



Approved Innovative Course

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Course: *Making Connections II*

PEIMS Code: N1290333

Abbreviation: MAKECON2

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 outcomes.

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 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 students with developing and generalizing appropriate and beneficial social skills and increase student's postsecondary outcomes. Making Connections II assists students with understanding true friendships. Their enrollment in this course assists students to develop and maintain relationships.
- (c) Knowledge and Skills.
 - (1) Disability Awareness. The student examines the impact that autism and other related disorders can have on the ability to develop, maintain, and understand relationships. The student is expected to:
 - (A) use various resources to research;
 - (B) express an understanding of explain the student's specific manifestations of autism how they impact the student's social progress;



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- (C) research the impact that deficits related to autism such as social communication deficits or adaptive skill deficits have on individuals with autism in various aspects of their lives including school, family, and postsecondary settings;
- (D) examine the number and quality of personal interactions that occur during and after school; and
- (E) determine if increased efforts toward understanding, developing, and maintaining relationships would be beneficial to the student.
- (2) Social Awareness. The student demonstrates an understanding of friendship. The student is expected to:
- (A) identify the student's interests or skills that may be of interest to peers;
- (B) identify activities in which the student is currently involved that may enable the student to develop friendships based on shared interests;
- (C) analyze aspects of the student's behavior that may solicit or prevent friendships;
- (D) identify behaviors that the student wants to change to allow the student to develop more appropriate friendships; and
- (E) identify, develop, and employ strategies to address the student's problem behaviors that prevent appropriate friendships.
- (3) Social Awareness. The student demonstrates an understanding of appropriate friendships versus inappropriate friendships. The student is expected to:
- (A) compare and contrast the qualities of appropriate and inappropriate friendships;
- (B) identify and discuss behaviors that make others appropriate friends to pursue;
- (C) identify and discuss behaviors that make others inappropriate friends;
- (D) analyze the behaviors of peers through modeling, roleplay, and natural opportunities and describe those behaviors as demonstrating social acceptance or rejection; and
- (E) roleplay and participate in natural opportunities of initiating conversation, and sharing information with a peer regarding each other, and the student's individual experiences or interests.



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- (4) **Personal Growth and Awareness.** The student demonstrates an understanding of negative attention from peers and identifies multiple ways in which to cope with that attention. The student is expected to:
- (A) identify various ways that students receive negative attention from peers such as teasing, physical bullying, cyber bullying, and rumors or gossip;
 - (B) differentiate between peer rejection and bullying;
 - (C) analyze roleplay situations involving negative attention from peers to another;
 - (D) compare and contrast possible action plans for the student to pursue when receiving negative attention such as accessing available support systems, ignoring the peer, or attempting to have a conversation with the peer;
 - (E) characterize personality traits and behaviors that inspire confidence and trust in others and identify those traits and behaviors in current personal relationships; and
 - (F) roleplay scenarios of peer interaction and discuss actions or steps the student could take in the scenarios or in previous circumstances to practice preventative as well as coping strategies.
- (5) **Social Success.** The student engages in conflict resolution. The student is expected to:
- (A) identify strategies for remaining calm in stressful situations such as deep breathing, counting backwards, or taking a break;
 - (B) discuss, observe, and roleplay the behaviors such as the appropriate use of prosody, tone, volume, and cadence a person employs when engaging in effective conflict resolution;
 - (C) discuss, observe, and roleplay the appropriate use of body language such as proximity, facial expressions, arms and hand movements, eye contact, and shoulder placement during effective conflict resolution;
 - (D) discuss, observe, and roleplay the use of appropriate conflict resolution phrases to express frustration;
 - (E) discuss, observe, and roleplay the use of statements that express an interest and empathic understanding another person's point of view to resolve conflict;
 - (F) discuss, observe, and roleplay expressing an opinion in a respectful manner;



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- (G) discuss, observe, and roleplay listening respectfully to another person's opinion;
 - (H) discuss, observe, and roleplay developing a mutually agreed upon plan of action to resolve a conflict and to prevent further conflict; and
 - (I) discuss, observe, and roleplay coping skills to employ when a conflict does not end in a resolution.
- (6) Social Awareness in the community. The student develops strategies for initiating, maintaining, and understanding relationships. The student is expected to:
- (A) describe the various settings in which the student has the opportunity to develop friendships;
 - (B) discuss strategies for developing friendships in various community settings;
 - (C) employ strategies for developing friendships in various settings; and
 - (D) examine the effectiveness of each strategy or developing friendships in natural settings.
- (7) Future Planning. The student describes the importance of developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships. The student is expected to:
- (A) identify current appropriate friendships;
 - (B) develop a plan for developing more appropriate friendships in multiple settings such as school and work; and
 - (C) develop a plan for maintaining friendships throughout high school.

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.



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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 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

Recommended course activities:

Making Connections II

- Personal Interest Survey



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- Reinforcement Survey
- Goal Setting
- Discuss community outings with family and friends
- Role-Play with critiques
- Behavior rehearsal exercises
- 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.

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.

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



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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