

Promoting Children's Success:

Building Relationships and Creating Supportive Environments



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**The Center on the Social and Emotional
Foundations for Early Learning**



**Administration for
Children & Families**



**Child Care
Bureau**



**Head Start
Bureau**

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Learner Objectives

- Participants will be able to describe the relationship between children’s social-emotional development and challenging behaviors.
- Participants will be able to describe the importance of building relationships with children, families, and colleagues.
- Participants will be able to describe the relationship between a number of environmental variables, children’s challenging behaviors, and social emotional development.
- Participants will be able to identify strategies that can be used to (1) build positive relationships with children; (2) design environments, schedules, and routines; (3) structure transitions; (4) help children learn rules and routines; (5) plan activities that promote engagement.
- Participants will be able to use praise, encouragement, redirection, and ignoring effectively to support children’s positive social behaviors.
- Participants will evaluate their work with children related to building relationships and the structure and design of their environment, and generate strategies for addressing areas where they need to make changes or improvements.

Suggested Agenda

- I.** Introductions and Logistics (30 min.)
- II.** Examining Our Attitudes about Challenging Behaviors (30 min.)
- III.** Understanding the Relationship between Challenging Behavior and Social-Emotional Development (10 min.)
- IV.** Creating Environments in which Children Can Be Successful: The Pyramid (5 min.)
- V.** Building Relationships with Children, Families, and Professionals (45 min.)
- VI.** Designing the Physical Environment (30 min.)
- VII.** Schedules, Routines, and Transitions (60 min.)
- VIII.** Planning Activities that Promote Engagement (45 min.)
- IX.** Giving Directions (10 min.)
- X.** Teaching Children to Follow Rules and Directions (15 min.)
- XI.** Ignoring/Redirecting (30 min.)
- XII.** Ongoing Monitoring and Positive Attention (15 min.)
- XIII.** Using Positive Feedback and Encouragement (30 min.)
- XIV.** Pulling It All Together: Summary and Completion of Action Plan (45 min.)

Materials Needed

- Agenda
- Speaker’s notes
- PowerPoint or overheads
- Facilitator’s Guide
- Handouts
 - PowerPoint handouts (H1.1)
 - Positive attention data collection sheet (H1.2)
 - List of starters for praise comments (H1.3)
 - Sample certificate (H1.4)
- Markers and chart paper
- Yellow construction paper circles (for activity about attitudes); approximately five circles (3-inch diameter) per participant
- Video clips
 - 1.1 Adult: Child Conversations during Dramatic Play
 - 1.2 Circle Time Video Clip (Children Not Very Engaged)
 - 1.3 Circle Time Video Clip (Children Engaged)
 - 1.4 Positive Attention during Large Group Activity
- Session Evaluation Form

I. Introduction and Logistics

(30 minutes)



(Handout 1.1)

II. Examining Our Attitudes about Challenging Behaviors

(30 minutes)



- A. During this time, you will want to accomplish the following things.
1. Introduce all the presenters. Begin with an introduction of all speakers, a brief overview of who you are, where you are from, and information about your background that is relevant to this training event.
 2. Have the participants introduce themselves to each other and provide you with a brief overview of who they are. Have each table of participants introduce themselves to each other and then report back to the whole group what roles the participants at their table represent (e.g., teachers, assistants, therapists, administrators, parents, trainers).
 3. Review what you plan to accomplish for the day (**Slide 2**), and the learner objectives (**Slide 3**).
 4. Distribute **Handout 1.1** that has copies of all overhead/PowerPoint slides.
 5. Take care of logistical issues (e.g., breaks, bathrooms, lunch plans).
 6. Encourage participants to ask questions throughout or to post them in a specially marked place.
- A. **Slide 4.** The purpose of this discussion is to acknowledge how difficult it is to deal with children with challenging behaviors. Explain how important it is for teachers to have support when they are working with children with challenging behaviors. It is difficult to see beyond the challenging behavior, and it helps to have someone else who can brainstorm possible solutions.



(Individual activity)



B. Hot Button Activity

1. Have participants identify children's behaviors that "drive them crazy" or "push their buttons."
 - a. Put a small pile of yellow construction paper circles (yellow "hot button" disks) on each table, and have participants individually fill in their "hot button behaviors" on separate disks. Each participant can complete several disks.
 - b. Ask for volunteers to name some of the behaviors that push their buttons. Keep going until you have an extensive list.
2. Ask participants to think of children who they have worked with who have these types of behaviors.
 - a. Then have participants talk about how they felt when they were working with that child or how they felt when people were sharing their list of behaviors that "pushed their buttons."
 - b. As they say these things, write them on the flipchart paper or a blank overhead. They will most likely say things like: "It makes me frustrated." "I feel like I don't know what I am doing." "It makes me mad." "I feel like a failure." "It makes me want to get another job."
 - c. Once you have a long list, make the point that it is difficult to be effective with children when you are feeling this way. It is important to plan a strategy for dealing with these situations. How does it affect your interactions with children when they engage in these behaviors? Participants might say they avoid children when they act like this or that adults interact in a not-so-pleasant way after children engage in these behaviors, etc.
 - d. Let's talk about how we can use this emotional signal as a positive thing—it tells you that you need to think of positive ways to deal with the situation (e.g., focusing on the positive, asking for help, reframing).

(continued)

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- e. Walk through **Slides 5 and 6** (*Managing Personal Stress: Thought Control*) reading over the upsetting thoughts and the calming thoughts. Talk about the fact that if we reframe our thoughts we can engage in more positive interactions with children and use these as opportunities for growth.
3. Have participants take each of their “**yellow hot buttons**,” re-read it, and consider how they can reframe the behavior to interact with the child to build a positive relationship with him or her. For example, one might consider: “If Delroy starts to whine when he can’t get his shoes on or off, or his bookbag stored in his cubby, I will use these interactions as opportunities to teach him how to ask for assistance in a more appropriate way.”
 4. Make the point that there are individual and culturally based beliefs that affect our attitudes about challenging behavior.
 - a. What pushes one individual’s button might be very different from what pushes another individual’s buttons.
 - b. Past experiences with children, training experiences, and level of support for dealing with challenging behaviors are just some of those factors.
 - c. Also, culturally based beliefs affect our attitudes (e.g., what skills we expect children to engage in independently at certain ages, how we expect children to interact with adults, etc.).
 5. Talk about how important it is to use a team approach. It is especially important in terms of providing support to the teachers who work with children with challenging behaviors every day.

III. Understanding the Relationship Between Challenging Behavior and Social Emotional Development

(10 minutes)



A. Describe how several national reports (e.g., *Eager to Learn*, *Neurons to Neighborhoods*, *A Good Beginning*, *the Kaufmann Report on Social-Emotional Development*) have all discussed the importance of social emotional development in children's readiness for and success in school. These publications have identified a number of social emotional skills that children need to learn or develop during preschool, including the ones on **Slide 7**. Read through the list of skills:

- Confidence
 - Capacity to develop good relationships with peers
 - Concentration and persistence on challenging tasks
 - Ability to effectively communicate emotions
 - Ability to listen to instructions and be attentive
1. Ask participants to explain how they know when a child doesn't have each skill. For example, "What do children do when they can't persist at a challenging task and they are faced with something that is hard for them?"
 2. Write on a piece of chart paper the behaviors that participants observe children exhibiting when they don't have the social emotional skills listed above.
 3. Then make the point that children often use challenging behaviors when they don't have more appropriate behaviors to accomplish the same goal or to communicate the same message. This means that our focus has to be on "**teaching children new skills**" rather than "trying to get them to stop using challenging behaviors." **We have to teach them what to do rather than what not to do.**
 4. Make the point that this also applies to children who speak another language or whose home culture values different behaviors. The goal is to facilitate children's learning of skills valued in school/community to ensure success while at the same time honoring the values and beliefs of the home culture and language.

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IV. Creating Environments in which Children Can Be Successful: The Pyramid (5 minutes)

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- B.** Talk about some basic assumptions about challenging behavior (**Slide 8**).
1. Emphasize that challenging behaviors often occur when children don't have the appropriate language or social skills to achieve the same purpose. **It is important to point out that children with challenging behaviors often do *not* always have disabilities.**
 2. Talk about other variables that might contribute to children's challenging behavior such as lack of sleep, hunger, stress in the home, temperament, and genetic factors. These should be considered when designing individualized plans for children.
 3. Explain that when children use challenging behaviors over time, those behaviors are working for them. Use an example such as the child who grabs toys from another child rather than asking to play. If the child usually ends up with the toy after grabbing it, then he will continue to grab—grabbing is working for him.
 4. Point out that there is a lot we can do to prevent challenging behavior, such as having a positive relationship with the child, having schedules and routines that support the child, having activities that are engaging, and teaching children the skills they need to be successful. And that is what the rest of this day of training will be about.
- A. Slide 9.** As we just talked about, there are a variety of things we can do to prevent challenging behaviors and to teach children appropriate behaviors. As teachers, we must first focus on these things before we focus on changing children's inappropriate behaviors. We must focus on:
1. Ensuring that the environment is a place children want to be
 2. Designing environments that promote engagement
 3. Teaching children the skills they need to be successful

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B. One way we can look at this is through the following model (**Slide 10**). This pyramid addresses each of the components that we will be talking about in each of the training modules. Talk about how this model is consistent with developmentally appropriate practices in that it includes key practices for promoting social emotional development and only focuses on more intensive interventions for those children with the most persistent challenging behavior.

1. Relationships form the foundation of the triangle and are necessary for everything else we do.
2. Well-designed environments support children's appropriate behaviors and make it less likely that children will need to engage in challenging behavior. In addition, they teach children expectations and promote their engagement and interactions.
3. Talk about the importance of teaching children the skills that they need so they don't have to use challenging behavior.
4. When we do all of this, we are less likely to need to design intensive, individualized interventions. The success of individualized interventions depends on the extent to which the other levels of the pyramid have been addressed.

V. Building Relationships with Children, Families, and Other Professionals
(45 minutes)

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A. Slide 11. At the foundation of everything we do with children is the relationship that we build with children, families, and other colleagues. We know about the importance of relationships on children's development and success in school. It is important to build these relationships to promote children's success rather than waiting until there is a problem.

1. Children learn and develop in the context of relationships that are responsive, consistent, and nurturing.
2. Children with the most challenging behaviors especially need these relationships, and yet their behaviors often prevent them from benefiting from those relationships.

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Group activity
(10 minutes)

3. Adults' time and attention are very important to children, and we need to be sure that we are giving them that time and attention at times other than when they are engaging in challenging behavior.
4. Parents and other colleagues (such as mental health providers and therapists) are critical partners in building children's social emotional competence. We should all work together to ensure children's success.

B. Slide 12. Activity: Strategies for Building Relationships with Children, Families, and Colleagues

1. Have participants select a partner.
2. Assign each group one of the following: (a) children (b) families (c) colleagues.
3. Brainstorm a list of things we can do to build relationships with children, families, or other colleagues.
4. Give participants about 10 minutes to do this task.
5. Teams report back to the large group with examples.
6. Write these suggestions on chart paper.

Included below are some examples of the types of things that you might highlight or use to prompt participants to think more broadly about how to build relationships with children:

- Pay attention to each individual child.
- Give children one-on-one positive attention.
- Joke and laugh with children.
- Know what interests each child and talk to the child about that interest.
- Respect each child's approach to situations and people.
- Don't be afraid to be wrong and to talk with children about it.
- Give hugs, pats, and handshakes.
- Talk to the child seriously when the topic is serious or important to the child.

(Continued)

- Tell children what makes you feel happy and sad and ask them to respect your feelings.
- Ask children to tell you what makes them happy and sad and respect their feelings.
- Speak to children at their eye level.
- Greet children by name when they enter the classroom each day.
- Show children that you are happy they are there.
- Learn and remember personal information about children (e.g., best friend's name, pet's name, type of pets, sibling, activities they do outside of school), and use this information in your conversations with them.
- Use positive reinforcement in a meaningful and respectful manner. Tailor positive reinforcement to the individual needs/likes/preferences of the child.
- Give children genuine choices, and assist them in following through with their choices.
- Show respect for children's cultural, linguistic, and religious beliefs.
- Speak respectfully about children's families.
- Listen to children when they speak to you and respond appropriately to their questions.
- Spend time with children doing what they love to do.
- Play with children on their level (both physically and emotionally).
- Smile at children.
- Respond to children consistently.

C. At this point, you should highlight the importance of play as a context for building relationships with children. Explain that play gives the adult an opportunity to follow the child's lead, comment on what the child is doing, and build on positive interactions.

1. Talk about how easy it is to spend most of our time giving directions and correcting behavior, and point out that play provides a context for focusing on more positive behaviors and interactions and promoting children's social skills and emotional development.

(Continued)



(video clip 1.1)



Group activity
(10 minutes)



Inventory of
Practices & Action
Plan

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2. **Activity.** Show **video clip 1.1: Adult:Child Conversations during Dramatic Play.**

- a. Ask participants to comment on how this teacher used play as a context for building relationships.
- b. What things did she do?
- c. Participants might comment on how the teacher talked about things the children do at home, engaged in the children's play, participated in play as a partner, sat at the children's level, and teased the little girl when she wasn't given a coffee cup.

D. Action Planning. Give each team another 10 minutes to pick one or two things that they are going to do when they get back to their classroom to improve their relationships with all children or with a particular child, family, or colleague, or things that they will do to help others improve their relationships with the children, family, and colleagues.

1. Participants can use the *Inventory of Practices* and *Action Planning Form* described earlier to make notes about changes they are going to make or facilitate in their job settings.
2. Encourage participants to consider resources or support they might need to make these changes.
3. If time allows, you can have one or two people share with the group what changes they are going to make.

E. Slide 13. Explain that the next things you will be talking about are related to creating supportive environments.

1. Although they may not be new concepts to people, explain that participants should be thinking about these issues in terms of how they relate to preventing challenging behavior and promoting social emotional development.

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2. Discuss some environmental design issues that will help teach children these expectations, including (1) the physical design of the environment, (2) schedules, (3) routines, (4) rules, and (5) how activities are planned and structured.

TIP: *For some groups, this material will be a review of information they already know. If you know your audience is highly skilled, consider presenting this in an alternative way. Rather than walking through each slide, do an activity in which you encourage participants to think about how each practice is related to promoting social behavior or preventing challenging behavior. Divide the participants into small groups (4-6 people). Assign each group a set of practices (e.g., designing learning centers, schedules, and routines). Have them discuss how those practices support children's social behaviors and prevent challenging behavior. Have them identify practical examples of how they could implement these practices specifically to focus on social behavior (e.g., to prevent challenging behavior during transitions, use a buddy system where less-skilled peers are paired with highly skilled peers).*

VI. Designing the Physical Environment (30 minutes)

In this section, we cover many topics. While they are all important, you will need to determine how much time to spend on each topic based on the needs and skills of your audience.

- A.** When we consider the design of the physical environment, we are trying to do two things: promote engagement and prevent challenging behavior.
1. There are several issues about the physical arrangement of the environment that will do just this—prevent challenging behavior.
 2. We will talk about two sets of strategies related to the physical design of the environment: traffic patterns and designing learning centers.

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B. Slide 14. Review the following major issues about traffic patterns.

1. Minimize large open spaces in which children can run, etc.
2. Minimize obstacles.
3. Consider environmental arrangement as it applies to children with physical or sensory (e.g., blindness) disabilities.

C. Then talk about how a lot of strategies related to learning centers will increase the likelihood of children being engaged and decrease the likelihood of challenging behaviors occurring. Talk about two aspects of planning learning centers—the physical design and the actual content of the materials and activities that occur in each center.

D. Slide 15. Review the following major issues about the physical design of learning centers.

1. Have clear boundaries so that children know where the center begins/ends, and so that children are not crowded together.
2. Make sure that all children are visible to adults and that adults are visible to children.
3. When learning centers are closed for some reason, indicate that the centers are closed by using visual prompts such as sheets or blankets, circles with a slash through them, etc.
4. Have enough centers for the number of children in your care and enough materials within the centers so that children are engaged and not continually arguing over materials.
5. Consider the size of centers and the location of centers. For example, it is best to avoid having a center that is likely to have a high level of activity in it (e.g., block center, dramatic play) located close to a center where the teacher wants quieter activities (e.g., listening centers, computer, etc.) to occur.

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6. Use developmentally appropriate and creative ways to limit the number of children in centers if this is necessary (e.g., laminated cards containing children's names that can be moved into pockets at the center as opposed to a sign saying "2 children only").
7. Organize materials and keep them in appropriate places, taking into consideration children's development of independence skills.
8. Have centers organized and ready to go when children arrive.

E. Slide 16: Creating Meaningful and Engaging Learning Centers. Learning centers need to be meaningful, engaging, and interesting to children.

1. Materials within centers need to be meaningful and relevant to children's needs, interests, and lives (e.g., within the dramatic play area, materials that are culturally appropriate should be available; the pictures on puzzles and in the classroom library should reflect the diversity within your community, etc.). There should be culturally meaningful activities and materials (e.g., within the typical water table, you can alternate materials that have a similar consistency such as beans, rice, pasta, and potatoes). Also, consider using labels in multiple languages around the classroom.
2. Centers need to be highly engaging and interesting to children. Build on children's interests by including materials and activities that children enjoy or express an interest in. If children all tend to stay in one or two centers, that preference would suggest that the other centers are not engaging or interesting to children.
3. Provide a variety of materials in each center. For example, related books can be put in every center (e.g., books on animals can be placed in the reading center; magazines can be placed in the dramatic play area that is designed as a veterinarian's office; a book about the post office can be placed in the writing center). Writing utensils and paper also can



(Partner Activity) Inventory of Practices & Action Plan



VII. Schedules, Routines, and Transitions (60 minutes)



be in a variety of centers (e.g., they can be in the dramatic play area, the writing center, or near the computers). Be creative.

4. Change the materials or themes in centers on a regular basis. The post office set up in the dramatic play area might be interesting and engaging at the beginning of the year but will be old and uninteresting if still there in the spring. Listen to what children are talking about. Create centers that build on their interests. Rotate materials within a center so that the same materials are not out all year. Let children help you choose the materials.

F. Slide 17. Activity: Classroom Arrangement and Design

1. With a partner, sketch a classroom or other environment/setting. Review item 3 on the *Inventory* and consider what changes need to be made in the environment based on what they heard or what is in the *Inventory*.
2. Redraw the environment, and then share major changes with other participants at the table.

A. Slide 18. Talk about how schedules should be designed to promote child engagement. As we have talked about earlier, when children are engaged with a material, a peer, or an adult, they are less likely to be engaging in challenging behavior. Some of the things that will keep them engaged are:

1. Minimizing the number of transitions.
2. Balancing the activities so there is a mix of small group and large group activities and a mix of teacher-directed and child-directed activities.
3. Teaching children the routine: We can't expect children to follow the routine if we don't teach it to them. For children new to a setting, schedules and routines provide some security and a sense of what

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comes next, children are able to anticipate what will happen, and thus feel more secure. This is especially important for children whose primary language differs from that spoken in the classroom.

B. Talk about different ways you can teach children to follow routines or schedules.

1. Teach it during circle using visual aids that all children understand.
2. Reinforce it as it happens.
3. Provide individual instruction to children who need more assistance, and use individualized picture schedules.
4. Be consistent with your schedule and routines. Children will learn to follow a classroom schedule if it is implemented consistently.
5. Post your schedule visually, and refer to it frequently throughout the day so children learn what will happen next.
6. When changes are necessary, prepare children for those changes. You can prepare children by making announcements at opening circle, using visual prompts on a posted schedule indicating a change (e.g., a stop sign on top of an activity that is not going to happen as planned), and reminding children about the changes as often as possible.

C. Slide 19. Another issue that is closely related to schedules and routines is transition. Challenging behaviors often occur during transitions, especially when all children are expected to do the same thing at the same time and then end up with time where they have nothing to do. We know from research that children spend a large amount of their preschool day making transitions between activities. So, our goal should be to:

1. Minimize the number of transitions that children have during the day.

(continued)

2. Plan transitions such that there is a minimal amount of time spent in transition and that children are highly engaged as much as possible during the transition.
- D.** Give participants some suggestions about how to accomplish this goal.
1. Give children a warning before a transition occurs.
 2. Minimize those transitions during which every child has to do the same thing at the same time (Does every child have to go to the bathroom at the same time? Could snack be part of center time?). Structure the transition so that children have something to do while they are waiting (e.g., finger plays, songs, guessing games). Provide some children with chores, and give children helping roles during transitions (e.g., handing out the paper towels, holding the door, helping a friend).
 3. Teach children about the expectations for transitions. This instruction can occur during a group time and should be reinforced throughout the day.
 4. Individualize the instruction and cues provided to children. Some children will make the transition with a minimal amount of support, while others may need a picture schedule, verbal prompt, adult assistance, or some other type of cue.
- E.** It is important to provide visual cues and reminders for young children—especially young children with special needs and children for whom English is their second language. Visual cues and reminders are useful to help children learn the routines of the classroom, the expectations or “classroom rules,” and to help children anticipate making transitions between activities and to assist children in knowing what to do during these transitions.

20-28

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(Group Activity)



Inventory of
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F. As adults, we use visual cues constantly. For example, (1) we look at our watches or the clock to see when a boring meeting will end or when it is time for lunch; (2) when we go into a new building, we look at signs to find places we need to go such as the elevator, restroom, or location of a conference room; and (3) when we go to vote, we look at the visual directions provided to see how to use the voting machine (and we pray that it will work!).

G. Slides 20-28. Show multiple examples of visual reminders or cues of rules, routines, and for transitions (nine examples are included). You can also bring examples of actual posters, signs, etc., that teachers use in their classrooms. Ask participants whether they have any other suggestions of visual supports or reminders that they have used.

H. Slide 29: Schedule Activity

1. Have each table write on a piece of chart paper a schedule for a preschool classroom (a schedule from one of the participant's classrooms or program).
2. Then have all participants discuss what changes might need to be made in the schedule to either increase engagement or prevent challenging behaviors.
3. Encourage them to consider the following questions:
 - (1) Are there too many large group activities?
 - (2) Is there a balance of large and small group activities?
 - (3) Are there too many transitions?
 - (4) Could some transitions be eliminated or the length be decreased?
 - (5) Could there be fewer whole group transitions?
 - (6) Is the length of activities appropriate (neither too long nor too short)?
4. Brainstorm ideas for change. Encourage participants to complete the *Action Plan* related to strategies that they might focus on when they get back to their programs.
5. If time permits, have a few people share their ideas for change with the large group.

VIII. Planning Activities that Promote Engagement (45 minutes)

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As we talked about above, one of the keys to preventing challenging behaviors is to ensure that children are engaged with activities, peers, or adults. We have already talked about how to build relationships with children on an individual basis. You should also plan activities in ways that will promote engagement. There are two keys to this: (1) using both small and large group activities and (2) ensuring that activities are designed and adapted so that all children can participate in a meaningful way.

A. Large Group Activities. One of the common problems that teachers talk about is large group activity. Teachers have difficulty keeping all children interested throughout circle time. Give participants some suggestions about how they can increase the likelihood that all children will be engaged. (Slide 30). This can be talked about in two parts.

1. Planning the activity

- a. Consider the length of time needed for circle time relative to the children's ages and to the types of activities that will occur during the large group time.
- b. Have a purpose and be clear about what it is you want children to learn during this time.
- c. Don't do the same thing every day. For example, you can teach concepts during large group in a variety of ways (e.g., puppets, role play, stories, songs, visual aids, discussion). Vary these activities from day to day.
- d. Don't just do circle to do circle, but use it as a time to teach new things. This is an especially good time to teach children social skills and to support children's emotional development. Explain that we will be talking about this point later.

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(video clips
1.2 & 1.3)



(video clip 1.3)

2. Implementing the activity

- a. Make sure children have opportunities to be involved (e.g., everyone holds a character from the story, children do things with partners).
- b. Assign jobs for children who have a particularly difficult time during circle (e.g., book holder, page turner).
- c. Vary the way you talk and the intonation of your voice.
- d. Have children help lead activities.
- e. Pay attention to children's behavior; remember that if they are wiggling and wandering away, the activity is probably not interesting to them.

B. Slide 31: Activity. Show video clips 1.2 and 1.3; Circle Time.

1. **Observe video clip 1.2** (*Circle Time Activity; Children Not Engaged*).
 - a. Have participants discuss with other participants at their table the following questions after they watch the videotaped segment. Are the children engaged? What tells you that they are? Describe what the teacher is doing currently and what she might do to improve the children's engagement in the activity.
 - b. Point out things such as the teacher sitting in a chair "above" the children rather than on their level, no props (e.g., photos, manipulatives, etc.) are used that could help engage children, etc.
2. **Observe video clip 1.3** (*Circle Time Activity; Children Engaged*).
 - a. Have each table of participants discuss this video clip with the following questions in mind. Are the children engaged?

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- b. What evidence suggests that they are engaged?
- c. What is the teacher doing that engages them?
- d. What is she doing that is different from the first video clip?
- e. What other strategies could the teacher do to help keep the children even more engaged in either video clip?

C. Slide 32: Small Group Activities. Talk about the importance of using small group activities both in terms of giving more individualized time to children and as an opportunity for skill building. Then talk about how to implement small group activities effectively.

1. Talk about being clear about the purpose and outcomes of the activity. What is it you want children to learn, and are you structuring the activity so that it meets the needs of each of the children involved? Although small group activities are often more teacher directed, they do not have to be didactic (one-on-one). They can involve games, stories, discussion, projects, etc.
2. Small groups also provide a great opportunity to use peers as models. One peer can model a skill or behavior you are trying to teach another child. However, it is also important to ensure that all children participate in a way that is meaningful and relevant to their goals and needs.
3. Provide descriptive feedback related to appropriate behavior to children throughout the activity.

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D. Slide 33: Adaptations and Modifications. Adaptations and modifications will be key to ensuring that all children can participate in a meaningful way throughout the day.

1. There are many different ways to modify or adapt activities to ensure participation by all children. Some suggestions are listed on this slide.

2. The point to make here is that it is important to not assume that all children can do things in the same way.
 3. Children might not be following the routine, making transitions as you would want them to, or engaging in activities for a variety of reasons, including the fact that they don't understand the expectations, they can't physically engage, etc. However, simple modifications to activities or routines might make it possible for them to engage.
 4. Explain that we have described some of these already, but then give some examples of each (tell participants that this information comes from "Building Blocks," (Sandall & Schwartz, 2002) which is included in their reference list).
 5. It would be good for trainers to think up some additional adaptations and modifications that they have done and how they relate to specific behaviors. There are lots of concrete examples in "Building Blocks."
- E. Environmental Support.** Provide individual workspaces by using trays, taping off areas to help children learn how to keep materials within a certain area, having a seating arrangement so that children who need help are sitting next to children who can give them that help, providing visual supports and reminders as described above.
- F. Materials Adaptations.** Build up the grasp of markers and other tools to make it easier for children with disabilities to use the materials; glue a small piece of Styrofoam to each page of a book to make it easier to turn the pages.
- G. Simplify the Activity.** Break down the activity into small, more manageable parts; modify the activity so there are fewer steps.
- H. Use Child Preferences.** Let the child pick the song or book during story time; let the child pick a friend to help him/her.

IX. Giving Directions (10 minutes)



- I. Special Equipment. Use a wagon to help a child with physical disabilities go long distances within the school building; use a prone stander so a child can participate in activities with his peers; use adaptive scissors.
- J. Adult Support. Model, praise, and encourage.
- K. Peer Support. Have peers model appropriate behaviors and skills; have peers be helpers for children who need assistance.

Research has shown that preschool children have high rates of not following teacher directions. While this might be because of the child's characteristics, it might also be because of the way teachers give directions. Directions that are stated negatively ("why haven't you put up the toys") or directions that are stated as questions ("can you help me put up the toys?") may confuse children or make them less likely to comply with the direction. Here are some strategies that can be used to increase the likelihood that children will follow teacher directions. **(Slide 34)**

- 1. Make sure you have the children's attention before you give the direction.** Many times, the child may not even hear the direction or realize the direction is being given to him. The teacher can begin a direction to the whole class by saying "I need everyone to listen" or the teacher can begin a direction to an individual child by tapping her on the shoulder or saying her name.
- 2. Minimize the number of directions given to children.** Research shows that teachers give a very high number of directions, many of which they do not follow through with. It is important to give only directions that you want the child to comply with, give directions in a positive way that tells the child specifically what to do, and give the child time to respond before giving another direction. Also, it is important to follow through if the child does not follow the direction.
- 3. Individualize the way directions are given.** Some children may respond well to verbal direction, while others may need physical prompts or pictorial prompts to follow the direction.

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4. **Give clear directions.** Tell the child exactly what you want her to do. Avoid directions that are vague such as “be careful” or “settle down.” These directions could be substituted with “hold on to the railing” or “sit quietly.”
5. **Slide 35. Give directions that are positive.** Maintain a positive tone when you give directions.
6. **Give children the opportunity to respond to a direction.** Avoid giving multiple directions at one time without giving the child a chance to respond and without acknowledging the child for responding.
7. **When appropriate, give the child choices and options for following directions.** Sometimes it is important that children follow a direction in a specific way but other times, it is ok to give the child some options. For example, during a transition time, the teacher might say “you need to sit quietly, you can get either a book or you can draw a picture.”
8. **Follow through with positive acknowledgment of children’s behavior.** It is important that children understand when they are following directions.

X. Following Rules and Directions

(15 minutes)

36

- A. **Slide 36.** Emphasize that preschool settings need to have a few simple rules.
 1. Ask participants why having rules is important.
 2. Describe how there are general guidelines about rules, and ask participants to share what they think these guidelines are (e.g., stated positively, fewer than five, developmentally appropriate, posted visually, clear and concise).
 3. Ask participants why it is a good idea to have children involved in developing rules (e.g., they will understand them better, provides ownership, builds a learning opportunity, etc.).

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B. Slide 37. Present some ways to have children involved in developing the rules. For example,

1. Children can be involved in generating classroom rules (it will be important that teachers have had some time to reinforce at high rates those behaviors they would like to see so that children have an idea of what the classroom expectations are).
2. Children can help decide what visuals to put on posters around the room to help remind themselves of classroom rules.
3. Children can decorate a rules poster.

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C. Slide 38. Discuss what general behaviors or topics rules should address (e.g., noise level; movement; interactions with adults, children, and materials).

1. Talk about how you can't expect children to follow the rules without teaching them.
2. Explain how rules can be taught during circle time and reinforced in ongoing contexts.
3. As you are teaching rules, you can connect them to children's ongoing behavior (e.g., "Who has been a super friend; tell me what you did?" "Yes, I saw Corrine sharing the glue with Ed at the art table").

39



(Group Activity)



D. Slide 39: Rules Activity

1. Have small groups work to develop a list of three to five rules for their setting.
2. If they have rules already, have them list them and check them against the criteria.
3. Ask participants to brainstorm some fun ways they can remind and reinforce the rules in the setting. List these on flipchart paper.



(Group Activity)

XI. Ignoring / Redirecting

(30 minutes)

(Based on the work of
Carolyn Webster-Stratton)



4. Present additional ideas to reinforce classroom rules (Slide 40).
 - a. **Rules Bingo:** Put symbols of rules on bingo cards and have children play bingo.
 - b. **Big Book of School Rules:** Using large pieces of paper, children can help make pictures and pages about each rule, laminate the pages, and turn the pages into a big book.
 - c. **Home Rules:** Children draw a picture of their home and take it home with them with some blank circles. Children and parents write their home rules on the circles, tape them to the picture of their home, and send it back to school.
 - d. **Rules Charades:** Have a child model a rule, and have the other children guess what rule they are modeling.

Even when you have done all the things we have just talked about, some children will engage in challenging behavior. When this occurs, consider approaches such as ignoring or redirecting.

Ignoring misbehavior (Slide 41-42):

- Is one of the most effective techniques that can be used with students.
- Maintains positive teacher-student relationships based on respect rather than fear (adults show children that they can maintain self-control in the face of anger and conflict)
- Requires that adults give attention for positive behaviors as opposed to the negative ones.
- Can be a powerful tool for changing behavior since access to attention is such a positive thing for children.
- Will only be effective with students who desire teacher attention. Therefore, it is important that the teacher builds a positive relationship with the student first in order for ignoring to be effective (remember the base of the pyramid).
- Is probably the hardest teaching strategy for teachers to carry out.
- Is unnatural—our natural tendency is to attend to students who are being disruptive.

To use ignoring (Slide 43):

- Identify the specific behaviors you want to focus on. Select only 1-2 behaviors to systematically ignore at any given time. Limiting the number of behaviors will aid in being consistent so that each time the behavior occurs, you can realistically ignore it. Note that ignoring **is not appropriate for** behaviors that are verbally abusive or physically destructive to children, themselves, other people, or property (e.g., biting, non-compliance, stealing, lying).
- It is critical to plan carefully to provide attention and praise to the prosocial behaviors that are the opposite of the one you are ignoring (e.g., sharing versus grabbing toys). If children receive positive feedback and encouragement for the prosocial behaviors, they will learn that it is more beneficial to behave appropriately than inappropriately.
- Neutralize your reaction to what the student is doing (e.g., make your facial expression neutral, avoid eye contact, stop all discussions with the student, turn away from the student ...unless safety is an issue). Distract yourself by talking with another child, or by getting involved in something else.
- As soon as the student begins to behave appropriately, quickly return your attention by acknowledging appropriate behavior, or by providing a distraction or suggestion for an alternative, more appropriate behavior. For example, Melinda begins whining when told she cannot watch a video. Her mom ignores her until she stops whining and then asks Melinda if she wants to help feed the family dog and cat.
- Teach other students to ignore inappropriate behaviors. It might be necessary to practice or role-play with peers ahead of time so they know what behaviors to ignore and what it means to ignore a friend's tantrum, inappropriate language, etc.

44

When you ignore (Slide 44):

- Most children will initially react to ignoring with an increase in the challenging behavior to see if they can recruit the adult's attention. Thus, the behavior will usually get worse when you start to ignore it BUT realize that this is an indication that the strategy is working.
- Be prepared to wait out the testing period for if you give in, then students will learn that engaging in challenging behavior is an effective way to get what they want.
- Remember that **consistency** is the key to using ignoring!

45

Redirecting (Slide 45):

When children are withdrawn or off task, it is important that teachers do not ignore them. That can send a message that the teacher has low expectations for them or does not care. At these times, teacher should redirect distracted students, giving them opportunities to become involved in more productive activities.

46

Redirection (Slide 46):

- Can be nonverbal, verbal, or physical in nature (tap on the shoulder, clapping, singing, picture cues, verbal reminders that redirect students away from disruptive behaviors and back to routines)
- Should not be confrontational
- Should focus on the behavior you saw and provide specific feedback ("I saw you take that toy from Cameron. Can you give it back or should I help you?")

XII. Ongoing Monitoring and Positive Attention (15 minutes)

47

A. **Slide 47.** This slide presents the idea of "catching children being good." There are two important issues here.

1. Give children attention (e.g., verbal, nonverbal) when they are engaging in appropriate behaviors. Too often, we leave children alone when they are playing quietly or when things are going along smoothly in our early childhood settings.

48



(video clip 1.4)



(Handout 1.2)

XIII. Using Positive Feedback and Encouragement (30 minutes)

49

2. Adults need to monitor their own behavior to make sure they are spending more time using positive, descriptive language and less time giving directions or correcting inappropriate behavior.

B. Slide 48: Activity

1. Use the handout (*Positive Attention Handout 1.2*) for this activity. **Watch video clip 1.4** (*Positive Attention*) of large group activity, and count the number of times the teacher says positive things or uses positive nonverbal behaviors such as high fives, pats on the back, and handshakes.
 - a. Participants should be encouraged to jot down specific things that the teacher says or does.
 - b. After watching the videotape, engage participants in a large group discussion regarding what behaviors they saw and heard the teacher use.
2. Continue the discussion by asking participants for suggestions on how to keep teachers focused on the positive throughout the day. Examples might include having visual cues posted in the room as reminders (e.g., smiley faces, key words that trigger you to remember to praise).
3. Have participants return to their *Action Plan* and note ways they are going to help remind themselves and other adults within their settings to provide attention to children when they are engaged in appropriate behavior. How can they “up the ratio of catching children being good?”

A. Slide 49. Describe the four major principles of using positive feedback and encouragement. Positive feedback and encouragement should be:

1. **Contingent on appropriate behavior.** For example, when Cameron hangs his coat in his cubby, you praise him. When you observe Patrick washing his hands before lunch, you give him positive descriptive feedback with a “thumbs up.”

2. **Descriptive.** Rather than just saying “good job” or “thanks,” you provide a brief description of the behavior that you just observed. This feedback helps children know exactly what the behavior is that you would like to see repeated. For example, you might say, “Thanks for hanging up your coat all by yourself, Cameron. You sure are getting big.” “Wow, Patrick. You just washed your hands all by yourself without Ms. Ellie or me even telling you to do it.”
3. **Conveyed with enthusiasm.** Tone of voice, facial expressions, being down on a child’s level, and the timeliness of when the positive feedback is delivered are all variables that affect the spirit in which positive feedback is accepted.
 - a. Children inherently like to please adults, and as we know, they will typically do many things to gain adults’ attention (yes, the good and even the not-so-good behaviors!).
 - b. Our enthusiasm when we deliver feedback conveys to young children that we are paying attention to them, that their behavior matters to us, and that we celebrate their accomplishments.
 - c. Think of the number of times you have heard a young child say, “Teacher, I did it!!!” It makes us smile just remembering the enthusiasm of young children when they have mastered a new skill or tried something that they have never done before.
4. **Contingent on effort.** Children need to be encouraged for their efforts as well as their successes. For example, Maggie, a child with special needs in your classroom, who really struggles with self-help skills, would be encouraged to try and put her shoes on, even if it means just getting her toes inside the shoes.

B. Slide 50. Talk about how there are different ways to give encouragement and feedback beyond the simple “good job.” Encourage participants to think both about other ways to verbally give praise and encouragement but also ways to give nonverbal feedback and encouragement.



(Handout 1.3)



1. Refer to **Handout 1.3** titled *Some Starters for Giving Positive Feedback and Encouragement* (e.g., “You are so good at...” etc.). As they read through the suggestions, participants should mark a few that they particularly like and plan on using when they return to their early childhood settings.
 2. Giving nonverbal feedback/acknowledgment or signs of appreciation is an important strategy that we often overlook. Providing children with “warm fuzzies” might include hugs, high fives, winks, and thumbs-ups. Have participants think of nonverbal ways that they typically provide feedback to young children. Have the group generate a list of these nonverbal behaviors and compile them on chart paper.
- C.** We do need to remember that types of positive feedback and encouragement should be individualized for each child. For example, some children may not feel comfortable being encouraged in front of a group, while others may really like to be encouraged in front of a group of peers. We have to look at the individual preferences of children. There also may be cultural variations on what is typical and/or acceptable. Share an example (such as the following), noting the individual differences of children.
1. Relate the example of Kunal, a 4-year-old boy who struggled to be independent and was extremely persistent. After trying for many minutes to complete a task such as riding his bike up a slight incline and numerous slips backwards, he would get angry at his Mom and Dad if they praised his efforts. He would even go so far as to say, “Don’t say ‘You did it!’” or if they patted his back as he finally peddled away, he would cry out, “No, don’t pat me.” For Kunal, the challenge, and then ultimate success, although stressful and frustrating at times, was rewarding enough at that moment. His parents learned that, for him, bringing up these successes later (e.g., at bedtime when talking about the day, or hugging him and telling him how proud they were that he was learning to ride his bike so well) was a better strategy for providing positive feedback on Kunal’s efforts.

D. Encourage other adults and peers to use positive feedback and encouragement. Point out to participants that this idea is a real key to increasing children's appropriate behaviors! The impact of positive feedback and encouragement can be increased by ensuring that children are encouraged from multiple sources (e.g., parents, other teachers, and peers). Encouragement from more than one person is more likely to have a positive impact on children's behavior. Consider the following examples of how the impact can be increased for individual children.

1. Kendall is acknowledged by his teacher at school and given a certificate about his good behavior that is attached to his coat. The bus driver acknowledges him as Kendall gets on the bus to head home, and then both of his parents praise him at home. By using this strategy of sending home a complimentary note, his teacher has helped Kendall receive three pieces of information about his behavior with one simple note (Mom, Dad, and the bus driver have all commented on his great sharing today).
2. Outside another Head Start classroom, Shannon (a child with Down syndrome) is complimented in front of her Mom when the Mom arrives to pick Shannon up at the end of the day. The teacher mentions that Shannon had such a great day because she "used her words to ask for more crackers and juice during snack" that day. Hearing this compliment, Mom is likely to mention it again to Shannon as they drive home, and she might even mention it to Grandma when they arrive at the grandparents' house for dinner that evening.
3. If children repeatedly hear you thank them when they have assisted in cleaning up a center, helped wipe off the snack table, or assisted in gathering all the backpacks, they are likely to give one another compliments when a peer helps them with a backpack or takes part in gathering toys together.



Inventory of Practices & Action Plan



(Handout 1.4)

XIV. Pulling It All Together: Summary and Completion of Action Plan (45 minutes)



Inventory of Practices & Action Plan

E. Slide 51. With a partner, have participants list three to five behaviors that they would like to see more of in their classrooms (partners do not have to end up with the same list but rather through discussion develop their own lists of behaviors to target). This list becomes the behaviors participants should encourage at high rates when they return to their early childhood settings. Have participants refer to their *Action Plan* and add these behaviors that they hope to target.

F. Slide 52 and Handout 1.4 (Sample Certificate). Show a sample of a certificate that teachers might use to send notes home about a child's appropriate behaviors.

A. Slide 53. Highlight the four major messages presented today.

1. The first and most important thing that we can do is to build positive relationships with every child and family (as well as with the other professionals who work with the child and his/her family).
2. Focus on prevention and teaching appropriate skills (strategies we have discussed during this session such as looking closely at the physical environment, considering the schedules/routines/transitions/rules within your setting, and forms and frequency of positive feedback/encouragement used).
3. Promoting social emotional development is not easy. There are no quick fixes to challenging behavior.
4. Promoting children's social emotional development requires a comprehensive approach that includes building relationships, evaluating our own classrooms and behaviors, and Teaching.

B. Action Planning Activity. Have participants complete their *Action Plan Form*, filling in the grid with ideas of changes they want to make in their early childhood settings as a result of today's session, as well as methods for evaluating their progress in making these changes. Ask if anyone is willing to share some ideas

that they hope to implement “back home.” Encourage a few participants to share ideas gleaned from today’s session.

C. Answer any final questions.

1. Thank participants for their input and attention.
2. Have participants complete the evaluations.

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