

POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT IN EARLY  
CHILDHOOD: STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL EMOTIONAL  
LEARNING

Minneapolis Public Schools  
Early Childhood Education



Jane Biegen  
Sandra Santiago Pickett

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*"If a child  
can't learn  
the way we teach,  
maybe we  
should  
teach the  
way they learn."*

— Ignacio Estrada

*The Emancipator Press*



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Teachers make  
more minute by  
minute decisions  
than a brain  
surgeon



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# DO NOW ACTIVITY (YES!...RIGHT NOW)



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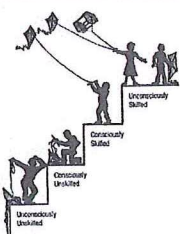
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## Examining attitudes towards challenging behavior



- Understands the relationship between children's social emotional development and challenging behaviors.
- Understands that children's challenging behaviors are conveying some line of message.
- Identifies what behaviors "push my buttons"
- Develops strategies for dealing with situations when children's behaviors "push my buttons"
- Works with a team to problem solve around issues related to challenging behaviors



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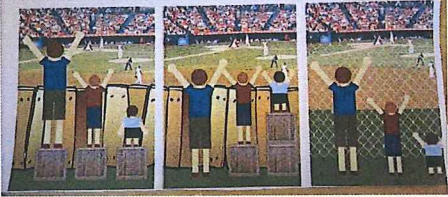
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## EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY



### Thoughts?



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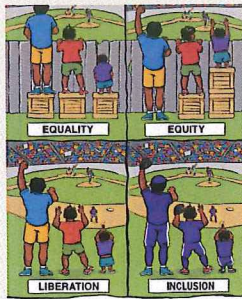
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What does this mean and how does this relate to YOU?




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### Early Childhood Positive Behavior Support

**Tertiary Prevention**

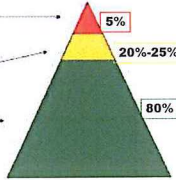
- \* Intensive, Individual Interventions
- \* Assessment-based

**Secondary Prevention**

- \* Targeted Group Interventions
- \* Some children (at risk)
- \* High efficiency

**Primary Prevention**

- \* System-wide Interventions
- \* All children
- \* Preventive, proactive
- \* Broad community focus




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**Tier 2**

- 2-5 students
- Small group instruction
- Play stories/role play
  - Sharing
  - Taking turns
- Specific needs
- Progress monitoring
- Identify emotions
- Visuals-Teach what you mean
- Practice
- Pre-referral
- EVERY DAY
- 10minutes
- Target skill

**Tier 3**

- One-to-one
- Inventory of practice
- Practice skills
- Identify needed skill
- Social stories
- Affirmations
- Behavior plan
- Find student interests
- Lunch Bunch
- Circle of Friends
- Visual supports
- Use a timer
- Refer to a schedule




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**MTSS- Multi Tiered Systems of Support**  
 Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a comprehensive, evidence-based prevention framework that aims to support the academic, social, emotional and behavioral development of all students.

**Define the Problem**  
What is the problem and why is it happening?

**Develop a Plan**  
What are we going to do?

**Implement Plan**  
Carry out the intervention.

**Evaluate**  
Did our plan work?

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### Beginning of the Day

**Creating Routines:**

- Morning Greeting
- Sign In
- Strive for Five
- Visual Schedules

**Ideas:**

- Cut out/ lessen frequency of calendar time
- Second Step
- Restorative Circle
- Emotional Literacy
- Wiggles
- Social Emotional Story

### Sensory Affect versus Motivator

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### Social Stories

**Social stories** may increase awareness and maintenance of social skills. Social stories were first defined by Carol Gray in 1991 and are commonly used to break down a task or social situation into small and easy to understand steps, often accompanied by descriptive pictures

no hitting

But if I hit another, and do those things, he will get hurt and won't want to play with me any more.

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Authentic Children's literature  
to teach about emotions




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Active learning encompasses everything we teach

Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.

- Benjamin Franklin




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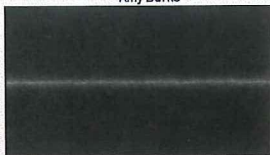
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Mindfulness

Being aware of our feelings, our emotions, and how they impact us

Being able to approach a classroom with a sense of calm understanding and the skills to intervene appropriately can make learning a pleasure for everyone.

TEDx Amsterdam: MINDFULNESS IN EXCELLENCE-Learning From the Inside Out  
Amy Burke




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### Children Need to be Understood in the Context of Their Relationships



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### It's in our DNA!

WHAT IS HISTORICAL TRAUMA AND CULTURAL HEALING?  
U of M NCYFE



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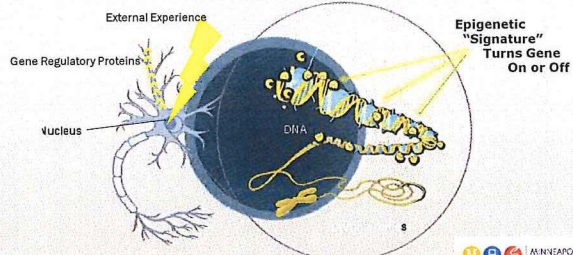
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### Genes Carry Instructions that Tell Our Bodies How to Work Early Experiences Leave Lasting Chemical "Signatures" on Genes

Megan R. Gunnar, Ph.D., Director, Institute of Child Development/Institute of Child Development University of Minnesota



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### What Are ACEs? Adverse Childhood Experiences

- ❖ Traumatic experiences in childhood
- ❖ Sometimes called toxic stress of childhood trauma
- ❖ Cause children to live in fight or flight (freeze) mode
- ❖ Short attention span
- ❖ Struggle learning; fall behind in school
- ❖ Respond to world as constant DANGER
- ❖ Distrustful of adults
- ❖ Unable to develop healthy peer relationships
- ❖ Feel failure, despair shame and frustration



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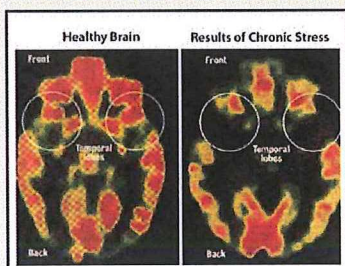
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Neglect, abuse and Household dysfunction without intervention does create chronic stress and can lead to trauma



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### Maslow's Hierarchy of Basic Needs

Schools that help meet basic human needs help children focus, overcome barriers, and reach toward their potential.

Maslow's Hierarchy

- Physiological Needs – Nurture
- Safety Needs – Security
- Love and Belonging – Acceptance
- Esteem – Impact
- Self-Actualization – Competence
- Self-Transcendence – Independence



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### What do we do?

#### Create stable, nurturing, and safe relationships

- Provide immediate support in time of need; provide food, shelter, comfort
- Safe-Free from harm
- Nurturing-Compassionate, restorative response to harm
- Stable-Trust through consistency




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#### FOUNDATION FOR EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS IS BUILT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

- **Self-Control** – ability to filter thoughts and impulses to resist temptations and distractions
- **Working Memory** – ability to hold and manipulate information in our heads over short periods of time
- **Mental Flexibility** – adjusting to changing demands, priorities, or perspectives

### EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

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### Rethink Time Out and Other “Punishments”



Young children have not yet mastered the complex life skills of expressing strong emotions, resolving social problems peaceably, and getting along.




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### Time In

- ❖ Teacher-child attachments are necessary if a child is to trust enough to learn to manage classroom conflicts (Betz 1994).
- ❖ In conflict situations the adult acts as a mediator, seeking to understand the situation and lead children toward peaceable resolution.
- ❖ Affirm child's emotions
- ❖ Help child redirect and self regulate by modeling strategies
- ❖ Talk through event with child model appropriate behaviors




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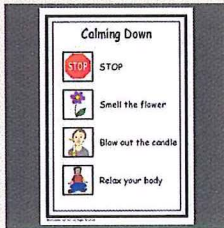
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### De-escalation Strategies

1. Affirm child's emotions
2. Help child redirect and self regulate by modeling strategies
  - Breathing strategies
  - Blowing bubbles
  - Count to 5
3. Talk through event with child model appropriate behaviors.



It doesn't happen overnight.  
STICK WITH IT!

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### Heavy Work

Proprioceptive input is the performance of tasks "Heavy Work" that involves heavy resistance and input to the muscles and joints, and is essential in helping our bodies assimilate and process both movement (vestibular) and touch (tactile) information.

- Heavy work activities include:
- Whole body actions involving pushing, pulling, lifting, playing, and moving
  - Oral actions such as chewing, sucking, and blowing
  - Use of hands for squeezing, pinching, or "fidgeting"




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### A couple of thoughts:

- Always keep safety in mind when performing activities
- Remember every child is unique - some children will calm to certain activities while others get more excited
- Vestibular input is more unpredictable as to how a child will react (may overly excite them)
- Keep the child's age in mind and adapt the activity as needed
- It may be helpful to be highly structured.
- Use visual timers or regular timers so the kids know when their time is up.
- Any visual supports you can offer, such as picture symbols so they can choose which activity they want (if that is an option)




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### You Got It

Lisa Fox Rochelle Harper Lentini

- Jigsaw article for 10 minutes
- Summarize your part with your partner
- Share out




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### Remember...

Children may forget  
what you said  
but  
they will  
not forget  
how  
you  
made  
them feel.




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