Including Children with Challenging Behavior in the Preschool Classroom

Presented by:
Michelle Mead & Denise Bouyer-Hargrove
Today’s Objectives

- Define challenging behavior and its impact.

- Describe an approach to understand why children engage in challenging behavior.

- Identify strategies that will decrease challenging behavior and improve the quality of life for all children in the preschool classroom.
What is Challenging Behavior?

• Persistent pattern of behavior, or perception of behavior
• Interferes with or risk of interfering with
  – Optimal learning
  – Engagement in pro-social interactions
• Defined on the basis of its effects
• Manifests in a variety of ways
  – Aggression toward self, others, and things
  – Oppositional behavior, looks like avoiding tasks, refusal to comply
  – Repetitive movements, activities that distract the child and may appear to have no purpose
  – Dropping to the ground
  – Yelling, screaming, crying, whining
  – Others???
Why Behavior Happens?

Two Major Functions of Behavior

Most all behaviors occur for a reason. Behavior has two major functions/purposes: either to GET something or to GET AWAY from something.

Take a look at the following chart. Try to think of several behaviors you have encountered or some of your own behavior. Are you surprised that they all fit somewhere in the chart?
Impact of Challenging Behavior

• About 1/3 of preschool age children engage in persistent patterns of challenging behavior.

• Preschool teachers consistently report that one of their biggest concerns is dealing with challenging behavior.
  – Rising rates of preschool expulsion
  – Expulsion is 3 times more likely in preschool than grades K – 12

• Challenging behavior in early childhood years is predictive of future challenges
  – School failure and lower school attendance
  – Peer rejection
  – Punitive interactions with authority figures
  – Involvement with criminal justice system

Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children (TACSEI)
What Do We Want Children to Do Instead?

• Build social-emotional skills that have been identified as essential for success in school:
  – Ability to get along with others
  – Follow directions
  – Identify and regulate emotions and behavior
  – Effectively problem solve to resolve conflict
  – Persist at a task
  – Engage in social conversation and cooperative play
  – Accurately interpret other’s emotions and behavior
  – Positively assess self and others
  – Willingness to try new things

Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children (TACSEI)
What are We Teaching?

• Challenging behavior tends to draw more attention
• It takes attention and time away from those following the rules
• On average in school settings, the majority of kids are doing the right thing and a few are not
  – There are 10 kids in a class. 7 are sitting in their seats on task. 3 are out of their seats off task. Teacher is focused on getting the 3 kids to sit and do their work. What about the other 7 kids?
Increasing Behaviors We Want to See

- Reinforcement increases desired behaviors
- Positive reinforcement adds something desirable
  - Praise
  - Tangible rewards (i.e., stickers)
- Negative reinforcement takes away something unpleasant
  - Removes an undesirable task/demand
  - Removes an undesirable situation
- Be very conscious of what behaviors you are reinforcing
Shift Toward Prevention: The Best Intervention

• Taking a proactive, positive approach
• Emphasis on changing things within our control BEFORE behavior would typically happen
  – Aspects of the environment
  – Interactions with children (Are you using the 3:1 rule?)
  – More and better quality attention on the positive behaviors
• Less reliance on consequences
• If prevented, it doesn’t have to be responded to
Redefining Our Roles

• Including children with challenging behavior in the classroom requires a shift in perspective and practice.

• See behavior as an attempt to communicate a message about unmet needs.

• See children with challenging behavior as in need of being taught skills, not willfully disobedient.

• See selves as facilitators of social-emotional development, not behavior managers.
Importance of Social Emotional Screening

• Use validated screening instruments that can identify strengths as well as possible social-emotional areas of need in infants and toddlers

• Early identification of young children with social emotional needs is key

• Understanding the function of behavior
An Approach to Address Challenging Behavior
The CSEFEL Pyramid Model: Promoting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children

[Assessment-based interventions result in individualized behavior support plans.]

- Few Children
- Children At-Risk
- All Children

Universal Promotion
Nurturing and Responsive Relationships
High Quality Supportive Environments
Targeted Social Emotional Supports
Intensive Intervention
Treatment

Effective Workforce

Systematic approaches to teaching social skills can have a preventive and remedial effect.

Supportive responsive relationships among adults and children is an essential component to promote healthy social emotional development.

High Quality early childhood environments promote positive outcomes for all children.

Systems and policies promote and sustain the use of evidence-based practices.
“The Pyramid Model is not a curriculum or intervention; rather, it is a framework for how a program and partitions can operate to support the social emotional needs of all children” (DEC).
Universal Tier Promotion of Positive Behavior
(CSEFEL)

Where Are We?

Module 1: Social Emotional Development within the Context of Relationships
Universal Tier Intervention – Supports For All

- Building Positive Relationships
- Designing Supportive Environments
- Social Emotional Teaching Strategies
- Individualized Intensive Interventions

RUTGERS

The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities
New Jersey’s University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service
“Every child needs 1 person who’s crazy about him”

Uri Bronfenbrenner
Building Relationships & Supportive Environments
(CSEFEL)
Teaching Children Expectations (CSEFEL)
Secondary Tier – Support for Those at Risk

The Teaching Pyramid

- Building Positive Relationships
- Designing Supportive Environments
- Social Emotional Teaching Strategies
- Individualized Intensive Interventions
- (PBS)
- Few children
- Children at-risk
- All children
Secondary Tier – Social Emotional Teaching Strategies – Skill Teaching (CSEFEL)

• **Friendship Skills**

**Sharing**

• Rationale
• Describe skill
  – Child has materials
  – Offers or responds to request from peer for materials
• Demonstrate
  – Right way
  – Wrong way
• Practice
• Promote
Problem Solving Steps (CSEFEL)

Step 1: What is my problem?

Step 2: Think, think, think of some solutions.

Step 3: What would happen?

Step 4: Give it a try!

Would it be safe?
Would it be fair?
How would everyone feel?
Tertiary Tier – Intensive Intervention (PBS)

The Teaching Pyramid

- Building Positive Relationships
- Designing Supportive Environments
- Social Emotional Teaching Strategies
- Few children
- Children at-risk
- All Children

(PBS) Individualized Intensive Interventions
Tertiary Tier Promotion of Positive Behavior

• Individualized and intensive intervention

• Meant for the few children who are engaging in persistent patterns of problem behavior

• If you have more than 5% of your class who appear to be in need of this level of intervention, then this signifies a need to build up implementation of the 2 prior tiers.

• Uses the Positive Behavior Support (PBS) approach to understand why behavior is happening (function) and develop a plan to address it.
What is PBS?

• Comprehensive approach
  – Child centered
  – Mental Health
  – Behavioral

• Goals
  – To decrease rates of challenging behavior
  – To increase quality of life

• Process
  – Plan environmental supports
  – Assess by doing a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)
  – Plan interventions to prevent the behavior
  – Educate on prosocial skills to meet needs instead of problem behavior
  – Replace the problem behavior with consistent practice of new skills and reinforce replacement behaviors
There Are Many Variables to Explore (CSEFEL)

Interactions
Communication to the child, Emotional support, Attachment...

Health
Trauma, Illness, Stamina, Medication...

Play
Toys, Level of play, Opportunities, Choice, Expectations...

Learning Environment
Schedules, Room arrangement, Materials, Adaptations, Resources, Predictability...

Home & Family
Routines, Resources, Siblings, Environment, Respite, Predictability, Extended family...

Instruction
Transitions, Cues, Prompts, Supports, Accommodations...

Outings/Events
Places family goes, Activities...

Friends
Shared interests & experiences, Relationships...

Routine, Resources, Siblings, Environment, Respite, Predictability, Extended family...
Behavior Basics

Setting Events – Establishing Operations
What sets the behavior up

Antecedents
What sets Behavior off

Behavior

Consequences
What pays Behavior off
Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)
FBA Team Process

• Establish observable, measurable definition of the behavior.
• Review records to gather a history & awareness of life challenges
  – Change in living situations
  – Change in caregivers
  – Change in health status
  – Exposure to any traumatic events
• Functional Assessment Interview (FAI) form.
• Direct observation. Antecedent -Behavior-Consequence (ABC) data
• Look for patterns in the data to help determine the function
  • When, where, with who the child typically manifests the behavior
  • What typically happens right before and right after the behavior
  • What is typically going on when the child isn’t engaging in the challenging behavior that is working to support positive behavior
• Develop a Hypothesis Statement detailing the sequence of elements involved in the behavior and states the function
### Hypothesis Statement Example - Jake

| Something sets me up  
(setting event) | Something sets me off  
antecedent) | So I  
behavior) | And I Get/Avoid  
(consequence) |
|------------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|
| • Engaged in preferred activities at home and school  
• With others around  
• Transition times  
• Moved into a smaller home recently. Gave away a lot of things. | • A child or adult attempts to take me away from something I like and move me onto something else that I don’t like. | • Scream  
• Bite  
• Hit  
• Pinch | • Everyone backs off and leaves me alone  
• I get to avoid doing something I don’t want to do. |

Function:  
Attention  
\[ \text{Escape} \]  
Tangible  
Sensory
Develop a Behavior Support Plan (BSP)

- Strategies based on the function of the behavior.
- Critical elements to include
  - Prevention strategies that address two areas
    - Setting Events
    - Antecedents
  - Skills you will teach that will replace the challenging behavior
    - Should meet child’s needs (function of behavior)
    - Prosocial ways to get that need met
    - Communication Skills, Self-Skills, Social Skills
  - Response Plan
    - What do you do when you aren’t able to prevent the challenging behavior
    - Minimize attention to challenging behavior & maintain everyone’s safety
    - Everyone in the room needs to know their role with implementing the plan
### Hypothesis Based BSP Strategies-Jake

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Something sets me up (setting event)</th>
<th>Something sets me off (antecedent)</th>
<th>So I (behavior)</th>
<th>And I Get/Avoid (consequence)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Engaged in preferred activities at home and school  
  • With others around  
  • Transition times  
  • Moved into a smaller home recently. Gave away a lot of things. | • A child or adult attempts to take me away from something I like doing and move onto something else that I don’t like. | • Scream  
  • Bite  
  • Hit  
  • Pinch | • Everyone backs off and leaves me alone  
  • I get to avoid doing something I don’t want to do. |

**Function:** Attention  
**X** - Escape  
Tangible  
Sensory

| • Classroom picture schedule. Allow times kids choose activities.  
• Write Jake a social story about his move. Include pics.  
• Lessons (using books, video, discussion) on moving & positive ways to cope. | • Use a picture or other nonverbal cue (i.e., bell) as a signal  
• Provide verbal countdown and/or timer/song to help prepare.  
• Get Jake involved with doing these things. | • Teach using his words. Use a script in form of Social Story.  
• Teach checking visual reminders of what to do instead  
• Teach negotiation skills /role play to practice Ex: Ask to bring transition item | • High quality, abundant praise to those following directions.  
• Give choice to bring item from previous activity into new one  
• Guide to an area of classroom where everyone can stay safe. Ex: Calm down space |
Resources

• New Jersey’s Pyramid Model Implementation, Montclair State University
• Professional Impact NJ, www.pinjregistry.org
• New Jersey Inclusive Child Care Project at SPAN
• Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children (TACSEI) http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/
• The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/index.html
• New Jersey Positive Behavior Support in Schools (NJ PBSIS) http://www.njpbs.org/
• Division for Early Childhood, http://www.dec-sped.org/
References


• DEC, Division For Early Childhood, [http://www.dec-sped.org/]


• Florida’s Positive Behavior Support Project

• Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children (TACSEI)
Thank you for joining us!

Please contact us with any further questions or concerns.

Michelle Mead, MA, LAC
Training & Consultation Specialist, NJ PBSIS Team
The Boggs Center, Rutgers-RWJ Medical School
335 George Street, Suite 3500, P.O. Box 2688
New Brunswick, NJ 08903-2688
Phone: (732) 235-6829
Email: Michelle.Mead@rutgers.edu
Website: http://rwjms.rutgers.edu/boggscenter/

Denise Bouyer Hargrove
Director, New Jersey Inclusive Child Care Project
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN)
35 Halsey Street, 4th Floor
Newark, N.J. 07102
Phone: (973) 642-8100, 1-800-654-7726 (SPAN)
Email: dbouyer@spannj.org
Website: www.spannj.org/njiiccp