Aligning Social Skill Acquisition with Colorado Academic Content Standards

Many educators would like to help their students build social skills while they build literacy, in ways that are aligned with Academic Content Standards. Thinking about all of the issues, which interfere with students' success in school, can be overwhelming for school staff. How can we, in schools, prevent physical, sexual and personal violence, alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, teen pregnancy, and HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, in addition to teaching students academic subject content? All of these issues have a prevention strategy in common**, behavioral rehearsal of social skills**. The social skills that prevent these risky behaviors are also skills that help students focus on learning:

- *Setting boundaries* and *Anger/Impulse Management* for self-control and coping with stress.
- *Decision-making* and *Using Community Supports* to assist and support self-determination.
- *Empathy Development and Expectations in Relationships* to increase awareness of self and connections with others.
- *Verbal/Non-Verbal Communication* and *Conflict Management* to increase the quality of interpersonal relations.

The benefits of integrating social skills into academic curricula are many:
- ✓ Students become motivated when material is personally meaningful.
- ✓ Academic subjects become connected.
- ✓ Students become proficient in both the academic subject and the social skill
- ✓ Positive school climate is increased.
- ✓ A safe, civil learning environment is supported without additional class time.

There are excellent opportunities within Academic Content Standards, for **social skills to be integrated** into academic subjects and practiced by students.

Colorado Academic Content Standards	Social Skills
Science **#3** Students know and understand the characteristics and structure of living things, the processes of life, and how living things interact with each other and their environment. **#3.1** Students know and understand how the human body functions, factors that influence its structures and functions, and how these structures and functions compare with those of other organisms.	♦ Decision-Making – Identifying their personal needs for decision-making skills and addressing problems or issues using decision-making techniques. ♦ Anger/Impulse Management –identifying 2 situations in which impulsiveness or anger might control responses, detecting personal physical signs, which occur prior to explosiveness or self-destructiveness, de-escalating personal emotions using three techniques and employing two proactive stress-reducing strategies
Reading and Writing **#1** Students read and understand a variety of materials. This includes predicting, comparing and contrasting, self-monitoring, reading for different purposes, and increasing vocabulary.	♦ Decision-Making – Identifying their personal needs for decision-making skills and addressing problems or issues using decision-making techniques. ♦ Anger/Impulse Management –identifying 2 situations in which impulsiveness or anger might control responses, detecting personal physical signs, which occur prior to explosiveness or self-destructiveness, de-escalating personal emotions using three techniques and employing two proactive stress-reducing strategies Using community support – calling or visiting one community support system, and providing information to another person about services. ♦ Using community support – calling or visiting one community support system, and providing information to another person about services.
Reading and Writing **#2** Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences. This includes persuading, using precise vocabulary to convey meaning, comparison/contrast, problem/solution and cause/effect relationships.	♦ Setting Boundaries – Identifying personal boundaries, identifying two situations in which personal boundaries might be tested and communicating personal boundaries to another in a verbal and non-verbal way. ♦ Empathy – detecting and identifying one's own feelings ♦ Verbal/Non-Verbal Communication – Using "I Messages", employing active listening and using body language to convey messages. ♦ Conflict Management – Applying a working definition of conflict management to personal life, de-escalating a situation using 3 techniques and addressing a conflict using at least one conflict management strategy. ♦ Anger/Impulse Management –identifying 2 situations in which impulsiveness or anger might control responses, detecting personal physical signs, which occur prior to explosiveness or self-destructiveness, de-escalating personal emotions using three techniques and employing two proactive stress-reducing strategies

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Reading and Writing **#4** Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing. This includes making predictions, analyzing, drawing conclusions, discriminating between fact and opinion, defining and solving problems, expressing and defending points of view orally, taking another perspective, cultural influences of others and evaluating reliability and accuracy of information.	♦ Verbal/Non-Verbal Communication – Using "I Messages", employing active listening and using body language to convey messages. ♦ Conflict Management – Applying a working definition of conflict management to personal life, de-escalating a situation using 3 techniques and addressing a conflict using at least one conflict management strategy. ♦ Anger/Impulse Management –identifying 2 situations in which impulsiveness or anger might control responses, detecting personal physical signs, which occur prior to explosiveness or self-destructiveness, de-escalating personal emotions using three techniques and employing two proactive stress-reducing strategies ♦ Decision-Making – Identifying their personal needs for decision-making skills and addressing problems or issues using decision-making techniques ♦ Empathy – detecting and identifying one's own feelings
Reading and Writing **#5** Students read to locate, select and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference and technological sources. This includes organizing and synthesizing information and locating relevant information.	♦ Decision-Making – Identifying their personal needs for decision-making skills and addressing problems or issues using decision-making techniques. ♦ Using community support – calling or visiting one community support system, and providing information to another person about services.

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Geography **# 4** Students understand how economic, political, cultural and social processes interact to shape patterns of human populations, interdependence, cooperation and conflict. **#4.1** Students know the characteristics, location, distribution and migration of human populations. Includes the physical and cultural impact of human migration **#4.2** Students know the nature and spatial distribution of cultural patterns. Includes identifying how the elements of culture affect the ways in which people live, describing how cultures and cultural landscapes change, and analyzing how cultures shape the character of a region. **#4.3** Students know how cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of Earth's surface. Includes describing how and why people create boundaries and how cooperation and conflict affect neighborhoods and communities, and contribute to economic and social divisions.	♦ Empathy – detecting and identifying one's own feelings ♦ Expectations in Relationships – recognizing commonalities among people, regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religious beliefs. ♦ Using community support – calling or visiting one community support system, and providing information to another person about services. ♦ Setting Boundaries – identifying personal boundaries, identifying two situations in which personal boundaries might be tested and communicating personal boundaries to another in a verbal and non-verbal way. ♦ Conflict Management – de-escalating a situation using three techniques, addressing a conflict using at least 2 conflict management strategies.
Civics **#4** Students understand how citizens exercise the roles, rights and responsibilities of participation in civic life at all levels- local, state and national. Includes understanding and exercising the roles and skills related to citizenship. **#4.1** Students know what citizenship is. Includes identifying significant characteristics of an effective citizen, with common courtesy, respect for person and property, civic and personal responsibility and honest and fair dealings.	♦ Empathy – Detecting and identifying one's own feeling, recognizing and identifying signs of emotion in another person. ♦ Expectations in Relationships – Identifying expectations they have of themselves and of their friends, and recognizing expectations others' have of them. ♦ Decision-Making – Identifying their personal needs for decision-making skills and addressing problems or issues using decision-making techniques. ♦ Anger/Impulse Management –identifying 2 situations in which impulsiveness or anger might control responses, detecting personal physical signs, which occur prior to explosiveness or self-destructiveness, de-escalating personal emotions using three techniques and employing two proactive stress-reducing strategies. ♦ Conflict Management – Applying a working definition of conflict management to personal life, de-escalating a situation using 3 techniques and addressing a conflict using at least one conflict management strategy.
History **#3** Students understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time. **#3.1** Students know how various societies were affected by contacts and exchanges among diverse peoples. Includes recognizing how the presence, interactions and contributions of various groups, peoples and cultures have affected the school, neighborhood, community and state, how roles of people, such as gender, age, caste, racial identity, wealth and/or social position, have differed throughout history and how social roles, such as family structures and community structures, have changed and endured throughout U.S. history.	♦ Empathy – detecting and identifying one's own feelings and recognizing and identifying signs of emotion in another person. ♦ Expectations in Relationships – identifying expectations students have of themselves and of their friends, recognizing expectations that others' have of them, and recognizing commonalities among people, regardless of gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religious beliefs. ♦ Decision-Making – identifying personal needs for decision-making skills and addressing a problem or issue using decision-making techniques. ♦ Using Community Supports – contacting at least one community

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#5 Students understand political institutions and theories that have developed and changed over time. Includes issues of cooperation and control, dealing with the inherent tensions and inevitable conflicts caused by the pursuit of both principles of liberty, equality, individual rights and justice. **# 5.3** Students know how political power has been acquired, maintained, used and/or lost throughout history. Includes giving examples of how individuals in various groups have gained, lost, or maintained political rights, freedoms, power or cultural identity, how attributes of various people, such as gender, racial identity, national origin, property ownership, religion, legal status, have affected their individual political rights, analyzing how genocide has been used to acquire or maintain political power, analyzing the causes and events of major wars, and describing how forms of involuntary servitude, such as slavery, have been used to maintain and expand political power throughout history. **# 6** Students know that religious and philosophical ideas have been powerful forces throughout history. **#6.1** Students know the historical development of religions and philosophies. Includes recognizing that people develop traditions that transmit their beliefs and ideas, describing religious traditions of various ethnic groups in the United States and explaining how, throughout history, conflicts among peoples have arisen because of different ways of knowing and believing. **#6. 2** Students know how societies have been affected by religions and philosophies. Includes giving examples of how religious and philosophical beliefs have defined standards of right and wrong, good and evil, and justice and injustice and giving and describing examples of individuals who, throughout history, acted from their religious or philosophical beliefs.	♦ agency that can assist and support the student, and providing that information to another student. ♦ Setting Boundaries – Identifying personal boundaries, identifying two situations in which personal boundaries might be tested and communicating personal boundaries to another in a verbal and non-verbal way. ♦ Anger/Impulse Management – Identifying two situations in which impulsiveness or anger might control responses, detecting personal physical signs, which occur prior to explosiveness or self-destructiveness, de-escalating personal emotions using 3 techniques and employing 2 proactive stress-reducing strategies. ♦ Verbal/Non-Verbal Communication – Using "I Messages", employing active listening and using body language to convey messages. ♦ Conflict Management – Applying a working definition of conflict management to personal life, de-escalating a situation using 3 techniques and addressing a conflict using at least one conflict management strategy.

There are four steps to using behavioral rehearsal to teach and assess social skills:
1) **Explain.** Break the skill up into steps. Clarify when the skill would be appropriate to use.
2) **Demonstrate.** Show students how to perform a particular skill. You can model the skill yourself or ask another student, who has already learned the skills being taught to model them. Videotapes can also be used. After the demonstration, ask the students when they saw you use the steps to the skill.
3) **Practice.** Divide the class into small groups or pairs and then have students take turns practicing the skill. *Always* provide concrete, brief, real life scenarios, for students to use during practice. (If they make up the scenario themselves, it gets wild!) It is essential that students understand that they aren't "acting" as someone other than themselves, but rather they are practicing a new social skill that they will use later. Each student needs to practice the skill successfully, so you will want to walk around the room coaching and cuing students, providing lots of positive feedback.
4) **Process.** This step has several parts. First, ask students specific questions to assess the effectiveness of the skills they used in practice and to provide constructive feedback. Second, discuss the applicability of the skill to real life. Then, provide opportunities for the students to practice their newly learned skill. This is accomplished through behavioral homework assignments. Extended practice encourages the student to use new skills outside of the classroom; in a natural way and helps them use the skills in their everyday lives.

Here is an example of behavioral rehearsal used to teach a skill aligned with academic content standard #4 for Reading and Writing. Go to the "Standards in Action" resource bank at http://www.cde.state.co.us/action/curric/int/middle.htm for other lessons and assessments.

Active Listening

1. *Explain*: "Have you ever felt misunderstood? Have you ever said to your parent or teacher or friend, "You're not listening to me"? A lot of people don't know how to listen. Here are some skills for all of us to better understand others. Write these down and take notes for later."
   Responding: "How do you know when someone is listening to you?" [List verbal and non-verbal characteristics of responding]
   Clarifying: "Can anyone tell me what "clarifying" means? Clarifying is checking to make sure you understand what the other person is saying. Ex: "do you mean she accused you of taking her shoes?"
   Paraphrasing: "Can anyone tell me what "paraphrasing" means? Paraphrasing is re-stating what the listener is saying in your own words. Ex: "so you got mad when she said you took her shoes?"
2. *Demonstrate*: "Watch me use active listening skills with Jenny. While you watch, I'd like you to note when you see me responding, paraphrasing and clarifying."
   "Jenny, what did you have for lunch today?" [Rehearse with student]
   "How was I responding? Did I clarify? Did I Paraphrase?"
3. *Practice:* "Now it's your turn to practice this skill. In your pairs decide who will talk and who will practice the listening skill. Then the listener will ask, "What did you have for lunch?"
   [Use a rubric or checklist to assess students' proficiency as they practice]
4. *Process:* "Talkers, what happened when you talked to your partner?" "Why do you think that happened?" "Listeners, could you have done something differently?" "What would have happened then?"

To integrate social skills into academic curriculum:

- ♦ Determine what students need to know and be able to do to build personal strengths and avoid risky behaviors
- ♦ Design rubrics to assess that knowledge and skill acquisition.
- ♦ Design a set of activities for students within the existing curriculum, which are aligned with academic content standards, and that include behavioral rehearsal of social skills.
- ♦ Identify the lessons and assessments that are currently being implemented to meet those academic content standards
- ♦ Substitute the new lessons and assessments, which teach knowledge and skill through behavioral rehearsal, and meet academic content standards in the chosen subject area.

Integrating social skills into the school day is an essential part of creating a safe, civil learning environment, to increase students' personal strengths and challenge barriers to academic success.

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