



The Use of Social Thinking (R) Methodology in Inclusive Autism Education

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The Social Thinking® Methodology (developed by Michelle Garcia Winner and colleagues) is currently being implemented across the Autism Queensland Brighton School. Our school caters for students aged 5-18 years and offers short term (approximately 2 year) dual placements with various school settings.

Our presentation aims to inform teaching teams about how the Social Thinking Methodology and programs are implemented to teach social emotional skills in our school setting and generalised to other environments. It is used as the primary tool to introduce and teach social emotional learning concepts covered by the Personal and Social capabilities of the Australian Curriculum. The concepts introduced cover all four areas of the Personal and Social Capabilities (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and social management) and outline a developmental continuum of skills that assist with teaching students of all stages of learning.

Social Thinking programs are introduced by Therapists in the classrooms depending on the specific needs of the students in each class, with the support of a Teacher and Teacher Aide. Information about vocabulary and concepts taught are also shared with parents and carers. The involvement and collaboration of the teaching team and parents ensures that the concepts and vocabulary introduced are generalised to the classroom program outside of direct teaching times. The ultimate outcome aimed for is generalisation to the student's home and mainstream school setting.

We will outline how Social Thinking programs can support students' social emotional learning in both mainstream and Special Education settings. The presentation will cover how the sub-elements outlined within the Personal and Social Capabilities area can be taught using Social Thinking concepts and resources, including goal setting and program implementation. Skills covered within Social Thinking programs include flexible thinking, understanding emotions in themselves and others (including body language), working within groups, perspective taking, friendship and conversation skills, among others. It outlines concepts such as expected and unexpected behaviours and the impact of students' behaviour on their relationships with others. The presentation will outline the methods we use to explicitly teach and reinforce the concepts during structured tasks. It will also describe how students are supported to generalise these concepts first to their peers at Autism Queensland and at home, and then to the wider population of their mainstream school setting.

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