

# Implementing PBIS as a Trauma-Informed Approach for Young Students

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## Resource Links:

### **Adversive Childhood Experiences: Video**

[Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\): Impact on brain, body and behaviour - YouTube](#)

### **Checklist of Early Childhood Practices that Support Social Emotional Development and Trauma-Informed Care**

[Layout 1 \(usf.edu\)](#)

### **Trauma-Informed Care and the Pyramid Model**

[Trauma-Informed Care and the Pyramid Model \(usf.edu\)](#)

### **Understanding Program-wide Implementation of the Pyramid Model**

[Program-Wide Implementation \(usf.edu\)](#)

### **Program-wide & SWPBIS Crosswalk**

[pyramid\\_and\\_swpbis\\_crosswalk.pdf \(usf.edu\)](#)

### **Inventory of Practices for Promoting Children's Social Emotional Competence**

[H1.4R2 \(pyramidmodel.org\)](#)

### **Early Childhood Program-Wide PBS Benchmarks of Quality (EC-BOQ) CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS COMPANION**

[Early Childhood Program-Wide PBS Benchmarks of Quality \(EC-BOQ\) CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS COMPANION \(usf.edu\)](#)

## BLUEPRINT: Understanding the Impact of Stress & Trauma on the Brain

Dr. Dan Siegel and Dr. Tina Payne Bryson have a concept in their book "The Whole-Brain Child" that helps us understand the brain in a simple way. It's the *upstairs* and *downstairs* brain.

Picture a brain like a house.

- Downstairs is where important things live. Basic functions like breathing, strong emotions, and innate reactions to danger, like fight, flight or freeze. It's like the downstairs of a house, which is where we almost always find the basics—kitchen, living room, bathroom.
- The upstairs brain is more complex. Thinking, imagining, planning – these things come from the upstairs brain. We use the upstairs brain to think critically, problem solve, and make good decisions. Important to note for those of us working with teens, the upstairs brain is not fully formed until our mid-20s







Most young kids do not yet have the neurological capabilities to calm their downstairs brain. They rely heavily on adults to help them learn calming strategies. As they learn these strategies, they form new neural connections in the brain, which can be strengthened over time (the more they do it, the more the connection is reinforced, the stronger the connections become).

Early educators are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of understanding the impact of trauma on young children and their families and offering trauma-informed care. Children's responses to trauma can include a child's difficulty in relationships and social interactions with peers and adults, challenges in emotional regulation and social skill development, and challenging behavior.

## FOUNDATION: Integration of the The Pyramid Model & Trauma-Sensitive Practices

**The Pyramid Model for Promoting Social and Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children** (Fox, Dunlap, Hemmeter, Joseph, & Strain, 2003; Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox, 2006) provides a multi-tiered approach that has been designed for implementation within early care and education programs. In programs implementing the Pyramid Model, practitioners are guided in how to: 1) establish nurturing and responsive relationships with children and families; 2) provide predictable and supportive environments; 3) promote the development of social, emotional, and behavioral skills; and 4) address challenging behavior through understanding the behavior and designing interventions that are positive and focused on teaching new skills.

Practices that are recommended for providing a **trauma informed educational program** (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017) consist of:

-  Implementing a multi-tiered approach that acknowledges the importance of providing a safe and nurturing environment for all children and more intensive and focused prevention and intervention for children who have social, emotional, or behavioral support needs;
-  Prioritizing the establishment of nurturing and responsive relationships with all children and their families;
-  Offering children predictable routines;
-  Teaching children social, emotional, and behavior regulation skills;
-  Responding to challenging behavior by seeking to understand the behavior and use prevention and instructional strategies to address behavior; and
-  Eliminating the use of exclusionary or punishment responses to challenging behavior (i.e., time-out, suspension).

## FRAMING: Nurturing, Positive & Responsive Relationships

<b>SEL &amp; Trauma-Support CHECKLIST:</b>	<b>I Do This Consistently</b>	<b>I Want to Concentrate on this Practice</b>
Speak to children in a warm, positive, calm, AND supportive manner		
Actively listen to children, showing interest		
Help children feel noticed and 'known' (e.g. "I know how much you like this story." "I know it can be hard for you to calm your body to rest.")		
Respond to children's comments AND ideas by asking questions AND making comments (focus on noticing a child's emotional expression e.g. facial expressions, body language)		
Spend time with individual children and small groups of children – following children's lead in play and engaging in child-directed play with them		
Recognize children's efforts – offer specific non-judgmental praise (e.g., "You put so many colors on your paper.")		
Ask families about strategies they use to comfort their child and help him/her feel soothed and safe		
Share with family members the specific strategies that you are using to develop nurturing and responsive relationships with children		
<b>Social Emotional Competency INVENTORY</b>		
<b>1. Develop meaningful relationships</b> Δ Provide greetings upon arrival Δ Communicate with children at eye level Δ Verbally interact with individual children during routines and activities Δ Participate in children's play when appropriate Δ Speak calmly, respectfully, and with warmth Δ Attend in positive ways at times when children are not engaging in challenging behavior		
<b>2. Examine personal, family, and cultural views of children's challenging behavior</b> Δ Consider personal beliefs regarding the acceptability and unacceptability of specific types of behavior Δ Consider personal beliefs regarding the causes of specific types of unacceptable behavior Δ Acknowledge contrasting or conflicting beliefs held by others regarding acceptable and unacceptable types of behavior		
<b>3. Examine own attitudes toward challenging behavior</b> Δ Understand the relationship between social emotional development and challenging behaviors Δ Consider developmentally appropriate levels for behavior and response strategies for behavioral challenges Δ Understand prevent strategies which decrease the likelihood of challenging behaviors Δ Identify what children's behaviors "push my buttons" and develop strategies for dealing with situations such situations		

## DRY WALL + ROOFING: Positive and Supportive Evidence-based Classroom Practices

<b>SEL &amp; Trauma-Support CHECKLIST:</b>	<b>I Do This Consistently</b>	<b>I Want to Concentrate on this Practice</b>
Encourage children to engage in developing rules and expectations for the class		
Post and visually represent rules and expectations (children can help create visuals)		
Limit the number of rules to no more than four and state them positively		
Children are reminded of upcoming transitions with a consistent approach (i.e., at every transition the teacher says "5 more mins" or sings the same transition song every day)		
Visual prompts of the schedule and routines are available to show children		
Children who need more help with transitions are given individual reminders		
Focus on what behavior you want to see (i.e., what you want children to do: "Use walking feet" versus "Don't run")		
Offer children choices frequently (e.g., "Would you like to read a book or work on puzzle?")		
Ask families about their routines and rules at home; share classroom routines, expectations and rules		
Share strategies you use to create predictable and smooth routines and transitions with families		
<b>Social Emotional Competency INVENTORY</b>		
<p><b>1. Design the physical environment by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>△ Arranging traffic patterns in classroom so there are wide open spaces</li> <li>△ Removing obstacles that make it difficult for children with physical disabilities to move around the room</li> <li>△ Clearly defining boundaries in learning centers</li> <li>△ Arranging learning centers to allow room for multiple children</li> <li>△ Providing a variety of materials in all learning centers</li> <li>△ Designing learning centers so that children spend time evenly across centers</li> <li>△ Consider children's interests when deciding what to put in learning centers</li> <li>△ Make changes and additions to learning centers on a regular basis</li> <li>△ Visually closing learning centers when they are not an options for children to use</li> </ul>		
<p><b>2. Develop schedules and routines by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>△ Designing schedules to include a balance of large group and small group activities</li> <li>△ Visual displaying of schedules to minimize the amount of time children spend making transitions between activities and increase predictability</li> <li>△ Consistently implementing to increase predictability</li> <li>△ Teaching children the schedule paired with school-wide positive behavioral expectations</li> <li>△ Provide explanations when changes in the schedule are necessary</li> </ul>		
<p><b>3. Ensure smooth transitions by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>△ Eliminating excess waiting time with nothing to do</li> <li>△ Teaching positive behavioral expectations associated with transitions</li> <li>△ Provide precorrections prior to transitions</li> <li>△ Individualize precorrections – if necessary – prior to transitions</li> </ul>		
<p><b>4. Design activities to promote engagement by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>△ Planning and conducting large and small group activities with specific goals in mind</li> <li>△ Varying the topics and activities in large group from day to day</li> <li>△ Providing opportunities to be actively involved in large group activities</li> <li>△ Varying speech and intonation to maintain interests in large group activities</li> <li>△ Monitoring children's behavior and plans when children lose interest in large and small group activities</li> <li>△ Using peers as models during small group activities</li> <li>△ Making adaptations and modifications to ensure that all children can be involved in a meaningful way in any activity</li> <li>△ Use a variety of ways to teach positive behavioral expectations to specific activities so that all children understand them</li> <li>△ Using VISUAL SUPPORTS for predictability in large and small groups</li> </ul>		
<p><b>5. Giving directions by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>△ Gaining children's attention before giving directions</li> <li>△ Minimizing the number of directions</li> <li>△ Individualizing the way directions are given</li> </ul>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>△ Giving clear directions that are positive</li> <li>△ Giving time to respond to directions</li> <li>△ Giving choices and options when appropriate</li> <li>△ Following through with positive acknowledgment of children's behavior</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Giving directions by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>△ Gaining children's attention before giving directions</li> <li>△ Minimizing the number of directions</li> <li>△ Individualizing the way directions are given</li> <li>△ Giving clear directions that are positive</li> <li>△ Giving time to respond to directions</li> <li>△ Giving choices and options when appropriate</li> <li>△ Following through with positive acknowledgment of children's behavior</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Establishing positive behavioral expectations for classroom routines by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>△ Teaching positive behavioral expectations in developmentally appropriate ways</li> <li>△ Providing practice opportunities</li> <li>△ Using positive words (avoiding "no" and "don't")</li> <li>△ Keeping rules manageable (no more than 3)</li> <li>△ Frequently reinforcing appropriate behavior</li> <li>△ Identifying consequences for both following and not following expectations/rules</li> <li>△ Following through with consistency and fairness</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. Using positive feedback and encouragement by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>△ Using contingent reinforcement for appropriate behavior &amp; effort</li> <li>△ Providing frequent descriptive feedback and encouragement</li> <li>△ Conveying enthusiasm while giving positive feedback &amp; encouragement</li> <li>△ Providing nonverbal cues of appreciation</li> <li>△ Recognizing that there are multiple means of acknowledgment</li> </ul>



## “What’s in your toolbox?”

### **SHINE THE LIGHT** 5:1 Ratio of Positive Attention

The 5:1 ratio of positive attention is based on research that shows young children are better behaved when adults spend the majority of their time attending to positive behavior and not challenging behaviors. Challenging behavior has many negative consequences. Among these is the tendency for adults to minimize their time with the child in positive, growth-enhancing interactions.

#### **Rationale/Description**

The 5:1 ratio of positive attention is based on research that has shown that children are better behaved in early childhood settings when adults spend the majority of their time attending to positive behavior and not challenging behaviors. At one level it may seem as if maintaining a 5:1 ratio is simple and straight forward. If it was, then everyone would do it. Another thing that we know about challenging behavior is that it has many negative consequences for the “behavior”. Among these is the tendency for adults to minimize their time with the child in positive, growth-enhancing interactions. Many teachers have explained this phenomenon this way, “I just decided to leave him alone for fear that something would set him off.” Of course, over time this can result in the child receiving a 1:5 ratio of positives to negatives!

### **PAINT A PICTURE OF PREDICTABILITY** Visual Schedule

One of the most simple but effective classroom-wide strategies for reducing challenging behavior is to maximize children’s ability to predict what comes next. Having a daily schedule that truly operates to reduce challenging behaviors is not just about having a poster on the wall and doing the same thing every day. It’s about using visual supports, maintaining a routine and keeping all children informed about the routine.

#### **Rationale/Description**

One of the most simple but effective classroom-wide strategies for reducing challenging behavior is to maximize children’s ability to predict what comes next. Developing a daily schedule and directly teaching children what comes next is a great place to start. Having a daily schedule that truly operates to reduce challenging behaviors is not just about having a poster on the wall and doing the same thing every day. It’s about maintaining a routine and keeping all of the children informed about the routine.

### **NAIL DOWN ROUTINES** Directly Teach Routines within Routines

The predictability of a general schedule does not provide enough structure to prevent some children’s challenging behaviors. It is often helpful to specify other levels of predictability with one’s overall classroom schedule and this is where the idea of routines within routines within routines comes into play.

#### **Rationale/Description**

The predictability of a general schedule does not provide enough structure to prevent some children’s challenging behaviors. It is often helpful to specify other levels of predictability with one’s overall classroom schedule and this is where the idea of routines within routines within routines comes into play.

### **MAKE IT STICK** Directly Teach Behavior Expectations

Make certain that all children know precisely what behavioral expectations you have for each routine. Adjust school wide expectations to developmentally match the students in your classroom. It is recommended to use one to three expectations for any one routine.

#### **Rationale/Description**

Make certain that all children know precisely what behavioral expectations you have for each routine. Adjust school wide expectations to developmentally match the students in your classroom. It is recommended to use one to two expectations for any one routine.

### **BUILD OPPORTUNITIES** Directly Teach Peer-Related Social Skills

Build opportunities through careful planning around routines & activities and arranging the environment to support peer interaction. Provide opportunities for children to engage in more social interactions throughout the day and have more opportunities to practice emerging social skills. Routine activities such as snack, arrival time, and clean up time allow for practice, maintenance and generalization of social skills.

#### **Rationale/Description**

Build opportunities through careful planning around routines & activities and arranging the environment to support peer interaction. Provide opportunities for children to engage in more social interactions throughout the day and have more opportunities to practice emerging social skills. Routine activities such as snack, arrival time, and clean up time allow for practice, maintenance and generalization of social skills.

# PAINTING Promoting Social Emotional Competence

<b>SEL &amp; Trauma-Support CHECKLIST:</b>	<b>I Do This Consistently</b>	<b>I Want to Concentrate on this Practice</b>
Respond to children's feelings and expressions by commenting on their facial expressions, body language etc. (e.g., "You look worried")		
Show children a range of emotions; adults should ensure that their affect reflects emotions such as joy, curiosity, concern, pleasure to be working with children etc.		
Teach children a range of vocabulary words related to feelings—using visuals of feeling faces, commenting on facial expressions, reading books about emotions etc.		
Read stories about children's feelings and various common child experiences (i.e., the death of a pet, the arrival of a new sibling, etc.)		
Label one's own emotional states and provide an action statement about them (e.g., "I am feeling frustrated so I better take some deep breaths and calm down")		
Encourage children to express their emotions through music, art and play		
Teach children (and regularly practice) strategies for regulating emotions such as mindfulness (i.e., mindful walking, eating, breathing, noticing sounds, sights, tastes, smells, the feel of things around them; deep breathing; tin man/wet noodle; quiet/loud; Tucker Turtle; red light/green light; Mother May I; smell the flower/blow the bubble etc.)		

## Social Emotional Competency INVENTORY

### 1. Developing friendship skills and peer relationships

- △ Utilize peers as models of desirable social skills
- △ Encourage peer partners/buddies
- △ Demonstrate sensitivity to peer preferences and personalities
- △ Understand developmentally appropriate levels of interaction for parallel and cooperative play
- △ Develop interaction opportunities within classroom routines
- △ Provide sincere, enthusiastic feedback to promote and maintain social interactions
- △ Wait until interactions are finished before reinforcing; avoid interrupting interactions
- △ Give general reminders to "play with your friends"
- △ Facilitate interactions by supporting and suggesting play ideas
- △ Ensure that interactions are mostly child-directed not teacher-directed during free play
- △ Provide role-playing opportunities for learning friendship skills
- △ Incorporate cooperative games, lessons, stories and activities
- △ Structure activities to encourage and teach sharing, turn-taking, requesting and working cooperatively
- △ Integrate friendship skills through cooperative learning and curriculum activities

### 2. Emotional Literacy and Self-Regulation

- △ Develop appropriate receptive and expressive "feeling" vocabulary
- △ Structure activities to label positive and negative feelings (paired with actions to regulate)
- △ Provide opportunities to model and label own emotional state and provide an action statement (I am feeling frustrated, so I better take some deep breaths and calm down)
- △ Use opportunities to comment on occasions when children state they are feeling upset or angry but are remaining calm
- △ Help children recognize cues of emotional escalation
- △ Integrate emotional literacy and self-regulation skills within cooperative learning and curriculum activities

### 3. Problem Solving

- △ Systematically teach the problem-solving steps:  
What is my problem? / What are some solutions? / What would happen next? / Try out the solutions
- △ "Problematises" situations throughout the day to allow children opportunities to generate solutions
- △ Take time to support children through the problem-solving process during heated moments
- △ Comment on and reinforce children's problem-solving efforts
- △ Help children identify appropriate choices
- △ Help children try solutions until the situation is appropriately resolved
- △ Display photographs of children working out situations
- △ Integrate problem solving skills within cooperative learning and curriculum activities