

LIGHTS ON JOY UP!

Reframing Challenging Behaviors
and Reigniting Your Purpose



with Dr. Nefertiti Poyner | Founder and CEO
Mighty Work Education Group, LLC



THANK
YOU!



DR. NEFERTITI POYNER

TEACHER

TRAINER

AUTHOR

WIFE

MOM





**IT TAKES A VILLAGE
TO RAISE A CHILD**

The image features four stylized black silhouettes of children holding hands in a circle. They are positioned against a bright, glowing sun that creates a lens flare effect. The background is a gradient of blue and yellow, suggesting a sky at sunrise or sunset. The children are standing on a dark, irregular silhouette that represents the ground or a horizon line.

IT TAKES A **HEALTHY** VILLAGE
VILLAGE TO RAISE
A **HEALTHY** CHILD.

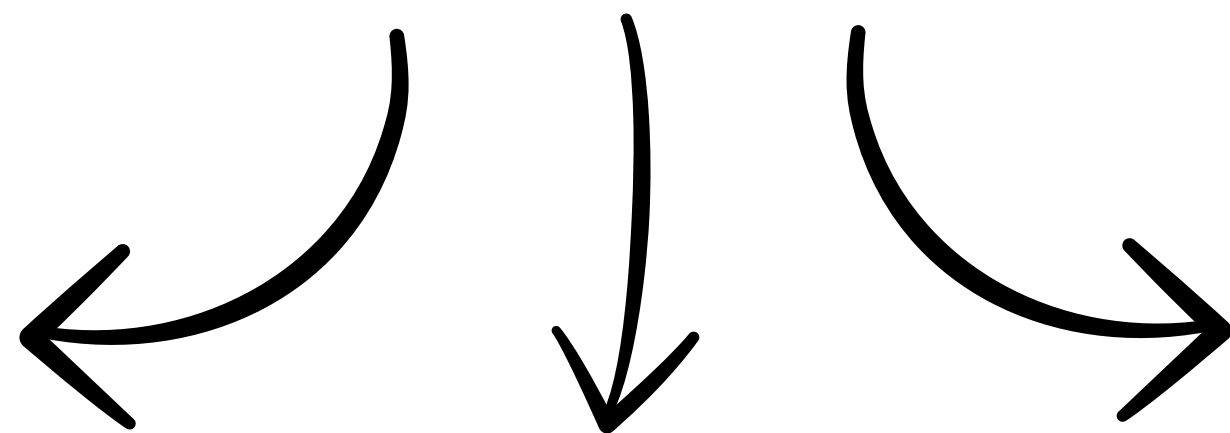
POLL



AGENDA FOR TODAY

RECOGNIZE

Participants will be able to identify the difference between “pretending” and “being prepared” when stepping into their professional role, especially during challenging moments.



PRACTICE

Participants will apply quick, practical strategies for self-preparation (mindset, body language, and key tools) so they can show up with clarity and confidence. **PLEASE DOWNLOAD TODAY'S HANDOUT.**

REFLECT

Participants will evaluate their current approach and commit to at least one intentional shift they can make immediately to strengthen how they show up in their role.





KEVIN!





KEVIN!

**SOUNDS LIKE YOU WERE
BEING FAKE TO ME...
PRETENDING LIKE YOU CARED...**





**I WAS NOT PRETENDING,
I WAS PREPARED
TO PERFORM.**



I AM GOING TO OPRAH!

Because I don't pretend, I PERFORM.



Fun Way To Get Into
CHARACTER!



WHAT'S YOUR THEME/CHARACTER MUSIC!





Lights On! Joy Up! Let's talk more about

PERFORM

FROM THE RESEARCH

Early Childhood Education Journal (2023) 51:615–626
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-022-01326-1>



Preschool Teachers' Emotional Acting and School-Based Interactions

Elizabeth Levine Brown¹ · Colleen K Vesely¹ · Swati Mehta¹ · Kristabel Stark¹

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Keywords Preschool teachers · Emotional labor · Emotional acting · Teacher emotion · School-based interactions · Teacher relationships

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Preschool teachers' direct interactions with young children (ages 3–5) critically contribute to their developmental and academic outcomes (Hamre et al., 2014; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Specifically, teacher-child interactions are influenced by the social and emotional dynamics experienced in the classroom (Coplan et al., 2011). Because teachers' responses to children are shaped by their own social and emotional functioning (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), teachers' abilities to regulate their emotions effectively

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At all times, but especially in an ongoing pandemic, navigating the emotional complexities of their job is a challenge (Lambert et al., 2018) for which teachers receive little preparation or training (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). ECE

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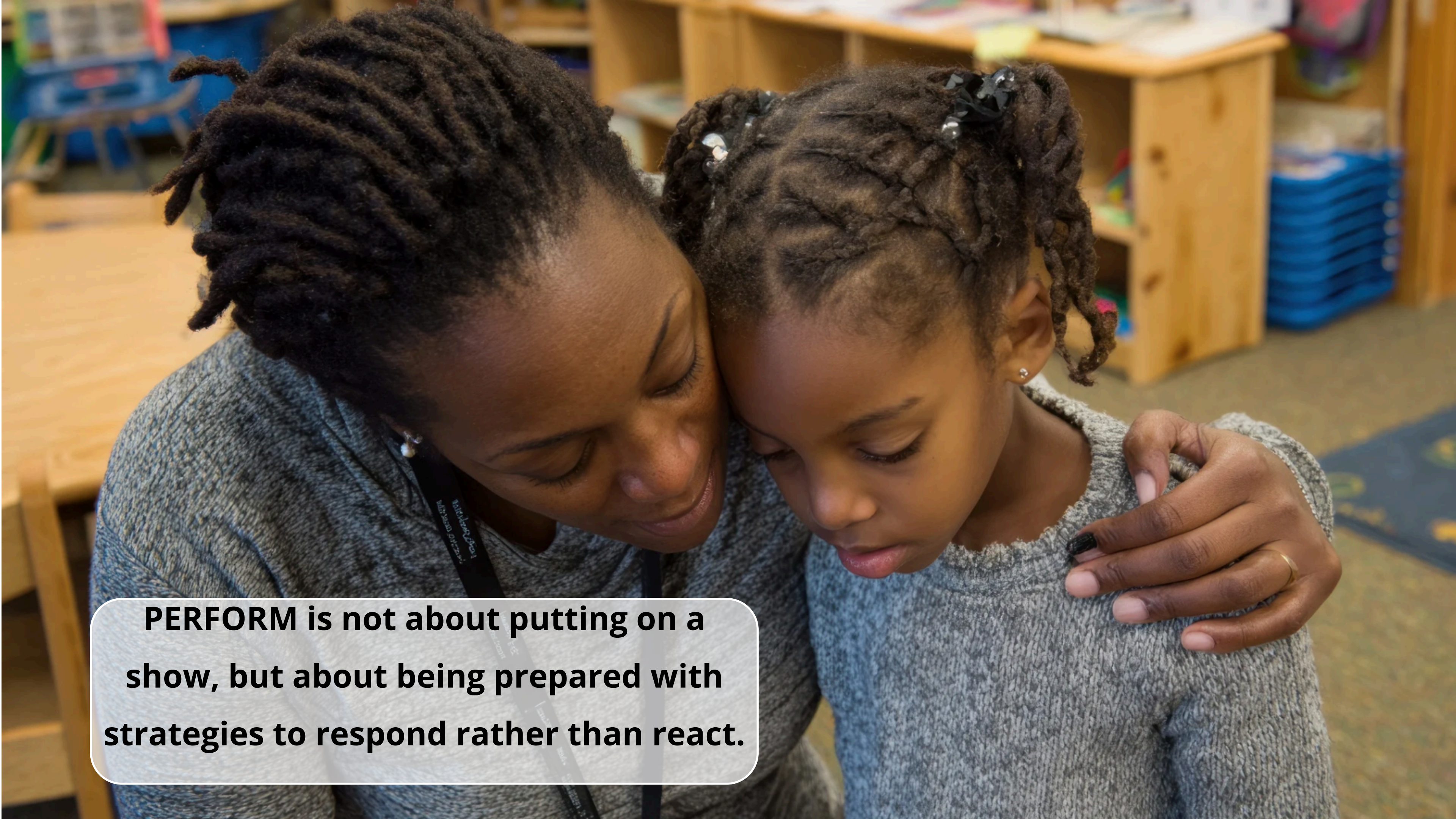
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A close-up photograph of a woman and a young girl with dark skin and dreadlocks. The woman, on the left, has her eyes closed and a gentle smile, leaning her head against the girl's. The girl, on the right, also has her eyes closed and a soft expression, leaning her head against the woman. They are both wearing grey, textured sweaters. The woman's hand is visible, resting on the girl's shoulder. The background is a blurred classroom setting with wooden desks and shelves. A text box is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

PERFORM is not about putting on a show, but about being prepared with strategies to respond rather than react.

An aerial photograph of a beach with turquoise waves crashing onto the sand. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white rounded rectangle in the center.

REFLECT UPON THE THOUGHTS WE HAVE JUST SHARED...

Take a few deep breaths.



P

P – Plot & Role Awareness

- Before you “step on stage,” you must know the story and your role in it.
- **Every child’s behavior communicates a need or message.**
- Before you respond to a behavior of concern from a child, please remember the important step of investigating the plot.
- Ask: What do I need to better understand about this child and his/her use of behaviors I find challenging?



P

E

Environment Cues (Costume & Props)

- Once you've learned as much as you can about the child (the plot), the next step is to examine the stage itself.
- In the PERFORM approach, the classroom environment is not just a backdrop; it's an active player in every scene.
- Children's behaviors are often influenced by the physical space, the routines within it, and even the emotional tone of the adults present.



P

E

Environment Cues (Costume & Props)

- Your voice, posture, temperament, and personality shape how safe and supported a child feels.
- In this step of the PERFORM model, you're looking at the whole stage, furniture, materials, routines, and adult presence, and making intentional choices to reduce stressors and enhance supports so that challenging moments become easier to navigate.



P

E

R

R – Role-Model with Body Language (Stage Direction)

- On stage, actors don't just speak their lines; they use movement, posture, and expression to guide the audience's attention.
- In the classroom, children are the "audience" and we are their primary cue.
- Young children constantly read our nonverbal signals to decide how safe they feel and how to behave.





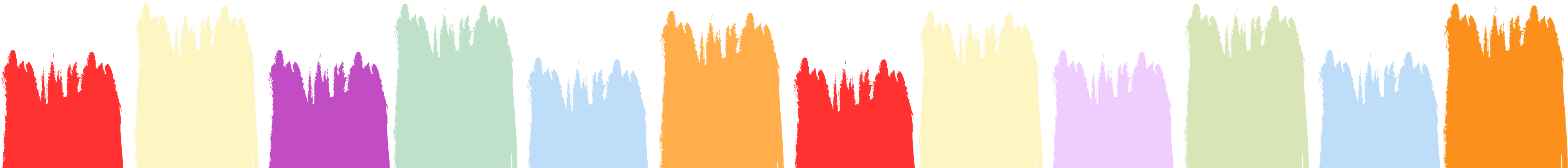
P

E

R

F

F – Flexibility (Improvisation)

- Even the best-prepared actors sometimes have to improvise when a scene takes an unexpected turn.
The same is true in early childhood classrooms.
 - By the time you've studied the "plot," considered the environment, and modeled your best body language, you may still find that a child's behavior or the group dynamic isn't responding the way you hoped.
 - When the "script" goes sideways, pivot with creativity. Redirect, adjust, or pause.
- 

Think:

Plot

Environment

Role Modeling

Flexibility



DISCUSSION

Think:

Plot

Environment

Role Modeling

Flexibility





P

E

R

F

O

O – Ongoing Practice (Rehearsal)

- Actors don't walk on stage without rehearsal, and neither should we. Responding well to behaviors we find challenging is a skill that grows stronger through intentional practice.
- This doesn't mean you "practice" a child's behavior; it means you practice your responses, the words, tone, and actions you'll use when the moment arises.



P

E

R

F

O

R

R – Reflection & Feedback (Director's Notes)

- Even the most seasoned actors don't improve in isolation, they rely on a director's notes and a cast around them.
- In the same way, early childhood educators grow when they pause to reflect, review what happened, and invite insight from others.
- Reflection isn't one more burden on your plate; it's the practice that makes everything else sustainable. It's how you connect the dots between your preparation (Plot, Environment, Role-Modeling, Flexibility) and your growth as a professional.



P E R F O R M

M – My Backstage Crew (Including My Well-Being)

- Even the brightest performer needs a backstage crew. No actor performs night after night without people managing the lights, costumes, and cues, and no educator can sustain their best work without support and wellness built in.
- Your backstage crew includes colleagues, mentors, supervisors, family, friends, and mental-health professionals, and the practices you personally use to care for yourself.



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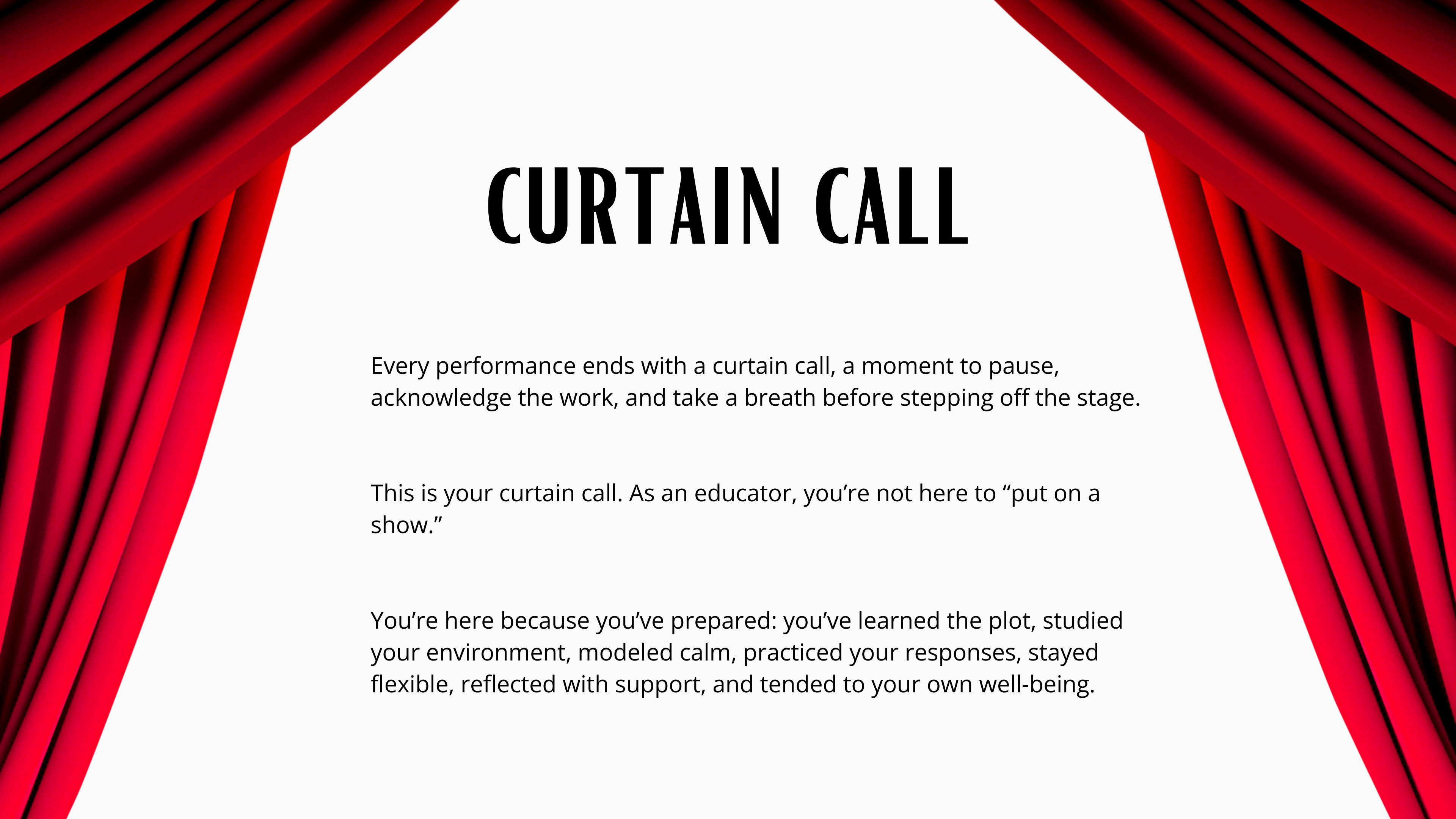
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WE DON'T PRETEND, WE

PERFORM

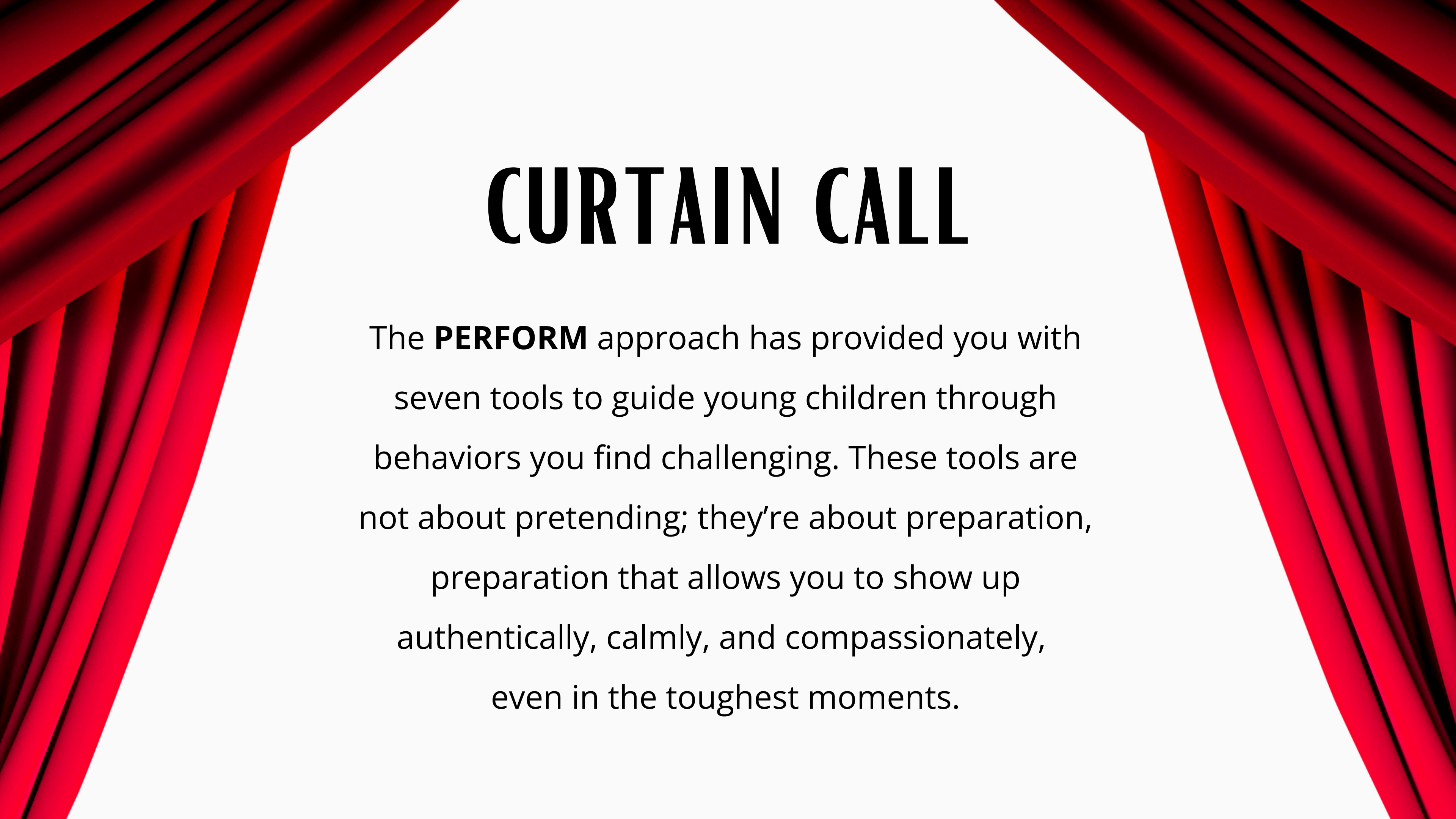
The image features a white background with red curtains on the left and right sides, framing the text. The curtains are draped and have a slight sheen. The title 'CURTAIN CALL' is centered at the top in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font.

CURTAIN CALL

Every performance ends with a curtain call, a moment to pause, acknowledge the work, and take a breath before stepping off the stage.

This is your curtain call. As an educator, you're not here to "put on a show."

You're here because you've prepared: you've learned the plot, studied your environment, modeled calm, practiced your responses, stayed flexible, reflected with support, and tended to your own well-being.

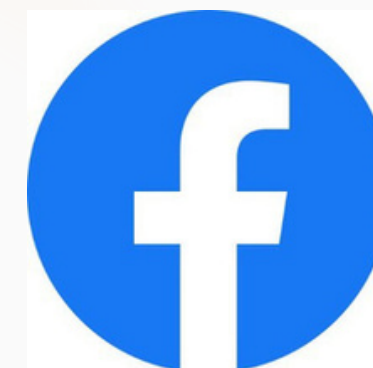
The image features a white central area framed by vibrant red, draped curtains on both the left and right sides. The curtains have a realistic texture with folds and shadows, creating a stage-like atmosphere. In the center of the white area, the title "CURTAIN CALL" is written in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font.

CURTAIN CALL

The **PERFORM** approach has provided you with seven tools to guide young children through behaviors you find challenging. These tools are not about pretending; they're about preparation, preparation that allows you to show up authentically, calmly, and compassionately, even in the toughest moments.

LIGHTS ON JOY UP!

www.nefertitipoyner.com



LIGHTS ON. JOY UP!

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Welcome



Hello Friend,

I'm so glad you're here, and that we can do this together. Teaching young children is one of the most meaningful and impactful callings there is; it shapes lives, families, and communities in such lasting ways. And while it isn't about "putting on a show," every day in the classroom, educators step into a role that asks for presence, awareness, and heart. Like an actor preparing for a meaningful part, you carry with you not just knowledge, but also the mindset, body language, and techniques that shape how each scene unfolds.

Lights On. Joy Up! reframes this experience: you're not being asked to perform; you're being invited to prepare. This framework introduces seven practical, responsive techniques that help you bring the best version of yourself to every interaction with children, especially when behaviors you find challenging arise.

By learning and practicing these seven techniques, you'll move from reacting to responding, from feeling overwhelmed to feeling equipped. You'll see how "rehearsal" builds confidence, how "stage directions" guide your presence, and how your "supporting cast" sustains you along the way. Most of all, you'll leave with strategies you can use immediately to support children, strengthen relationships, and protect your own well-being in the process.

With joy,
Dr. Nefertiti B. Poyner



Lights On. Joy Up!

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Why Preparation Matters

Decades of research confirm that children's behavior is a form of communication, not defiance. The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard notes that responsive, well-regulated adults are a critical buffer against the effects of stress and adversity. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network emphasizes that trauma-informed practice begins with adults understanding the meaning behind a child's actions, not simply reacting to them. Culturally responsive education research also shows that when teachers intentionally examine their own assumptions and adapt to children's cultural contexts, they reduce conflict and strengthen engagement.

At the same time, research on emotional labor in teaching reminds us that constantly "acting" calm or cheerful, especially in stressful moments, can take a toll on well-being. Educators need strategies that help them prepare, not pretend, to bring their most grounded, authentic selves into each interaction.

The PERFORM approach translates this body of research into seven practical tools that help teachers respond with purpose, presence, and heart, protecting their own well-being while supporting children's growth.

The Seven PERFORM Tools at a Glance

P – Plot & Role Awareness

Know your role, the "plot" of the classroom, and gather as much information as you can about the child.
Ask: "What do I need to understand about this child before I step into this role?"

E – Environment Cues (Costume & Props)

Shape the "set" of the classroom. Use visuals, routines, and calming tools. Remember, your tone and posture support regulation and are a part of the environment.

R – Role-Modeling with Body Language (Stage Direction)

Move, stand, kneel, and speak with intention. Nonverbal cues communicate safety faster than words.

F – Flexibility (Improvisation)

When the "script" goes sideways, pivot with creativity. Redirect, adjust, or pause.

O – Ongoing Practice (Rehearsal)

Practice approaches and strategies ahead of time. Role-play with colleagues to build automaticity under stress.

Lights On. Joy Up!

Reframing Challenging Behaviors and Reigniting Your Purpose

Why Preparation Matters (continued)

R – Reflection & Feedback (Director's Notes)

Seek supportive feedback from leaders, peers, or mentors. Reflect on what worked and what you'll try next time.



M – My Crew (Backstage Support System)

Identify your “backstage crew”, colleagues, administrators, mental-health consultants and other team members who help you stay regulated and resilient.

Putting It All Together

When you PERFORM, you're not pretending, you're prepared. This approach helps early childhood professionals shift from reacting to responding, protect their own well-being, and transform challenging moments into opportunities for growth and connection. And just as in acting, no role is complete without rehearsal and reflection. Each element of the PERFORM framework comes with its own set of reflective questions, designed to help you pause and think deeply about how you show up in your role. You don't need to answer them all or go in order, simply choose the ones that feel most meaningful to where you are right now. Reflection is not an “extra,” it's part of the work. By taking time to reflect, you strengthen your presence, protect your well-being, and prepare yourself to respond with greater clarity and compassion. You'll find these reflective questions on the next few pages as you continue exploring this resource.



P – Plot & Role Awareness

Before you “step on stage,” you must know the story and your role in it. Every child’s behavior communicates a need or message. No child wakes up intending to “get on your nerves.” With a trauma-informed and culturally responsive lens, the first step is to pause and study the plot, the child’s context, and clarify your role. Before you respond to a behavior of concern from a child, please remember the important step of investigating the plot. Learn your script! Ask: What do I need to better understand about this child and his/her use of behaviors I find challenging.

Responsive Questions for “P”: Plot and Role Awareness

What might this behavior be communicating about the child’s needs, feelings, or stress level?

What do I already know about this child’s developmental stage and temperament?

What is this child’s developmental age?

Have there been recent changes at home, school, or community that could be influencing this behavior?

What strengths and interests can I build on to support this child?

Could cultural norms or communication styles be shaping how this behavior shows up or how I interpret it?

What sensory, environmental, or routine triggers might be contributing to the behavior?

Am I making assumptions based on my own experiences, values, or biases?

What support systems (family members, specialists, community resources) already exist for this child?

How can I adjust my expectations or approach to be developmentally appropriate, culturally respectful, and trauma-sensitive?



Environment Cues (Costume & Props)

Once you've learned as much as you can about the child (the plot), the next step is to examine the stage itself. In the PERFORM approach, the classroom environment is not just a backdrop; it's an active player in every scene. Children's behaviors are often influenced by the physical space, the routines within it, and even the emotional tone of the adults present. Your voice, posture, temperament, and personality shape how safe and supported a child feels. In this step of the PERFORM model, you're looking at the whole stage, furniture, materials, routines, and adult presence, and making intentional choices to reduce stressors and enhance supports so that challenging moments become easier to navigate.

Reflective Questions for E – Environment Cues (Costume & Props)

In which areas of the classroom or schedule do I most often see the behaviors I find challenging?

What might the physical setup (furniture, pathways, crowding) be communicating to children about safety or expectations?

Are there sensory elements (lighting, noise level, textures, smells) that could be overwhelming or under-stimulating for this child?

How predictable and clearly defined are the routines and transitions in this space?

Does the arrangement of materials and activities allow children to engage independently, or does it invite conflict?

How might cultural factors (colors, images, materials, rules) in the environment affect how children experience the space?

What is my own energy, tone, and body language adding to this environment—calm, tension, warmth, or confusion?

Are there simple changes (lighting, seating, proximity, visuals) I could try to reduce triggers and support regulation?

Do children know where to go or what to do when they need a break or calming activity?

What feedback could I invite from a colleague, coach, or family member about how this environment "feels" to them?



R – Role-Model with Body Language (Stage Direction)

On stage, actors don't just speak their lines, they use movement, posture, and expression to guide the audience's attention. In the classroom, children are the "audience" and we are their primary cue. Young children constantly read our nonverbal signals to decide how safe they feel and how to behave.

In this step of the PERFORM approach, you become intentional about your "stage direction." Before you speak, you pause to check your own body: Are you calm? Are you at the child's eye level? Are your gestures open and welcoming? When you role-model self-regulation, empathy, and respect through your tone and body language, you're showing children what those skills look like, not just telling them.

The goal isn't to be perfect; it's to embody the climate you want in your classroom. By managing your own state first and then moving, speaking, and gesturing with intention, you offer children a living example of the behaviors and emotional control you're hoping they'll learn.

Reflective Questions for R – Role-Model with Body Language (Stage Direction)

Before I approach a child, have I checked in with my own body—am I calm, centered, and ready?

Am I at the child's eye level when I speak, or am I towering over them?

What is my facial expression communicating right now (warmth, frustration, neutrality)?

Is my voice tone and pace soothing, neutral, or escalating?

Are my gestures open and welcoming or closed and rigid?

How close am I standing—am I respecting the child's personal space while still offering support?

Am I modeling the regulation skills I want the child to learn (deep breaths, soft voice, slow movements)?

How do I physically acknowledge positive behaviors (smiles, nods, gentle touch) without overwhelming?

When I feel stressed, what body cues might I be sending unintentionally to the children?

What small adjustment to my posture, tone, or movement could make this interaction feel safer and calmer for the child?



F – Flexibility (Improvisation)

Even the best-prepared actors sometimes have to improvise when a scene takes an unexpected turn. The same is true in early childhood classrooms. By the time you’ve studied the “plot,” considered the environment, and modeled your best body language, you may still find that a child’s behavior or the group dynamic isn’t responding the way you hoped.

This is where flexibility becomes a professional strength, not a sign of failure. Flexibility means pausing to read the room, giving yourself permission to adjust, and using creativity to meet children’s needs in real time. It may look like shifting to a movement activity, leaning into humor to break tension, redirecting a child to a new task, or re-sequencing your lesson plan on the fly. When educators improvise with intention, they show children that problems can be solved without panic, and they preserve connection which serves as the foundation for any strategy put into place to address behaviors of concern.

Reflective Questions for F – Flexibility (Improvisation)

When a plan isn’t working, do I give myself permission to pause before reacting?

How comfortable am I with trying a new strategy in the moment—even if it’s not in my lesson plan?

What signs tell me a child (or group) needs me to shift gears?

Have I practiced a few quick “Plan B” ideas (songs, movement, sensory breaks) to draw on when needed?

How do I use humor or imagination to de-escalate a tense moment?

Do I see flexibility as a professional skill rather than a weakness?

How can I communicate changes or redirections to children so they feel secure, not confused?

When I improvise, how do I stay aligned with developmental appropriateness and cultural sensitivity?

What can I learn from times when flexibility worked well—or didn’t—to build my toolkit?

Who can I check in with afterward (colleague, coach, leader) to reflect on how I handled the moment?



O – Ongoing Practice (Rehearsal)

Actors don't walk on stage without rehearsal, and neither should we. Responding well to behaviors we find challenging is a skill that grows stronger through intentional practice. This doesn't mean you "practice" a child's behavior; it means you practice your responses, the words, tone, and actions you'll use when the moment arises.

Rehearsal can happen anywhere: role-playing with a colleague, talking through scenarios with a coach, writing out "go-to" phrases, or even standing in front of a mirror. Practicing in low-stakes settings builds muscle memory, so when a real-life moment hits, you can respond calmly and confidently instead of scrambling for words. Rehearsal also allows you to try out different approaches, get feedback, and refine your strategies before they're needed.

Reflective Questions for O – Ongoing Practice (Rehearsal)

Which situations with children tend to throw me off balance the most?

Do I have a few "go-to" scripts or calming phrases I can rehearse ahead of time?

Have I ever practiced my response with a colleague or coach before trying it with a child?

How could I incorporate quick role-plays into staff meetings or planning time?

What physical cues (breathing, posture) can I rehearse to stay calm under stress?

Who in my building could give me constructive feedback as I practice?

How do I reflect on what went well after each "real" moment so I can refine for next time?

How might cultural or family perspectives influence the scripts or strategies I choose to rehearse?

What small practice routine (5 minutes a week) could help me feel more prepared?

How will I measure whether my practice is paying off in calmer, more effective responses with children?



R – Reflection & Feedback (Director's Notes)

Even the most seasoned actors don't improve in isolation, they rely on a director's notes and a cast around them. In the same way, early childhood educators grow when they pause to reflect, review what happened, and invite insight from others. Reflection isn't one more burden on your plate; it's the practice that makes everything else sustainable. It's how you connect the dots between your preparation (Plot, Environment, Role-Modeling, Flexibility) and your growth as a professional.

Taking a few moments at the end of a day, a lesson, or a challenging interaction allows you to identify patterns, celebrate what worked, and get ideas for next time. And like any good screenplay, you don't have to do it alone: colleagues, mentors, administrators, or even families can offer "director's notes" that give you new angles on the same scene.

Reflective Questions for "R – Reflection & Feedback"

After a challenging moment, do I pause to ask what worked and what didn't?

Did my response match the child's developmental stage and individual needs?

How did the environment (physical and emotional) influence what happened?

Were there early cues I might have noticed before the behavior escalated?

Did my body language communicate calm and safety, or something else?

How flexible was I—did I pivot when the plan wasn't working?

Whose "director's notes" could help me see this situation differently (colleague, mentor, administrator, family)?

How can I capture what I've learned (journal, debrief with a co-teacher, voice memo) so I don't lose the insight?

What strengths did I show in this moment that I want to build on?

What's one small adjustment I'll try next time to support this child or myself?

P E R F O R M

M – My Backstage Crew (Including My Well-Being)

Even the brightest performer needs a backstage crew. No actor performs night after night without people managing the lights, costumes, and cues — and no educator can sustain their best work without support and wellness built in. Your backstage crew includes colleagues, mentors, supervisors, family, friends, and mental-health professionals and the practices you personally use to care for yourself.

This step of the PERFORM approach invites you to name your “crew” and your “care.” Who holds you up? What routines restore you? By tending to both, you ensure you have the energy, clarity, and resilience to bring your best self to children each day. Self-care isn’t a luxury; it’s part of the production.

Reflective Questions for M – My Backstage Crew (Including My Well-Being)

Who are the people in my professional life I can go to for help, advice, or encouragement?

Who in my personal life replenishes me outside of work?

What daily or weekly practices help me maintain my emotional and physical well-being?

Do I have clear boundaries to protect my time and energy?

How do I communicate my needs to my “crew” so they can support me effectively?

When I’m feeling overwhelmed, who can I call on first?

What systems are in place at my workplace to support staff well-being, and am I using them?

How do I model healthy self-care to children and colleagues?

What new practice or connection could strengthen my backstage crew this month?

How can I remind myself regularly that taking care of me is part of taking care of them?



Curtain Call

Every performance ends with a curtain call, a moment to pause, acknowledge the work, and take a breath before stepping off the stage. This is your curtain call. As an educator, you're not here to "put on a show." You're here because you've prepared: you've learned the plot, studied your environment, modeled calm, practiced your responses, stayed flexible, reflected with support, and tended to your own well-being.

The PERFORM approach has given you seven tools to carry with you as you guide young children through behaviors you find challenging. These tools are not about pretending; they're about preparation — preparation that allows you to show up authentically, calmly, and compassionately, even in the toughest moments.

And remember: your journey with this resource doesn't have to begin or end on this page. You can return to any section, start with any tool, or pick up wherever you are in your practice. Each time you do, you'll discover new insights and renewed confidence.

As you close this guide, take one more breath. Choose one tool to focus on first. This is your curtain call, the moment to recognize your own growth and step back into your classroom prepared, not pretending, ready to help every child write a better story.

JEANETTE USES THE PERFORM APPROACH

SAMPLE CASE STUDY

Background



Jeanette is a third-year preschool teacher in a 4-year-old classroom. A new child, Marc, has joined her center. Since starting, Marc has often used physical aggression (hitting, pushing, grabbing) to get toys or express frustration. Jeanette wants to use the PERFORM approach to respond more effectively.

P – Plot & Role Awareness

Janette has been working to support Marc for several weeks. She has reviewed the information available in his student file. As she works to implement the PERFORM Approach, Janette takes time to learn the “plot.” She reviews Marc’s enrollment forms and talks with his family about routines, communication style, and recent changes at home. She observes him quietly for several days, taking notes on when, where, and with whom incidents occur. She reminds herself: “Marc isn’t trying to give me a hard time; he’s having a hard time.”

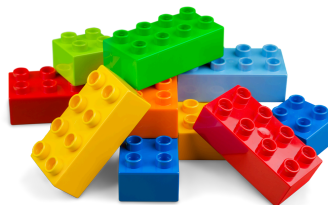
She also clarifies her own role: calm guide, not referee. This helps her stay centered and approach each incident with curiosity instead of judgment.

E – Environment Cues

Next, Jeanette examines the “stage.” She notices that most of Marc’s aggressive behavior happens during free-choice centers when the classroom is crowded and noisy. Materials are limited, and transitions are loose.

She adjusts the environment by:

- Adding duplicates of high-interest toys.
- Creating a quieter corner with sensory items Malik can access when overwhelmed.
- Introducing a visual schedule and a “choice board” to reduce confusion.
- She also softens her own voice and posture during free time, knowing her presence is part of the environment.



JEANETTE USES THE PERFORM APPROACH

SAMPLE CASE STUDY (CONTINUED)

R – Role-Model With Body Language (Stage Direction)

Jeanette practices moving slowly and kneeling to Marc's level when intervening. She uses a calm, steady voice and open hands to signal safety. She models gentle touch and says, "Hands are for helping. Watch how I pass the block." Over time, she notices Marc starting to mirror her tone and gestures.



F – Flexibility (Improvisation)

When a planned activity begins to escalate, Jeanette pivots. One day she sees Marc getting tense at the block area and spontaneously invites him to help her "deliver mail" to different centers, redirecting his energy into movement. Another day she turns a tug-of-war over a toy into a collaborative "build together" game. She gives herself permission to improvise rather than push through a plan that isn't working.

O – Ongoing Practice (Rehearsal)

Outside class, Jeanette rehearses her responses. She role-plays scenarios with her assistant teacher, practicing calm scripts and body language until they feel automatic. She keeps a small card in her pocket with go-to phrases she wants to use when tensions rise. This practice gives her confidence to respond instead of react.

R – Reflection & Feedback (Director's Notes)

At the end of each week, Jeanette spends a few minutes journaling what worked, what didn't, and what triggers she noticed. She invites her director to observe one morning and offer "director's notes" on her transitions and redirections. These reflections help her fine-tune her approach.

M – My Backstage Crew (Including My Well-Being)

Jeanette identifies her "crew": her co-teacher, a mental-health consultant, and a supportive colleague in another classroom. They meet briefly after tough days to debrief. She also sets a boundary of five minutes of quiet breathing in the staff lounge after free-choice time to reset herself. By tending to her own well-being and leaning on her crew, she sustains her energy for Marc and the rest of the class.