Meeting the Challenge of Challenging Behaviors

We can change the trajectory of the life of a child whose behaviors impede learning. The Pyramid Model of Social Emotional Competence provides us a framework to succeed in this powerful role. When implemented program-wide, as in the two programs highlighted below, the results can be amazing.

“Kicking it up a Notch” With the Pyramid Model

Nancy G. Willman, Program Administrator at Goodwill Industries’ A Child’s Place at the Kenosha County Job Center, reports that their entire staff took the Pyramid Model training and they now incorporate aspects from the training in monthly staff meetings. Even though they were already doing many of the things presented in the training, they could—and did—“kick it up a notch” and got much better results in terms of relationships and their overall environment. Not only did they make changes in the physical environment, but in the social interaction environment as well—how people communicate and treat each other.

Teachers at A Child’s Place are proud that this has become the culture in their program. They “speak the language of social emotional competence.” They have steps to follow in challenging situations and they are more confident in their ability to handle situations with children because they have strategies that work. Parents have become involved, too, resulting in positive changes in relationships with them as well, and carryover at home.

Staff at A Child’s Place was extremely encouraged when Rebecca Breda, their YoungStar Formal Rating Observer, told the program she had observed some of the best conversations between teachers and children and teacher-to-teacher. At A Child’s Place, Nancy Willman feels it’s all a work in progress, but with support from coaches, staff will continue to use what they have learned through the Pyramid Model Training with children, parents and each other.

Cover story continued on page 3...
Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA) is a statewide nonprofit organization for early childhood professionals. With offices in Madison and Milwaukee, WECA offers training, professional development, educational scholarships, retention rewards, a child nutrition program, and more. WECA calls for greater public investment in early education and promotes excellence in the child care profession.

Stay involved...

Read our blog at wisconsinearlychildhood.wordpress.com

facebook.com/wisconsinearlychildhood

Attend the WECA Annual Conference
Wisconsin Dells, Oct 10-12, 2013

Contribute to this newsletter

Visit WECA’s website by scanning the barcode below with your smart phone:

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When you say the word “workforce”, what do you think of? It sounds massive, strong, and even powerful. Then I think about the Early Care and Education Workforce. We are very powerful when we are working to benefit children and families.

The workforce showed its power at the 2012 WECA Annual Conference in Waukesha which offered many ways to enjoy being together—nearly 500 early education professionals attended. We had opportunities to relax, go for a walk, meet new people, weave on a loom, eat with friends, and much more. The Conference can be a busy time but it also lets us enjoy friends and time away from the regular, everyday struggles of our lives. For those who missed the conference this year, I encourage you to join us in 2013. It’s an exciting way to support our workforce.

Speaking of our workforce, as a field, we are seeing a renewed interest in teaching children social-emotional competence. My question to you is: Who is taking care of your social-emotional well-being? If you are like most of us, we come last on the list of things to do. I want to challenge you to consider how to make sure you are spending time and energy to renew and revitalize your spirit and enthusiasm. Take some time to relax with soft music and reflect on where you have been and where you plan to go.

Personal care includes keeping appointments for yourself, allowing time to do nothing, and especially time to have some fun. Laughter is the best medicine—and it’s also easier to take than most other medications. I ask you to plan for some personal time. Find a good book, a good movie, or something that lets you enjoy being you. In this world of hurry and hustle, I ask you to slow down and take a breath.

Most of all I want to say make each day special in some way. Take time to laugh, smile, rest, and help others do the same. Love, Luck, Laughter—Faith, Family, and Friends. These are the most important things to me. May they become important to you, too.

Susan Schimke
Now That’s “Emotional Literacy”
The CAP Services Head Start in Stevens Point started by implementing the Pyramid Model in the Family Development Center, and now they will be implementing it agency-wide. Diane Shaver, Center Director and Shannon Piotrowski, Special Services Manager at CAP Services believe the foundation of Head Start is compatible with the foundation of the Pyramid Model: establishing relationships and working with parents in all aspects of the program.

The teachers at the Family Development Center report that the children can now identify and talk about their emotions, for example, children talk about being “frustrated” and why. That’s “emotional literacy”. The whole staff is now working as a team: classroom teachers, home visitors, support staff, and parents, providing the consistency children need.

Joan Rice, the program’s external coach, says, “They have been successful in implementing the Pyramid Model because they are committed to the work, and program leadership made the commitment of staff time and resources to participate fully in the program.”

The staff met monthly for training and was gradually introduced to new strategies. Staff had a month to think about changes they wanted to make, get needed materials, and try out their ideas. Internal coaches provided ongoing support throughout the process.

With the commitment of time and their passion for doing what is best for children, CAP Services Head Start has seen amazing results. They believe in the future success of the children because they have the skills to maintain good relationships and communicate effectively.

For more information on the Pyramid Model and helpful resources, go to: www.collaboratingpartners.com.

You can also get information about scheduled trainings and qualified trainers to learn about and implement the Pyramid Model for Social and Emotional Competence.

A worksheet to build on the cover story:

Building Social Emotional Competence in Children Begins with Reflective Teachers

The Pyramid Model has as a foundation “an effective workforce”... that’s YOU. From that base, we focus on the quality of our relationships with children and the learning environments we create for them. All children need attention paid to these areas and when that happens well, 80% of challenging behavior can be eliminated. As we move up the Pyramid, we recognize that some children need more, which we call “targeted strategies”. And then we get to the top of the Pyramid to find that if all else is done well, only a few children need individualized intervention.

Let’s start at the base of the Pyramid, with YOU, and what you’ve learned about relationships:

1) Think of someone really special to you when you were growing up.

2) What made you think of this person?

3) Imagine that one day a child whose behavior is challenging to you today, when he or she is grown, is asked this same question. Imagine that YOU are named. What are you doing now to make you so important or special in his or her life?

Begin each day as if this were true!
Stand Up For Children!

Become a WECA Advocate!

WeCA is deeply committed to keeping the needs of young children and early childhood professionals visible, valued and funded. But to do that, we need your voice. Advocates will receive periodic “calls to action” - usually asking you to send an email to your elected officials. WECA makes it easy - providing pre-filled fields with your legislator’s contact information.

Sign up at wisconsinearlychildhood.org

Advocacy: What’s Next?

Use this calendar to stay up to date with what’s happening in the world of advocacy. Funding to early childhood programs is greatly impacted by federal and state budgets. We have a busy year ahead of us!

October 2012


November 2012

December 2012

Jan. 2, 2013 Automatic, across-the-board federal spending cuts - known as "the sequester" - scheduled to begin.

January 2013

Dec. 31, 2012 Multiple legislative provisions are scheduled to expire including tax cuts and emergency unemployment benefits.

February 2013

Feb./Mar. 2013 Congress will need to raise the debt ceiling again and renegotiate a spending/appropriations bill for the remainder of FY 2013.

March 2013


April 2013

Feb. - June 2013 Wisconsin State Legislature Joint Finance Committee works on the state budget.

May 2013

June 2013 Wisconsin State Legislature votes on the state budget.

June 2013

July 1, 2013 Wisconsin state fiscal year begins.

July 2013
1. Know your own “hot buttons” so when they’re pushed you can stop and think, “What is this child trying to tell me?”
2. Take some deep breaths to calm yourself. Invite the child to take some deep breaths, too!
3. Provide the child (and yourself) with a distraction like a rhyme or finger play to calm down, like this one: “I have a little mouse, and he has a little house, and he lives right here” (doing it on his hand and going up his arm). We both feel more relaxed.
4. Walk away, if even for a moment. Make sure you’re in the right frame of mind BEFORE trying to talk about what has happened.
5. In the most difficult of situations, when the child and I can’t resolve a problem, I’ll call the parent and ask for their help by talking with their child. It’s a last resort not to be used often, but it can work.
6. Calm down together: My staff and I find it very helpful to sit down on the floor and look the child in the eye while holding hands with a calm and peaceful look on our faces.
7. Make sure you’re providing lots of praise and encouragement to everyone throughout the day. The positive energy it creates will help you in the hard times.
8. Try the “tag team” approach: let a co-teacher handle a situation that’s difficult. It models for the children that others can help when we are overwhelmed.
9. Reflect on what you’ve learned about the impact of classroom arrangement on behavior, the need for children to be engaged in rule setting, the importance of children having a “feeling vocabulary”… and then strive for the changes that will make tomorrow better.
10. Chocolate... There is always chocolate!! Every now and then we HAVE to have some chocolate at break time!!

These suggestions came from the following WECA Members:
- Gina Hobbs, WECA Professional Development Counselor, Milwaukee
- Catherine Roach, Toddler Teacher, Grandma’s House, Brookfield
- Patti Robinson, Precious Few Child Care, Wilmot
- Diana Smith, Centennial Family Child Care, River Falls
- Celeste and Scott Swoboda, Teddy Bear Totland Child Care, Chippewa Falls
- Sharlene Weibel, YWCA Child Center Director, YWCA of the Coulee Region, La Crosse
- Annette Wilburn, Christian Love Child Care, Milwaukee

Have an idea for a top 10 list?
Email Kelly at kchambers@wisconsinearlychildhood.org to be featured in an upcoming WECA newsletter!
In Recognition & Appreciation
Presenting the 2012 “Above & Beyond” Award Recipients!

Awardees were honored at the Professional Development Luncheon on October 5, 2012 during the WECA Annual Conference. The recipients remind us to acknowledge “the everyday hero” in all who care for and educate young children. Congratulations and thank you.

**Early Childhood Teacher of the Year (three awards)**

**Lori Maypark**, teacher at the Hudson Community Children’s Center, is most notable for her classroom management skills. Recently Lori and her colleagues engaged in Pyramid Model Training. She took what she learned to heart and implemented many new strategies in her classroom. The transformation in children’s behavior has been nothing short of remarkable!

**Tina Rabis** is described as “an energetic teacher who goes above and beyond the expectations in the experiences she brings each and every day to the children” at St. Mary’s Early Childhood Center in Green Bay. Tina is especially noted for her fun and educational science activities, and her willingness to share her ideas with her colleagues.

**Estella Garcia-Ortega** represents the next generation of early childhood teachers. Working in a bilingual accredited family child care program in Milwaukee (X’s and O’s Educational Child Care), Estella strives each day to prepare children to live in a world of diversity. She offers them inspiration to learn and opportunities for success.

**Outstanding Partner in Early Education and Care**

**The Reading Buddies**, a corps of 50 some volunteers who once a month – rain or shine – read to children of Head Start/Early Childhood and Parkside Day Care Center in Merrill. Children building their literacy skills are read to as a part of this intergenerational experience; they also enjoy activities related to their book, get to take a book home each month, and receive the kindness of wonderful members of their community. Betty Ann Tubbin, one of the founders of The Reading Buddies 15 years ago, accepted the award.

**Outstanding Service**

**Julie Betchkal** is described as one who has “an infectious passion for early childhood.” Julie has excelled in many roles in our profession because of her strong leadership skills and her understanding and compassion for children and their families with and without special needs. Currently she is the state trainer for Wisconsin Pyramid Model training from her home base in Turtle Lake – CESA #11 Agency School District.

**Collaborative Team of the Year**

**Little Sprouts Discovery Center Teaching Team and Staff**. Director Krista Sobieski nominated her staff – Cheryl Sobieski, Erin Lang, Geri Loeck, Jennifer Kester, Allie Henke, Johanna Hopp, Karen Wittman, Cindy Zastrow, Tiffany Faccio and Kim Jacobi – because she says, “They are collaborating continually every day with programs in our area, building partnerships and often doing lots of extra work to make these multiple collaborations happen.” Krista adds that the dedication of program staff is too often underestimated and underappreciated. Little Sprouts is located in Red Granite, Waushara County.
The faculty of the Early Childhood Program has developed a new cohort designed specifically for students transferring with an applied associate of science degree in Early Childhood Education from a Wisconsin Technical College. The Early Childhood Program is a dual licensure program in which students earn a bachelor of science in education degree and can be recommended for licensure to teach both regular education and special education up to third grade in Wisconsin Public Schools. Courses are taught primarily online with six Saturday on-campus sessions a semester.

Learn more at uww.edu/coe/ece4u

Kristal Kagy: kagyk@uww.edu • 262-374-4433

The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater Early Childhood Program is the only dual licensure program in Wisconsin recognized by NAEYC and CEC/DEC.
What’s inside?
• Cover Story: Social-Emotional Development with hands-on worksheet
• Advocacy Calendar
• Top 10!
• “Above & Beyond” Awards

Where is your pathway to quality taking you?

Take the next step on your path as an early childhood professional.

WECA membership is designed to help you grow in the field, advocate for your needs, and provide you resources to give children your best.

To learn more, visit wisconsinearlychildhood.org and continue on your pathway to quality.

Thank you!