Social Skills Lesson Plan: THANK YOU!

1. **Group or Individual:**
   This lesson plan is designed for an individual or small group of 4th graders, aged 9 or 10, who have high functioning autism. Any combination of boys and girls can be included. Because the time allotted for the Social Skills lesson is only 15 minutes each morning, this lesson is designed to be split into small parts over several days. It works well this way because it provides time for the student to digest the material and build on it after the student has given thought to questions in the previous lesson. It also allows time to present different scenarios and for the student to practice them so the skill becomes generalized to more situations.

2. **Skill:** Saying, “Thank you” and showing appreciation to others.

3. **How and why skill chosen was for instruction:**
   During recent conversations, the target student (who has high functioning autism) was unable to list people or things he was grateful for.

   This is an appropriate month to discuss Thanksgiving and its meaning, and to assist the student in socially appropriate behavior during the Thanksgiving holiday, as well as other upcoming winter holidays when he might receive gifts and need to thank the person giving it to him. This lesson will provide the student with an opportunity to learn through a simulation and then generalize to the actual Thanksgiving celebration and, with the parents’ support and reinforcement; it will also be generalized through the winter holidays.

4. **Behaviorally-Stated Objective:**
   When presented a scenario reflecting a Thanksgiving celebration in his household, he will be able to say “Thank you” to his mother who has cooked the meal, both at the beginning of the meal in a general context and at the end of the meal for a specific item.

5. **Material(s):** Book, *Thanksgiving Rules*, hand-out Practice Card with “Thank you” skill steps outlined, name tags for family members.

6. **Instruction (Procedures, Methods):**
   a. **The Social Skill:**
      
      Scenario: At Thanksgiving dinner, when he sits down to eat and his mother brings the food out to the table, he will:

      1. Look at the person and smile
      2. Say, “It looks delicious!”
3. Say, “Thank you!” and enjoy the meal
4. At the end of the meal, remember to compliment a specific item he enjoyed, e.g. “I really liked the turkey!”
5. Rationale: He does this because his mom has spent a lot of time cooking and preparing foods he and the family like. His mom took extra time to prepare a special meal for all of them to enjoy.

b. Student Rationale: In preliminary discussions, the student has had difficulty describing why he should say “Thank you!” We have discussed the concept, including ideas like his mom tried to make foods he liked and make it special for him, as well as others in the family.

   We will finish reading the book, Thanksgiving Rules. This book has been useful as an introduction to our discussion about Thanksgiving celebrations. We will continue to discuss the idea that, if he remembers to say, “Thank you” people will be more likely to do nice things for you and like you.

c. Cues/characteristics of general situations requiring the skill:

   The skill will be used during the Thanksgiving holiday celebration and at other times of year such as his birthday or the winter holidays when family and friends may give him a gift. “Flags” include special dinners, a birthday party, gifts, and special holiday celebrations where he needs to thank the hostess.

d. Specific examples of situations in which the skill is used:
   - Thanksgiving dinner, birthday presents, a gift from someone (even if it is not your birthday)

e. Specific steps of the skill:
   If it is a dinner:
   1. Look at the person and smile
   2. Say, “It looks delicious!”
   3. Say, “Thank you!” and then enjoy your meal
   4. At the end of the meal, remember to compliment a specific food with enthusiasm. For example, “I really liked the turkey!”

   If it is a gift:
   1. Take the gift
   2. Smile at the person, making eye contact
   3. Say, “Thank you!” with enthusiasm
4. If the gift is wrapped, open it and say, “That was really nice of you!” and say something positive about the gift.

f. **Model the skill:**

Day 1 (Wednesday, 11/17): The teacher and student signed “Thank you” cards and the student wrote a short “Thank you for all you do.” Then they delivered the cards with special Thanksgiving chrysanthemums to the school office secretaries. (Note: I had already prepared the senior secretary, Ms. S., that we were doing a special lesson and would be coming.)

I took a photo of the student delivering the cards and plants which helped us discuss what happened when we returned to the classroom. After looking at the steps to the skill, “Thank you!” I asked him what Ms. S. had said, how she acted, and how it had made him feel. (Special Note: when we were returning from the office delivery, the student was smiling and skipping down the hallway.)

**g. Verbal rehearsal of skill steps (students learn to name steps of skill to automaticity)**

We read and discussed the skills listed on the attached hand-out. I had taken a photo of the student delivering the cards and plants which helped us discuss what happened when we returned to the classroom. After looking at the skill steps, I asked him what Ms. S. had said, how she acted, and how it had made him feel. This was designed to convey the feelings that usually accompany the act of saying “Thank you.” (Special Note: when we were returning from the office delivery, the student was smiling and skipping down the hallway.)

**h. Behavioral rehearsal (role play) of skill steps with feedback and reinforcement**

The flower delivery was the first day of practicing this skill.

Day 2 (11/22): I had asked him to talk with his parents about their plans for Thanksgiving over the weekend. Based on his information, we will create a social story about the Thanksgiving at his house and act it out. Roles of mother, father, and child will be filled by the Cooperating Teacher, student teacher, and student and name tags used to indicate who is playing which role. The student will have the option of which role he wants to fill first, and then we will switch roles and name tags.

Day 3, 11/23, I gave the student a small gift and the student will practice the steps previously discussed. He will do a self-assessment of whether he remembered to perform all four of the steps.
i. **Homework (generalization) assignment:** (i.e. students try skill in new settings)
   The student will practice the “Thank you” skills during the family’s Thanksgiving holiday. A copy of the skills hand-out will be sent home to the parents with information on what we have been practicing. The parents will be asked to write a short note to the teacher whether he remembered to follow the steps.

7. **Student Evaluation—evidence of student learning:**
   The student will recite the 4 steps with 100% accuracy and be able to express his appreciation while acting out the family’s Thanksgiving celebration, performing it with two teachers filling in family roles. He will then check off the steps he completed.

8. **Notes about commercial materials available:**
   While researching information available for this lesson, I purchased *Thanksgiving Rules* by Laurie Friedman. It is a short Thanksgiving Day story told from the perspective of a boy about 10 years old. It incorporates child-like humor as well as constructive ideas on good manners for children, including saying “Thank you.” I felt it was a good introduction to our discussion and was very relatable for my student.

   Most lesson plans I saw on the internet were either too young or too religious. I did borrow the idea of the “thank you plant” from K. Dockery’s “Thank you! Lesson 4.” This material was developed by me and through conceptual discussion with other teachers. The one addition was the “thank you” plant mentioned earlier.

References:
