span, which all required central processing skills. The 14 question comprehension subtest measures the participants’ comprehension of behavioral situations, largely social in nature. For the picture arrangement subtest, a low score may reflect problems with visual organization. On each item, the child attempts to assemble a cut-up picture sequence in a logical order to tell a story. Unlike the picture or comprehension, the Digit Span Subtest measures immediate auditory recall by requiring the subject to repeat strings of numbers.

Because there were high correlations between these subtests and PONS, Reiff and Gerber (1990) highlight how an inability to make central inferences is the most salient factor in social perception deficits in students with LD, as measured by PONS. As attending to a correct central inference requires the ability to interpret cues, both the picture arrangement and comprehension measurement tasks were described as having an inherent relation to social perceptual functioning. Skills such as the ability to interpret relevant cues, as well as arriving at a central inference are not only necessary for social perception tasks, but for many cognitive tasks as well.
Although Reiff and Gerber initiated the shift in understanding social perception difficulties toward a processing issue, the measurement tool of PONS is questionable. PONS requires participants to recognize emotions as having a negative or positive tone when presented by an adult. By limiting responses to recognizing a negative or positive tone, the complexities of social perception are not assessed thoroughly. In addition, the reliability of PONS for those with LD is unclear. Despite extensive research activity as well as extensive research on the validity of PONS in many different cultures, its applicability to LD is concerning. Until the relationship between social perception and those with an LD is more precisely described, social perception instructional programs and interventions, which have gained in popularity, may be misguided.

**Social Perception Tasks**

According to Reiff and Gerber (1990), students with LD are unable to perform these social perception tasks in many different contexts. Children with LD also appear to be limited in their ability to elicit rewarding responses from others. Further, they are more likely to be rejected by others, thus experiencing difficulty with social perception (Cartledge et al., 1986). In the investigation by Cartledge et al. (1986), a central question sought to explore whether there was a stronger relationship between social perception and social skill for children with LD when compared to TD children.

With 52 third, fourth and fifth grade subjects, the study assessed social perception and social skills. Individually, a graduate assistant presented four stories to each subject. Each story was presented twice--the first time the child had to identify how the stories made the subject feel, and the second time for the subject to identify the feelings of the main character of the story. Children were asked to report their perceptions of the feelings of the main characters in each of four stories. Dependent t-tests were computed to test for differences between the LD and TD
subjects. Cartledge et al.’s (1986) study failed to detect significant differences between LD and TD on a social perception assessment. Although the mean scores for TD subjects were higher on the social perception scores than the means for the LD subjects, none of the differences was statistically significant. As poor performances on social perception tasks have led several researchers, such as Reiff and Gerber (1990), to assume a cause-and-effect relationship between social skill and social perception for the LD learner, the findings of Cartledge et al. (1986), are at odds with this assumption. However, it is always difficult to know whether composition of the groups tests was responsible for contradictory findings, but such inconsistent findings do remind us to interpret studies with caution.

Researchers continue to debate the status of social-emotional difficulties in children with LD. Within this debate, there is a strong consensus that social skill deficits are central to the characterization of the disorder. However, these deficits are not apparent in all children with LD. Bauminger et al.’s (2005) study aimed to fill a gap in the literature to provide a more comprehensive and integrative understanding of the social-emotional difficulties for this population. At the foundation of their study is the notion that social perception constitutes insight into understandings of other people’s feelings. According to Bauminger et al. (2005), their study sought to examine such social perception capabilities, with a focus on complex emotions. With 100 children in fourth to sixth grade, LD and TD children were matched to form groups with no significant statistical differences on gender, age, grade, and class distribution. Subjects analyzed four social vignettes and completed two emotional recognition tasks and four emotional knowledge tasks.

Bauminger et al. (2005) focused mainly on complex emotions in children with LD and on higher emotional understanding capabilities, such as the comprehension of mixed and hidden
emotions. However, their findings reveal an inconsistent profile of social perception for those with LD. Through tasks that sought emotional vocabulary, Bauminger asked children to provide definitions for the five emotions and coded their definitions as correct or incorrect. In terms of encoding, the experience of emotions tasks had children with LD tell about a time they felt each of the five emotions. Lastly, children were told to share clues used to recognize emotions in oneself and in others.

Although children with LD encoded social cues less well than their TD peers, the ability of children with LD to identify the problem and to interpret the situation as positive and negative resembled the TD group. Additionally, the group with LD recalled less information and tended to add more irrelevant information while processing social situations. Specifically, the group with the LD had less inclusion of the social context in their representation of social cues, a lower quantity of social goals, a lower quantity of solutions generated during their response search, a lower competence level of the solution chosen in the response decision step, and a weaker link between goals and the chosen solution (Bauminger et al., 2005). Despite children with LD suggesting fewer social solutions to problems than the TD peers, the suggested solutions were competent.

**Social Perception Deficit**

For many decades now, researchers have suggested that children with LD exhibit a unique social perception deficit (Tur-Kaspa & Bryan 1994). Difficulties to recognize cues, as well as to identify central inferences have been assumed to be independent of their academic difficulties. Bauminger et al. (2005), as well as Cartledge et al. (1986), show inconsistent performance on social perception tasks among children with LD in comparison to their TD peers. Study results demonstrated that children with LD had major difficulties in social information
processing, and consistent difficulties with the different tasks in the understanding of complex emotions and in higher emotional understanding capabilities such as understanding that two conflicting emotions (love and hate) can be simultaneously experienced.

Bauminger et al. (2005) propose that children with LD may experience difficulty in the understanding that social scenarios are a series of continuous, mutually related steps that influence and are influenced by one another. To extend Bauminger et al.’s (2005) conclusions, it is necessary to recognize how research on emotional understanding, specifically social perception, is limited in several ways. As the majority of studies have implemented the Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity (PONS) as a key measurement tool, these children with LD are exposed to an adult expressing positive or negative affect during 20 emotional situations. Most often, these expressions are done through visual, auditory, or both modes to the subject with LD. In these 20 emotional situations, inconsistencies can be linked to children with LD’s lack of self-regulation capabilities which may cause a more impulsive rather than typical social response.

**Implications for MICE**

In summary, the discussed studies (Bauminger et al., 2005; Cartledge et al., 1986; Reiff & Gerber, 1990; Tur-Kaspa & Bryan, 1994), highlight a major difficulty with the understanding of complex emotions, an inability to make central inferences in a social context, as well as in the ability to interpret relevant cues in elementary school-age children with LD. The social perception and emotional understanding difficulties of children with LD imply the need for intervention models that incorporate training in social cognition processes (e.g. facial expression recognition), and social and emotional understanding. As a result, instruction in these areas must be targeted for specific outcomes (Cartledge et al., 1986). For MICE, the role of social
perception has been clearly delineated. Through facial expression exercises and role playing activities, social perception cognitive behaviors are targeted.

In addition, these included studies highlight how MICE should inherently target social contexts and role-taking abilities. Within this social perception analysis, the link between social perception and emotional understanding underscore the importance of a comprehensive intervention model that includes social context and role-taking abilities for elementary students. As MICE has been developed within this comprehensive framework, the activities and extensions reflect such a model.

**Social Skill Interventions**

Formal social skill assessments, curricula, and numerous intervention studies have emerged for students with LD. However, this work is reported to result in varying degrees of success. In 2004, researchers began to notice the rather modest gains reported in social skill studies and have begun to question the overall effectiveness of these interventions for this population (Kavale & Mostert, 2004). Regardless of a lack of effectiveness of the interventions, there is a belief that the implementation of appropriate educational programs will strengthen the ability of children with LD to resolve the interpersonal conflict deficits apparent within research findings (Agaliotis & Goudiras, 2004). Educational programs, such as social skill training programs, typically include a comprehensive assortment of skills that cover areas such as social problem solving, friendship, conversation planning, and dealing with feelings (Kavale & Mostert, 2004). As many children with learning disabilities are assumed to have social skill deficit problems, Kalyva and Agaliotis’s (2009) sought to examine the efficacy of social stories in helping students with LD to choose more appropriate interpersonal conflict resolution strategies.
For Kalyva and Agaliotis (2009), a social skill story intervention was recorded and played to 31 elementary school children with LD in an experimental group twice a week for a period of one month, while 32 children with LD in the control group did not receive any intervention. Before the intervention, similar findings to Agaliotis and Goudiras (2004) were found because children with LD in both groups selected mainly the hostile and avoidance interpersonal conflict strategies (Kalyva & Agaliotis, 2009). However, after the intervention, children with LD in the experimental group opted for the desirable outcomes of compromise and accommodations (Kalyva & Agaliotis, 2009). Kalyva and Agaliotis (2009)’s study serves to highlight how social stories interventions can help children with LD overcome their interpersonal conflict resolution problems. Regardless of the success of Kalyva and Agaliotis (2009) intervention, practitioners have struggled with devising effective interventions for alleviating these social problems for students with LD.

**Social Skill Training Effectiveness**

McIntosh, Vaughn and Zaragoza (1991) reviewed twenty two social skills training and intervention studies with 572 children with LD. In examining these studies, McIntosh et al. (1991) examined characteristics and components of intervention effectiveness. Of the 22 studies designed to improve the social behavior of students identified with LD, 14 reported intervention effects. For McIntosh et al. (1991), effective social skill training programs involved the selection of subjects with low peer acceptance and use of a model that included individual or small group instruction that included cognitive-behavioral procedures.

Kavale and Mostert (2004)’s meta-analysis of social skill interventions also revealed limited measurable progress for these students in terms of social skill growth. In fact, they concluded that treatment effects were modest and estimated that only about 58% of students with
LD would significantly benefit from social skills training. In addition, McIntosh et al. (1991) criticized these interventions as they did not determine which approaches were successful with different subgroups of students with LD. Although the relatively modest effects are discussed in relation to a number of psychometric and design issues, the limited treatment outcomes should be recognized.

Overall, social skill interventions appear to be only minimally effective in changing the behaviour of students with LD. Chandler and Lubek (1991) reviewed 51 studies examining generalization and maintenance of social skills interventions. For these studies, the authors found that the least effective problems utilized a “train and a hope” approach. In a meta-analytic review of social skill interventions, Forness and Kavale (1996) evaluated the findings from 53 studies that included 2,113 school-age participants. Given social skills training, students with LD gained about 8 percentile ranks, corresponding to a mean effect size of 0.21.

As social skill interventions have become a popular treatment for students with LD, these meta-analysis studies highlight an important reality. Although social skill deficits appear to be an integral part of the difficulties experienced by some children with LD, these meta-analysis reveal ineffective treatments by practitioners. Although Kalyva and Agaliotis (2009)’s intervention did meet success for its participants, Kavale and Mostert highlight that most social skill training programs usually provides modest success for their participants.

Kavale and Mostert (2004) suggested that a number of variables might be responsible for the lack of significant social skill growth within their analyzed interventions, including the reliance on training packages, intensity of the program, as well as measurement issues. Interestingly, Kavale and Mostert (2004) propose that a solution for social skills training is the need for social skills interventions to be more closely coordinated with academics to achieve maximum results.
It has also been suggested that many interventions used in research studies are not adequately validated and therefore may not yield desired results (Vaughn, Elbaum, Boardman, 2001). According to Kavale and Forness (1996), most instructional programs used to teach social skills were developed specifically for research purposes and may lack authenticity in the classroom application.

**Implications for MICE**

Although research on the effectiveness of social skill interventions has provided minimal support for such programs, a number of factors have emerged that appear to strengthen intervention results and promote generalization and maintenance of social skills. According to McIntosh et al. (1991), social skill instruction that is carefully planned, implemented and scaffolded into the curriculum presents a great opportunity for learning than incidental social skill instruction. To support McIntosh et. (1991), MICE has been created to support the Long Range Planning practices of teachers, including literacy activities and the arts. However, to extend this shift to an academic focus, more effort by the classroom teacher should be devoted to changing the perception that social skills instruction is a frill rather than a necessity for students with LD.

For MICE, the most critical consideration is to ensure that these teachings will result in significant changes in social functioning that persist across time and settings. Students with LD require the explicit and repetitive instruction of a variety of interpersonal conflict management strategies. Within a series of activities, the four main strategies identified by Kalyva and Agaliotis (2009) are examined. Hostile, avoidance, compromise and accommodation are explicitly taught, reviewed, discussed, and applied in a variety of contexts. Although these strategies are explicitly taught, they take advantage of naturally occurring behavioral incidents in
the classroom. Through the reliance of student incident journals, as well as classroom and peer discussions, students are able to generalize these skills to different situations, persons and behaviours that are relevant and meaningful.

**Social Stories**

According to More (2008), a social story is a story that delivers social instruction. Social stories are distinguished from other stories by their short length, personalization, and being written from the perspective of the student. Social studies should be written at the student’s reading level and use age-appropriate vocabulary. Additionally, social stories can meet the diverse needs of learning by combining visual cues with verbal cues (More, 2004). Typically, social stories are written to help children negotiate specific social situations that are frequently encountered by children. Gray (2004) emphasizes how social stories explicitly tell readers what is going to happen in these social situations and attempt to describe why these situations happen.

More (2008) identifies several strengths of social stories as an intervention piece for students with LD. As the stories are individualized, they can be written to meet the specific needs of each learner, and can be easily embedded in the classroom routine. As they use information that is directly related to each child’s unique social experience, they engage children to understand complex skills in smaller components that are more easily understandable and transferable (Gut & Safran, 2002; Barry & Burlew, 2004). However, More (2011) emphasizes how the intent of the social story is to help understand a social situation, not necessarily tell children with LD how to behave in the situation.

In the past, social stories have been implemented as an intervention with individual students. However, More (2011) emphasizes how social stories can be used as an intervention with individuals or small groups or large groups of children as long as the story targets a
behaviour that is relevant to the audience. In the primary classroom, social stories can be used to help TD children and children with LD with myriad social skills. In terms of interpersonal conflict, issues such as taking turns, inviting a friend to play, joining a playgroup, accepting no for an answer, and working together can be addressed (More, 2011).

Writing a social story can take time, thought, and planning. At the core of this writing process are considerations that go beyond just picking materials and content. According to More (2011), preparing a social story must include developing the best description of a social situation and involving the children in the draft. According to Gray (2004) teachers should keep the language simple and developmentally appropriate, using descriptive sentences rather than directive sentences. Although social stories are easy to create, careful attention needs to be paid to the preparation of the story, the reading, and the instruction that occurs after a social story.

**Implications for MICE**

More (2011) emphasizes that by implementing social stories with young children with LD in a thoughtful and systematic way, teachers can increase the likelihood that these children will access and utilize the information contained within a social story. Within MICE, children write their own social story. By involving children in the composition of the story, the children increase their ownership of the story as well as the social skill being addressed. Within MICE, the social story writing organizer allows students to write short and simple stories. Ideally, these student constructed stories can be easily embedded in the classroom routine, in which reading instruction is already occurring. Once the stories are drafted, teachers have the opportunity to guide the students with LD to include ideas and address problem areas. MICE enables teachers to create a library of social skill books made by students in their classroom. As each story will be individualized, the books will be tailored to meet the needs of each learner in the classroom.
Literature-Based Social Skills Instruction

According to Womack, Marchant, and Borders (2010), the education system does not provide the curricular framework for explicit social skill instruction to be taught. Given that educators and administrators may not feel that they can justify allotting time exclusively to social skill intervention, curriculum areas that might lend support to this type of instruction should be considered. An effective solution to the time constraints and pressures to produce academic gains is to embed social skill instruction into a read-aloud time using literature. For Womack et al. (2010), this multi-tasking approach to integrating social skill training can provide the benefits of both hearing literature and learning these pro-social behaviors.

Womack et al. (2010) highlight how social skill instruction that is carefully planned, implemented and scaffolded into the curriculum presents a greater opportunity for learning than does incidental social skill instruction. As the strategy of embedding social skills in literature has its roots in bibliotherapy, the context, characters and illustrations of children’s literature are used to teach the social skills needed for academic and social success. In addition Womack et al. (2010) highlight that the distinctive addition that the literature-embedded social skills strategy offers is the explicit instruction and practice of a teacher identified social skill.

Implications for MICE

Within MICE, the general framework of this literature-embedded strategy allows for a book to be selected and used that simultaneously attends to the needs of students with LD. During the regular literacy instruction, social skill strategies are embedded in the texts. Throughout the module, activities have explicit Shared Reading Texts that support and extend
the main social skill goals. Using this inclusive strategy, the entire class is exposed to the story and receives the social skill lessons together after their regular literacy instruction.

**Conclusion**

After reviewing the role of social skills for students with LD, it is my hope that teachers will use MICE in their classrooms. Although academic expectations for students with LD should be held high, it is also the responsibility of the teacher to help these students to develop socially. As a classroom teacher and outdoor educator, I believe that socially confident students will be more likely to use their academic skills to their best of their ability. It is my hope that by providing teachers with a module that has activities designed to meet the specific social needs of primary students with LD, more teachers will embrace the idea of “teaching social skills.” Through an inclusive approach, these activities are designed to not only help TD students acquire a greater understanding of social skills but have these students feel more comfortable including students with LD in their social activities.
Managing Interpersonal Conflict for Everyone (MICE): A Module for Primary Classes (Grades 1-3)

Alyssa Willoughby
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Shared Reading

Rationale

Social skill instruction that is carefully planned, implemented, and scaffolded into the curriculum presents a greater opportunity for learning than does incidental social skill instruction (Anderson, 2000). For MICE, language arts, particularly shared reading texts, is conducive to the integration of social skill training. Although MICE includes shared reading texts in the activities, teachers are not limited by these suggestions. Instead, as a way to extend and support the activities, it is highly encouraged to incorporate additional shared reading texts.
Managing Interpersonal Conflict for Everyone
MICE

Learning Goal
There are ten activities in this unit, all designed to increase student competence in managing interpersonal conflict, for everyone in primary classes. Both typically developing and students with a learning disability learn and apply a Social Skill Literature strategy and discover how four strategies can be applied to managing interpersonal conflict. In the first activity, students discover how to explicitly make new friends and how this is an important skill to have before addressing interpersonal conflict. Throughout the activities, students generate and discuss a list of interpersonal conflict situations. These authentic situations are explicitly examined in the rest of the activities.

Ideally, this module is to be used for whole class instruction. However, as time constraints and curriculum pressures many not allow for the incorporation of this module into the regular classroom schedule, the activities have been written so that they can be easily modified to use as small group activities. In addition, although it is ideally written for the classroom teacher, other adults within the classroom, such as an Educational Assistant or Parent Volunteer can implement the activities.

Rationale
Individuals with a learning disability have been characterized as a population at risk for developing interpersonal problems (La Greca, 1981; Smith & Wallace, 2011). Social situations presuming the activation of a large portion of an individual’s social skills, such as interpersonal conflict, place more stress on the social competence of children with a learning disability. As a result, most children with a learning disability, compared to typically developing peers, manifest more difficulties in understanding social situations and have a lower quality and quantity of spontaneous strategies for tackling social situations.

Suggestions for Long Range Planning
As this module has been created for primary students, it can easily be incorporated into the thematic approach that many elementary teachers use. Because managing interpersonal conflict is a skill that requires compassion, kindness and understanding, incorporating this module into a friendship, valentine, or social studies unit may be practical for the classroom.
### Overview of Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Friendship</td>
<td>Students learn the need for strategies to interact effectively to maintain a friendship.</td>
<td>Self-assessment, shared reading, group discussion, pair work, role-playing</td>
<td>Shared Reading Text: <em>Will I Have a Friend?</em></td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Folder for each student, BLM 1.1-1.2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Active Listening</td>
<td>Students learn the components of active listening with their peers. Students discuss active listening in the Looks like, Sounds Like, Feels Like activity.</td>
<td>Role-playing, group discussion, work sheet application</td>
<td>BLM 1.3</td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. The Emotion Game</td>
<td>Students recognize the role emotions play in conversation. Students explicitly examine facial expressions.</td>
<td>Shared reading, game activity, group discussion</td>
<td>Emotion Game Cards: A pack of eight small cards for each group of four students. Each card has an emotion written on it.</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. What is Interpersonal Conflict?</td>
<td>Students assess the events that cause interpersonal conflict with their peers. Students then examine how they personally deal with conflict.</td>
<td>Shared reading, group and pair work, individual study, brainstorming sessions</td>
<td>Shared Reading Text: <em>Sir Lofty and Sir</em> or <em>Talk and Work it out</em> (<em>Learning to Get Along</em>), chart paper and markers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td><strong>Art Resources (Paint, Large Paper, Scrap Construction, etc.)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>45 minutes</td>
<td>5. Introducing the Social Skill Literature Strategy (SSLT)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>Students use the SSLT strategy to deal effectively with interpersonal conflict problems.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities</strong></td>
<td>Shared Reading, group and pair work, brainstorming sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
<td>BLM 1.4-1.5, scissors, blank booklets, and art supplies</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

6. Applying the Social Skill Literature Strategy

| **Description** | Students practice using the Social Skill Literature Strategy in thinking about interpersonal conflict. |
| **Activities** | Group discussion, pair work |
| **Resources** | List of interpersonal conflicts generated from Activity 3, BLM 1.6 |
| **Time** | 45 minutes |

7. Other Strategies: Compromise and Accommodation

| **Description** | Students have older students guide discussion on using compromise and accommodation as an interpersonal conflict strategy. |
| **Activities** | Visitors, small group work, and class discussion |
| **Resources** | Junior/Intermediate Students, BLM 1.7, Chart Paper |
| **Time** | 60 minutes |

8. General Interpersonal Conflict Situations

| **Description** | Students role-play situations that often provoke interpersonal conflict in the primary classroom. |
| **Activities** | Group and pair work, role-playing, class presentations and discussion. |
| **Resources** | BLM 1.8 and BLM 1.9, Chart paper |
| **Time** | 45 minutes |

9. Four Ways to Remember

<p>| <strong>Description</strong> | Students examine four strategies for managing interpersonal conflict. |
| <strong>Activities</strong> | Shared Reading, pair work, individual study, class discussion |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Resources</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Managing Interpersonal Conflict (Evaluation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students assess their interpersonal conflict resolution strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BLM 1.10, BLM 1.11, BLM 1.12, BLM 1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Shared Reading

Texts Included in Module

Activity 1:

Activity 3:

Activity 4:

Activity 9:

Extension for Module: Suggested Texts

*Best Friend on Wheels,* Debra Shirley

*Best Friends,* Charlotte Labaronne

*Bully,* Judith Caseley

*Clancy’s Coat,* Eve Bunting

*Chrysanthemum,* Kevin Henkes

*Can you Be a Friend?* Nita Everly

*Dinah’s Mad, Bad Wishes* Barbara M. Joose

*Franklin’s New Friend,* Paulette Bourgeois

*How to Be a Friend,* Laurier Krasny

*How to Lose all your Friends,* Nancy Carlson

*Let’s Talk about it: Extraordinary Friends,* Fred Rogers

*Making Friends,* Fred Rogers

*The Best Friends Book,* Todd Parr

*The Recess Queen,* Alexis O’Neill

*The Fight,* Betty Doyle Boegehold
1. Friendship

**Learning Goal**
To understand the steps for making a friend at school

**Resources**
One copy per student of *Making a Friend* (BLM 1.1)
Enlarged copy of *Making a Friend* (BLM 1.1)
Shared Reading Text: *Will I have a Friend* By: Miriam Cohen
Enlarged copy of *Steps for Making a Friend* (BLM 1.2)
Folder for each student to keep the materials from the Module

**Time**
This activity requires approximately 40 minutes.

**Activity Plan**
1. **Introduce the module.**
   Present a rationale to your students for this interpersonal conflict module. Discuss with your students why you decided this module would be beneficial for the class.

2. **Students individually complete the Making a Friend self-assessment.**
   Give each student a copy of the *Making a Friend* (BLM 1.1). As a class, read the enlarged copy of *Making a Friend* (BLM 1.1). Have students independently colour the smiley face that best represents how they feel. Circulate among the students, specifically probing the students with learning disabilities for the reasoning behind their rankings.
3. **Introduce the topic of Friendship for the shared reading exercise.**
Introduce the topic of friendship to the class. Ask the class open-ended questions about making friends through a Think-Pair-Share exercise. (What and Who are friends)? In a Think-Pair-Share exercise, each student is given a few minutes to think about the question posed. Students should find a partner with whom they are comfortable, and each student then shares their thoughts on the questions posed. Circulate among the students to keep the conversation on task as the sharing should not take more than 6-8 minutes. Choose pairs to share their partners’ thoughts with the class. Form the pairs yourself if you are concerned about some students who may not be chosen by any classmate.

4. **Shared Reading of “Will I Have A Friend”: Introduce the text.**
Tell the students about the book and explain its use in making friends. Explain that after reading and discussing the book they will have an opportunity to practice the Friend-Making Skills that are used by the main character.

5. **Read the Story.**
During the story, ask open-ended questions for all of the students to answer or to think about. (For the Will I have A Friend Text):
   1. What does Jim want or who does he want to meet?
   2. Who are some of the people in his class?
   3. What does Jim enjoy doing?
   4. Who does Jim talk to?
   5. What did he say?
After the story, question the students about the feelings of the main character, Jim:
   1. How did Jim feel before he entered his class?
   2. When was Jim happy during the story?
   3. When was Jim nervous during the story?
   4. Who is Paul? How do you know?
You should not direct your questions strictly for the students with learning disabilities. Ensure that you observe the student (s) with a learning disability.

6. **Present steps for making a new friend as an interpersonal skill.**
As a class, read the Enlarged copy of *Steps for Making a Friend* (BLM 1.2). As a class, discuss each step according to the actions of the book. As a class, brainstorm a list of questions that could be asked. Keep this questions posted on an anchor chart.
7. **Students form groups of two.**
There are different ways of assigning students to pairs. For example, you may decide on student placement prior to class, students may be paired randomly, or students may find their own partners. As the present activity requires students to make a new friend, students will be more successful and comfortable if you choose the partners before the activity.

8. **Students assign roles within pairs.**
One student initiates the Steps for Making a Friend, while the other answers the questions. You will circulate the classroom, monitoring the discussion. Students within the pair will switch roles.

**Extension**
Students may wish to practice *Steps for Making a Friend* (BLM 1.2) in other contexts. Challenge the students to make a new friend during their recess break. Provide students with the opportunity to share this experience in their specific journal for this module, or by drawing a picture, or during class discussion.
Making A Friend

1. Do you like making friends? ☺ ☹

2. Do you know how to make friends? ☺ ☹

3. Do you like talking to new people in your class? ☹ ☺

4. Do you like talking to new people outside? ☹ ☺
Steps for Making A Friend

1. Choose someone
2. Smile and approach the person
3. Introduce yourself
4. Ask a question.
5. Listen to the person.
6. Suggest something to play or do together
2. Active Listening

Learning Goal
To understand the components of active listening.

Resources
Chart Paper with the Active Listening (BLM 1.3) template written out.
One copy per student of the Active Listening (BLM 1.3).

Time
This activity requires approximately 40 minutes.

Activity Plan
1. You will perform a role-playing exercise to model active listening to the class.
Select a typically developing student to share what has been happening in their life over the past week.
Model active listening by:
   - Looking at the student the entire time she/he speaks
   - Reacting to what she/he shares, without interrupting
   - Repeating back portions of what she/he shares to her/him.

2. Discuss the role-playing exercise with the class.
Ask the class what actions you took to show that you were listening.
On chart paper, answers would ideally address the following ideas:
   - LOOKS LIKE: eye contact, not walking away, not colouring or playing.
   - SOUNDS LIKE: one voice, no interruptions by the speaker
   - FEELS LIKE: speaker is happy, listener is interested and excited.
Post the chart paper at the front of the class, in a place that it can easily be referred to.
3. **Students generate a list of topics for conversation.**
As a class, have students generate a list of topics for conversation. Together, discuss how the conversations would be different for someone who you just met versus a close friend or family member.

4. **Students form pairs.**
You may wish to select the pairs before class so that the students with learning disabilities are working with typically developing students.

5. **Students role play active listening.**
Have students role play active listening in pairs with each other. Allow students one to two minutes for each student to talk about a topic from the list generated by the students.

6. **Students complete the Active listening activity.**
Independently, have students complete the *Active Listening* (BLM 1.3). Encourage each student to communicate what active listening looked, sounded like and felt like during their role-playing exercise with their peer. Encourage students to use pictures, words, and/or simple written messages.

**Extension**
Throughout the week, have students monitor their own conversations with their peers and friends. Provide blank copies of *Active Listening* (BLM 1.3) within the classroom for easy access. Encourage students to complete these sheets and attach them to their writing journal for this module.
# Active Listening

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOOKS LIKE...</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Eyes" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOUNDS LIKE....</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Ear" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FEELS LIKE....</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Heart" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. The Emotion Game

Learning Goal
To recognize the role emotions play in conversation. Students will explicitly examine the role facial expressions have in conversations and emotions.

Resources
Shared Reading Text: *The Way I Feel*
A pack of eight small cards for each group of four students. On each card write one of these words: Happy, embarrassed, interested, frightened, surprised, disappointed, sad, angry.

Time
This activity requires approximately 45 minutes.

Activity Plan
1. **Shared Reading of: The Way I Feel**
   **Introduce and Read the Story**
   Tell the students about the book and how it the illustrations demonstrate how the characters feel and how they act. Explain that after reading and discussing the book they will have an opportunity to play a game that identifies a variety of facial expressions.

2. **Discuss the Story**
   As a class, brainstorm the emotions found within the text. Discuss how the characters demonstrate these emotions through facial expressions in the illustrations.

3. **Model the Emotion Game**
   You will choose three students to join you in front of the class. Shuffle the Emotion game cards, and place them face down in the middle of the group in front of the class. You will take the top card and ‘act out’ the word written on it. The
other players must guess what the word is. If someone guesses correctly, that person receives a point. If no-one has guessed correctly, the card goes back into the pack and you will act out another card. The winner is the person with the most number of correct guesses.

4. Students form groups of four.
Small groups are needed for the small game in the next step. Generally, groups of four work well, as the group is small enough for everyone to participate but large enough for everyone to have a turn. The groups for this activity may be selected by the students.

5. Students play the Emotion Game.
Monitor the student engagement in the emotion game while circulating the classroom. Students should not have longer than 10-15 minutes to complete the game.

6. Students discuss the Emotion Game.
As a class, students discuss the emotion game. You will prompt the students in the class discussion with the following questions:
   - When you were playing the Emotion Game did you find it easy to guess which feelings were being expressed?
   - Were some easier to act than others?

7. Facial Expressions
As a teacher, discuss with students how sometimes we put on a particular expression on our face to send a message which may be quite different from the message in our words. Role-play the examples of: “No Test! Oh what a Shame!” And, “I love when you take my crayons when you don’t ask me.”

Extension
Throughout the week, allow students the opportunity to play the emotion game during class time. Encourage students to play with different peers.
4. What is Interpersonal Conflict?

**Learning Goal**
To understand the events in one’s own life that cause interpersonal conflict.

**Resources**
Shared Reading Text: *Sir Lofty and Sir Tubb* or *Talk and Work it out (Learning to Get Along)*
Chart Paper and Markers
Art Resources (Paint, Large Paper, Scrap Construction Paper, etc)
Extension Activity: Writing Journal

**Time**
This activity requires approximately 45 minutes.

**Activity Plan**
1. **Shared Reading of Sir Lofty and Sir Tubb OR Talk and Work it Out:**
Tell the students about the book and how it aligns with their activities on interpersonal conflict. Explain that after reading and discussing the book they will have an opportunity to creatively share their own interpersonal conflict skills as well as those that are used by the main characters.

2. **Discuss the Story**
As a class brainstorm the interpersonal conflict situations found within the text. Discuss how the characters deal with their conflict, describing the strategies used. Once students have exhausted the text, encourage them to brainstorm other strategies for the characters. Write these ideas on chart paper.
3. Students form groups of four.
Small groups are needed for the brainstorming that takes place in the next step. Generally, groups of four work well, as the group is small enough for everyone to participate but large enough to generate ideas. The groups for this activity may be selected by the students. Each group should choose a student to record their ideas on chart paper (through pictures and words).

4. Groups brainstorm interpersonal-conflict situations.
You may wish to structure the brainstorming by instructing students to think of interpersonal conflict situations in only one domain, such as outside at recess. Establish the following guidelines for group brainstorming: only one person should speak at a time, all ideas are acceptable, and names should not be used when specific individuals are discussed. As much as possible, students should think of personal instances when they were involved in interpersonal conflict. However, many students may be initially reluctant to state that they have any problems with interpersonal relationships. These students may feel more comfortable discussing interpersonal conflict that they have witnessed in others.

5. Groups present their chart paper to the class.
Each group reads their chart paper of interpersonal conflict situations that was generated. While the students share their ideas, make a master list of their examples. This class list will be used frequently in the module to help decide what problems are most relevant to student needs.

6. Students depict how they deal with interpersonal conflict.
Most students will have a pattern in how they respond to interpersonal conflict. Some students withdraw, others become hostile, show avoidance or seek compromise. These are only a few of the many possible responses to interpersonal conflict. In this step, give each student art paper and markers to draw or write about a situation when they had interpersonal conflict and how they reacted to the event. Their representation may take the form of a drawing, story, or a poem. The choices are limited only by the available resources within the classroom.
7. **Students display their interpersonal conflict strategies to the class.**
Students do not have to share their work individually as a presentation. Instead, have the students display their pieces so that their peers can circulate from desk to desk. Be sensitive to those students who do not want to share their work with others.

**Extension**
Students may wish to keep an “incident” journal, recording interpersonal conflict situations. These incidents may later be used in class discussions or for another sharing opportunity.
5. Introducing the Social Skill Literature Strategy

Learning Goal
The students will identify with a character, describe his/her behaviours, thoughts, and feelings. Through social stories, the students will be exposed to a technique that will address interpersonal conflict.

Resources
Enlarged copy of Scott and Sophie (BLM 1.4).
One copy per pair of Scott and Sophie’s Conflict (BLM 1.5).
Scissors, glue and blank booklets for each student
Art supplies

Time
This activity requires approximately 40 minutes.

Activity Plan

1. Review how the students deal with interpersonal conflict.
In the previous activity, students illustrated how they often deal with interpersonal conflict. You may wish to encourage students to display these creations as an introduction to this activity. During this sharing, list on the chalkboard/white chart paper, the various strategies suggested by the students in their depiction. During the discussion, help the students to think of the various categories, into which these strategies fall, for example, negotiation, avoidance, hostility, compromise and accommodation.
2. Read the Social Story.
As a class, read the social story *Scott and Sophie* (BLM 1.3). As a teacher, do not pose questions regarding the story. Instead, simply read the text out loud.

3. Students form pairs.
You may wish to select the pairs before class so that the students with learning disabilities are working with typically developing students.

4. In pairs, students create a social skill story.
Students create a social skill story by using *Scott and Sophie’s Conflict* (BLM 1.4). Students will cut and paste the sentences, illustrating pictures that depict the story.

5. Each student thinks of a new interpersonal conflict situation to discuss.
Introducing students to social stories may have developed the students’ ability to think about interpersonal situations individually. Encourage each student to write down or communicate another interpersonal conflict situation. These situations can form the basis for discussion in future classes, and also should be retained for Applying the Social Skill Literature Strategy used in Activity 6.

Extension
Students may wish to read their illustrated version of *Scott and Sophie’s conflict* to their family, other friends, as well as older peers (in a reading buddy program). Opportunities should be made so the students are able to do so.
Scott and Sophie

Scott enters the class and sees his best friend Sophie eating her favourite chocolate. Scott tells Sophie that he wants to have some as well because he was playing chase during the break and he is hungry.

Sophie refuses to give Scott some, because she says that she is hungry too and she does not have much chocolate left. Scott feels sad because he really wants to eat chocolate, so he tells Sophie that if she gives him chocolate he will give her some candies that he has in his bag.

They both feel very happy because they both got what they wanted and they are still best friends.
Scott and Sophie’s Conflict

Scott enters the class and sees his best friend Sophie eating her favourite chocolate.

Scott tells Sophie that he wants to have some as well because he was playing chase during the break and he is hungry.

Sophie refuses to give Scott some, because she says that she is hungry too and she does not have much chocolate left.

Scott feels sad because he really wants to eat chocolate, so he tells Sophie that if she gives him chocolate he will give her some candies that he has in his bag.

They both feel very happy because they both got what they wanted and they are still best friends.
6. Applying the Social Skill Literature Strategy

Learning Goal
Through social stories, students will create solutions for managing interpersonal conflict.

Resources
List of interpersonal conflicts generated from Activity 5
Enlarged copy of Social Skill Booklet (BLM 1.6)
Copy per student of Social Skill Booklet (BLM 1.6)

Time
This activity requires approximately 45 minutes.

Activity Plan

1. The class selects an interpersonal-conflict situation for discussion.
Students select a situation to examine as a class from the list of interpersonal conflicts generated in Activity 5. In this activity, however, the students will be the ones who explore the different strategies to resolve the issues.

2. Students discuss strategies to resolve the conflict.
In a Think-Pair-Share exercise, each student is given a few minutes to think about the conflict posed. Students should find a partner with whom they are comfortable, and each student then shares their thoughts on the questions posed. Circulate among the students to keep the conversation on task as the sharing should not take more than 6-8 minutes. Choose pairs to share their partners’ thoughts with the class. Allow the students adequate time to reach consensus about how to resolve
the conflict. If the discussion is prolonged, call for a class vote or emphasis the importance of having different solutions to a conflict.

3. **As a class, students complete an enlarged copy of Social Skill Booklet (BLM 1.6).**
   As a class, you will direct the students to take the interpersonal conflict situation and complete a Social Skill Book through an enlarged copy of (BLM 1.6) on chart paper.

2. **Students form pairs.**
   You may wish to select the pairs before class so that the students with learning disabilities will be working with typically developing students. In addition, there is a large demand on the writing ability involved in completing this activity.

3. **Student pairs create a social skill literature book.**
   Together, the students walk through Social Skill Booklet (BLM 1.6) worksheet. Circulate the classroom, encouraging both students to participate actively in the process.

4. **Pairs create a social skill story based on the worksheet.**
   Based on the worksheet, students create a social skill story. In pairs, students will present their story to the teacher as they complete the activity.

**Extension:**
Students may wish to laminate and finalize these books for the class library. In addition, they may want to hear the books written by their friends. You can organize an author afternoon, in which students share their final pieces.
Social Skill Booklet

Page 1: Introduce the characters

Page 2: Explain the problem

Page 3: Explain how the characters feel

Page 4: The solution

Page 5: Explain how the characters feel
7. Other Strategies: Compromise and Accommodation

Learning Goal
To learn about other interpersonal conflict strategies, specifically compromise and accommodation, used by junior and intermediate students

Resources
Junior/Intermediate Students as guests in the classroom
*Interpersonal Conflict Scenarios for Primary* (BLM 1.7)
Chart Paper

Time
This activity requires approximately 60 minutes.

Activity Plan

1. **Invite a junior/ intermediate teacher to participate in this activity.**
   Invite a class of junior/intermediate students who are prone to interpersonal conflict but have developed the skills of compromise and accommodation. In order to ensure that these junior/intermediate students have these skills, ask their classroom teachers to make observations on their interpersonal conflict strategies. At recess, monitor these students. Visitors should be comfortable speaking with younger students in an age appropriate manner. Brief these students about the purpose of the exercise so that there will be a clear focus on interpersonal conflict
strategies. In a meeting with the junior/intermediate students, work through some of the examples as a group before they work with the primary students.

2. **Students form the same number of groups as there will be classroom visitors.** You may wish to select the groups before class so that the students with learning disabilities will be working with typically developing students. The number of visitors you invite will depend on the number of students in your class and the availability of visitors.

3. **Visitors present interpersonal conflict scenarios to the groups.** In Activity 3, students have generated a list of interpersonal conflict scenarios. You can choose to provide the visitor with four of these scenarios. However, there is also the *Interpersonal Conflict Situations for Primary* (BLM 1.6) worksheet provided in this activity. The teacher’s script below focuses on how you might begin this step.

Today, we are having some _____ students visit our class. The visitors are going to present four interpersonal conflict scenarios. The purpose of this activity is to see what kinds of strategies people use to manage interpersonal conflict successfully. With the visitors’ help, your group will find solutions to the interpersonal conflict scenarios. These solutions will be recorded on chart paper, using pictures and words.

4. **The visitors present the interpersonal conflict scenarios.**
Gauge how much time to allow for all of the scenarios and share this limit with the students before they start the discussion.

5. **Each group summarizes the visitors’ comments and group discussion for each scenario.**
After each set of scenarios, each group should prepare a summary of their strategies on chart paper. As much as possible, the summary should concentrate on the strategies used for dealing with the interpersonal conflict. Although the visitor stays with the group for the entire activity, the visitor should be directing the conversation, not talking at the students.
6. The class discusses the different strategies employed for each scenario.
The class discussion will help connect the different strategies available for interpersonal conflict. Initially have the class consider each scenario, with each group reporting what was discovered in their discussion. Once all of the information has been collected, shift the thinking to the strategies people use to control interpersonal conflict.

Extension
Without the visitors, have students practice the scenarios throughout the week. Choose different groups each time. Allow for class discussion on each scenario with the different groups.
Interpersonal Conflict Situations for Primary

Scenario 1:
You are not invited to a classmate’s birthday party. Your best friend is invited. You are jealous and get mad at your best friend.

Scenario 2:
Two students see a marker and try to pick it up at the same time. They get mad at each other.

Scenario 3:
Matt’s two friends are swinging outside. Matt wants to swing too, but there are not enough swings.

Scenario 4:
Randy sits beside two friends eating lunch at school. He tries to talk to them. They ignore him.
8.
General Interpersonal Conflict Situations

Learning Goal
To role-play some of the situations that often provoke interpersonal conflict in the school setting.

Resources
A teacher copy of Interpersonal Conflict Teacher Modeling (BLM 1.8)
Student copies of Role-Play Scenarios (BLM 1.9)
Chart paper

Time
This activity requires approximately 45 minutes.

Activity Plan
1. Role-play a seated situation with a partner to the class.
   If possible, ask another teacher or adult to assist you in this modeling. Alternatively, prepare a typically developing student prior to class to help you model this activity. Remain seated throughout the role-play. The lack of action helps students focus on the strategy rather than on the mechanics of acting. A situation is provided for your modeling in the Interpersonal Conflict Teacher Modeling (BLM 1.8). As much as possible, work through this conflict using more than one strategy (accommodation, compromise, hostility, avoidance) with the students.
2. Randomly distribute the Role-play Scenarios (BLM 1.9) to the student pairs.
One situation is given for seated practice. Within Role-Play Scenarios (BLM 1.9), there are 10 scenarios. It is important that at least two pairs are given the same situation. The situations focus on general interpersonal conflict problems that often arise at school for primary students. However, to make this activity more authentic, it may be beneficial for you to monitor your students for interpersonal conflict scenarios that occur within your own classroom. Students with a learning disability should be paired with typically developing students.

3. Pairs practice the role-play scenarios.
Once the pair has received a scenario, the students practice their role-play. On chart paper, students will write/illustrate their solutions to the interpersonal conflict. Circulate among the students to give support for the use of more than one strategy for dealing with conflict.

4. Pairs share their role-play resolutions to the other pair with the same role-play situation.
Students form groups according to the situation that they practiced. Once the groups have been made, pairs share their chart paper strategies to each other. Students discuss why they chose each strategy.

5. One pair per group demonstrates the situations for the class. One pair per group shares the strategies for interpersonal conflict resolution.
Display a copy of the situations to the class during student demonstration. Ensure that students remain seated for the role-plays. After each presentation, lead a discussion of the strategies, organizing each strategy according to (negotiation, compromise, hostility, accommodation and avoidance). At this time, it is important for you to highlight the consequences of each strategy. Ensure that the students do not think that all strategies are equal. Instead, focus on how hostility and avoidance can create more interpersonal conflict in a friendship.

Extension:
Have students create social story booklets based on the role-play scenarios. Add these books to the classroom library, and have students bring these books home for further reading opportunities.
Interpersonal Conflict Teacher Modeling

Amanda’s best friend said she would come over after school. She didn’t come. Amanda feels hurt.
Role-Play Scenarios

Scenario 1: When Jill tells a friend that her goldfish died, she starts to cry. Her friend laughs.

Scenario 2: Sam is playing at recess. His little brother tries to play with him. Sam does not want to play with him.

Scenario 3: Jacob saved up for a year to buy a special book; Jacob lets his best friend borrow the book. When the book is returned, the pages are torn.

Scenario 4: Jamie and Andy are best friends. A new student, Matthew tries to make friends with Andy. Jamie gets upset.

Scenario 5: It’s Nick’s birthday party. He wants play a game and two of his friends want to do something else.

Scenario 6: Sean’s two friends are playing soccer and not letting others play.

Scenario 7: Matthew lines up after recess. Kaeden pushes him so he can be first.

Scenario 8: Alex and Lily are colouring a picture. Alex starts calling Lily’s picture stupid.

Scenario 9: Jason and Luke start pushing their friend Michelle in line. Michelle falls and is hurt.

Scenario 10: David and Anthony are partners for a project. Anthony does not want to do anything, and tells David to finish the project.
9.

Four Ways to Remember

Learning Goal
To understand and apply four specific strategies (compromise, negotiation, hostility and avoidance) for resolving interpersonal conflict.
To understand the consequences of using these four strategies.

Resources
Shared Reading Text: *Enemy Pie* OR A Text from *George and Martha: The Complete Stories of 2 Best Friends*
Chart Paper
Materials for creating a poster.

Time
This activity requires approximately 45 minutes.

Activity Plan
1. Shared Reading of Enemy Pie OR A text from George and Martha: The Complete Stories of 2 Best Friends
Tell the students about the book and how it aligns with their activities on interpersonal conflict. Explain that after reading and discussing the book they will have an opportunity to creatively share their own interpersonal conflict skills as well as those that are used by the main characters.

2. Discuss the Story
As a class brainstorm the interpersonal conflict situations found within the text. Discuss how the characters deal with their conflict, describing the strategies used.
Once students have exhausted the text, encourage them to brainstorm other strategies for the characters. Write these ideas on chart paper.

3. **Demonstrate how to address an interpersonal conflict situation using the four specific strategies (compromise, negotiation, hostility and avoidance).**

Ask the students to brainstorm a list of interpersonal conflicts they experienced over the past day at school. Have a class vote to determine which scenario to use for your demonstration. On a chart paper, write out four examples that demonstrate each strategy solution.

3. **The student selects one strategy from the list of solutions.**

After the discussion, the student chooses a strategy that they feel most comfortable with. Once they decide on the strategy, the student creates a poster reflecting this strategy. Students can use illustrations and words to highlight how this strategy can resolve or increase interpersonal conflict. Students can post their work around the school, or choose to create a classroom book.

**Extension**

Throughout the week, provide students with the opportunity to create another poster to different interpersonal conflict scenarios that they have experienced. Do not limit the interpersonal conflict scenarios to school life, encourage students to think about scenarios in different contexts (at home, baseball, hockey, girl guides, etc).
10. Managing Interpersonal Conflict

Learning Goal
Formative assessment of student’s interpersonal conflict resolution strategies.

Resources
Copies per student of BLM 1.10, BLM 1.11, BLM 1.12, BLM 1.13

Time
This activity requires approximately 45 minutes.

Activity Plan
1. Briefly review the four strategies to interpersonal negotiation. (Compromise, Negotiation, Hostility and Avoidance).
Without a lengthy discussion, briefly review the four strategies for resolving interpersonal conflict. Highlight the consequences of all four strategies. Ensure that students with LD understand that hostility and avoidance may increase interpersonal conflict.

2. Students independently complete (BLM 1.10-1.13).
This formative assessment contains four different activities. This activity does not have to be implemented at the end of the module. Instead, these activities can be used as assessment for learning throughout the module. By implementing these activity sheets, you can identify where the students level of understanding is, provide feedback, and adjust instruction to meet their needs.
Using Compromise

How I look:

A time when I did this:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Pictures of others doing this:
Using Negotiation

How I look:

A time when I did this:

Pictures of others doing this:
Using Hostility

How I look:

A time when I did this:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Pictures of others doing this:
Using Avoidance

How I look:

A time when I did this:

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Pictures of others doing this:
References


doi:10.1177/002221948902200207


http://www.dundee.ac.uk/eswce/research/projects/socialcompetence/definition

