The Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children

Instructions: Read packet and complete all “Activities” and “Reviews” and return to YPLC administration. New employees will not considered off “probationary status” until this packet is complete or you have completed a 16 hour Pyramid Training Course.

Once you submit this packet, your answers will be reviewed and you will be proved with feedback as well as this packet being returned to you for any future review.

Please do not hesitate to ask questions!

Young Peoples Learning Center
Employee Training Packet
Updated 5/21/13
# The Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children

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*Young Peoples Learning Center Employee Training Packet*
The Child Success Pyramid

The Child Success Pyramid depicts the classroom dynamics necessary for a child to thrive in the learning setting. The first three levels are focused on promoting a healthy social-emotional setting while also preventing elements that may interfere with personal and social growth. The fourth level, Individualized Intensive Intervention, is a tool to use after the first three levels of the Pyramid are in place. Always assess first what you could change to build a stronger relationship, what you could do to change the classroom environment and what social-emotional skills a child might need in order to be successful BEFORE jumping to child-specific interventions.

“Every child needs one person who is crazy about him” - Uri Bronfenbrenner
Examining Our Attitudes About Challenging Behaviors

Challenging behavior is referred to as “any repeated pattern of behavior that disrupts pro-social interactions and engagement with peers and adults.” This includes unresponsiveness to instructions as well as physical and verbal noncompliance, all leading to learning and classroom disruption. Challenging behavior from children can wear on teachers’ patience and affect their ability to see beyond this conduct.

**Activity 1. Hot Button Activity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On this row, write down behaviors that push your buttons</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On this row, write down your feelings when faced with these behaviors</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On this row, write down how these feelings impact your relationship with the children who exhibit these behaviors</th>
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</table>

Seeking support from other teachers and caregivers can be a useful tool as you brainstorm possible solutions to addressing issues surrounding behavior in the classroom.
Managing Personal Stress: Thought Control

These behaviors that “push your buttons” can negatively affect how you feel about a child, thus hindering your ability to be an effective teacher. In this moment, a change in perspective can mean the difference between upsetting yourself or staying calm. By positively re-framing your thought process, you will re-gain perspective of the situation and be able to proactively evaluate solution options.

For example: Peter starts to whine when the markers on the table are just out of his reach. You re-frame the situation through a positive perspective: “This is a great opportunity to teach him how to use his words in asking for what he wants.”

Activity 2. Reframing Perspective

Now, looking back at the previous activity, consider how you could reframe your perceptions of the challenging behavior (your “hot buttons”) in a way that promotes a positive relationship between you and that child.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Upsetting Thought</th>
<th>Calming Thought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This child is out of control!</td>
<td>This child is testing to see where the limits are. My job is to stay calm and help him learn better ways to behave.</td>
</tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
Cultural Differences

Culturally based beliefs and attitudes affect how we view challenging behavior. Recognizing your personal perspective is essential to recognizing when your personal views and understanding may be interfering with a child’s learning.

Every family dynamic illustrates a different culture and lifestyle from which each child learns to understand social functioning and interaction. As a child begins school, classroom and teacher expectations are often novel concepts, so learning the ropes can be a challenging experience. The child may find that behaviors and routines practiced at home are not acceptable within the classroom. If this is the child’s first exposure to a group care setting, the emotional and social demands can be overwhelming. Thus, challenging behaviors displayed by a child may indicate a desire or need that is beyond his or her social and verbal capacity to communicate effectively.

Despite cross-cultural differences, a teacher and caregiver’s goal is to promote every child’s success. This includes creating an engaging environment where children feel confident and welcome at school. Promoting success requires teaching expectations and routines that children can use in place of challenging behaviors.

Activity 3. Self-Reflection

List five ways in which you take time to re-frame your perspective (for example: exercise).

1. __________________________________________________________
2. __________________________________________________________
3. __________________________________________________________
4. __________________________________________________________
5. __________________________________________________________
**Build Positive Relationships**

This is the base of the success pyramid and it must first be present before any other levels of the model can be applied.

(“Early Childhood Education and Beyond: Teacher–Child Relationships and Learning”)

By building positive relationships, each child feels established as an integrated member within the classroom community. This begins to build the child’s social functioning within a supportive group context. Here, communication and behavior, empathy and mutual respect, humor and sensitivity are learned, tested and exercised.

For teachers, building positive relationships with children –outside of corrective behavioral teaching—facilitates trust and respect. Building individualized, positive relationships is crucial in developing both the ability and capacity for each child to learn.

- Pay attention to each individual child
- Spend time with children doing what they love to do
- Laugh, joke, and tell stories
- Show children that you are happy they are with you
- Ask children to tell you what makes them happy and sad at school and respect their feelings
- Respect each child’s approach to situations and people, cultural, linguistic, and religious beliefs
- Respond to children consistently

Building and maintaining healthy relationships with colleagues is equally important. This can be accomplished through an encouraging teamwork environment that provides support, builds trust, and recognizes and respects the different talents and abilities of each member. The work environment is further enriched through the development of a shared vision, goal and mission, nurturing a sense of humor, and acknowledging accomplishments.
Review A

Level 1: Build Positive Relationships

Briefly describe the importance behind building a positive relationship with children in your class.
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

How might you build a positive relationship with parents?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

How might you work toward building a positive relationship with a child who is shy?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
**Design Supportive Environment**

This is the second level of the Child Success Pyramid. Incorporating this element supports children’s appropriate behavior as well as promoting an atmosphere conducive to interactive learning.

(“The Role of Supporting School Environments in Promoting Academic Success”)

**Physical environment:** Consider traffic patterns in the classroom and situate learning centers accordingly. Arrange the room in a way that enables children with physical or sensory limitations. Minimize large open space in which children can run, and minimize obstacles to children, so they use the learning space as intended.

**Content of materials and activities:** Provide a variety of centers and items in the centers. Incorporate and build on the interests and developmental needs of children; include materials that are culturally relevant as you change the contents or themes in centers on a regular basis.

**Schedules, routines, and transitions:** Schedules and routines provide consistency, promote a sense of security, and prepare children for activities and classroom expectations. Discussing the schedule of the day during circle time and providing visual cues for each activity helps children learn to prepare for transitions within a structured environment. Frequently referring to these visual cues throughout the day and giving reminders will also encourage children to anticipate these changes. Furthermore, helping children to construct a plan for their days and follow through with these plans teaches self-regulation and planning. Classrooms should structure transitions by minimizing the time spent in between activities to ensure children remain highly engaged. While children are waiting between transitions, assign chores and helping roles. Sing songs, play games, and talk to children if they must spend time waiting. Minimize the number of transitions children are expected to make throughout the day.
Giving Directions:
The manner in which a teacher gives directions can influence whether or not a child follows instructions. (Remember, the relationship you have established with children along with the supportive environment of the classroom, influences children to want to follow the rules).

-Make sure you have the child’s attention before you give direction: This applies when you address the class as a unit and when you address individuals.

-Individualize the way directions are given: Some children may respond to verbal directions, while others may need physical or picture prompts.

-Give clear directions: Directions should be given in a positive tone that tells the child specifically what to do.

-Minimize the number of directions given to children: Give directions one-at-a-time.

-Give the child time to respond: Wait for instruction to be followed before giving another direction, and then follow through with correction if the child does not follow the direction.

-Follow through with positive acknowledgment of children’s behavior: Let children know they are following directions correctly.

Teaching Classroom Rules:
Children will only know classroom rules if those rules are taught. Involving the class in the creation of a “classroom rules” poster or board is one way to engage their understanding of the classroom expectations. Make sure the guidelines are stated positively and clearly, with no more than five rules. Keep decorations simple, but remember that by engaging in any part of the poster-making process, children recognize their ownership of these classroom expectations.

Positive feedback:
The place and time for positive feedback and encouragement should be individualized for each child and is not provided for the benefit of OTHER children. For example, one child may feel comfortable being praised in a group setting, while another child may feel embarrassed and prefer positive feedback at a later time. Encouragement from more than one individual can further strengthen the positive impact on children’s behavior. For example: A parent comes to pick up a child at the end of the day. The teacher compliments the child in front of the parent, mentioning how the child “used words outside to ask for a turn on the swing.” Hearing that compliment, Mom will most likely mention the
encouraging words again to the child on the way home, and may even mention it Grandma that night at the dinner table.

**Teacher Environment:**
Teachers likewise thrive in a positive environment. Knowing the individual strengths of your co-workers is important in building a work area that acknowledges, encourages, and utilizes the unique skill set each person offers as a team member. A simple word of encouragement and thanks between teachers edifies the workplace support system as well as facilitating professional and personal enhancement. Leaving a sticky note to thank teachers for their hard work is one of many ways to show your appreciation for the commitment you see in your work place!

As you interact with coworkers each day, think about the Pyramid Model and how this can impact your relationships here as well. Communicate with coworkers in order to build strong relationships. Participate in team building and other relationship building activities. Keep the classroom, break rooms, resource rooms and other shared spaces comfortable for everyone. Find out from your co-teachers what kinds of things they need to feel organized and comfortable in their day, especially as it pertains to set-up and clean-up of the room between shifts. Give your coworkers time and space to learn and practice new skills. Whether this is our first year teaching or our twentieth, we all have things to improve on and we all come from work places that had different expectations. Making sure your coworkers know your expectations, or know what to help you with will give them the skills they need in order to make your workplace better. If all of these steps are in place and things still are not clicking, it may be time to create a specific plan. If these things are not in place, a specific plan will probably not solve the issue.
Review B

Level 2: Design A Supportive Environment

(Circle all answers that apply)

1. Designing a Supportive Environment Refers to which of the following contexts:
   a. The physical set up of the room
   b. The content of material used to teach
   c. Schedules, procedures, and transitions
   d. All of the above

2. Children are able to follow directions best when
   a. Directions are specific
   b. Multiple directions are given at-a-time
   c. Positive feedback is offered
   d. The child is rushed

3. According to the packet, referring to daily schedules is important for these reasons
   a. Children can learn to anticipate transitions
   b. Children are taught self regulation
   c. Schedules are for teacher use only
   d. Planning is taught through schedules

4. Guidelines for classroom rules should adhere to the following basics
   a. Include children in making “classroom rule” poster
   b. Make as many rules as possible
   c. Cover rule posters with lots of decorations
   d. State rules in a positive way which enable children to know what TO do

5. Positive Feedback
   a. Should be individualized to the person being commended
   b. Is only meant for children
   c. Should ALWAYS be loud and put one child in the spotlight
   d. Has a tendency to be contagious
**Establish Social-Emotional Competence**

This is the third level of the Child Success Pyramid. This component of the success model is crucial, as children establish an understanding of emotional self-regulation through problem solving and communication.

("Social and Emotional Learning")

As children begin school, they need the following social emotional skills:

- 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

When children do not have each of these skills, they often exhibit challenging behaviors. To prepare children for success, teachers must be dedicated to teaching these skills!

The Teachable Moment

*When to use Teachable Moment Techniques*

Ryan steps on Jeremy’s foot. Jeremy kicks Ryan who hits back. The point of crisis in a situation (when the emotions accompanying a high-stress situation is at its peak) is not the most effective time for a teachable moment. In this instance, the incident already happened and both children are upset, therefore making a response other than direct corrective behavior, inappropriate at the time. Intervening at the moments of crises (in this situation: when Ryan stepped on Jeremy’s foot) to aid the child in proactively responding to the situation) are not the only time that we can teach social skills. Purposeful lesson plans centered on emotional skills, as well as naturally occurring instances throughout the day give rise for opportunities to teach social skills.
**The Teachable Moment (How)**

Consider the child’s stage of learning with regards to individual skills when determining *how* to approach teachable moments.

- **Acquisition:** A child learns a new skill or concept. Support their discovery by explaining and demonstrating the skill/concept. This will encourage them to retain the new skill.

- **Fluency:** Provide multiple opportunities for children to practice and master this skill in a variety of situations.

- **Maintenance:** Without support or prompting from an adult, a child is able to maintain the skill.

- **Generalization:** This occurs once a child is able to apply the concept of the skill to various situations, people and settings.

The daily schedule should include a time when new skills will be taught. This allows children the opportunity to *acquire* new skills, become *fluent* with the skill, eventually learn to *maintain* what has been learned, and be able to independently *generalize* their knowledge to new situations. Children typically have opportunities to exercise these skills within large and small groups; all stages should be practiced during large group times and small group times—allow the children both space and time to practice!

**Friendship Skills**

Promote, support and encourage children as they acquire and learn to generalize these friendship skills.

- **Play organizers:** are children who take on a leadership role in play situations and can expand opportunities for themselves and others to join.

- **Sharing skills** include the ability of children to share play material and maintain opportunities for positive peer interactions.

- **Being helpful/team players** allows children initiate play and respond to each other.

- **Taking turns** helps children learn reciprocity, leading to friendship pairs engaging in longer interactions.

- **Giving compliments** engages children as they form friendships.

- **Knowing when and how to give apologies** grows a child’s responsiveness to other’s feelings as well as insight into their own behavior.
Emotional Literacy

*(Refer to Page 21 “Feelings Chart”)*

The foundation of children’s emotional literacy is based on their exposure to emotional language. Through teaching, they learn to label, understand, and identify their personal feelings, as well as the feelings of others. As words beyond the basic, “happy, sad, and mad” are learned, children increase their ability as interpersonal communicators.

*Direct Teaching* involves planning specific activities and opportunities for children to learn and engage in emotional literacy.

For example: You include songs, games, and children’s literature about emotions in your curriculum.

*Indirect Teaching* occurs when a teacher offers emotional labels to describe a child’s affect.

For example: Jason is bouncing up and down, eagerly waiting in line to go outside.

You label the actions with a feeling word: “I see you are excited!”

Controlling Anger and Impulse

The Turtle Technique

Originally intended for adults learning anger management skills, this technique has been adapted for school-aged children and preschoolers. The basic steps of the turtle technique are as follows:

(Step 1) Recognize that you feel angry.

(Step 2) Think, “Stop.”

(Step 3) Go into your “shell,” take three deep breaths, and think calming, coping thoughts: “It was an accident, I can calm down and think of good solutions, I am a good problem solver, etc.”

(Step 4) Come out of your “shell” when calm, and think of some solutions to the problem.

*This technique helps children learn to replace aggressive reactions with a more effective and thought-out response.*

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Developing Problem Solving Skills

Young children often have difficulty thinking of alternative responses in interpersonal conflict (Step 4 of the “Turtle Technique”). It is important to teach children a tool to process problem solving steps and recognize that solutions have consequences.

Recognizing When You Have a Problem

As the first step to problem solving, the child must be able to recognize when he has a negative emotion and identify it as a problem (For example, Liz wants to play with Jake, but Jake is busy playing with another friend. Liz names her feelings- *I feel sad*). Next, the child must be able to describe the problem; sometimes reframing the situation for her as a third party can help generate ideas for more effective solutions. (Liz says, “*Jake doesn’t want to be my friend*” A teacher can then reframe the situation for her as a third party, “Your friend looks like he’s busy right now.”) Time should be spent directly teaching children alternative solutions for every-day scenarios (i.e. “*Could you play with another friend or go to another center while you wait to ask Jake to play?*”). Without the help of an adult, brainstorming multiple solutions can be challenging for a child. And finally, the key is to encourage children to generate a number of solutions, rather than identifying the best solution.

Consequences

After children have generated several different solutions to problems, they can then think through the consequence of each solution. A teacher may say, “What would happen next?” Three questions can guide a child as he or she explores if the consequences would be good or bad:

1) Is the solution safe?
2) Is the solution fair?
3) How would everyone feel?

Understanding consequences by analyzing possible outcomes of solutions can be difficult for some children, so visual aids such as puppet plays or role-plays help teach children to think ahead. Prompting from a teacher can encourage children to think: Did anyone get hurt? Was it fair? How did you feel? How did the other person feel?

At this point, children are encouraged to try out the best solution they generated. Here, they also learn to draw upon another solution, if the first solution does not work. Activities can be used to teach
children about exploring solutions, such as playing, “What would you do if,” to facilitate children’s problem solving development. “Problematizing” situations throughout the day and encouraging children to think up solutions also helps children explore different solutions to problems. Children’s books that feature characters or include a storyline about a problem can be used. While teaching this skill may seem like a task that will take a long time, the process will get faster with practice!

Supporting Young Children with Problem Solving in the Moment

Consider the following five steps:

1. Anticipate Problems
   - Knowing that problems will occur keeps teachers available to support children if a problem does present itself.
2. Seek Proximity
   - Rather than preventing problems from occurring, a teacher near-by can assist children who might need to use problem solving steps and skills in the moment, such as the “Turtle Technique.”
3. Support
   - Young children and those who feel timid about problem solving will need support from the teacher to remember and work through the problem-solving steps. Role playing is an effective way to support the child in this learning process.
   - Adding visual depiction of the problem-solving steps can help prompt a child, especially when an adult is not available.
4. Encourage
   - Even the best solutions sometimes do not work, so children need to be encouraged to explore alternative solutions and continue through the solution steps. Children will need practice over time before they gain the ability and confidence to accomplish this social skill.
   - Using a “solution kit” provides picture cues of various solutions. Cards are available on the CSEFEL website at csefel.uiuc.edu/practical-ideas.html. Keeping these cards in an accessible place—preferably a box or folder—allows children the opportunity to retrieve these helpful hints and bring them to problem solving areas.
5. Promote
   - Reinforce the child’s problem solving success; in informal and formal ways.
   - Informally, teachers can give high-fives, thumbs up, verbal acknowledgement when children use these skills.
-Formally, teachers can arrange mini-celebrations or send notes and letters home with children.
-As a teacher supports, encourages and promotes problem solving in the classroom, children will also encourage each other’s efforts.

**Review C**

**Level 3: Establish Social-Emotional Competence**

*C(Circle the best answer)*

1. In regards to a child’s level of understanding, Acquisition is when a child
   a. Can apply the concept of the skill to various situations, people, and settings
   b. Is able to maintain the skill without support or prompting from an adult
   c. Masters a skill in a variety of situations when given opportunities
   d. Learns a new skill or concept

2. What is the difference between direct and indirect emotional teaching?
   a. Direct teaching is when a specific emotion-based lesson is planned and presented. 
      Indirect teaching is when a teacher allows class discussion about feelings.
   b. Direct teaching involves offering emotional labels to describe a child’s affect. 
      Indirect teaching is when a specific emotion-based lesson is planned and presented.
   c. Direct teaching involves planning specific activities and chances for emotional learning. 
      Indirect teaching is when a teacher offers emotional labels to describe a child’s affect.
   d. Direct teaching is when a teacher allows class discussion about feelings. 
      Indirect teaching is when a specific emotion-based lesson is planned and presented.

3. In your own words, describe the actions that accompany the four steps of the “Turtle Method.”

   (Step 1) ________________________________________________________________
   (Step 2) ________________________________________________________________
   (Step 3) ________________________________________________________________
   (Step 4) ________________________________________________________________
Activity 3. Pulling it All Together

This activity incorporates the first three levels of the pyramid. Integrate the intentional social-emotional skills discussed thus-far. Choose two behaviors with which you have been struggling right now in your class, or think up two up behaviors and complete the following.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the Behavior?</th>
<th>Why might the child be doing this?</th>
<th>What can I do to prevent this behavior?</th>
<th>What new skills can I teach?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

When thinking about these, what is the underlying **FUNCTION**?
The Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children

**Individualize Intensive Intervention**

This level of the Child Success Pyramid is to be used when a child continues with severe challenging behavior and does not respond to procedures typically followed for prevention, guidance, or social emotional teaching that normally works with most children.

(Refer to Pages 64–81, “Behavior Support Strategies in Early Childhood Settings”)

The former school of thought for discipline was to react to a child’s behavior and deliver a consequence powerful enough to ensure the behavior was not repeated in the future.

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a behavior modification approach that takes into consideration a child’s environment and triggers, recognizing that challenging behavior are a way of communicating to adults the child’s message or meaning. PBS matches the intervention to the purpose of the child’s behavior and succeeds in long-term intervention through teaching new skills.

Challenging behavior often arise when a child lacks the social know-how or developmental capacity to communicate in an appropriate manner. Children may also engage in challenging behavior when doing so has worked for them in the past when wanting to obtain or avoid situations or people.

**Behavior Equation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trigger: Anything that affects a child’s behavior</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behavior: Enacted to obtain or avoid situation or person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function: The purpose behind the behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining Consequence: The child’s desired result</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The function behind a child’s behavior can be difficult to understand. Further assessment may include intentional observation. This is a long process that takes time. First, a collaborate team of caregivers

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and/or childcare professionals work as one unit to examine a child’s behaviors. Second, a functional assessment is undertaken. The group gathers observed information that may explain possible reasons behind the child’s acting out behaviors. Third, observations are exchanged, and the group discusses a hypothesis, a “best guess,” as to the function behind a child’s behavior. Fourth, the group designs behavior support plans to teach the child alternative methods to achieve the desired result. And finally, those plans are executed through monitoring, evaluating the outcomes, and refining the plan in the child’s natural environment.
Review D

Level 4: Individualize Intensive Intervention

(Circle all answers that apply)

1. What are the reasons one might implement this level of the Child Success Pyramid?
   a. A child continues with severe challenging behavior
   b. A child does not respond to typical prevention, guidance, or social emotional teaching
   c. A child refuses to comply with directions on several occasions
   d. A child is severely disruptive

2. PBS (Positive Behavior Support) matches the intervention to the purpose of the child’s behavior and succeeds in long-term intervention through teaching new skills.
   a. The purpose/ teaching new skills
   b. The degree/ discipline
   c. The level/ consequences
   d. The purpose/ discipline

3. In order to determine the reason behind a child’s behavior, extensive assessment may require
   a. Input from experts
   b. A long process
   c. A timely process
   d. Intensive observation
Feelings Chart

Tired  Lonely  Loved  Nervous
Happy  Embarrassed  Mad  Frustrated
Proud  Surprised  Sad  Scared
This packet was developed for the sole use of background training for Young Peoples Learning Center Employees and only constitutes training hours once the activities and reviews have been evaluated by a trainer and the employee has received feedback. Reviewing this packet does NOT exempt employees from participating in a full-length Pyramid Training program, but is meant to help them get quickly on the same page as other teachers until such a class is available.

A big THANK YOU to Angela Miller for putting together this training packet during her time at YPLC as a Bachelors of Social Work intern.

The research articles and training binder used to create this document are available to any staff at any time.

More materials and training is available at www.challengingbehaviors.org