

Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) in Early Childhood Settings

The Pyramid Model



The information in this section comes from the following articles from:

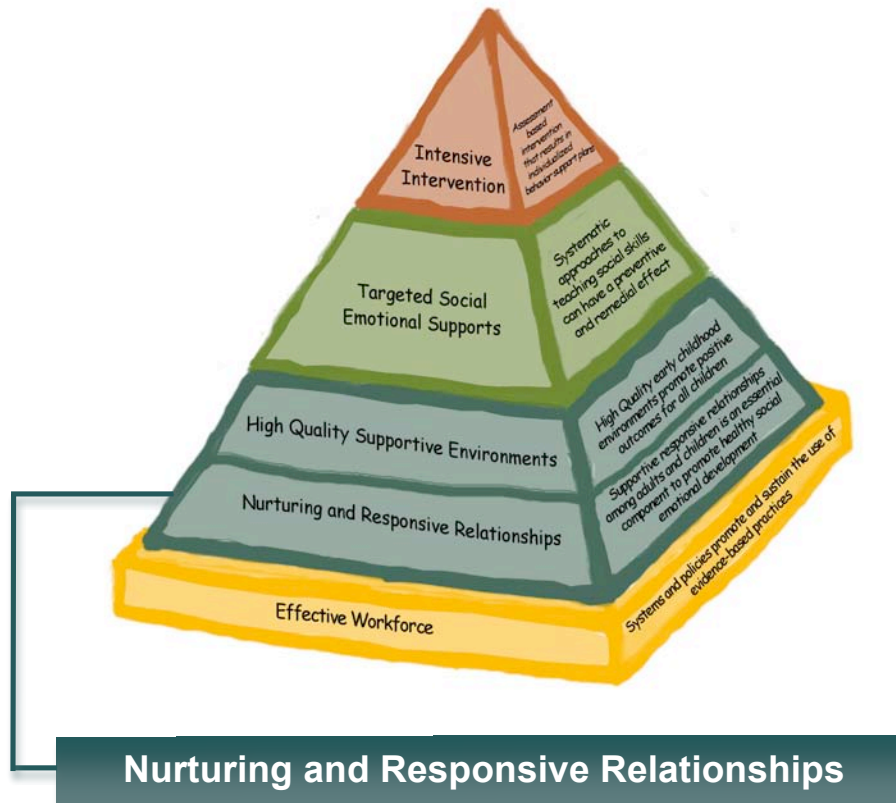
Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. (2003). *Promoting social & emotional competence*. Champaign, IL: Author. Retrieved October 31, 2011, from <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/modules-archive/index.html>.

The reader is referred to the following resources as the basis for the information packet. Each is provided in the Articles Section of this packet.

- Some starters for giving positive feedback and encouragement, Module 1, Handout 1.3
- Building positive relationships with young children, Module 2, Handout 2.2
- You've got to have friends, Module 2, Handout 2.3
- Enhancing emotional vocabulary in young children, Module 2, Handout 2.4
- Helping young children control anger and handle disappointment, Module 2, Handout 2.6
- Strategies for teaming with families in the process of PBS, Module 3b, Handout 3.3(a)
- Positive Behavior Support Additional Resources: Module 3b, Handout 7

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June 2005, Revised January 2012

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The foundation of the Pyramid Model is building nurturing and responsive relationships with children and their families. Without this foundation, the best prevention and intervention strategies have less impact or long-term effectiveness. One key to building positive relationships is taking time to get to know each child and his or her strengths, preferences and abilities. Home visits, personal conversations, and one-on-one time with children in the classroom are good ways to start the process.

Another element is to make a connection with each child, learn what works and doesn't work with that child, and provide warm, positive attention on a regular basis. This helps develop trust, respect (e.g., "I will celebrate your strengths"), and helps convey emotion to children. Finally, building relationships with families helps to involve parents in their children's social-emotional development and engage them proactively in addressing challenging behaviors.

The attached article from the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) highlights the importance of "Building Positive Relationships with Young Children".

HIGH QUALITY SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

The next level of the Pyramid Model is related to high quality supportive environments. These are strategies that reflect best practice in early childhood programs. It is important to note the relationships between using these practices and the effect they have on children's behavior. That is, children

have fewer difficulties when they are taught expectations, how to follow routines, and how to get help when they need it. Effective preventative practices set the stage for developing a positive, proactive, classroom environment and will prevent most problems before they occur.

Some of the classroom practices that are known to create supportive environments include:

- *Physical arrangement* of the classroom – size of space, placement of materials and furnishings, location of personal items
- *Use of materials* – child-friendly and age-appropriate items and activities, giving cues for how to use items, rotating materials frequently to maintain interest
- *Predictable routines and planned transitions* – providing structure for activities and transitions between activities, providing predictability across the day, giving cues for quiet time vs. active time, and giving guidance for completing routines independently
- *Rules and expectations* – establish clear guidelines for expected behavior, provide for positive behavior, show respect for children by teaching them what is expected of them

The key feature to developing high quality supportive environments is planning to engage children actively in each event or routine across the day. Active engagement promotes a child's emotional and cognitive development. Children, then, are more likely



to participate in activities independently across the day, have longer play periods, and less likely to engage in challenging behavior. The attached article by Nordquist & Twardosz (1990) highlights the importance of using the classroom environment to prevent challenging behavior.

The KITS TA packet on *Creating Supportive Environments* by Jack & Lindeman (2011) is available for more detailed information on the use of these practices. This can be found at: <http://kskits.org/ta/Packets/EnvironmentalSupport.shtml>.

TARGETED SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORTS

A majority of children react positively to classroom preventative strategies such as environmental arrangement, schedules and transitions, and classroom rules.

Other children, however, may need additional support to learn how to develop friendships, manage their feelings, and problem-solve conflicts. These skills are critical to the success of children who may be “at-risk” for developing more serious behavioral challenges as they encounter difficult situations or settings in which they do not understand the social expectations. Research supports the notion that challenging behavior results when children lack communication skills and social-emotional competence (Hemmeter, 2006).

Friendship skills should be promoted and supported throughout the course of the program day through recognition, prompting, and play activities. Emotional awareness includes being able to recognize one’s feelings and responding to the signs of feelings in others, as well as controlling one’s own emotional behaviors. The attached article on teaching social skills (Fox & Lentini, 2006) provides guidance on how to teach social skills to children in an intentional and meaningful way. The emphasis at this level of the pyramid is on planned social skill instruction for all children, with opportunities to review and practice each skill embedded across the day. Some children may require additional instructional support, guidance or modeling in order to master each skill.



Finally, teaching social skills should be a planned and integrated part of the early learning curriculum. Many excellent curricula exist that support social skills development and can be easily adapted for most settings. Incorporating learning experiences that support social skills into the daily lesson plan is a very effective way to ensure that children are receiving the support they need to develop these critical skills. The attached research synthesis on social-emotional curricula provides guidance on selecting and implementing these materials.

Intensive Individualized Interventions

The final level of the Pyramid Model is designed to address the children who display the most severe forms of challenging behavior. Even with all of the other supports in place, some children need individualized support plans that address their specific behavioral difficulties and teach more appropriate ways to communicate their wants or needs. The development of an individualized support plan involves several steps, outlined below. This process is always a team-based process involving the child's parents, caregivers, teaching and support staff and, if necessary, a behavior support facilitator. The attached TACSEI article on recommended practices for intensive individualized interventions offers an overview of this process



Steps for developing individualized support plans include:

- Establish team for addressing child's behavioral concerns
- Review previous levels of the teaching pyramid to ensure all aspects of a positive supportive environment are in place
- Complete assessments for child and review data from:
 - IFSP, IEP and/or Person-Centered Plan
 - Functional Behavioral Assessment
- Brainstorm interventions and develop plan based on assessment data

- Implement plan by establishing preventive strategies, teaching child replacement behaviors, and providing alternative instructional strategies
- Review plan, evaluate progress, revise as necessary

For more information or to review the framework for intensive individualized interventions and the complete reference guide to the PBS process see TACSEI:

<http://www.challengingbehavior.org/explore/pbs/pbs.htm>

See the KITS packet *Functional Behavioral Assessment* by Jack & Lindeman (2005) for more detailed information on the use of the behavior support process at

<http://kskits.org/ta/Packets/FunctionalBeh.shtml>.



Fully implementing the Pyramid Model program-wide requires additional supporting structure beyond the teaching practices. This also requires extensive effort, planning and leadership. Program leadership teams are essential to the implementation of program-wide adoption of the pyramid model. The leadership team is responsible for determining the areas of emphases and implementation steps for model adoption, ongoing evaluation, data-based decision-making, professional development, family partnerships, program practices and policies. Program wide adoption also requires a

long view—implementing and sustaining the model takes years to accomplish. For an example of a program in Kansas that has been implementing the model since 2001, read the attached booklet *Program-Wide Positive Behavior Support: Supporting Young Children’s Social-Emotional Development and Addressing Challenging Behavior*.

Additional information on program practices is included in the attached articles: *The Teaching Pyramid - A Model for Supporting Social Competence and Preventing Challenging Behavior in Young Children* and *Recommended Practices – Program Practices for Promoting the Social Development of Young Children and Addressing Challenging Behavior*.