Creating a Nurturing and Responsive School Environment to Promote Students’ Social, Emotional, and Academic Success

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The Problems that Necessitate Change

• 1 out of 4 children experience social, emotional, and behavioral needs that interfere with their academic functioning

• Most children do not receive indicated mental health services (Kataoka et al., 2002)
  – Less than 20% of students with mental and behavioral health needs receives services
MYTH

If you build it, they will come
The Problems that Necessitate Change

• Services are unlikely to be evidence-based (Evans & Weist, 2004; Rones & Hoagwood, 2000)

• **Low levels of effectiveness**, some iatrogenic effects for SMH programs targeting low-income, urban youth (Farahmand et al., 2011)

• **Longstanding disparities** for students of color
  – Less likely to receive effective services
  – More likely to receive exclusionary discipline
  – More likely to be referred for special education under EBD and placed in restrictive settings
Hospitalizations
Suicidal ideation & attempts

Figure. Associated Changes in Pediatric Emergency Department (ED) Visits for Suicide Attempts (SA) and Suicidal Ideation (SI)
What should go on educators’ plates?

Know your Portions

Portion control

What’s on your plate?

Making sure the right stuff is on the plate
A Tale of Two Gaps...

1. Access & Utilization of Services
2. Enhancing Service Quality
Schools as the **Hub** of Access

- Academics
- Social, emotional, and behavioral
- Physical & medical
• “If a child doesn’t know how to read, *we teach.*”
• “If a child doesn’t know how to swim, *we teach.*”
• “If a child doesn’t know how to multiply, *we teach.*”
• “If a child doesn’t know how to drive, *we teach.*”
• “If a child doesn’t know how to behave, *we... teach?... punish?*”

(Herner, 1998)
Framing Questions

• What is missing from the environment that the student needs and we have the control over to implement?

• AVOID THESE QUESTIONS
  – What does the student have that we can label or name?
  – What is wrong with this student?
  – What external factor explains why the student is struggling, but goes beyond our control?
    • Parents, poverty, etc.
TRAUMA
The Science of Human Behavior

**Setting Events**
An event that increases the likelihood that the trigger will provoke the behavior

**Triggering Antecedents**
The immediate event that provokes the behavior

**Problem Behavior**
The main behavior of concern

**Maintaining Consequences**
The purpose or reason why the problem behavior occurs (i.e., function)
Setting Events

- Factors outside the immediate situation that increases the probability that a given situation will provoke a behavior

- TRAUMA!!!
Examining Educators’ Own Vulnerabilities

• Specific situations in which we are more vulnerable to unskillful behaviors that do not align with our values

• Examples:
  – Tired/fatigued (lack of sleep)
  – Stress due to external factors
  – Feeling overwhelmed because juggling multiple responsibilities
Adult Self-Regulation

1. Problem Behavior
   - The main behavior(s) of concern

2. Triggering Antecedents
   - The immediate event that provokes the behavior

3. Setting Events
   - An event that increases the likelihood that the trigger will provoke the behavior
   - Anticipating stress
   - Fatigue

4. Maintaining Consequences
   - The purpose or reason why the problem behavior occurs (i.e., function)
   - Relief from unwanted behavior
   - Removal from the classroom
   - Unwanted, behavior

Educator Behavior
What are ACEs (cumulative risk)?

**ABUSE**
- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual

**NEGLECT**
- Physical
- Emotional

**HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION**
- Mental Illness
- Incarcerated Relative
- Mother treated violently
- Substance Abuse
- Divorce
33% Report 0 ACES

With 0 ACESs
1 in 16 smoke
1 in 69 are alcoholic
1 in 480 use IV drugs
1 in 14 has heart disease
1 in 96 attempts suicide

51% Report 1-3 ACES

With 1-3 ACESs
1 in 9 smoke
1 in 9 are alcoholic
1 in 43 use IV drugs
1 in 7 has heart disease
1 in 10 attempts suicide

16% Report 4-10 ACES

With 4-10 ACESs
1 in 6 smoke
1 in 6 are alcoholic
1 in 30 use IV drugs
1 in 6 has heart disease
1 in 5 attempts suicide
Mechanisms by Which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan
Emotion Dysregulation

• The emotional system overpowers the cognitive, rationale thinking part of the system
  – A person loses access to other skills, with the main motivation being to avoid, escape or put an end to an unwanted situation
Is the emotional reaction justified and proportional to the situation? Does it result in impairment?
What **not** to do

• The truth alone never sets one free
  – Compassion and understanding alone won’t address the needs of trauma-exposed students

• Blame game
  – Avoid placing blame on families and the community as being deficient
    • Recognize the social determinants of ACES

• Lower accountability and expectations for behavior
  – Shaping behavior through high accountability and high support
Develop, grow, heal, and recover

Neuroplasticity
Whole Child Approach Defined

• Policies, procedures, and practices that ensure each child receives what they need academically, socially-emotionally, and behaviorally to......
  – develop and maintain their wellbeing, engagement, and growth in school
  – and their eventual success in work, civic, and private aspects adult life
Whole Child as both Skill Acquisition and the Environment

- Social-emotional wellbeing as a function of **Enabling, Healthy Environments**
  - Create the context for engagement and learning to occur

- SEL competencies as **Enablers to Life Success**
  - Knowledge and skill acquisition
“Organizations are groups of individuals whose collective behaviors are directed toward a common goal & maintained by a common outcome”

Skinner, 1953, *Science of Human Behavior*
Safe, Nurturing, Predictable, Reinforcing and Responsive Host Environments
Safe Environment

- Individuals do not anticipate harm or hurt, emotionally or physically.

- An environment free of bullying, discrimination, aggression/violence.
Nurturing Environment

- Secure **relationships** that create sense of belonging, respect and safety

- Setting and **enforcing limits** compassionately and with empathy (teaching that behaviors have consequences)
Predictable Environment

• Predictable environments are stable environments in which students can anticipate and trust what is going to happen

• Adults strive to maintain consistency in their expectations and reactions to behavior through common language and practices
Reinforcing Environment

- Students/staff are **non-contingently** acknowledge for their value and worth as a person
  - Greetings, check-ins, farewells

- **Contingent** recognition of behavior, effort, and contributions to greater good
  - Praise
  - Access to privileges
  - Rewards
  - Social activities/experiences
Responsive Environments

• **Understands children’s basic needs** and seeks to ensure children receive what they need to **develop and grow in a health way**

• **Fairness** is **about differentiating supports** to ensure everyone receives what they need

• **Early and timely intervention** when struggles / problems first emerge
Social-Emotional Competencies

- Social competence
- Emotional competence
- Sense of Purpose / future orientation
- Responsible decision making
Acquisition of Self-Regulation Skills

Definition

Ability to regulate thoughts, feelings, impulses, and behavior in pursuit of goals and experiences that are not immediately attainable (i.e., delayed gratification)
School as a Recipe Metaphor

• Promoting optimal student outcomes is like a good cooking recipe that involves the integration of core active ingredients
  – An active ingredient is a component of a recipe that helps achieve its desired outcome
  – Single active ingredients represent necessary features of the recipe, but insufficient alone to produce the desired outcome
The **Recipe** for Optimizing Student Social-Emotional and Academic Success

**What are the ingredients?**
Evidence-Informed Ingredients

- **Environment** – adults in charge create a safe, structured, predictable, and positive environment.
- **Relationships** – everyone (staff and students) feels a sense of belonging and connection.
- **Instruction** – rigorous instruction to teach students the social, emotional, and academic knowledge and skills necessary to meet the demands of home, work, & civic life.
- **Agency**: sense of purpose/future orientation – sense of purpose, properly motivated, and future oriented.
- **Relentless family and community engagement** – families and community organizations are partners.

Culturally Competent and Well Adults
Linking Ingredients to Implementation

**Environment:** positive, safe, structured, predictable  →  SW-PBIS & Proactive Classroom Management

**Positive relationships for ALL**  →  Establish, Maintain, Restore or Restorative Practices

**Instruction to teach students academic, social-emotional, and health skills**  →  Core academic, SEL & health curricula

**Promoting student agency**  →  Future possible selves; goal setting; service learning

**Relentless family support/engagement**  →  School-home communication system; regular parent training

**Supporting and responding to physical needs**  →  School health center with medical and mental health providers
Social-Emotional & Behavioral Side

Targeted/Intensive (FEW High-risk students)

Individual Interventions (3-5%)

Selected (SOME At-risk Students)

Small Group & Individual Strategies (10-25% of students)

Universal (ALL Students)

School-wide, Culturally-responsive Systems of Support (75-90% of students)

Tier 3 Menu of Individual Supports for a FEW:
- FBA-based Behavior Intervention Plan w/ Replacement Behavior Training
- Individualized Cognitive Behavior Therapy
- Home and Community Supports

Tier 2 Menu of Default Supports for SOME:
- Self monitoring
- School-home communication system
- Structured mentor-based program
- Class pass intervention
- Positive peer reporting
- Small group SEL, SST, CBT

Tier 1 Menu of Supports for ALL:
- School-wide PBIS
- Social-emotional learning curriculum
- Relationships w/ ALL Students
- Proactive classroom management (GBG)
- Differentiated supports within Tier 1 for struggling students
What are the ingredients?

• Environmental ingredient
  – A safe, nurturing, predictable, and reinforcing environment
School-wide PBIS: Teaching, Modeling, Cueing and Reinforcing Common Behavioral Expectations to Create Positive School Culture & Climate
Big Ideas of SW-PBIS

- Common language
- Consistency among adults
- Shared understanding of behavior between adults and students
- Code-switching
- Behavioral feedback from the environment
- Turning behavioral mistakes into learning opportunities
School-Wide PBIS: 7 Steps of Implementation

1. Establish 3-5 positively stated, teachable behavioral expectations
2. Create a behavioral expectation by setting matrix
3. Develop a schedule for ongoing teaching of expectations
4. Post expectations in every setting to cue and prompt behavioral expectations
5. Create a motivation system to recognize and acknowledge students for exhibiting the behavioral expectations
6. Develop a progressive method of responding to problem behaviors with clearly defined categories of problem behaviors
7. Gather data on disciplinary sanctions that could inform decision making
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Hallways</th>
<th>Playgrounds</th>
<th>Cafeteria</th>
<th>Assembly</th>
<th>Bus</th>
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<tr>
<td>Matrix</td>
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<td>1. SOCIAL SKILL</td>
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<td>2. NATURAL CONTEXT</td>
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<td>3. BEHAVIOR EXAMPLES</td>
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School-Wide PBIS: Creating a progressive discipline system

The effectiveness of the progressive response system depends on the adult being calm and having some degree of empathy for the student (does not mean you have to agree with the behavior)

Keys:
- Privately correct problem behavior (if possible avoid publically correcting student behavior)
- Try to minimize interactions that would be harmful to the relationships

**Minor behaviors Staff-Managed**

- Minor behavior
  - Disrespect
  - Defiance/non-compliance
  - Disruption
  - Physical contact/aggression
  - Tardy
  - Dress code
  - Inappropriate language
  - Technology violation

**1st or 2nd Minor Behavior**

**Strategies**
- Proximity control
- Redirection tactic within the classroom
- Modify seating or assignment
- Direct verbal prompt
- In-class reflection
- Mini-conference with student (behavior support takes over class)
- Buddy teacher and “Think Time”
- In-class natural and logical consequence

**3rd Minor Incident within a predetermined amount of time (e.g., middle school 55-minute period)**

**Level 1 Referral**
- Fill out referral
- Behavior support specialist engages in a solution-oriented process (apology, loss of privilege, restitution task, etc.)

**Yes!**
- Reinforce appropriate behavior and praise

**No?**
- Student is non-responsive to repeated corrective efforts
- Try a more intensive corrective effort (red)

**Did the behavior change?**
Responding to Problem Behavior

- Proximity control
- Redirection strategy
- Ongoing Monitoring
- Prompt expected behavior
- Teaching interaction

1. Warning of consequence with “Think Time”
2. Delivery in-class disciplinary consequence
3. Request for office support process

Reconnect, Repair, & Restore Relationship
Proactive Classroom Management:
Prevention-oriented strategies to promote academic engagement and decrease problem behaviors
Structured Environments
Proactive Classroom Management

Relationship Strategies
1. 5 to 1 ratio of positive to negative interactions (Magic ratio)
2. Behavior specific praise
3. Smiling and being nice
4. Positive greetings and farewells on a daily basis
5. Communicating competently with students
6. Wise Feedback
7. Non-contingent reinforcement

Procedural Strategies
7. Precorrection
8. Organizing a productive classroom (effortless to pay attention, flow, limit distractions, seating)
9. Providing numerous opportunities to respond
10. Providing student choice
11. Ongoing teaching, modeling, and recognition of behavioral expectations
12. Transitions are managed well
13. Independent seatwork is managed and used when needed
14. Teacher proximity and mobility
15. Class-wide motivation system to motivate behavior
16. Goal setting and performance feedback
17. Visual schedule of classroom activities
18. Effective cueing systems to release and regain attention
What is a Precorrection?

A form of errorless learning

Reminding/prompting students how to be successful before they even begin the activity, assignment or task
- Not assuming that students are ready or are thinking about how to be successful
- Rather, providing them with the behavioral answers to be successful in class
What is a Precorrection?

Managing behavior with precorrection:

• Anticipate what activities may cause inappropriate behaviors
• “Getting in front” of problem behaviors
• Example: Gentle reminder of expected behaviors in the hallway before dismissing for lunch

VS.

Managing behavior with consequences:

• Requires waiting until the behavior occurs to respond
• Example: Creating an action plan for three alternatives to yelling at a peer
Steps to implementing precorrection

1. Identify context and anticipated behaviors.
2. Determine the expected behaviors.
3. Adjust the environment.
4. Provide opportunities for behavioral rehearsal.
5. Provide strong reinforcement to students engaging in expected behavior.
6. Develop a prompting plan to remind students about the expected behavior.
7. Develop a monitoring plan to determine the effectiveness of the precorrection plan.
8. Offer students an opportunity to give feedback on this strategy.
What are the ingredients?

• Relationship ingredient
  – All students and staff feel welcomed, valued and a sense of belonging and connection to others in school
Common Language:
Three phases to every relationship

Establish
Making sure no child falls through the relational cracks

Maintain
Ongoing effort to keep positive relationships intact

Restore
Repairing harm following negative interactions
Establish-Maintain-Restore

- Provides staff with **concrete relationship practices**
- Embedded within **professional learning communities** as a continuous improvement process

**Establish**
- Intentionally cultivate positive relationships

**Maintain**
- Keeping relationships intact through ongoing positive interactions

**Restore**
- Reconnecting with the student after a negative interaction to *restore* the relationship
EMR General Things to Do and Avoid

**Do**
- Correct behavior privately and with empathy
- Positivity
- Greet
- Recognize & acknowledge positive behavior

**Avoid**
- Publically correct behavior to embarrass or shame
- Negativity
- Ignore
- Take positive behavior for granted
Establish Strategies

The Practices
• Relationships are transactional, like banking:
  – One **cannot withdraw** from a relationship **until** deposits have been made
Banking Metaphor

- Types of withdrawals from relationships teachers need to make:
  - Correcting student behavior
  - Motivating a student to do unwanted work
  - Reminding students to show up to class on time
  - Getting students to be okay with failure
  - Encouraging students to try their hardest
Establishing Positive Relationships
Strategy #1

Banking Time
1. Find individual time to spend with a single student to engage in relational conversation
2. Student selects something to do during interaction
3. Adult uses effective communication techniques
   - Open-ended questions to facilitate conversation
   - Actively listen so the person feels heard
   - Express an interest in what the student says
   - Avoid judgment, giving advice, delivering instruction
   - Respond with empathy by putting yourself in your student’s shoes
Establishing Positive Relationships
Strategy #4

Indirect compliments delivered through others

- Identify something to compliment about the student’s behavior/performance and relay that compliment through another adult
  - Positive note or call home to parent
  - Positive office referral to administrator
  - Through another teacher or school counselor

- Compliments must be *specific* and *sincere*!
  - Specific = something the student said, did, or achieved
  - Sincere = conveying that one really means it
Establishing Positive Relationships

Strategy #5

Positive greetings and farewells on a daily basis

• **Positive greetings** (salutations) at the door using the student’s name provides an ongoing opportunity to personalize interactions with each student to welcome and demonstrate that the teacher values their presence.

• **Positive farewells** each day by offering words of encouragement, saying thank you for participation, and wishing someone a good rest of the day.

**NOTE:** Be sure to do this for students who need it the most and recognize when students have been absent the previous day.
Establishing Positive Relationships
Strategy #6

2x10 Strategy

– Spend **2 minutes a day for 10 straight days** in a row engaging in a conversation that has nothing to do with an instruction or academic task at hand to acknowledge that the student is a person and not just a student

**NOTE:** 2 minutes is an approximation of time. If student gives you signals that they aren’t up for it, don’t continue to push the interaction – timing is key!
Maintain Strategies

The Practices
Without intentional maintenance practices, relationships tend to strain or get worse over time.
MAINTAINING Relationships with Students: Ongoing Positive Interactions

Relationships are maintained by striving for a 5 to 1 ratio of positive to negative interactions

AKA - the “Magic Ratio”

5:1
Gets the job done!!!
Maintaining Positive Relationships
Strategy #2

• **Effective Use of Praise:** process of recognizing, acknowledging, and approving
  1. **Behavior specific praise**
     • Contingent, specific, and sincere recognition of a specific behavior exhibited by the student
  2. **Growth mindset-oriented praise**
     • Recognize the student for effort, hard work, growth, a process used
Maintaining Positive Relationships
Strategy #2

- **Relationship Check Ins**
  - Interaction with no strings attached other than to check in on how things are going
  - Capitalize on brief moments to check in with students
    - Open-ended questions
    - Expressing an interest in how the student is doing in general
Empathy is the ability to decipher what the other person is thinking and feeling in a given situation.

Before correcting behavior begin the interaction with an empathy statement that communicates you are seeking to understand how they are thinking / feeling.
Steps to responding with empathy

• Start with an empathy statement
  – “You seem bored with today’s class and I know firsthand how challenging things can be when class seems boring, it’s tough to stay on task. HERE IS THE DEAL”

• Label the perceived problem behavior
  – “Right now you are talking out loud and distracting other students from doing their work.”

• Describe the appropriate alternative behavior
  – “Instead of talking out loud, I need you to start working quietly on the assigned work.”

• Provide a rationale for appropriate behavior
  – “If you can quietly on your work, other students can get their work done and I’ll circle back to you to figure out what’s boring and see if we can make it go away.”

• Put the student in a decisional dilemma
  – “You have a couple of choices. One is you can get back to working on this assignment and I’ll come back to see if we can make class seem less boring. The other choice is to continue to talk out loud and distract others. If you continue with this, you’re going to miss out on being able to work with others in group. I’m going to give you a few moments to figure out what you want to do.”

• Deliver feedback
  – “Thanks for making the right choice, Now, tell me what’s bothering you about today’s class.”
Restore Strategies

The Practices
Goal

• **Reconnect** with the student after a negative interaction to **repair** harm through a skillful communication to **restore** the relationship
  – **Reconnect** and **repair** in order to **restore** (R³)

Actions

• Find a window of opportunity to reconnect with the student, select from **1 of 5 skillful communication techniques**, and deliver it genuinely and authentically to the student
When is Restore Needed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes in student’s behavior</th>
<th>Your internal feelings</th>
<th>Following a negative interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- changes in eye contact</td>
<td>- you don’t like/are annoyed by the student</td>
<td>- argument/disagreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>- starts ignoring your instructions</td>
<td></td>
<td>- removal from class</td>
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<tr>
<td>- argues, debates, challenges more than usual</td>
<td></td>
<td>- unintentionally embarrassed the student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- starts shrugging when you ask questions</td>
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<td>- misunderstanding (e.g., student takes constructive feedback personally)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- becomes more withdrawn</td>
<td></td>
<td>- student gives you negative feedback (can be about other teachers or the school in general)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These MAY indicate a need to restore the relationship.
Restorative Communication Techniques

1. Letting go of the previous interaction
   • fresh start
2. Ownership for the problem
   • acknowledging one’s own mistake/missed opportunity
3. Empathy statement
   • Showing effort to understand the student’s perspective
4. Statement of care
   • separating the deed from the doer
5. Collaborative problem-solving
   • working together to find a win-win solution
Matching the Technique to the Student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Student</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Letting go conversation</td>
<td>Student who needs to hear adults make mistakes</td>
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Matching the Technique to the Student

**Technique**

- Letting go conversation
- Ownership for the problem
- Empathy statement
- Statement of care (separating deed from the doer)
- Collaborative problem-solving to identify a win-win scenario

**Student**

Student who wants their perspective / feelings recognized
Matching the Technique to the Student

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<td>• Letting go conversation</td>
<td>Student who thinks the adult does not care for or want them in the class</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ownership for the problem</td>
<td>because of their behavior</td>
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<td>• Empathy statement</td>
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Matching the Technique to the Student

**Technique**

- Letting go conversation
- Ownership for the problem
- Empathy statement
- Statement of care (separating deed from the doer)
- Collaborative problem-solving to identify a win-win scenario

**Student**

Strong willed student who likes to have input on the solution moving forward
What are the ingredients?

• Knowledge and skills ingredient (i.e., teaching and learning)
  – Teach the knowledge and skills that enable students to meet the demands of civic, work, and private aspects of life
Social-Emotional Learning:
Adopting a curriculum that supports students to learn self-regulation and decision-making skills that lead to increased resilience and school and life success
What is Social and Emotional Learning?

Recognizing one’s emotions and values as well as one’s strengths and limitations

Managing emotions and behaviors to achieve one’s goals

Making ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behavior

Showing understanding and empathy for others

Forming positive relationships, working in teams, dealing effectively with conflict

Self-awareness

Self-management

Social awareness

Relationship Skills

Responsible decision-making

social & emotional learning
Implementing an SEL Curriculum

• Delivery
  – What?
    • Selecting a high quality curriculum
  – When and where?
    • Time and day of the week
    • Homeroom, advisory period, health class, other classroom setting
  – Who?
    • General education teacher, health teacher
  – Master scheduling issue
Isn’t this the responsibility of homes?

• How many of you are a parent?

• How many of parents have the knowledge and skills to teach literacy, math, writing, STEM?

• Teaching social-emotional skills goes beyond the knowledge and skillset of most parents
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