

METHODOLOGICAL GUIDE

ON MODULE 1: SOCIAL SKILLS

SOCIAL „SURVIVAL“ SKILLS

Expected results:

- To acquaint teachers with social survival skills;
- Students under the guidance of teachers to learn the basic social skills of getting attention, listening, following directions and instructions, ignoring distractions, using appropriate language, time management, etc.
- To enrich the methodological toolkit of teachers with interactive methods and techniques for getting out of situations, engaging students' attention and maximum involvement on their part in the learning process.

THEORETICAL BASICS

PEDAGOGY OF CELESTIN FREINET AND THE ACQUISITION OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION AND PERFORMANCE SKILLS

Celestin Freinet's pedagogy does not offer a strict methodological framework for work. It relies on following the fundamental principles and pedagogical invariants/constants, and the teacher is free to find the best path for himself and his students. Freinet emphasizes practical activities to reach theoretical summaries, the proactive participation of the student in the cognitive process, giving the student the right to choose in the learning process, which is, however, tied to taking responsibility for the final result, developing skills for *joint work*, *to lead discussions* and *make common decisions about school life*.

Learning should be enjoyable. “Philosophers who have pondered the meaning of life and the destiny of man have not paid enough attention to the fact that nature herself has taken upon herself the effort to enlighten us in this respect. It warns us with a precise sign that our destination has been reached. That sign is joy ... wherever there is joy, there is creation: the more fruitful it is, the deeper the joy.” (A. Berson). Learning is pleasant if it does not require unnatural effort and futile labor on the part of the students and pointless effort on the part of the teachers. If learning is not enjoyable, if it reproduces the attitude that work is always difficult because it is unpleasant, learning becomes a means of punishment

Learning should be a game. “With the exception of whales, we are probably the only creatures of God who play all their lives. And because of this fact, we are lifelong learners. The day we stop playing, we also stop learning.” (W. Glasser)

Those who oppose work and play have forgotten that play can also be difficult, but that does not make it an unpleasant activity. Moreover, any game can be conceived as a means of learning, and that learning always implies playing (as far as we have accepted that the game is a simulation of reality), because at least its last phase requires the training of skills in simulated situations.

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On the other hand, if we perceive play as an internal (intrasubjective) synthesis of thinking and emotions in images (internal or external), then play (playing) possesses consciousness and gives rise to imagination. Learning is always accompanied by spontaneous (authentic) images through which knowledge becomes accessible and personally experienced. Just like the very concept of "education" is etymologically related to the concept of "image" to show that this process is the human way to shape the natural endowments and abilities.

Training should instill security through the mutual agreement of terms and conditions of work, criteria and means of assessment, imposing an atmosphere of trust and mutual assistance. And although learning, as we have already pointed out, is born with the nature of play, it is inappropriate to draw analogies between learning and extreme games and sports.

Creating a safe social and ergonomic environment can make it possible to orient students to explore their experiences and build a community of inquiry in the classroom. The creation of a safe social and ergonomic environment is a mandatory condition for the full development of diverse forms and ways of knowing.

Training should orient the student to experiential learning. Learning that is detached from the experience of the learner does not lead to learning, which, once again, confirms the thesis that the development of man is the development of his experience. Experience is what we understand in the everyday sense of the word as acquired knowledge of reality, based on practice (unity of knowledge, skills and attitudes). As experience is gained through practice and research, it is given a key place in the learning process, because learning that is disconnected from the unity of knowledge, skills, and relationships is disconnected from the realities that make up the natural object of knowledge.

From this point of view, the existence of academic disciplines in the reduced format of accessible sciences should be reconsidered. Thanks to experiential learning, knowledge appears in its immediacy and ability to be available to the student's individual consciousness. And since experience implies research, it initiates doubt and problematization of the obvious, provokes the need to share individual discoveries and seek others as partners in the process of knowledge.

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Thus, the construction of the class as a research community and the implementation of philosophical propaedeutics in all levels of the school could be not only strokes towards a futuristic education. The student's experience is also the interpersonal (and multicultural) terrain that mediates or hinders the understanding of interpersonal social interactions. It can be a source both for strengthening social stereotypes and prejudices, and for their problematization. Achieving understanding, cooperation and agreement between the student and the social environment is possible if the educational practice is organized so that the student's own experience and the experience of others in the group are present as a kind of source of educational content. Personally perceived or retold, the experience acquires the dimensions of learning content, which, of course, cannot be fully formalized in the educational programs and controlled by the teacher, but nevertheless has the real dimensions of the experience. Educational programs that are tailored to the advantages of this type of source of information - the inexhaustible resource of what is shared in the process of communication (the experience of students, their parents, relatives and relatives) have a peculiar valence for achieving understanding between different social communities and groups.

Training should be aimed at overall activation of the person's perceptions and abilities. Teaching should offer methods that naturally involve the student in the learning process. It is unnatural for the process of knowledge to be carried out through prolonged monologues and instructions of the teacher. It is known that the emphasis on certain perceptions and abilities of the personality at the expense of others does not lead to full-fledged learning, i.e. to the acquisition of new behavior. The constant insistence that children should read more and specifying the exact type of information source (most often a textbook or a book) needs to be reevaluated. Behavior is made up of interrelated components that correspond to the four types of general abilities—intellectual, emotional, social, and physical. Training that claims to provide optimal conditions for learning must take into account (depending on the specific situation) the overall nature of the behavior that the student is expected to acquire. In the activation of the different perceptions related to the mentioned abilities and the search for an appropriate balance between internal and external activity in the cognitive act can be found part of the magic of the so-called interactive learning.

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Teaching that is based on learning through experience requires the use of methods that lead to increased cognitive, social and emotional activity of students.

In general, these are learning methods that are based on play (didactic and role-playing games, dramatizations), dialogue (discussion, discussion, brainstorming), research (observation, experiment, work on a research topic or project) and practical activities (exercises, situational methods - case study and analysis of situations, work on social projects). To these we can add the variety of techniques for organizing interactions in the class, through which cooperation and working ability in the group are improved.

TYPES OF SOCIAL SKILLS

We can group them into four areas:

1. *Survival skills* (e.g. listening, following directions, ignoring distractions, using pep talk or pep talk, rewarding)
2. *Interpersonal skills* (e.g. sharing, asking permission, engaging in an activity, taking your turn)
3. *Problem-solving skills* (eg asking for help, apologizing, accepting consequences, deciding what to do)
4. *Conflict resolution skills* (eg, dealing with ridicule, loss, blame, abandonment, peer pressure)

SOCIAL SKILLS FOR SURVIVAL

When we googled definitions of 'social survival skills' we found that they were not associated with 'creativity', 'critical thinking', 'imagination', 'sharing', 'collaboration' and 'listening'.

When a student plays a board game with a peer or adult (parent or otherwise), they learn to share and take turns. When he joins his friends for a soccer game, he practices cooperation. When he participates in conversations with his peers and teachers, he learns to listen and communicate. Through his interactions with friends, teachers, family and even strangers, he unconsciously hones a range of social skills, from following directions to understanding emotions.

We can conclude that it is a question of *social learning*, which happens in meetings and communication with people, but also in activities realized independently such as e.g. reading a

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book, listening to music, entering game formats in various professional or social roles – e.g. of doctor, teacher, fireman, cook, but also father, mother, etc.

A good command of social skills is crucial for coping successfully in school and subsequent functioning in life. The extent to which children and adolescents possess the appropriate set of social skills can affect their academic achievement, behavior, social and family relationships, and participation in extracurricular activities.

Social skills are also related to the quality of the school environment and school safety. Although most children learn social skills through their daily interactions with adults and peers, it is important that educators and parents reinforce this casual learning with direct and indirect instruction. We must also recognize when and where children pick up behaviors that may be harmful to their development or safety. In the past, schools relied exclusively on families to teach children important interpersonal and conflict resolution skills. However, the increased negative influence of society and the demands on family life require schools in our time to partner with parents in a new way to facilitate this process of social learning.

With a full repertoire of social skills, students will be able to make social choices that will strengthen their interpersonal relationships and increase their success in school. Some implications of applying social skills include:

- A positive and safe school environment.
- Resilience of children in future crises or other stressful life events.
- Students who seek appropriate and safe ways when aggression towards them occurs.
- Children who take personal responsibility for promoting safety at school.

The consequences of a lack of social skills lead to difficulties in interpersonal relationships with parents, teachers and peers. These students elicit highly negative reactions from their peers, who often ignore, isolate, or reject them. However, peer rejection is often associated with school violence, signs of depression, aggression and anxiety. It can also lead to the demonstration of poor academic performance as an indirect consequence.

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According to some authors, **the main social skills important for survival and successful interaction** in the school and wider social environment are:

- **Anger management skills**
- **Skills in recognizing/understanding the point of view of others**
- **Social problem-solving skills**
- **Communication skills for negotiating with peers**
- **Conflict management skills**
- **Peer resistance skills**
- **Active listening**
- **Effective communication**
- **Greater acceptance and tolerance of different groups.**

By themselves, these social skills are not enough to ensure safety at school. Interventions should not be limited to teaching and preparing students. Change in school culture should be facilitated by incorporating social skills training into a comprehensive system of school safety and discipline policies, emphasizing relationship building between students, teaching and non-teaching staff within the school community on the one hand, and between the school and families on the other to ensure effective management of behavior and academic (cognitive) development.

According to others, with a view to the future professional and personal development of today's students in the conditions of the rapidly changing technological and socio-cultural environment, **the most important social skills for survival** are defined as:

- **Critical thinking and problem solving**
- **Collaboration and leadership**
- **Agility and adaptability**
- **Initiative and entrepreneurship**
- **Effective oral and written communication**
- **Access to information and its analysis**
- **Curiosity and imagination**

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EIGHT IMPORTANT SOCIAL SKILLS FOR SURVIVAL AND HOW CAN STUDENTS LEARN AND DEVELOP THEM?

1) Sharing

Sharing is part of everyday life, but it is difficult to achieve with younger children because they are focused more on their own needs and wants than on the needs and wants of others. This is normal because the feeling that something "belongs" to them is usually much stronger than their desire to please others. Although it is difficult to share, it is crucial to the development of a child's social skills as it helps him maintain and develop friendships. It's also a great way to bond and show appreciation.

2) Hearing

Active listening is an important skill that even some adults lack. Deciphering and comprehending information correctly requires considerable concentration, but active listening can enhance their perceptual language skills (the ability to understand spoken language). These skills help the student:

- to cope successfully in social interactions;
- to answer questions;
- to understand fairy tales;
- to understand what he reads;
- to understand gestures.

As he develops his social skills, the student will learn how important it is to listen actively when others speak, because he too wants to be understood correctly.

3) Following directions

The execution of the instructions ie. following the instructions is intrinsically necessary for working in a school, where teachers as authoritative adults organize and implement the educational process.

4) Cooperation and cooperation

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Good collaboration and cooperation skills allow students to see in practice that working in a group gives them the opportunity to express their ideas and listen to the ideas of others. By working together to achieve a common goal, they can develop their skills in sharing both objects and ideas.

5) Patience

"Patience is a virtue" and is one of the most useful social skills. Patience is critical for many things, including maintaining friendships and relationships and achieving big goals that can only be accomplished over an extended period of time. This is where the concept of delayed gratification comes into play. When you help your child understand that good things often take time, you're teaching them to be patient and work toward long-term goals.

6) Empathy

Empathy is defined as the ability to recognize the emotions and feelings of others and understand their point of view. When people feel accepted and respected it creates trust. Empathy can be developed through purposeful effort. The easiest way to encourage the development of empathy is by showing it in action. This skill is closely related to the skill of active listening, because to truly support someone, you must first understand them, and this requires listening without judgment.

7) Respecting boundaries

This is an important social survival skill because breaking various emotional and physical boundaries can lead to adverse consequences.

Teaching a child how to ask for permission and set boundaries helps them build a sense of respect for themselves and others. The same goes for helping them learn to set boundaries for themselves.

8) Positivity

Working on positivity can facilitate learning other social skills such as patience, boundaries, listening and sharing. The easiest way to demonstrate positivity is by modeling it. The more positive you are about the development of your students' social skills (including the inevitable mistakes and lapses), the more confident and positive they will become themselves. That doesn't mean you have to be positive all the time. In fact, a healthy amount of honest criticism can be helpful in helping teens learn to express their feelings. To do this, start with your own emotions.

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If you can, let them know how you're feeling and how you're dealing with it in real time. Children need to know that it is normal to be sad, angry or angry sometimes and how to deal with it.

HOW TO TEACH SOCIAL SKILLS TO CHILDREN?

Effective social skills programs consist of two main elements:

- a teaching process that uses a behavioral/social approach to learning,
- and a universal language or set of steps that facilitate the acquisition of new behavior.

When planning social skills training programs, schools should:

- include parents and other caregivers, both to help design and select interventions and as meaningful participants in interventions;
- focus on all age groups, including primary school-aged children, who are often overlooked in the mistaken belief that they will 'outgrow' their bad behaviour;
- avoid blanket approaches and adapt interventions to the individual or specific needs of students and groups. Students who speak a mother or home language other than that of schooling may need intensive social skills training to promote acculturation and peer acceptance. Children with disabilities may need adaptive curriculum and learning strategies. Most children will need a combination of different strategies that are tailored to their specific deficits and background.

Social skills training:

- focuses on facilitating desirable behaviors as well as eliminating undesirable ones;
- emphasizes acquisition, performance, generalization, and maintenance of appropriate behavior through modeling, mentoring, and role-playing;
- appreciates the importance of students receiving immediate feedback on their performance.

It is advisable to apply positive strategies and use punitive ones only if the positive approach is unsuccessful and the behavior can lead to serious violations or mental and physical trauma.

Interventions can be implemented at the school, specific setting, class, or individual level, but at all levels the emphasis is on teaching the desired skill rather than punishing negative behavior.

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Facilitating learning through normal activities. Teachers and parents should take advantage of informal (incidental) learning, where naturally occurring behaviors or events are used to teach and reinforce appropriate social behavior. Adults can reinforce demonstrated positive social skills by praising children when they behave appropriately or offering alternatives to poor decisions to teach more appropriate behavior. When working with children who experience particular difficulties, you may need to deliberately prompt them to do the right thing or devise situations in which they can make good choices.

Pay attention to environmental factors. The school or home environment can affect a child's ability to learn and demonstrate good social skills. If a child is having difficulty demonstrating a particular skill, it is best to first assess the environment to determine what may be preventing the child from properly acquiring that skill. For example, a student may be unruly at the beginning of the day, and so the teacher should regulate specific procedures for entering the classroom, entering without running, hanging up coats, putting away bags, putting away desks, etc.

Pay attention to individual factors. Some children need more intensive, personalized instruction due to individual factors, such as a disability. These interventions may target children who experience specific difficulties or those who have previously been identified as being at risk for behavioral problems. For example, studies show that children with mild disabilities tend to exhibit poor social skills and excessive problem behavior to a greater extent than students without such disabilities. Interventions targeting at-risk students are based on an individual assessment of the specific child's skills and deficits. The interventions selected aim to prevent the development of existing behavioral problems into more serious ones.

Accept mistakes as normal. Children need to know that you don't expect perfection. There is no way that all these social skills can be performed always and everywhere without mistakes. This is normal! In fact, it is encouraged. Errors are normal; that's how we learn what was right or wrong.

Encourage sharing (without breaking boundaries)! While sharing is great and should be encouraged, there may be some things that are special to each child that they don't want to share.

Check if they are actively listening! During social interactions at school, in the family or outside, pay attention to the child's listening skills. You can observe to see if he is listening carefully. Does

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it look engaged? Does he ask questions? And remember that it is just as important that you listen to the child. This shows him that what he's saying is important, and in turn encourages him to listen to you in return.

Think about how to give directions! In teaching social skills to children, the teacher takes on the responsibility of ensuring that the instructions he gives are such that they can be carried out. When giving directions, be clear, firm and gentle. As mentioned earlier, children find it very difficult to complete tasks with many directions at once. Start with one instruction at a time that the child can focus on.

When giving directions, have the child repeat what you want them to do. Give further instructions only when the first one is fulfilled. Repeat until the task is completed.

The student can also give you directions. This way, he will understand what it takes to delegate, manage, and complete a task from start to finish.

Give empathy to get empathy! Show your students that you think about other people's emotions too! This is not so much a teaching moment as an authentic display of empathy. If you see someone expressing an emotion, validate it for them. "Oh, I can see you're excited. I love that you're so eager and happy to do this!" You can also validate negative emotions. For example, you might say, "I know this must have made you angry. What can we do together to make you feel less unhappy?"

Not only does this help them feel seen and heard in the moment, it also gives them a direct example of how to handle empathizing with other people in similar situations.

WHEN DO WE USE SOCIAL SURVIVAL SKILLS IN SCHOOL IN THE CONTEXT OF CELESTIN FREINET'S PEDAGOGY?

- When preparing and adopting rules for group work or for an activity;
- In all discussions related to freedom of expression;
- Activities and games with clear instructions use the social skills of following directions, active listening, patience, empathy, etc.

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- When setting a time for each activity
- When writing letters and proposals to different addressees: administration, adults, friends
- In planning – individual and group SMART plans.

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PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES

MOTION IN THE DIRECTION OF A POINT

Each participant visually selects a point in the room without communicating his choice to the others. At a signal given by the leader, everyone starts moving, trying to reach his point without colliding with others who are also moving to a certain point.

EXCHANGE PLACES WITH GLANCES

Participants stand in a circle facing each other.

Participant "A" makes eye contact with Participant "B" and walks towards him to take his place in the circle.

At the same time, "B" must immediately make eye contact with another participant - "B" and walk towards him with the same goal, etc.

Important: Eye contact must be made before departure, not after participants have departed.

FIND SIMILARITIES BY TOUCH

All participants wear a blindfold/towel/scarf.

At a given signal, the participants must meet each other and, just by touching, find out if they are similar in any way (for example: long hair, jacket, etc.).

If a participant finds a resemblance to their partner, they give them a hand and stand next to them.

The scarves are then removed and everyone sees who they have chosen.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

The participants line up in a circle and each in turn must complete the sentence: "I resemble ... (group member) in (quality), and in the same way I differ from (participant from the group)".

Note: Finally, the leader can make a summary of how the participants in the group are alike and how they are different. It is possible to continue the conversation on different topics. For example,

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how are all people alike: need for love, friendship, family, food, security, health, etc., i.e. these are values equally important to all.

GESTURES AND FACIAL EXPRESSIONS TO EXPRESS FEELINGS

The participants in the group are straight, in a circle, facing each other.

One of them stands in the center of the circle and acts with gestures and mimics his emotional state at the moment.

The other participants repeat the shown gestures and facial expressions.

The participant in the center of the circle chooses someone from the group to continue the game with their facial expressions or gestures reflecting their emotional state.

Options:

(1) The participant turns to the neighbor on one side and shows him his emotional state with a gesture or mime. He turns to the other participant in the circle and repeats what he saw. Thus, the gesture or facial expression is passed around the circle until it reaches the participant who played it first.

(2) After the facial expression or gesture "returns", the participant who offered it explains in words what he played. Then, each one of the group acts out the feelings in their own way, about which he found out.

Note: To facilitate the participants, the presenter can play the action first and then invite the participants.

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APPLICATIONS

SURVIVAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY SCENARIO

Grade/Age :				Teacher :			
Objective/s of the lesson :							
Result / final product :							
N	Name of the activity	Description – clear steps and instructions given by the teacher	Time	Interactions – whole class, pairs, groups, individual work	Materials	Social skills we work on	Link to Pedagogics Freinet
1.	Warming up with a game about emotions or communication						
2.	Presentation of the topic/problem						
3.	Create rules						
4.	Group assignments						
	Presentation of the final result / product						
	Reflection and feedback		10 min				