

## Strategies for Teaching Social and Communication Skills

How to be an effective classroom teacher?

This presentation provides several examples of evidence-based instructional strategies for social skills and communication. It teaches you about the hidden curriculum within learning environments, and that individuals with exceptional learning needs and styles may need direct instruction for unspoken aspects of social skills. It teaches you about typical speech, language, and social skills development. Moreover, it provides multiple ways of assessing social understanding and gives examples of formal and informal speech and language assessments through different enchanting and effective games and strategies. In this twenty min workshop we will use some of the easy icebreakers and communication games used in an inclusive/differentiated classroom in order to inspire and motivate the learners. Finally, if a child in the classroom is really struggling socially or academically, a teacher should learn more about his interests, cultural background, and learning style and communication is the best tool that helps teachers to point out all the above.

It is about little things in terms of your approach; your attitude; your practice. They could change how you feel when you speak in front of others. The workshop targets primarily one type of communication. Not the one that you plan for in advance, the type that you actually spend time thinking about or you might be creating slides for as in the formal presentations. It is about spontaneous speaking, when you are asked to speak on the moment. What we're going through is actually the result of the notion of responding to "COLD CALLS when a teacher looks at some students and asks: "what do you think about what I have just mentioned?" and there is a lot of panic and a lot of silence. So as a result of that, a hybrid collection of activities and ice breakers

are suggested to enhance self-confidence and strengthen the feeling of being a part of the group. The reality is that spontaneous speaking is actually more relevant than planned speaking; perhaps it is **giving introductions**: you are in a dinner and someone says: you know so and so ... would you mind introducing them? Maybe it is **giving feedback** on the moment when your boss asks you: tell me what you think... or finally it could be during the **Q&A** session. So our goal is simple, in order to be an effective communicator, regardless if it is planned or not, you need to have your anxiety under control by what we call breaking the ice.

A study from Chapman University asked Americans what are the things that you fear most and among being in a surprise terrorist attack, having identity card stolen, public speaking was among the top 5. This is a big fear and I believe they can manage. And I used the word manage very carefully because I don't think we want to overcome it. Anxiety actually helps us, it gives us energy, keeps us focused and tells us what we're doing is important but we should learn how to manage it. Thus, communication and speaking in front of others is a hard task and the teacher as a communicator should facilitate this process by preparing a healthy environment in the classroom where each individual feels secured and respected. We've all had teachers who were considered "Super" but who in fact they were boring in class or who were unable to engage the students in the classroom. Widen your effective communication skills in the classroom and watch how your students become more engaged and your classroom a more fun place to teach and learn as well.

There are many components of communication: receiving, expressing and socializing. The easiest and the most traditional way is receiving and we all know the details of this passive method. However, the most challenging way is expressing and socializing, it is challenging for both the teacher and the learner. The teacher's role is more like a communicator and a facilitator

in the classroom where he should set the environment for communication. This is the need of all that all the human beings; the need to listen and be listened to, the need to feel good about oneself and raise the self-esteem. Consequently, you need to slow down and listen in order to understand the domains and the requirements of the situation that you find yourself in in order to respond appropriately. Teachers as communicators should listen and listen carefully to be in service of their students and understand their needs. No matter how many years of experience you have don't think that you know what is going on through your student's mind. If you're not having the results you expected it may be you missed something that you could easily resolve just by asking and listening. The key to success is questioning in its dialogic form where the teacher provides structure to the students and setting goals for everything which helps to set expectations and clarify everything. Make sure you communicate a clear form of the objective you wish your students to achieve. If you see any hesitated looks from the class, explain again, or ask one of your students to explain in their own words what they understood is the purpose of the lesson (project, homework) so you can double-check if everyone is on track. You have an important job to do and your students depend on you for their learning process. Let them know you care by offering time during the week where they can meet with you for any questions they may have regarding class work. You can also give them a special email address you have set up for this purpose or create an online forum for open questions by using apps like google class. You don't have to offer "24-7 service" but make sure they can reach you if they need to. Everyone likes to hear they're doing a good job and your students also do. If you see someone having real difficulty with a specific subject it is especially helpful to praise even small improvements, as it will motivate your student to keep pushing forward towards the goal. If your whole classroom is working together to achieve similar goals it creates an environment that

makes communication easier, it will help students help each other and build the friendship needed to make the classes run more smoothly and effectively. So introduce new tools in your teaching: use role-play, bring an expert, tell a story, play a game, solve riddles, ask if questions, ask “would you rather...” questions, do an interview, prepare a debate or make your students research and teach the subject. Non-stop lectures will only make whatever you’re teaching less memorable for students. Sometimes use humor since it can lighten up the mood. This does not mean you have to turn your lecture into standup comedy, but keep things light and have a little fun. A little humor can even get your students to do a task that may not be their favorite. Variety is the spice of life and routines are mood killers.

Students who are able to study and receive new content may still have difficulty using it appropriately in various situations and contexts. There are so many strategies, techniques, variations, exceptions and differentiation to navigate and keep track of. Some students are able to manage all complexities; they pick up clues from watching others in a social context. Other students are not able to pick up on their own and will need direct instruction about the social cues happening around them and what to do about this. Consequently, the need to use different activities and techniques is alarming and the 21<sup>st</sup> century student and teacher are struggling to get into this communicative world and at the same time they need to reach the outcomes of learning. Communication and social skills are engaging they lead to positive connections with others, reduction of conflicts and a sense of belonging. For everyone to have equitable chance for this, the social environment or the community should be based on the concept that everyone should be valued and is able to express meaningfully. When a teacher creates a healthy classroom community where students want to interact and know one another, he or she has created an

environment where communication and social interaction is highly effective and serves the goals of teaching.

Communication is the process of receiving and expressing speech and language. Social skills form the framework to use the language. Students might struggle in one of these areas and they need specific support to be fully engaged at home, school and community settings. A creative teacher should focus on the hidden curriculum where he or she can create magic skills to develop appropriate social and communication skills.