



SOCIAL THINKING

The Social Thinking® Methodology

Speech Language Pathologist Michelle Garcia Winner created Social Thinking to teach individuals (ages 4 to adult) how to share space effectively with others, learn to work as part of a group, and develop relationships. For more information, visit www.socialthinking.com

Social Thinking and the Minnetonka Schools

Kari Zweber Palmer M.A.CCC-SLP, started her career in the Minnetonka schools. She then had an opportunity to work for and train with Ms. Garcia Winner in CA. She currently lives in Excelsior where she runs a small private practice. Kari travels internationally to speak on topics related to Social Thinking.

Kari co-authored a social emotional curriculum (*We Thinkers* series) and continues to create and write for Social Thinking publishing. She consults with schools across the country.

What is Social Thinking?

We practice social thinking all day long, in typical social interactions (like conversations) and in a wide variety of other contexts. Essentially, we use social thinking whenever we think about the perspective of another person. Consider the following examples:

- **In conversation** – when we attempt to read the thoughts, beliefs, intentions, emotions, knowledge and actions of our conversation partner(s) and adapt our behavior to affect the thoughts they have about us.
- **At the grocery store** - when we move our cart away from the middle of the aisle so other shoppers can pass by.
- **Watching TV** – when we follow the story by understanding how the characters interpret and then influence each other.
- **Social media** – to understand the intention of a message and its sender

Social Thinking and Academics

The same social thinking ability required to relate effectively to people around us is also essential for success in academics. Students must use social thinking constantly at school, to work effectively as part of a group, stay on task, figure out the expected times to talk in class, and share space well with others in the classroom, cafeteria, and on the playground. Social thinking is also critical to succeed in individualized academic tasks, such as reading a book. It is required when reading stories to understand the deeper meaning behind the actions of the characters and their relationships.





Social Thinking Pilot Program at Excelsior Elementary

During the 2017-2018 school year, staff from Excelsior, Deephaven, and Groveland are invited to participate in a Social Thinking voluntary pilot program.

Each month, Kari presents a concept from the *Social Thinking Vocabulary*. The content of the presentation is designed to give all staff members more information on social emotional learning and strategies to support their students.

Our collective goal is to learn and implement Social Thinking Vocabulary concepts. Data is being collected to share with schools around the world that are interested in our innovative work together.

What is the Social Thinking Vocabulary?

A research based, user friendly vocabulary for talking about complex social concepts and expectations in a concrete way.

Why Use It?

The Social Thinking Vocabulary was developed to:

- Make our abstract social world more concrete
- Teach individuals to notice the social expectations of any given setting.
- Give us a common language that can be used across people and settings

Social Thinking Vocabulary Definitions

Group Plan

We talk about "the group plan" as a way to help students know what they are expected to think about and do when they are part of a group. When everyone is following the plan, we are all thinking about each other. This differs from following one's own plan.

Think With Your Eyes

Using your eyes to figure out what non-verbal messages others are sending, what they might be thinking, as well as figuring out the plan (or what is happening/expected) for the situation. This manner of talking about how to use eyes to figure out information provides a better way to teach concepts like "use good eye contact" or "look at me."

Body/Brain in the Group

We notice when another's body is physically close enough and/or is turned into the group so that he/she looks like a part of the group. We also notice when someone's body is not close enough to the group and/or turned away from the group in a manner that makes people think the person does not want to be in the group. When someone's attention appears to be focused on the group and we call this "keeping your brain in the group."

Whole Body Listening

We teach that the whole body (eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet, brain, etc.) are important parts of the listening/attending process.²