Social Stories 101

Lauren Mathews M.S. CCC-SLP
UNT Speech and Hearing Graduate Students:
Samantha Grasty B.S.
Casey Manning B.A., B.S.
Tomorrow I am going to give a presentation.
There will be a lot of people listening.
I might get a little nervous.
That is ok.
Take a deep breath and smile at the people.
Talk slowly.
Speaking to people is fun!
Definition

“Social stories are like ‘social reading,’ in which a child’s understanding of a social situation improves through the use of visual instruction. Social stories incorporate directions and explicitly stated guidelines to support the social behavior of children with ASD.”

–Carol Gray

(Prelock, 2006)
Created by Carol Gray

Director of The Gray Center for Social Learning and Understanding in Grandville, Michigan

http://www.thegraycenter.org/
Goals of a social story according to Gray

- “to share accurate social information in a patient and reassuring manner that is easily understood by its audience.”

- “to minimize potentially confusing instructional interactions by providing students direct access to social information.”

(Prelock, 2006)
Why Use Social Stories?

Functions of social stories:

- Targets situations that interfere with the child’s participation in their home, school, or community
- Supports person’s attention to relevant social cues
- Helps person understand and interpret social cues
- Prepares the person for something that is going to happen or transitions
- Teaches appropriateness in a situation
- Facilitates understanding, or independence in a situation

(Prelock, 2006)
Preparing to Write a Social Story

- Determine where the situation occurs, who is involved, how long the event is, how it begins and ends, what happens, and why it happens
  - Collect this information through interviews with those working with the person/ others familiar with the situation
- Observe the situation yourself to determine motivators that might predict the person’s response

(Prelock, 2006)
Writing a Social Story

- Vary sentence length depending on person’s developmental and language level
- Use pictures paired with salient words or use one picture to represent entire story
- Stories can be prepared before the situation or on the fly during an interaction
  - Pictures can be Mayer Johnson Picture Symbols, real pictures, clip art or hand drawings

(Prelock, 2006)
Writing a Social Story Con’t

- Always consider the perspective of the student from whom the story is written.
- Focus on what student may see, hear and feel in the targeted situation.
- Begin the story with background information about the child and the social situations that present challenges.
The noise you hear is a fire alarm.

It is OK. Get in line behind me.
People ask me lots of questions. I always make sure to answer.

Sometimes I don’t know the answer. This is OK. When I don’t know the answer I say “I don’t know.”
A bully does mean things. A bully might call me names or say things that make me feel bad. A bully might push me or trip me up. A bully might also grab my things or try and get people to laugh at me.

If a bully is calling me names I can ignore him. I do this by pretending I didn’t hear what the bully said. The bully wants me to hear what he says and he might say more unkind things. I don’t look at him and I don’t answer him. I pretend I can’t hear him.
Components of a Social Story

- **Sentence Types**
  - **Descriptive**: provides info about setting, people or activities
  - **Directive**: informs children on what they need to do in a given situation
  - **Perspective**: describes the feelings, beliefs, or reactions of others
  - **Control**: identifies strategies the child might use to recall information from the social story

(Prelock, 2006)
Examples of Sentence Types

- **Descriptive**: “I go to gym class on Tuesdays and Thursdays with my third-grade class.”
- **Directive**: “When I go to gym class, I listen to what my teacher tells the class to do.”
- **Perspective**: “My teacher likes it when I listen to what he says.”
- **Control**: “When I listen to my teacher’s instructions, I will draw a picture in my head of what the teacher is telling us to do.”

(Gray 1995a)
One directive sentence for every two to five descriptive, perspective, or control sentences is recommended, although the precise number of each sentence type is dependent on the needs of the student

(Prelock, 2006)
Social Story 1
What to do when an unexpected visitor comes to class
- I am in Mrs. Johnson’s class.
- Sometimes people that I don’t expect in my classroom want to visit.
- That is okay.
- Sometimes people who visit my classroom like to be included in our activities.
- When visitors want to join in the activity I am doing, I will try to look at them, smile, and say, “Hi.”
- It is okay to smile at our classroom visitors.

Prelock (2006)
Riding the Bus to School

I ride the bus to school.

I climb up the steps.

I sit down on a seat.

I do not stand up. This is important.

I can look out the window.

The bus will take me to school.
Examples

When I Talk to People

Sometimes I talk to people.

I look at their faces.

Their eyes look at me.

I listen and look.

I look at people’s faces when I talk to them.
Warning!

Don’t

◦ Don’t use language above the person’s receptive language abilities. Instead, use simple sentences with associated pictures or visual symbols.
◦ Don’t use the same social story for children that have varying cognitive levels. Instead, adapt each story to the cognitive demands of the person.
◦ Don’t expect immediate results from the social story. Social stories need to be directly taught and used multiple times before the person can be expected to understand!

(Prelock, 2006)
Resources

- For more information about social stories

- For a variety of sample stories
  - [http://www.frsd.k12.nj.us/Page/4816](http://www.frsd.k12.nj.us/Page/4816)

- Books with examples of social stories
  - [Autism & PDD Social Skills Lessons](#): Pam Britton Reese and Nena C. Challenger
  - [The New Social Story Book](#): Carol Gray