

NEW TECHNOLOGY EASES SOCIAL IMPACT OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS

Speech pathologists' interactive software programs teach critical social skills to adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder

LEESBURG, VA, September 12 /PRNewswire/ -- Social Skill Builder, a company that develops educational software to help developmentally-challenged children acquire social skills, today announced the availability of the new CD-ROMs *School Rules! Volumes 1 & 2*. The program teaches acceptable behavior and appropriate social interaction to adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other learning difficulties, assisting with structured activities related to the classroom, group work, and physical education, and unstructured scenarios in places like the hallway and the locker room.

ASD, which is usually diagnosed during early childhood, represents a group of developmental disabilities that includes Autism, Pervasive Developmental Disorder, and Aspergers Syndrome. The US National Institute of Health estimates that one American child in 250 is affected with ASD, compared with one in 10,000 a decade ago.

Unlike their peers, children with ASD do not acquire basic social skills, such as sharing conversation and maintaining eye contact, through general experience and observation. This inadequacy often results in anxiety, depression, social avoidance, academic difficulties, and problematic peer interactions.

“Adolescence is one of the most difficult times to teach social communication due to the subtle social cues associated with this life stage. Non-technology based training methods do help kids with ASD to some extent, but our clients’ needs required that we take our approach to the next level,” said Laurie Jacobs, a practicing speech pathologist and co-founder of Social Skill Builder. “Programs like *School Rules!* are more effective because they imitate real life situations where teens interact with peers.”

Social Skill Builder's series includes five CD-ROMs and is designed for speech and occupational therapists, educators, counselors, psychologists, and parents. “The software’s interactive video sequences provide opportunities to pause, replay, and discuss information so teens can understand the scenarios and carry learning into everyday life,” said Austin-based public school speech therapist Karen Vinson. “The lessons hit home, and kids can have fun with them in a safe, non-threatening environment.”

A 2004 Virginia Public Schools study proved that Social Skill Builder software dramatically increased children with ASD’s socialization, daily living skills, and communication. The results of a national study will be released later this year.

ABOUT SOCIAL SKILL BUILDER

Founded by speech pathologists Jennifer Jacobs M.S. CCC-SLP and Laurie Jacobs M.A. CCC-SLP in 1999, Social Skill Builder provides interactive software tools for teaching

social skills to children affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other language/learning difficulties. The programs, which include the CD-ROMs *The Birthday Party*, *My School Day*, *My Community*, and *School Rules!*, instruct children on the “rules” of social communication and address everything from appropriate social touch and body space and speech volume to appropriate classroom behavior and lunchtime interaction. For more information, please visit www.socialskillbuilder.com.

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