



NORD ANGLIA  
INTERNATIONAL  
SCHOOL  
HONG KONG

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# Social Skills or Social Thinking





Human beings are sociable creatures and we have developed many ways to communicate our messages, thoughts and feelings with others.

# What are social skills?

Social skills are the skills we use to communicate and interact with each other, both verbally and non-verbally, through gestures, body language and our personal appearance.



# What do we hope?

- More and Better Relationships
- Identifying well with individuals leads to more relationships and, at times, friendships.



**It's an incredibly complex  
process that most of us take  
for granted.**



# The Four Steps of Communication

The Four Steps of Communication are briefly broken down into individual steps, but they form a synergistic whole; all factors are to be considered at all times.

Interestingly, these four steps do unfold in this linear sequence, however, in milliseconds of time and often without conscious thought about them.



# The Four Steps of Communication

***Step 1: Think about other people's thoughts and feelings as well as your own.***

- To participate successfully in a communicative act we have to take the perspective(s) of our communicative partner.
- Effective communication requires all participants to be thinking (most of the time) about the same topic/idea and for the thoughts to stay connected (even if not mutually agreed upon) throughout the communicative exchange.



# The Four Steps of Communication

***Step 2: Establish physical presence; enter with your body attuned to the group.***

- Effective communication typically requires people to not only stand about an arm's length of each other (physical proximity) but to also have a physical stance/posture that conveys emotional calm and willingness to participate.
- It's important that we teach not only about physical proximity but also about physical relaxation when communicating with others.



# The Four Steps of Communication

## ***Step 3: Think with your eyes.***

- Teaching eye contact from a purely physical, functional perspective can hurt as much as help our students in social situations.
- Instead, we need to teach students to "think with their eyes" - meaning, to use their eyes enough to monitor how people are feeling and what they may be thinking (based on what they are looking at) during social encounters.



# The Four Steps of Communication

## ***Step 4: User your words to relate to others.***

- Language is the way we share our thoughts with others. Just as in Step #1 we try to keep our thoughts connected while communicating together, we also must keep our language connected to whatever is being discussed.
- We must teach students communication strategies such as asking questions, adding a thought, showing interest, etc. based on the conversation at hand and what they think other people are thinking about.



# The Four Steps of Communication

- Traditionally, parents and educators spend so much time and attention teaching students to use better social language skills.
- However, it is fascinating to observe that by merely engaging in the first three steps of communication well, we can be considered effective communicators.



## The Four Steps of Communication

- However, if we only do the fourth step, in the absence of the first three, we are considered equally ineffective.



**Communication is more than words. Let's teach our children to communicate using their whole bodies.**

**Social Thinking is what we  
do when we share space with  
others**



Social Thinking is what we do when we share space with others **and** a host of other daily activities that involve our social interpretation and related reactions.



We consider the context; take in the thoughts, emotions and intentions of the people with whom we are interacting and use that information to determine how we respond.



How we think about people affects how we behave, which in turn affects how others respond to us, which in turn affects our own emotional internal and external responses.

# How Does Social Thinking Develop?

- Social thinking develops from birth, much like walking. Figuring out how the social world works is intuitively *hard wired* into most of us.
- A milestone of infancy is called **joint attention**. This occurs when babies naturally follow the gaze of another person. Others follow a baby's gaze too when attempting to figure out wants or needs.



# How Does Social Thinking Develop?

- This is the building block for many parts of social communication, including play, cooperation, sharing an imagination, and working as part of a group. Once this milestone is reached, complex communication develops rapidly.
- Being able to play effectively with peers in the early years provides the foundation for sitting/learning in a classroom as well as having back-and-forth conversations. Play is really important!

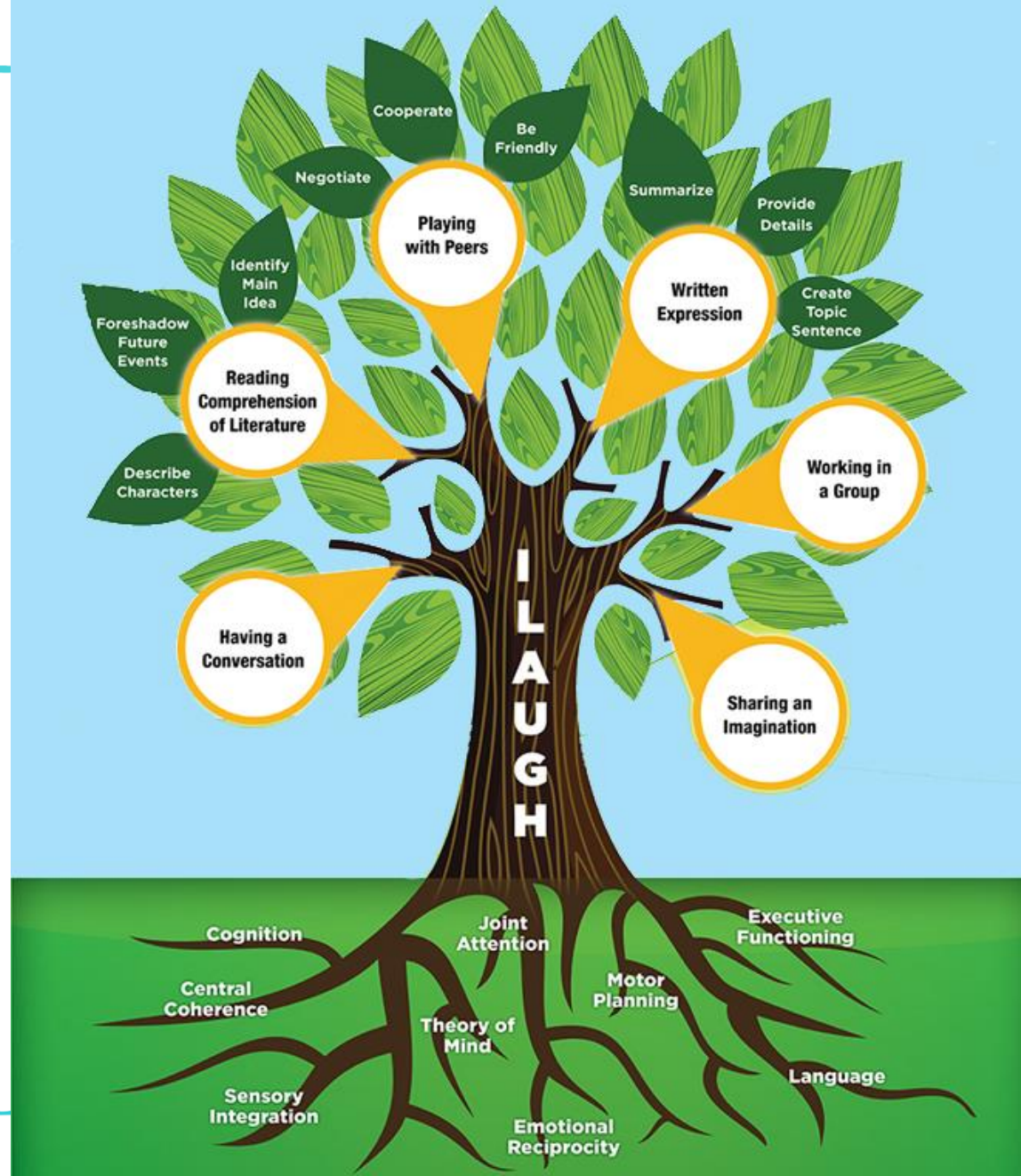


# How Does Social Thinking Develop?

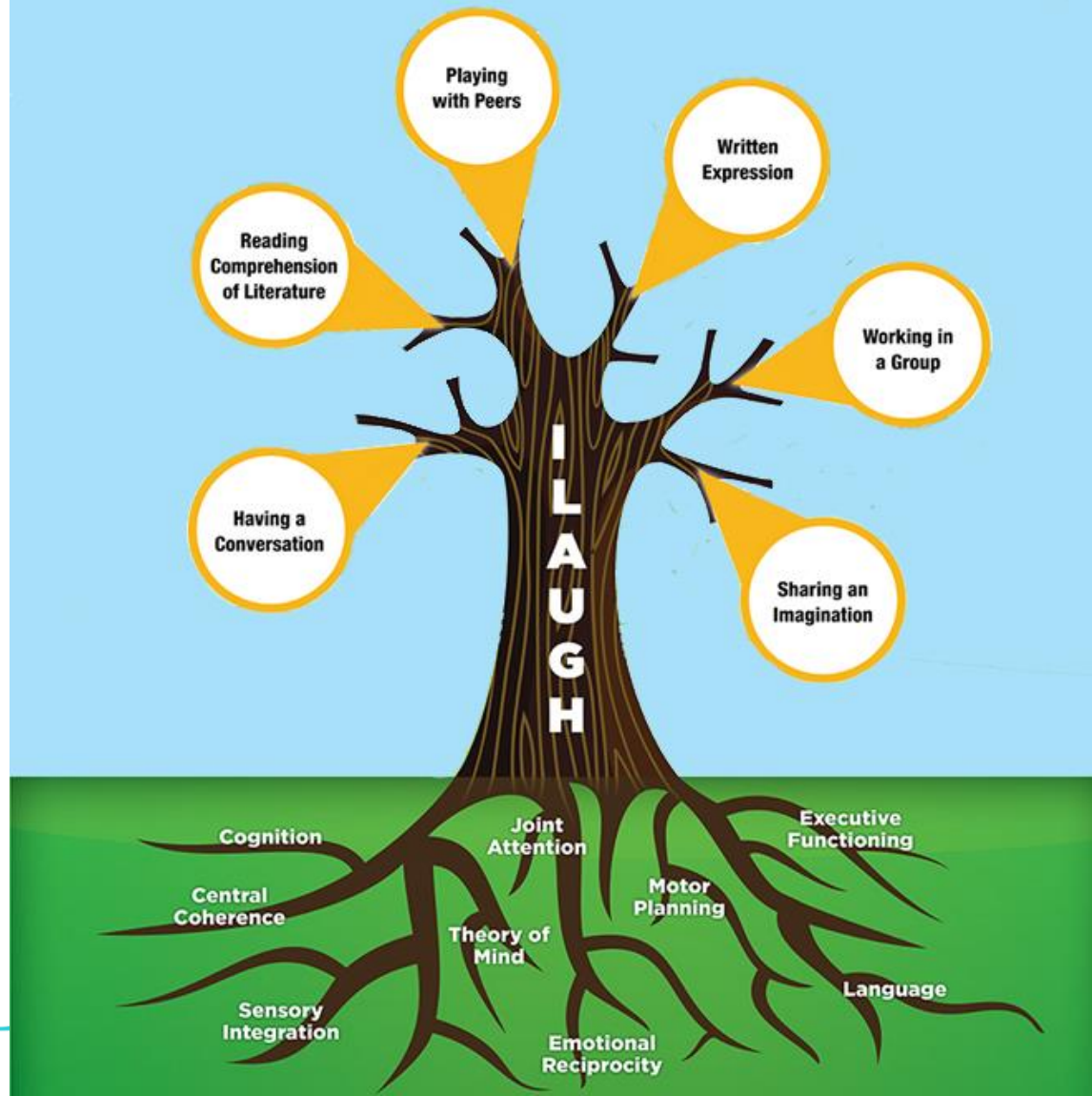
- Students with social learning challenges do not intuitively learn social information the way other children do. Instead, they have to be cognitively taught how to think socially and understand the use of related social skills.
- Individuals learning about social thinking concepts do so via strategies to *think about thinking* in play, classrooms, social relationships, work settings, and community.



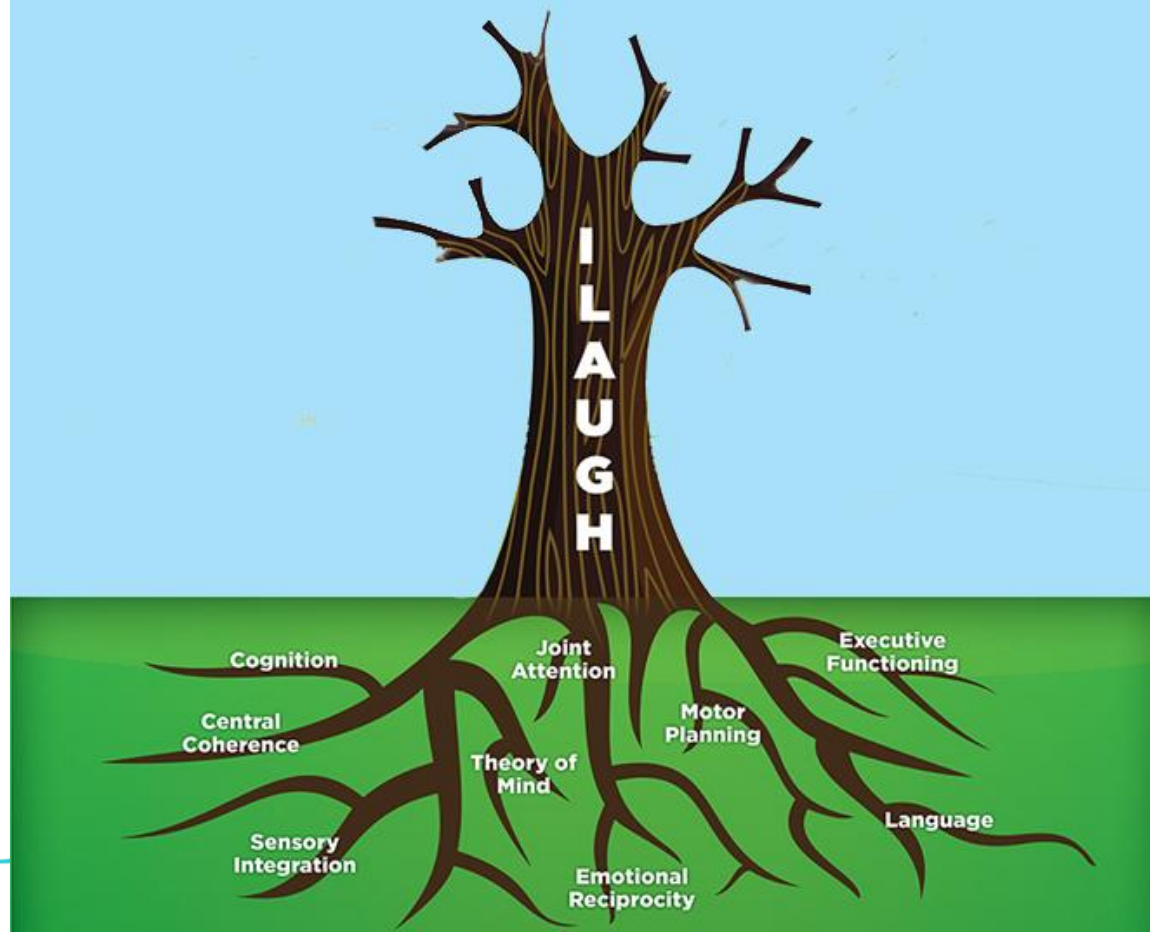
# Social Thinking: Social Learning Tree



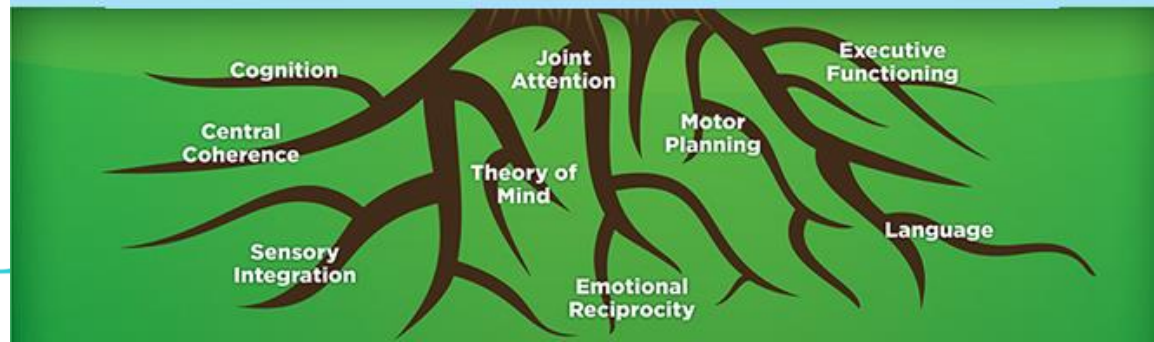
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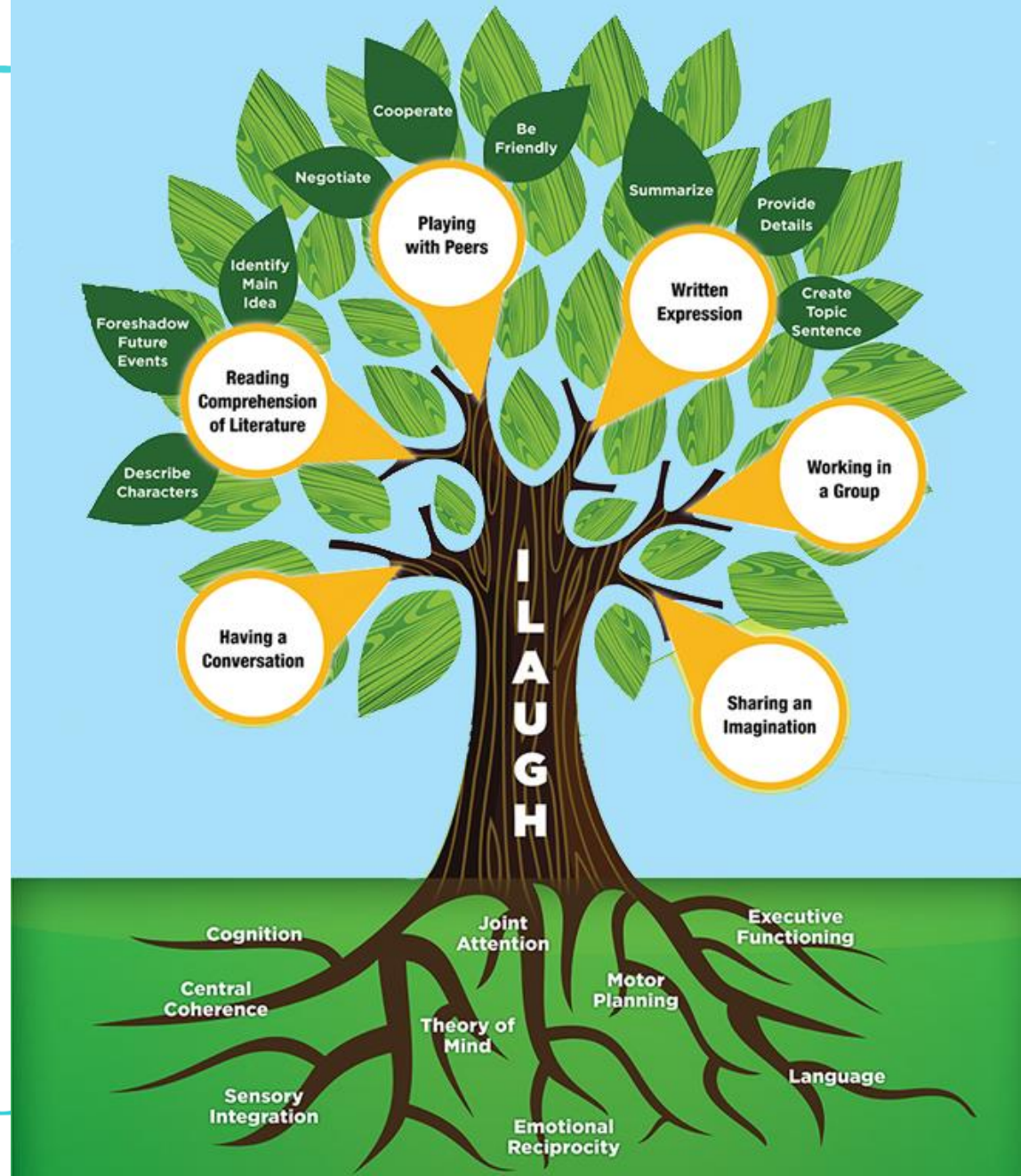
# Social Thinking: Social Learning Tree



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# Social Thinking: Social Learning Tree



# ILAUGH Model – Michelle Garcia Winner

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I = Initiation of Communication

L = Listening With Eyes and Brain

A = Abstract & Inferential Language/Communication

U = Understanding Perspective

G = Gestalt Processing/Getting the Big Picture

H = Humor and Human Relatedness

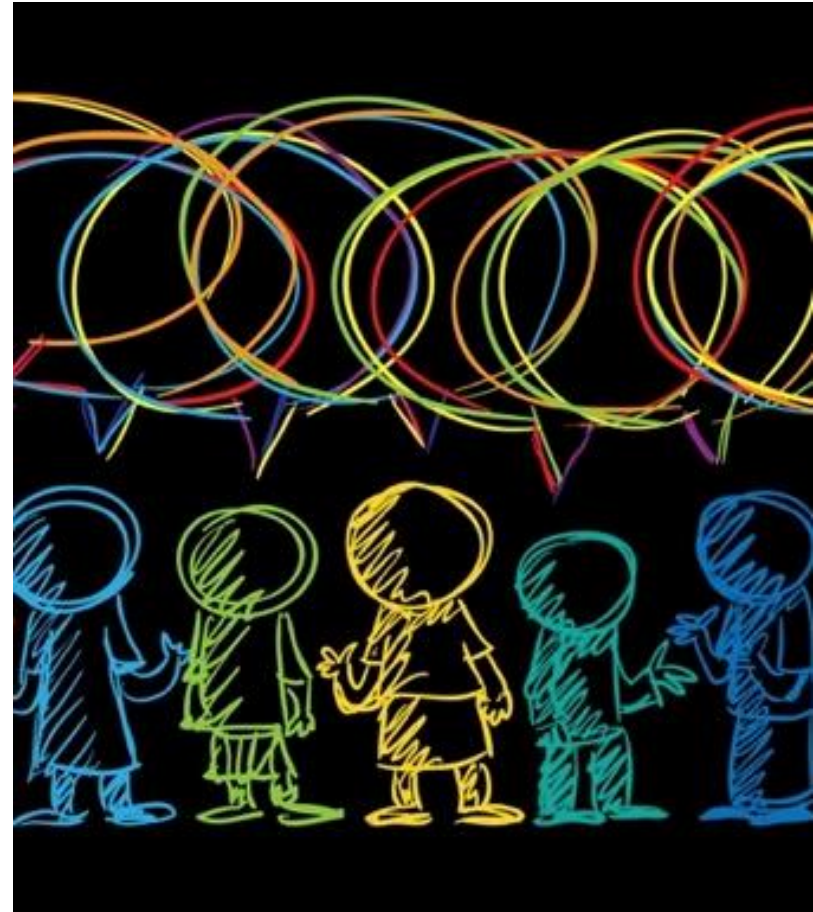
# Redefining the Nord Anglia Education Brand

## I = Initiation of Communication

Initiation of communication is the ability to use one's language skills (verbal and nonverbal) to start (or initiate) something that is not routine.

- asking for help,
- seeking clarification,
- executing a new task, and;
- entering and exiting a peer group.

An individual's ability to talk about his or her own topics of interest can be in sharp contrast to how that person communicates when in need of support or clarification. Yet, these two skills – asking for help and understanding how to join a group for functional or personal interaction - are paramount for future success in the workplace, academic endeavors and relationships.



# Redefining the Nord Anglia Education Brand

## L= Listening With Eyes and Brain

From a social perspective, listening is more than just receiving auditory information. It routinely requires the integration of visual information with auditory information *within the context* in order to understand the full meaning of the message being conveyed, or at least make an educated guess about what is being said when the message cannot be interpreted literally.

This is also referred to as “active listening” or *whole body listening*. Classrooms depend heavily on having all students attend nonverbally to the expectations in the classroom.

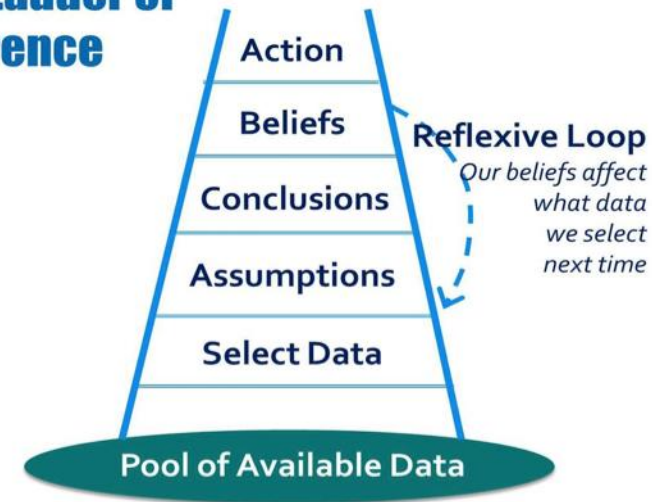


## **A = Abstract and Inferential Language/Communication**

Most of the language we use is not intended for literal interpretation. Our communication is peppered with idioms, metaphors, sarcasm and inferences. Abstract language has also crept into the digital, mass and social media markets.

Active interpretation of the motives and intentions of others emerges in the first year of life and expands in complexity thereafter. As children grow developmentally, they understand that message interpretation depends heavily on one's ability to "make a smart guess" based on past experiences, what they know (or don't know) about the current person and situation, and the communication clues available.

### **The Ladder of Inference**



# Redefining the Nord Anglia Education Brand

## U = Understanding Perspective

The ability to interpret others' perspectives or beliefs, thoughts and feelings across contexts is critical to social learning. It is central to group participation in the social, academic or vocational world.

Perspective taking is not one thing, it represents many things happening all at once meaning it is a synergistic and dynamic process. A definition of perspective taking can include the ability to consider your own and others:

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Physically coded intentions
- Belief systems
- Language based intentions
- Personality
- Prior knowledge and experiences

While considering all of this with regards to the specific situation being considered.



# Redefining the Nord Anglia Education Brand

## **G = Gestalt Processing/Getting the Big Picture**

Conceptual processing is a key component to successful social and academic functioning. It is critical to be able to be a part of and follow the group plan or share an imagination. Due to the fact that information is conveyed through concepts and not just facts, it is important that one is able to tie individual pieces of information into the greater concept.



# The ability to relate to other's minds, emotions and needs.

## H = Humor and Human Relatedness

Human relatedness is at the heart of social interaction. Most of us desire some form of social interaction and our students, clients and family members are no exception.

Most children have a very good sense of humor, but they often feel anxious because they miss many of the subtle cues that help them to understand how to use their humor successfully with others.

It is important for educators/parents to work compassionately with humor to help minimize the anxiety the individual may experience. It is also not uncommon for many to struggle with using humor inappropriately and direct lessons targeting this concept are necessary





**Thank you.**

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## **Michelle Garcia Winner**

Founder & CEO Social Thinking, M.A., SLP

**Michelle** is a speech language pathologist (SLP) who specializes in the treatment of students with social cognitive deficits at the Social Thinking Center, her clinic in San Jose, California. It was her interest in autism while attending the University of California, Santa Barbara, in 1979 that became the catalyst for becoming an SLP.

The heart of Michelle's work is illuminating the often elusive and intangible world of Social Thinking, and developing practical strategies that can be easily used by parents, educators, and service providers across different environments. Teaching "social skills" is not enough - individuals with social-cognitive challenges must learn the why and the how of their own and others' abilities to process social information - a capacity that for most of us is intuitive, but needs to be explicitly taught to individuals who enter this world with a brain that does not process social information in the same way. The strength of Michelle's work is her ability to break down the research and abstract concepts and create concrete ways to reach and teach this growing population of children and adults – to give them the chance to develop real social skills they can fluidly use across environments. Her approach led GreatSchools.org, a leading national nonprofit organization, to call Michelle, ["...the leading expert in the field of social skills."](#)