Let’s Take a Peek into a Pyramid Model Classroom: How Do We Support All Children’s Social Emotional Competence

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Agenda

• Context
• The “Philosophy” of the Pyramid model
• Let’s take a peek into a classroom…
• “Wow, how do we make that happen?”

Social Competence (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015)

• Children reported to have better social skills such as sharing, cooperating, and helping other children in K are:
  • More likely to get a college degree and have a full time job
  • Less likely to be arrested, use drugs or be on a waiting list for public housing

Gilliam (2005)

• Preschool children are three times more likely to be expelled than children in k-12
  • 6.7/1000 – PreK
  • 2.1/1000 – k-12

Young Children with Challenging Behavior: What Do We Know?
Is this a suspension/expulsion

- “We just have him come for a few hours each day rather than the full day”.
- “We told the parents that they could probably find a better place for him”.
- “She can’t come back until she stops biting”.
- “When she’s having a hard day, we just ask her grandmother to come pick her up”.
- “When he isn’t being a good friend, we don’t let him go outside”.

Key Points about Effects of Suspension/Expulsion

- Suspension/Expulsion in early years is predictive of problems in school and beyond
  - The best predictor of expulsion is a previous expulsion
  - May hinder child’s development
    - Lack of continuity in care settings
    - Missed opportunities for learning and interactions
  - Potentially contributes to family stress
    - Economic issues
    - Increases likelihood of punitive discipline practices in the home

The Need for A Comprehensive Approach: Positive Behavior Intervention and Support Models

We expect problem behavior to happen in group care settings: Are we ready?
Our Focus....

- Adopting a posture of support:
  - Supporting all children
  - Supporting all families
  - Supporting all teachers and providers
  - Supporting all programs
- Promoting confidence and competence
  - Supporting inclusion, not exclusion

Key Social-Emotional Skills

- Confidence
- Capacity to develop good relationships with peers and adults
- Concentration and persistence on challenging tasks
- Ability to effectively communicate emotions
- Ability to listen to instructions and be attentive
- Ability to solve social problems

What do children do when they don't have each of these skills?

If a child doesn't know how to read, we teach.
If a child doesn't know how to swim, we teach.
If a child doesn't know how to multiply, we teach.
If a child doesn't know how to drive, we teach.
If a child doesn't know how to behave, we... teach? punish?

Why can't we finish the last sentence as automatically as we do the others?

Tom Herner (NASDE President) Counterpoint 1998, p.2)

Pyramid Model

- An approach, not a curriculum
- Not just about adding on strategies like the solution kit
- Not a quick fix or magic bullet to change behaviors
- Implementing successfully often involves a change in philosophy
Some Basic Assumptions
Challenging behavior usually has a message

I'm bored.

I need some attention.

I'm sad. You hurt my feelings.

Children often use challenging behavior when they don’t have the social or communication skills they need.

Goal
- To promote children’s success by:
  - Creating an environment where EVERY child feels good about coming to school
  - Designing an environment that promotes child engagement
  - Focusing on teaching children what TO DO!
    - Teach expectations and routines
    - Teach skills that children can use in place of challenging behaviors
“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”
- Benjamin Franklin

The Pyramid Model:
Promoting Social-Emotional Competence and Addressing Challenging Behaviour

Universal: Nurturing and Responsive Relationships
- Foundation of the pyramid
- Essential to healthy social development
- Includes relationships with children, families and other professionals (e.g., mental health, PT, OT)

It’s all about relationships

“Every child needs one person who is irrationally crazy about him.”
- Uri Bronfenbrenner

Building Relationships with Every Child

The KIDS who need the most LOVE will ask for it in the most UNLOVING of ways.
- Vicki Johnston
Supportive Conversations

- Have conversations with every child
  - In the context of play
  - Extended conversations
  - On topics that interest the child
- Support children’s conversations with other children

Creating a Climate of Friendship in the Classroom

- Design routines in which children help each other or work together
  - Buddy reading
  - Classroom jobs (morning greeter, snack captain, transition reminder)
  - Think pair share
  - Transition buddies
- Remind children to play with their friends
- Teach children to call their friends by name and look at them
- Remind children to try again if they don’t get a response

Relationships with Colleagues in the Classroom

- Your turn…
- Talk with your colleagues
- What would you see in a classroom if teaching teams and other staff were working well together?
- How might that be related to the Pyramid Model practices?

Relationships with Colleagues

- A common goal of supporting children where children spend time
- Respect for each other’s expertise
- Absence of blame
- Nonjudgmental
- Transparency
- Within a classroom:
  - Behavior support approach
  - Modeling what we want children to do

Staff Tree:

Staff members put notes to each other on the leaves and post

“Parents need to know that we care before they care what we know” (Klass, 1997)
# PyramidWinatHome

- Jalen – 3 years old
  - I am going to put on daddy’s Titans hat to make me feel better when I am missing him
- Ace – 4 years old
  - I had to go to my room and take 3 deep breaths to calm down
- Sara – 4 years old
  - That’s just embarrassing
- Jake – 4 years old
  - That’s not very responsible daddy

Some Things to Think About

- How do families know that we care about their children?
- How have we shared with families our approach to behavior support?
- How do families know how to support social skills and behavior at home?
- Are we talking with families or to families?

Sharing Information with Families

- Sharing Good News with Families

Bridging Home and School

Going to School

Some of us are here all day and some of us are only part of the day. We all need to remember to be safe and respectful while we are at school.
Walter Gilliam

"I've never seen a case where a child was expelled from a preschool or child care program when the teachers and parents knew and liked each other. I've never seen it once."

High Quality Supportive Environments

- Classroom arrangement and design
- Environmental/visual cues
- Schedules and routines
- Transitions
- Supporting engagement during large and small group activities
- Giving directions

Are our classrooms designed to promote engagement, teach social skills and prevent problem behavior?
Ideas for Reflecting on Your Practice

• On paper, write out your daily schedule.
  - Put a J next to the activities that work well and a L next the activities where there is often challenging behavior.
  - Consider what might be contributing to the problem.
    - Length of adult-directed activities
    - Number of transitions
    - Engagement in activities
    - Unclear directions/environmental cues

• On a paper, draw your classroom
  - Put a J in the areas where there is not much challenging behavior and a L next the areas where there is often challenging behavior.
  - Consider what might be contributing to the problem

• What changes might you need to make?

The Pyramid Model: Promoting Social-Emotional Competence and Addressing Challenging Behavior

Secondary prevention: Some children
Teaching Social Skills and Emotional Competencies

What to teach

Friendship Skills
- Sharing – giving toys
- Sharing – requesting toys
- Play Organizer - “You be the mommy.”
- Giving Compliments – “I like your painting.”
- Assisting – “I can help you”
- Affection – give a hug

Teaching Emotions

Children with a Strong Foundation in Emotional Literacy:
- tolerate frustration better
- get into fewer fights
- engage in less destructive behavior
- are healthier
- are less lonely
- are less impulsive
- are more focused
- have greater academic achievement
Calm Down Strategies

Problem Solving
- Learning problem solving steps
- Thinking of alternative solutions
- Learning that solutions have consequences
- Learning to evaluate solutions - Is it safe? Is it fair? Good feelings?
- What to do when a solution doesn’t work

Problem Solving Steps

When to Teach

How to Teach

Stages of Learning
- Show and Tell
  - Acquisition: new skill or concept
- Practice Makes Perfect
  - Fluency: the ability to immediately use the skill or concept without a prompt
- You Got It!
  - Maintenance: continuing to use the skill or concept over time
  - Generalization: applying the skill or concept to new situations, people, activities, ideas, and settings
Acquisition Stage: Show and Tell

- Explain concretely
- Demonstrate
- Link to other ideas or concepts
- Examples and non-examples
- Encourage child when learning

Warning! Skill or concept can be easily lost at this stage...encourage, encourage, encourage.

Fluency: Practice Makes Perfect

- Offer multiple opportunities to practice
- Help child link concept or skill to others
- Prompt the child to use the skill or concept in new situations
- Elaborate on the skill or concept

Maintenance and Generalization: You Got it!

- Provide opportunities to use the skill or concept in new situations or with new people
- Provide opportunities within a variety of activities and in new applications
- Comment on the child’s ability to maintain the skill and generalize it’s use

Stay-Play-Talk

- Peer buddies are taught to:
  - Stay - maintain proximity
  - Play - establish mutual attention by suggesting a play activity
  - Talk - about an ongoing activity

Table Talk Activity

- With the people at your table...
  - For 1 minute, write a list of feeling words that you would want to teach the children in your classroom

Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Routine/Activity</th>
<th>Strategies for Promoting Peer Interactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Check-in/Arrival</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Partnering with Families: Tucker Goes Home

Head and tail are on a stick to pull head in and out. Visual cues are on the back of each step.

Super Turtle Letter

Dear Parent,

Billy did a great job today handling frustration and not getting angry when we ran out of his favorite cookie at snack. Instead of getting upset, Billy took three deep breaths and decided he would try one of the other cookies. That was a great solution and he really liked the new cookie too!

You can help Billy at home by: Asking him what he did at school today when we ran out of his favorite cookie. Ask him how he calmed down. Comment on what a great job he did. Tell him that you hope that he will do that again when he gets frustrated about something.

Thank you so much!

Mr. Phil

Reflecting on your practice

• What skills do you teach?
• How do you teach them?
  – Do you teach them differently to different children?
• How do you ensure there are many opportunities to practice?
• How do you individualize instruction for children who need more support?

The Pyramid Model:
Promoting Social-Emotional Competence and Addressing Challenging Behavior

Tertiary intervention:
Few children

• Comprehensive interventions across all settings
• Assessment-based
• Collaborative team
• Skill-building

Teacher Implementation of Pyramid Model Practices

Effect Sizes X Wave

Wave 2: d = .59
Wave 3: d = 1.14
Wave 4: d = 1.52
Observations of Target Children’s Social Skills

Figure 2. Mean frequency of positive social interactions during 60 min observation session across waves for Cohort 1 target children whose teachers were in the intervention or control condition. An average of the frequency of positive social interactions for the 2 to 3 target children in each classroom was used to derive the means reported for each group at each wave.

Wow, how do we make that happen?

Pyramid Model

A Framework of Evidence-Based Practices

Managing Complex Change

The use of effective interventions without implementation strategies is like serum without a syringe; the cure is available but the delivery system is not.”
—Fisher, Blase, Duda, Naporn, & Van Dyke, 2010

Leadership Team

Staff Buy-In

Family Engagement

Program-Wide Expectations

Supports for Pyramid Model Practice Implementation

Data-Driven Decision-Making Leading to Systematic Implementation and Outcomes

Continuous Professional Development

Leadership Ready

Systems to Identify and Respond to Individual Child Needs
Program Wide Implementation?

- Make a program wide commitment to all children
- Develop program policies that reduce the likelihood of suspension/expulsion
- Support teachers:
  - Coaching and support in the classroom
  - Reduce stress
- Engage with families around promotion, prevention and intervention

Outcomes Associated with Program Wide Implementation

- Improvements in classroom quality
- More intentional instruction around social skills and emotional competencies
- Better relationships with families
- Decrease in problem behavior, increase in social skills
- Decrease MH dollars spent on intervention
- Decrease turnover

The Promise, The Challenge

Fred Rogers

What makes the difference between wishing and realizing our wishes? Lots of things, and it may take months or years for a wish to come true, but it’s far more likely to happen when you care so much about a wish that you’ll do all you can to make it happen.
Visit us online at ChallengingBehavior.org