



Approved Innovative Course

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Course: Making Connections I

PEIMS Code: N1290332

Abbreviation: MAKECON1

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 I assists the students in developing an understanding of autism and other related disorders. The course also assists the students in developing and generalizing appropriate and beneficial social skills and in turn increases that student's postsecondary outcome.

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.
- (b) **Introduction.** The Making Connections courses serve students who have an autism spectrum disorder or a related disorder, such 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 students with developing and generalizing appropriate and beneficial social skills and increase student's postsecondary outcomes.

Making Connections I includes an overview of autism and other related disorders as well as the student's new school. The student identifies the areas with which autism has impacted their life. The student identifies and modifies the atypical behaviors.

- (c) **Knowledge and Skills**



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- (1) Disability Awareness. The student develops an understanding of autism and other related disorders. The student is expected to:
 - (A) use various resources to research autism and related disorders;
 - (B) identify and describe the typical deficits consistent in autism and related disabilities such as social (pragmatic) communication disorder; and
 - (C) identify and describe the atypical behaviors of autism and related disorders such as restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities.
- (2) Personal Growth and Awareness. The student analyzes how autism spectrum disorder or a related disorder has impacted the student. The student is expected to:
 - (A) analyze the student's current social skills by completing a social skills inventory;
 - (B) analyze the results of the social skills inventory and observations of the student's behavior to recognize specific strengths and deficits ;
 - (C) identify the student's individual strengths;
 - (D) compare strategies and skills that will allow the student to mediate the disability;
 - (E) summarize what impact the student's social deficits may be having on academic and social success;
 - (F) identify any environments or situations in which the student's atypical behaviors, such as stemming, are useful or socially acceptable; and
 - (G) evaluate various strategies to increase the student's prosocial behaviors and decrease problematic behaviors.
- (3) Personal Growth and Awareness. The student develops a plan to eliminate or decrease the frequency and intensity of the atypical behaviors deemed inappropriate, nonfunctional, or detrimental to the student's academic and social success. The student is expected to:
 - (A) practice the formulated plan to eliminate or decrease the frequency and intensity of the atypical behaviors within the classroom;
 - (B) implement the plan across all settings for a set period of time;
 - (C) record and analyze data such as frequency of implementation of plan, antecedent of each incident, or consequence of each incident as observed during plan implementation;



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- (D) evaluate the success of the plan at decreasing the frequency and intensity of atypical behaviors; and
- (E) make any adjustments to the plan and employ the new plan for a period of time while recording the data.
- (4) Social Awareness. The student demonstrates an understanding of academic and social expectations in the student's high school. The student is expected to:
- (A) discuss, observe, and roleplay socially appropriate and expected behaviors in each school setting under various circumstances;
- (B) demonstrate socially appropriate and expected behaviors in prescribed situations across various educational settings such as initiating a conversation, ending a conversation, joining a conversation, making a phone call to a peer, making a phone call to a teacher, sending an email to a peer, sending an email to a teacher, using humor appropriately, participating in a group activity, or participating in a competitive activity; and
- (C) record and analyze data as to when the student demonstrated socially appropriate and expected behaviors and what the results of those behaviors were.
- (5) Personal Growth and Awareness. The student compares various organizational strategies and determines an organizational strategy that will best work for the student. The student is expected to:
- (A) apply organizational strategies successfully in order to meet assignment deadlines, locate needed supplies, and maintain an orderly work area;
- (B) examine the outcome of the organizational strategy by comparing previous strategies used and whether or not the current strategy was successful;
- (C) document if the student has missing assignments and zeros in grade books;
- (D) determine the effectiveness of the strategy by monitoring student success using the selected strategies; and
- (E) make adjustments to the strategy in order to increase its effectiveness such as decreasing number of missing assignments and having all needed supplies.
- (6) Social Success. The student employs and demonstrates appropriate interactions with peers, teachers, and other school personnel. The student is expected to:



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- (A) identify the steps to build positive relationships with peers, teachers, and other school personnel;
 - (B) practice skills needed to initiate, and maintain relationships with peers, teachers, and other school personnel;
 - (C) identify and describe various social organizations and clubs in the school;
 - (D) summarize the pros and cons of joining social organizations and the social expectations of those groups;
 - (E) apply social strategies in various settings;
 - (F) evaluate the strategies used and continue to refine the skills;
 - (G) demonstrate socially appropriate behaviors with increased frequency while demonstrating a reduction in frequency or intensity of socially inappropriate behaviors in various school settings during authentic situations; and
 - (H) compare the student's resulting social skills with the student's initial social skills by completing a second social skills inventory.
- (7) Social Awareness in the Community. The student demonstrates an understanding of social expectations in various community settings. The student is expected to:
- (A) observe, discuss, and roleplay socially appropriate and expected behaviors in various community settings under various circumstances;
 - (B) record and analyze data as to when the student demonstrated socially appropriate and expected behaviors and what the consequences of those behaviors were;
 - (C) develop a plan to modify appropriate social skills during the next community experience in order to build and maintain relationships as well as successfully participate in social or professional networks; and
 - (D) evaluate the employed strategies and continue to refine the skills.
- (8) Future Planning. The student investigates postsecondary options. The student is expected to:
- (A) identify postsecondary options in school, living arrangements, and community;
 - (B) discuss the pros and cons of the various postsecondary options; and



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- (C) identify the student's individual areas of strength and need for each of the various options.

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 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: About autism
<http://www.autism-society.org/what-is/>

autism Society. Living with autism.
<http://www.autism-society.org/>

Career Interest and Aptitude Assessment

Functional Behavior Assessment (multiple sources)

Individualized Education Program

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.



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Social Skills Inventory (e.g., Social Responsiveness Scale, Second Edition (SRS-2; Constantino & Gruber, 2012); Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS; Gresham & Elliot, 2008)

Recommended course activities:

Making Connections I

- Orientation
- Reading and discussing multiple resources regarding autism (e.g., autism Society Webpage, DSM -5)
- Completing pre- and post- social skills inventory
- Discuss results of social skills inventory
- Goal setting
- Observing appropriate and inappropriate social behaviors in various school settings
- Observing appropriate and inappropriate social behaviors in various community settings
- Discuss community outings with family and friends
- Role-play
- Behavior rehearsal exercises
- Discuss various career aspirations and the pros and cons of each avenue
- Homework assignments – Aimed at increasing generalization. These assignments don't necessarily occur in the home. They can occur in the students' other classrooms, or settings such as in the cafeteria, or in the mall.
- Reading and discussing excerpts from the school code of conduct

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).

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.



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Teacher qualifications:

At least one valid Texas educator certification related to the subject area indicated on page 1 must be listed. Please consult [high school teacher assignment rules](#) for guidance.

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)
Severely Emotionally Disturbed and Autistic
Special Education Certification Early Childhood - Grade 12

Additional information:

This course is designed for students with identified social skills deficits. These deficits should be addressed within the student's individualized educational plan. That plan is helpful at encouraging the appropriate interventions be used by staff as well as by each student. Although the students can only work towards acquisition, fluency, and maintenance within the Making Connections classroom the individualized educational plan should also detail the manner with which the student will achieve generalization of those skills across all educational settings.

References:

Hendricks, D. (2010). Employment and adults with autism spectrum disorders: Challenges and strategies for success. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 32(2), 125-134. doi: 10.3233/JVR-2010-0502

Shattuck, P. T., Narendorf, S. C., Cooper, B., Sterzing, P. R., Wagner, M., & Taylor, J. L. (2012). Postsecondary education and employment among youth with an autism spectrum disorder. *Pediatrics*, 129(6), 1042-1049. doi: 10.1542/peds.2011-2864