

Social and Relationship Assessment

Overview of Instruments

Educational settings – the cafeteria, the playground, classrooms, and hallways – present multiple social skills requirements that may overwhelm the student with autism. Students with challenges in this area may find themselves isolated, misunderstood, frustrated, anxious, or depressed. Others in their environment may perceive their social differences as an indication that they are rude, willful, awkward, or oppositional. Further, as these students transition from high school, social differences present challenges to successful employment, leisure, or relationship pursuits. Because of the pervasive impact of social differences, addressing social skills and social understanding is a critical part of the educational curriculum for all students with autism.

It is important to have a benchmark of the social skills and social understanding of individuals with autism in order to provide targeted interventions. Instruments designed specifically for this purpose are reviewed in this section.

AUTISM SOCIAL SKILLS PROFILE (ASSP)

The Autism Social Skills Profile (ASSP; Bellini, 2006) assists in identifying social skills deficits and measuring progress following intervention. It is not intended to be a diagnostic instrument. The ASSP is used with individuals between the ages of 6 and 17. It takes 15 to 20 minutes to administer and may be completed by adults who are familiar with the child's functioning. The 49 items are rated on a Likert scale. The test yields three subscale scores – Social Reciprocity, Social Participation/Avoidance, and Detrimental Social Behaviors – as well as a total score of social functioning.

PROFILE OF SOCIAL DIFFICULTY (POSD)

The Profile of Social Difficulty (POSD; Coucouvanis, 2005) was designed to help identify gaps in skills that are necessary for successful social interaction. The POSD lists skills necessary for

social interaction in a hierarchy and provides a profile of current skills in four areas: Fundamental Skills, Social Initiation Skills, Social Response Skills, and Getting Along with Others.

SOCIAL RESPONSIVENESS SCALE (SRS)

The Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS; Constantino & Gruber, 2005) is a brief 65-item questionnaire used to assist in screening and diagnosis of AU. Parents/caregivers or teachers who are familiar with the student can complete the scale. Questions are rated on a 4-point Likert scale. The test provides an overall score and five treatment subscales that can be used for program planning: Social Awareness, Social Cognition, Social Communication, Social Motivation, and Autistic Mannerisms.

SOCIAL SKILLS CHECKLIST

The Social Skills Checklist (Quill, 2000) was designed for young children with autism. Play (solitary and social) and group skills (attending, waiting, turn-taking, and following group directions) are rated in a yes/no format by parents or professionals who know the student. Skills are listed in sequence based on level of difficulty.

SOCIAL SKILLS RATING SYSTEM (SSRS)

The Social Skills Rating System (SSRS; Gresham & Elliot, 1990) evaluates the social behaviors of children and adolescents. The system includes teacher, parent, and student questionnaire forms. The SSRS is intended for use with individuals ages 3 to 18. It consists of three scales: (a) The Social Skills Scale consists of the following subscales: Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy, and Self-Control; (b) The Problem Behaviors Scale contains three subscales: Externalizing Problems, Internalizing Problems, and Hyperactivity; and (c) The Academic Competence Scale. Items are rated by frequency and importance. Administration takes from 10 to 25 minutes. The SSRS yields standard scores and percentile ranks.

Summary of Social and Relationship Assessment Instruments

Name of Tool and Author	Age Range (in years)	Method of Administration/ Format	Approximate Time to Administer	Subscale	Availability
Autism Social Skills Profile (ASSP) Bellini (2006)	6-17	49 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale	15-20 min.	The test yields three subtest scores – Social Reciprocity, Social Participation/ Avoidance, and Detrimental Social Behaviors – as well as a total score of social functioning	Bellini, S. (2006). Building social relationships: A systematic approach to teaching social interaction skills to children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorders and other social difficulties. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing.
Profile of Social Difficulty (POSD) Coucovanis (2005)	6-11	Items are rated on a 6-point Likert scale from “Very Difficult” to “Very Easy” Parents, teachers, or siblings may complete the questionnaire. A self-report version is available Yields profile of skills in the four areas assessed	15-20 min.	Fundamental Skills Social Initiation Skills Social Response Skills Getting Along with Others	Coucovanis, J. (2005). Super skills: A social skills group program for children with Asperger syndrome, high-functioning autism and related challenges. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing.

TARGET: Texas Guide for Effective Teaching
Social and Relationship Assessment

Name of Tool and Author	Age Range (in years)	Method of Administration/ Format	Approximate Time to Administer	Subscale	Availability
Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS) Constantino & Gruber (2005)	4-18	65-item parent/caregiver, teacher questionnaire Respondents answer questions on a 4-point scale from "not true" to "almost always true" Yields t-scores for a total (overall score) and five treatment subscales	15-20 minutes	Social Awareness Social Cognition Social Communication Social Motivation Autistic Mannerisms	Western Psychological Services http://portal.wpspublish.com/portal/page?_pageid=53,70492&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL
Social Skills Checklist Quill (2000)	Young children	Yes/no Questionnaire		Play: Solitary play Social play Group Skills: Attending Waiting Turn-taking Following group directions	Quill, K. (2000). <i>DO-WATCH-LISTEN-SAY: Social and communication intervention for children with autism</i> . Baltimore: New York: Brookes Publishing.
Social Skills Rating System (SSRS) Gresham & Elliot (1990)	3-18	Parent, teacher, and student (3rd through 12th grade) questionnaires; items are rated by frequency and importance	10-25 minutes	Social Skills Scale: Cooperation Assertion Responsibility Empathy Self-Control Problem Behaviors Scale: Externalizing Problems Internalizing Problems Hyperactivity Academic Competence Scale	Pearson http://psychcorp.pearsonassessments.com/HAIWEB/Cultures/en-us/Productdetail.htm?Pid=PAassrs&Mode=summary

Research on Social and Relationship Assessment Instruments

To date, no research (besides the work in developing the tools) has been conducted pertaining to social assessment and autism for the instruments reviewed in this section.

Misconceptions

Myth	Reality
Intelligence is related to social skills.	The best measure of an individual's conversation skills is when she is discussing her special interests.
The best measure of an individual's conversation skills is when she is discussing her special interests.	Social skills appear more typical when the individual with AU is discussing areas of strong interest. Social skills often look dramatically more impaired during spontaneous social interactions

References

Bellini, S. (2006). Building social relationships: A systematic approach to teaching social interaction skills to children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorders and other social difficulties. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing.

Constantino, J. N., & Gruber, C. P. (2005). Social responsiveness scale (SRS). Los Angeles: Western Psychological Services.

Coucouvani, J. (2005). Super skills: A social skills group program for children with Asperger syndrome, high-functioning autism and related challenges. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing.

Gresham, F. M., & Elliot, S. N. (1990). Social Skills Rating System manual. Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service.

Lord, C., Rutter, M., DiLavore, P., & Risi, S. (2001). Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule manual. Los Angeles: Western Psychological Services.

Quill, K. (2000). DO-WATCH-LISTEN-SAY: Social and communication intervention for children with autism. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing.

Resources and Materials

Bellini, S. (2006). Building social relationships: A systematic approach to teaching social interaction skills to children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorders and other social difficulties. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing.
This book overviews formal and informal assessment of social skills and interventions.