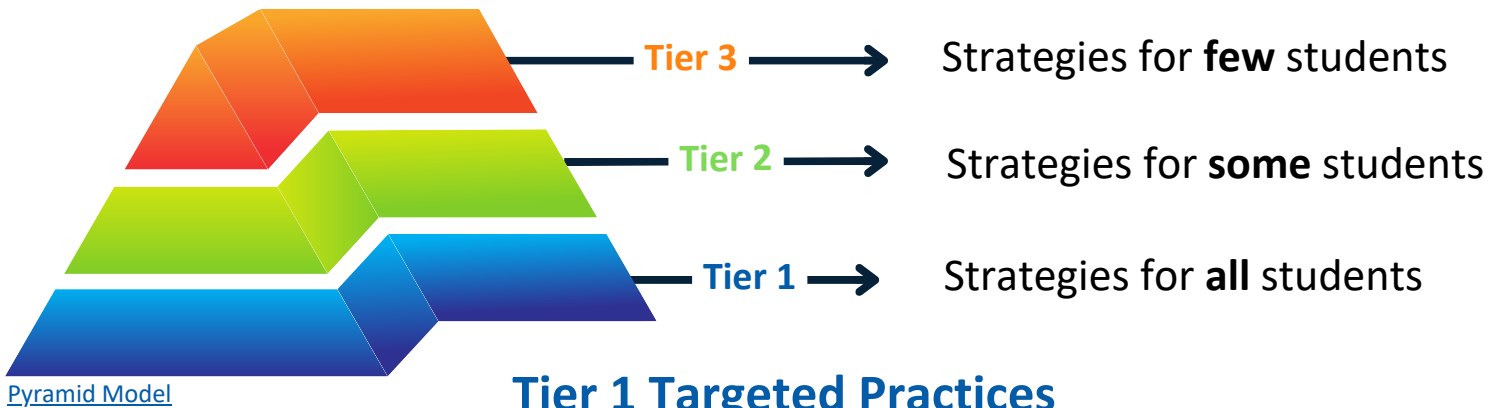


# Prekindergarten Teacher Guidance for Challenging Behaviors

Social-emotional health plays a significant role in a child's development and as such, the New York State Education Department strongly believes that the use of suspension and expulsion of PreK children should be limited. The purpose of this tip sheet is to provide support for Prekindergarten providers to promote positive behavioral supports to proactively prevent and significantly limit the use of exclusionary discipline practices. Programs should develop and clearly communicate an exclusionary discipline policy with families that complies with the US Departments of Health and Human Services and Education's, [Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood Settings](#).



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 student's hopes and interests.
- ❖ Understand how culture, beliefs, and biases influence interactions with students. Defining a child's behavior as challenging is influenced by these factors. It is helpful to identify and reflect on hidden bias 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 behaviors 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 presets between transitions (e.g., 5 minute warning, bell chime, 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 [quality prekindergarten learning environment](#) with both teacher-centered and child-initiated activities:
  - Cooperative work
  - Independent work
  - Whole group instruction
  - Opportunities for choice
  - Small group centers
  - Multilingual text-rich environment

*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.*

# Prekindergarten Teacher Guidance for Challenging Behaviors

## Tier 2

### How can I support my student in solving problems with their peers?

- ❖ Incorporate restorative practices which can include setting classroom agreements or norms, small impromptu conferences, or teach affective statements. Lead community-building circles daily which will give students the opportunity to speak, think, and listen while fostering independence when dealing with problems. Teachers should be mindful of [culturally responsive practices](#) in all areas of their teaching.
- ❖ Provide social emotional stories and lessons [Scripted Stories for SEL](#)  
[PBS Clips](#)  
[Pyramid Model Book Nook](#)  
[Children's Books](#)
- ❖ Explicitly teach and model different ways to share. As students are playing and learning during center time, incorporate this language organically into their play.

### How do I support a student that is feeling emotionally and physically overwhelmed?

- ❖ Create a calming space in the classroom to meet the sensory needs of your students. This is a safe place for children to utilize when they are having big emotions and should not be used as a timeout space.
- ❖ Teach calming and deep breathing self-regulation strategies. Provide visuals of these strategies that can be placed in a quiet space, so students always have access.



### If I have a student that is struggling to express their emotions and feelings, how do I support them?

- ❖ Practice identifying the emotions of self and others through modeling, labeling and coaching. For example:
  - Feelings Sign-In Chart
  - Feeling Wheel
  - Feeling Faces

## Tier 3

### How do I support a student that has difficulty transitioning throughout the day?

- ❖ Create an [individualized or a first/then schedule](#) that can be mobile with the student throughout the day. It should be interactive so that as tasks are finished, they are either removed or marked as completed. The schedule can be broken down into smaller chunks so it will not overwhelm the child. A first/then schedule will help students transition to a non-preferred activity so they can see that it leads to a preferred activity. A variation is to use real pictures of the child completing the activities and incorporate them into the schedule.
- ❖ Use visual timers to help students gain a sense of time allowing students to become more independent, anticipate and understand transitions, and stay on task.

### How can I support a child who refuses to participate?

- ❖ Give students a purposeful job during non-preferred activities to increase their engagement and time on a task. For example, if a student has difficulty sitting at circle time, give them the job of turning the pages of the class book towards the end of the circle time or passing out materials.

### What can I do when a student is running around the classroom and refuses to engage in teacher-directed activities?

- ❖ Provide scheduled opportunities for movement breaks prior to teacher directed activities for students who require frequent movement breaks. Utilize a visual/interactive board of self-regulation strategies to give students choice.

### How do I collaborate with families to support behaviors?

- ❖ Conference with the family to see what behaviors are observed at home and positive strategies that are successful. Identify what motivates the child, personality traits, and likes/dislikes. Create goals together and share progress toward child, family, and teacher identified goals.

## References



After tier 1, 2, and 3 strategies have been implemented with fidelity for a minimum of six weeks and a student is unresponsive, it is recommended that the family speak with their pediatrician. Provide the family with information on how to contact their school district's Committee on Preschool School Special Education (CPSE) for a complete evaluation. Parents may request in a written form of communication, an evaluation to address all areas of concern. Retain all documentation of strategies that have been implemented in the classroom for the parent to give to the district and/or pediatrician to review. Children who are identified as having a disability have the right to a [Free Appropriate Public Education, FAPE](#).