



## Approved Innovative Course

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*Course: Making Connections IV*

*PEIMS Code: N1290335*

*Abbreviation: MAKECON4*

*Grade Level(s): 9-12*

*Number of Credits: 0.5*

### *Course description:*

The Making Connections course sequence serves students who have an autism spectrum disorder or a related disorder such as social (pragmatic) communication disorder which causes them to have difficulty with social skills. The courses also assist the students with developing and generalizing appropriate and beneficial social skills and in turn increases that student's postsecondary outcome.

Making Connections IV assists students with developing skills to employ collaborative problem solving.

### *Essential knowledge and skills:*

- (a) General requirements. Students shall be awarded one-half credit for successful completion of the course. The Making Connections courses do not have to be taken in a sequential manner, however it is recommended. Enrollment in Making Connections IV is recommended for students grades 11-12.
- (b) Introduction. The Making Connections courses serve students who have an autism spectrum disorder or a related disorder such as social (pragmatic) communication disorder which causes them to have difficulty with social skills. These courses assist the students in developing and understanding autism spectrum disorder and other related disorders. The courses also assist the students with developing and generalizing appropriate and beneficial social skills and in turn increases that student's postsecondary outcome.

Making Connections IV assists students with developing skills to effectively employ collaborative problem solving.



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### (c) Knowledge and Skills

- (1) **Disability Awareness.** The student develops an understanding of how autism may impact a person's ability to engage in collaborative problem solving. The student is expected to:
  - (A) research repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities and how these factors may impact an individual with autism's ability to use collaborative problem solving skills; and
  - (B) explain how collaborative problem solving skills may impact an individual with autism's education and employment success.
- (2) **Personal Growth and Awareness.** The student identifies personal abilities and weaknesses related to collaborative problem solving. The student is expected to:
  - (A) evaluate statements regarding an individual with Autism's ability to engage in collaborative problem solving and compare to the student's experience;
  - (B) identify aspects of the student's behavior and belief system which may need to be modified to successfully engage in collaborative problem solving; and
  - (C) develop a plan to effectively employ collaborative problem solving strategies in various circumstances.
- (3) **Social Success.** The student engages in collaborative problem solving techniques. The student is expected to:
  - (A) identify multiple facets of an identified problem;
  - (B) generate multiple possible strategies to solve an identified problem;
  - (C) identify and discuss the pros and cons of each generated strategy;
  - (D) determine a strategy to employ;
  - (E) delineate the roles of each member in a collaborative group;
  - (F) employ the agreed upon strategy and record observations or resulting data;
  - (G) discuss the results and effectiveness of the selected strategy in solving an identified problem;
  - (H) evaluate the outcomes and effectiveness of different collaborative problem solving strategies; and
  - (I) determine what strategy may be most effective in the future; and



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- (J) assist other students with identifying and developing skills to employ collaborative problem solving.
- (4) Social Awareness. The student engages in social, or group, problem solving. The student is expected to:
- (A) identify the who, what, when, where, and why of a given social situation;
  - (B) document the student's behavior in response to a social situation;
  - (C) compare the outcome of a social situation with the student's intended outcome;
  - (D) analyze the perspective of other individuals involved in the social situation;
  - (E) analyze the cause-and-effect relationship between one's behaviors and the student's relationships with others;
  - (F) identify potential solutions to a problem in a social situation;
  - (G) describe the pros and cons of various solutions, including analyzing the perspective of others and predicting the likelihood that the student can effectively employ the solution;
  - (H) analyze past social interaction by employing strategies such as social autopsies for real-world situations and roleplays of interactions that are not successful;
  - (I) roleplay the solution in which the student should have engaged in; and
  - (J) determine the student's course of action for potential problems that may occur in upcoming social settings.
- (5) Social Awareness in the Community. The student assists a peer in a mentor-mentee relationship in the school environment. The student is expected to:
- (A) demonstrate empathy and use knowledge of the school, and understanding of the student's disability to build a mentor relationship with a student mentee;
  - (B) assist the student mentee with navigating the school, including highlighting routines, expectations, and social skills of each setting;
  - (C) use conversation strategies to learn about and build rapport with the student's mentee;
  - (D) assist the student mentee in identifying the mentee's area of needs and what available support systems such as teachers and counselors are available in the school to address those needs; and



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- (E) identify and discuss the student's personal experience with having a disability and how that recognition and understanding has positively impacted the student's success in school and community such as enabling the student and teachers to ensure the adequate and effective implementation of accommodations and modifications and promoting the student's ability to self-advocate.
- (6) Future Planning. The student identifies a post-secondary plan and takes steps to succeed in that plan. The student is expected to:
- (A) identify and discuss the student's post-secondary plan;
  - (B) identify the steps necessary to successfully initiate the post-secondary plan;
  - (C) identify steps that can be taken prior to graduation such as completing a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application, meeting with a transition specialist, comparing colleges with the student's desired degree, scheduling and completing college entrance exams, completing job applicants, and comparing available living arrangements in the college or work area;
  - (D) participate in mock interviews and utilize critiques appropriately to increase the student's employment opportunities;
  - (E) research available accommodations at the post-secondary institution or work place; and  
compare the student's current accommodations and/or modifications with the available accommodations at the post-secondary institution or work place the student is interested in.

### *Description of specific student needs this course is designed to meet:*

The Making Connections courses are designed to meet the needs of students with autism spectrum disorder or other related disorders such as social (pragmatic) communication disorder, that may cause deficits in the individual's social skills. These social skill deficits are identified within the students' Functional Behavior Assessment. Despite many students on the spectrum having average to above average intelligence, research has shown that students on the autism spectrum are less successful in their postsecondary endeavors than students with intellectual disabilities in obtaining and maintaining a job (Shattuck et al., 2012). Research has also illustrated individuals with an autism spectrum disorder as having difficulty achieving postsecondary success due to their deficits in social skills (Hendricks, 2010). Students in this



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course require direct social skills instruction as well as assistance generalizing those skills across multiple settings. This course will increase students' postsecondary outcomes.

### Major resources and materials:

"Autism Society of America: About Autism." Autism Society of America: What Is Autism. *Autism Society of America*, n.d. Web. 20 Mar. 2017.

*Autism Society of America: Living with Autism.*" Autism Society of America: What Is Autism. *Autism Society of America*, n.d. Web. 20 Mar. 2017.

"Disability Rights Texas." Disability Rights Texas - Advancing the Rights of Texans with Disabilities. N.p., 2011. Web. 20 Mar. 2017.

Career Interest and Aptitude Assessment

Functional Behavior Assessment (multiple sources)

Individualized Education Program

Buron, K.D. (2012). *The incredible 5-pointing scale; The significantly improved and expanded, (2<sup>nd</sup>.ed.) second edition.* Shawnee Mission, KS: AAPC Publishing

Gerhardt, P.F., & Crimmins, D. (2013). *Social skills and adaptive behavior in learners with autism spectrum disorder.* Baltimore, MD: Paul H . Brooks

Laugeson, E.A. (2013). *The science of making friends: Helping socially challenged teens and young adults.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Laugeson, E.A. (2014). *The peers curriculum for school-based professional: Social Skills training for adolescents with autism spectrum disorder.* New York, NY: Routledge

Laugeson, E.A., & Frankel, F. (2010). *Social skills for teenagers with developmental and autism spectrum disorders: The peers treatment manual.* New York, NY: Routledge

Luiselli, J.K. (2014). *Children and youth with autism spectrum disorder: Recent advances and innovations in assessment, education, and intervention.* Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press



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### Recommended course activities:

#### Making Connections IV

- Review of strategies for working in a team
- Review of student's strengths and weaknesses in each team activity
- Discussion of pros and cons of multiple problem solving techniques in each team activity
- Discussion of the benefits of flexible thinking vs rigid thinking
- Multiple team problem solving scenarios / activities
- Role-play with critiques
- Behavior rehearsal exercises
- Social Autopsies
- SOCCSS
- Perspective Taking Practices
- Review of Community Resources (e.g., Police, DARS)
- Multiple social exchanges with mentee
- Provide model for mentee
- Assisting mentee in navigating the school and getting to know the available support systems.
- Role-play with Critique
- Reviews of paraverbal communication
- Reviews of nonverbal communication
- Complete FAFSA
- Schedule and complete College Entrance Exams
- Meet with transition specialist
- Compare Colleges
- Compare current accommodations / modifications with what would be available in college
- Compare IDEIA and ADA

### Suggested methods for evaluating student outcomes:

The students participate in a class period that includes direct teaching of social skills instruction, but then is also monitored throughout the day by the Making Connections teacher and paraprofessionals. Monitoring consists of the staff consistently observing the students' other classes and providing prompting, redirection, and coaching of the learned social skills. This allows for the student to employ the learned strategies in an authentic circumstance and receive feedback from their trusted Making Connections staff. The combination of the Making Connections course and the monitoring serves to increase the students' social skills by moving them through all levels of learning (acquisition, fluency, maintenance, and generalization).



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The students will be evaluated using various minor and major grades as well as their progress towards their individualized goals. The progress towards their goals will be evaluated using consistently obtained data.

### Teacher qualifications:

An assignment for a Making Connections course is allowed with one of the following certificates:

- Emotionally Disturbed
- Generic Special Education
- High School—Generic Special Education
- Language and/or Learning Disabilities
- Secondary Generic Special Education (Grades 6 – 12) (Grades 6 – 12 only)
- Severe Emotionally Disturbed and Autistic
- Special Education: Early Childhood – Grade 12

### Additional information: