

This webinar will begin shortly.

Thank you for your patience.

Best Practices for Supporting Educators to Address Children's Behaviors that Challenge Adults

Date: April 30, 2024

Time: 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Tony Thurmond, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Welcome and Introductions



Sarah Neville-Morgan
Deputy Superintendent
Opportunities for All Branch



Stephen Propheter
Director
Early Education Division



Shanna Birkholz-Vasquez,
Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) Implementation and Support Office Administrator

Why do Relationships Matter for Learning?

- When children have positive relationships with adults:
  - They feel safe and secure in their environment
  - They are able to try new things and explore

- Using information about the quality of teacher-child interactions can help enhance equity and ensure all children have access to quality learning opportunities and supportive relationships with their teachers.



Photo Credit: Kidango

Responsive Adult-Child Interactions

- Managing adult emotions
  - Ask yourself, what can you do in the moment instead to connect with the child rather than disconnect
- Creating a safe space
  - A soft calming space in the classroom, where children are safe to go and release strong feelings
- Acknowledging feelings
  - Reassures a child's connection with you by helping them feel understood in the moment
- Reflection
  - Reflect on how you manage your emotional triggers

Addressing Exclusionary Discipline Practices

- Addressing the use of exclusionary discipline is a long-standing priority of the CDE
- Sending children home limits their opportunities to learn, grow, and thrive
  - **High Rates of Suspension:** Nationally, children in state-funded preschool programs are expelled at 3 times the rate of students in K-12 (U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2016).
- Numerous resources are available through CDE to support school districts, schools, and individual educators

Racial and Gender Inequity in Suspension and Expulsion Rates

- Preschool **boys** are suspended and expelled much more often than preschool girls.
- **Black preschoolers** are 3.6 times as likely to receive out-of-school suspension as white preschoolers.
  - **Black boys** have the highest rates of suspension and expulsion.
  - **Black girls** are the only group of girls that are disproportionately suspended.
  - In 2019-2020, Black/African American Students made up 5.4 percent of public school students in California but compromised 15 percent of students who were suspended.
- **American Indian/Alaska Native boys** and **Multiracial boys** are also suspended and expelled at higher rates.

(US Department of Civil Rights 2016 report and 2017-18 Data)

Addressing Bias

- Creating Equitable Early Learning Environments for Young Boys of Color
- Addressing the bias of educators
  - Addressing the bias of educators is a complex process that requires self-awareness, examining your own bias and continuous effort.
- P-3 Ready Schools
  - Every school should be ready for the children that walk through their doors and their many diverse needs.



Photo Credit: Saint Vincent's Day Home, Oakland, CA

Introduction of
Orange County Department of Education



Catherine Darker
Coordinator, Early Learning



Dr. Elida Garcia
Administrator, Early and Expanded Learning

Role of Children's Development

- Interplay - looking at children's behavior also means looking at children's development
- Developmental stages and individual development



Factors that Influence Children's Development and Behavior

Relationships and Interactions	Play Experiences	Environment	Interactive and Physical Activity
			

Dynamic Process

- Addressing children's behavior is an ongoing process
- Avoid the "fix it" syndrome instead "strive for better results"
  - Jimmy Casas, *Culturize* (2017)
  - Leads to realistic expectations
  - Reduces burnout



Continuum of Support

- Behavioral supports change as children’s needs change over time
- Design tiered supports based on children's individual needs
- Tiered supports can be implemented across different learning settings
- National Center for Pyramid Model innovations (NCPMI)



Photo Credit: Fullerton College Lab School, Fullerton, CA

Shared Responsibility

- It takes a village to support children's needs
- Supports in place for
  - Student
  - Family
  - Teacher
  - Class community



Team Approach

- Structures in place for time and space to collaborate on regular basis
- Joint planning between teacher, support providers and family
- Shared knowledge of child development among the team
- Support strategies and tools are appropriate for children’s age and developmental needs

Changing the Narrative

- It is crucial to rethink our perspective on behavior.
- We should interpret behaviors that children display as challenges for us, the adults, rather than labeling the children themselves as challenging.
- The frequency, duration, and intensity of the behavior determines the level of support.

Building Relationships is Always the First Strategy

- The quality of adult–child relationships motivates children toward cooperation and responsibility.
- Children are motivated to cooperate with adult requests and standards partly because of their emotional attachments to those adults and their desire to maintain positive relationships with them. (California Preschool Curriculum Framework)
- What we model is what we get (Jimmy Casas, 2024).

Relationship Strategy: Incorporate the Child's Interests

If you notice a specific time of day when a child requires additional support:

1. Observe the child to identify their interests and sources of pleasure.
2. Intentionally incorporate activities that align with their interests during this time.



Photo Credit: Fullerton College Lab School, Fullerton, CA

Relationship Strategy: Peer Buddies

A peer buddy can assist a child who struggles with transitions, remembering rules, or needing peer attention.

1. Choose a peer buddy that follows instructions effectively, engages in conversations with other children, and possibly shares similar interests with the other child.
2. Set time limits, outline expectations, monitor play, and debrief afterward.



Photo Credit: Fullerton College Lab School, Fullerton, CA

All Behavior is Communicative

- Children lack the life experience necessary to clearly articulate their needs.
- Provide children with numerous opportunities to practice processing and expressing how they are feeling.
- Progress comes with practice.

Supporting the Expression of Emotions

- Children need consistent but diverse methods to fully express their emotions.
- We can facilitate their emotional release and help them answer the question, 'What can I **do** with my feelings?'.
- We should identify safe and acceptable ways for children to convey strong emotions, both in the classroom and at home.

Children with a Strong Foundation in Emotional Literacy…

- Are more focused
- Have greater academic achievement
- Are healthier
- Tolerate frustration better
- Get into fewer fights
- Engage in less destructive behavior
- Are less lonely
- Are less impulsive



Photo Credit: Harry and Grace Children's Center, Costa Mesa, CA

Emotional Literacy Strategy: Feelings Journal

Steps:

1. Spend one-on-one time with the child.
2. Encourage them to draw or write whatever inspires them.
3. Engage with them by asking about their journal entries and carefully record their responses.



Photo Credit: Lampson State Preschool, Orange, CA

The Child Learns To… (1)

- Explore their own feelings, understanding the reasons behind these emotions and how they affect their life.
- Monitor moments of intense emotions and identify the associated feelings.
- Articulate their emotions and feelings more clearly.

Emotional Literacy Strategy

- Exploring characters' experiences and emotions in stories, helps children relate to and empathize with the characters, gaining insight into their own feelings.

- Discussions about the characters' emotions can provide a safe space for children to express their own feelings and learn appropriate ways to manage them.

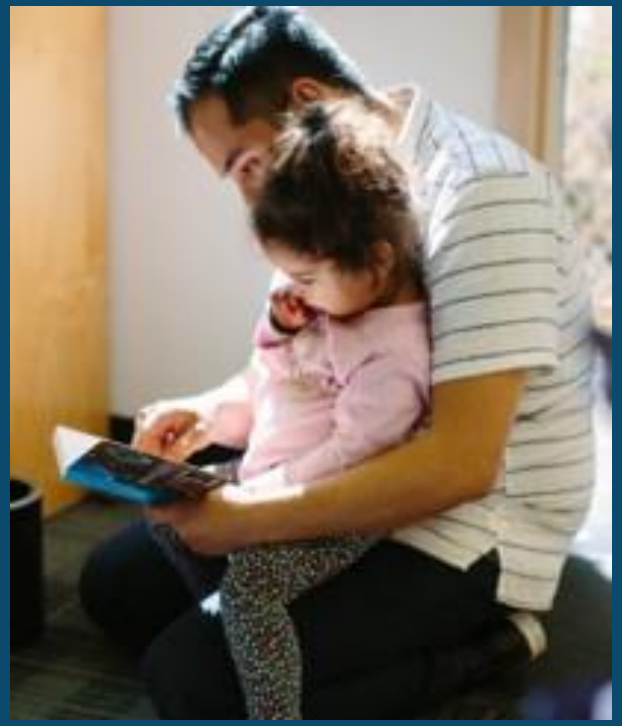


Photo Credit: Fullerton College Lab School, Fullerton, CA

Behavior: Aggression

What might this look like?

- Hitting or Pushing

What might the child be trying to communicate?

- "I feel frustrated"

What is the desired behavior?

- Expressing emotions in a healthy way

What is the adult concern?

- Someone will get hurt

If Intensity Escalates

- Focus on the safety of the child and other children in the classroom. Remove triggers and anything that can cause harm
- Stay close and stay calm. Wait until the child has started to de-escalate before intervening.
- Respond by remaining calm, helping the child identify their feelings, and give clear short instructions to calm down.

Expressing Emotions in a Healthy Way

It is important to help children learn:

- Any emotion is fine, it's what they do with that emotion that matters.
- How to identify their own feelings and express them in a safe way.

We need to intentionally teach, practice and model these skills for children to eventually master them.

Expressing Emotions Strategy: Push-a-Wall

1. Place hand cutouts on the wall and feet cutouts on the ground
2. Show children (when they are calm) how to push their hands against a wall and stomp their feet on the ground when they need to release energy and calm down.



Photo Credit: Salinas Family, Santa Ana, CA

The Child Learns To… (2)

- Release these emotions in a controlled manner, promoting self-regulation and a sense of relaxation and well-being.
- Channel their emotions into physical activities that don't pose a risk to themselves or their peers.
- Become more aware of their feelings and how they manifest in their bodies.

Behavior: Defiance

What might this look like?

- Refused to follow instructions

What might the child be trying to communicate?

- "I don't like or want to go to the next activity"

What is the desired behavior?

- Successful participation in activities

What is the adult concern?

- Not having control of the classroom
- Taking it "personal"

Participation Strategy: First/Then

1. Give the verbal instruction
2. Point to the visuals on the "first-then" board
3. Wait patiently
4. Acknowledge the child's effort when they follow the "first" prompt



Photo Credit: Preschool, Reveles Family Childcare, Riverside, CA

The Child Learns To… (3)

- Gain a sense of responsibility and accountability.
- Learn how to follow sequential instructions.
- Learn to delay gratification and wait for a desired activity, promoting patience and impulse control.

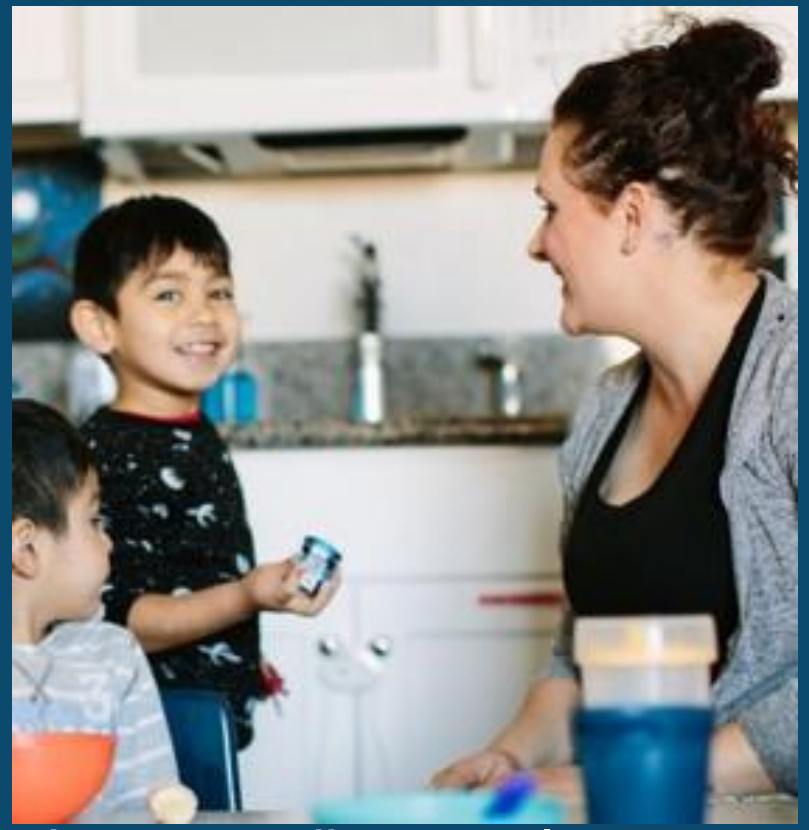


Photo Credit: Reveles Family Childcare, Riverside, CA

Participation Strategy: Visual Environmental Cues

- Use environmental cues such as timers, pictures, visuals, and sign-up sheets to provide clear, visual cues about the timing and sequence of activities, which can help children understand and anticipate transitions, reducing anxiety and resistance.



Photo Credit: Pacific Drive State Preschool, Fullerton, CA

Behavior: Conflict

What might this look like?

- Disagreements or arguing

What might the child be trying to communicate?

- “I’m still learning that others have different ideas”

What is the desired behavior?

- Solving problems, compromise, and conflict resolution

What is the adult concern?

- Not coming to a resolution could lead to aggression

Conflict Resolution

Children need a consistent, systematic approach to solve problems and conflicts

Intentionally teach:

- Problem solving steps
- Alternative solutions
- How solutions impact others

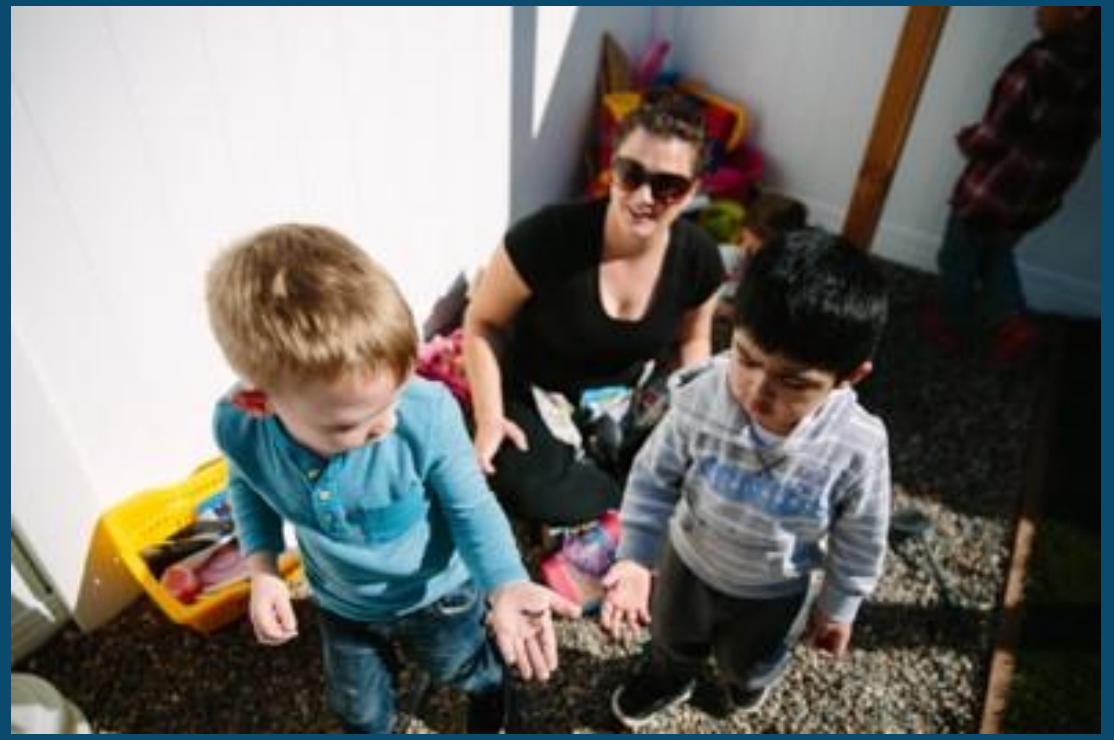
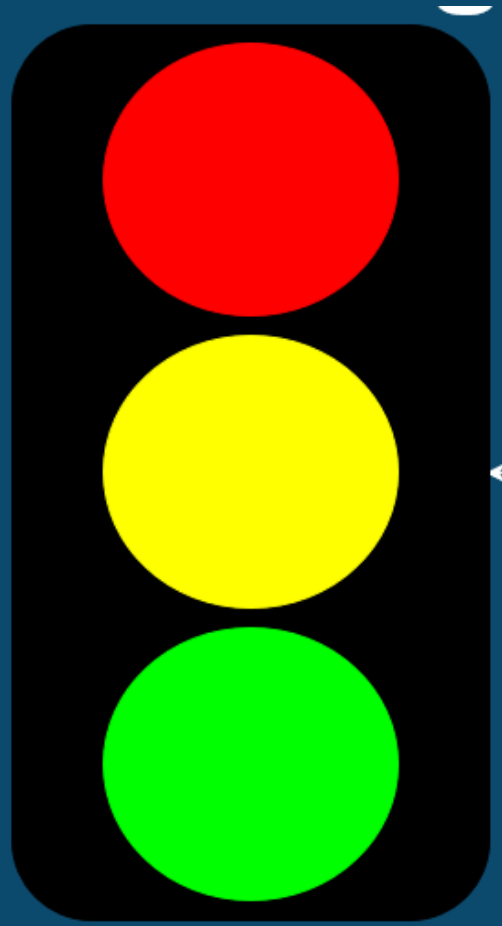


Photo Credit: Reveles Family Childcare, Riverside, CA

Conflict Resolution Strategy: Traffic Light

Stop-
What happened to you?



Slow Down-
What can we do?
Think of solutions!

Go-
Give it a try!

Conflict Resolution Strategy: Solution Cards

1. Place the Solution Cards in a visible and reachable spot
2. Assist children in using cards to find a solution
3. Encourage and Acknowledge when the children use the cards

Can be used in tandem with the traffic light strategy



Photo Credit: National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations

The Child Learns To… (4)

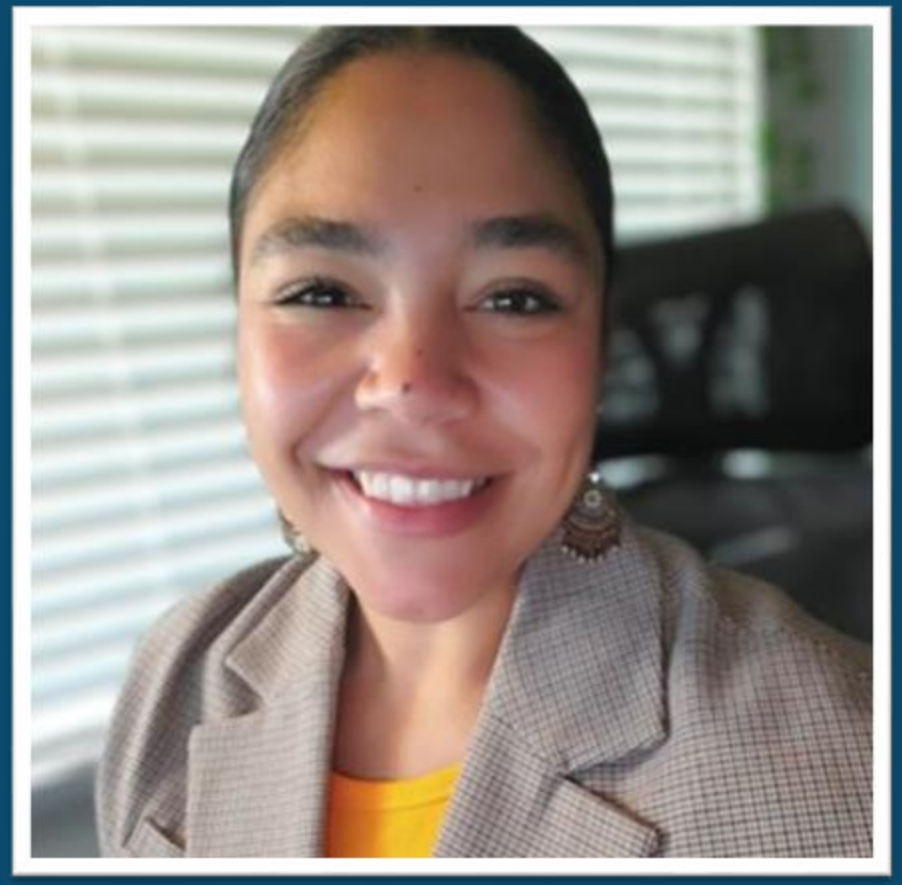
- Take a moment to pause and regroup.
- Feel empowered to select a solution when faced with a problem.
- Practice implementing their chosen solution, enhancing their skills and preparing them to navigate future conflicts with confidence and resilience.



Photo Credit: National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations

Panel Discussion

Moderator



Valentina Ware
Child Development Consultant
UPK Implementation and Support Office
Early Education Division
California Department of Education

Panelists (1)



Eliana Mancilla
Director of Learning and Development
Woodcraft Rangers



Jennifer Wright
Speech-Language Pathologist and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Specialist
Placer County SELPA



Andrew Crowe
Deputy Director
Scholarship Prep

Panelists (2)



Rebecca Flores-Acosta
Preschool Teacher
Twin Rivers Unified School District



Lisa Manges
Preschool Director
Faith Lutheran Preschool, Fair Oaks



Elaine Tam
Inclusion Transitional Kindergarten Teacher
San Fransisco Unified School District

Panel Discussion Questions (1)

- Building positive relationships is crucial for students' success and their sense of belonging. Could you share some relationship-building strategies you found instrumental in creating a positive classroom, program, or school environment?
- How do you ensure your teaching is equitable for all children? For example, how do you utilize and reflect empathy in understanding and responding to children's behavior?
- Students arrive in P-3 settings with a diverse set of strengths, skills, abilities, and needs. What strategies have you used to support ALL children to address their social and emotional needs, remove barriers to learning, and embed equity and inclusivity in the classroom?

Panel Discussion Questions (2)

- As educators, we all have our 'hot buttons'- those things students do that challenge us. It's a shared experience and okay to acknowledge. Cornell West says, 'Justice is what love looks like in public.' When considering what this quote means to you, how have you addressed your own ‘hot buttons’ to successfully continue supporting all students?
- Partnering with parents/caregivers to develop or update plans to support their child can involve difficult conversations. These conversations can be especially difficult when dealing with a regression. What strategies would you (or do you) use to approach these (types of) conversations with compassion and to ensure that the parents/caregivers feel supported?

Reflections and Closing

You can't teach children to behave better by making them feel worse.

When children feel better, they behave better.

- Pam Leo



Photo Credit: Hayward Unified School District; Hayward, CA