



# Preschool Pyramid Model Practices Session 1

## Foundational Principles and Nurturing Responsive Relationships

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# Acknowledgments

The content for this training day was adapted with permission from the preschool Pyramid Model practices training modules developed by the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI)

Additional acknowledgments:

- Unpacking the Pyramid Model book
- Instructionally Enhanced Pyramid Model Classroom Implementation Guide

**Thank you to all our Michigan preschools who contributed examples to the content!**

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# Group Agreements

## We are Responsible

- Return on time from breaks
- Take care of our needs

## We are Engaged

- Share “air time”
- Plan to participate in multiple ways
  - Chat, breakout rooms, polls, reactions, unmute
  - Ask questions

# Training Effectiveness

- At the end of the session, you will be asked to provide feedback on today's training
- Results will be used to make improvements to professional learning and for reporting to TA Center stakeholders
- One of the feedback questions you will see is related to promoting and positively portraying diversity among educators and learners (e.g., focus on asset-based language, positive representation of multiple identities)

# Purpose of the Series

The Pyramid Practices sessions are designed to equip teaching staff with the information they need to implement the Pyramid Practices with fidelity, leading to improved social and emotional outcomes for children.

## Intended Outcomes for Today

- Explore the foundational principles of Early Childhood PBIS and the Pyramid Model
- Understand the role of the Classroom Coach in the implementation of Pyramid Practices
- Identify ways to establish responsive relationships with children, families, and coworkers

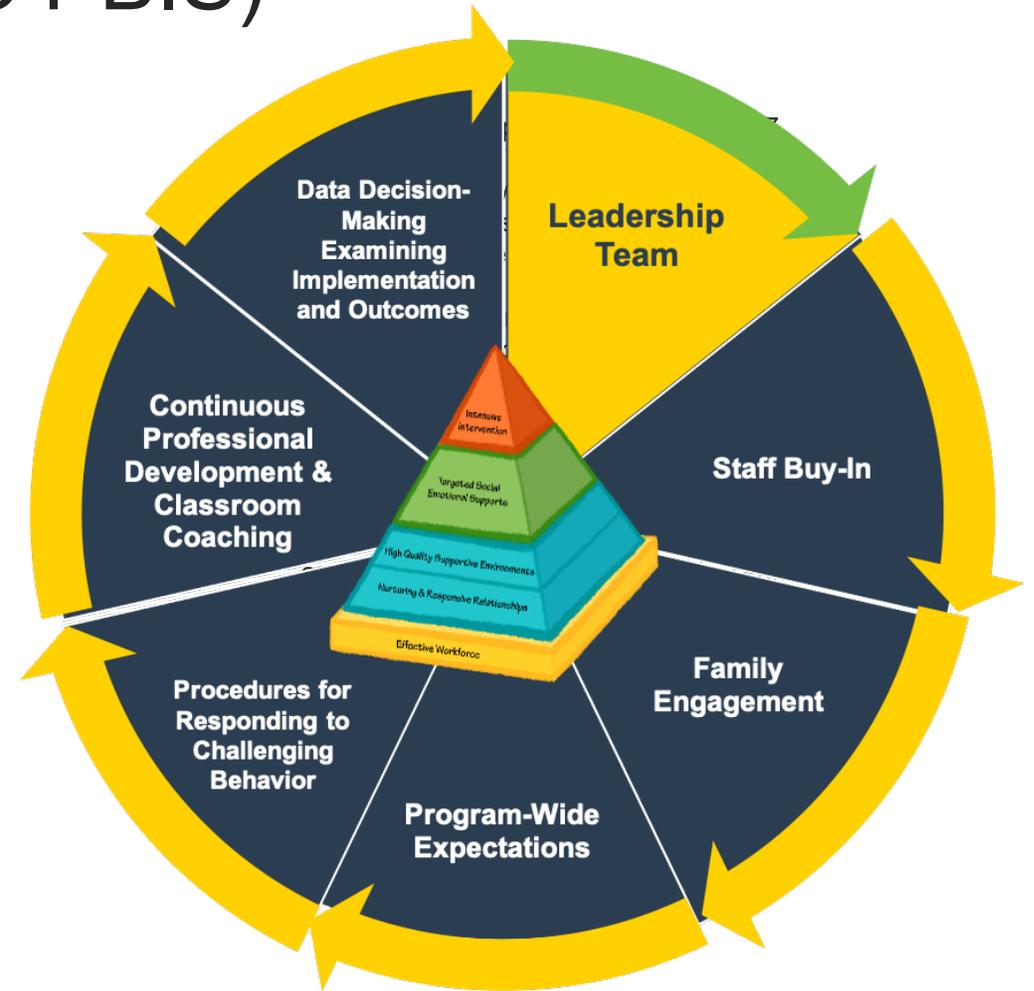
# Agenda

- 1.0 Introduction to Early Childhood PBIS
- 2.0 Applying the Pyramid Model Philosophy
- 3.0 Nurturing and Responsive Relationships
- 4.0 Wrap Up and Next Steps

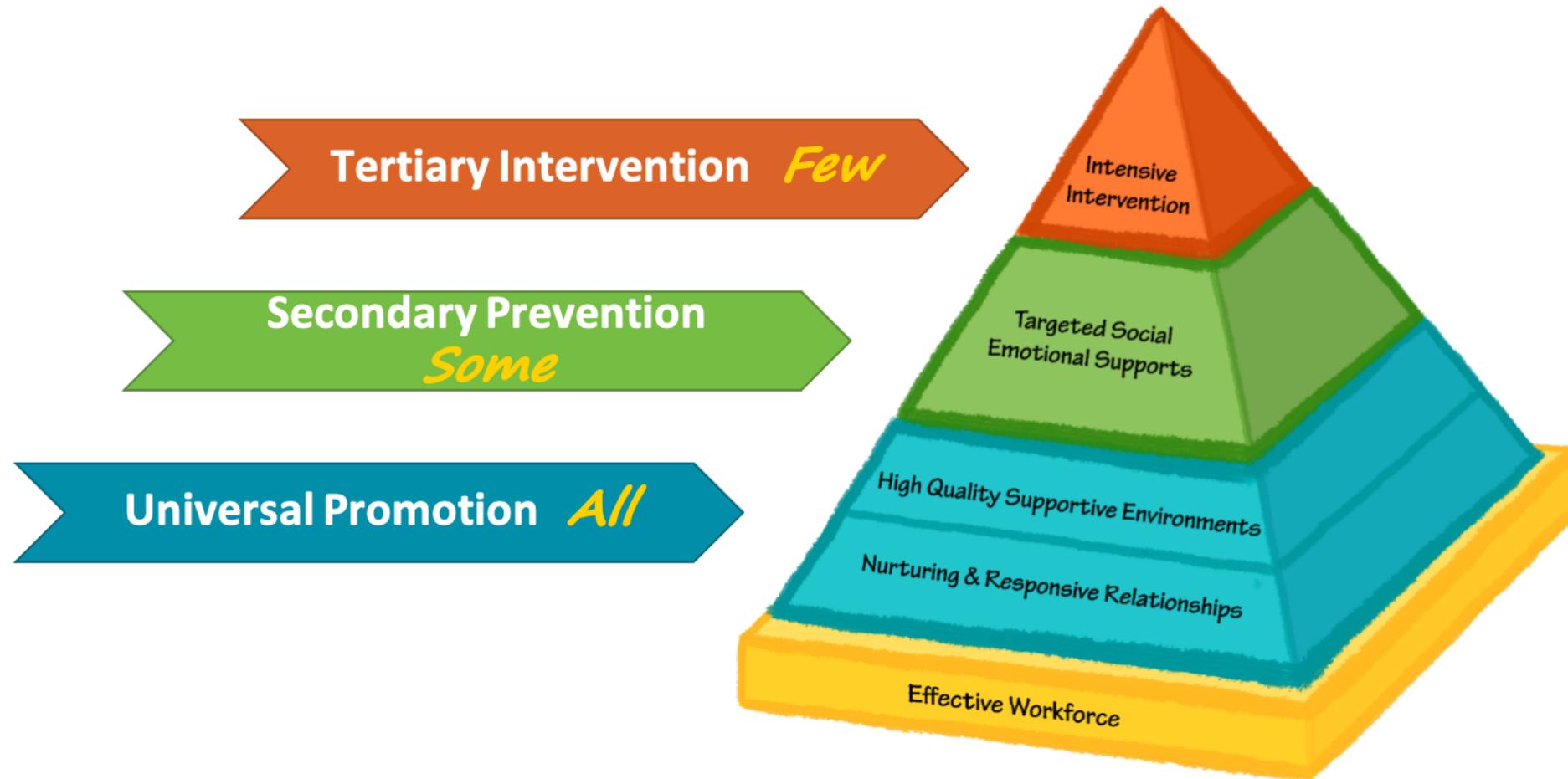
# 1.0 Introduction to Early Childhood PBIS

# Early Childhood Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (EC PBIS)

- Bringing Pyramid Practices into your classroom is just one part of Early Childhood PBIS!
- EC PBIS is the implementation of the Pyramid program-wide
  - Guided by a Leadership Team who focuses on many critical features
  - Includes the infrastructure to support staff and the use of data for decision making



# The What: Pyramid Model for Promoting Social and Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children



# Goal of the Pyramid Model

Ensure each and every child has the support, experiences, relationships, opportunities, guidance, and instruction to thrive in their social-emotional development and learning



# What We Know About Young Children

- Development is a highly interactive process, and life outcomes are not determined solely by genes
- Researchers estimate that between 49% and 75% of children will experience a potentially traumatic event between birth and age 5 (Briggs-Gowan et al., 2010, Jimenez et al., 2016)
  - Children's mental and physical health can be negatively impacted by racial trauma directly or indirectly
  - Race-based traumatic stress (RBTS), refers to the mental and emotional injury caused by encounters with racial bias and ethnic discrimination, racism, and hate crimes

## More About What We Know

- Young children are being suspended and expelled from preschool at alarming rates
  - Children with disabilities and Black preschoolers, especially Black boys, are being disproportionately expelled
- Children who are dual language learners make up 33% of all children under age 9, and are disproportionately likely to face multiple risk factors
- Children with disabilities in inclusive settings demonstrate stronger social-emotional skills than children in separate classrooms
  - The inclusion of children with disabilities benefits all children, including those without disabilities

# We Can Make a Difference

“...there is increasing evidence that strong social-emotional supports, such as high family resilience and connection and the provision of positive childhood relational experiences, are associated with children who are resilient and flourish despite their level of adversity”  
American Academy of Pediatrics, 2021





# Activity 1.1

- Take 30 seconds to think about why you are here today:
  - What student needs could be better supported in your program?
  - What enhancements are you hoping to see?
  - What is your “why?”
- Be ready to share

# So, How Do We Support ALL Children?

- Prevention Focused
  - Being ready to meet every child where they are and planning to support each child, family, and staff
- A Caring Community
  - Building meaningful relationships; honoring, valuing, and embracing the cultural ways of being
- Commitment to Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging
  - Adopting a program-wide philosophy that all children belong here and can be successful
  - Developing policies that prevent the use of exclusionary discipline practices

# Core Constructs of Educational Equity



## **Access –**

All learners have entrance into, involvement with, and full benefit of quality learning opportunities (Paris, 2012).



## **Representation –**

Having presence in decision making and in content (Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009).



## **Meaningful participation**

–All learners have agency and are empowered to contribute in effectual ways (Fraser, 1998).



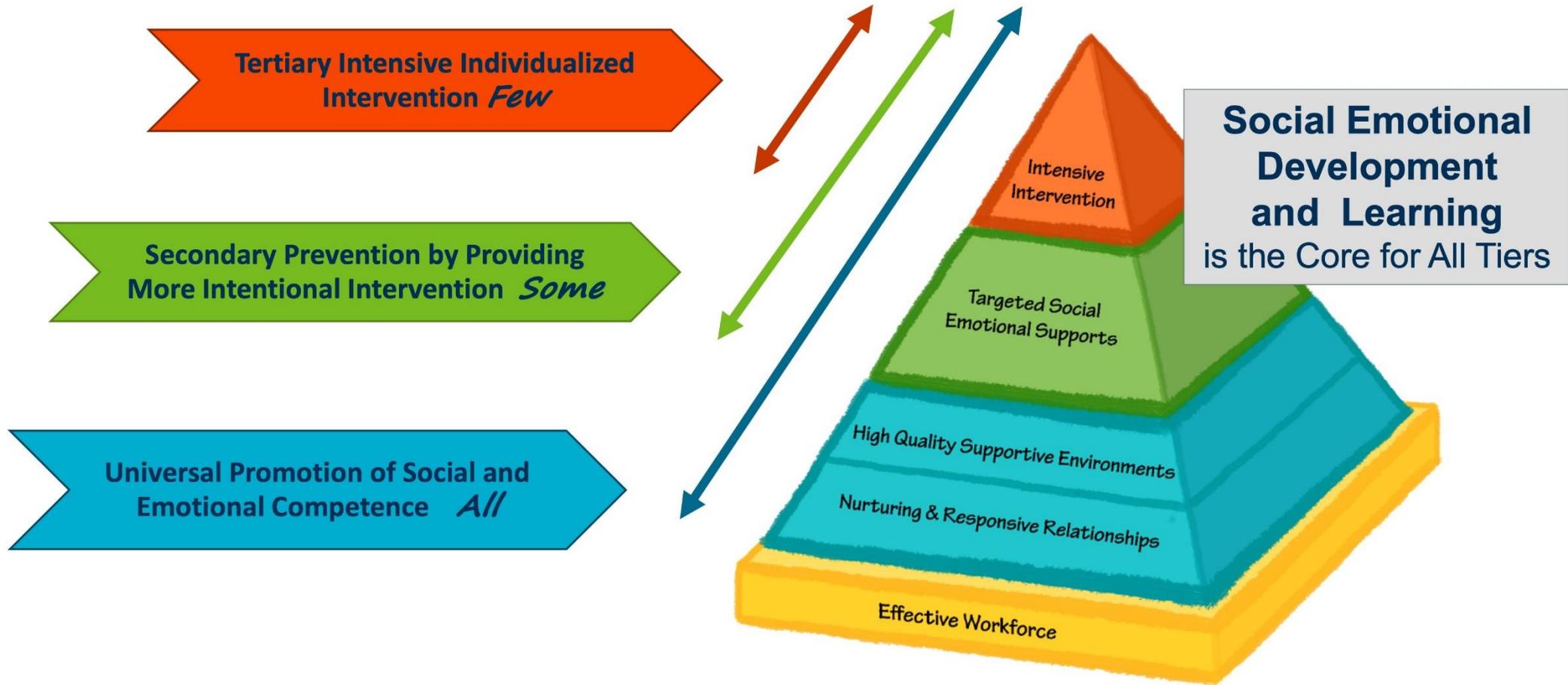
## **High Outcomes–**

Solutions benefit all learners towards self-determination and the ability to act as contributing citizens in a democratic society & global community (Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013).

# More About How We Support All Children

- Trauma-Informed
  - Staff understand how trauma might affect children and families and focus on resilience in interactions with children and families
- Anti-Biased Practice
  - Committing to advancing equity, ending all forms of bias and discrimination, and working with children and families to design our program
- Data-Informed
  - Use data to make decisions about professional development, intervention planning, and monitoring equity in both implementation and outcomes
- Ready for Every Child!

# Pyramid Model Practices



# Behavior is Communication

- I am scared
- I need help
- I don't want to play that game
- This activity is boring
- I don't understand what you want me to do
- I don't know how to play with those children
- I am frustrated

**When children feel those things, they might engage in behaviors that adults find challenging**

## Some Basic Assumptions

- Challenging behavior usually has a message
- Children often use challenging behavior when they don't have the social or communication skills they need
- Behavior that persists over time is usually working for the child

### **MANTRA:**

**Behavior continues because the behavior works!**

# Behavior Doesn't Tell Us What to Do, Understanding the Meaning (Function) Does

## I want or need something

- Toy, material, activity
- An adult to help me
- A friend to play with
- A hug
- To keep doing what I'm doing

## I want to avoid something

- Playing with a group of children
- Going to an activity I don't know how to do or isn't interesting to me
- Stopping what I am doing
- Loud noises



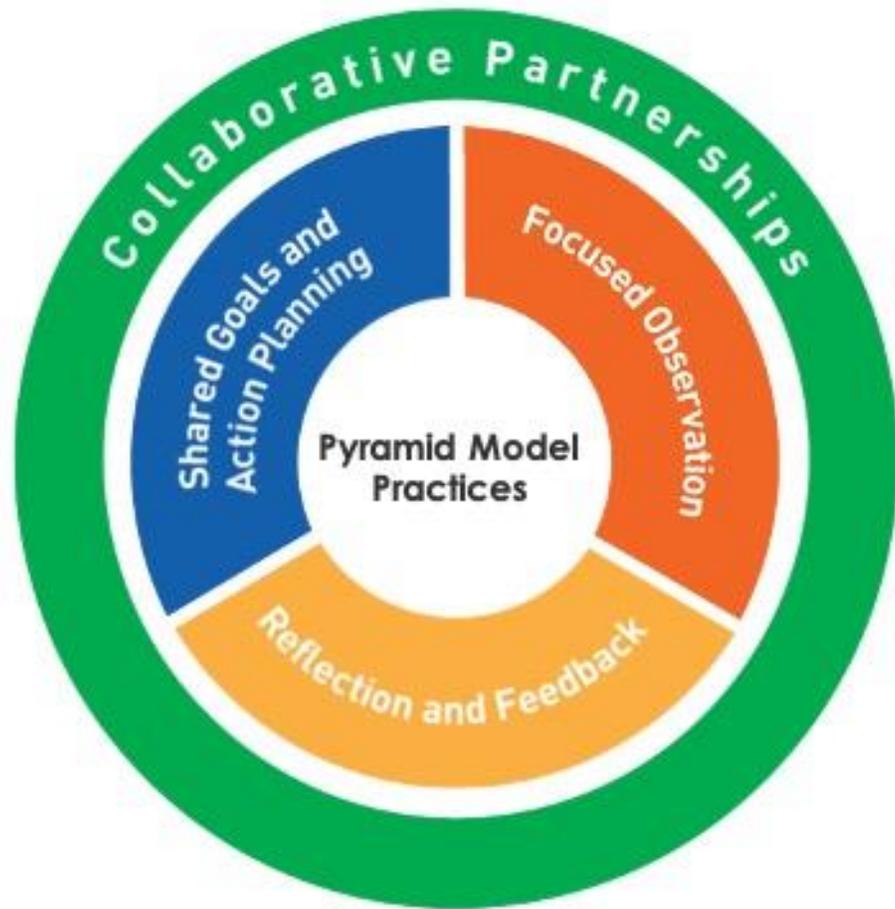
## Activity 1.2

- Independently, read through one or two of the following scenarios, and for each one, think about:
  - Why might this be happening?
  - What could I do to prevent it?
- 1. Several children are rolling on the floor and talking to each other during morning meeting
- 2. Two children are not following the daily schedule
- 3. On an almost daily basis, one child sits and watches other children play and then does something to destroy it (e.g., blocks, art)



Remember, it all rests  
on an effective  
workforce!

# Practice-Based Coaching Framework



- Set short-term implementation goals together
- Develop an action plan
- Focused observation (15-minutes) completed by the Classroom Coach
- Reflection and debrief session
- Goal is continued or new goal is created based on debrief

# Coaching

## Coaching Is:

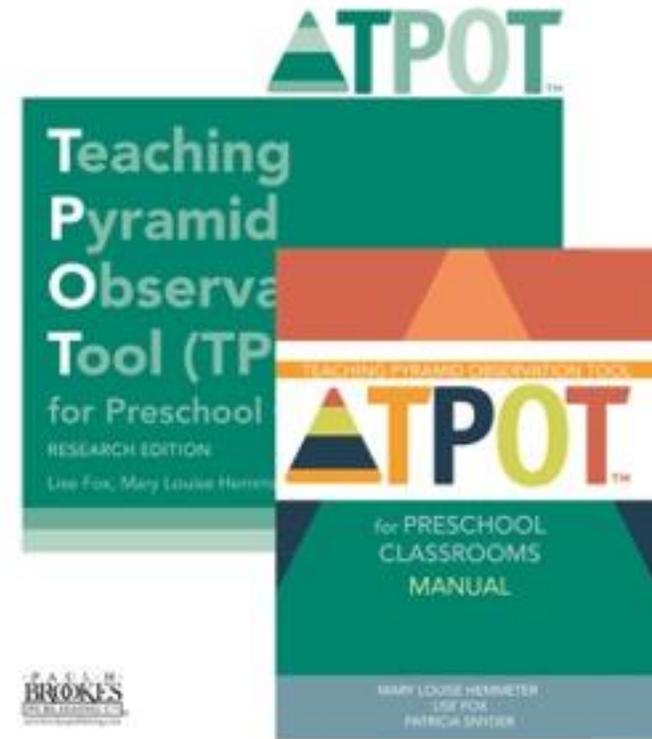
- Collaborative
- Interactive
- Focused on skill-building
- Reliant on observation and feedback
- Goal-directed
- Outcomes-driven

## Coaching Is Not

- Just providing advice and tips
- Supervision
- Only modeling
- Training with classroom observation
- Consultation

# Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT)

- Assessment used to measure Pyramid Practices in the classroom and identify areas of strength and areas for need for action plan goals
  - Two-hour observation
  - 20-minute interview
- Used annually to monitor progress on implementation of Pyramid Practices
- Administered by a trained Classroom Coach





## Activity 1.3

- Take a moment to reflect on the structure of support that will be provided for implementation of the Pyramid Practices
  - How is this similar or different than the coaching that you have experienced in the past?
  - What questions do you have?
- Put your responses in the chat

## 2.0 Applying the Pyramid Model Philosophy



## Activity 2.1

Based on what you know about the Pyramid Model so far, do these examples align with the Pyramid Model or not?

- Read each scenario and determine whether it aligns with the Pyramid Model
- If it does not, think about how you might reframe the item to be more consistent with the Pyramid Model

## Pyramid Model or Not?

- They know what to do; they just won't do it.
- They've had a hard time this week and seem to be getting upset so quickly. I am going to spend some 1:1 time with them and really connect.
- It won't work in our classroom. We've tried all those strategies.
- My kids are always telling on each other. I need to teach them other ways to solve problems.
- The parents never follow through with the suggestions we give them.
- She's hitting her friends when she wants to play with them. Maybe I should teach her how to get her friends' attention and offer play ideas.

## Pyramid Model or Not? (Cont.)

- He's throwing himself on the floor every time we're about to do something different. I wonder if he's getting the transition cues he needs
- All my assistant ever does is clean up after children. He never just plays with the children, nor does he engage in other classroom activities. I don't think he likes being in my classroom
- We are teaching the children to use calm down strategies at school. Maybe we could collaborate with families to identify some calm down strategies that might work for their child at home.

What are some behaviors that push your buttons?

## Activity 2.2

- Locate the **Hot Buttons** handout that is provided in your materials
- Record three child behaviors that tend to “push your buttons”
- Follow the instructions on the handout to record:
  - How the behaviors make you feel
  - The impact of these feelings and your response to behavior
  - The impact of the child’s behavior and your response on the relationship you have with the child
  - The impact of the child’s behavior and your response on the relationship you have with the family

# Reflecting on Behaviors That Challenge Us

- The impact of both the behavior and adult's response plays a role in the relationships of teachers, children, families, and peers
- Our own life experiences, temperament, personality, and culture all play into our response to behavior that pushes our buttons
- It can be difficult to see beyond the challenging behavior to be present and supportive of ALL children in order to develop and maintain relationships
- Relationships are critically important, especially when we consider:
  - Children who have been impacted by trauma
  - Children who have identity markers that are different than the teaching staff

## Additional Reflection Questions

- How does your response make the child feel?
- What does the child learn about relationships from your response?
- How might it impact the tone of the classroom?
- How might it impact the children's relationships with other children?
- How do these behaviors and your response affect the quality of instruction in your classroom?
- How do they affect your stress level and mood as a practitioner?

## 3.0 Nurturing and Responsive Relationships

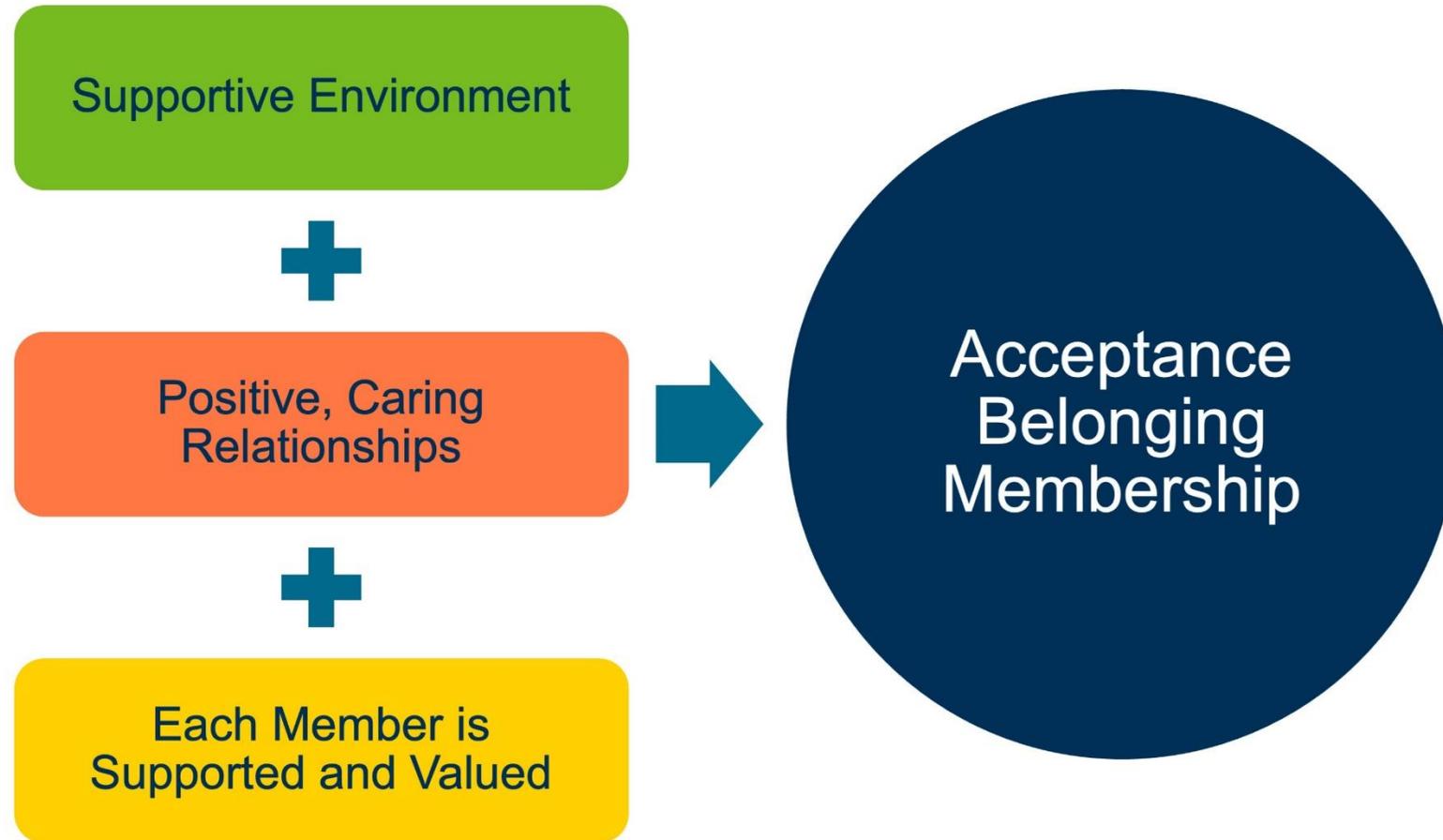
# The Foundation: Nurturing and Responsive Relationships



## Activity 3.1

- Review the **Nurturing and Responsive Relationships** section of the Pyramid Model Practices Implementation Checklist:
  - Caring Classroom Community, Relationship with Children, and Positive Attention (pg. 1-2)
  - Supportive Conversations and Relationships Among Children (pg. 3)
  - Relationships with Families and Colleagues (pg. 4-5)
- Place checkmarks next to the items that you do consistently well
- Star the items you want to learn more about or possibly get support from your Classroom Coach
- You'll be using this checklist during your coaching sessions!

# What is a Caring Community?



NAEYC. (2020). *Developmentally appropriate practice* [Position statement].

# Creating a Classroom Community

- Developing and identifying classroom structures that support a classroom community is important for success
- Elements of a caring classroom community
  1. Group identity and shared ownership
  2. Group members see themselves in the environment
  3. Reflects a culture of kindness

NAEYC. (2020). *Developmentally appropriate practice* [Position statement].

# 1. Group Identity and Shared Ownership

- Develop a group identity to build a sense of community
- Involve children in decision-making and caring for the classroom
- Everyone helps to make the classroom a positive, helpful, place



# Classroom Helpers

- The goal of classroom helpers is for children to feel valued as helpers in the classroom community
- Classroom helper tasks should be meaningful to the classroom rather than arbitrary tasks
  - Classroom Greeter
  - Solution Helper
  - New Friend Helper
  - Circle or Small Group Helper
  - Snack or Meal Helper





## Activity 3.2

- Locate the handout **From Classroom Jobs to Classroom Helpers** in your materials
- With your small group create a list of traditional jobs that you have used in your classroom
- Identify how you could reframe the jobs into classroom helpers
- Pick someone to share one or two ideas with the group!

## 2. Group Members See Themselves in the Environment

- Design the classroom to include representation of children, families, and community
- Ensure all children have work displayed in the classroom
- Include all families in the classroom
- Promote positive identities by including materials where children can see themselves



### 3. Creating a Culture of Kindness

- Structure the environment to support being helpful and kind by caring for the classroom environment, building into activities, and engaging children in generating ideas for being kind
- Teach the language of kindness by intentionally recognizing acts of kindness for every child
- Involve families and other adults by commenting on the kindness of those who help in your classroom and sending home notes of kindness
- Display kindness in the classroom by creating a kindness tree or displaying artwork or notes created by children about kindness

## Activity 3.3

- Locate the handout **Caring Community Planning Sheet** in your materials; take some time to reflect on the information we have covered:
  1. Group Identity and Shared Ownership
  2. Group Members See Themselves in the Environment
  3. Creating a Culture of Kindness
- Independently write ideas that resonate with you, and that you would like to try in your classroom
- Be ready to share some ideas with the group!

# Relationships Matter!

“The importance of a child’s close relationship with a caregiver cannot be overestimated. Through relationships with important attachment figures, children learn to trust others, regulate their emotions, and interact with the world; they develop a sense of the world as safe or unsafe, and come to understand their own value as individuals.”

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

## Relationships with Children

- Support social-emotional competence, trust and safety, an openness to learning new things, and building resilience
- Need to be built with **every** child in the classroom, even when it is difficult to make that connection
- Sometimes, challenging behaviors can make it difficult to develop relationships with children
- Intentional, planful interactions help to build connections with children

# Responsive Relationship Practices

- Adults' time and attention are important to all children
- We need to be sure we are giving time and attention at times **other than** when they are engaging in challenging behavior
  1. Turn toward children's bids for connection
  2. Follow the child's lead
  3. Have supportive conversations
  4. Provide positive attention and descriptive feedback



# 1. Turn Toward Children's Bids for Connection

- Children's bids for connection are attempts to reach out for connections
- Turning toward the child's bid for connection communicates positive messages to the child
- Responsiveness to diverse ways of making bids for connection is critical to build and maintain relationships
- Intentional and mindful responses to children's bids support connections and relationship growth

# Factors That Could Impact Children's Bids for Connection

- The child may not be able to verbally communicate
- Cultural expectations or norms
- Children who are dual language learners may not know the English words to use
- The adult may be busy and doesn't notice the bid
- Bids may occur at a time when the teacher cannot respond
- The adult may perceive the child's bid for connection as challenging behavior

## 2. Follow the Child's Lead

- Be flexible and allow children to have a voice in the classroom
- Build on children's interests and incorporate their ideas into activities
- Encourage children to express their ideas
- Provide children with choices, including culturally relevant materials and activities



### 3. Supportive Conversations

Meaningful conversations with children send a powerful message that teachers are interested in them, want to spend time with them, and care about them

- Supportive conversations:
  - Occur with all children throughout the day in the context of play, and other activities
  - Are extended with multiple exchanges
  - Include topics that interest the child
  - Support children's conversations with other children

## 4. Provide Positive Attention and Descriptive Feedback

- Children are more likely to repeat the behavior they are engaging in when it is acknowledged
- Adults should monitor our behavior to ensure we are using positive descriptive language more than redirection or correction
- Principles of positive descriptive feedback
  - Focus on positive/appropriate behavior
  - Acknowledge effort
  - Descriptive: Say what you see
  - Convey with enthusiasm

# Relationships with Children Whose Behavior is Challenging

- Sometimes we need additional support for building relationships with children whose behavior is challenging
- Spending positive time with children has been shown to prevent and reduce challenging behavior
- Banking Time
  - Focuses on building teacher-child relationships through intentional supportive interactions
  - Set aside time for a one-on-one interaction with the child 2-3 times per week
  - Intentionally plan banking time strategies for individual children, and monitor results

## Activity 3.4

- Locate the handout **Responsive Relationship Strategies Handout** in your materials and review the strategies provided so far:
  1. Turn toward children's bids for connection
  2. Follow the child's lead
  3. Have supportive conversations
  4. Provide positive attention and descriptive feedback
- Reflect on whether these strategies are used with ALL children in your classroom
- Independently, record some next steps to strengthen your use of responsive relationship strategies

# Relationships Among Children

Children reported to have better social skills such as sharing, cooperating, and helping other children in Kindergarten are:

- More likely to graduate from high school on time
- More likely to get a college degree and have a full-time job
- Less likely to be arrested, engage in substance abuse, or be on a waiting list for public housing



Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, (2015)

# Planning to Promote Peer Relationships

- Set up materials that encourage children to take turns, work together, or interact with each other
- Build daily routines where children can have opportunities to practice positive interactions with each other
- Plan activities and materials designed for peer play to encourage children to play together
- Encourage children to have conversations with one another at different times of the day
- Scaffold peer interactions for children who need additional help

# Benefits of Relationships with Families

When there is a focus on **safety, caring, respect, encouragement, and trust**, we...

- Focus on the family's capacity to support their children
- Support children's social-emotional growth and development
- Create a partnership that provides a context for addressing challenges that might arise
- Build a foundation for families to have positive experiences with school



## Making Connections with All Families

- Acknowledge the strengths of families and approach them as equal, reciprocal partners
- Create a welcoming and supportive environment where all families are represented in the classroom
- Offer informal and formal opportunities to participate in the classroom
- Establish and maintain frequent, **two-way communication** with families, using their preferred mode of contact
- Provide opportunities for families to share short and long-term goals for their child

# Connecting Pyramid Model Practices at School and Home

NCPMI provides several resources to guide families in the use of similar practices on the [Family Engagement page](#) of their website

- [Family Introduction to the Pyramid Model](#)
- [Providing Positive Feedback and Encouragement](#)
- [All About My Child](#)

**All About My Child**

**Instructions:** Fill in the blanks with the information you want to share with your child's teacher. Add a photo if you have one.

My child's name is: \_\_\_\_\_

My child likes to be called: \_\_\_\_\_

Some things I want you to know about my child are: \_\_\_\_\_

The languages my child hears at home are: \_\_\_\_\_

**NCPMI Providing Positive Feedback and Encouragement**

**Verbal Encouragement**

- ▶ "You are working so hard on..."
- ▶ "You must feel proud of yourself for..."

**Nonverbal encouragement also works! Try...**

- ▶ Giving a hug
- ▶ A thumbs up or wink
- ▶ Clapping
- ▶ Using a special hand shake
- ▶ Smiling
- ▶ Imitating gestures, words or sounds
- ▶ A happy dance

**We have something important to share with you!**

**Research<sup>1</sup> has shown that the skills your child needs to be successful in the future are social and emotional skills!** The more socially skilled children are, the more likely they are to succeed in school. Because this is so important for your child, we are using the Pyramid Model in our program.

**What is the Pyramid Model?**

The Pyramid Model is a framework for supporting the social and emotional development of our children. The goal of the Pyramid Model is to create an environment where every child feels good about coming to school. This is accomplished by designing classrooms that promote engagement in learning and by building positive relationships among children, families, and staff. In our use of the Pyramid Model, our classroom staff will work together to ensure that all children understand behavior expectations, receive instruction in social skills, and those who are struggling receive individual support.

The Pyramid Model illustrates that the foundation for helping children develop social and emotional skills is nurturing and responsive relationships and high quality environments. The middle of the Pyramid, teaching of social and emotional skills, is provided to all children with some children receiving additional teaching and support. The top of the Pyramid shows that a few children will need the foundation, the middle AND individualized intervention to address challenging behavior.

To use the Pyramid Model, our program established a leadership team that will provide ongoing support to our staff and families. Our leadership team looks forward to sharing some of the important work we are doing, including teaching program-wide expectations, partnering with families, training staff in teaching strategies, providing classroom coaching to help teachers implement, and using data for decision-making. Stay tuned for ongoing updates about the Pyramid Model in our program!

**What is gained by using the Pyramid Model?**

**FAMILIES**

- Receive information on how to help promote children's social and emotional skills
- Team with teachers to help children grow and learn
- Receive support for preventing and addressing behavior problems

**TEACHERS**

- Are effective in helping children learn social and emotional skills
- Strengthen classroom management skills
- Have information and resources to support families

**CHILDREN**

- Increase their social and emotional skills
- Improve in their readiness for kindergarten

**NCPMI National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations** [ChallengingBehavior.org](#)



## Activity 3.5

- Locate the document **Communicating with Families: Helpful Suggestions** and read through the examples for ideas to connect with families
- Think of two new ways to make connections with families
- Make sure one idea involves bidirectional communication
- When prompted, share ideas in chat

# Collaborative Relationships with Colleagues

- Leads to the development of as well as agreement on a **shared purpose**
- Each team member commits to **personal responsibility**
- Strong partnerships are **built** through relationship building, and **nourished** through effective, respectful communication
- **Trust** is earned and becomes a foundation for how the team operates



# Developing Meaningful, Collaborative Relationships

- Create a caring community where all team members are valued, respected, and recognized
- Define roles, responsibilities, expectations, and efficient classroom procedures
- Develop child guidance principles, specifically around preventing and responding to challenging behavior
- Work to understand how culture and experience shape relationships and communication styles
- Understand how each team member works collaboratively

# 4.0 Wrap Up and Next Steps

# Activity 4.1

## Let's Review!

- Look one more time at the **Nurturing and Responsive Relationships** section of the Pyramid Model Practices Implementation Checklist:
  - Caring Classroom Community, Relationship with Children, and Positive Attention (pg. 1-2)
  - Supportive Conversations and Relationships Among Children (pg. 3)
  - Relationships with Families and Colleagues (pg. 4-5)
- Make any notes based on what we talked about today; what practices might you want to learn more about and strengthen?

## What's Next?

- **Session 2:** High Quality Supportive Environments
- Please bring all of your materials from today's session

# Stay Connected to the MiMTSS TA Center



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# References

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- National Center on Parent, family, and community engagement (NCPFCE). ECLKC. (2022, June 8). <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/about-us/article/national-center-parent-family-community-engagement-ncpfce>

# URLs Used in Today's Session

[Pyramid Model Practices Implementation Checklist](https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Pyramid-Practices-Checklist.pdf) (https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Pyramid-Practices-Checklist.pdf)

[Pyramid Model poster](https://challengingbehavior.org/docs/NCPMI_PyramidPoster.pdf) (https://challengingbehavior.org/docs/NCPMI\_PyramidPoster.pdf)

[Positive Feedback and Encouragement poster](https://challengingbehavior.org/docs/ToolsBuildingRelationships_starters-for-giving-positive-feedback_Home.pdf)  
(https://challengingbehavior.org/docs/ToolsBuildingRelationships\_starters-for-giving-positive-feedback\_Home.pdf)

[Starters for Giving Positive Feedback and Encouragement poster](https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/ToolsBuildingRelationships_starters-for-giving-positive-feedback_Home.pdf)  
(https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/ToolsBuildingRelationships\_starters-for-giving-positive-feedback\_Home.pdf)

[All About My Child](https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/All-About-my-Child.pdf) (https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/All-About-my-Child.pdf)

[Classroom Collaboration Workstyle Discussion Guide](https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Classroom-Collaboration-Workstyle-Disc-Guide.pdf)  
(https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Classroom-Collaboration-Workstyle-Disc-Guide.pdf)

# URLs Used in Today's Session, Cont.

[Family Engagement page](https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Implementation/family.html) (https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Implementation/family.html)

[Emotional Piggy Bank](https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Emotional-piggy-bank.pdf) (https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Emotional-piggy-bank.pdf)

[Backpack Connection Series](https://challengingbehavior.org/implementation/family-engagement/#backpack:~:text=Link%20to%20this%20accordion) (https://challengingbehavior.org/implementation/family-engagement/#backpack:~:text=Link%20to%20this%20accordion)