

Taking Responsibility

(May and June)

“The purpose (of our work) is to provide a fun, motivating and non-threatening way for our students to explore social thinking while increasing their knowledge of social expectations”.

-Stephanie Madrigal

As we have witnessed throughout the year, transitions of all kinds are often challenging for our students. Finishing a grade, saying goodbye, beginning summer, and changing routines will all take place over the next two months. Throughout the year we have looked closely at problem solving and we have encouraged flexibility in our students to help them through their day. As the end of the year approaches, we begin to prepare students for the transition to the next grade by helping them internalize the strategies that work best for them. Our aim is for our students to recognize their needs, to identify their personalized strategies and to solve problems that arise over the course of a day. Such self-regulation makes for easier transitioning. Unit 5 reflects on the last four units, focuses on personal challenges, and guides the student towards self-awareness and self-advocacy.

As always this will be different for each child. Therefore, each child’s goals will be personalized to what they most need to move toward self-advocacy. For example, the younger student may still be focusing on how to share space with a group. The older student may be working on context and how the rules change from group to group. We also consider the individual levels of perspective taking as we support the development of social cognition. For the 3rd grade and above we can identify where our students fall on Winner’s Social Communication Profile¹ and tailor our

expectations to their perspective taking abilities and needs.

Looking over the previous units can guide the educator to a student’s challenging areas. Consider what unit content was both difficult and helpful to the student’s social functioning. Then we can uncover what concepts and strategies may be most helpful to them in this transition and at the start of the next year.

Once we know the targeted area, we work on helping students become more self-aware to promote effective communication. Reviewing social stories, role-plays, comic strips, investigated concepts, group projects and any personal strategies that have been developed with the student will support this self-awareness. We can highlight strategies that are successful or if necessary, work with them to develop personal goals for the next year. So, together we are *identifying* the pertinent strategies, *reviewing* their successes, and *planning* for the transition to next year. Reminding the student about what they know and what has worked supports competence: a golden tool to take with them to the next grade.

Explaining that peers in SDI or during academics have strengths and challenges as well, aids in perspective taking. This is a way to focus on strengths and to utilize them, to discuss differences, and then to understand challenging areas and how to think through them.

¹ Winner Crooke & Madrigal *Social Communication*

One of the most important skills we can give our students when dealing with any challenge is the ability to think flexibly (cognitive flexibility). This is the ability to understand when things are ‘good enough’, to be comfortable in the grey areas and with less concrete thinking. Cognitive flexibility includes developing new strategies when previous ones no longer work. By focusing on the ability to adjust to change, we are encouraging self-regulation and self-monitoring. Through feedback we highlight a successful use of strategies or strong social thinking.

This unit therefore is two-fold. The *child* will be given the opportunity to celebrate engagement, shared thinking and will think socially about the upcoming transitions and what they need to function well in the school environment. Additionally, each *educator* will consider the social developmental level

of the student and be sure to differentiate social supports to individual needs. In this way, we are supporting the carry over of successful strategies, language and concepts to each student’s next classroom.

We recommend that you look over the units that have been most beneficial to each student. Revisit what was successful and highlight these areas as successes and as tools that they now have to be more engaged, to share an imagination, to be better social thinkers. Also revisit the GPSs as a team. For next year’s team, understanding where the child was functioning come September will be invaluable to further social development. This self-reflection is essential to knowing the child’s capabilities and where to begin in the new school year.

SDI Vocabulary & Concept Review

Vocabulary & Concepts K-2nd ° *

Expected/ Unexpected Behaviors™
Listening with Your Whole Body
My place in the group
Big Problem/ Little Problem/Glitch
 (matching response to the level of the problem)
 Size of Problem vs. How it feels
 Teamwork and “We-ness”
 “Her eyes are telling me...”
 “We’re connected” (thinking together)
 Making Connections
 Flexible Thinking
 “I’m thinking about...”
 45-second rule °
 “Good Enough” ° - Building Flexibility
 Feeling Clues (facial and body language)
 Your face/body is telling me...
 Your tone is telling me.....
 Different or Multiple solutions
 Social Clues (Gathering Information)
Thinking-about you kid vs. Just-me kid™
 Shared Imagination/ Sharing Thinking

™ Social thinking vocabulary from Michelle G Winner’s Center for Social Thinking Inc.

°social relational concepts based on RDI

↔ social underground concepts

Additional for 3rd-5th*

Keep my Body & Brain in the Group™
Body/ Brain Rolled Out of the Group™
 Downloading vs. Uploading
Social Smarts™
Social Clues: Being a Social Detective™
Active Listening
Smart Guess/ Wacky Guess™
Thinking about what others are thinking
Whopping Topic Change™
Dealing with the Boring Moment™
 Brain match, “Thinking the same thing”
Connected Thoughts
 Me-File/ Friend/ People files™
 Rules Change Across Environment/People/ (context!)
 Compromise (give a little-get a little)
 Hidden Social Highlight
Figuring out someone’s plan™
 Sharing your Thinking/
 Keeping a Thought a Thought↔
 Collaboration
 “It Depends” (Context Highlighting)
 Reading the Scene↔
 Join the Action (not change the action)↔
 Thinking Alone vs. Thinking Together↔