



How to Effectively Teach Social-Emotional Skills to Children Who Exhibit Challenging Behavior

by Barb O'Neill, Ed.D.

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About

Who's teaching this webinar?

Barb O'Neill, Ed.D. is the creator and host of the Transform Challenging Behavior Online Conference, a free annual online event attended by thousands of early childhood professionals from around the world. Over the past 25 years she has worked as a preschool teacher, special education teacher, center director, and professor. Barb now devotes herself full time to speaking, training, and teaching online courses on challenging behavior.

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POLL 1

POLL 2

2 Underlining Assumptions in this Webinar

Many children are not learning the social-emotional skills they need to be successful in school.

Behavior is a sign the child has not yet learned a better way to get their needs met.



WHAT YOU'LL LEARN TODAY...

Note: the presentation is geared towards center directors, coaches, trainers, Head Start managers, administrators, and others supporting teachers or working to improve quality in early childhood.

1 WHAT LEADERSHIP HAS TO DO WITH IT How do you and your staff think and talk about children who use challenging behavior and families?	4 WHICH 5 SKILLS TO FOCUS ON Help the children who challenge teachers most with these 5 and set everyone up for success.
2 HOW TO USE THE POWER OF PLAY Play is the BEST way to connect with, motivate, and engage young children.	5 6 KEY CURRICULUM COMPONENTS Some you are probably doing and I bet there's a at least one or two you're not!
3 WHY YOU NEED A CURRICULUM Incidental teaching is not enough. We need to teach social-emotional skills proactively and reactively responsively.	6 WHAT WORKS: STORIES OF SUCCESS You'll get practical examples and real stories of how the strategies have been used successfully throughout!



LEADERSHIP

WHAT TYPE OF CULTURE ARE YOU CREATING?

THINK
 What's your mindset like when it comes to "challenging behavior"? Do you and your staff embrace this part of the job?

TALK
 How do you and your staff talk about challenging behavior; the children that exhibit these behaviors, and their families?

ACT
 Do you model inclusion and demonstrate your commitment to learning more about supporting children who exhibit challenging behavior?



MINDSET

HOW DO YOU RELATE TO "CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR" & THE CHILDREN WHO USE IT?

Fixed vs. Growth Mindset (Carol Dweck)

Applied to working with children who use challenging behavior

<p>Fixed Mindset</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Believes specialists should "fix" behavior ✓ Gives up easily when not seeing immediate results ✓ Sees effort as fruitless if the child's family doesn't follow through ✓ Ignores useful feedback ✓ Threatened by others' success ➔ Does not believe effectiveness in preventing and addressing challenging behavior can improve 	<p>Growth Mindset</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Embraces challenging behavior as part of the job! ✓ Persists in trying new methods ✓ Sees effort as a path to mastery ✓ Learns from feedback ✓ Inspired by others' success and open to new ideas ➔ Believes the ability to support children who use challenging behavior can be developed
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PLAY & PLAYFUL TEACHING

CONNECT
The best way to connect with a young child is during play or by being playful.

MOTIVATE
Play is intrinsically motivating to children. How can you use play to motivate?

ENGAGE
Play is the best medium for building children's attention spans and their ability to focus and engage meaningfully.



YOU NEED A SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILL-BUILDING CURRICULUM

Incidental teaching of social emotional skills is not enough!

**Not only does the research suggest this, but...
...the evidence is that you all showed up today!**

We need to teach social-emotional skills proactively.

When I say "curriculum" I mean...

ANYTHING that happens in the early childhood classroom 12
Planned or unplanned. Including materials & the physical environment. Interactions.



WHAT we are teaching.
&
HOW we are teaching it. 13

THE "WHAT": ESSENTIAL SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS 14
STRIVE FOR FIVE



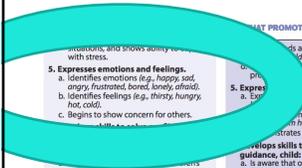
MOST OF THESE SKILLS ARE INCLUDED IN
THE EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS OF MOST STATES



1
IDENTIFY & EXPRESS EMOTIONS

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Preschool Foundational Standards	Kindergarten Readiness Standards End of Preschool	Utah's Core Kindergarten Standards End of Kindergarten
<p>and shows ability to cope with stress.</p> <p>5. Expresses emotions and feelings.</p> <p>a. Identifies emotions (e.g., happy, sad, angry, frustrated, bored, lonely, afraid), b. Identifies feelings (e.g., thirsty, hungry, hot, cold), c. Begins to show concern for others.</p>	<p>and accepts limitations of "no".</p> <p>environments with actions and behaviors.</p> <p>5. Expresses emotions and feelings.</p> <p>a. Expresses emotions (e.g., "I am hungry," etc.), b. Demonstrates empathy.</p> <p>Develops skills to solve conflicts. With guidance, child:</p> <p>a. Is aware that others may have different feelings and emotions other than his/her own,</p> <p>b. Responds appropriately to tone of voice, facial expressions, and gestures of others.</p> <p>c. Asserts rights by telling others how he/ she feels,</p> <p>d. Finds ways to help others,</p> <p>e. Seeks out appropriate help when unable to find a solution.</p> <p>7. Respects others and their belongings.</p> <p>a. Uses polite language to recognize peers' accomplishments (e.g., "Good job," "I like..."),</p>	<p>and roles of authority figures (e.g., parents, secretary, principal, teacher, librarian, police officers, firefighters, tribal leaders).</p> <p>7. Recognize that people have basic needs (e.g., food, shelter, clothing) and wants (e.g., toys, games, treats).</p> <p>a. Identify the difference between basic wants and needs,</p> <p>b. Explain that families have needs and wants,</p> <p>c. Describe how basic human needs, such as food, shelter, and clothing, can be met.</p> <p>8. Explain that people have jobs and earn money to meet their needs.</p> <p>a. Identify the jobs in the home and in the school,</p> <p>b. Explain why people work (e.g., to earn money to buy the things they need or want),</p> <p>c. Describe different types of jobs that people do and the tools and equipment that they use,</p> <p>d. Recognize various forms of United States coins and currency.</p> <p>9. Investigate and explain how sym-</p>



TRUE STORY: MATTHEW

3 year-old child had experienced a lot of family transitions

The main intervention the teachers used was when Matthew got upset they told him,

"Matthew, you can say, "I'm so mad!""

The classroom aide pointed out: we don't want him to get labeled as the angry child!

They helped all children to label and express a range of emotions throughout the day.

➡ Within a month they reported a marked decrease in the aggressive behavior.







Domain 3: Social and Emotional Development
Social and Emotional Development: Foundational Skills
Note: In prekindergarten, children are expected to demonstrate increasing awareness and competence in the areas that follow.

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Self Regulation

2. Regulates his/her responses to needs, feelings and events.

- a) Expresses feelings, needs, opinions and desires in a way that is appropriate to the situation.
- b) Appropriately expresses types of emotions (e.g., frustrated, happy, excited, sad) and associates them with facial expressions, words and behaviors.
- c) Demonstrates an ability to independently modify his/her behavior in different situations.



TRUE STORY: ROBERT

4 years-old
Would often fight with preferred play partner over materials
He would grab the item or hit while yelling, "mine" or "I had it"

Prevention:

- I would sit with these 2 children at the beginning of play time/outside play
- I would play with them often asking, "can I have it?" (modelling)
- Watched CLOSELY and prompted Robert to say, "can I have it?" whenever I saw him reaching or even looking at an object

➡ He would repeat my words and soon he started doing this on his own!



New Jersey Department of Education 2014 *Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards* 22

- Provide specific techniques children can learn to use to channel anger, minimize fear, and calm down (e.g., taking three deep breaths, using calming words, pulling self out of play to go to a "safe spot" to relax, listening to soft music, or working with clay).

Preschool Learning Outcomes

Children will:

Preschool Number	Preschool Indicator	P-12 Database Number
0.3.1	Recognize and describe a wide range of feelings, including sadness, anger, fear, and happiness.	0.3.P.A.1
0.3.2	Empathize with feelings of others (e.g., get a blanket for a friend and comfort him/her when he/she feels sad).	0.3.P.A.2
0.3.3	Channel impulses and negative feelings, such as anger (e.g., talking three deep breaths, using calming words, pulling self out of play to go to "safe spot" to relax, expressive activities).	0.3.P.A.3



Infants (Birth-8 months)	Young Toddlers (8-18 months)	Older Toddlers (16-26 months)	Pre-Kindergarten (3-5 years)
STANDARD STATEMENT Comfort self in simple ways and communicate needs for help through vocalizations and gestures. EXAMPLES Cries when hungry, tired, wet, overwhelmed, or scared. Calms self when upset by sucking on fingers or hand. Turns away or yawns when feeling overstimulated. Focuses on a nearby object when feeling overwhelmed. Moves towards an adult who provides comfort.	STANDARD STATEMENT Comfort self in a variety of ways. EXAMPLES Uses comfort objects, such as special blanket or a stuffed animal, to help calm down. Tries to control distress by hugging self, rocking, or sucking thumb. Uses gestures or simple words to express distress and seeks specific kinds of assistance from teachers in order to calm self.	STANDARD STATEMENT Anticipate and seek help to comfort self. EXAMPLES Continues to rely on adults for reassurance and help in controlling feelings and behavior. Asks for food when hungry. Gets blanket and lies down in the quiet corner when sleepy. Says, "Can you rub my back?" when having trouble settling down for a nap. Actively participates in naptime routines such as retrieving a blanket.	



TRUE STORY: BRANDON

4 years-old
Autistic child; inclusive classroom
when he got angry he often ran across the
room and hit

His teacher felt he would get overwhelmed and over-stimulated and sometimes needed a break.

Intervention: when she saw him starting to get upset she said, "Brandon, you can go take a break in the library if you're getting mad. I'll watch your Magnatiles."

➡ Year 2 he would walk away on his own initiative and come back in just seconds.





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FOLLOW
DIRECTIONS

2.0 Self-Regulation	
<p><i>At around 48 months of age</i></p> <p>2.1 Need adult guidance in managing their attention, feelings, and impulses and show some effort at self-control.</p> <p>Children follow simple rules and routines, seek to cooperate, manage classroom transitions, and make efforts at self-control (such as self-soothing and waiting) with adult guidance. Children also easily lose control of their attention, feelings, and behavior.</p> <p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jumps up and down on the couch but stops when asked to do so by a parent or teacher. Manages transitions in the classroom routine (such as moving from play time to cleanup) when helped to anticipate them or provided some choice. When asked by a teacher to share with another child, may initially resist but eventually cooperates. Knows to put away his coat and boots after arriving at the classroom. Is distracted by other children when working. 	<p><i>At around 60 months of age</i></p> <p>2.1 Regulate their attention, thoughts, feelings, and impulses more consistently, although adult guidance is sometimes necessary.</p> <p>Children anticipate routines, cooperate with fewer reminders, can focus attention on the task at hand, and manage transitions. They are more capable of emotional and behavioral self-regulation but sometimes require adult guidance.</p> <p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> May anticipate cleanup after play time and begin cleaning up without being prompted to do so. Puts away books where they belong without being prompted by an adult. Is more capable of focusing attention on a task in a busy classroom and is less distractible than a three-year old. Spontaneously tells the teacher she has broken something. Tells another child about how to treat the classroom pet.



**TRUE STORY:
MORE EXAMPLES THAN I CAN COUNT!**

To help children follow directions at clean up time or other child-directed activities (ie: outdoor play):

- give 2 class warnings (10 mins & 5 mins)
- give 2 individual warnings, as needed
- include an element of choice or something that will be motivational

EXAMPLE: "Natasha, let's put your name on your drawing. We're cleaning up in 5 more minutes so that we can go outside and play with the sand."

Teachers everywhere report that this works!

The BEST way to help children develop the ability to focus and sustain attention...
...is through child-initiated play!

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FOCUS &
SUSTAIN
ATTENTION

**APPROACHES TO LEARNING
TWO-YEAR-OLDS**

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

How does your two-year-old communicate with you about the unknown or newly discovered?
How can you encourage conversation to increase his language skills and knowledge of the world?
What are your two-year-old's favorite stories, toys, and activities? How can you build on those favorites to introduce your two-year-old to new experiences?
How do you observe your two-year-old using familiar things in new and creative ways?

A. EAGERNESS & CURIOSITY

1. Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner

Two-year-olds eagerly explore their environments. They are curious about and aware of changes that they see. They are interested in what others are doing. They expand their own behaviors by imitating those of adults and other children. Two-year-olds show eagerness and curiosity by:

- Showing interest in patterns, such as sorting colored pegs into single color piles, or putting all the small buttons in one container and the big buttons into another container;
- Enjoying opportunities to help parents, caregivers, and teachers, such as assisting with setting the table or folding the clothes;
- Exploring new toys to see how they work;
- Looking at insects, leaves, or other things from nature and examining them and watching them move or grow.

B. PERSISTENCE

1. Spends more time engaging in self-initiated activities and seeks and accepts help when encountering a problem

Two-year-olds pay attention to interesting activities. They enjoy repeating favorite activities, and seeks and accepts help while persisting with difficult tasks. Two-year-olds demonstrate persistence by:



TRUE FACT

If our goal is to help children develop an attention span then the best way to support this is to offer activities that they will find interesting and want to pay attention to!



THE "WHAT": 5 ESSENTIAL SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

STRIVE FOR FIVE



ADOPT OR CREATE A SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILL-BUILDING CURRICULUM




HOW WILL YOU TEACH THESE 5 ESSENTIAL SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SKILLS TO CHILDREN WHO EXHIBIT CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR and all children?

POLL 3

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL CURRICULUM
6 KEY COMPONENTS

- A CLASS PUPPET
- BOOKS
- SONGS
- POSTERS & VISUALS
- GAMES
- PLAY SUPPORT

→ Each component can be used in many ways to teach each of the 5 skills.

A CLASS PUPPET

ENDLESS POTENTIAL! A WAY TO MAKE MAGIC.

- Only the teacher uses the puppet
- Children develop a relationship
- Provide a visual focus
- Use the puppet to:
 - show emotions
 - model skills
 - review rules & directions
 - talk about class problems
 - discuss scenarios at home

IF ANY OF YOUR TEACHERS DO THIS GET THEM TO TEACH THE REST!

FROM ECE PROFESSIONALS...

"I used a puppet yesterday and the children were SO engaged!" - Teacher

"I don't feel very comfortable so I like the idea of using a shy puppet. - Teacher

"I attended your webinar where you discussed puppets... which we had not been using...all research points to the effectiveness...for children experiencing trauma and teaching social skills...I created a training for our teachers and it has been received with enthusiasm and true engagement from participants". - Head Start Professional





USING BOOKS TO TEACH SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

1. Use books designed to teach social-emotional skills
2. Use favorite stories
 - label characters' emotions
 - ask about emotions
 - label wants and needs
 - ask, "...what can she do?"
3. Read books about difficult changes in children's lives
 - death, moving, divorce, new baby, surgery...

TRUE STORY: MARISOL
2.5 years-old physically aggressive new baby at home

Teachers introduced multiple books about new babies

On shelf and read them at circle

Marisol initially said, "stupid book"

...BUT grew interested and expressed feelings re: baby

CREATE A "SPECIAL TOPICS" LIBRARY AND/OR GO TO LIBRARY





HOW CAN YOU USE SONGS TO TEACH...?

- how to identify and express emotions
- asking for what you want or need
- how to calm down
- direction following
- sustained engagement



USE SONGS TO TEACH SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS 

- "If you're **SAD** and you know it..."
- "Can I have it? Can I have it? Please and thank you!"
- "When I'm mad, when I'm really, really, mad I like to take ...3...breaths!" "...stomp..."
- **ANY SONG** or activity that involves copying teaches directions! ...and sustained engagement!

BRAINSTORM AND SHARE SONGS AT STAFF MEETINGS!



MUSIC AND MOVEMENT

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The #1 way to get kids to learn to follow the directions!



FEELINGS POSTER

- A visual representation
- Always on child-level display
- Could also be in book form
- You introduce refer to often
- Children can initiate using
- Make your own
- Most social-emotional curriculum kits will include one
- Download from CSEFEL: <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/modules/2006/feelings-chart-en.pdf>

PRO TIP

DON'T force children to use the feelings poster or say how they are feeling!!!!

...or argue with them about how they are feeling!!!!

No unnecessary power struggles!

COACHES, DIRECTORS, MENTOR TEACHERS, EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE: HELP TEACHERS TO NOT MAKE THIS MISTAKE!

USE GAMES TO TEACH SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS
matching games, memory games...

GAMES
Based on the interests of the child who especially needs help!

PLAY SUPPORT

When we play with children we can...

- build trust and rapport
- convey their play is important
- “feed them the words” to help them express their emotions
- “feed them the words” to help them express their wants and needs
- help them sustain engagement and develop their attention spans
- work on the skills of “leading” and “following” which helps with direction following at other times!

PLAY SUPPORT

STEP 1: Imitate

accept and imitate that is whatever the child is doing

PLAY SUPPORT

STEP 2: Expand

make a very small addition to the play and see if they copy you

“yes, and”




PLAY SUPPORT

STEP 3: Prompt peer interaction

experiment
don't insist

“Matthew, it looks like Lia wants an animal can you give this to her for me please?”

“Lia, tell Matthew what you just told me, “I’m making a zoo!”




The next time a teacher comes to your office to talk to you about a child’s behavior...

REMEMBER

As a program leader you are creating **culture**.

Are you and the teacher in a “growth” vs. “fixed” **mindset** about supporting this child?

The behavior is a sign the child needs to learn a better way to get their **needs** met.

PLAY and playful teaching are your greatest tools.

Work together on identifying **WHAT** social-emotional skill the child needs to learn (positive ways of getting attention counts) and **HOW** to teach it?

...and, maybe they need more **resources**?



 Questions?
Contact Info...

**Download the Teacher Tipsheet
to bring these ideas to your staff!**

<http://www.transformchallengingbehavior.com/blog/tipsheet>

Also, please feel free to get in touch!
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Thank you for the work that you do and for joining us today.

-Barb