

Student Name: _____

Rater: _____

Date: _____

Orion's Pragmatic Language Skills Questionnaire

The pragmatic language skills questionnaire is a tool that can be used by parents and professionals who know the child well. It allows parents and professionals to understand the complexity of the language skills we all use on a day-to-day basis. Further, it provides a way to evaluate the current skill level of a child and to reevaluate the child as the school year progresses, allowing parents and teachers to target areas of specific difficulty. The following is a pragmatic language skills questionnaire used at many specializing hospitals to screen current pragmatic language levels.

Next to each statement, write the number that best describes the frequency of the behavior:

1 = almost always

2 = usually

3 = about half the time

4 = rarely

5 = never

Nonverbal Communication

- _____ 1. Looks at the eyes of the person speaking with
- _____ 2. Uses facial expressions appropriate to content of words
- _____ 3. Understands the facial expressions of others and responds appropriately
- _____ 4. Understands the emotions of others and responds appropriately
- _____ 5. Recognizes nonverbal cues and gestures (body language)
- _____ 6. Acts at an age-appropriate level
- _____ 7. Recognizes the spatial relationships between people or objects and self; stands the appropriate distances from others; has sense of size/weight of things
- _____ 8. Refrains from making inappropriate noises

Expressive Skills

- _____ 1. Speaks clearly (does not mumble)
- _____ 2. Speaks with varied and appropriate tone and volume
- _____ 3. Is able to take another person's perspective
- _____ 4. Does not ramble on one topic, as if unaware of another's interest
- _____ 5. Understands sarcasm
- _____ 6. Understands and uses metaphor appropriately
- _____ 7. Can let go of an argument, even if the other person does not agree
- _____ 8. Understands own internal state and can respond to inquiries about self with more than "I don't know"

Conversational Skills – Topic Maintenance

- _____ 1. Chooses a topic appropriate to setting

- _____ 2. Introduces and discusses topic clearly
- _____ 3. Expresses relevant information and expresses it concisely
- _____ 4. Maintains a topic in conversation
- _____ 5. Changes topic appropriately
- _____ 6. Understands how to tailor conversations to audience – e.g. peers versus teachers

Conversational Skills – Turn Taking

- _____ 1. Takes turns in conversation – does not monopolize
- _____ 2. Attends to listener’s comprehension and attention to what he/she is saying
- _____ 3. Is appropriate when interrupting both peers and adults
- _____ 4. Waits to be called on or acknowledged before speaking in class or a group
- _____ 5. Appropriately asks a speaker to clarify comments made
- _____ 6. Is flexible when there is a change in topic

Speech Conventions

- _____ 1. Introduces self appropriately to others
- _____ 2. Uses appropriate conversational pleasantries (greeting, apologies – response to others)
- _____ 3. Makes him/herself available for conversation (is approachable)
- _____ 4. Talks “to” people, not “at” them
- _____ 5. Asks for help when needed
- _____ 6. Initiates original (non-redundant) conversation

Peer Skills

- _____ 1. Establishes and maintains appropriate friendships
- _____ 2. Refrains from making fun of others
- _____ 3. Welcomes others to join group
- _____ 4. Offers and accepts criticism appropriately
- _____ 5. Offers and accepts compliments appropriately
- _____ 6. Uses appropriate slang with peers
- _____ 7. Demonstrates empathy
- _____ 8. Seems confident in same and opposite sex interactions
- _____ 9. Responds to verbal conflicts appropriately
- _____ 10. Compromises and negotiates appropriately
- _____ 11. Can let another “win” an argument
- _____ 12. Listens to another person’s perspective without having to impose own

Other

- _____ 1. Recognizes and expresses own emotions
- _____ 2. Does not blame others for own issues or feelings
- _____ 3. Demonstrates remorse when appropriate
- _____ 4. Assertively deals with peer pressure
- _____ 5. Respects the hierarchy of a school or other setting
- _____ 6. Cares what others think of him/her
- _____ 7. Can understand the purpose of rules, even when doesn’t agree

Children with these disorders have information processing deficits. They often interpret language literally, missing sarcasm, humor or even threats. Facial expressions and changes in tone of voice are missed by these kids who rely on the literal meaning of the spoken word. In essence, all of the information goes in then seems to get lost in a confusing internal filing system where not all of the pieces go to the right place.

In addition, this makes it difficult for these children to apply experience to other situations; they have difficulty seeing another's perspective or putting themselves in another's shoes. This difficulty makes them appear to be self-centered, lacking in empathy, and even cold. These children desire to connect with others and to develop relationships, but don't have the tools to be able to connect with others and sustain or grow close personal relationships with their peers – but they don't know why the relationships fail to develop.

These kids need to be taught pragmatic language skills (everyday language including nuances, inference, implied meaning, etc.). They need to be taught self-observation and how to adopt or see another person's perspective or perceptions. Without some way to assess a child's social language skills and progress, it often feels like the development of pragmatic language skills is both difficult and mysterious. The review shows that, although it may be a slow and difficult process, it is not a mystery. The development of pragmatic language skills can occur in any child, and the involvement of the school and family is central to the process.