

CALECSE

California Early Childhood Special Education Network

Funded by the California Department of Education (CDE), Special Education Division

Tiny But Mighty: Growing Inclusive Transitional Kindergarten (TK) Classrooms

Part 4: Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Positive Behavior Support

ABOUT CalECSE

Funded by the CDE

Supporting Educators. Strengthening Partnerships. Improving Outcomes.

Explore. Learn. Connect.
Visit the CalECSE Network website for no-cost trainings, communities of practice, practical tools, and resources.

California Early Childhood Special Education Network (CalECSE)

A CDE-funded technical assistance project supporting local educational agencies (LEAs), Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs), county offices of education (COEs), and agency partners through:

- Professional learning
- Technical assistance
- Evidence-based resources
- Cross-agency collaboration

Mission

Strengthen early childhood systems to improve outcomes for young children with disabilities and their families.

Leadership Team



Scott Turner
Co-Executive Director



Melanie Hertig
Co-Executive Director



Carrie Rodrigues
Program Specialist, Exemplar Leads



Sara Castille
Program Specialist, Northern California



Laura Clarke
Program Specialist, Southern California

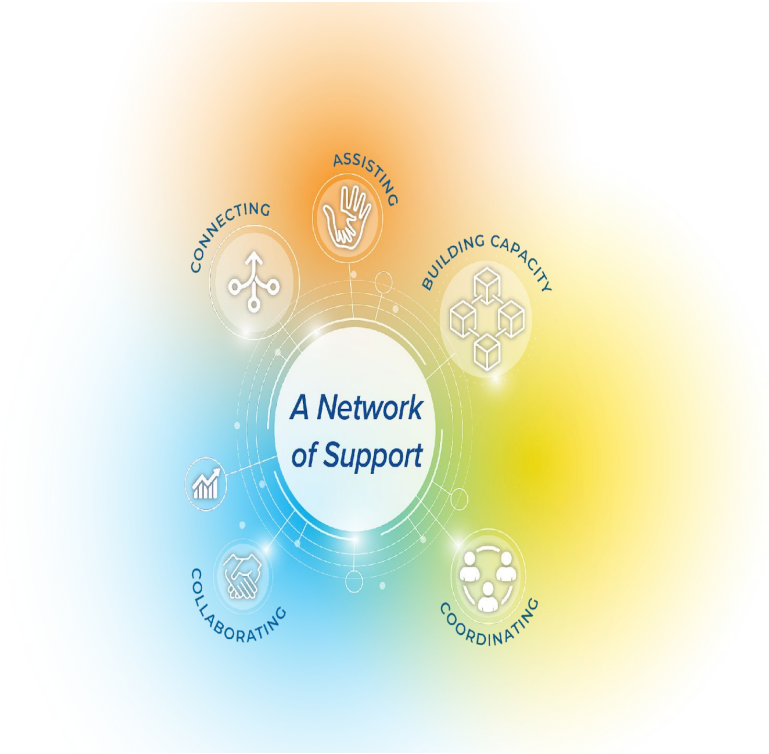


André Eng
Program Specialist, Birth to Three

Today's Presenters

Carrie Rodrigues
Program Specialist, Exemplar Leads
crodrigues@calecse.org

Sara Castille
Program Specialist, Northern California
scastille@calecse.org



CALECSE
California Early Childhood Special Education Network

Today's Agenda

- Building on What We've Learned
- Explicitly Teaching Social-Emotional Skills to All Children
- Understanding Behavior in Early Childhood
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in the Early Childhood Classroom
- Tier Two: Secondary Prevention and Targeted Social-Emotional Supports

Building on What We've Learned

Tiny But Mighty: Growing Inclusive Transitional Kindergarten (TK) Classrooms Series

Part 1: Developmentally Appropriate Practices and Play-Based Learning

View Part 1 presentation slides (PDF)

Watch Part 1 training recording

Part 2: Supporting Toileting and Independence in Transitional Kindergarten (TK)

View Part 2 presentation slides (PDF)

Watch Part 2 training recording

Part 3: Tier 1 Supports and Evidence-Based Classroom Practices

View Part 3 presentation slides (PDF)

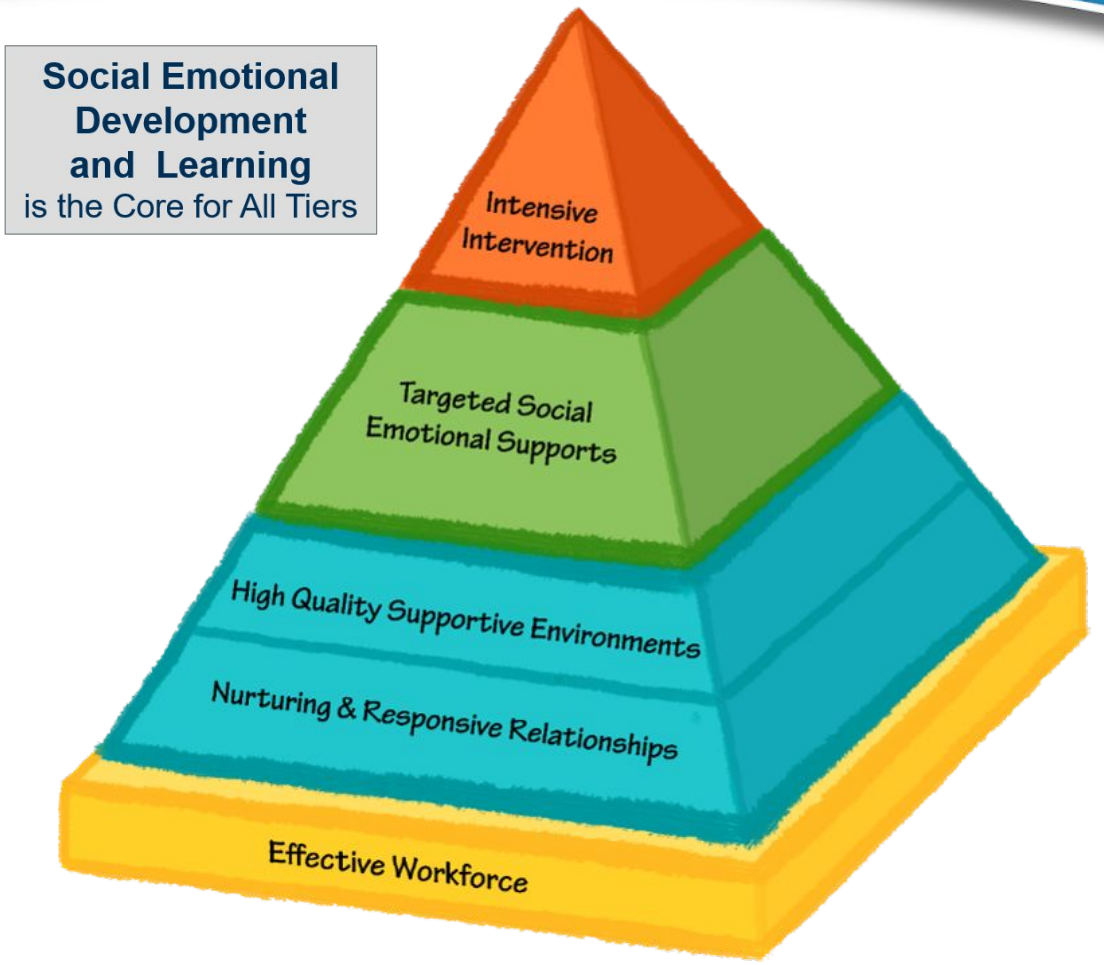
Watch Part 3 training recording

CALECSE
California Early Childhood Special Education Network

The Pyramid Model

The Pyramid Model is a framework of evidence-based practices that promotes social-emotional competence and addresses the behavioral support needs of all young children, including children with disabilities and children who need intensive individualized supports.

Throughout this training, we will reference the Pyramid Model Practices Implementation Checklist for Preschool (2–5) Classrooms to support implementation of these practices.



Source: National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI). Pyramid Model Basics: Overview of the Pyramid Model.

Explicitly Teaching Social-Emotional Skills to All Children

New Research: Teaching Social-Emotional Skills at Age Four: Benefits That Last Into Adulthood

A longitudinal follow-up of a randomized controlled trial examined the long-term outcomes of children who participated in the Head Start Research-Based, Developmentally Informed (REDI) intervention.

Key Findings at Ages 21–22

- **Lasting benefits:** Participants assigned to REDI showed statistically significant advantages on seven of 11 young adult well-being outcomes.
- **Mental health:** Participants reported fewer depressive symptoms, less loneliness, and fewer conduct problems.
- **Social-emotional functioning**: Participants reported greater empathy, more emotional support, and higher life satisfaction.
- **Physical well-being:** Participants reported more healthy days.
- **Early adversity:** Findings suggested that the intervention may help buffer some negative associations between childhood adversity and later adjustment.

Implications for TK: Intentional social-emotional instruction, combined with language-rich learning experiences and supportive teacher-child interactions, may contribute to long-term positive outcomes.

Source: Bierman et al. (2026). Promoting resilience with social-emotional learning: Young adult follow-up of a preschool randomized-controlled trial. American Psychologist.

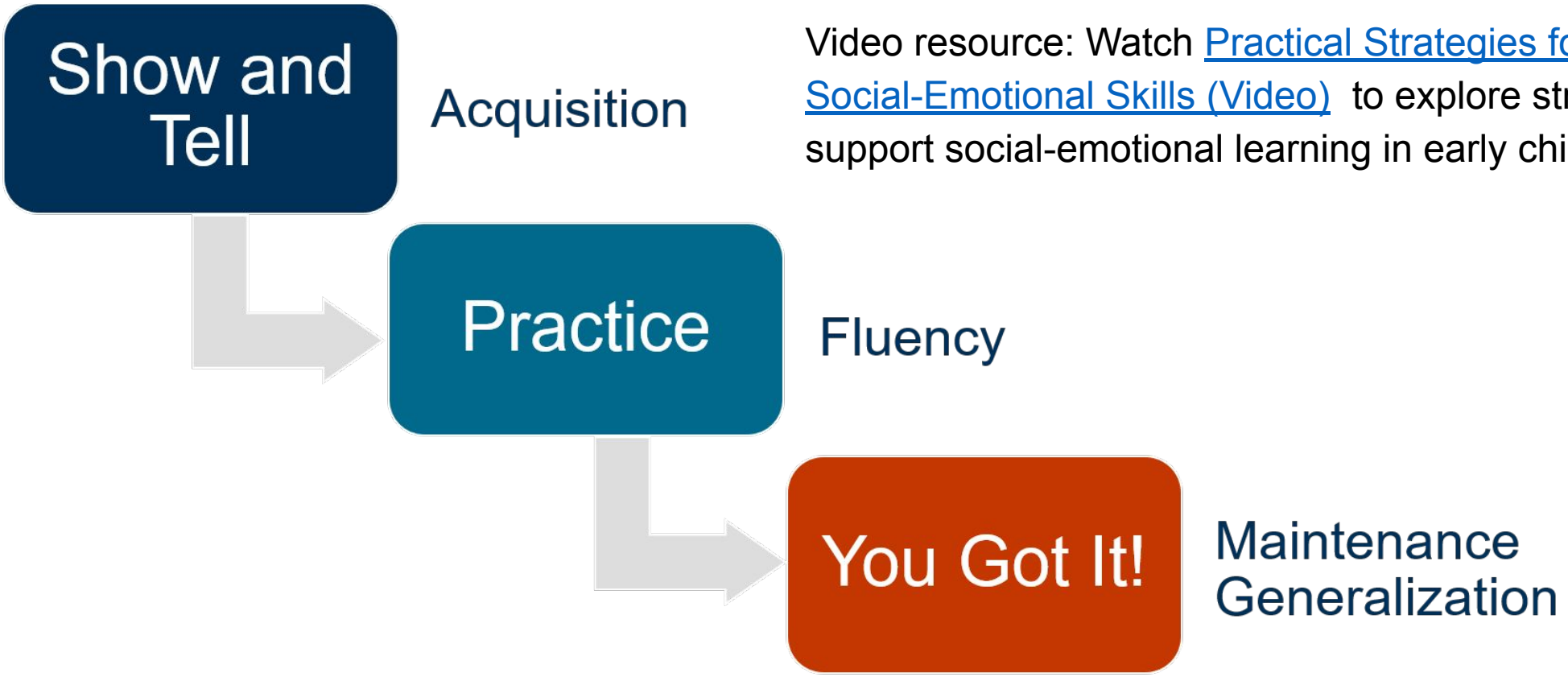
Teach Social-Emotional Skills Through Direct Instruction and Embedded Learning

- Social-emotional skills develop through modeling, direct instruction, play, repetition, and supportive feedback.
- Embed teaching throughout familiar classroom routines.
- Provide multiple ways for children to communicate, participate, and demonstrate their skills.
- Introduce a skill, practice it in meaningful contexts, and support independent use over time.



Source: NCPMI. *Preschool Module 3: Teaching Social-Emotional Skills*.

Stages of Learning Any New Skill



Video resource: Watch Practical Strategies for Teaching Social-Emotional Skills (Video) to explore strategies that can support social-emotional learning in early childhood settings.

Source: NCPMI. *Preschool Module 3: Teaching Social-Emotional Skills*.

Friendship Skills: Helping Children Connect



- Entering and joining play.
- Initiating interactions with peers.
- Requesting materials and turns.
- Cooperating on shared projects.
- Offering and accepting help.

Source: NCPMI. *Preschool Module 3: Teaching Social-Emotional Skills*.

What Do Friendship Skills Look Like in Young Children?

- Initiate interactions and join peer activities.
- Share materials and take turns.
- Suggest ideas for cooperative play.
- Offer and accept help.
- Demonstrate caring behaviors.
- Give compliments and encouragement.
- Recognize and respond to others' feelings.

Source: NCPMI. *Preschool Module 3: Teaching Social-Emotional Skills*.

CALECSE
California Early Childhood Special Education Network

Teaching Friendship Skills in Transitional Kindergarten Classrooms



National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI) provides practical strategies and visual supports to help teachers explicitly teach friendship skills and reinforce them throughout the school day.

- **Teach explicitly:** Model sharing, turn-taking, requesting materials, and joining play through stories, puppets, and role-play.
- **Embed practice:** Create opportunities to use friendship skills during centers, outdoor play, and cooperative activities.
- **Provide individualized support:** Use visuals, prompting, peer modeling, and positive descriptive feedback.

Resources:
Explore NCPMI Preschool Module 3: Teaching Social-Emotional Skills
Download NCPMI Peer-Mediated Strategies Posters (PDF)

Source: NCPMI. *Preschool Module 3: Teaching Social-Emotional Skills*.

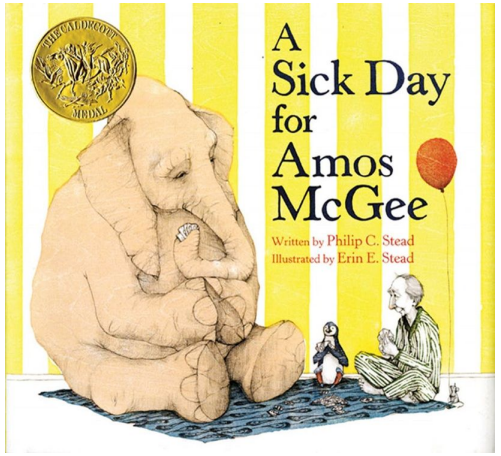
Using Literature to Teach Friendship Skills

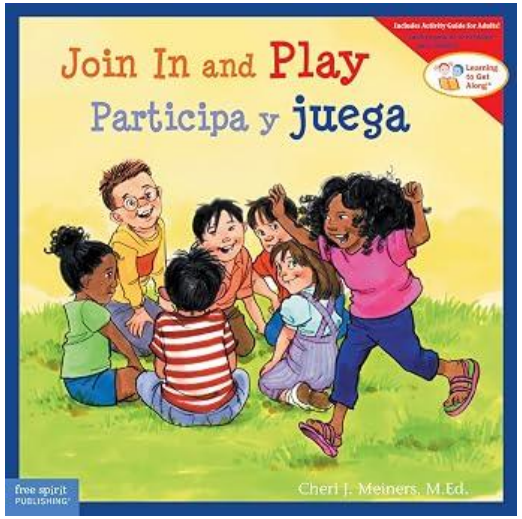
- Select a children's book that models a specific friendship skill.
- Choose culturally responsive books that reflect diverse identities, family structures, cultures, languages, and people with a range of abilities and disabilities.
- Pause during reading to ask questions about characters' feelings, actions, and relationships.
- Reinforce the skill through art, dramatic play, blocks, puppets, and child-created stories.

Resource: [Explore the NCPMI Book Nook collection for social-emotional learning](#).

Source: NCPMI. *[Preschool Module 3: Teaching Social-Emotional Skills](#)*.









Embedding Social-Emotional Learning Throughout the Day with Intention



Source: Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. (2017). Inventory of practices for promoting children's social-emotional competence (adapted by WestEd San Marcos)

Use this Embedding Friendship Opportunities Matrix to intentionally plan opportunities to teach, practice, and reinforce social-emotional skills across daily classroom routines.

- **Identify opportunities:** Select routines and activities where children can naturally practice friendship skills, such as joining play, sharing materials, taking turns, and helping peers.
- **Model and teach:** Demonstrate the targeted skill using puppets, role-play, or adult modeling.
- **Embed practice:** Provide opportunities to practice during planned activities and authentic peer interactions.
- **Prompt, acknowledge, and reinforce:** Use individualized prompts and specific, positive descriptive feedback to support children's use of the skill throughout the day.

Emotional Literacy: Recognizing and Expressing Feelings









- Teach a broad vocabulary for emotions.
- Use photographs, books, puppets, and mirrors.
- Model naming emotions without labeling them as good or bad.
- Recognize that emotional expression differs across children and cultures.
- Support children in identifying emotions in themselves and others without requiring eye contact or interpretation of facial expressions alone.

Source: NCPMI. *Preschool Module 3: Teaching Social-Emotional Skills*.

CALECSE
California Early Childhood Special Education Network

Resources for Classrooms

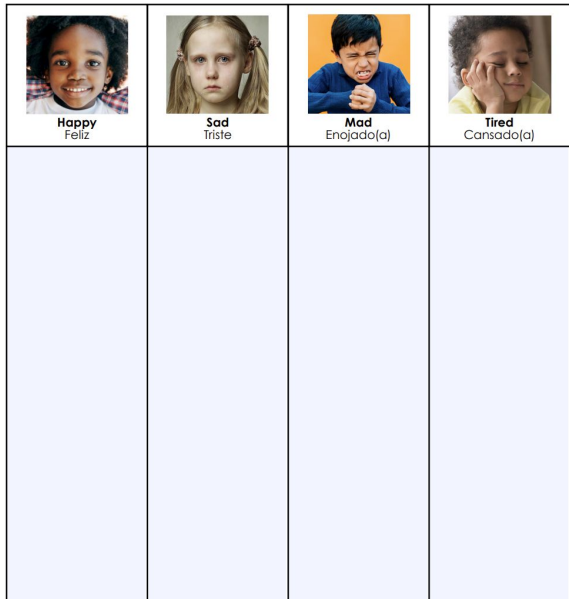
Video: [Using Children's Literature to Explore Recognizing and Expressing Feelings (National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations [NCPMI])]

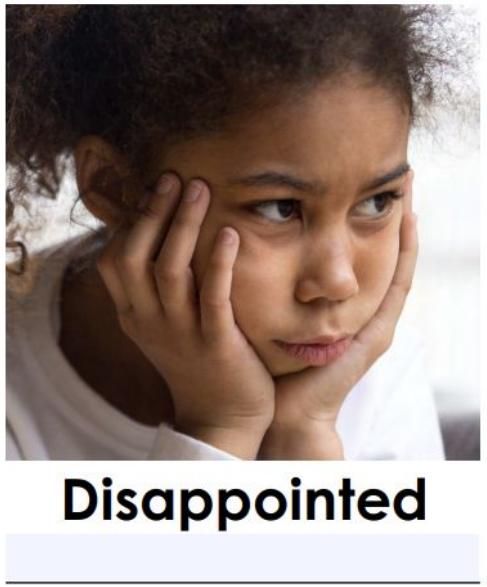
Watch a teacher use a children's book to help children recognize, identify, and express emotions through shared reading and guided discussion.

[NCPMI Practical Strategies for Teachers]

Explore free, evidence-based resources from NCPMI to support teaching social-emotional skills in early childhood classrooms. Resources include practical strategies, visual supports, and activities to help children develop emotional literacy, self-regulation, friendship skills, and problem-solving skills.

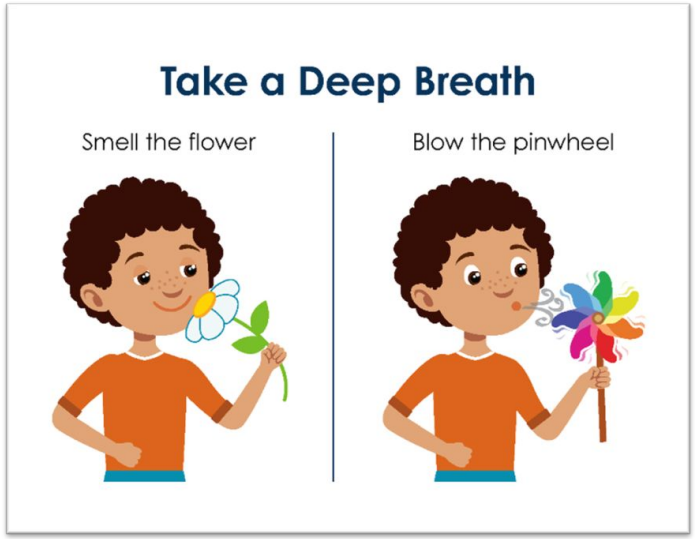
Source: NCPMI. *Preschool Module 3: Teaching Social-Emotional Skills*.







Teaching Self-Regulation and Managing Strong Emotions











- Adults support co-regulation by responding calmly, acknowledging children's emotions, and providing individualized support.
- Teach calming and coping strategies when children are regulated. Build into daily routines.
- Explicitly teach and practice breathing, movement, sensory supports, requesting space, and asking for help.
- Use the NCPMI Breath and Blow breathing strategy to teach young children a simple calming technique that supports emotional regulation. Model and practice the strategy during calm moments to help children develop skills they can use when experiencing frustration, stress, or other strong emotions.
- Provide children with choices about which strategies work for them.
- Recognize that regulation does not always mean being still, compliant, or quiet.

Source: NCPMI. (2020). Help us stay calm: Strategies that help you and your child during challenging behavior.

CALECSE
California Early Childhood Special Education Network

Sensory Supports: Individualizing the Classroom Environment



Children have different sensory preferences and support needs. Teachers can provide flexible, developmentally appropriate options that promote participation and regulation.

- **Movement:** Offer movement breaks, opportunities to stand or change positions, and active play.
- **Sound:** Provide access to quieter spaces and optional noise-reducing headphones.
- **Touch:** Respect children's personal space and preferences for physical contact.
- **Oral sensory needs:** Collaborate with families and qualified professionals to identify safe, hygienic alternatives when needed.
- **Flexible seating:** Offer appropriate seating and positioning choices that support comfort and participation.
- **Individualization:** Observe children's responses and adjust supports based on their preferences, safety, and functional needs.





Sources:
Division for Early Childhood. (2014). DEC recommended practices in early intervention/early childhood special education.
Office of Head Start. Implementing a curriculum to support all learners.
Office of Head Start. Responsive learning environments.

CALECSE
California Early Childhood Special Education Network

Create a Calming Space

A calming space is a supportive, welcoming area where children can practice recognizing and regulating their emotions with adult guidance.

- **Create an inviting environment:** Designate a quiet, comfortable area with soft seating, visual supports, and a limited selection of calming materials.
- **Support co-regulation:** Help children recognize their feelings, offer reassurance, and guide them in choosing strategies that meet their needs.
- **Promote independence:** Explicitly introduce and practice using the calming space when children are regulated, so they understand how to access it independently or with adult support. Use visual cues and individualized supports to help children recognize when they need a break and return to classroom activities when ready.
- **Keep it positive and accessible:** Make the space available to all children as a supportive resource, **never as punishment or exclusion.**

Explore NCPMI's Practical Strategies for Teaching Social-Emotional Skills.

Source: NCPMI, *Practical Strategies*.





When Universal Social-Emotional Instruction Is Not Enough



- Some children need additional opportunities to learn and practice specific skills.
- More explicit modeling, repetition, prompting, and feedback may be needed through targeted intervention.
- Partner with families to understand the child's strengths, needs, and experiences across settings
- Data may need to be collected to determine situations and environmental factors associated with the behavior.
- Individualized instruction according to children's communication, developmental, and learning needs.
- Monitor whether the support is helping.
- Collaborate with classroom staff, families, and relevant specialists to plan and monitor supports.

Source: NCPMI. (2025). *Tier 2 and the Pyramid Model*.

Understanding Behavior in Early Childhood

Understanding Behavior in Early Childhood

- Young children's behavior must be understood within the context of their developmental abilities, relationships, and learning environments.
- Behaviors that may be concerning in older children can be developmentally typical for preschool-aged children.
- Effective positive behavior support emphasizes prevention, explicit social-emotional instruction, and individualized, assessment-based interventions.
- Understanding children's developmental and behavioral support needs helps educators select appropriate strategies.

Source: Dunlap, G., & Fox, L. (2015). The Pyramid Model: PBS in early childhood programs and its relation to school-wide PBS. Pyramid Model Consortium.

Functions of Behavior

The SEAT acronym can help educators remember four commonly identified functions of behavior:

1. Sensory/automatic
2. Escape/avoidance
3. Attention
4. Tangible/access



Source: Borgmeier, C. Teaching function of behavior to all staff [Presentation slides]. Center on PBIS.

Identifying Possible Functions of Behavior



Let's brainstorm examples of behaviors that may serve each function:

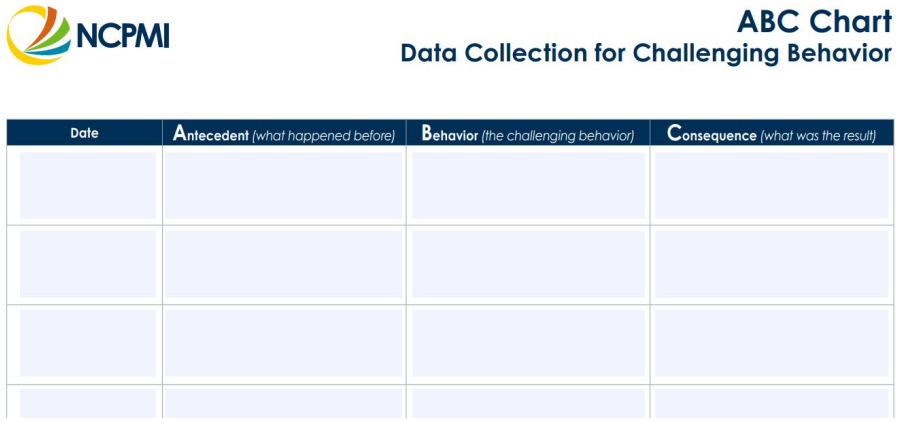
- Sensory/automatic: A child repeatedly taps a surface because the sound or sensation is reinforcing.
- Escape/avoidance: A child moves away when a difficult activity begins.
- Attention: A child calls out and receives a response from an adult.
- Tangible/access: A child reaches for a toy being used by another child.

Source: Borgmeier, C. Teaching function of behavior to all staff [Presentation slides]. Center on PBIS.

Determining the Function

The NCPMI Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (ABC) Chart helps educators document what occurs before, during, and after a behavior.

1. **Antecedent:** What happened immediately before the behavior?
2. **Behavior:** What did the child do? Describe the observable action.
3. **Consequence:** What happened immediately after the behavior, including responses from others or changes in the environment?


NCPMI

ABC Chart
Data Collection for Challenging Behavior

Date	Antecedent *(what happened before)*	Behavior *(the challenging behavior)*	Consequence *(what was the result)*

Source: NCPMI. ABC chart

Using ABC Data to Develop a Hypothesis

- Look for the pattern(s)
- Determine the outcome
- Create your hypothesis



Sources:
Baylor College of Medicine. How behaviors are learned: The ABC model.
IRIS Center. Functional behavioral assessment: Identifying the reasons for problem behavior. Vanderbilt University.

Developing a Behavior Hypothesis Example

- **Pattern:** In four of five observations, the behavior occurred after the child was asked to clean up.
- **Outcome:** In four of five observations, cleanup was delayed and the child continued holding a preferred toy.
- **Hypothesis:** When asked to clean up centers, the child drops to the floor and screams. This behavior may function to delay the transition and maintain access to the preferred toy.

Sources:
Baylor College of Medicine. How behaviors are learned: The ABC model.
IRIS Center. Functional behavioral assessment: Identifying the reasons for problem behavior. Vanderbilt University.

Two Essential Components of Positive Behavior Support

CALECSE
California Early Childhood Special Education Network

1. Teach an Appropriate Replacement Skill

- Identify a skill that serves the same function as the challenging behavior.
- Teach a replacement skill that is effective, efficient, and accessible to the child.
- Provide opportunities to practice and reinforce the new skill.

2. Prevent Challenging Behavior Through Environmental Supports

- Identify patterns in when and where challenging behavior occurs.
- Examine antecedents, environmental conditions, and potential setting events.
- Adjust routines and classroom supports to reduce predictable challenges.

TK Example: If a child becomes upset when centers end, use a visual transition warning and teach the child to request more time or help with cleanup.

Source: IRIS Center. Functional behavioral assessment: Identifying the reasons for problem behavior. Vanderbilt University.

Targeted Prevention and Intervention

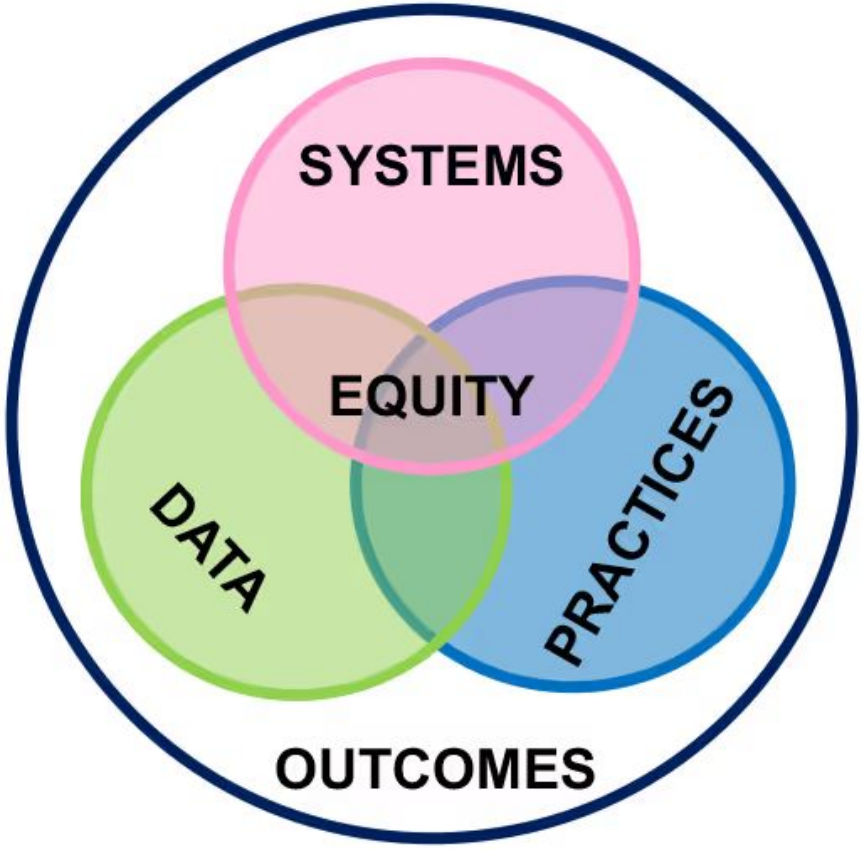
Teachers can use the NCPMI Teaching Tools for Young Children to explore prevention strategies and supportive responses for common early childhood routines, including circle time, cleanup, transitions, and play.



Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) in the Early Childhood Classroom

Classroom Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports

- Evidence-based practices establish predictable, positive, effective, and equitable learning environments.
- Tiered supports address students' universal, targeted, and individualized needs.
- Positive practices support students' social, emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes.
- Systems and data guide educators' implementation and decision-making.
- Preventive strategies help educators proactively support positive behavior.



Source: Center on PBIS. (2025). Supporting and responding to students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs: Evidence-based practices for educators (Version 2). University of Oregon.

Benefits to Students

When evidence-based classroom practices are implemented consistently and with fidelity, students may demonstrate:

- Increased academic engagement and participation.
- More appropriate responses during instructional activities.
- Reduced disruptive and off-task behavior.



Source: Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. Classroom PBIS. University of Oregon.

Benefits to Educators

When classroom PBIS practices are implemented effectively, educators may experience:

- Greater confidence in their ability to support student behavior.
- Improved perceptions of teaching effectiveness.
- Reduced classroom management stress.

Source: Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. Classroom PBIS. University of Oregon.

Implementation

Educators can strengthen implementation by:

1. Creating positive, predictable, and supportive learning environments.
2. Explicitly teaching social, emotional, and behavioral skills.
3. Monitoring whether practices are implemented as intended.
4. Using student outcome data to guide instructional decisions.

This guide from the Center on PBIS summarizes evidence based, proactive, and positive practices for implementing classroom wide PBIS: Supporting and Responding to Students' Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Needs: Evidence-Based Practices for Educators

Source: Center on PBIS. (2025). Supporting and responding to students' social, emotional, and behavioral needs: Evidence-based practices for educators (Version 2). University of Oregon.

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support in the Early Childhood Classroom

Early childhood PBIS applies positive behavioral support practices in ways that reflect young children's developmental and learning needs.

- Embed instruction within play, relationships, and daily routines.
- Explicitly teach and model social-emotional skills.
- Provide frequent opportunities for guided practice.
- Use immediate, specific, positive descriptive feedback.
- Individualize supports based on developmental, communication, and sensory needs.



Sources: National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations. (n.d.). Linking the Pyramid Model and PBIS.
Fox, L., & Perez Binder, D. (2015). Getting preschool classrooms on board with school-wide positive behavioral intervention and supports. University of South Florida.

Tier Two: Secondary Prevention and Targeted Social-Emotional Supports

What Does Tier Two Support Look Like In Transitional Kindergarten?

- Provides targeted instruction and additional practice for children who need more support than universal practices alone provide.
- Focuses on specific social-emotional and behavioral skills.
- Uses developmentally appropriate, evidence-informed interventions embedded in classroom routines.
- Builds on strong universal practices and supportive relationships.
- Includes progress monitoring to determine whether additional or individualized support is needed.

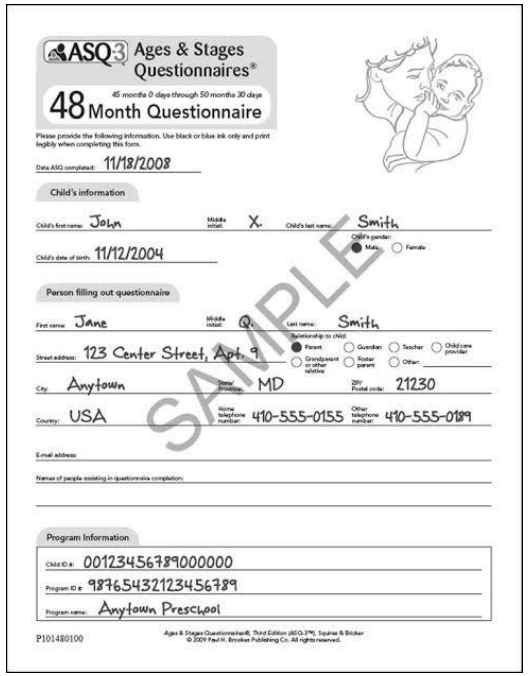
Source: NCPMI. (2025). Tier 2 and the Pyramid Model

Core Components of Tier Two Supports

- **Targeted skill instruction:** Explicitly teach emotional literacy, self-regulation, friendship skills, and social problem-solving.
- **Feasible implementation:** Select practical strategies that can be integrated into classroom routines and implemented consistently.
- **Data-informed decisions:** Use observations, screening information, and progress monitoring to identify needs and evaluate effectiveness.

Source: Center on PBIS. *Early Childhood PBIS*. University of Oregon.

Identification—Who Needs Support?



Identifying Children Who May Benefit From Targeted Supports

- Use developmentally appropriate universal screening when implemented as part of the program's established procedures.
- Review screening results alongside classroom observations and family perspectives.
- Consider developmental, cultural, linguistic, and disability-related factors when interpreting results.
- Identify specific skills that may benefit from additional instruction and practice.
- Monitor children's progress and adjust the level of support as needed.

Source: NCPMI. (2025). Tier 2 and the Pyramid Model

Implementation

- **Team-based planning:** Teachers, specialists, administrators, and families collaborate to identify needs and coordinate supports.
- **Child identification:** Uses teacher observations, developmental screening tools, and behavioral data to spot children who may benefit from additional support.
- **Evidence-based interventions:** Utilizes structured strategies that fit seamlessly into daily early childhood routines.
- **Progress monitoring:** Tracks whether children are gaining skills and responding to the intervention using short-cycle check-ins.
- **Practice-based coaching:** Provides educators with ongoing modeling, observation, reflection, and feedback.

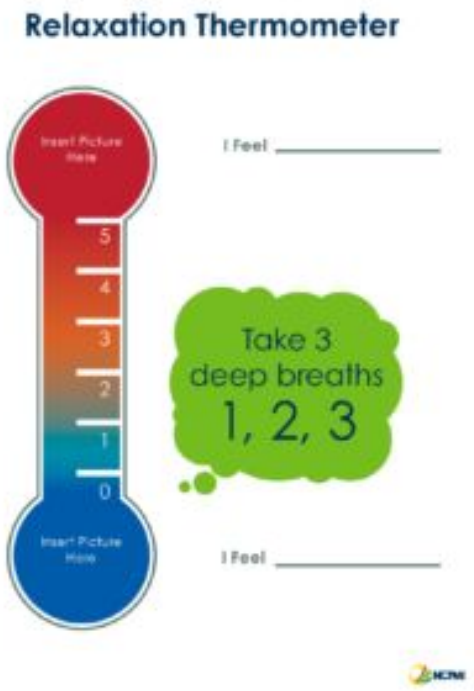
Source: NCPMI. (2026). Expanding coaching support for Tier 2

Examples of Strategies and Interventions

- **Small-group instruction:** Provide explicit teaching and guided practice in friendship skills, emotional literacy, and problem-solving.
- **Targeted adult check-ins or check-in and check-out (CICO) adaptations:** modified CICO systems featuring visual daily progress notes and predictable adult connection.
- **Scripted stories for social situations:** Use individualized stories and visual supports to teach specific skills and routines.
- **Supported peer interactions:** Structure opportunities for cooperative play, peer modeling, and positive social engagement.

Sources: Center on PBIS. (2020). Session F2: PBIS Forum 2020—Tier 2 evidence-based practices [Video].
NCPMI. (2025). Tier 2 and the Pyramid Model.

Additional Targeted Supports



- **Self-management and visual schedules:** using picture checklists, emotion thermometers, or transition timers to help young children monitor their own behavior.
- **Structured breaks and safe spaces:** access to a quiet or cozy corner with sensory tools to help regulate big emotions before a meltdown occurs.
- **Visual support cards:** pictures to support what is happening next, or to cue students as to what they should be doing currently.

Sources: Center on PBIS. (2020). Session F2: PBIS Forum 2020—Tier 2 evidence-based practices [Video].
NCPMI. Practical strategies and tools for supporting young children's social-emotional development.

Tools for Teaching Social-Emotional Skills

NCPMI Tools for Teaching Social-Emotional Skills

Explore practical resources that can help teachers provide individualized instruction and reinforce skills throughout the TK day:

- Examples of scripted stories for social situations
- A self-regulation: relaxation thermometer printable
- Explore visual supports for classroom routines and transitions

Source: NCPMI. Practical strategies and tools for supporting young children's social-emotional development.

Questions

CALECSE
California Early Childhood Special Education Network

Communities of Practice: Join the Conversation

Discuss and Discover. Share and Strengthen. Connect and Inspire.

View the full schedule of communities of practice (CoPs) on the CalECSE Communities of Practice webpage

Join a regional, job-alike, or statewide Community of Practice (CoP) to share ideas, solve problems of practice, exchange successful strategies and tools, and strengthen early childhood special education across California.

Interested in joining a community of practice (CoP)? Scan the QR code below or complete the CalECSE Community of Practice Interest Form

Communities of Practice
California Early Childhood Special Education Network

bitly

Share Your Feedback for a Chance to Win CalECSE 2027 Symposium Registration

CALECSE
California Early Childhood Special Education Network



Please help us improve our practice and complete the Zoom survey following this session.

After doing so, you will be entered into a raffle to win a free registration to CalECSE's 5th Annual Symposium to be held at Paradise Point in San Diego, October 19–20, 2027.

CALECSE
California Early Childhood Special Education Network



Growing Knowledge. Building Capacity. Changing Lives.

Thank you for joining us today! We appreciate your participation and hope to see you at a future training. Explore our full schedule of no-cost professional learning opportunities on the [CalECSE Training Calendar]

SCAN ME

Continue the conversation with CalECSE:

@CalECSE

@CalECSE

@Cal_ECSE

@Cal_ECSE

@CalECSE