

THE SOCIAL ATTRIBUTES CHECKLIST

Child's name _____ Date _____ Completed by _____

Because social development begins in the early years, it is appropriate that early childhood programs include regular periodic assessment of children's progress in the acquisition of social competence. The set of items presented below is based largely on research identifying elements of social competence in young children, and on studies in which the behavior of well-liked children has been compared to that of less well-liked children. For preschool through grade 2.

Unless children achieve minimal social competence by about the age of six years, they have a high probability of being at risk throughout life. Peer relationships contribute a great deal to both social and cognitive development and to the effectiveness with which we function as adults. The single best childhood predictor of adult adaptation is NOT IQ, NOT school grades, and NOT classroom behavior but, rather the adequacy with which the child gets along with other children. Children who are generally disliked, who are aggressive and disruptive, who are unable to sustain close relationships with other children, and who cannot establish a place for themselves in the peer culture are seriously "at risk" for poor mental health, dropping out of school, low achievement and other school difficulties, poor employment history, etc.

In using the checklist, teachers should pay attention to whether the attributes are typical. Any child can have one or two really bad days; judgments of the overall pattern of functioning over a period of time is required. Many of the attributes listed in the checklist **indicate adequate social growth if they USUALLY characterize** the child. This qualifier is included to ensure that occasional fluctuations do not lead to over-interpretation of children's temporary difficulties. **If a child seems to be doing poorly on many of the items on the list**, the adults responsible for his or her care can implement strategies that will help the child to establish more satisfying relationships with other children.

I. Individual Attributes *The child:*

- Yes No 1. Is USUALLY in a positive mood
- Yes No 2. Is not EXCESSIVELY dependent on the teacher, assistant or other adults
- Yes No 3. USUALLY comes to the program or setting willingly
- Yes No 4. USUALLY copes with rebuffs and reverses adequately
- Yes No 5. Shows the capacity to empathize
- Yes No 6. Has positive relationship with one or two peers; shows capacity to really care about them, miss them if absent, etc.
- Yes No 7. Displays the capacity for humor
- Yes No 8. Does not seem to be acutely or chronically lonely

II. Social Skill Attributes *The child USUALLY:*

- Yes No 1. Approaches others positively
- Yes No 2. Expresses wishes and preferences clearly; gives reasons for actions and positions
- Yes No 3. Asserts own rights and needs appropriately
- Yes No 4. Is not easily intimidated by bullies
- Yes No 5. Expresses frustrations and anger effectively and without harming others or property
- Yes No 6. Gains access to ongoing groups at play and work
- Yes No 7. Enters ongoing discussion on the subject; makes relevant contributions to ongoing activities
- Yes No 8. Takes turns fairly easily
- Yes No 9. Shows interest in others; exchanges information with and requests information from others appropriately
- Yes No 10. Negotiates and compromises with others appropriately
- Yes No 11. Does not draw inappropriate attention to self
- Yes No 12. Accepts and enjoys peers and adults of ethnic groups other than his or her own
- Yes No 13. Gains access to ongoing groups at play and work
- Yes No 14. Interacts non-verbally with other children with smiles, waves, nods, etc.

III. Peer Relationship Attributes *The child is:*

- Yes No 1. USUALLY accepted versus neglected or rejected by other children
- Yes No 2. SOMETIMES invited by other children to join them in play, friendship, and work.

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| Number of NO responses: _____ out of 24 possible |
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Source: McClellan, D., & Katz, L. (1993). Young children's social development: A checklist. Urbana, IL

This digest is adapted from the article, "Assessing the Social Development of Young Children. A Checklist of Social Attributes," which appeared in the Fall 1992 issue of DIMENSIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD (pp. 9-10). <http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/files/socialdev.html>

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