

Bridging Education and Mental Health: Proactive, Positive, and Predictable Environments

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Overview

- What is BEAM
- Intervention Conceptual Framework
- Positive, Proactive, and Predictable Environments
 - Picture Schedules
 - Transition Strategies
 - Positive Attention/Praise
 - Problem-solving
 - Feelings and Language
- Questions and Discussion



Why is social-emotional development important?

- A young child's emotional and behavioral adjustment is a valid predictor of academic achievement (Blair, 2002).
- Children who are emotionally well-adjusted have a significantly greater chance of early school success (Raver, 2002)
- Good instruction for young children is embedded in relationships (Pianta, 2006)



Findings from the National Center of Early Development and Learning Study

- Only 14% of the pre-K classrooms were rated (on the CLASS) as high in emotional and instruction support
- 20% were rated as highly negative with low instructional quality
- Children who were at-risk were found to make significant gains and close the achievement gap in settings with high emotional support!
- The take home message: “What” you teach may not be as important as “How” you teach it.

(Pianta, 2006, Harris Forum)

Case-Study

Elliott is a four year old boy who attends a therapeutic preschool in a large metropolitan area. The preschool is designed for children who have experienced some type of trauma in their lives such as neglect or abuse. Elliott, his mother and 8 year old sister have recently moved to the area from another large city where the children were witnessing the extreme physical and emotional abuse of their mother by her boyfriend. The children and their mother lived with her boyfriend for two years before moving. In addition to witnessing the abuse, the children were often neglected, with Elliott's sister often being in charge of him for hours at a time. The children and their mother currently live in a shelter and the mother is looking for full-time work. Elliott's teacher has concerns about his behavior at school. He displays very aggressive behavior toward both the teacher and the other children. He often approaches other children and kicks or hits them to get their attention. He also uses these tactics when trying to resolve a conflict with both the teacher and the other children. Transitions are particularly difficult for him. Elliott seems detached from his mother, never exhibiting any affection toward her. He is also not affectionate with his teacher. He uses inappropriate language in the classroom, swearing at the teacher and the other children and has recently begun wetting his pants at school. His mother is extremely open to the idea of working with the teacher in order to try to change some of the behavior and has been very honest in terms of what has happened and is happening at home. Elliott enjoys looking at books and playing dress up. Occasionally he will respond well to other children when they initiate play with him.



Let's go back to Elliot
What environmental risk factors
are impacting his development?

What specific antecedents are
impacting his development?

Characteristics of Children

Effects of Abuse and Neglect on Social- Emotional Development

- Early childhood trauma can be considered *an environmentally induced complex developmental disorder* (De Bellis, 2001)
- Children who have experienced physical abuse more readily perceive anger in facial emotion than children who have been neglected or those who have not been abused. Those who have been neglected have more difficulty distinguishing emotion (Pollack, Cicchetti, Horning, & Reed, 2000).

Characteristics of Children Abused or Neglected

- Chronic interpersonal trauma has been shown to negatively impact the functioning of neurobiological systems involved in emotion and stress response and regulation (DeBellis, 2001; Gunnar, 2000)
- This difference in psychobiological functioning relates to increases in a range of behaviors from aggressive, hyperactive, and hyper-vigilant to distracted, withdrawn, anxious and self-injurious behaviors

Stress Response Continua

Given these neurobiological and behavioral differences in children who have been exposed to chronic trauma many have developed coping mechanisms that have helped them to tolerate unsafe and stressful situations. A model of stress response has been developed at the Baylor School of Medicine.

Stress Response Continua

Hyperarousal Continuum

Rest

Vigilance

Resistance

Defiance

Aggression

Disassociative Continuum

Rest

Avoidance

Compliance

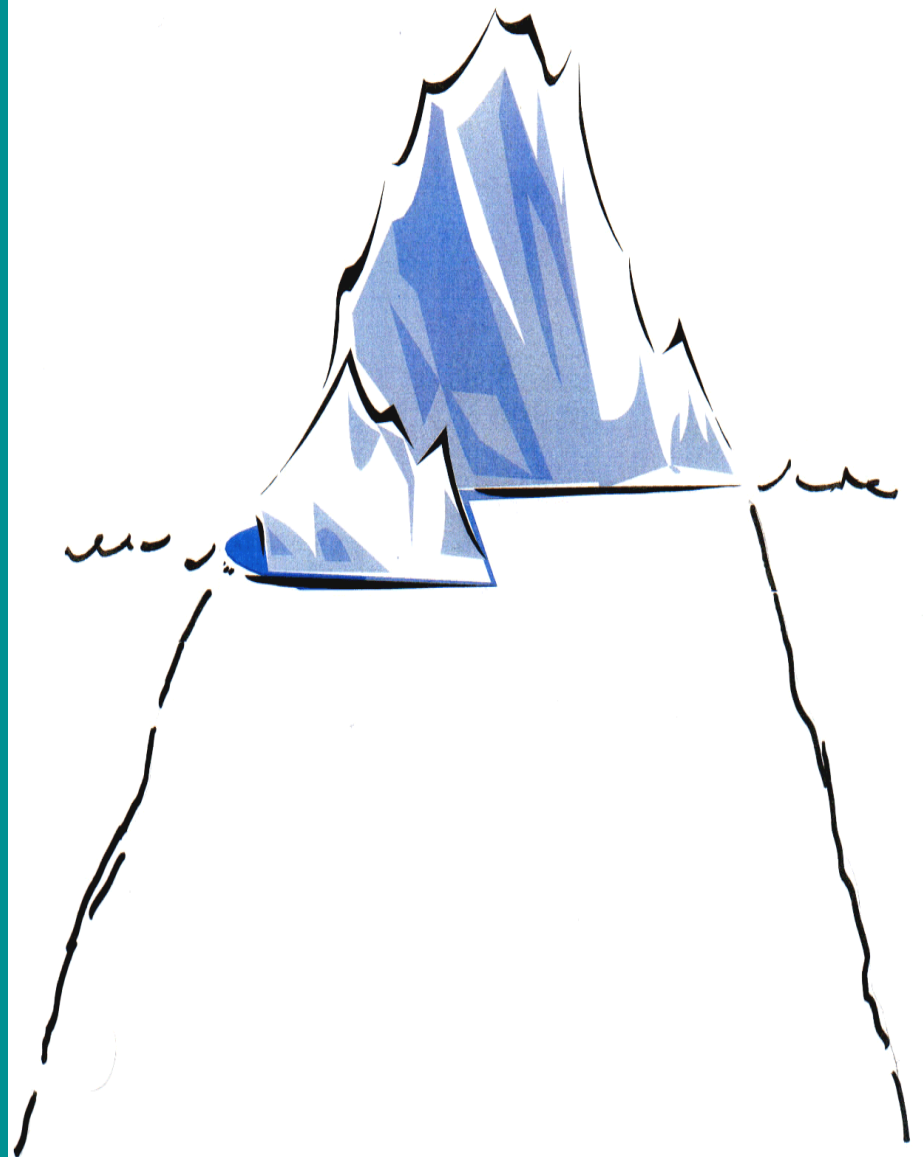
Dissociation

Fainting

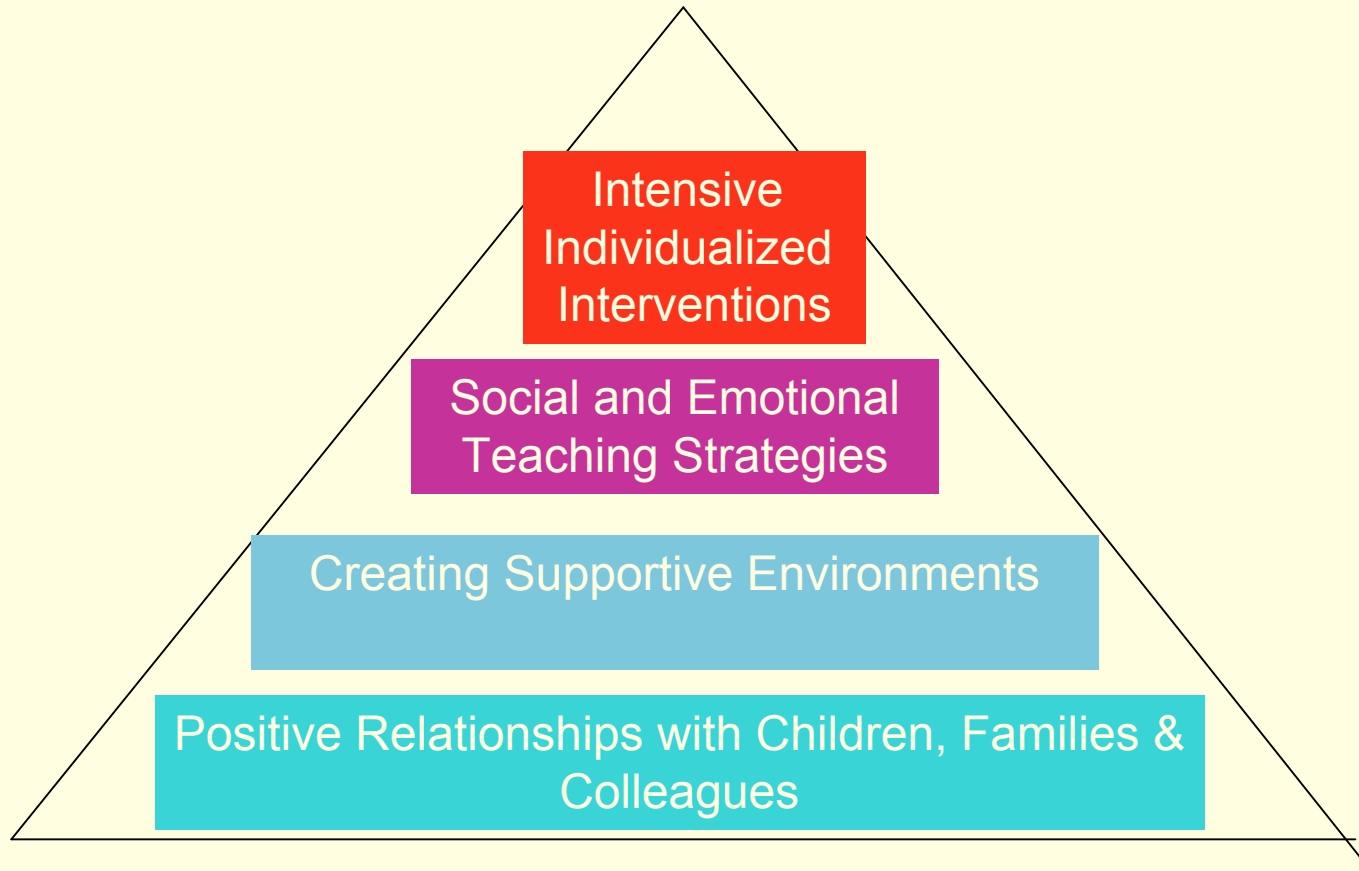
CIVITAS Trauma Project, Baylor School of Medicine

The behavior we observe provides many pieces to the puzzle, however it doesn't give us the whole story. In fact one could say, it's just the tip of the iceberg. It's easy to jump to conclusions and intervene based on what we experience.

But we need to investigate whether there are underlying issues that may be related to the challenging behavior



Expanding Promoting Social Emotional Competence: BEAM

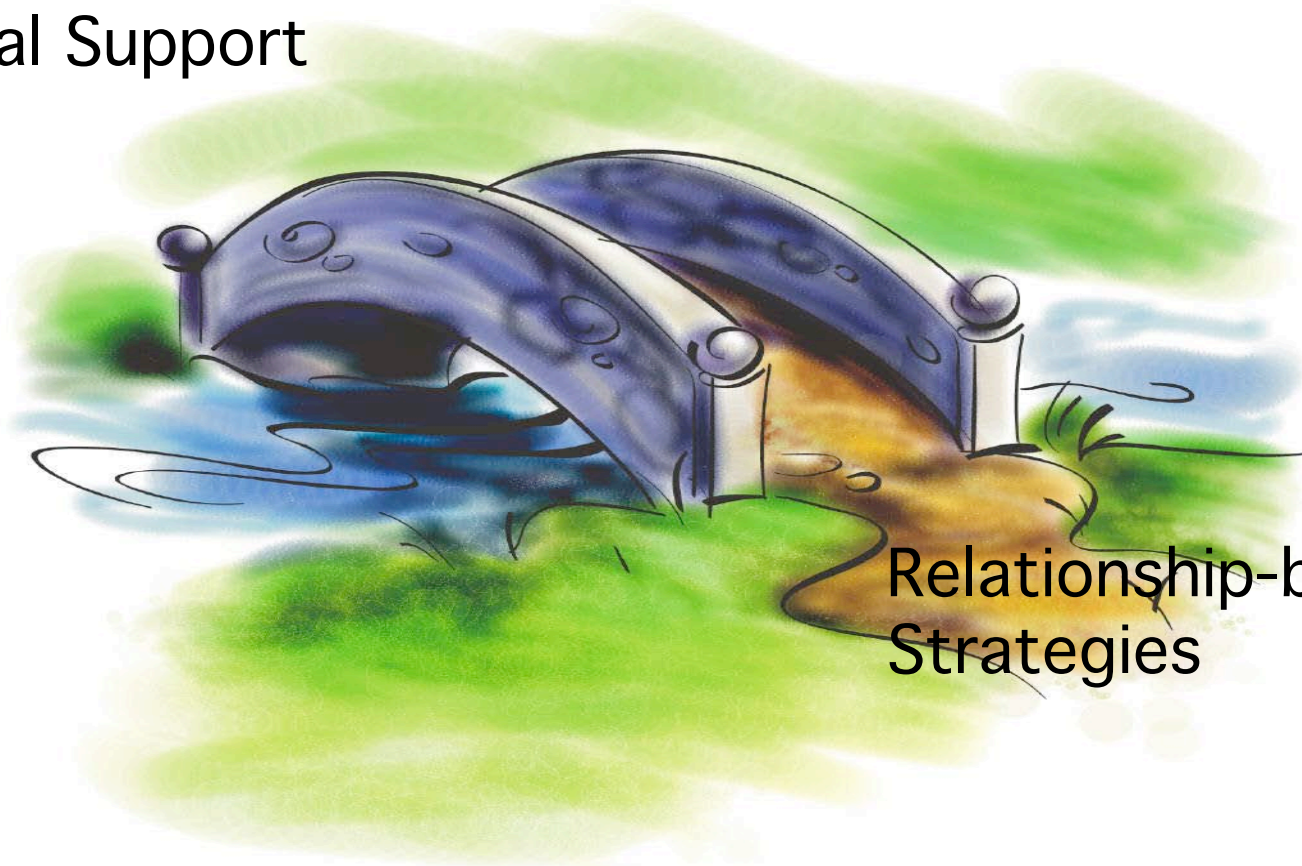


From Fox, Dunlap, Hemmeter, Joseph, & Strain, 2003

What is BEAM?

Combining Positive Behavioral Support and Relationship-Based Teaching to Meet the Social/emotional Needs of Young Children

Positive
Behavioral Support



Relationship-based
Strategies

Big Ideas

Behavior is communicative

Environments and interactions are clear, consistent, and predictable

Asking “why” tells us “how”

Meaningful relationships with children, families, and colleagues are essential for successful outcomes

- Children who have insecure relationships with their primary care provider as a result of abuse can form secure attachment relationships with their preschool teachers and child care providers over time. Children with more sensitive care providers had higher attachment scores (Howes & Segal, 1993; Howes & Ritchie, 1998)

Foundation Beliefs of BEAM

- A BEAM Classroom is Proactive
 - CONSISTENT,
 - PREDICTABLE, and
 - CONTINGENT
- From Howes & Ritchie (2002)
- BEAM Classroom Guide



Positive, Proactive, and Predictable Environments and Interactions

The Bridge

**Positive Behavioral
Support**

Relationship-based

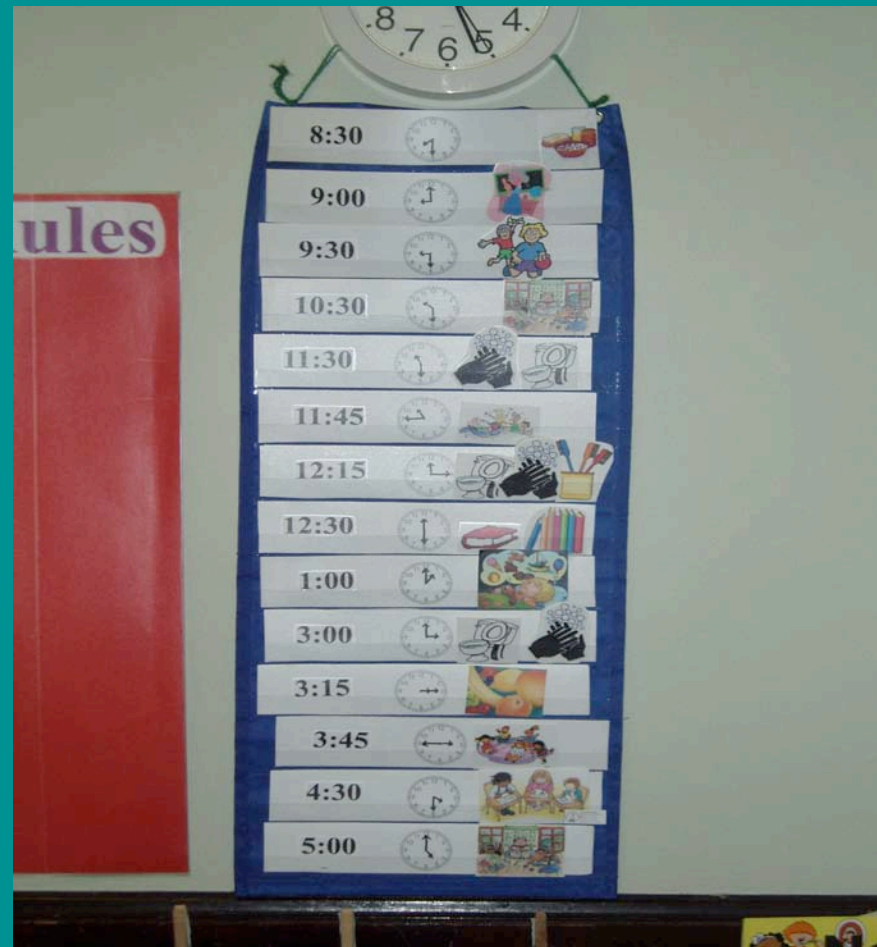
Picture Schedules
Transition Strategies
Positive Attention/Praise
Problem-solving
Feelings and Language

Creating Positive Relationships through the Environment

Purpose of a Classroom Schedule

- To provide orderly structure and predictability so that children don't have to worry about change
- Provides a level of trust for children – they know they can always rely on certain things (teachers, availability of food)
- To teach the child to carry out daily activities independently
- To facilitate interactions with other children
- Teachers need to be taught how to use a schedule and so do children
- Be sure to include a symbol about end of the day and the next day

Example of a Classroom Schedule





Individual Schedule Options

- To Do List
- Afternoon schedule
- Task Analysis (decrease prompting)
- Transition Activities
- Allow child to make daily schedule
- Schedule Box

Examples



Example



Example



Video Examples

- Morning routine and schedule
- Schedule at the end of the day

Transitions

- Beginning of the school day
- Movement within the classroom and the building throughout the school day
- End of the school day

Transitions: Planning

- Plan all transitions
 - What should the children be doing?
 - What should the staff be doing?
- Transitions should be as brief as possible

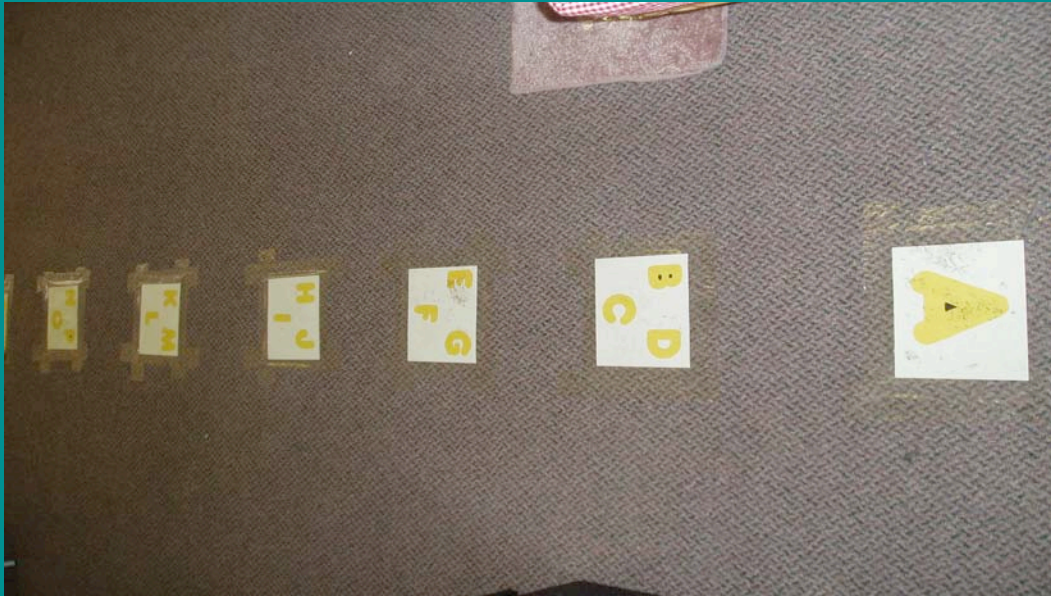
Transitions: Tips

- Cue children of impending transitions – Transition cues
- Give head start to slower children
- Adult waiting in transition spot
- Have safe storage for unfinished activities
- Clear ending and beginning
- Keep voices low; create a calm atmosphere
- Clearly defined task (e.g., clean up, wash hands)
- Use superhero strategy for sense of control, power, and security
- Praise children on task

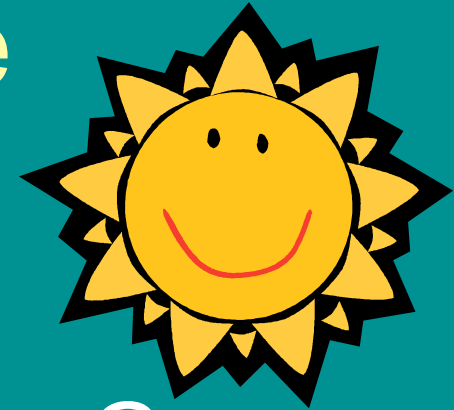
Staffing Patterns

- All staff should have an assigned task during EVERY transition
- One staff is always with children who arrive first
- All activities should be prepped PRIOR to transition (preferably before kids arrive)
- Join children in activities (e.g., washing hands, cleaning up)

Lining-up Strategies



Setting a Positive Tone



Four Glows for every one Grow

- Based on a national study including 80% of the publicly funded pre-K programs in the country the quality of teacher-child interactions predicted student outcomes above structural factors of the classroom or teacher's level of education
(Pianta, 2006, Harris Forum)

Setting a positive tone: Getting on your bicycle

- Movement
 - Unpredictable pattern
 - Stop briefly
- Scanning
 - Sweep
 - Spot check
- Praising
 - Use name
 - Be descriptive
 - Be brief
- Following-up
 - Praising around

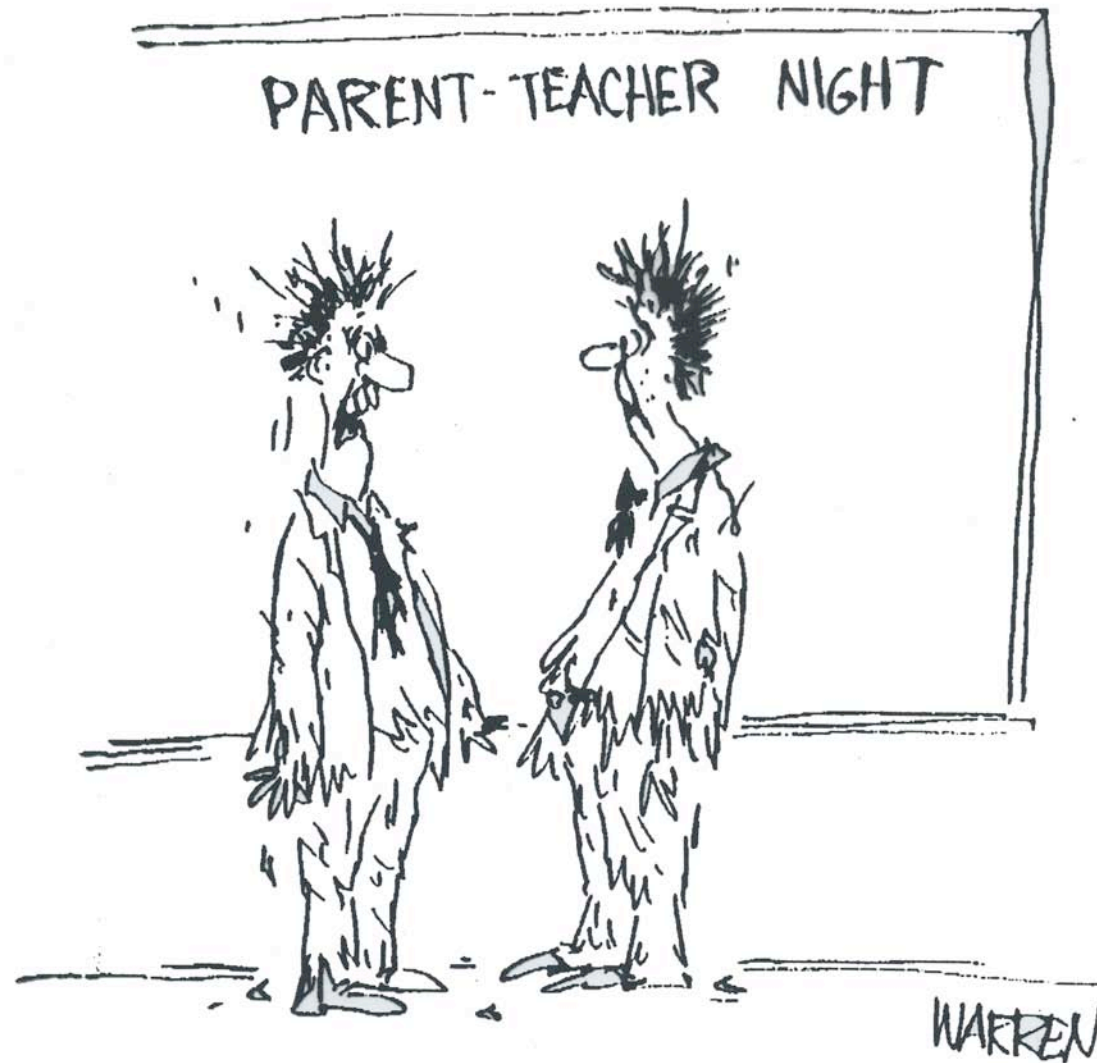


Another way to remember...

- T ime
- E ye contact
- N ame
- T one

(from Cadigan, 2006)





"You must be Timmy's dad. I'm Timmy's teacher."

Problem-solving Strategies

- Feelings Board – video examples
- Thumbs-up choice book

Feelings and Language

- Validating, Interpreting, and Reframing
 - Adults use language to reframe, interpret and validate feelings.
 - Adults acknowledge children's feelings and help children identify and verbalize emotions when appropriate
- Emotional Literacy

Strategies: Teaching “Emotional Literacy”

Model and teach appropriate ways to express emotions—

- *If I know this feeling as a name, I can be more in control of it.*
- *I learn to express emotions by watching those around me.*

Strategies: Teaching “Emotional Literacy”

Having a word for this feeling gives the child the message that:

- *Someone understands me and will help me through this.*
- *I am not the only one who feels this way, so I must be okay.*

Strategies: Teaching “Emotional Literacy”

- Be descriptive when teaching about emotions—*You are stomping your feet and yelling: you look really mad!*
- Point out other children’s emotions as a way to teach empathy—*She is crying. I think she’s sad. Maybe she misses her mom.*

Strategies: Teaching “Emotional Literacy”

- Differentiate the feeling from the way it is expressed—*You’re mad, but hitting is not okay. You can say, ‘I’m mad!’*
- Teach the child what kinds of expression are okay—you may want to practice this, e.g. teach the song *If You’re Happy and You Know It...*

Emotional Literacy—Words that Explain

- Caregivers should tell children what they are going to do before they do it so children can have a sense of control—*I'm going to wipe your nose, change your diaper, etc.*
- Help children anticipate what will happen next—*In five minutes it will be time to get dressed, clean up, etc.*

Feelings and Language: Reframing

- In the moment to moment interactions the teacher might use phrases such as
 - You look like you're having big feelings
 - I wonder if you're sad about....

Reframing

- Helping children to understand the situation from a different perspective.
- Using phrases such as,
- We have enough...
- I'll still be your teacher even when you're angry
- You forgot the rule this time, but I'm sure you'll remember next time...
- This is a safe school. I'm going to keep you safe, me safe, and all the kids safe.
- At our school we take care off kids when they are happy, and when they are mad too.

Preventing Problem Behavior

“an ounce of prevention avoids pounds of punishment”

- Consider your interactions
 - 4 Glows to every one Grow
- Consider your physical environment
- Consider your schedule
- Consider your transitions
- Consider how you use language



Conclusion



When we are new, and when we are fresh and young, our hearts are very open in a way that they may never again be the rest of our lives, so that the impressions that are made on us and the good that is done for us, the kindness and generosity by which a child lives, are never forgotten. Never forgotten.

Nothing that you do for a child is ever wasted. Ever. You may never know exactly what that child saw, or how that child received it, but any gift you give a young person is permanent... because it is then given to other people and that is as permanent as we know.

Garrison Keillor