

FSL FAQs

POPARD Family - School Liaison Newsletter



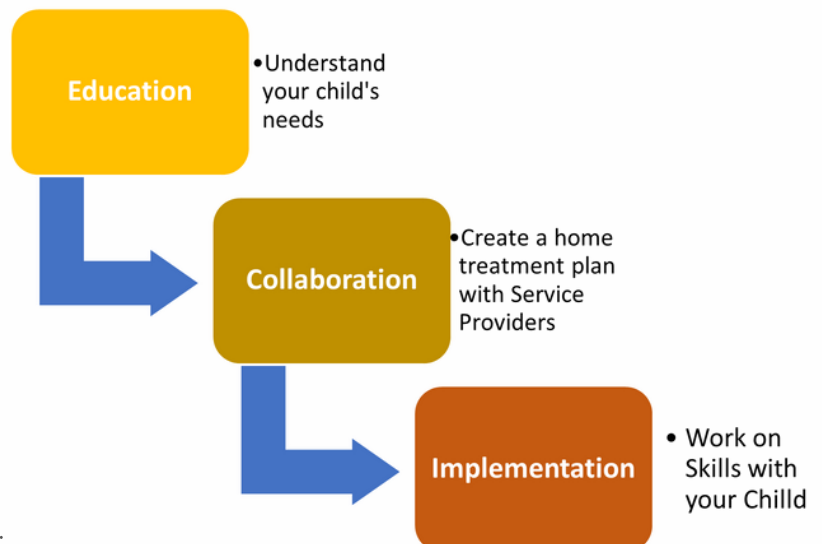
FAQ: HOW CAN I WORK ON SOCIAL SKILLS FOR MY CHILD (OF ANY AGE)?

If your child is diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), the clinician(s) who assessed them identified:

- 1) deficits in social communication and social interaction and
- 2) restricted repetitive behaviors, interests, and activities

The first reflects a lack of skills needed for social communication, while the second sometimes includes behaviours or activities that interfere with learning or with the development of communication and positive social relationships.

Working on Social Skills for Your Child



Education

If your child is diagnosed with ASD, education might involve understanding your child's needs within the context of autism. While each individual with a diagnosis of ASD is unique, understanding ASD can provide perspective, and that perspective can help to set goals and write objectives to measure the accomplishment of goals.

Taking time for educating yourself can pay off by helping you to collaborate more fully with professionals who are guiding the skills training you are doing at home with your child. As well, it can reduce your own anxiety over doing the best for your child.

These days, there are more books, articles, websites, and individual blogs related to ASD that any one person has time to peruse. How does one choose where to spend the time that one has? One way is to consider the trustworthiness of the organization or individual recommending particular resources in which you might be interested. Below are examples, from the most trustworthy to less trustworthy:

Most trustworthy. Government websites are most trustworthy.

Specialists review information on these sites to ensure that content is consistent with current scientific knowledge and practice. The National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH) <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/>, Canada Public Health Autism: [About, causes and co-occurring conditions - Canada.ca](#), and British Columbia Ministry of Health [Autism spectrum disorder - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](#) websites are examples of these. Individual government-funded organizations, such as POPARD, offer curated references and resources for parents. Autism Information Services BC at [autism brochure english.pdf \(gov.bc.ca\)](#) offers information on services throughout the province for all ages. Large societies, such as Autism Community Training BC [Autism Information | ACT - Autism Community Training \(actcommunity.ca\)](#), also offer vetted information. ACT-BC support individuals with ASD and their caregivers and offers a rich library of information and links to parent and professional training. Many of the above organizations may also offer courses and webinars on specific topics that are presented by instructors who are experienced and knowledgeable service providers.

Trustworthy. Individual authors of books and articles published by governments, universities, well-known publishers, and large societies are trustworthy. However, authors' credentials should be appropriate to the topic and verifiable. And check dates of publication; newer information might supersede information in older publications.

Less trustworthy. Individual bloggers without professional training offer opinions based on personal experience or biases. These may be appealing because they might engage in a shared experience, but their recommendations might diverge from best practice. Discuss information from these resources with practitioners who have appropriate professional credentials.

Collaboration with a Service Provider

If your child was recently assessed, the report might include recommendations with regards to interventions or accommodations. You and your service provider might begin to work with your child by referring to recommendations made in the diagnostic report.

These recommendations identify and prioritize issues observed at the time of assessment and help to determine what you might prepare to work on with your child. If your child was diagnosed more than a year ago, it is likely that their needs have changed and a new evaluation of skills and/or developmental issues will be useful.

For challenges in social communication and interaction, **Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs)** can assist. For behaviours or activities that interfere with development of communication and positive social relationships, **Occupational Therapists (OTs)** or **Behaviour Consultants** can assist. These professionals can assist by developing a curriculum or plan for your child in which challenges are addressed by setting goals and creating a program or curriculum for you to implement with frequent guidance to support you.

Finding practitioners to do this is described in POPARD's FAQs: "What 'professional' supports are available in schools?" and "How do I find professionals [professional services] outside of school in my community?"

For school-age children, professional services are often intended to support parents with weekly or bi-weekly monitoring and guidance in teaching skills. These services may be delivered on-site, in-person, or online.

Public and independent schools strive to embed social-emotional learning (SEL) into everyday teaching for all students across all grade levels, as this is part of BC's new curriculum. SEL describes a broad set of skills involved in achieving meaningful social connections. It may be helpful to find out if your child's school is using a curriculum to teach these skills so you can coordinate what you do at home with what is being used with your child's classmates at school. Here are some curriculums that are being used to teach social-emotional learning in many BC schools:

- **Elementary Age**

- We Thinkers® Series - <https://www.socialthinking.com/Products/we-thinkers-volume-1-2-curriculum-bundle>

- **High School Age**

- PEERS® Curriculum - <https://www.semel.ucla.edu/peers>

- **All Ages**

- Second Step® - <https://www.secondstep.org/>
- Everyday Speech™ Curriculum - <https://everydayspeech.com/>
- Circle of Friends - <https://www.edplace.com/blog/send/how-to-create-a-circle-of-friendship>

Implementing a Plan to Develop Your Child's Skills

Your service provider will:

- model instruction
- guide you in instructing or in implementing an intervention or adaptation
- monitor the success of an intervention

Your task as parent usually includes:

- providing opportunities, daily or more frequently, to your child to practice a targeted skill,
- recording your child's success or challenges in practicing the skill,
- ensuring that practice is positive,
- managing adaptations to the home environment, and
- participating fully in mentoring by your service provider.