The Learning Clinic Pragmatic Skills Survey®

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The need to assess the level of pragmatic skill functioning for Asperger's and High Functioning Autistic students is clear. Children and Adolescents with such diagnoses require a functional assessment that is relevant to the creation of treatment objectives and which provides a method to monitor treatment results. The TLC Pragmatic Skill Survey is designed to be useful to parents, professionals, and paraprofessionals who are involved with the care and treatment of children and youth who demonstrate deficits in social skills and pragmatic language.

The survey data may be used to establish treatment objectives that are observable, modifiable, and assessable. The survey assesses components of Pragmatic Skills with peer and adult interactions across settings. This survey form is for use by Permission of The Learning Clinic.

Parents, professionals, and paraprofessionals who are involved with the care and treatment of children and youth are encouraged to download, print, complete this survey, and mail a completed copy to:

The Learning Clinic, Attn: Admissions Office, P.O. Box 324, Brooklyn, CT 06234

In the near future you will be able to complete this form online and submit it electronically. The Learning Clinic Pragmatic Skills Survey is the Property of The Learning Clinic Inc. and is intended for the sole use of parents, professionals, and paraprofessionals who are involved with the care and treatment of children and youth.

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Description / Examples of Terms

<u>Pragmatic Language</u> is defined as language use. It involves what is said and why it is said. Included are verbal and nonverbal communication and the ability to know when to best use each in effective conversation.

The TLC Pragmatic Skill Survey is an assessment tool designed to describe the level of social communication skill evidenced by student performance.

The survey assesses FOUR (4) categories of communication. Each category is further described by subcomponents, as follows:

1. Topic: Subject of any disclosure.

Topic is described by SEVEN (7) subcomponents.

- * Establishes conversation
- * Maintains conversation
- * Content of topic
- * Changes topic appropriately
- * Revises message to fit change in topic
- * Modifies message to repair breakdown in communication
- * Terminates conversation appropriately
- 2. Purpose: End or aim or intent of disclosure.

Purpose is described by FIVE (5) subcomponents.

- * Requesting / Asking
- * Informing
- * Regulating
- * Expressing
- * Ritualizing

3. <u>Abstraction</u>: A generality in language, not concrete in language or in reasoning but requires inference to be drawn.

Abstraction has SIX (6) sub-components.

- * Uses sarcasm appropriately
- * Understands/responds appropriately to sarcasm
- * Uses idioms/figurative language appropriately
- * Understands/responds appropriately to idioms/figurative

language

- * Uses indirect messages
- * Understands/responds appropriately to indirect messages
- 4. <u>Visual / Gestural Cues</u>: Nonverbal communication signals as to mood or state of mind, or intent as a communicative "hint" to the observer.

Visual/Gestural Cues are described by SIX (6) sub-components.

- * Uses appropriate eye contact
- * Gestures/body posture is consistent with message
- * Facial expression is consistent with message
- * Uses appropriate proximity/distance
- * Uses appropriate physical contact
- * Responds appropriately

The aim of the four categories of the Pragmatic Skill Survey and the sub-component sections is to provide a functional description of the student-clients' communication skill with adults and peers, in alternate settings.

The following is a further elaboration on each of the four (4) categories and the respective sub-components:

A: TOPIC

<u>Topic</u> of the communication is the first category for evaluation. <u>Topic</u> is defined as the 'subject' of the communication.

The seven (7) sub-components under <u>Topic</u> are indices of the student's ability to communicate, as follows:

1. Establishes Conversation

- a. appropriate selection of topic
- b. appropriate *introduction* of topic

This sub-component assesses the student's ability to <u>establish</u> a conversation by appropriate <u>selection</u> and <u>introduction</u> of the topic.

2. Maintains Conversation

- a. duration of topic
- b. appropriate turn-taking

This sub-component assess the student's ability to <u>maintain</u> a conversation in terms of <u>duration</u> of sustaining the topic and appropriate <u>turn-taking</u> during the flow of communication.

3. Content of Topic is:

- a. accurate
- b. logical
- c. relevant to subject at hand
- d. concise

The <u>content</u> of the TOPIC is also assessed in terms of <u>accuracy</u>, <u>logic</u> (one thought logically follows another without the introduction of non-relevant data, themes, or questions), <u>relevance</u> to the subject under general consideration and <u>conciseness</u>. <u>Concise</u> refers to the degree to which the topic covered demonstrates under or over elaboration or perseveration. Perseveration is demonstrated by the student's inability to shift ideas. It is a restricted, limiting scope within the boundaries of the topics.

4. Changes topics appropriately

5. Revises message to fit change in topic

6. Modifies message to repair breakdown in communication

The sub-components of the TOPIC also includes an indication of the students' ability to <u>change</u> topics appropriately, <u>revise</u> messages within the flow of reciprocal communication based on new information being received. It also includes the ability to <u>modify</u> the <u>message</u> to repair breakdowns in communication. A modification of the message is in response to the students' perception that the person intended to receive the message doesn't understand it. The speaker then adjusts the message so that it is better understood.

7. Terminates conversation appropriately

The last sub-component under TOPIC is the assessment of the student's ability to <u>terminate</u> conversation appropriately, (i.e. the student demonstrates an ability to 'close' the topic).

B. PURPOSE

<u>Purpose</u> of conversation and/or communication is the second category of this survey. The <u>purpose</u> is the inferred "why" behind the communication event. A message may be delivered with varying degrees of directness and politeness and clarity.

Purpose has five (5) sub-components with elaboration for each sub-component, as follows:

1. Requesting / Asking

- a. choices/either-or questions
- b. another's emotions, sensations, or intents
- c. product questions
- d. process questions
- e. for action
- f. permission for an action or object
- g. for clarification of prior remark
- h. suggesting action

<u>Requesting</u> / <u>Asking</u> behavior may employ "why" interrogatives or using inflection, e.g., upward tone of voice at the end of a sentence. "<u>Asking</u>" may be used to obtain information, clarify a message or to initiate a message to alter another person's actions.

<u>Product Question:</u> A product question is one that requires a response that involved a product, such as information. <u>Example:</u> What is the capital of Virginia?

<u>Process Question:</u> A process question is one that is asking for information about a process/sequence of steps. The response to a process question would provide information/clarification about a sequence of events. <u>Example</u>: Okay, after I sort my clothes by color, and put them in the washing machine, what do I do next? OR After I earn status 4, what do I have to do to earn status 5?

<u>Action Question:</u> An action question is one which asks others to do something that involves an action. Example: Would you please prepare the dog's food and feed her?

2. Informing

- a. explaining, describing or identifying
- b. expressing personal judgments, opinions, attitudes, agreements, or disagreements
- c. expressing beliefs about other's abilities
- d. answering choices, questions, or indicating compliance

<u>Informing</u> pertains to the use of statements to convey specific information. It may be a relevant response to a question.

3. Regulating

- a. uses warning when appropriate
- b. uses reminders when appropriate
- c. delineates personal claims
- d. labels the speaker who gets next turn
- e. uses persuasion appropriately
- f. objects to another's behavior/demand
- q. offers assistance
- h. uses negation appropriately
- i. attempts to delay or speed-up action of self or others appropriately

<u>Regulating</u> pertains to the use of statements that intend to control another's behavior, to get attention, negotiate or influence actions.

<u>Delineates personal claims</u>: Statements that identify personal claims/rights to property, privileges, etc. <u>Example</u>: It's my turn to use the camera next.

4. Expressing (receptive / expressive)

- a. uses statements to express emotions, sensations, intents of self
- b. uses statements to express beliefs about the emotions, sensations or intents of others
- c. tells jokes appropriately
- d. apologizes appropriately
- e. congratulates appropriately
- f. using exclaiming appropriately
- g. uses teasing, annoying or provoking of others in a playful, good- natured manner
- h. understands / responds appropriately to jokes
- i. understands / responds appropriately to playful, good-natured teasing
- j. uses appropriate volume
- k. uses tone of voice consistent with situation / intent

<u>Expressing</u> is a type of language that uses statements that describe a person's emotions, sensations, intents, beliefs, or that label or elicit emotions in others. It also includes self emotions such as "That hurts", "I feel sad" or other-directed comments such as "You look happy", "I bet that hurt".

Expressing may also define a prediction "If I do that, it will hurt me"

5. Ritualizing

- a. demonstrates "manner" greetings, farewells, introductions, phone manners, and/or politeness markers
- b. uses specific context-audience exchange

<u>Ritualizing</u> pertains to a type of communication where the person demonstrates a response to a social situation that implies an "automatic" element in the response: (e.g. use of appropriate manners). A person may excuse themselves for stepping in front of another person, belching, interrupting conversation, etc.

<u>Ritualizing</u> may pertain to a specific social context as well when exchange with an audience is required. For example, a sales clerk may ask "May I help you?", "May I take your order?", etc.

<u>Ritualizing – uses specific context-audience exchange</u>: "Automatic" social manners that are elicited in a specific context. <u>Example</u>: (context: TLC Talent Show). Emcee steps up to the microphone and says, "Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen." <u>OR</u> (context: TLC school building, and UPS man walks through doorway). Student approaches and asks, "May I help you?"

C. ABSTRACTION

Abstraction is a separate category for assessment with six (6) sub-components as follows:

- 1. Uses sarcasm appropriately
- 2. Understands / responds appropriately to sarcasm
- 3. Uses idioms / figurative language appropriately
- 4. Understands / responds appropriately to idioms / figurative language
- 5. Uses indirect messages
- 6. Understands / responds appropriately to indirect messages

<u>Abstraction</u> pertains to a type of message that is communicated by language that is not concrete. An abstract message requires inference and it usually relates to mood, tone, audience and event. Nonverbal cues are relied on more heavily for interpretation than the statement itself. The student's intent is to communicate a relationship, image, or emotion that can not be conveyed in direct terms. "Hints" need to be combined to sum up the message.

<u>Abstractions – uses indirect messages</u> – This involves the use of nonverbal communication to convey the message. <u>Example</u>: A student notices a group of peers gathered around another peer who is sharing a bag of chips. He stands nearby, wide-eyed, licking his lips, and inquires, "Are those good?" The indirect message, "Can I have some chips?" is indirectly communicated by the close proximity, wide-eyed, and liplicking behaviors.

<u>Abstractions – understands/responds appropriately to indirect messages</u> -- Is the student able to correctly interpret (and respond to) indirect communication, (see preceding example)?

D. VISUAL / GESTURAL CUES

<u>Visual / Gestural</u> cues refer to <u>nonverbal</u> ways of communicating attitudes, moods, or affective states in general. Posture, <u>proximity</u>, <u>eye contact</u>, <u>body movements</u> are elements of visual / gestural cues. Visual / gestural cues have 6 sub-components as follows:

1. Uses appropriate eye contact

Eye contact (initiated, sustained, diverted, avoided) is a visual / gestural cue related to the message.

2. Gestures / body posture is consistent with message

Body language (posture) can be consistent or inconsistent with the message. For example, arms folded, sideways stance, shifting position, unrelated and/or competing body movements in relation to the message are observable indices of socially appropriate communication, or interfering behaviors.

3. Facial expression is consistent with message

Facial expressions, such as grimace or smile are observable indices of a message.

4. Uses appropriate proximity / distance

Use of proximity to others is also an observable index of a message.

5. Uses appropriate physical contact

Physical contact refers to the use of touch to convey a message and influence the behavior of others.

6. Responds appropriately to:

- a. eye contact
- b. gesture / body posture
- c. facial expression
- d. physical proximity
- e. physical contact

Responses to visual / gestural communication may be consistent or inconsistent, or appropriate or inappropriate to the message. Social context is also assessed by this sub-component.

REFERENCE GROUP

As you rate a TLC student, compare the skill level of the TLC student with the skill level of <u>same-age average</u> <u>students in the general population</u>. For example, how does the skill level of the TLC student compare to the skill level of an emotionally healthy, well-adjusted student of the same age, in a public school? Specifically, base your rating on the behavior, or lack of it, that you directly observe in your daily interaction with the student.

RATINGS

A rating score of zero to five (0-5) may be awarded to each index in the survey. Score values are as follows:

0 = no behavior observed	Skill is <u>never</u> observed
1 = (1 - 20% of the time) (1-2 times out of 10)	Skill is <u>rarely</u> observed.
2 = (21 - 40% of the time) (3-4 times out of 10)	Skill is <u>sometimes</u> observed.
3 = (41 - 60% of the time) (5-6 times out of 10)	Skill is evident in many settings, but performance is inadequate, and inconsistent. Skill still dependent on external prompts.
4 = (61 - 80% of the time) (7-8 times out of 10)	Skill is mastered at an age-appropriate level, and demonstrated in <u>most</u> settings. Evidence of some level of internalization of skill.
5 = (81 - 100% of the time) (9-10 times out of 10)	Skill is mastered at a high level of quality, and demonstrated <i>consistently</i> in <i>all settings</i> . Skill has been internalized, and does not require external prompts.

INTERPRETATION

Divide column totals by 65 to average score. Column total
65

A score of 0, 1, or 2 for any survey index represents a target for treatment intervention.

A score of 3 on, an index may need treatment intervention, depending on the significance of that behavior for the student's overall social functioning.

A total column score of 130 represents an average index score of 2. An average score of 2 or less represents severe social pragmatic skill deficits. An average score this low indicates that a specialized treatment plan and structured environment may be required to elicit and maintain pragmatic skills. The therapeutic intervention and structured supports should be continued until the skills are incorporated into the behavioral repertoire of the person, and generalized across multiple settings.

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	Fragiliatic Skills Survey (
Name:	
	School:
Age:	Recorder:
Date:	Relationship to Student:
	<u> </u>

	KEY	Degree of Skill					
0 not high		1 2 3 4 5 low					

	CLASSROOM		RESIDENCE		OTHER
	w/ peers	w/ adults	w/ peers	w/ adults	
TOPIC					
Establishes conversation					
a. Appropriate selection of topic	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
b. Appropriate introduction of topic	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
2. Maintains conversation					
a. Duration of topic					
for 1 minute	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
for 5 minutes	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
for 10 minutes	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
for 15+ minutes	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
b. Appropriate turn taking	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
3. Content of topic is:					
a. Accurate	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
b. Logical *	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
c. Relevant to subject at hand	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
d. Concise *	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
4. Changes topics appropriately	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
5. Revises message to fit change in topic	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
6. Modifies message to repair breakdown in					
communication *	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
7. Terminates conversation appropriately	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
TOPIC SUBTOTAL					
TOPIC MEAN: Subtotal / 15					
PURPOSE					
Requesting * / Asking:					
a. Choices / either or questions	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
b. Another's emotions, sensations, or intents	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
c. Product questions *	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
d. Process questions *	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
e. For action	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
f. Permission for an action or object	012345	0 1 2 3 4 5	012345	012345	012345
g. For clarification of prior remark *	012345	0 1 2 3 4 5	012345	012345	012345
h. Suggesting action *	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345

	CLASSROOM		RESIDENCE		OTHER
	w/ peers	w/ adults	w/ peers	w/ adults	
2. Informing *					
a. Explaining, describing, or identifying	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
b. Expressing personal judgments, opinions, attitudes, agreement, or disagreements	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
c. Expressing beliefs about other's abilities	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
d. Answering choice questions or indicating compliance	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
3. Regulating *					
a. Uses warning when appropriate	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
b. Uses reminders when appropriate	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
c. Delineates personal claims	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
d. Labels the speaker who gets next turn	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
e. Uses persuasion appropriately	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
f. Objects to another's behavior/demand	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
g. Offers assistance	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
h. Uses negation appropriately	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
Attempts to delay or speed-up action of self or others appropriately	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
Expressing * (receptive/expressive)					
Uses statements to express emotions, sensations, intents in self	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
b. Uses statements to express beliefs about the emotions, sensations, or intents of others	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
c. Tells jokes appropriately	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
d. Apologizes appropriately	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
e. Congratulates appropriately	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
f. Using exclaiming appropriately	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
g. Uses teasing, annoying or provoking of others in a playful, good-natured manner	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
h. Understands / responds appropriately to jokes	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
, ,	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
 Understands / responds appropriately to playful, good-natured teasing 	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
j. Uses appropriate volume	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
k. Uses tone of voice consistent with situation / intent	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
5. Ritualizing					
 Demonstrates "manner" - greetings, farewells, introductions, phone manners, and/or politeness 					
markers	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
b. Uses specific context-audience exchange	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
PURPOSE SUBTOTAL PURPOSE MEAN: Subtotal / 34					
TONTOGE WILANT. Subtotal / 34					

	CLASSROOM		RESIDENCE		OTHER
	w/ peers	w/ adults	w/ peers	w/ adults	_
ABSTRACTIONS *	•		•		
Uses sarcasm appropriately Understands / responds appropriately to	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
sarcasms	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
Uses idioms / figurative language appropriately	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
Understands / responds appropriately to idioms/figurative language	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
Uses indirect messages	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
Understands / responds appropriately to indirect messages ABSTRACTIONS SUBTOTAL	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
ABSTRACTIONS 30BTOTAL ABSTRACTIONS MEAN: Subtotal / 6					
VISUAL / GESTURAL CUES					
Uses appropriate eye contact Gestures / body posture is consistent with	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
message	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
Facial expression is consistent with message	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
Uses appropriate proximity / distance	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
Uses appropriate physical contact	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
Responds appropriately to:					
a. Eye contact	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
b. Gesture / body posture	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
c. Facial expressions	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
d. Physical proximity	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
e. Physical contact	012345	012345	012345	012345	012345
VISUAL/GESTURAL CUES SUBTOTAL VISUAL/GESTURAL CUES MEAN: Subtotal / 10					

COLUMN SUBTOTALS: Topic

Grand Total

Overall Mean: Grand Total / 65

Sources: "Pragmatic Skills Checklist" from Communication Skill Builders, Inc. The Test of Pragmatic Language The Learning Clinic, Inc. Raymond W. DuCharme, Ph.D.

^{*} Refer to "Descriptions / Examples..."for clarification" Additional Comments / Observations: