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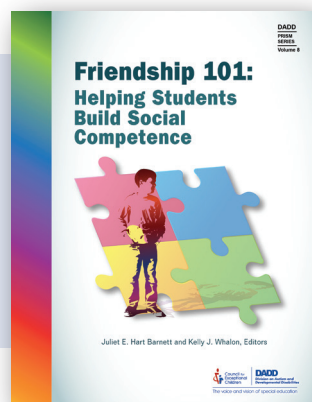
Friendship 101: Social Competence

Students with disabilities often have difficulty acquiring social skills, and these challenges can continue throughout the school years. As a result, **social competence** skills are important instructional goals for their K-12 education. This reference guide supports general and special education teachers, service providers, parents, and caregivers in their efforts to address the social development of students with disabilities by providing a complete program of step-by-step, evidence-based instructional strategies for assessing social competence skills.

Friendship 101:
Helping Students
Build Social
Competence

Juliet E. Hart Barnett and Kelly J. Whalon, Editors

This reference guide is developed from content in Friendship 101: Helping Students Build Social Competence, edited by Juliet Hart Barnett and Kelly Whalon.

find out more

What is Social Competence?

Social competence is a complex skill set influenced by a number of factors (for example, our own and others' social competence abilities; social requirements of various contexts). Social competence skills can be assessed using a multiphase and multistep approach beginning with standardized assessments and then incorporating ecological and functional assessments.
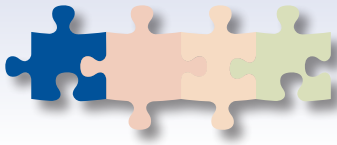
Assessing Social Competence

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Phase 1: Standardized Assessments

Use standardized measures to comprehensively evaluate the student's strengths and needs across all developmental areas and domains. This will provide a broad picture of how a student is performing compared to typically developing peers.

find out more

2

Phase 2: Eco-Behaviorial Assessment

Directly observe social skills in naturally occurring social interactions.

- **STEP 1:** Identify situations and activities that provide social opportunities.
- **STEP 2:** Identify social materials to incorporate into social competence instruction that provide opportunities for interaction with peers (toy preferences, enjoyable activities, best times of the day, topics of conversation).
- **STEP 3:** Identify socially competent partners. Increase chances for success by pairing students with partners of the same gender, similar age, familiarity, and who possess the cognitive and social abilities required for social competence.
- **STEP 4:** Identify context-specific social competence skills. The type of activity governs the socially appropriate behaviors. Directly observe the activity and identify the skills that socially competent peers display.

3

Phase 3: Naturalistic Observation

Observing students interacting with their peers is the most direct method of assessment.

- **STEP 1:** Observe students' social competence skills and determine how they match up with the social skills required for success.
- **STEP 2:** Identify motivating consequences. Understanding the reason for the social interaction and what happens before and after can help determine what motivates or reinforces the interaction. What are the consequences that maintain students' appropriate or inappropriate social skills?

Supports and Resources

- Enlist school support staff (school psychologists, special educators, paraprofessionals, volunteers, local university college students) to observe social communication, monitor progress, and record data.

- Investigate using iPad/iPod apps for collecting data.

Behavior-Tracking Applications for iPad/iPod

| Application	Web site	Description	Cost
Intervals, duration, and frequency apps	www.elocinsoft.com/intervals	elocinSoft has three applications available. One collects interval data ($9.99), one duration data ($4.99), and the third frequency data ($0.99). Data is exported via e-mail, iTunes, or Dropbox, and is accessible in Excel.	$0.99 $4.99 $9.99
Autism Tracker Pro	www.trackandshareapps.com/Autism	Tracks and graphs frequency data. Exports graphs via e-mail, Dropbox, iCloud, or Twitter.	$9.99
ABC Data Pro	cbtaonline.com/drupal/welcome	Tracks frequency and interval data. Data is exported via e-mail and is accessible in Excel.	$27.99
Behavior Tracker Pro	www.behaviortrackerpro.com	Tracks and graphs behavior. Used to collect frequency, duration, and interval data. Data is exported via e-mail and is accessible in Excel.	$29.99
BehaviorSnap	https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/behaviorlens/id459755410?mt=8	Tracks and graphs behavior. Used to collect frequency, duration, and interval data. Exports graphs via e-mail.	$29.99
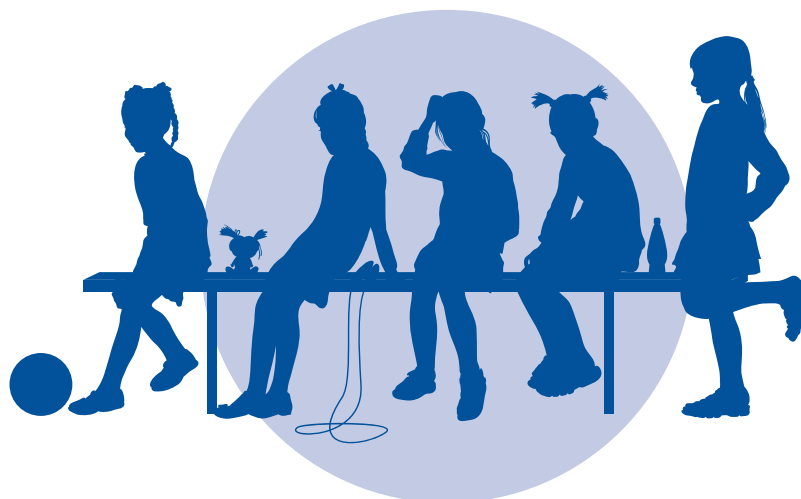
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About the Book

The eighth volume of the CEC Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities' Prism series, *Friendship 101* focuses on building social competence, friendship making, and recreation and leisure skills among students with autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disabilities. Chapters in this evidence-based, user-friendly guide address the needs of students in different developmental periods (from pre-K through young adulthood), providing teachers, parents, faculty and teacher educators with tools and strategies for enhancing the social skill development of these children and youth. Presented through an ecological perspective, together these chapters emphasize building social competence within and across school, home, and community contexts.

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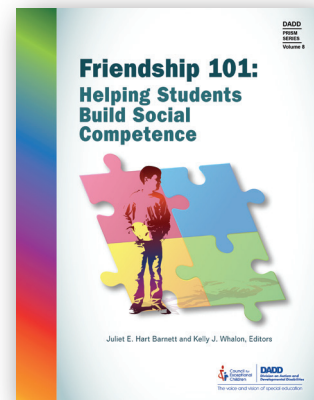
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