

# Positive Behavior Support in Early Childhood

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## Pyramid Framework for Positive Behavior Support



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Why are we here?

Why are we focusing on the  
social and emotional  
development of children?

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## Importance of Social & Emotional Competence

A young child's social development is an important part of development. Social competence and the willingness to interact competently with others – adults as well as peers – affect a wide range of factors related to learning the basics of one's culture (Katz & McClellan, 1997).

The quality of a young child's social competence can be a predictor of later social and academic competence (Pellegrini & Glickman, 1990).

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## Significance

Early appearing aggressive behaviors are the best predictor of juvenile gang membership and violence.

*(Reid, 1993)*

When aggressive and antisocial behavior has persisted to age 9, further intervention has a poor chance of success

*(Dodge, 1993)*



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## The Promise

We have evidence-based practices:

- Earlier is better
- Support for parents matters
- High quality relationships and environments are key
- A comprehensive approach is necessary
- Behavior consultation makes a difference
- Parents and teachers can implement the practices in natural settings



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## The Challenge

- How do we ensure that effective practices are accessible to all children, families, and staff?
- How do we build systems within states, programs and communities such that teachers and families have the support they need to implement the practices?



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## Issues to Consider when Implementing Program Wide in EC Settings

- Range of service delivery systems
- Training and expertise of teachers
- Program philosophy, curriculum practices
- Age and developmental level of children
- Many early childhood programs do not have expertise in behavior support or resources to access this expertise
- Lack of policies and procedures in place related to behavior support and guidance
- Lack of systematic measure of effects

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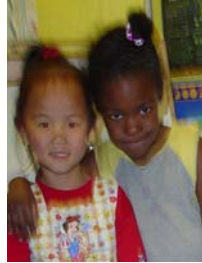
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### Some Key Points about the Pyramid Model

- Most social/emotional development and behavior is promoted through positive preventive measures
- Most children's behavior and development does not require intensive intervention



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### Key Social Emotional Skills Children Need as They Enter School

- 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?

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### Process

This program wide approach requires:

- Administrative commitment and leadership
- Resource development and budgeting
- Staff buy in, staff development and staff support plans
- Shared decision making and collaboration with staff, families and community partners
- Accountability
- Universal strategies and expectations

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### Program-wide Implementation: Universal Strategies

- Intense focus on preventing behavior problems through:
  - Building relationships with children
  - Classroom arrangements
  - Teaching expectations
  - Parent training opportunities
  - Newsletter articles on positive strategies

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### Program-wide Implementation: Universal Strategies

- How did we do this?
  - Self-assessment, ongoing observations
  - Site specific plans for implementation
  - Annual review of strategies & goal setting
  - Threaded staff development throughout
    - Policies & Procedures
    - Job Descriptions & New Employee Orientation
    - Establish expectations for accomplishing tasks
    - Give regular feedback about quality of work
    - Provide meaningful opportunities for training and growth

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### Why are Program-Wide Expectations Important?

- Creates a shared focus and continuity for program, school, classrooms
- Gives school/program a shared language
- Communicates positively what is desired

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### Program-wide Implementation: Social-Emotional Strategies

- A focus on “at-risk” children who need more directed instruction on:
  - Creating a climate of friendship in each classroom
  - Problem solving
  - Expressing emotions
  - Individualized instruction when necessary
  - Enlist mental health partners in teaching critical skills

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### Program-wide Implementation: Social-Emotional Strategies

- How did we do this?
  - Frequent mini-trainings
  - Peer-to-peer networking
  - Direct coaching & modeling of SE strategies
  - Threaded staff development throughout:
    - Cultivating leadership skills & teaming
    - Developing problem solving strategies
    - Providing breaks or additional supports to prevent burnout
    - Providing targeted training for specific needs

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### Program-wide Implementation: Intensive Individualized Interventions

- For children with significant challenging behavior:
  - Team-based problem solving
  - Functional assessment & behavior support planning
  - Data based decision making

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**Program-wide Implementation:  
Intensive Individualized Interventions**

- How did we do this?
  - Clearly defined process
  - Multiple behavior support facilitators
  - Training & follow-up for site teams

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**Outcomes**

- Staff view themselves as having the skills to better support children in the classroom. They feel confident and competent
- Staff report having time to actually teach!
- Staff look to each other as sources of additional information and support
- Staff can demonstrate the fundamental elements of the Teaching Pyramid model in their classrooms
- Teamwork has been strengthened

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**Outcomes**

- Staff now understand that there is not a “bad child”...there is only inappropriate behavior
- A culture of friendship and support is created throughout the program
- We have become intentional and purposeful in our interactions with children in order to build on their strengths
- We look at ways children are alike instead of how they are different
- Children are able to self regulate

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### Outcomes

- The Teaching Pyramid model works for all children
- Internal expertise has increased. Staff have asked for fewer suggestions from outside experts on dealing with challenging behavior
- Time out has been eliminated

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### Outcomes

- The number of children receiving individual counseling from psychologists has decreased
- The number of children identified as having challenging behavior and needing referral for mental health services has decreased

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### Outcomes

- Resources have been reallocated to prevention instead of intervention
- In management and direct service debriefing sessions over the past four years, challenging behavior was not mentioned one time as a barrier to teaching. Staff now have the skills and support they need to figure it out!

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## PW-PBS Implementation: Where are we now?

- Currently in eighth year of implementation with significant changes in:
  - Philosophy, priorities & allocation of resources
  - Focus on prevention
  - Staff turnover & satisfaction

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## Impact of PBS:

### Our Teaching Staff Say:

“...it has changed my actual teaching style.”

“The stress level is reduced. I feel more confident to try new things.”

“By having this program, it’s helping daily. More children are more successful and I have time to teach”

“And it helps keep our turnover down. People stay.”

“I think overall the environment has shifted.”

“We have hope!”

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## What Makes This Model Work?

- A champion
- Administrative leadership
- Ongoing support for those working directly with children and families
- Clearly articulated policies and procedures related to behavior
- Commitment to long term process - systems change
- Collaboration between ECE and mental health/behavior consultants

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## Resource Links

- [http://www.challengingbehavior.org/explore/webinars/5.6.2009\\_tacsei\\_presentation\\_teleconference.htm](http://www.challengingbehavior.org/explore/webinars/5.6.2009_tacsei_presentation_teleconference.htm)
- <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/training.html>
- <http://www.challengingbehavior.org/explore/presentation.htm>
- <http://www.challengingbehavior.org//communities/trainers.htm>

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## SEK-CAP Story

- Available for download from:  
[www.Challengingbehavior.org](http://www.Challengingbehavior.org)



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