Let’s Be Proactive: Universal Strategies to Prevent and Support Challenging Behaviors

Kansas Division of Early Childhood Conference, 2018

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Participants Will:

• Gain proactive strategies to increase student engagement in the classroom.
• Increase their knowledge regarding universal strategies that can be implemented throughout the school day to support children’s positive social emotional growth.
• Learn ways to differentiate those strategies to meet the individual needs of students.
Definition According to DEC

“Challenging behavior” is defined as “any repeated pattern of behavior...that interferes with or is at risk of interfering with the child’s optimal learning or engagement in pro-social interactions with peers and adults” (Smith & Fox, 2003, p. 6). (DEC, 2017).
Behavior:
How do we approach it?

“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?”

Adapted from: Tom Herner, Counterpoint (1998, p.2)
Some Basic Assumptions

- Challenging behavior usually has a message: *I am bored, I am sad, you hurt my feelings, I need some attention.*

- Children often use challenging behavior when they don’t have the social or communication skills they need to engage in more appropriate interactions.

CSEFEL, 2016
Children Communicate in Many Ways:

- Words
- Sentences
- Pointing
- Eye Gaze
- Pulling adult or other child
- Crying
- Biting
- Tantrum
- ?
More Basic Assumptions

• Behavior that persists over time is usually working for the child.

• We need to focus on teaching children what to do in place of the challenging behavior.

CSEFEL, 2016
Functions of Challenging Behavior

Escape
- Demands
- Activities
- Transitions
- Social Situations
- Sensory stimulations
- Interactions
- ?

Request
- Object
- Activity
- Help
- Interaction
- ?
Always Remember

• Although a behavior may be inappropriate, its purpose is always appropriate.
Start with Prevention Strategies

• What can be done to make the problem behavior irrelevant (how can the environment be changed to reduce the likelihood of the behavior occurring)?

• What procedures can I select that fit naturally into the structure of the classroom?
Reflect on Your Day
What Research Tells Us...

...Environments that are engaging, predictable, and characterized by on-going positive adult-child interactions are necessary for promoting children’s social emotional development and preventing challenging behaviors.

Hemmeter, M.L., Ostrosky, M., & Fox, L., 2006

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Engaging Environments

VS

www.ksdetasn.org/mtss
Predictable Schedules
Well Planned Routines and Transitions

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Relationships are the Foundation for Everything We Do.

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The Importance of Building Relationships

Adults’ time and attention are very important to children, and we need to be sure that we are giving them that time and attention at times other than when they are engaging in challenging behavior.

CSEFEL, 2016

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Ways to Foster Nurturing Relationships

• Give children real choices
• Get down to the child’s level when talking to them
• Be consistent
• Be responsive
• Play with children
• Tell children it is ok to feel sad, angry, or hurt
• Have one on one conversations with children
• Build relationships with each child’s family.

(Adapted from Grisham-Brown, Hemmeter, and Pretti-Frontczak 2005)
Teach Expectations

• Identify a small number of rules
• State them positively
• Involve the children
• Develop a teaching matrix that demonstrates the rules across a variety of settings
# Classroom Expectations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Classroom</th>
<th>Bathroom</th>
<th>Playground</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Be Safe</strong></td>
<td>• Keep feet on ground</td>
<td>• Wash hands with soap and water</td>
<td>• Go down slide on bottom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use walking feet</td>
<td>• One person in a stall</td>
<td>• Rocks and wood chips stay on ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use inside voice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Be Kind</strong></td>
<td>• Share with others</td>
<td>• Use inside voice</td>
<td>• Let others play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use listening ears</td>
<td>• Keep hands to self</td>
<td>• Keep body to self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Share</td>
<td>• Share</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bathroom Expectations

Be Safe
- Wash Hands With Soap and Water
- One Person in a Stall

Be Kind
- Use Inside Voice
- Keep Your Hands to Yourself
Teach Expectations

- Teach them systematically
- Help children use them in context
- Remind children of rules as a prevention strategy
- When problem behavior occurs, remind child of posted behavior expectations
Teach Expectations

• Acknowledge children who demonstrate the rules
• Teach across the day and throughout the year
• Ensure children know HOW to engage in the rules
Make your behavior content as present and visually appealing as your academic content.

**Outside Rules**

1. We let ALL bugs and animals live.
2. We use gentle words and hands.
3. We use our looking eyes.
4. We share and take turns with our friends.

![Emotions Chart](image)

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Provide a High Ratio Of Positive Interactions

5:1
5 to 1

**Deposits:**
- Specific Praise/Encouragement
- Follow the child’s lead in play
- Greet them at the door
- Active Listening
- Send positive notes home
- Hugs, high fives, and thumbs up

**Withdrawals:**
- No
- Don’t
- Stop
- Demands - directions
- Using a loud voice
- Requests

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Using Positive Feedback and Encouragement

- Contingent on appropriate behavior
- Descriptive
- Conveyed with enthusiasm
Positive Approaches Work

Division of Early Childhood (DEC) strongly believes that positive approaches should be used to prevent and address challenging behavior. Although caregivers and educators sometimes use punitive responses (e.g., reprimanding, threatening, taking away recess) to challenging behavior, such responses rarely result in long-term behavior change and do nothing to teach children the social and communication skills they need to succeed. (DEC, 2017)
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

CSEFEL, 2016

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What Tools Do You Use?

- Confidence
- Problem Solve
- Concentration and Persistence
- Positive relationships
- Communicate Emotions
- Listen and be attentive

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Teach Specific Social Skills

• Use Evidence Based Resources
  – Friendship Skills
  – Emotional Literacy
  – Problem Solving
Children with Strong Friendship Skills

- Give suggestions (play organizers)
- Share toys and other materials
- Take turns (reciprocity)
- Is helpful
- Give compliments
- Understand how and when to give an apology
- Begin to empathize

(CSEFEL 2018)

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Emotional Literacy

In order to demonstrate emotional literacy, children must be able to identify, understand, and respond to their own emotions and the emotions of others in a healthy manner.
Super Friend
Emotional Literacy Includes:

- Learning words for different feelings
- Empathy training
- Learning to recognize how someone else is feeling
  - Facial cues
  - Body language
  - Tone of voice
  - Situational cues
Key Concepts for Feelings

- Feelings change
- You can have more than one feeling about something.
- You can feel differently about something than someone else.
- All feelings are valid, it’s what you do with them that counts.
Children With Strong Emotional Literacy Skills:

- 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

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Problem Solving Skills

• Learning steps to problem solve.
• Thinking of alternative solutions.
• Learning that solutions have consequences.
• Learning to evaluate the solutions:
  » Is it safe?
  » Is it fair?
  » Does it create good feelings?
• Learning what to do when a solution doesn’t work.
Problem Solving in Action

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What Happens When Children Don’t Have These Skills?

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Always Remember

- Although a behavior may be inappropriate, its purpose is always appropriate.
Behavior Change is Like a Kaleidoscope

Don’t try to fit children into our concept of what they should be, instead join with them to discover their concept of themselves.
Provide a Higher Ratio Of Positive Interactions

10:1
Provide Increased Visual Supports
Create Individualized Plans to Teach and Reinforce Replacement Skills

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Understand the Teachable Moments

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Don’t Poke the Bear
Throw Them a Lifeline

- Connect
- Validate
- Listen- decrease the verbal input
- Restate
Provide Feedback when Appropriate:

**Quality Feedback:**

- Prioritizes learning over the “rules”
- Acknowledges that while the behavior may be inappropriate the emotions behind it are OK.
- Says we are a team, we will figure this out together.

Pretti-Frontczak 2015

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Remember the Power Of A Peer
Don’t Be Afraid to Try
Website Resources

• The Pyramid Model Consortium: http://www.pyramidmodel.org/resources/educators-families/teachers/

• Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning: http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html

• Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention (TACSEI)

• http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/do/resources.htm

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**References**

- Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Childhood. [www.csefel.vanderbilt.edu](http://www.csefel.vanderbilt.edu)

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