

Fostering Positive Behavior in the Prekindergarten Classroom



Office  of
Early
Learning



THE OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING

- Provides direction and support to inform Statewide policies and programs related to best practices across PreK to Grade 3.
- Support LEAs in the provision of high-quality prekindergarten programming
- Guidance for Voluntary Registered Nursery Schools and Kindergartens
- Support early learning providers, school districts, and families
- Remains current with review of research to inform policies and practices related to early childhood education
- Administers and monitors State-Administered Prekindergarten

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Agenda

- What are common challenging behaviors and how do we work with students?
- What is Function Based Thinking?
- What can we do right now?



Webinar Materials and Resources



Building Relationships and Environments to Foster Positive Behavior in Prekindergarten: A Resource and Reflection Tool

Function-Based Thinking

Early childhood educators sometimes need to take a step back and observe the child within the classroom environment to determine the cause of the challenging behavior. Function-based thinking is a strategy that can be used to help determine the reason behind the behavior. The function of the behavior is the reason people behave in a certain way (Hershfeldt, Rosenberg, & Bradshaw, 2010). The following pages contain an example of an Antecedent, Behavior and Consequence (ABC) chart to help identify the function of a child's behavior.

Each day, a person engages in millions of behaviors. These behaviors fall into four main categories:

Escape/Avoidance: The individual behaves in order to get out of a situation, avoid a task or an activity he/she does not want to do. Some avoidance behaviors might include:

- refusing to come to the table for small group;
- continuing to play when it is clean up time;
- running away on the playground when it is time to line up to go inside; and/or
- leaving the large group area.

Attention Seeking: The individual behaves to get focused attention from parents, teachers, siblings, peers, or other people that are around them. Some attention seeking behaviors might include:

- throwing a tantrum/toys;
- whining, talking out of turn or saying mean things;
- hitting others; and/or
- acting silly at inappropriate times.

Access: The individual behaves in order to get a preferred item or participate in an enjoyable activity. Some examples of access behavior might include:

- biting, hitting, shoving, or grabbing to obtain a toy from others;
- refusing to leave a preferred area when the area is full or it is not their turn;
- property destruction such as knocking over a peers block structure; and/or
- crying or screaming to be allowed to participate in a favorite activity.

Sensory Stimulation: The individual behaves in a specific way because it feels good to them. Some examples of of sensory stimulation might include:

- chewing on clothing or hair;
- rocking or bouncing;
- thumb sucking; and/or
- flapping arms or moving their hands.

Using the starred behavior on page 5, what category of function from the definitions and examples above does it fall under?

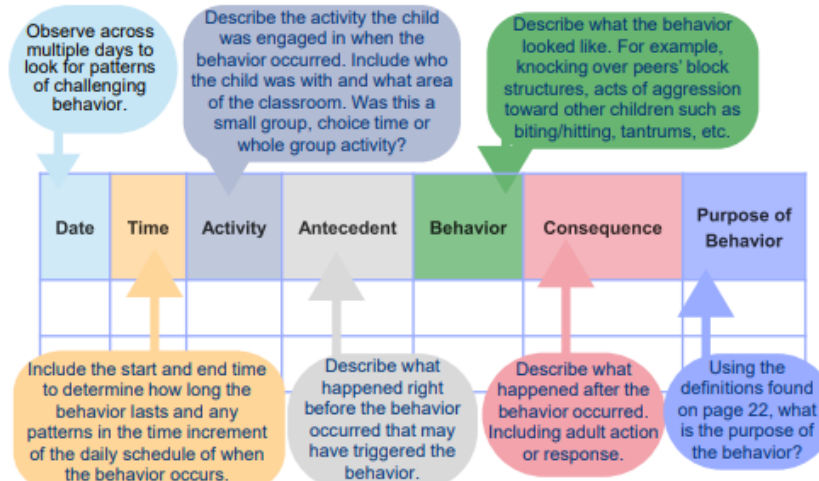


Using an ABC Chart

All behaviors serve a purpose. Understanding the underlying triggers and patterns that contribute to a challenging behavior is a crucial first step. Teachers can use Function Based Thinking (FBT) tools to assist them in defining problem behaviors and selecting solutions that match the function of the behavior. By taking the focus away from the student and shift it to the behavior, think about:

- Why is the behavior occurring?
- What is the function?
- In what context/s is the behavior occurring?

Using simple tools, like the chart below, can help assist in determining the function of the behavior. This chart could be completed by a teacher, teacher's assistant, administrator or other staff member. As a reminder for OCFS licensed Pre-k programs, these documents should be used in conjunction with the written behavior management plan established as required by [OCFS regulation 418-1.9](#). The individual completing the chart should focus only on completing the chart and shadowing the child at different times through the week. For example, small group, meal times, work times, or whole group. Ensure the observer does not have additional tasks during this time allowing them to fully focus on just the child who is exhibiting the challenging behaviors.



Teachers must then consider what changes they can make to shift their own behavior or the learning environment to prevent the problem from occurring. It is important to note that FBT is NOT a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA), although it adheres to the same basic principles. Steps include gathering information, development of a plan that ensures interventions match the function of the behavior, and evaluation/monitoring of the plan. For more information on FBT, please see: [Office of Special Education Partnership - Function Based Thinking](#)

Create a chart using the prompts below to develop your plan!

Support Plan Process	Our Plan
Replace: problem behavior by teaching a socially acceptable, efficient behavior that allows student to obtain the pay-off/function.	
Prevent: problem behaviors by directly addressing triggers & prompting replacement behaviors based on the function of behavior.	
Reinforce: replacement & desired behaviors based on function/pay off for the student.	
Redirect: problem behaviors by quickly & effectively redirecting student to replacement behavior.	
Minimize Reinforcement: by ensuring that problem behaviors do NOT pay off for the student (i.e., does not result in the function of behavior).	
Plan for progress monitoring: using tools from your progress monitoring assessment, document the progress the student is making.	

For more detailed information on Function Based Thinking and creating a support plan, please see the [Office of Special Education Partnership](#) resource [Function-Based Thinking \(FBT\) Applying a Proactive Process to Support Student Behavior in the Classroom](#) by scanning the QR Code below.





Reflect on your own
classroom/program:

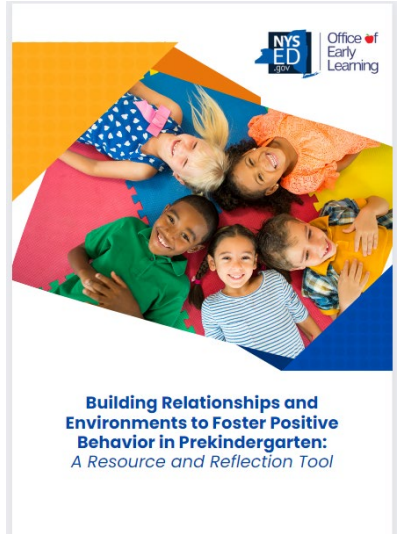
What is the most frequently
reported challenging behavior in
the PreK setting this year?

**Some frequently reported
prekindergarten (ages 3-5)
developmentally appropriate behaviors
that may be challenging for adults
include:**





- inability to wait or sit still
- testing limits and boundaries
- lacking impulse control
- arguing
- blaming others
- misbehaving to gain attention
- acting aggressive
- using hurtful words
- regulating their emotions



Define and Teach Expectations



Executive function is the ability to focus, hold, and work with information in the mind. It allows us to filter distractions and change gears while focusing on multiple streams of information at the same time. Sometimes we may need to revise plans as necessary.

Instructional Mindsets			
<p>Intentionality</p> <p>Teachers use instructional strategies purposefully and are able to articulate specific drivers (e.g., children's prior knowledge, learning goals, sequence within content areas)</p> 	<p>Flexibility</p> <p>Teachers are aware of the range of effective instructional strategies, how and when to implement them, and when to switch strategies or formats (e.g., whole class, small group).</p> 	<p>Differentiation and Individuation</p> <p>Teachers generate or individualize instructional strategies as needed to efficiently meet the diverse abilities and needs of students.</p> 	<p>Reflection</p> <p>Teachers rely on reflective practices to make intentional, creative instructional decisions and avoid overreliance on default practices.</p> 

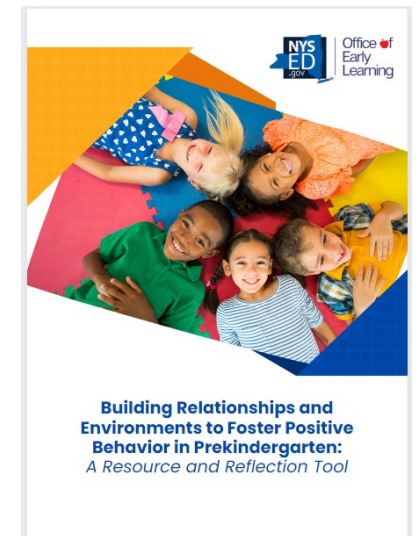
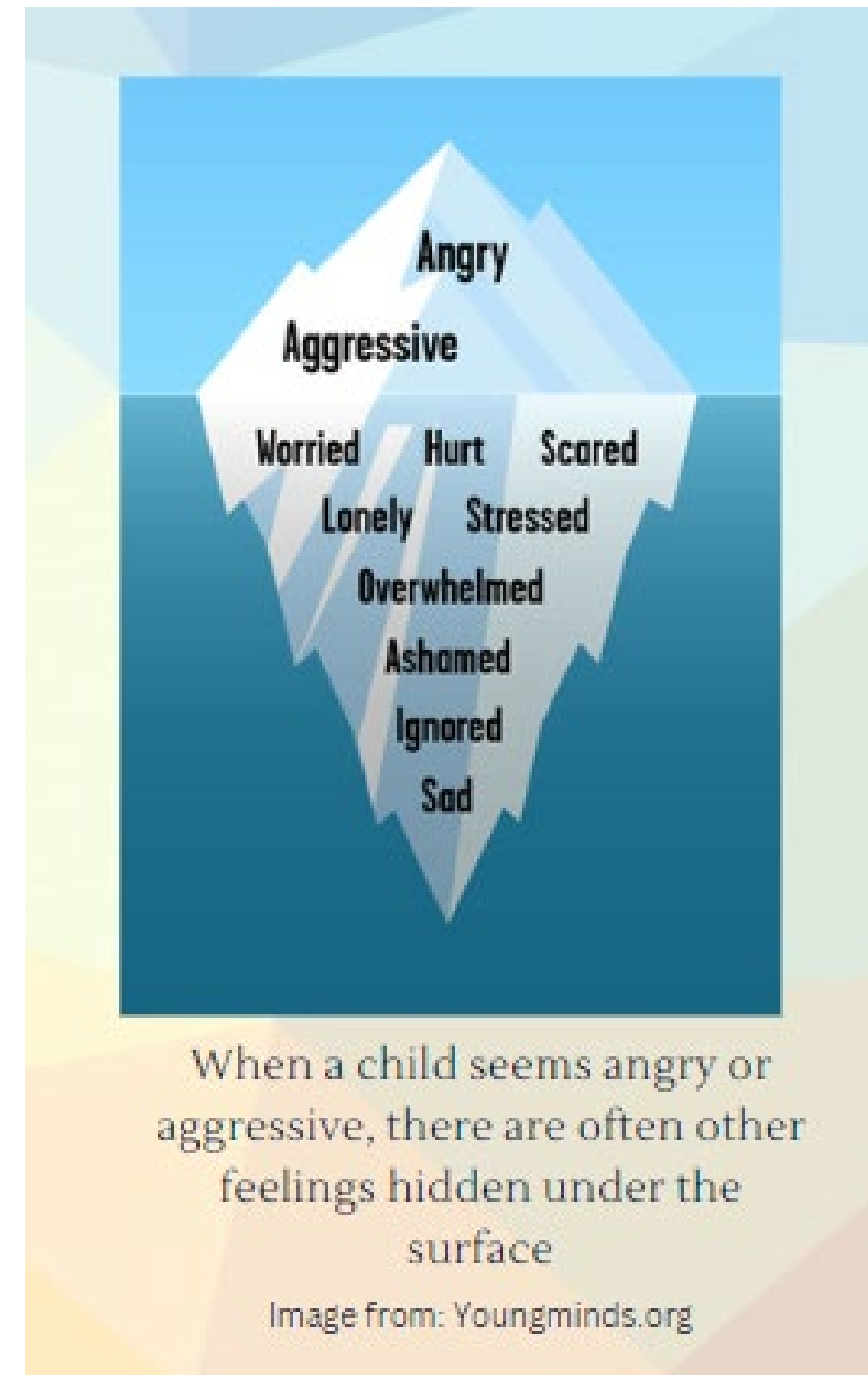
Cultural Identity and Implicit Bias

Cultural Identity

- Our Cultural Identity begins forming at birth
- Our experiences
- Not all cultural footprints are the same

Implicit Bias

- We all have them
- Our experiences
- Perceptions of Challenging Behavior



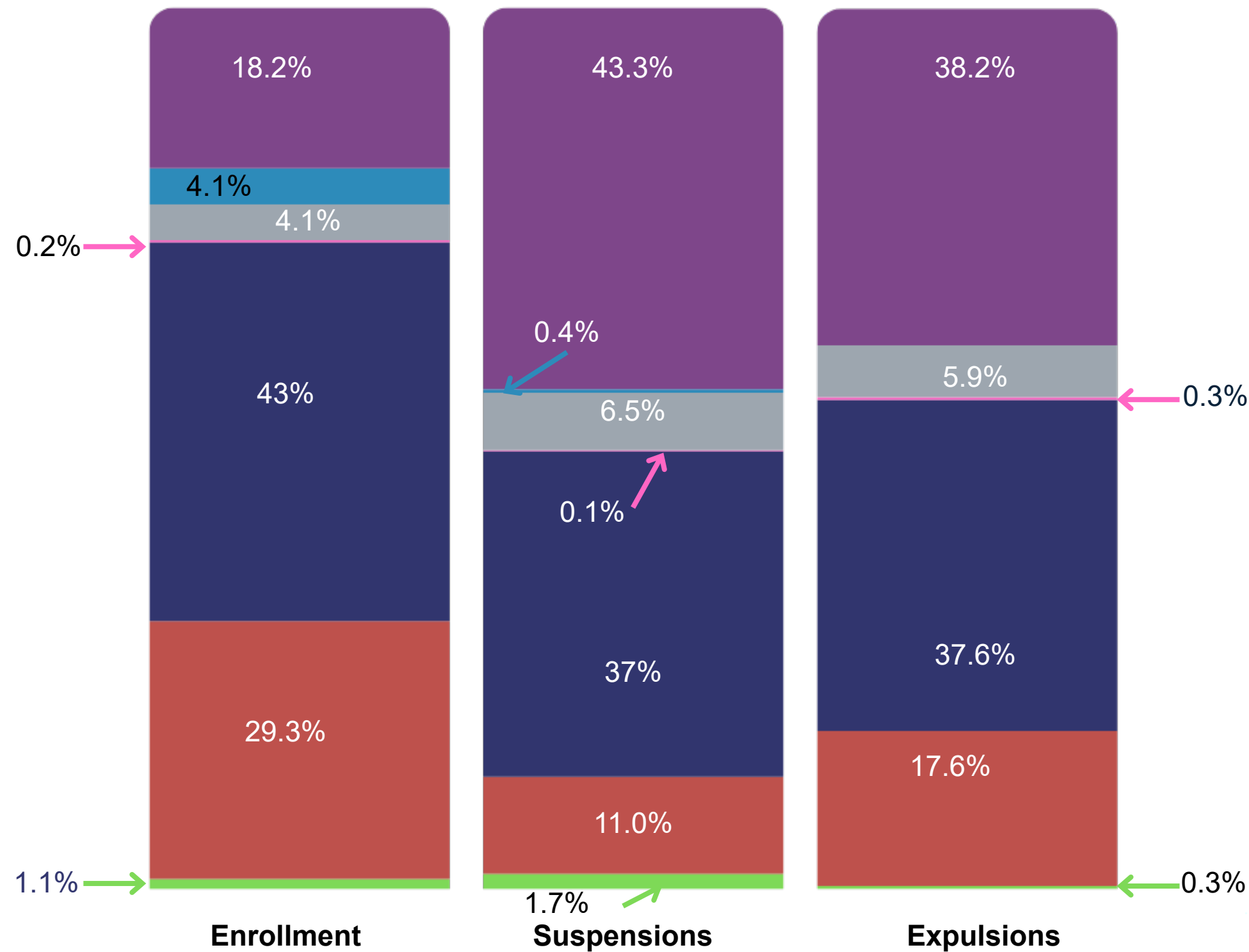
What does suspension and expulsion look like in PreK?

In School Suspension	Sending the child out of the classroom such as to the director's office
Out of School Suspension	Asking a family to pick up their child early because of behavioral issues
Expulsion	Telling a family that they will need to find another location because the child is not a "good fit" for the program or that the program can "no longer support" their child.
"Soft" Expulsion	Asking a family to repeatedly pick up their child early because of behavior issues, requiring them to leave or miss work frequently.



<https://preventexpulsion.org/overview/>

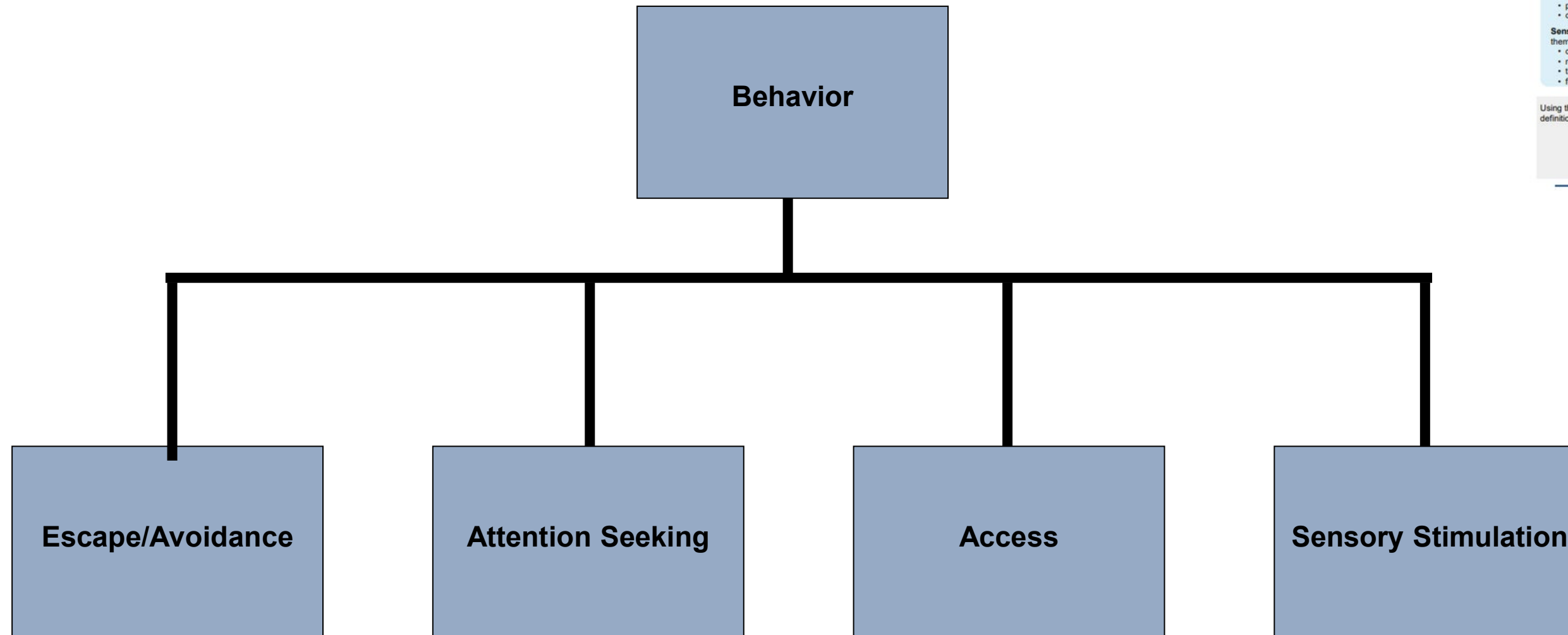
Rates of Prekindergarten Suspension and Expulsion



- American Indian
- Hispanic or Latino
- White
- Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander
- Multi-Racial
- Asian
- Black

Source: [AN OVERVIEW OF EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE PRACTICES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR THE 2017-18 SCHOOL YEAR](#)

Function Based Thinking



Function-Based Thinking

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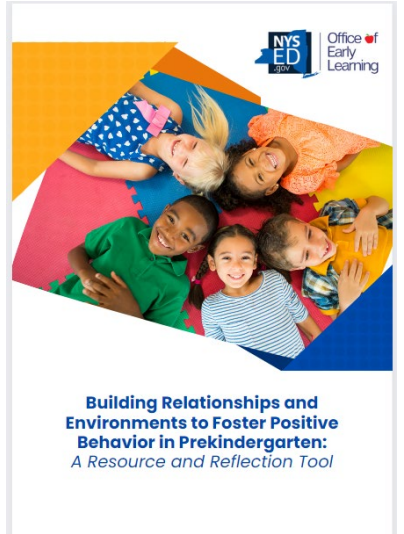
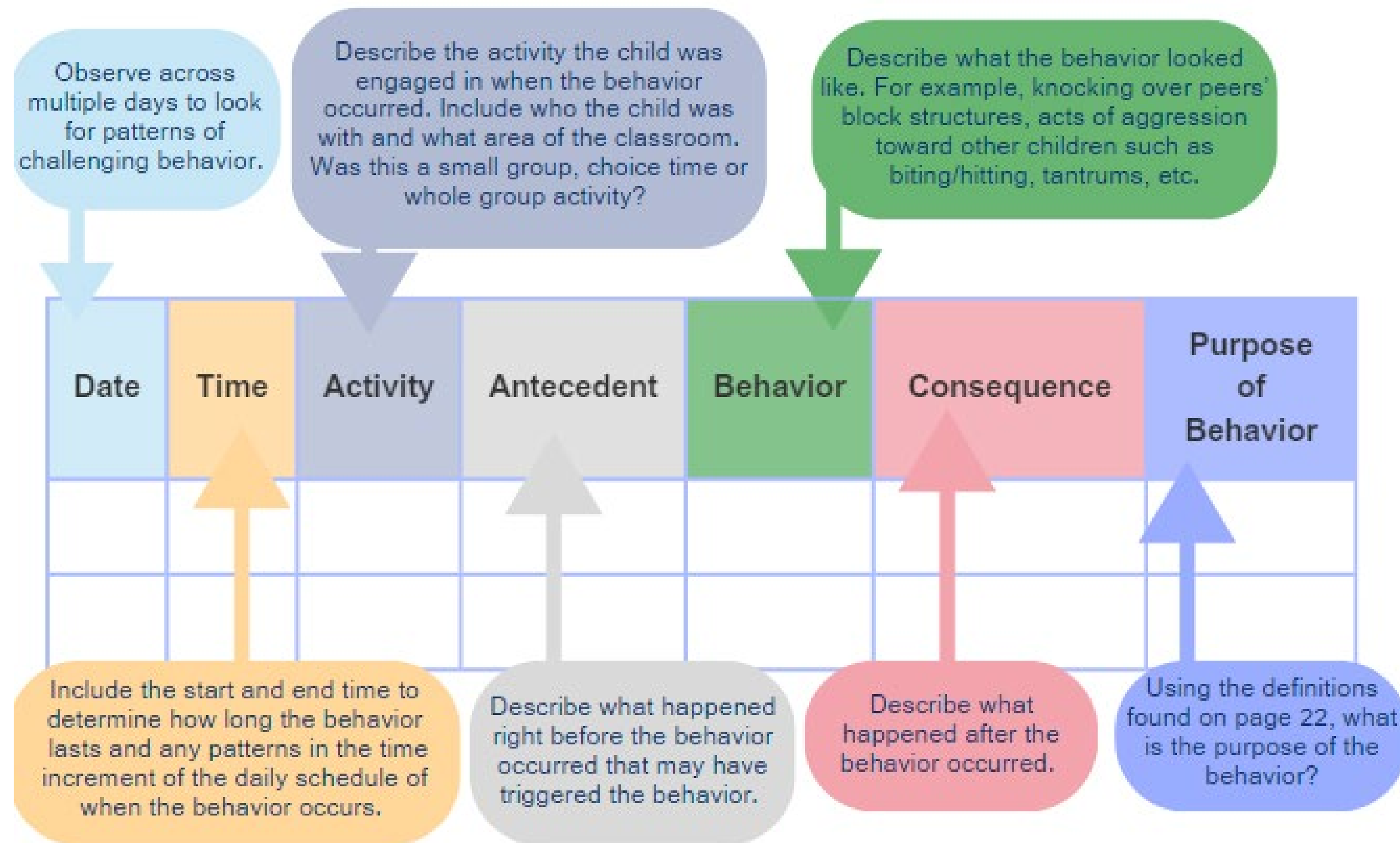
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During small group time when the students in the class are engaged and listening to the teacher, Hailey starts touching her peers and making silly faces at them. The students begin to laugh, and the teacher addresses Hailey's behavior.

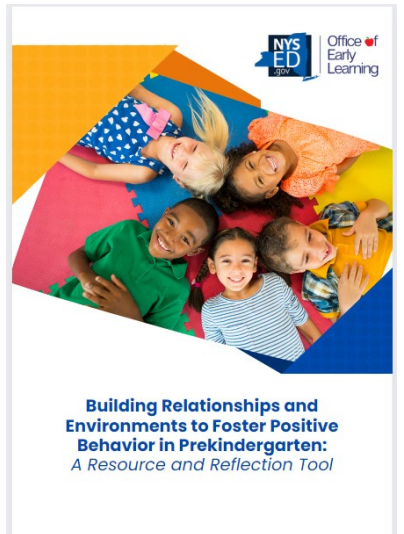


ABC Chart



ABC Chart

Date	Time	Activity	Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence	Purpose of Behavior
2/5	8:24-8:34	free play at the puzzles with 2 friends (M.P & C.T) at the table	teacher gave 2 minute warning to clean up	Yelling and throwing puzzle pieces	Friends yelled, teacher removed child from the table	Access
2/5	9:03-9:05	whole class - making center choice plans	The block center is filled with students. Child cannot choose to go to the center	Yelling and pushing their way into the area	Teacher sits child at the table and gives them a different activity	Access
2/5	11:30-11:33	Meal time sitting next to M.P.	M.P. brought a lunch from home with a special treat	Grabs the treat and does not give it back when M.P. tries to get it back she pushes M.P. off the chair	Teacher takes the treat and give it to M.P. removing child from the lunch table.	Access



Interpreting the Information

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How could I reframe this behavior?

Making peer connections is hard and when I do connect, I don't want it to end.

How did I respond to this behavior?

I was frustrated!
But now that I know when to expect the child to struggle I can plan to provide support.



Adding Context



What do I know about this child through my conversations and information gathered from their family?

In the family questionnaire I notice that they moved here only a few weeks ago.

What wonderings could I share with the family to help put this behavior into context?

I am wondering if their child had strong relationships with classmates in their old program?

New York State
Pyramid Model

Promoting Social & Emotional
Competence in New York's
Young Children



Selecting support strategies from various Tiers.

Individualized Plan – Does the child need specialized tools to support skills development.?

Friendship and Problem Solving – Does the child need support in connecting with peers or choosing a resolution to the problem?

Emotional Literacy & Impulse Control – Would helping the child to understand their feelings and use coping skills be a good approach?

Environment – Are there cues I can place in the environment that would be helpful? How can I create an environment that reduces the potential for this behavior to occur?

Relationships – What do I know about this child, their family? Do I need to ask some questions to put this behavior into context?

Educator Skills – Do I have all the information I need to make a plan?

Tier 3
Strategies

Tier 2
Strategies

Tier 1
Strategies

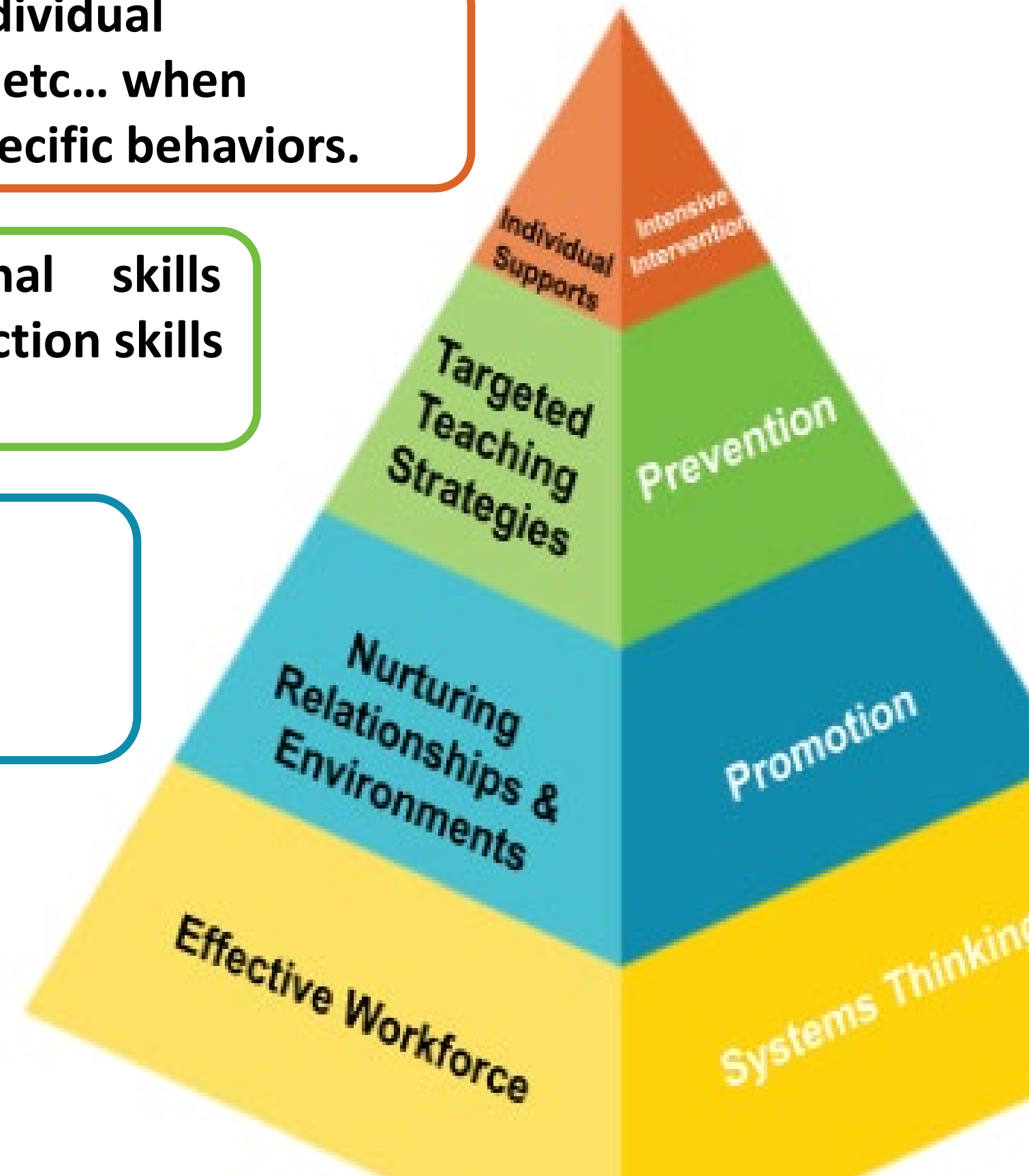
The Pyramid Model Framework

Tier 3 – Strategies focus on individualized supports such as an individual schedule, direct support during interactions, social stories, etc... when working toward reducing the frequency and intensity of specific behaviors.

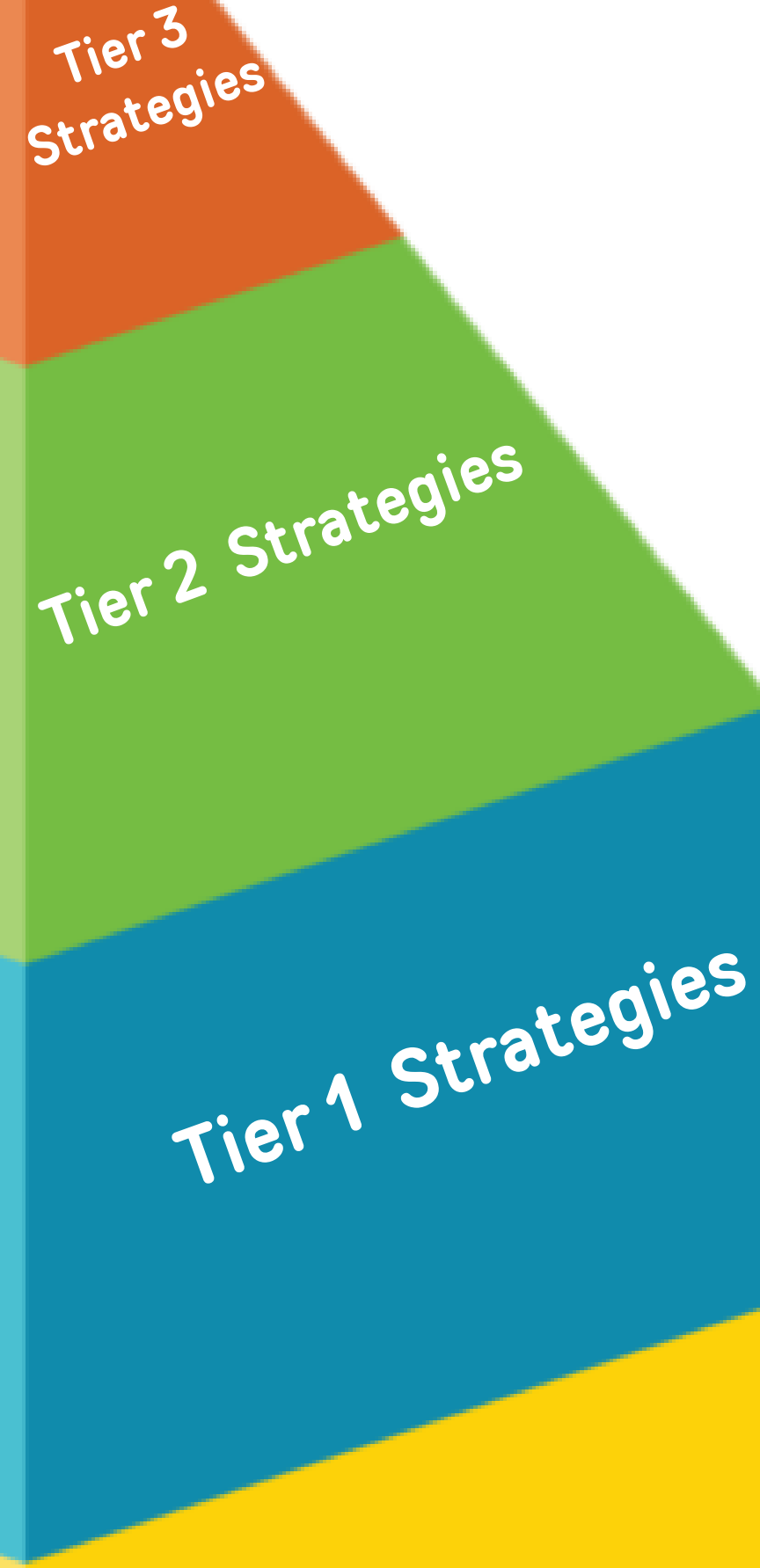
Tier 2 – Strategies focus on intentional teaching of social emotional skills such as, emotional literacy, impulse control, friendship & connection skills and problem solving.

Tier 1 – Strategies focus on building strong relationships with children and families and considering all elements of the learning environment, physical space, expectations, cues, schedules, etc...

The Foundation - requires effective training, responsive policies, well defined procedures and a supportive program culture



Key Considerations for Constructing the Support Plan



- **Select the strategies from each tier that meet the needs of the child**

For example, you might select –

- “Creating classroom cues” from Tier 1
- “teaching coping skills” from Tier 2

- **Consider how you will implement these strategies**

What tools will I use –

- Creating a visual for Tier 1
- Using a particular story for Tier 2

- **Plan specifically when you will introduce the elements of the plan**

- I will introduce the new visual at morning circle on Monday

I will read ... story on Tuesday at morning circle and refer back to the visual introduced on Monday

Support Plan



Create a chart using the prompts below to develop your plan!



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Plan for progress monitoring: using tools from your progress monitoring assessment, document the progress the student is making.	

For more detailed information on Function Based Thinking and creating a support plan, please see the [Office of Special Education Partnership](#) resource [Function-Based Thinking \(FBT\) Applying a Proactive Process to Support Student Behavior in the Classroom](#) by scanning the QR Code below.



Support Plan Process	Our Plan
<p>Replace: problem behavior by teaching a socially acceptable, efficient behavior that allows student to obtain the pay-off/function.</p>	<p>Keisha will have a visual timer showing how long she has transitioning out of a preferred activity or the amount of time remaining in a required activity.</p>
<p>Prevent: problem behaviors by directly addressing triggers & prompting replacement behaviors based on the function of behavior.</p>	<p>Give a visual warning of an upcoming transition</p>
<p>Reinforce: replacement & desired behaviors based on function/pay off for the student.</p>	<p>When Keisha transitions to an activity, teachers will verbally name the desired behavior giving her positive attention</p>
<p>Redirect: problem behaviors by quickly & effectively redirecting student to replacement behavior.</p>	<p>Keisha will help to set the visual timer as a reminder of the activity.</p>
<p>Minimize Reinforcement: by ensuring that problem behaviors do NOT pay off for the student (i.e., does not result in the function of behavior).</p>	<p>All staff in the room will be aware of the plan and will have use of the visual timer. Keisha will not be removed from</p>
<p>Plan for progress monitoring: using tools from your progress monitoring assessment, document the progress the student is making.</p>	<p>Document transition behaviors and reevaluate in 4 weeks</p>

Partnering with Families

There are many reasons families may resist including:

- lack of an established relationship
- feelings of judgement
- not seeing the same behaviors at home
- lack of classroom observational notes
- overwhelmed by the process
- afraid their child will be labeled as “bad”





PERSPECTIVE MATTERS

HOW WE VIEW FAMILIES & CAREGIVERS MATTER

“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.”

~Benjamin Franklin



PreKindergarten
& Early Childhood Programs
A smart way to start!

Parent Power Moments



FOR PRE-K!

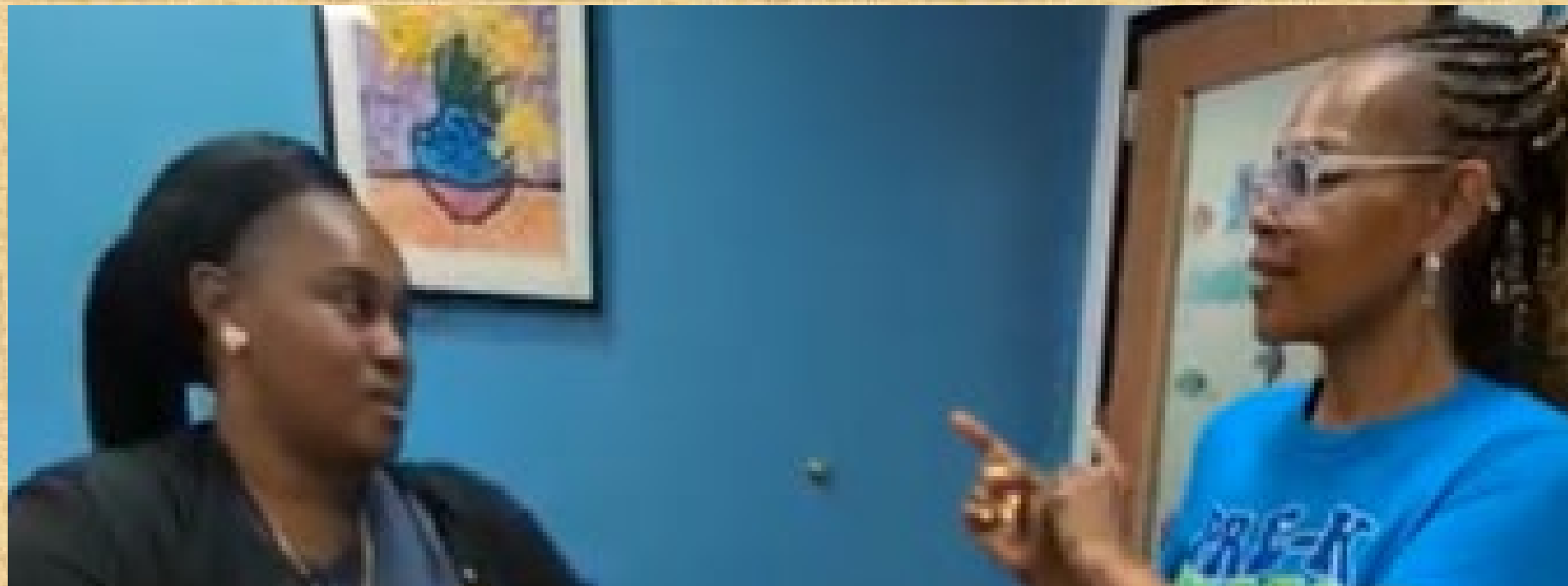


Bonita Williams

Latasha Pride



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PERSPECTIVE MATTERS

HOW WE VIEW PARENT CONVERATIONS MATTERS

“Conversations with parents are not just about reporting progress ~ they are about building relationships that support student learning.”

~Unknown



Parent Power Moments



FOR PRE-K!



Bonita Williams

Latasha Pride



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PERSPECTIVE MATTERS

WHEN WE CONNECT WITH FAMILIES MATTER

“The right conversation at the right time can change everything” ~ unknown

“You never get a second chance to make a first impression” ~ Will Rogers



PreKindergarten
& Early Childhood Programs
A smart way to start!



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FOR PRE-K!



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Creates Opportunities to build a strong and collaborative school ↔ home connection.

Sessions topics include:

- 1 - Making the Connection
- 2 - Keeping it Positive
- 3 - Behavior has Meaning
- 4 - The Power of Routines
- 5 - Teach Me What to Do
- 6 - Responding with Purpose
- 7 - Putting it All Together with a Plan

Included with the series is a Family Handbook, Family Materials, Facilitator's Guide, and Presentation Materials.

New York State
Pyramid Model
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Additional Materials and Resources

Getting Started: Six Tips for Supporting Positive Behaviors



The early childhood years are full of new experiences, expectations, and opportunities to build developmentally appropriate relationships. Early childhood educators have the potential to support the development of self-regulation skills with intentional instruction, support, and scaffolding.

This document provides tips to help early educators in building relationships, classroom communities, and learning environments that foster positive interactions and to promote self-regulation skill development in prekindergarten students. For more resources and information on challenging behaviors, please refer to *Building Relationships and Environments to Foster Positive Behavior in Prekindergarten: a Resource and Reflection Tool*.

Self-Regulation

The act of managing thoughts and feelings.

Co-Regulation

The process by which adults provide:

- warm, responsive interactions;
- support;
- structure;
- coaching; and
- modeling.



Tip Sheet for Creating a Cozy Area

Why have a cozy area?

The cozy area is a space where a child can go to be by their self and spend time alone. The area should not be used as a "time out" area when a child is feeling overwhelmed, but instead should be an area where a child may choose to go. The purpose is to help students develop social-emotional skills, identify self-soothing skills, learn self-regulation strategies, develop self-awareness, and manage their thoughts, feelings, and actions.

What is the teacher's role?

The teacher identifies the quiet space in the room and provides materials and strategies for student use. The teacher models how to use the area, establishes rules, and develops mini lessons on self-regulation as needed throughout the year. There may be times when more than one child wants to use the area and the teacher should pause and reflect on if a whole group or small group calming activity would benefit the class.

What might be included in a cozy area?

(consider the space and needs of students when selecting items. Too many items can be overwhelming to students)

- Soft furnishings (i.e. soft chair, beanbag chair, etc.) for the child to sit, lay or stretch out on
- A selection of soft materials such as dolls, weighted stuffed animals, pillows, or puppets
- A selection of non-fiction, fiction, and social stories about feelings including board books for threes and younger fours
- A selection of sensory bottles and tactile items the child may fidget with
- A bin with writing materials such as crayons and paper
- Visual supports such as posters of feeling charts, pictures of meditation, deep breathing or yoga poses the child could practice in the space
- A listening center with soft music a child can listen to
- Noise canceling headphones



Prekindergarten Teacher Guidance for Challenging Behaviors

Social-emotional health plays a significant role in a child's development. The purpose of this tip sheet is to provide support for prekindergarten providers to prevent and best the use of exclusionary discipline practices of suspension and expulsion. The Office of Early Learning strongly recommends and encourages prekindergarten programs to consider the suspension and expulsion of young children as a last resort. Programs should develop and clearly communicate an expulsion and suspension policy with families that complies with the US Department of Health and Human Services and Education's [Policy Statement on Exclusion and Suspension Practices in Early Childhood Settings](#) and be rooted in basic respect of all people.



How can teachers provide social-emotional development for all students?

Relationships with Students

- Establish positive teacher-student relationships that encompass respect, honesty, trust, and communication. Learn about students' hopes and interests.
- Understand how culture, beliefs, and norms influence interactions with students. Defining a child's behavior as challenging is influenced by these factors. It is helpful to identify and reflect on biases (not to thoughtfully respond to students' behavior and create a comfortable environment for all students).
- Promote high-quality positive communication and [interactions](#) between children and teachers/caregivers. When providing feedback be positive and specific.
- Keep communication open with families regarding both positive behavior and behavioral goals in the classroom.

Classroom Environment

- Model and practice simple routines and expectations such as hand washing, cleaning up, how to use classroom materials, and transitioning in and out of the classroom.
- Use a visual and interactive predictable classroom schedule that includes structured movement breaks.
- Provide consistent prompts between transitions (e.g., 5 minute warning, bell done, etc.)
- Foster an environment where students learn through [play](#).
- Teach from a social-emotional curriculum aligned with [The Prekindergarten Early Learning Standards](#) daily.
- Provide a [play environment](#) with both teacher-constructed and child-initiated activities.
 - Cooperative work
 - Independent work
 - Whole group instruction
 - Opportunities for choice
 - Small group centers
 - Multilingual text-rich environment

NYS ED does not endorse the use of any particular resource linked within this document. These are a sampling of resources being used by prekindergarten programs across the state.

Guidance for Supporting Positive Behaviors at Home



How do I provide support for my child socially and emotionally?

- Establish strong and predictable [family routines](#) at home. A routine is an event that is completed on a regular basis, frequently involving a series of responses. You may want to develop a routine for daily activities such as getting ready in the morning, eating meals, or going to bed at night.
 - [Morning Routine](#)
 - [Bedtime Routine](#)
- Create [family rules](#) at home with your child. Following rules at home can help your child adjust to following rules at school and teach your child your family values. Rules create boundaries and help children feel safe. Remain consistent when implementing the rules and their consequences to create clarity and demonstrate their importance.

- Incorporate daily affirmations into your routine. Daily affirmations help children to gain confidence, minimize negativity, foster independence, and helps them to believe in themselves.
 - I am good.
 - I am kind.
 - I am important.
 - I am smart.
 - I am strong.
 - I learn from my challenges.
- Provide your children with a sense of purpose by giving them chores to do around the house. Age appropriate chores will teach your child how to work with others, solve problems, compromise, and contribute.

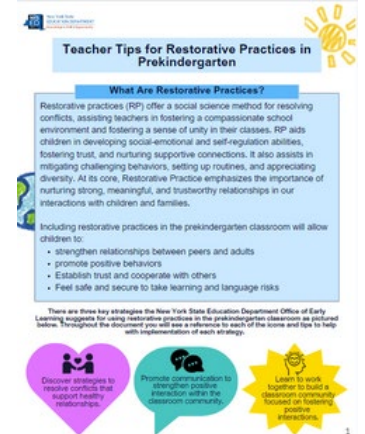
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How do I help prevent tantrums from occurring throughout the day?

- Give your child choices and allow him or her to make choices throughout their day when it is appropriate. You can give your child the choice between milk or juice or have them pick out their own clothes for the day. Choices empower your child and allow for control and ownership over their day. Choices will help to avoid tantrums, build confidence, add value, teach responsibility, promote creativity, and develop problem-solving skills.
- Make transitions fun. When leaving the playground walk like a duck, hop on one foot, or make it a race. Singing a silly song about leaving can also be fun. Giving your child a job to do can also help make transitions smooth. Have your child help you carry items to the car or help buckle themselves.
- Give your child [positive praise](#). Praise needs to be immediate and specific. For example, "What a great listener you are, you put your shoes and coat on and are ready to go." or "You should really feel proud of yourself because you used your words when you were upset."
- Use "first/then" statements at home. For example, "First put your shoes on, then we can play at the park." The child will be more motivated to complete the non-preferred task knowing that it leads to a preferred task.
- Create a [visual schedule](#) for challenging transitions at home using pictures and words. A visual schedule will establish routines and set expectations for the day.



Restorative Practices



Discover strategies to resolve conflicts that support healthy relationships.




Promote communication to strengthen positive interaction within the classroom community.



Learn to work together to build a classroom community focused on fostering positive interactions.

Pages 2 and 4




NYS ED New York State EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Knowledge • Skills • Opportunity



Tips for Nurturing Healthy Relationships


- Model and facilitate positive interactions between adult and peers
- Create small group opportunities throughout the day for children to interact and communicate with each other and adults
- Arrange the classroom area to promote interactions among children and adults
- Use images and words of emotions to assist children in expressing themselves
- Create a welcoming and affirming environment in which all children and families feel safe and represented
- Model developmentally appropriate emotional vocabulary and encourage students (when appropriate) to use expressive language skills
- Engage in read-aloud activities with social and emotional themes and model expected behaviors through role-play scenarios

Teacher's Notes:

2

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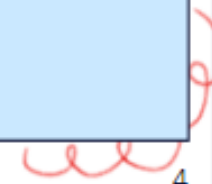


Restorative Conversations Guidelines

Directions: Use these guidelines to assist in planning and conducting a restorative conversation. Select one question from each phase that best fits the situation to enhance the discussion. Ensure the developmental needs of the child are considered prior to entering into a restorative conversation. Conversations should be limited to an age appropriate time limit.

Phases	Conversation Starters
1. Facilitate Student Reflection of the Incident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happened that made you feel happy/sad/excited? • Tell me about why you think this happened... • What happened first in the story you're telling? Then what happened? And what happened last?
2. Discuss Student Need and Plan to Address Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was there something you really wanted or needed? • When did you start feeling sad or upset? • What do you think we could do to make it better?
3. Plan to Restore Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who else was sad or hurt by what happened? • What can we do to help them feel better?

Teacher's Notes:



4




Teacher Tips for Restorative Practices in Prekindergarten

What Are Restorative Practices?
Restorative practices (RP) offer a social science method for resolving conflicts, assisting teachers in fostering a compassionate school environment and fostering a sense of unity in their classes. RP aids children in developing social-emotional and self-regulation abilities, fostering trust, and nurturing supportive connections. It also assists in mitigating challenging behaviors, setting up routines, and appreciating diversity. At its core, Restorative Practice emphasizes the importance of nurturing strong, meaningful, and trustworthy relationships in our interactions with children and families.

Including restorative practices in the prekindergarten classroom will allow children to:

- strengthen relationships between peers and adults
- promote positive behaviors
- Establish trust and cooperate with others
- Feel safe and secure to take learning and language risks

There are three key strategies the New York State Education Department Office of Early Learning suggests for using restorative practices in the prekindergarten classroom as outlined below. Throughout the document you will see a reference to each of the icons and tips to help with implementation of each strategy.

1

Thank you!

“Remember everyone in the classroom has a story that leads to misbehavior or defiance. 9 times out of 10, the story behind the misbehavior won’t make you angry. It will break your heart.” -
Annette Breaux



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