



## Early Childhood Assessment: Social Skills

Est. Time: 6 Hours

### Objective

To use different observational systems and curriculum-referenced measures to assess social skills.

### Overview

Social relationships are a critical outcome of early intervention. Frequent and positive interactions are a foundation upon which relationships can be established, and social play is often the context in which those interactions are promoted. However, some children engage in relatively few social interactions and little social play. For this reason, assessing social interactions and the levels of social play is important in planning effective interventions.

### Activity

Use the steps outlined below to complete this activity.

1. Identify a child with a disability to assess.
  - a. Identify activities during the day when it is appropriate for the child and his or her peers to play and interact with one another.
2. Become familiar with observational codes and data recording procedures for social play and interactions.
  - a. For social play, use *Parten's stages of social play*:

**Unoccupied Behavior:** Children are not playing but are engaged in “unoccupied behavior.”

**Onlooker Behavior:** Children watch other children at play. They may verbally interact but do not join in the play.

**Solitary Play:** The child engages in play by him or herself. The play is totally independent.

**Parallel Play:** The child plays near other children. The child is involved in his or her own play.



The contents of this resource were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, #H325E120002. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officers, Sarah Allen and Tracie Dickson.



## Early Childhood Assessment: Social Skills

Est. Time: 6 Hours

### Activity [Cont.]

**Associative Play:** The child plays with others in a group. He may exchange play materials but there is no planned purpose to the play.

**Cooperative Play:** The child plays with other children, and the play has an intended purpose or goal. The children plan and assume roles.

If you want, you may combine associate and cooperative play categories. Define each with examples and non-examples related to the planned observational activities. Prepare a data collection sheet, and use a partial interval recording system and define its parameters.

- b. For social interactions, use an event recording system to measure the following categories of behavior: (a) initiation, (b) response to an initiation, (c) continuation, (d) positive interaction, (e) negative interaction, and (f) neutral interaction. Before you begin, define each category of behavior and include examples and non-examples related to the planned observational activities.
  - c. Observation times: For social play, observe twice for 20 minutes each. For social interactions, observe twice for 20 minutes each. These times are minimum. Complete enough observations to ensure that a comprehensive picture of the child's social abilities is recorded.
3. Use a curriculum- or criterion-referenced measure (e.g., AEPS, HELP, Carolina Curriculum, Brigance, Battelle) to assess the child's social abilities.
  4. After the observations and testing, analyze and interpret the data.
    - a. For social play, calculate the proportion of intervals spent in each type of behavior.
    - b. For social interactions, analyze the data in terms of the number of initiations (to and by the child with a disability), the number of responses to initiations (to and by the child with a disability), the percentage of initiations by the child with a disability resulting in a response, the percentage of initiations by peers resulting in a response, the length of interactions when initiated by the child (range and mean number of turns), the length of interactions when initiated by a peer (range and mean number of turns), and the tone of interactions (positive, negative, neutral).
    - c. Identify the behaviors the child does *and the conditions under which they occur* as well as the behavior the child needs to learn to do.
  5. Determine what objectives or intervention practice changes should be made to promote the child's social play and interactions.



## Early Childhood Assessment: Social Skills

Est. Time: 6 Hours

### Activity [Cont.]

6. Write your report using the underlined words below as headings. Only one report should be submitted for each group and each should include all of the information outlined in the bullets below. Be sure to write in a style that is professional yet can be understood by individuals without advanced training.

#### Identifying Information (Who was observed?)

- List the child's name, gender, date of birth, age in months, and diagnosis in columns.

#### Methods of Observation (What did you do?)

- List the context of the measurement: the dates, purpose of observing/measuring (e.g., social play, social interactions), the activities and routines observed, where each measurement occurred, how many adults and children were present, and the beginning and end times of each observation. This information should be presented in a table (using dates as rows).
- For social play, include:
  - A definition for each category with examples and non-examples specific to the activities observed
  - A description of the observational system and how the data were recorded
- For social interactions, include:
  - A definition for each category with examples and non-examples specific to the activities observed
  - A description of the observational system used and how the data were recorded
- For the curriculum- or criterion-referenced test, list the APA reference and describe what items were used and how they were administered.

#### Results (How did the child do?)

- For social play, make a table of the data by observation and category and write a narrative of the data in the table. List observations in rows and the categories in columns.
- For social interactions, make a table of the data and write a narrative of the data. Again, list observations in the table's rows.



## Early Childhood Assessment: Social Skills

Est. Time: 6 Hours

### Activity [Cont.]

- For the curriculum- or criterion-referenced test, provide a summary of what the measure says the child can do, the conditions under which those behaviors occur, and the behaviors she or he needs to learn.

#### Recommendations (How would you use the data?)

- Based on your analysis, list two objectives that could be established for the child in the social domain.
- Provide a three-to-four sentence rationale for each objective.
- List an intervention practice that could be used for each objective.

**Note:** Attach the completed data sheets and other notes (raw data). These do not have to be typed, although the rest of the report should be.