

Promoting Healthy Social Behaviors in Child Care Centers

Expulsion Prevention Resources for Early Care and Education Programs

Preschool Expulsion: A Serious Problem

- In a study released May 2005, of nearly 4,000 state-funded pre-kindergarten classes randomly selected across the nation, 10.4 percent of pre-kindergarten (pre-k) teachers reported at least one expulsion in their classes during the past 12 months. A rate of 6.7 expulsions per 1,000 preschoolers enrolled in state-funded programs nationally was reported.¹
- According to the above study, North Carolina's expulsion rate in the More At Four pre-kindergarten program (2003-2004) was 28 children out of the approximately 2,166 children enrolled. North Carolina ranked sixth highest in the country with pre-kindergarten expulsion rates. According to this specific data (three and four year olds in More At Four programs), pre-kindergarten programs were expelling over 6 times the number of children than were the NC public schools (kindergarten – 12) systems.
- In the less regulated area of **private child care**, expulsion rates for preschoolers, as well as infants and toddlers, have been reported to **be much higher**, ranging from 10 expulsions per 1,000 enrolled preschoolers in Colorado to more than 27 per 1,000 in Massachusetts and in the Detroit area.
- In the same study, older preschoolers were expelled at a higher rate than younger preschoolers. African-American preschoolers were about twice as likely to be expelled as European-American (both Latino and non-Latino) preschoolers and over five times as likely as Asian-American preschoolers. Boys were expelled at a rate over 4.5 times that of girls.
- The goal of early education is to promote school readiness. Many children may be “unready” for kindergarten because of difficulties regulating their emotions and behavior, forming friendships, and following adult directives. For these children, a high-quality school readiness experience that includes social-emotional skills is essential to their starting kindergarten with the skills they need to succeed in school.

Are we expelling the very children who need us the most?

¹ Gilliam, WS. Ph.D. Yale University Child Study Center., *Pre-kindergarteners left behind: Expulsion rates in state prekindergarten programs*. (Abbreviated as Foundation for Child Development Policy Brief Series No. 3, May, 2005)

What We Know About Expulsion in Preschool

Taken from *Implementing Policies to Reduce the Likelihood of Preschool Expulsion, Foundations for Child Development*, Walter S. Gilliam, PhD., Yale University Child Study Center, 2005

- A higher number of children per teacher predicts increased expulsion. Only 7.7 percent of pre-k teachers reported an expulsion in the past year when there were fewer than eight children per adult in the class, compared to 12.7 percent when 12 or more children per adult were enrolled.
- Program duration is related to expulsion rates in state-funded pre-k, although no such relationship has been found in child care centers. Only 7.1 percent of half-day pre-k classes experienced an expulsion over a 12 month period of time, compared to 9 percent for school-day classes and 13.2 percent for extended-day classes of eight or more hours per day.
- The number of years pre-k teachers have taught four year-olds is significantly related to both better teacher-child interactions and more appropriate learning opportunities. However, neither teacher education level, early education credentials, nor years of experience teaching young children are reliable predictors of expulsion in either child care or pre-k.
- Various psychological characteristics of pre-k teachers may affect their classroom and behavior management skills or tolerance for problem behavior, such as authoritarian childrearing, teacher depression, and job stress.
- Although expulsion is the most severe disciplinary sanction that an educational program may impose, its effectiveness at reducing future behavior problems has not been supported by research.
- In a recent state-wide random controlled study, pre-kindergarten classes that received early childhood mental health consultation demonstrated significant decreases in teacher-rated acting-out behavior problems in the classroom.

What We Know About Young Children Who Use Challenging Behaviors

- Children with challenging behaviors have a tremendous risk of school failure and adult lives characterized by violence, abuse, loneliness, and anxiety (McCord, 1978, Olweus, 1991).
- The developmental course is predictably negative for those who are “non-treated” or “poorly treated” (Lipsey & Derzon, 1998; Patterson & Fleishman, 1979; Wahler & Dumas, 1986).
- Early appearing behavior problems in a child’s preschool career are the single best predictor of delinquency in adolescence, gang membership, and adult incarceration (Dishion, French, & Patterson, 1995; Reid, 1993).
- Children who grow into adolescence with challenging behaviors are likely to drop out of school, be arrested, abuse drugs and alcohol, have marginalized adult lives, and die young (Lipsey & Derzon, 1998; Walker, Calvin, & Ramsey, 1995).
- There is evidence to show that young children with challenging behavior are more likely to experience:
 - early and persistent peer rejection (Cole & Dodge, 1998);
 - mostly punitive contacts with teachers (Strain et al., 1983);
 - family interaction patterns that are unpleasant for all participants (Patterson & Fleishman, 1979);
 - school failure (Tremblay, 2000, Kazdin, 1993); and
 - high risk of fatal accidents, substance abuse, divorce, unemployment, psychiatric illness, and early death (Cole & Dodge, 1998; Kazdin, 1985).²
- Approximately 10-15% of all typically developing preschool children have mild to moderate levels of behavior problems. (Campbell, 1995).
- Children who are poor are much more likely to develop behavior problems with prevalence rates that approach 30% (Qi & Kaiser, 2003).
- Children who are identified as hard to manage at age 3 or 4 have a high probability (50:50) of continuing to have difficulties into adolescence (Campbell and Ewing, 1990; Egeland et al 1990; Fischer, Rolf, Hasazi & Cummings, 1984).
- When aggression and antisocial behavior has persisted to age 9, further intervention has a poor chance of success (Dodge, 1993).³

There are evidence-based practices that are effective in changing this developmental trajectory, therefore, we must use them! Group social skills and expectations can best be learned and practiced in a group, not in “time out” at home.

² Facts About Young Children with Challenging Behaviors, Center for Evidence-Based Practice: Young Children with Challenging Behavior, www.challengingbehavior.org

³ Center for Evidence-Based Practice: Young Children with Challenging Behavior, www.challengingbehavior.org, PowerPoint presentation-Impact and Prevalence by Matt Timm and Lise Fox

Does Expulsion From School Solve the Problem?

The public schools use suspensions and expulsions in response to persistent behavior problems so being “tough on misbehavior” must work. No, it is not working there either.

- Many early care and education programs seem to have adopted the public school’s “zero tolerance” policy. In the mid 1990’s, zero tolerance became federal policy partly as a response to highly publicized school shootings. Initially, the policies were intended to exclude students for very specific and serious behaviors, such as bringing a weapon to school, but many schools have expanded suspension and expulsion for minor infractions.
- “Although exclusionary school discipline policies are intended to ensure productive learning environments, when students are removed from school their learning is severely impaired. **Moreover, there is little scientific evidence showing that suspension and expulsion are effective in reducing school violence or increasing school safety.**”⁴
- “Despite widespread public support for schools zero tolerance policies, the American Bar Association voted in 2001 to recommend ending them. The American Bar Association argues that it is wrong to mandate automatic expulsion or referral to juvenile court without taking into consideration the specifics of each case.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics has expressed serious concerns about suspension and expulsion policies in public schools. Children who are suspended are often from a population that is the least likely to have supervision at home. Children who use illicit substances, commit crimes, disobey rules, and threaten violence often are victims of abuse, are depressed, or are mentally ill. **Those most likely to be suspended or expelled are those most in need of adult supervision and professional help.**”⁵

⁴ Skiba, Russell. Zero Tolerance, Zero Evidence: An Analysis of School Disciplinary Practice, Bloomington, Ind. Indiana Education Policy Center, August 2000.

⁵ American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement, Out of School Suspension and Expulsion, PEDIATRICS, Vol. 112, No.5 November 2003.

Preschool Expulsions: How Can I Be a Part of the Solution?

It takes supports and relationships on many different levels to successfully implement an inclusive program for children with challenging behaviors. It's difficult work and it often begins with a critical question as the following director discovered:

“During the 21 years I served as a center director, I found that balancing everyone’s needs was one of the most rewarding and difficult parts of my job. It was never harder than when Andrew attended the center.

A child with challenging behavior, Andrew raised the question, “Whose needs take priority?”; Those of the child with challenging behavior, who doesn’t have the skills to cope with the circumstances of his life? Those of the other children, who no longer feel safe and can’t enjoy themselves in child care? Those of the parents of the child with challenging behavior, who are at their wit’s end dealing with their child at home? Those of the parents of the other children, who are afraid to send their child to the center, because of the stories they are hearing? Or those of the staff, who are burned out from caring for a child who is endangering the safety of others and making it almost impossible to provide an interesting and developmentally appropriate program?

Despite pressure from a vocal group of staff and parents, expulsion wasn’t an option for me. I didn’t want to increase Andrew’s chances of ending up as so many young children with challenging behaviors do - at high risk of school failure, substance abuse, and trouble with the law. Neither did I want to give him the message that he couldn’t trust us, that we didn’t want him, or that he was so bad we had to send him away. And I didn’t want anyone else to get the idea that our center was a place where only some children were welcome. On the contrary, I wanted our center to be an inclusive community.

In theory, so did the staff, parents, and board of directors. But as I talked with them, I discovered that Andrew had created a chasm between theory and practice; and I realized that as the center’s director, I was responsible for bridging that gap. I had to take my role as advocate seriously. I had to help adults and children alike believe that Andrew or any other child with challenging behavior was part of our community and to convince them that we could learn the skills we needed to feel competent and confident about addressing challenging behavior.”⁶

Many directors have wrestled with similar issues with some ultimately justifying the expulsion of a child because of an angry parent or a teacher who threatened to quit...but if expulsion puts our children at high risk of failure, how do we begin to implement proven intervention strategies that address challenging behaviors?

⁶ Child Care Exchange, *Including Children with Challenging Behavior in Your Child Care Community*, Barbara Kaiser and Judy Sklar Rasminsky, August, 2005

Five Steps to Build Your Program's Capacity to Serve All Children

Dr. Mary Louise Hemmeter, an associate professor in the Department of Special Education at Vanderbilt and Director of The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL), says “Many families of children with challenging behaviors have experienced multiple changes in child care because of their child’s behavior. While this is disruptive for families, it has even more serious consequences for children. For these children, consistency and continuity is critical to their long-term outcomes. In order to build the capacity of programs to meet the needs of children with social emotional needs and challenging behaviors, an approach is needed that includes not only training and support for teacher but administrative supports and policies. In her article: *We Are ALL in This Together: Supporting Children’s Social Emotional Development and Addressing Challenging Behavior*,⁷ she suggests five important steps for building supports within programs to address the social emotional needs and challenging behaviors of all young children:

1. Adopt a **philosophy** that focuses on ensuring all children will be successful in your program.
2. Develop **program-wide expectations for children’s behavior** and be proactive about promoting the expectations and sharing the information with families.
3. Ensure that **environments** are designed to promote children’s social emotional development and prevent challenging behavior.
4. Develop **a plan** for addressing the needs of children with ongoing persistent challenging behavior.
5. Provide **systematic training, coaching in the classroom**, and other **supports for teachers** related to promoting social emotional development and addressing challenging behavior.

⁷ Exchange, *We Are ALL in This Together: Supporting Children’s Social Emotional Development and Addressing Challenging Behavior*, Mary Louise Hemmeter, July/August, 2007.

STEP 1: Adopt a philosophy that focuses on ensuring all children will be successful in your program.

Sounds simple, right? Just type out a philosophy statement and share it. Unfortunately, having the right words on paper doesn't really change the beliefs and values of you or your staff and families. If you truly want your program to believe "that all children belong here and it is our job to provide the supports for them to be successful here" then it is a dedicated, detailed process to develop a philosophy and then fully support it.

CSEFEL suggests the following strategies to develop a philosophy statement:

- Convene a group that includes teachers, administrators, and families to write a draft philosophy statement;
- Get input on the philosophy statement from staff and families through e-mails, surveys or meetings;
- Share the philosophy statement with staff making clear the director and owner's commitment to having the philosophy drive program decisions and practices;
- Share the philosophy with families by including it in a handbook or materials given to new families, sending home flyers, and having family gatherings; and
- Share the philosophy with applicants who are interviewing for positions. Probe applicants' understanding and acceptance of the philosophy.

STEP 2: Develop program-wide expectations for children's behavior and be proactive about promoting the expectations and sharing the information with families.

- Once your program has accepted the philosophy you can work together to define appropriate expectations of children's behaviors (rules) that will be used **throughout** your program.
- Keep the number of rules brief (3-5) and state them positively. The rules should help children learn what to do...instead of what not to do. Examples might be "use soft touches, quiet voices and walking feet."
- Engage the children in helping you decide which rules to choose.
- Systematically teach the children what the rules mean and review them daily.
- Make the rules visual and post at eye level of children.
- There are many advantages to developing and sharing program-wide expectations. Some are:
 - Development of a more positive approach to behavior,
 - Acceptance of a common language for all staff and families,
 - Less time is spent focusing on negative behaviors when expectations are taught systematically,
 - Creation of a positive climate for staff, families and children.

STEP 3: Ensure that environments are designed to promote children’s social emotional development and prevent challenging behavior.

- Understand that the environment of a classroom includes not only the physical setting but also the affective environment (emotional tone of classroom) and the teaching/learning environment.
- Focus on **promotion** of social emotional development and **prevention** of challenging behavior through the use of CSEFEL Pyramid Model (*see model on page 11*), which focuses on the relationships within a program, the environment and strategies for teaching social-emotional skills. When these areas are addressed many challenging behavior disappear.
- **Affective Environment:** The foundation of this model is grounded in the context of positive, supportive relationships between teachers and children, as well as with families and other professionals. These relationships are essential to implementing effective practices to support children’s social emotional development.
- **Physical Environment:** The next level of the model reflects the importance of designing environments that support children’s success by engaging them in meaningful activities, teaching them about the expectations of the environment, and implementing a schedule that is predictable and engaging to each child. Classroom preventive practices include designing physical environments in ways that support the development and use of appropriate behavior and social skills, providing developmentally appropriate materials that promote children’s engagement, teaching children about rules and expectations, and using positive attention and encouragement to support prosocial behavior.
- **Teaching/Learning Environment:** The third level addresses the need for systematic ways to support children in developing competence in emotional literacy, problem solving, impulse control, and friendship skills. These strategies are used to teach important skills, such as expressing emotions appropriately, solving problems, and building friendships.
- Your local child care resource and referral agency has trained staff who can help you evaluate your classroom and playground physical environments. Your regional behavior specialist can help you evaluate the social-emotional environment of your classroom and implement social-emotional teaching.

STEP 4: Develop a plan for addressing the needs of children with ongoing persistent challenging behavior.

- The final level of the Pyramid Model is designed for those children who continue to exhibit significant challenging behaviors or other social emotional needs when the other levels of the model are in place. When the Pyramid Model is implemented, there may be a small number of children who have challenging behavior that is unresponsive to the foundational levels of the pyramid...and these are the children most at risk of expulsion. The children who persist in displaying challenging behavior are best supported through intensive and individualized approaches that are focused on identifying the environmental factors that are related to challenging behavior, the use of individually determined prevention strategies to support the child in engaging in appropriate behavior, and the instruction of new skills to replace challenging behavior.
- Individualized intervention plans should be created based on an understanding of each child's behavior after careful and thorough observation by a team that includes parents, teachers, an administrator, and a person with behavior support expertise. Recognize that a child's behavior has meaning and try to discover what the child is trying to communicate.
- The plan should identify the supports needed to help the child be successful in the specific setting where challenging behavior occurs.
- The plan should include:
 - multiple strategies for reducing the challenging behavior (typically a single strategy won't be effective in isolation),
 - consciously teaching the child new skills to use in place of the existing behavior, and
 - examples of teacher responses that will likely increase appropriate behavior and decrease inappropriate behavior.
- Teachers and administrators should know:
 - Individualized plans must be implemented consistently and for adequate periods of time.
 - Behavior often gets worse before it gets better. Staff need extra support in order to persevere.
 - Better behavior by the child should not necessarily mean it's time to stop the plan.
 - If a mental health specialist is involved, a plan can be expanded to include home behavior and individual therapy if needed.
 - Individualized plans require extra time and support from the administrator so that the teacher can work with the team.

The CSEFEL Pyramid Model for Promoting Social and Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children



STEP 5: Provide systematic training, coaching in the classroom, and other supports for teachers related to promoting social emotional development and addressing challenging behavior.

- Staff, including administrators, need sequential training that corresponds to each level of the Pyramid Model. Contact your local child care resource and referral agency for information about these opportunities provided by the Healthy Social Behavior initiative throughout North Carolina.
- Time is needed between each of the trainings for teachers to implement the practices and receive coaching related to using the practices. Contact your local child care resource and referral agency for information about technical assistance using the Pyramid Model provided by the Healthy Social Behavior initiative throughout North Carolina.
- Coaching can be provided in a variety of ways including in-class observations by the director or a resource and referral agency staff, peer coaching, one-on-one discussions and review of videotapes.
- Administrators and directors should be intentional about providing positive feedback and acknowledgement to teachers around the use of the practices.
- Create processes for three types of assistance:
 1. **Crisis Situation** -Who within the program does a teacher call when a child is totally out of control and the teacher needs help with the other children?
 2. **Problem-Solving Process** - What specific times will be set aside for teachers to share and problem-solve on-going issues related to behavior with the director and/or other teachers?
 3. **Individualized Plans** - When and what is the exact process that the team will use?

In summary, a comprehensive program-wide plan needs to be developed to address the social emotional development and challenging behavior of young children, particularly in group care settings. Adapt the plan to your program's specific needs but make certain to include all the components. Understand that this is a continual and on-going process that will evolve as the children, staff, parents and resources change.

When Programs Enroll a Child with a History of Expulsion...

What steps can be taken to prevent this child from being expelled again?

- If an inclusion policy and philosophy already exists, the director should again share the program's philosophy statement with staff and families emphasizing the program's commitment to ensuring all children can be successful and remain in the program.
- If no inclusion policy exists then enrolling this child might stimulate the beginning of that process; however staff and families' commitment and buy-in takes time so initial commitment may not be as strong.
- Everyone involved in the process should respect the confidentiality of the family and child and only share necessary information.
- Directors should consider carefully the match between the individual needs of the child and the program. Consider the following examples:
 - A director has a four year-old classroom that is already predominately male and the teacher has expressed some concerns over challenging behavior and is feeling stressed. Is this the best classroom for this child who has already experienced difficulties and expulsion at another program?
 - The child was in a classroom group of 15 at the previous center and experienced challenging behavior when the full group was there but seemed to do fine at times of the day when only 5 or 6 children were present. Can you offer a with a small class size to ensure success?
 - The foster parents say the child has a diagnosis of reactive attachment disorder and has been a victim of abuse and neglect. The classroom at your program that has a vacancy for this age child has a wonderful teacher, but she is getting ready to be out on maternity leave in less than a month. Does accepting this child really benefit the child?

To a desperate parent, any amount of time that you can take care of his/her child may be a gift, but if you do not feel that your program is a good fit for this child permanently, then helping the family find other permanent alternatives may be a better choice than taking a child temporarily.

When Programs Enroll a Child with a History of Expulsion...

What special protocols could be put in place for this child's transition into the program?

"I know this child has been expelled before, but I think my program is the right "fit" for this child and this child is the "right fit" for my program."

Ideally, your inclusion philosophy is in place, your staff and families are committed, and your program has program-wide expectations already established for children's behavior. Introduce the parent and the child to your program philosophy, policies and procedures, and to the specifics of the classroom. Take time to create a transition plan and outline protocols for home-school communication.

A transition plan might include:

- A slower transition: The child may begin attending only partial days to become introduced to the teacher, classmates, expectation and environment.
- Gathering information from the family: The family should complete paperwork (or do an interview where information is recorded) about the child's special interests, strengths, areas for growth and, if applicable, formal assessments and services he/she is currently receiving.
- Social-emotional assessments: The family may complete an assessment such as the DECA or ASQ:SE. Healthy Social Behavior specialists can assist you with these assessments.
- Communication about services: If services are being received, the family should share information with the service providers about the new child care arrangement and sign consent forms so the specialized providers can share information with the child care staff. The child care program should discuss integrating the services into the classroom.
- Behavioral assistance: The program should inform the family of the Healthy Social Behaviors specialists who could be called in if additional help is needed.
- Additional resources: The Healthy Social Behaviors resources list of local social-emotional supports available can be made available, through your local child care resource and referral agency, if the parent is interested in additional supports.

Establish a protocol plan for communication:

- Agree on the type of communication (should be a mix of verbal and written communication).
- Establish a frequency of communication (beginning with daily communication).
- Establish a benchmark time to evaluate if the communication plan is meeting the needs of the staff and the parents.
- Document communication messages in the child's file at the center for clarification issues, reminders or follow-up.
- Clarify for parents that the communication plan is there to support the child's success in his/her new classroom.

When Programs Enroll a Child with a History of Expulsion...

What special supports will teachers likely need from the administration and/or a Healthy Social Behaviors specialist?

Teachers will need:

- Regular opportunities to discuss frustrations and problem-solve with other teachers and the director
- Consistency in the day by keeping the teacher (both full time and part time afternoon teacher) in her classroom instead of moving her among different rooms
- Help to ensure adequate communication between families and teachers (i.e. daily form completed by parent and teacher)
- Adequate planning time and additional resources
- Additional breaks to alleviate stress and provide down time. “Early education and child care programs should ensure that teachers work reasonable hours with breaks away from children.”⁸
- Access and availability to trainings regarding inclusion and behavior management
- Permission to contact agencies and services for additional help, such as behavior specialists, technical assistance specialists or therapists
- Adaptive work schedules, dependent on needs of program, individual classroom and/or teacher
- Additional support staff (director, assistant director, substitute and/or volunteer) and lower ratios. “Early education and child care programs should enforce student-teacher ratios of no more than 10 preschoolers per teacher, preferably less.”¹
- Systematic training, coaching in the classroom and other supports for teachers related to promoting social-emotional development and addressing challenging behavior
- Sequential training events that correspond to each level of *The Teaching Pyramid*, with time in between each of the trainings for teachers to implement the practices and receive coaching related to using the practices.
- Coaching can be provided in a variety of ways including in-class observations by the director or resource and referral agency staff, peer coaching, one-on-one discussions, and review of videotapes.
- Administrators and directors (and behavior specialists) should be intentional about providing positive feedback and acknowledgement to teachers around the use of the practices.

⁸ Implementing Policies to Reduce the Likelihood of Preschool Expulsion, Walter S. Gilliam, Foundations for Child Development, Policy Brief No. 7, January, 2008.

What are the Consequences of Expulsion for the Child and the Family?

“The more challenging a child’s needs, the greater the flexibility parents require, either at home, from those with whom they can share responsibility, at work in their job and work schedules, or from reliance on an accommodating caregiver. Unfortunately, many of these parents lack flexibility from work or family and therefore need extra caregiver flexibility. Too bad! No other category of parent encounters so much difficulty finding satisfactory care arrangements in the child care market, or experiences so much turnover in care arrangements as their child is asked to leave. Of all kinds of non-parental care, centers offer the least flexibility and not necessarily the most stability.”⁹

“Having a child expelled from child care or school is very hard on parents and very damaging for their children....There are many possible negative outcomes to a child being expelled from child care or school. It often results in:

- loss of work time for parents,
- stress for the family,
- trouble finding another child care program or school,
- the child feeling unwanted and confused,
- parents feeling rejected, and
- parents not knowing where to turn for help.”¹⁰

“The most important property of humankind is the capacity to form and maintain relationships. These relationships are absolutely necessary for any of us to survive, learn, work, love and procreate. Human relationships take many forms but the most intense, most pleasurable, and most painful are those relationships with family, friends, and loved ones. Within the inner circle of intimate relationships, we are bonded to each other with “emotional glue” - bonded with love. The capacity and desire to form emotional relationships is related to the organization and functioning of specific parts of the brain. Just as the brain allows us to see, smell, taste, think, talk, and move, it is the organ that allows us to love - or not. The systems in the human brain that allow us to form and maintain emotional relationships develop during infancy and the first years of life. Experiences during this early vulnerable period of life are critical to shaping the capacity to form intimate and emotionally healthy relationships. Empathy, caring, sharing, inhibition of aggression, capacity to love, and a host of other characteristics of a healthy, happy, and productive person are related to the core attachment capabilities which are formed in infancy and early childhood.”¹¹

⁹ Setting the Pace: Model Inclusive Child Care Centers Serving Families of Children with Emotional or Behavioral Challenges, Eileen Brennan, Jennifer Bradley, Shane M. Ama, and Natalie Cawood, Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children’s Mental Health, Portland State University, September 2003.

¹⁰ The Daily Parent, “Acting Up, Acting Out: When Young Children Are Put Out of Programs”, National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, 2005.

¹¹ “Bonding and Attachment in Maltreated Children: How You Can Help”, Dr. Bruce Perry, <http://teacher.scholastic.com/professional/bruceperry/bonding>

“Socio-economic status has nothing to do with the ability to establish successful attachment relationships. Children who have had a succession of nannies, or orphaned children who spend their early years in orphanages or move from foster home to foster home, are at risk for severe attachment disruption.

Detached children focus on survival, order, and predictability - functions of the lower regions of the brain—as they try to meet their own needs in a world of undependable adults. Regular disruption of important bonds causes children to become manipulative and aggressive and inhibits development of their sense of love and belonging. Their brain development is affected as is their ability to learn and think. Detachment also makes impulse control more difficult, and that has direct implications for the development of conscience. Regular disruptions in relationships keep children from experiencing the kinds of bonds that become templates for warm, responsive, stable friendships, marriages, and job collegiality as adults.”¹²

Symptoms of Insecure Attachment¹³

- Emotional Problems - low self-esteem, needy, clingy or pseudo-independent behavior, inability to deal with stress and adversity, depression, apathy
- Physical Problems - susceptibility to chronic illness; obsession with food-hordes, gorges, refuses to eat, eats strange things, hides food
- Social Problems - lack of self-control, inability to develop and maintain friendships; alienation from parents, caregivers and other authority figures, aggression and violence, difficulty with genuine trust, intimacy, and affection; lack of empathy, compassion and remorse, negative, hopeless, pessimistic view of self, family and society
- Learning Problems - behavioral problems at school, speech and language problems, incessant chatter and questions; difficulty learning

¹² *Relationships, the Heart of Quality Care*, Amy C. Baker, Lynn A. Manfredi/Petitt, page 128.

¹³ Attachment Disorders: Insecure Attachment and Reactive Attachment Disorder”, www.helpguide.org/mental/parenting_bonding

How Can Directors Assess Classroom Social-Emotional Quality?

The Healthy Social Behaviors team developed the following for use by program directors in reviewing the social-emotional quality of a classroom. Behavior specialists have a companion checklist for teachers you can request as a tool for teacher self-reflection or as a staff meeting discussion starter.

Social-Emotional Checklist of Early Care and Education Practices For Program Administrators

As you observe the practices in your program don't forget about a very important area of child development: learning social and emotional skills (or how to get along with others and how to understand and express feelings in an appropriate way). Social and emotional skills are the foundation of all learning in the early years and programs that focus on helping children develop these skills are truly getting them ready for school!

The checklist below will help you observe classrooms in your program through a social-emotional lens. Spend some time in each classroom and ask yourself if you would enjoy spending your days there...how does it feel to you? Look around the physical space, notice how the day flows and observe the teachers interacting with children.



Spend some time noticing how the classroom feels. Do you notice these things?	Comments
<i>Close your eyes for a few minutes and just listen.</i> Is the classroom is a pleasant place with sounds of laughter and happy voices...teachers and children?	
Do teachers and children smile frequently at each other?	
Do teachers speak to children on the child's level and look them in the eyes?	
Do teachers use a tone of voice that is playful, affectionate and positive?	
Do children show interest and enthusiasm about activities?	
Do teachers respond to children's feelings?	
Do children seem to understand the schedule and routines of the day? Do they know what happens next and what is expected of them? <i>(*young toddlers are just beginning to learn this)</i>	
Do children move between activities smoothly and without chaos? <i>(*young toddlers are just beginning to learn this)</i>	
Are children engaged in activities or with teachers...not wandering around the room seeming lost and/or unhappy?	
Do teachers seem to have a positive relationship with each other?	

Focus on the interactions of the teachers and children in the classroom. Do you notice these things?	Comments
Are teachers are warm and nurturing?	
Do teachers display affection toward the children through hugs, smiles, gentle touch, etc?	
Do teachers help children recognize and respond to the feelings of others?	
Do teachers encourage good listening and communication skills?	
Do teachers anticipate problems and steps in to help when needed?	
Do teachers help children learn problem-solving skills (<i>*young toddlers are just beginning to learn this</i>)?	
Do teachers help children learn ways to calm and control themselves?	
Do teachers encourage children to share and take turns (<i>* young toddlers are just beginning to learn this</i>)?	
Do teachers encourage and nurture special friendships that develop between children?	
Do teachers respect and support a child's need for a security object (pacifier, blanket, special doll), which helps children calm themselves and feel safe and secure away from home?	
Do teachers encourage individuality and allow children to be creative in their play?	
Do teachers encourage children, once they begin to use language, to talk about their feelings?	
Do teachers teach child the names for emotions they are feeling?	
Do teachers encourage exploration and show interest in children's discoveries?	
Do teachers engage in pretend play with the children?	
<p>Is the teachers' talk to children mainly positive, not negative (encouragement and recognition of accomplishments instead of corrections and directions)?</p> <p><i>Take a moment and listen to the next four things a teacher says...at least 3 should be positive and encouraging!</i></p>	

Look around the classroom. Can you observe these things?	Comments
Is the overall physical environment is pleasant and soothing, not over-stimulating?	
Is there enough space for children to play (with pathways between play spaces)?	
Are the furnishings child-sized and designed to encourage children to be independent?	
Are there enough toys, books, and materials for the number of children in the room?	
Are materials neatly arranged and labeled?	
Are there materials that promote children playing together such as dramatic play props, dolls, puppets, or group art projects?	
Are there places for children to be alone or with a special friend?	
Is the space for each child's special possessions?	
Are there displays of the children's art work and other creations?	
Are family photos or other connections to the children's homes evident?	
Does the environment provide visual clues to guide the children throughout the day (picture schedules, picture rules, etc)?	

Schedule a time to ask the classroom teacher(s) about the things from the lists above that you didn't observe during your time in the classroom.

Additional questions to ask the teacher(s):

1. How do you help a new child transition into your classroom?
 - *As a guide: Do they gather information from families to make the transition easier for the child? Do they seek to make their caregiving routines (feeding, diapering/toileting, napping, etc.) like the routines at home, as much as possible.*

2. How do you teach social and emotional skills to the children?
 - *As a guide: Ask them to give you examples of how they actively teach these skills.*

3. What do you do when a child misbehaves?
 - *As a guide: The answer should include positive, respectful approaches to helping children learn to manage their own behavior...not punishment.*

4. How much time each day do children spend in uninterrupted free play?
 - *FYI: Research supports that children need at least 30 minutes of uninterrupted play each day where they select their own activities.*

5. How do you encourage family participation?
 - *As a guide: Do the teachers view parents as partners? Are parents welcome to visit at any time?*

6. What are your classroom rules?
 - *As a guide: Classrooms should have 3 or 4 positively-stated rules to guide the child's behavior and let them know what they should do.*

7. What do you like about working with children? What do you like about working here?
 - *FYI: When children lose their caregivers they lose a significant relationship so it's important that children spend their days with a teacher who is committed to and enjoys her work.*

8. How do you promote school readiness?
 - *As a guide: Does the answer include an understanding that teaching social-emotional skills is the most effective way to help children prepare for school?*

What Should Adults Know...

About the lifelong impact they can have when they help a child develop the skills needed to succeed in a group!

- Take time to learn about and understand current findings on the following topics:
 - Attachment
 - Resiliency
 - Brain development
 - Temperament
 - Social-emotional competencies as the foundation of school success
- Be familiar with *The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning* (www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel).
- Be familiar with *The Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention* (<http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/>).
- Understand the *CSEFEL Pyramid Model* and how to implement it in your program.
- Understand that knowing yourself (your temperament, personal HOT buttons, beliefs, etc.) can help you remain calm in the classroom.
- Understand developmentally appropriate behavior and how children learn through play.
- Understand how building positive social emotional skills in the early years benefits a person forever.
- Understand that programs can be successful in supporting children with challenging behaviors!

In the words of a parent of a child who uses challenging behaviors:

“I know for teachers in the classroom, there’s a lot of stress. There are a lot of things going on and it’s difficult. And it’s easier, just to be honest, to get rid of this child. But you have to remember that you are working with a child and this is going to be impressed upon the child for years to come, whatever the outcome of the situation is. **You are working with a child...you are working with a family...you are literally working with lives.**”¹⁴

¹⁴ Facing the Challenge – Trainer Guide, 2007, quote by Linda Hurst, parent of a child with challenging behaviors