Fostering Positive Behavior in the Prekindergarten Classroom

NYSED.gov | Office of Early Learning

Agenda

- What are common behaviors and how do we work with students?

- What is Function Based Thinking?

- What can we do right now?

- Questions - have a parking lot for questions throughout the presentation

Materials and Resources for Today

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

Tip Sheet for Creating a Cozy Area

Why have a cozy area?

A 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 it 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

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
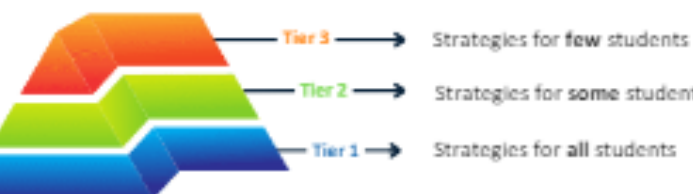The act of managing thoughts and feelings.

Co-Regulation
The process by which adults provide:
- warm, responsive interactions;
- support;
- structure;
- coaching; and
- modeling.

Prekindergarten Teacher Guidance for Challenging Behaviors

Tier 3 → Strategies for **few** students
Tier 2 → Strategies for **some** students
Tier 1 → Strategies for **all** students

Tier 1 Targeted Practices
How can teachers provide social emotional development for all students?

Relationships with Students

Classroom Environment

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

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

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.

Brain labels: Working Memory, Long-Term Memory, Comprehension, Auditory Processing, Visual Processing, Attention, Processing Speed, Planning, Logic & Reasoning

Instructional Mindsets

Intentionality	Flexibility	Differentiation and Individuation	Reflection
Teachers use instructional strategies purposefully and are able to articulate specific drivers (e.g., children's prior knowledge, learning goals, sequence within content areas)	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).	Teachers generate or individualize instructional strategies as needed to efficiently meet the diverse abilities and needs of students.	Teachers rely on reflective practices to make intentional, creative instructional decisions and avoid overreliance on default practices.

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

Angry
Aggressive
Worried   Hurt   Scared
Lonely   Stressed
Overwhelmed
Ashamed
Ignored
Sad

When a child seems angry or aggressive, there are often other feelings hidden under the surface

Image from: Youngminds.org

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

NYS ED .gov | Office of Early Learning
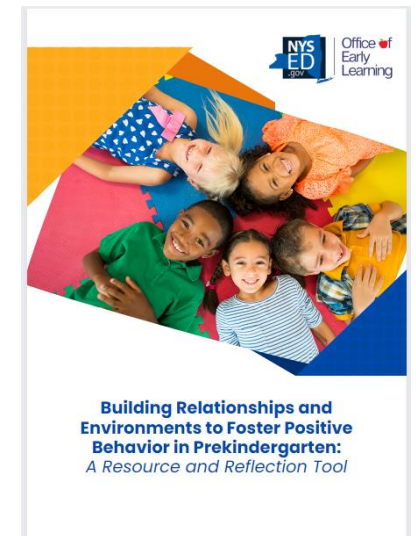
What does suspension and expulsion look like in PreK?

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 thier 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" thier 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/

NYS ED .gov | Office of Early Learning
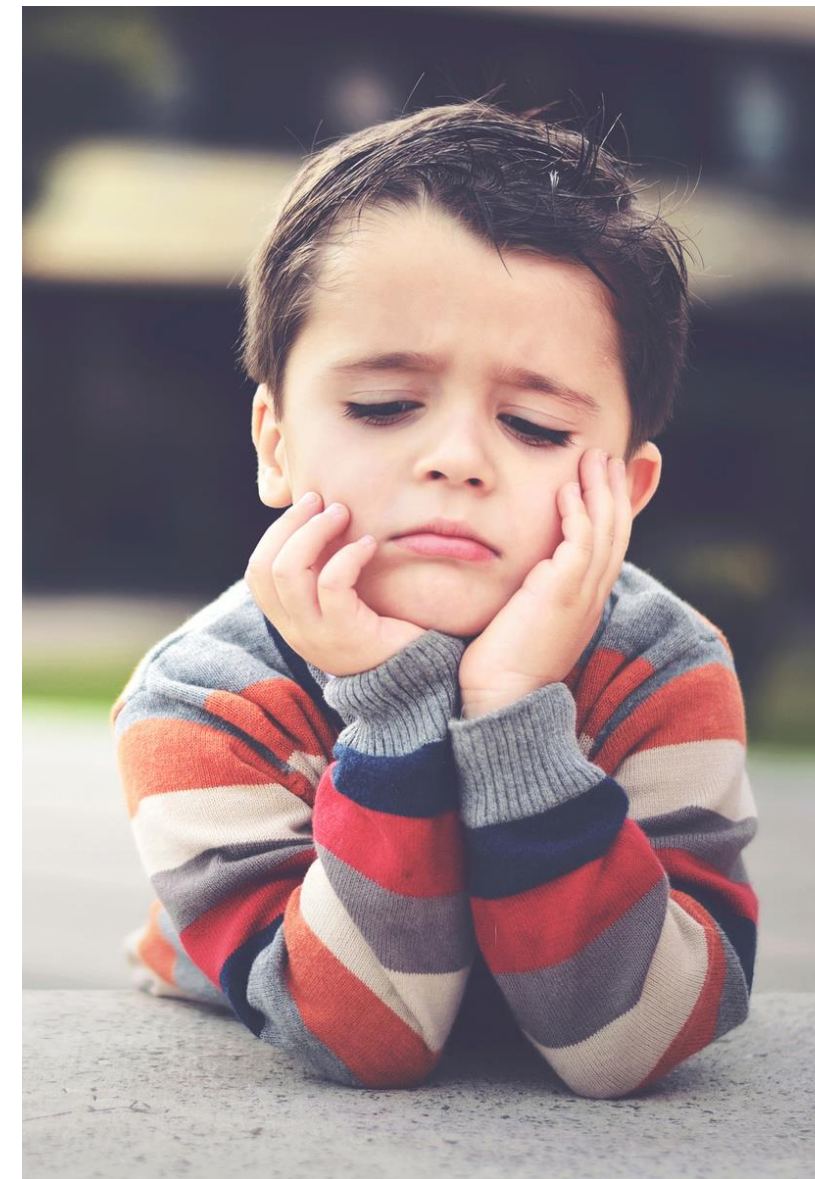
Rates of Prekindergarten Suspension and Expulsion

Enrollment
- 18.2% Black
- 4.1% Asian
- 4.1% Multi-Racial
- 0.2% Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander
- 43% White
- 29.3% Hispanic or Latino
- 1.1% American Indian

Suspensions
- 43.3% Black
- 0.4% Asian
- 6.5% Multi-Racial
- 0.1% Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander
- 37% White
- 11.0% Hispanic or Latino
- 1.7% American Indian

Expulsions
- 38.2% Black
- 5.9% Multi-Racial
- 0.3% Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander
- 37.6% White
- 17.6% Hispanic or Latino
- 0.3% American Indian

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

NYSED.gov | Office of Early Learning
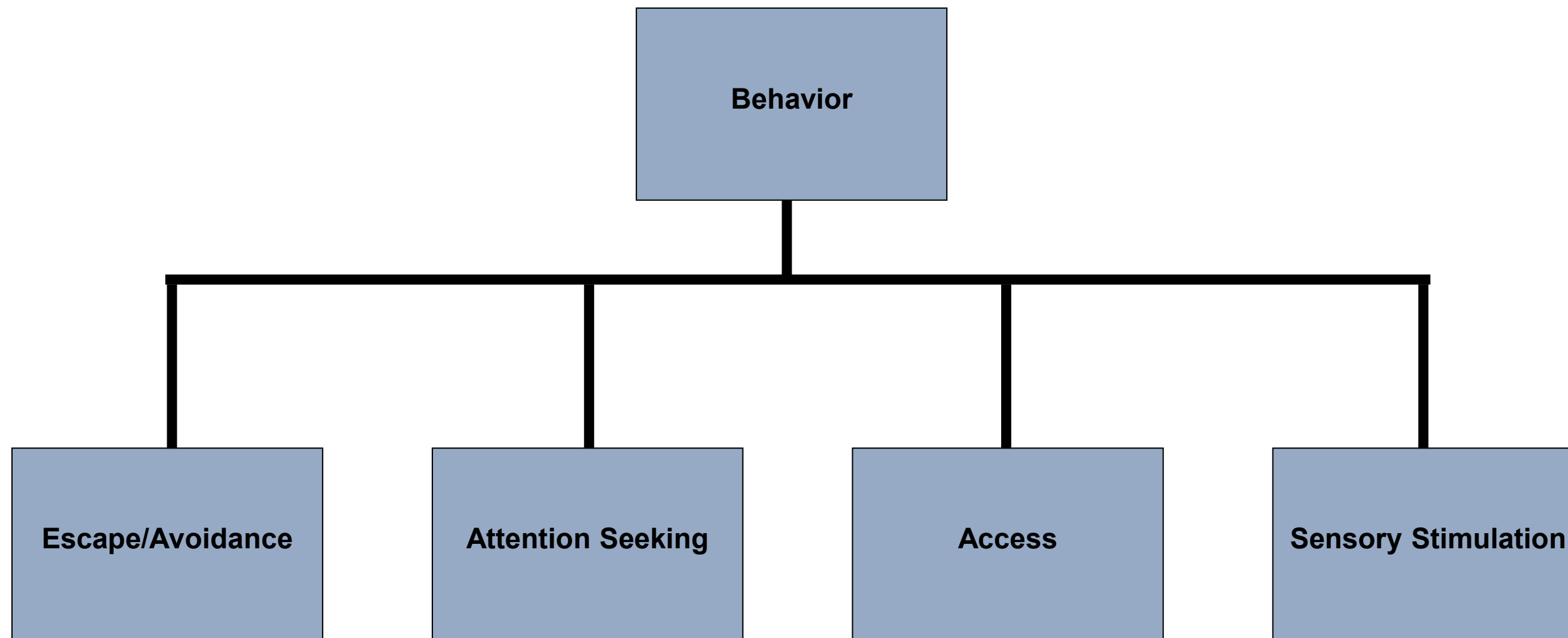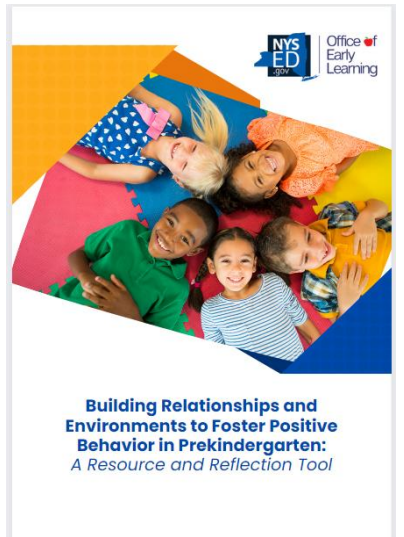
Data Dive

- How do you track this in the program?

- What trends do you see?

- How can you provide support based on the trends?

NYS ED .gov | Office of Early Learning

Function Based Thinking

```
                    ┌─────────────┐
                    │   Behavior  │
                    └──────┬──────┘
        ┌─────────────┬────┴────┬─────────────┐
  ┌───────────┐ ┌───────────┐ ┌────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
  │  Escape/  │ │ Attention │ │ Access │ │   Sensory    │
  │ Avoidance │ │  Seeking  │ │        │ │ Stimulation  │
  └───────────┘ └───────────┘ └────────┘ └──────────────┘
```

Behavior

Escape/Avoidance   Attention Seeking   Access   Sensory Stimulation

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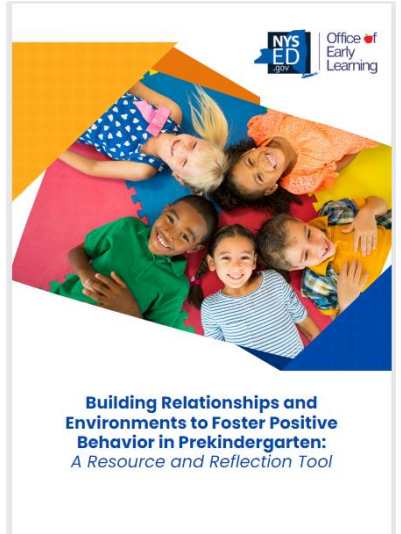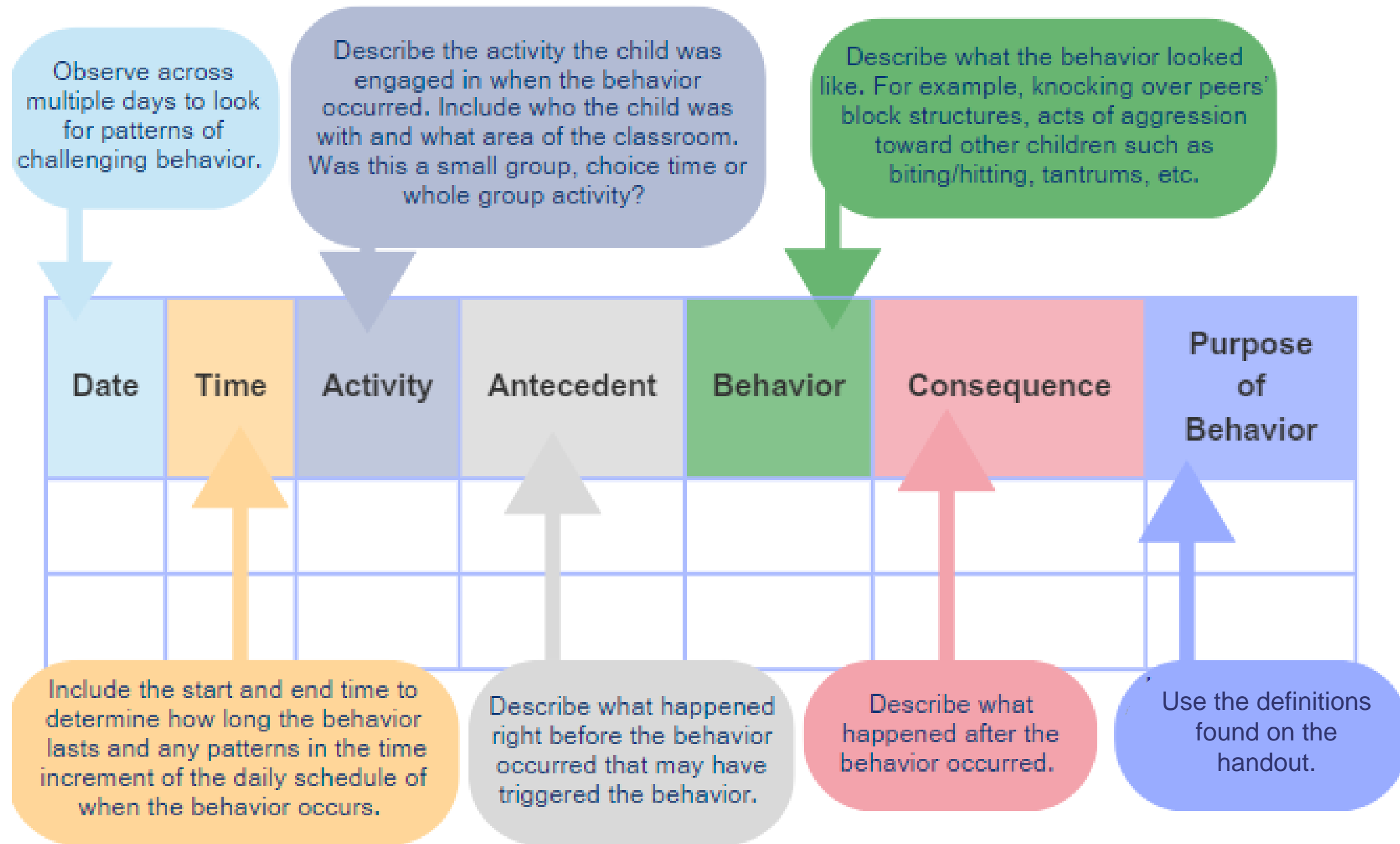*A Resource and Reflection Tool*

In the block area during centers, when Susie is told to stop playing and clean up and to get ready for nap time, she responds by throwing blocks and screaming. The teaching assistant then removes the child from the classroom to the office where she is allowed to play with toys until the director/principal can meet with her.

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

ABC Chart

Observe across multiple days to look for patterns of challenging behavior.

Describe the activity the child was engaged in when the behavior occurred. Include who the child was with and what area of the classroom. Was this a small group, choice time or whole group activity?

Describe what the behavior looked like. For example, knocking over peers' block structures, acts of aggression toward other children such as biting/hitting, tantrums, etc.

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

Date	Time	Activity	Antecedent	Behavior	Consequence	Purpose of Behavior

Include the start and end time to determine how long the behavior lasts and any patterns in the time increment of the daily schedule of when the behavior occurs.

Describe what happened right before the behavior occurred that may have triggered the behavior.

Describe what happened after the behavior occurred.

Use the definitions found on the handout.

Think, Pair, Share

During computer time, Keisha will yell and scream when the teacher asks her to turn off her favorite reading game and join the class for nap time. The teaching assistant will then remove her from the class so that the rest of the students are able to rest.

During table activities, Keisha will walk around the classroom poking and touching her peers while they are engaged in their individual activities. Some students respond by asking her to stop, some will laugh and play with her, and others yell at her to go away.

Now What?

Once the ABC chart has been completed, the next step in the process is to develop a plan that supports a change in the child's behavior. As the ABC chart is reviewed, consider the following:

- In what setting(s) does the behavior occur (blocks, lunch, rest time, etc.)?

- Is there a setting where the behavior does not occur (include indoor and outdoor)?

- Who is present when the behavior occurs?

- What actions or interactions take place prior to the behavior?

- What happens after the behavior?

NYS ED.gov | Office of Early Learning

Support 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.	

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

NYSED.gov | Office of Early Learning
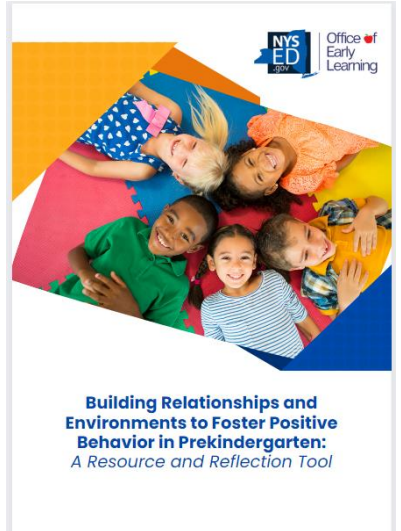
How do I use this document?

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

Table of Contents

PAUSE & REFLECT

Getting Started

1 Establish a warm and responsive relationship with each child.

2 Build a Classroom Community that fosters positive relationships in the classroom.

3 Create a calm and structured learning environment.

4 Intentionally teach behavioral expectations.

5 Provide curriculum experiences that are age appropriate.

6 Partner with Families.
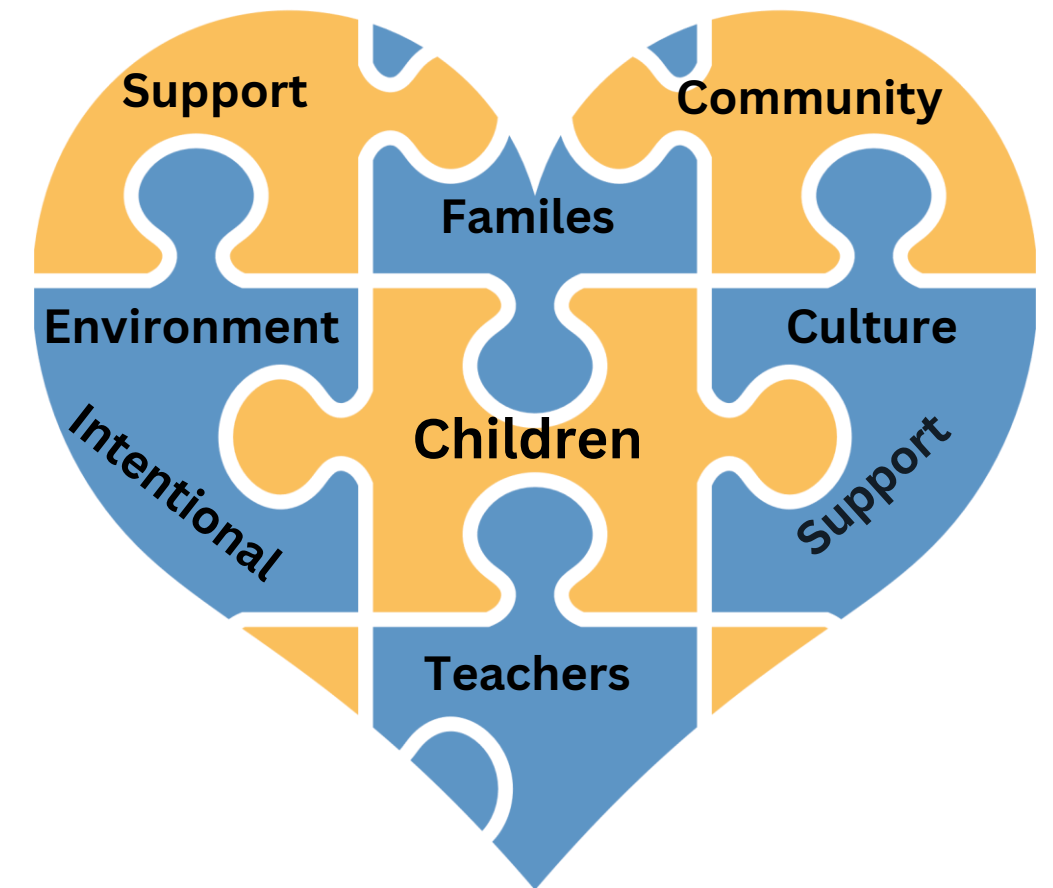
Cozy Area

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 it 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

Teacher Guidance for Challenging Behaviors
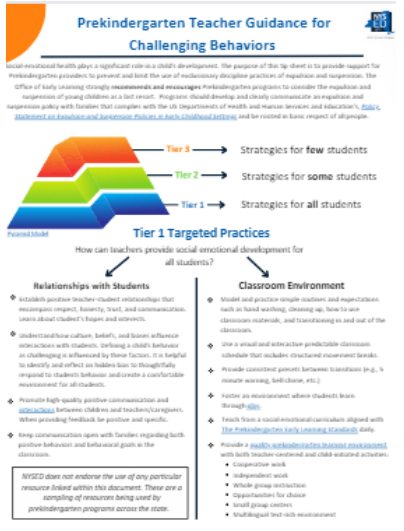
Strategies for **few** students

Strategies for **some** students

Strategies for **all** students

[Pyramid Model](#)

Parent Tip Sheet

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 smart.
  - I am kind.
  - I am strong.
  - I am important.
  - 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.

NYSED 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.

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.

Final Thoughts & Questions

"So often children are punished for being human. Children are not allowed to have grumpy moods, bad days, disrespectful tones, or bad attitudes. Yet, us adults have them all the time. None of us are perfect. We must stop holding our children to a higher standard of perfection than we can attain ourselves."
- Rebecca Eanes