Behaviour for Learning Policy

Statement of Intent

Our vision is to deliver a learning experience for each pupil which encompasses each of our core values: Citizenship, Learning to Learn, Aiming High, Respecting Ourselves and Others and, most importantly, Enjoying Learning.

Each child, irrespective of background or academic ability, has the right to access an engaging and stimulating curriculum, within a safe, secure and nurturing environment. At the heart of our curriculum is our belief in creativity, diversity and aspiration for all. We believe that children should not be limited by labels and have created this curriculum to inspire, enthuse and engage all of our pupils and their families, working in partnership with parents and carers. We also aim for them to acquire experiences within the local and wider environment irrespective of personal socio-economic circumstances.

We are conscious of the responsibility of schools in shaping well-rounded individuals who are confident learners willing to take risks and have the knowledge and skills necessary to be a 21st century citizen. We have incorporated opportunities to develop leadership and collaborative skills, and to utilise our setting fully, including the rich locality as a wider campus.

By the end of their primary education, we want our pupils to be aware of their responsibility in shaping the future as life-long learners, as well as having pride in what they have achieved with us.

ETHOS

We expect and work towards a well-disciplined and ordered environment creating effective conditions for learning and promoting high standards in terms of behaviour. Children, staff (including volunteers, TAs and MDAs) and parents will support each other in creating a community where all can reach their potential. We believe that pupils, staff and parents/carers at Clare Community Primary School have the right to be treated with respect and courtesy and we should be building an inclusive and tolerant environment for all. We recognise that good behaviour comes from good relationships between children and staff: mutual respect and trust, empathy and tolerance.

PURPOSE

- To ensure an ethos of high expectations;

- To encourage resilience and risk-taking within a secure and supportive learning environment;

- To provide pupils and staff with a secure, well-ordered environment;

- To ensure that clear boundaries support learning and progression;

- To ensure a clear dialogue with pupils about potential barriers to learning;

- To secure the involvement of parents/carers in pupils' learning and personal development;

- To promote and support the development of a range of personal qualities and interpersonal skills such as courtesy, respect and sensitivity to the needs of others;

- To encourage self-regulation;
- To build self-esteem and robust mental health;
- To promote the development of good personal relationships and tolerance towards others;
- To promote equal opportunities and value individuals regardless of gender, race, Special educational needs or disabilities (SEND).

BEHAVIOUR FOR LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

Pupils will:

- **Have a positive attitude** and be engaged in their learning;
- **Respect** themselves and others, and respect their learning environment;
- **Be responsible** for their own actions, learning and belongings;
- **Be resilient,** learning from their mistakes and take pride in their achievements;
- **Have good listening** behaviour- being attentive and facing the speaker, and following instructions promptly;
- **Follow** agreed class and whole school expectations.

Parents/carers will:

- Promote a positive attitude towards learning and the school community;
- Ensure children arrive at school on time and that they attend school every day that the school is open and available;
- Remember that we are all working together towards the same goals;
- Notify the school straight away regarding any issue concerning behaviour;
- Attend parents' evenings and support their children with any home learning
- Support the School's decisions regarding behaviour, whilst retaining their right to appeal against any decision with which they disagree;
- Treat all members of staff with respect.
- Refrain from discussing any issue on social media, instead speaking face-to-face with your child's class teacher in the first instance, in line with our open door policy.

Staff will:

- Implement the Behaviour for Learning policy with consistency and impartiality;
- Establish a positive learning environment in their classrooms appropriate to individual needs;
- Encourage children to make sensible choices within the school;
- Give children the opportunity to change inappropriate behaviour;
- Label the behaviour but not the child;
- Use a sanction appropriate to the misdemeanour and the individual, taking into consideration the needs of children with SEND;
- Build children's self-esteem and try and find out the reasons behind unacceptable behaviour;
- Notify parents of any patterns of unacceptable or unusual behaviour.

Foundation Stage

Children in this year group will have a version of these expectations and sanctions appropriate for their development and understanding (Appendix I).

SEND Pupils

These pupils will be expected to follow this policy to the best of their ability but we recognise that they will need extra support in doing this, and there may be occasions where these expectations will need to be adapted for an individual pupil's emotional and behavioural development. These will be made explicit within their School Support plan and should include strategies such as the use of Social Stories to teach understanding of the appropriate behaviour within different social situations. Whole class approaches to behaviour regulation will be inclusive and follow SEN strategies. All staff should follow the strategies and script outlined here:

PRE-EMPTIVE

- Use **social stories** to prepare child for new events/changes/transitions/to introduce desired outcomes;
- Use **visual timetable**;
- Use **Now/next** task sheets;
- Don't make issue of what haven't achieved or done- ignore low-level poor behaviour, focusing on positive;
- Identify a **safe place** where the child feels calm and relaxed;
- Prepare a **calm-down box** of resources.

PERSONALISED

- Develop a bespoke routine for your child, building in `chill` time at beginning of morning;
- Join in with whole-class lessons/routines where possible;
- Provide Nurture Room adult with targets and expectations for tasks;
- Teachers' planning should reflect the child's School support plan: a child working significantly below chronological age should have *separate planning* linking to PKS objectives if necessary; children working no more than a year behind should be marked on whole-class planning with *access arrangments* explained;

SEND BEHAVIOUR- A CLEAR STRATEGY AND SCRIPT

ENCOURAGE SELF-REGULATION

- Use **Colour Monster/Zones of Regulation** resources to enable children to describe their current state `I can see that you are happy now because…`
- **Display pictures** to link these emotions to the child;
- Encourage children to start linking emotions and behaviour.

IF BEHAVIOUR ESCALATES:

- Try to distract;
- If the child loses control, encourage them to go to their `safe place` to calm down. Follow at a distance and do not confront; Give them time to calm down, remind them of strategies to do this;
- Record this behaviour;
- Use a social story to unpick triggers;
- Reflect on triggers to inform future provision.

Positive Behaviour Reinforcement

The School uses a variety of strategies in order to ensure that all children can follow the Behaviour for Learning Expectations. Rather than the emphasis being on punishing children for disruptive behaviour, we seek to teach skills to control their behaviour. We recognise that there often is a correlation between SEND and behaviour that is not acceptable within a whole-class situation and so we explicitly teach children our expectations of behaviour within a whole-class environment, how to interact with other children and adults in the dinner hall, on the playground or in different areas of the school. We use the terms and resources from the Zones of Regulation Programme as well as `The Kids' Guide to Staying Awesome and in Control` by Lauren Brukner and `The Colour Monster` to support our teaching.

> *The Zones is a systematic, cognitive behavioural approach used to teach self-regulation by categorizing all the different ways we feel and states of alertness we experience into four concrete colored zones. The Zones framework provides strategies to teach students to become more aware of and independent in controlling their emotions and impulses, manage their sensory needs, and improve their ability to problem solve conflicts.*
>
> *By addressing underlying deficits in emotional and sensory regulation, executive functioning, and social cognition, the framework is designed to help move students toward independent regulation. The Zones of Regulation incorporates Social Thinking® (www.socialthinking.com) concepts and numerous visuals to teach students to identify their feelings/level of alertness, understand how their behavior impacts those around them, and learn what tools they can use to manage their feelings and states.*
> www.zonesofregulation.com

We also teach the children what is good listening behaviour, and how to put their points of view across in a non-aggressive and confrontational way. We do not assume that all children have these skills before they enter our classrooms. Please see Appendix IV for more information on this thinking. In KS1, this is done via a 5 minute catch-up before or after a lesson. In KS2, part of the class assembly is used to explicitly explore self-regulation, but the level of support children will need to depends on their own strengths and weaknesses.

As a whole school, we offer these strategies to promote our behaviour expectations within our school community:

- A weekly celebration assembly of our core values: Community and Citizenship, Learning to Learn, Aiming High, Respect for Ourselves and Others, and

Some examples of unacceptable behaviour	Some classroom management strategies which might be used by staff
Distracting others	Tactical ignoring
Calling out	Removal of equipment
A persistent lack of attention	Giving children a choice
Moving round the classroom / school without permission	Verbally warning children
	Positive reinforcement of good behaviour
Not following/disobeying instructions	Giving time-out or take-up time
Misusing equipment	Sending children to an agreed class*
Talking back to staff (incl TA and MDA)	Docking time from break/lunch* / rewarding
Lack of manners e.g. pushing past others	others' good behaviour

> Enthusiasm for Learning, through assemblies; Gold Certificates, a mention in the Kindness book (run by the School Council) and Headteacher's certificates for excellent standards in learning and social behaviour;

- PSHE lessons explicitly teaching behaviour regulation e,g, `The Colour Monster` in EYFS and Key Stage 1 and the `Zones of Regulation` in Key Stage 2;
- House Points are awarded on merit, and used in different ways by individual class teachers;
- The School Council help to maintain and regulate high standards of behaviour throughout the school, for example, by supporting their peers during lunchtime and break times, fostering positive relationships and patterns of behaviour.

- Structured and planned emotional support from adults to encourage self-esteem, self-confidence and motivation; such as acting as a personal mentor and meeting with a child on a regular basis.
- We encourage shared responsibility throughout the school by encouraging older children to buddy younger pupils. (Year 5 Reception buddies, KS2 pupils partnering younger pupils on trips (COVID), mixed age groups within curriculum enrichment days)
- Year 6 prefects model good behaviour and support younger pupils in the corridors and at lunchtimes and breaktimes; likewise, Young Leaders;
- Individual Behaviour Plans (IBP) / Pastoral Support Plans for children ;

- Specific use of outside agencies such as CISS (County Inclusion Support Service) to provide focused support for individuals;

Classroom and wider school behaviour

Figure 1: Low-level behaviour which would be dealt with by the classroom teacher and support staff

these sanctions should not be used repeatedly and reviewed if they have little or no effect on behaviour

Initially, it is the responsibility of teachers to investigate patterns of poor behaviour more deeply; they should begin a dialogue with parents of children who develop a pattern of low-level behaviours that become a barrier to their learning. I

f this pattern continues it is important to formalise an in-class Individual Behaviour Plan with the agreement of the Leadership Team (Appendix II) and instigate regular dialogue/meetings (see p.8). Underlying issues should also be explored via the Cause for Concern process.

As children in the school become used to a culture of self-regulation and social thinking, the need for Behaviour Plans should decrease.

Figure 2: High-level behaviour (Non-compliance after all strategies have been used)

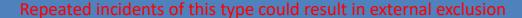| **Serious behaviour incidents needing the involvement of Leadership Team** |
|---|
| Repeated defiance of adults/single act of serious defiance of class teacher or repeated refusal to follow instructions |
| Aggression/threatening behaviour (includes self-harming) |
| Swearing / spitting at / biting a member of staff or child |
| Racial prejudice |
| Bullying |
| Theft |
| Dangerous items/substances |
| Deliberate damage to school property |
| Children leaving the classroom or place of learning without permission |

Staff use range of agreed strategies and child is still uncompliant

Call member of Leadership Team

Child is internally excluded/has other form of consequence
Incident is logged by Leadership Team and parents are informed

Repeated incidents of this type could result in external exclusion

Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will instigate a PSP for child, involving parents and class teacher

Exclusions

These are a last resort, and should only be used for one of the infractions listed in Table 2 above.

Exclusion means that a pupil is removed from normal lessons and prevented from mixing with other members of the school community. Exclusions may be conducted internally or externally depending on the severity of an incident. Exclusions can vary in length according to the nature of the breach of policy and will take into account the age of the pupil.

During an internal exclusion, the child will be withdrawn from their class group and supervised by a member of staff while they complete work set by the class teacher.

A final decision will be made by the Headteacher as to whether external exclusion is an appropriate course of action, after discussion with the Leadership team, and a thorough investigation with all involved (see next section). The Chair of Governors will be informed of any external exclusion.

External fixed term and permanent exclusions will be conducted in accordance with this Policy and statutory guidelines.

After an external exclusion, a reinstatement meeting will be conducted by the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher or a member of the School Leadership Team with the pupil and his or her parents or carers. The pupil's class teacher may be present.

Investigations regarding breaches of the Behaviour for Learning Policy
Before any decision on external exclusion is reached, a thorough investigation should take place.
1. Investigations will be conducted under the guidance of the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher. All those involved in the incident should write a statement. Statements should also be gathered from witnesses where appropriate.
2. Once an investigation has taken place, documentation should then be passed to the Headteacher who will make the final decision about the most appropriate action for the pupil(s) involved, and parents will be informed of this decision.

Aggression and violence
1. Aggressive or violent behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated at Clare Community Primary School. Staff will make a professional judgement as to whether behaviour breaches this guideline. An incident does not need to result in physical harm for it to instigate serious sanctions. Incidents will be investigated and, where necessary, the pupil may be internally or externally excluded, depending on the severity of the incident and age of the pupil.
2. Where there is violence, or where there is an attack by a pupil on another, then external exclusion may be used, depending on the context and age of the pupil. Persistent offenders may face permanent exclusion. In extreme cases the pupil may face permanent exclusion for a first offence.
3. Verbal abuse or verbal or physical threats against staff will be investigated and will result in a fixed term internal or external exclusion. Depending on the severity of the situation, verbal or physical threats against staff may result in permanent exclusion.
4. Physical violence towards staff will result in fixed term exclusion and may result in permanent exclusion, depending on the severity of the incident and age of the pupil.

Defiance of staff
1. Defiance of staff will not be tolerated.
2. Defiance could lead to either an internal or external exclusion from school. Continued defiance may result in a longer period of exclusion.
3. In extreme cases, such as repeated defiance of the Headteacher, pupils could face permanent exclusion.

Swearing
1. Whilst swearing is regarded as verbal abuse and is unacceptable, we recognise that younger children may experiment with language without malicious intent.
The following sanctions apply:
    a. Swearing overheard in conversation with another pupil; the member of staff will provide a consequence and ensure that the pupil is aware that their language was inappropriate;
    b. Swearing directly at a member of staff or child: the situation will be investigated according to the policy guidelines. Swearing at a member of staff will result in an internal exclusion;
2. Second and/or subsequent offences will attract a longer period of internal exclusion.

Damage to the school fabric or furniture
1. If the damage is accidental, there will be no charge. If the damage is the result of silly behaviour, parents/carers will be informed and the cost of repair/replacement will be shared between those involved.
2. Deliberate or malicious damage will result in the full cost of replacement or repair and, depending on the incident, further sanctions including internal or external exclusion may result.   Serious offences may result in permanent exclusion.

Dangerous items and substances
1. Pupils are not allowed to bring dangerous items into school. This includes items that could constitute a weapon or substances such as cigarettes/e-cigarettes, aerosols or anything which could be deemed illegal or dangerous.   Pupils who do so will be internally or externally excluded for a fixed period, depending on the nature of the offence.   Very serious offences may result in permanent exclusion.
2. The police will be informed in all cases where a dangerous weapon or substances deemed as illegal are brought onto the school site.

Theft
1. Theft will attract either internal or external exclusion depending on the severity of the offence. Persistent or very serious offences may lead to permanent exclusion.   In addition, the cost of those items that have been stolen will be recovered from the pupil involved.
2. The police will be informed when appropriate.

Setting off the fire alarm without threat of fire
1. Setting off the fire alarm or damaging fire protection equipment is a criminal offence that puts the health and safety of pupils and staff at risk. Any pupil who intentionally sets off the fire alarm will be internally excluded for one day.
2. However, second and/or subsequent offences will attract a longer period of exclusion. In the case of persistent offenders permanent exclusion may be considered.

Behaviour on school trips and public transport
Pupils on school trips, visits and on buses are representing Clare Community Primary School. Pupils are expected to follow the Behaviour for Learning Policy. Pupils and staff will also be expected to adhere to the rules and expectations of the establishment of they are visiting.

Where a pupil's conduct does not fit into any of the areas stated previously but disturbs the learning environment, puts pupils or staff at risk, or affects Clare Community Primary School in any detrimental way, internal or external exclusion will be considered. Depending on the severity of the incident pupils could face permanent exclusion.

Individual Behaviour Plans (IBP)

1. When a teacher finds a pupil is struggling to comply with 'The Behaviour for Learning Policy' and deems it appropriate, the pupil may be given an IBP.   These should be written by teachers with the involvement of the SENCO or the Deputy Head and need to be shared with parents.
2. A master list of IBPs will be kept in the Headteacher's Office and teachers need to ensure that it is kept updated.

Pupil Support Plan

1. Pupils who are internally excluded on a number of occasions, or externally excluded, as a result of poor behaviour will be placed on a Pastoral Support Programme. This will be drawn up in partnership with parents/carers and the pupil and entail fortnightly meetings between families and staff throughout the monitoring period. If behaviour continues to deteriorate further action will be taken, utilising the support of outside agencies. There would be the possibility of further fixed term exclusions, for longer periods of time.

Record keeping and contact

1. Each teacher should keep an informal Behaviour Log for reference prior to contacting parents, and in preparation for Parents' evenings.
2. MDAs on lunch duty will keep brief notes in a notebook which will be shared with class teachers if necessary.
3. Detailed records of all formal contact with pupils and parents must be recorded. These records are vital in terms of providing evidence for further action and support.   In the case of high-level incidents of the kind noted in Figure 2, a formal behaviour log of incidents will be kept by the Leadership Team; this Behaviour Log needs to be kept updated by and will be regularly reviewed by the Head Teacher so that trends can be noted.

Lunchtime behaviour

Behaviour at lunchtime is covered by this Policy. (*See Appendix III)*

Bullying

See Anti Bullying Policy.

Racist Incidents

See Racist Incident Policy.

APPENDIX 1

Clare Community Primary School

Pupil Expectations, Consequences and Rewards – Foundation Stage

1) Time out within classroom or within another KS1 classroom. Staff liaise with parents/carers if appropriate.

2) For persistent, repetitive misbehaviour, the child will be taken to the Key Stage Lead for time out and the incident will be logged. Teacher to record incidents in own class book.

3) When appropriate, an IBP will be written in consultation with parents.

4) For the following issues children will be taken to see the Head and parents will be informed: a) hurting other children or staff e.g., biting, spitting

    b) rudeness and swearing to/at other children or adults

    c) damaging school property.

    d) Repeated defiance

CLARE COMMUNITY
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Targets:	To do my computer reading programme when I come into the classroom each day.
	To do as I am asked to do within a few minutes
	To not go out of the classroom unless I have a permission or am using my `time-out` card
Support:	You may use your `time out` card once in a lesson. You may use it to go and sit in the KS2 shared area for up to 5 minutes.
	You will have a special tick chart to fill in after each session. You may take a copy of this home each night.
	At lunchtime, you will be directed to help in the ICT room if available.
Reward:	If 3 ticks are earned, then at 3pm Xxxx can go down to Year 1 and read a story to a child,
Signatures and Date:	Xxxx_____ Class Teacher_____ Parent_____

APPENDIX III (reviewed by the School Council)

LUNCHTIME Playground Procedure

Key Stage 1 Expectations:

- Keep your hands and feet to yourself;

- Be kind and gentle;

- Be a good friend;

- Stay to the agreed areas on the playground/field;

- Do as you are asked;

Key Stage 2 Expectations:

- Play sensibly – no rough games, no play fighting;

- Use kind words – no swearing, no teasing, no shouting close to someone;

- Be safe and move safely around the playground, playing sensibly and being a good role model;

- Be a good friend and include others;

- Stay to the agreed areas on the playground/field;

- Keep ball games under control and to the agreed areas.

We expect everyone to clear up after themselves in the dinner hall.

We expect everyone to listen to the MDAs and Sports Coaches and follow their instructions.

When the whistle blows, stand still. Walk to the line on the second whistle.

Procedure:

1. If a child is not following these rules they will have a reminder of behaviour expectations.

2. If behaviour continues, this will be followed by a warning. If appropriate, this will be shared with the class teacher.

3. If poor behaviour on the playground continues, then a member of the Leadership Team should be made aware.

4. Serious incidents will be brought to the attention of the Leadership Team immediately.

If there is an incident involving extreme violence, for example, a fight or a safety concern, then a member of the Leadership Team should be called immediately.

APPENDIX IV

Social Emotional Self-Regulation: Why It Doesn't Involve a Behavior Plan
Michelle Garcia Winner, MA, CCC-SLP
Oct 14, 2019

A couple of years ago I was asked to write a marketing quote for a book intended to help kids learn to self-regulate. I was eager to read it but was disappointed to discover it was mostly discussing behavior management systems teachers could use in their classrooms to encourage children to "behave"! I didn't write the quote, but I did start thinking much more deeply about the process involved in helping students learn to self-regulate and how this is very different from encouraging students to behave.

What's the difference between learning to control behavior and self-regulation?
Our behavior is what others observe us doing. To a limited extent, we can teach kids to behave in a specific manner, around specific people, etc. This is especially the case for adults who are controlling an individual's external reward system. However, self-regulation is more complex and internal to self. It requires us to develop social competencies that guide us to socially attend, interpret people in context, problem solve how to respond, monitor how our behavior is being perceived, and adjust as needed to meet our own personal social goal(s) and/or the collective shared goal of the people in that context. Self-regulation arises from within us; behaviorally based teaching of social skills is external to an individual's personal decision-making process.

All behavior observed by others is, in fact, social behavior, as the behavior impacts how observers feel, think, and possibly react and respond. Students on behavior plans are traditionally told (by adults) what they are expected to do, and the adult expectation is that they do it. Behavior plans are not designed to teach a student how to decide when to use a behavior or set of behaviors and how our behavioral responses likely impact others' emotions. Different

types of behavior plans rely on extrinsic motivators (e.g., tokens, rewards, praise, etc.) to kick off the process of helping kids learn to modify their context-specific behavior. Behavior plans may also include visual supports and explicit verbal and visual cues to provide feedback to students about how they are performing the behavior. Desired behaviors are usually reinforced through external rewards chosen to increase student motivation to produce the behavior. Simultaneously, the student is discouraged from producing non-preferred behavior through negative reinforcement or withholding rewards. A well-trained behaviorist would avoid the use of punishment altogether within a behavior plan.

Effective use of behavior plans

There are valid reasons for utilizing behavior plans and there are valid reasons for developing social competency-based treatment plans. Interventionists need to know what approach to use with which type of individual and when. From our experience, behavioral management techniques are commonly utilized and often effective in the following situations:

- To teach students who have not yet, or may never be able to, develop social self-awareness, how to produce desired social behaviors or possibly strings of behaviors to help them better function in an individual or simple group task. This may include:
  - School-age individuals with poor joint attention, who have limited language and very weak social awareness of themselves and others.
  - Preschoolers who are struggling to socially attend to any direct teaching without external rewards (not all preschoolers need explicit rewards to engage in social collaborative behaviors).
- To remind typically developing preschool children of the social behavioral expectations for a specific context. For example, a classroom teacher uses external rewards (a gold star on a chart, a specific compliment to a student, etc.) for learners in her class who are quietly sitting and listening to the teacher as a way to encourage the entire group to focus on quiet sitting and listening as important and expected classroom behaviors.
- To encourage rapid learning and production of specific pro-social behaviors, with students whose behavior is deemed grossly inappropriate, destructive and/or dangerous within the setting or group.

It's possible for behavior plans to miss the mark

When using behavior plans to promote pro-social behaviors with this latter group (students who are more socially aware), even the most experienced behavior management specialist will often run into difficulty, especially when working with students ages 9 and older. These more aware students often find the behavior plan is lacking. With its singular focus on the production

of behavior, it neglects to teach students about "everything else" they need to learn that is connected to their own thoughts, feelings, and behavior as well as others' emotions, thoughts, feelings, and behavior in a specific context. Most behavior plans don't help students understand:

- The complexity of the social situation; how the social world works in that context.
- How the student feels emotionally about the situation and what's happening.
- How to interpret what others in the situation are saying or doing.
- Areas in which the student is struggling to learn.
- Strategies the student can use to figure out a social situation.
- Deeper cognitive challenges the student may face related to weak affective and/or cognitive perspective taking, central coherence and/or executive functioning challenges.

For example, "Jess" is in middle school and is overwhelmed by the curriculum in most of his classes. It's too complex for him to handle. Jess has a history of getting agitated, shutting down in class, and refusing to work when he's overwhelmed. The interventionists who know Jess consider him to be a bright but sassy student who often acts like a "know it all." They think the only reason Jess isn't completing his written work is that he chooses not to. So they assume it's a "behavior problem" and the solution is a behavior plan. The plan is put in place to encourage Jess to be productive (e.g., complete his assignments) by giving him a reward for writing a paragraph or asking for help.

Sounds reasonable, right? In reality, Jess is overwhelmed with the complexity of the written language process. It's not that he "won't" do the work; he "can't." He struggles to come up with a topic sentence and figuring out what to do with the many different ideas in his mind: which to use/not use, how to organize them, and how to put them into words on paper in a way that makes sense. The more Jess is pushed to write, the more anxious he becomes. He demonstrates his anxiety by making mean-spirited comments and telling people he doesn't care about getting rewards or having points taken away for his negative attitude. The adults remind him to ask for help if he's unsure of what to do, but the fact is that Jess doesn't know what he needs help with; he's swimming in uncertainty before he even gets started. Adults tell Jess he's being rude. This makes him more frustrated and further stressed. Given his personality and developmental age, Jess often deals with his stress by cracking jokes. And, he's clever at finding holes in the behavior plan. He'll produce behaviors the behavior plan intended to eliminate but did not directly state as such. This further infuriates the teachers and assistants. Jess is ultimately directed out of the classroom for more serious disciplinary actions.

Jess clearly was struggling because he lacked basic executive functioning skills needed for

written expression. But a lack of skills is not always the case with challenges faced by our more socially aware students. Another student, "Georgia", flat out says "no" when asked to participate in behavior-based treatment programs designed to teach students specific stimulus-response, memorized, pro-social behaviors to use when relating to peers or in a group setting, such as a classroom. In situations where Georgia winds up in such a treatment program, she tries to undermine the entire group. As with Jess, Georgia is viewed as a "behavior problem." It came as a surprise to the interventionists when in a meeting with Georgia to address her poor participation and refusal to do the classroom work, that she replied, "I could teach the other students how to do this; I'm way beyond this learning level. I don't want to be in this class!" The reality is that Georgia is anxious and stressed; she thinks people perceive her as far more socially inept than she actually is. The lessons being taught to all students in the class are relevant to the more literally minded students, but they are not relevant to her given she is already fairly competent at this more basic level of social functioning.

It's important to keep in mind that extrinsic, behaviorally based teaching can be effective for many individuals with limited learning capacities or for children too young for a language-based, cognitively based learning approach. However, more sophisticated social emotional learners find that behavior plans fail to teach them the social competencies they need. It is these competencies that steer their course and set their sails for a lifetime of coping and social problem solving. Social competencies rather than social skills, guides them through adolescence and into the adult social world of competitive employment, changing family dynamics and the expectations that come with maturation, relationship development, and figuring out how to manage themselves across familiar and unfamiliar settings. Keep in mind that in the adult world there are no behavior plans, such as those we use with school-age students. They're not part of the adult world of employment, co-existing in the community or attending a university. During the school years if a student has problematic behavior, we call a meeting to figure out how to design a treatment plan. In the adult world the police are the first to be called.

Levels of the social mind and why we need to avoid assumptions based on standardized testing

Over the years, my colleagues and I who take the lead in evolving the Social Thinking® Methodology began to notice patterns that helped define different learning levels associated with the social mind. We developed the Social Thinking-Social Communication Profile™ to describe these levels. The Profile outlines six different cohorts of social learners from Significantly Challenged Social Communicators at one end to Neurotypical Social

Communicators at the other. These six levels represent the spectrum of social learners. Our purpose in mapping out these different levels of the social mind was three-fold: 1) to help interventionists understand the broad spectrum of social awareness and understanding; 2) to help interventionists get a clearer picture of where a specific student functions on the spectrum of social cognition; and 3) to bring light to the differing treatment needs, including mental health issues, that are associated with these different levels of social learning. As part of the Social Thinking Methodology we seek to sort out how different students with similar diagnostic labels (e.g., autism spectrum disorders [ASD]) learn socially based information differently and how individuals with different diagnostic labels learn social information in a similar manner (e.g., one individual diagnosed with ASD may appear very similar to another individual diagnosed with ADHD, and also behave similarly to another student considered to have oppositional defiant disorder).

Based on our clinical experience, we also observed that by adolescence there is a positive correlation between higher levels of social self-awareness, higher levels on our Profile, and a tendency toward even more compelling mental health challenges (anxiety, depression, etc.) than those with lower social self-awareness and ability to interpret socially based information.

The research has yet to define how different levels of self-reflection or social self-awareness differ across the spectrum of social learning. That said, over the last 15 years we've witnessed a flood of research about different aspects of anxiety being tied to different types of ASD (van Steensel, et. al, 2017). Without a doubt, even more subtle forms of persistent social anxiety and/or sadness related to social learning challenges impact a student's ability to form and sustain relationships, while also impacting the treatment process. There are a number of research articles describing how persons with "higher functioning" ASD experience more compelling anxieties (Joyce, et. al, 2017).

Gauging students' social learning abilities is not something interventionists (e.g., speech-language pathologists, psychologists, teachers, occupational therapists, behaviorists, etc.) are taught how to do. Compounding matters is that interventionists responsible for developing treatment plans for social learners may make assumptions about their learners' social abilities that miss the mark. These treatment plans are often based on a social learner's diagnosis, measured level of academic intelligence, verbosity/use of language, IQ, etc. Assumptions that are based on diagnosis or presumed level of intelligence fail to take into account the often-pervasive social learning challenges these students face. Why? Standardized testing fails to measure social competencies (Kraper et al., 2017) and social competencies are not well defined in the behaviorally based descriptions of different mental health challenges in diagnostic

manuals such as the DSM-5 or ICD-10. Even our distinction between "high functioning autism" and "Asperger's syndrome" type functioning is just beginning to be more fully explored (de Giambattista, et al., 2019), despite these diagnoses being no longer part of the autism spectrum disorder category in the DSM-5.

Think about it: no standardized tests currently available gauge a person's level of social self-awareness or that person's ability to coordinate and carry out complex socially based goals and study plans (executive functioning). Furthermore, any existing socially based tests are largely conducted in controlled settings, outside normal social situations that shift and change within seconds.

Socially self-aware students are active social interpreters, often focused on trying to figure out how others think and feel about them. They have solid to high-level language skills and solid to strong IQ. That sounds good but, from our experience, the end result doesn't measure up. These students may be able to understand what they expect from others and understand that people have thoughts and feelings about them. However, this is typically coupled with weaker insight about their own role in the social equation. They don't really understand what it is they may be doing that is subtly off the social mark. This makes them more agitated and possibly paranoid about being with others. These individuals may be diagnosed with ASD level 1 (or previously Asperger's syndrome), ADHD, language learning challenged, and/or considered twice exceptional, etc. They may be making subtle or not so subtle social errors based on weaker-than-expected perspective taking and social problem-solving abilities, which then lead to problematic responses in dynamic social contexts. Telling socially self-aware students how they should behave and rewarding that behavior may be counterproductive toward helping these students achieve their social goals. A behavior-based treatment program can undermine our students' motivation to think deeper, dig deeper and look more closely at what's happening around them and how to navigate their own related social response(s).

What does it mean to learn to self-regulate?
An alternative to using behaviorally focused lessons to foster social learning is to teach strategies that guide our students toward their own self-regulation. What is self-regulation? In short, it's a process internal to one's self that involves "controlling one's behavior, emotions, and thoughts in the pursuit of long-term goals" (Cuncic, 2019).

Self-regulation is a catch-all term, what we describe as an "everything term" much like the terms "executive functioning", "perspective taking" or "social communication." Like these

other terms, self-regulation encompasses many moving parts (meaning it's synergistic) and we are expected to self-regulate differently in the same environment when the context changes (meaning it's dynamic). It's a process (meaning it spans time) through which we learn to control our emotions, thoughts, physical sensations and ultimately our behavior (including social language, facial expressions, gestures, etc.) to meet whatever goal is put in front of us, whether it's our own (individual goal) or a collective goal of others' choosing.

To view self-regulation as "one thing" and then try and teach someone to simply "self-regulate" is like expecting an orchestra conductor to conduct a symphony with one musician who may have limited talents playing his or her instrument.

Self-regulation takes many different forms. They include but are not limited to:

1. Emotional self-regulation: we learn to manage negative and/or big emotions.
2. Social self-regulation: we learn social competencies to meet our own social goals. These goals can be diverse ranging from relationship development to being part of a team to sharing space effectively.
3. Personal self-regulation: what we do to accomplish a specific task or assignment. It may be something we choose to do (e.g., play to win a lot of points in a computer game) or something someone else assigns to us (e.g., homework assigned by a teacher; a project assigned by a manager, etc.).

For typically developing individuals, our ability to acquire capacities toward different types of self-regulation is developmental; our brains are able to help us manage ourselves better in complex situations over time. For many of us, our core ability to self-regulate our emotions and social responses starts in early childhood, evolves intuitively and then continues to evolve across our lives. That said, most individuals encounter times in their lives where the situation challenges our ability to self-regulate. As we age, we are faced with growing self-regulatory demands that can feel absolutely overwhelming at times (e.g., college finals, complex friendships, disturbing social media comments made about us, inability to excel at a sport or game, being turned down for a promotion, breaking up with a partner, etc.). Virtually all of us benefit from learning strategies to help us through different aspects of this journey, such as how to:

- Understand how the social world works.
- Better read and interpret internal signals and sensations from our bodies that include, but are not limited, to our feelings and sensory systems.

- Better understand how our own and others' social mind works and how to navigate through expectations from our teachers, bosses, friends, or spouses across a range of contexts and dilemmas.
- Regulate our feelings and behaviors to be able to work in the social world and accomplish our social goals.

All aspects of self-regulation require us to have meta-awareness and meta-cognition. Meta-awareness is our ability to be actively aware of what we are thinking and feeling about what we are experiencing. Meta-cognition is our ability to think explicitly about our choices, how others may have a different point of view or expectations, and how to problem solve to decide how to manage ourselves and others to achieve our goals and help others meet their goals. Meta-awareness and meta-cognition rely on internal language (using self-talk) to imagine different options for our future, as well as learn from our past errors and triumphs. Self-talk is a powerful language-based tool our brain uses to think about our own and others' thoughts and feelings, imagine choices and possibilities, and reframe or reformat certain experiences inside our own mind so they make sense and we learn from them. This internal thinking and problem-solving process is a huge part of self-regulation.

Expressive and receptive language abilities (in addition to interoception, which is the ability to feel and understand what's happening inside your body), are pre-requisite to navigating through how our social mind works and our body feels in different situations. Teachers need these abilities to teach about social self-regulation, and social learners need these abilities to learn about themselves and others. Students with augmentative communication devices who can express complex ideas, thoughts, and emotions through these devices are considered to have solid expressive and receptive language, right alongside their peers who express themselves to others verbally. Students who are not able to use language to learn and who are unable or have limited ability to express their ideas through language are not strong candidates for self-regulation curriculums. Behavior programs built on extrinsic motivators and rote repetition of social skills are more suited for this population, who will have less sophisticated but still meaningful outcomes. The goal in any treatment program is to help individuals make meaningful progress when compared to their own baseline abilities.

Ultimately, learning strategies to understand hidden social expectations and problem solve to self-regulate involves being socially aware of the situation and what is known about the people in that context. It also depends on developing self-awareness of our own behavior and how it impacts others. It involves learning to self-monitor and manage our emotions, thoughts, and behaviors no matter where we are to achieve one or more goals. Over time and with experience

we exhibit self-control with greater efficiency and predictability, and we achieve our goals with greater ease. Continuous self-regulation across all aspects of our lives is a holy grail most of us never fully achieve. Our abilities ebb and flow across time, situations, and the people we encounter.

Social Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: helping individuals navigate to regulate in the social world

Cognitive behavioral approaches help individuals learn about their thoughts and feelings and this, in turn, can directly impact their behavior and foster their ability to self-regulate. Often referred to as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), its origins are in helping individuals with mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression learn to think differently about their experiences as a means to change aspects of their behavior. More recent research supports the use of CBT with persons with ASD (Luxford, et al., 2017).

Being socially competent requires more than simply having social self-awareness. It also means we have to decipher unspoken social expectations to understand how best to respond. This dynamic process of social interpretation and problem solving involves spontaneous theory of mind—that split-second processing we do to figure out our own and others' intentions, feelings, and thoughts, and then formulate a social response.

Interventionists who are helping individuals develop their social competencies may benefit from utilizing a CBT framework. Its focus on helping individuals better understand themselves is a natural segue for helping learners figure out not only how the social world works but how we each can work in the social world. A CBT framework opens up conversations and learning about situations, people's roles in different situations (e.g., teacher, friend, boss, etc.), people's intentions, and any shared goals that exist among participants in the situation. Shared goals may be to hang out together, work on a team project, learn in a classroom, or host a birthday party. Since the social world is both dynamic and synergistic, students benefit from learning strategies to be flexible thinkers. [Flexible thinking](#) allows them to consider different options and evolve in their choices as they gain a deeper and more mature understanding of the ever-shifting social dynamics around them.

The Social Thinking Methodology is grounded in SCBT

Attempting to explicitly teach some if not many of these social dynamics requires an extended CBT approach that we refer to as Social Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (SCBT). SCBT provides layers of social learning about **how the social world works** as well as **how to work (navigate to regulate) in the social world**. Many parts of the Social Thinking Methodology

explore and explain aspects of the social world and reiterate the necessity to slow down to study it. This is accomplished through many different treatment frameworks included in our books and materials:

- Four Steps of Perspective Taking and Four Steps of Communication (*Thinking About YOU Thinking About ME,* 2nd Edition, 2007).
- Social Emotional Chain Reaction (*Social Behavior Mapping Revised Edition,* 2019).
- The Friendship Pyramid (*Socially Curious and Curiously Social,* 2011).

Interventionists and social learners are also encouraged to explore the social world through our four-step social learning framework, the **Social Thinking-Social Competency Model**. In this model students are taught to attend, interpret, problem solve and respond to figure out any social situation and how to respond and interact within it. The Model is explained in more detail in our free article and webinar.

We also offer the unique Social Thinking Vocabulary—a user-friendly way to teach and talk about complex social concepts. The vocabulary includes terms such as people have thoughts and feelings, reading the group plan, thinking with your eyes, body in the group, brain in the group, making a smart guess, size of the problem, etc. These and other vocabulary are explored and talked about in our books, *We Thinkers! Volume 1 Social Explorers* (2013), *We Thinkers! Volume 2 Social Problem Solvers* (2016), *Think Social!* (2008), *Social Thinking and Me* (2016), and our free webinar series, *10 Core Concepts*, which is part of our webinar library.

When learning to navigate to regulate within the social world, the Social Thinking Methodology helps all students learn anxiety management strategies that include, but are not limited to, emotion regulation strategies that are a part of *The Zones of Regulation* (Kuypers, 2011) and social self-regulation strategies that are explored in our *Superflex®…A Superhero Social Thinking Curriculum* (2008). Other regulation strategies and frameworks include the Spirals of Social Success and Spirals of Social Failure discussed in our book, *Socially Curious and Curiously Social* (2011), understanding the relationship between the size of our problem and reaction size, and building our perspective taking skills. These are all building blocks to acquiring stronger social competencies. Ultimately, individuals are learning to "be comfortable with discomfort" as they not only develop strategies to navigate in the social world but also strategies to navigate their emotions, anxiety, and possible sadness or depression.

Alongside what we are teaching our students, interventionists need tools that help them help their students. The Social Thinking Methodology provides qualitative Informal Dynamic Social Thinking Assessment tasks (*Thinking About YOU Thinking About ME, 2nd edition*) that

help interventionists gauge students' current level of social understanding and social functioning and their ability to socially self-regulate. The methodology also includes materials with explicit instruction on helping students self-manage their organizational goals. This requires working with students on related abilities in executive functioning, perspective taking, central coherence, etc.

Emotional self-regulation, social self-regulation, and personal self-regulation all require different layers of teaching over time. Each layer must be sensitive to the developmental age, academic learning abilities, social learning abilities, and personality of students. Social norms and expectations change as we grow and evolve as human beings. There is nothing quick about teaching students core knowledge and strategies they can use to navigate themselves in the social world. We are giving them tools they can use not just today, but in all situations across their lifetimes.

Teaching social learners about any and all aspects of self-regulation is a journey, not a sprint. Keep that in mind as you explore this journey not only with the individuals you are teaching, other interventionists on their team and also within yourself!

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