Keeping Kids in Class:
Empowering Professionals to Prevent Pre-K Exclusion

Sara Wolfe, MA, NBCT

strother3@marshall.edu

Eastern Early Childhood BSS

WVBMHTAC

Sara Wines, MA

sara.wines@marshall.edu

Mountain Region Early Childhood BSS

WVBMHTAC

<u>**Working Smarter Not Harder:**</u>
Establishing Systems, Enhancing Skills, and Empowering People

WVBMHTAC Annual Conference
Charleston Coliseum and Convention Center
Wednesday, June 7   10:15-11:15 AM   Room 213

West Virginia Behavior/Mental Health Technical Assistance Center — Establishing Systems, Enhancing Skills, Empowering Individuals

WV ECPBIS — Early Childhood Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

The West Virginia Behavior/Mental Health Technical Assistance Center (BMHTAC) is a collaboration between:

Our Mission

Amy Staples
BMHTAC Director
amy.staples@marshall.edu

Dr. Amy Carlson
WV ECPBIS Coordinator
amy.carlson@marshall.edu

Dr. Anna Shreve
BMHTAC Program Evaluator
rubenstein9@marshall.edu

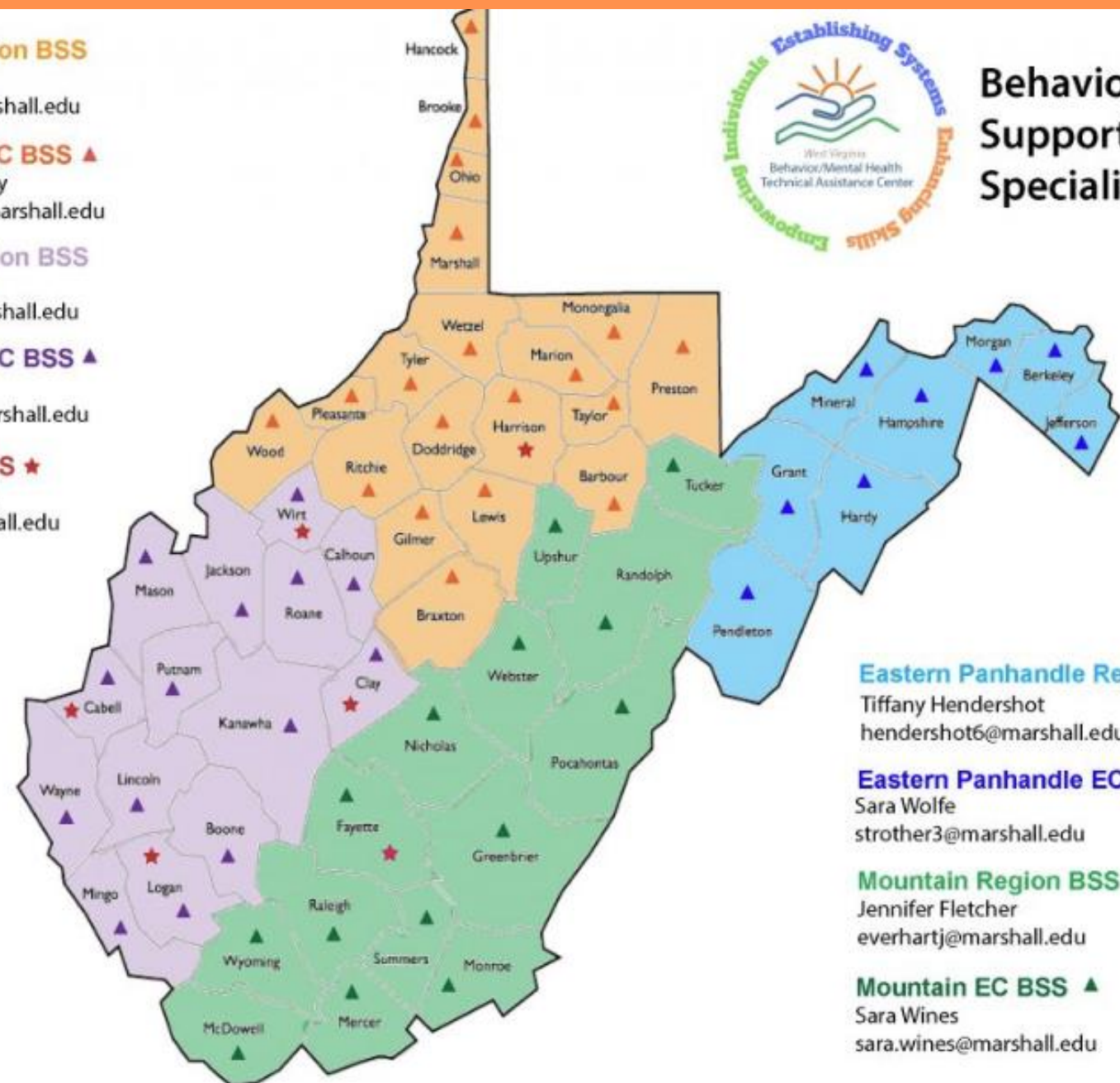**Alicia Ziman**
SW PBIS Coordinator
holt64@marshall.edu

North Region BSS
Erin Day
day137@marshall.edu

Northern EC BSS ▲
Marlo Hornsby
hornsbym@marshall.edu

South Region BSS
Teryl Jones
joneste@marshall.edu

Southern EC BSS ▲
Kate Morris
morriska@marshall.edu

AWARE BSS ★
Christy Fubio
kroll3@marshall.edu

Behavior Support Specialists

Eastern Panhandle Region BSS
Tiffany Hendershot
hendershot6@marshall.edu

Eastern Panhandle EC BSS ▲
Sara Wolfe
strother3@marshall.edu

Mountain Region BSS
Jennifer Fletcher
everhartj@marshall.edu

Mountain EC BSS ▲
Sara Wines
sara.wines@marshall.edu

WV ECPBIS
Early Childhood Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

WV PBIS
Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

Mental Health
FIRST AID
from NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR
MENTAL WELLBEING

NORTH

Early Childhood Behavior Support Specialist

Marlo Hornsby

hornsbym@marshall.edu

School-Wide Behavior Support Specialist

Erin Day

day137@marshall.edu

⭐ **AWARE Behavior Support Specialist**

Christy Fubio

kroll3@marshall.edu

- Hancock
- Brooke
- Ohio
- Marshall
- Wetzel
- Monongalia
- Preston
- Barbour
- Taylor
- Marion
- Harrison
- Lewis
- Doddridge
- Tyler
- Pleasants
- Wood
- Ritchie
- Gilmer
- Braxton

SOUTH

Early Childhood Behavior Support Specialist

Kate Morris

morriska@marshall.edu

School-Wide Behavior Support Specialist

Teryl Jones

joneste@marshall.edu

AWARE Behavior Support Specialist

Christy Fubio

kroll3@marshall.edu

- Wirt
- Calhoun
- Clay
- Roane
- Jackson
- Mason
- Putnam
- Kanawha
- Cabell
- Lincoln
- Boone
- Logan
- Mingo
- Wayne

Early Childhood Behavior Support Specialist

Sara Wines

sara.wines@marshall.edu

School-Wide Behavior Support Specialist

Jennifer Fletcher

everhartj@marshall.edu

AWARE Behavior Support Specialist

Christy Fubio

kroll3@marhall.edu

MOUNTAIN

- Tucker
- Randolph
- Upshur
- Webster
- Pocahontas
- Nicholas
- Greenbrier
- Fayette
- Raleigh
- Summers
- Monroe
- Mercer
- Wyoming
- McDowell

EASTERN PANHANDLE

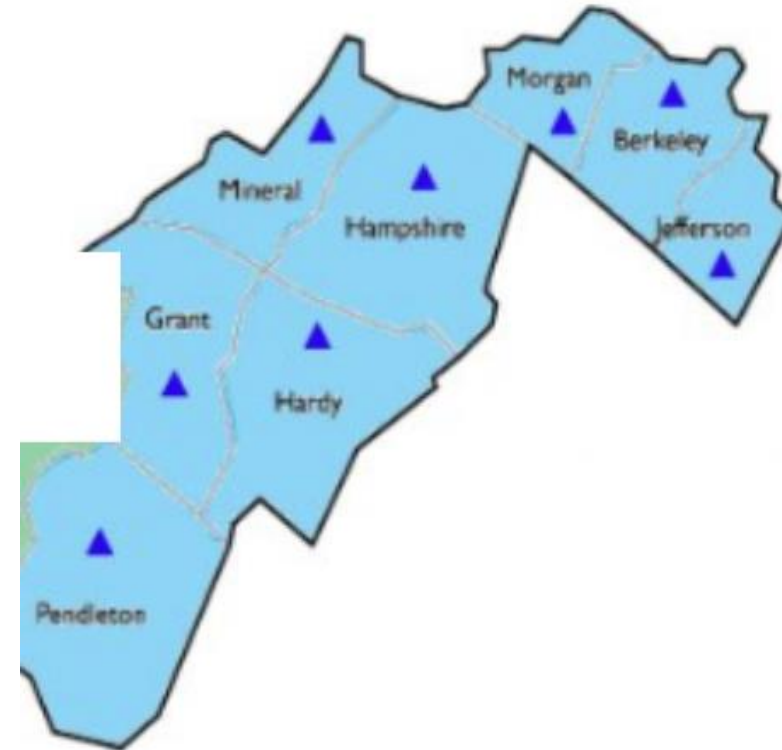**Early Childhood Behavior Support Specialist**

Sara Wolfe

strother3@marshall.edu

School-Wide Behavior Support Specialist

Tiffany Hendershot

hendershot6@marshall.edu

- Jefferson
- Berkeley
- Morgan
- Hampshire
- Mineral
- Grant
- Hardy
- Pendleton

Learning Objectives

- Learn current data related to suspensions and expulsions of preschool children
- Become aware of factors linked to the use of exclusionary discipline
- Examine the role that implicit bias may have on disproportionality of suspensions of children of color, gender and ability
- Compare West Virginia data to national data
- Learn Tier 1 Program/School-wide Supports to prevent suspensions/expulsions
- Learn Tier 2 Individual Classroom Support for preventing suspensions/expulsions
- Learn Tier 3 Individual Student Supports for preventing suspensions/expulsions
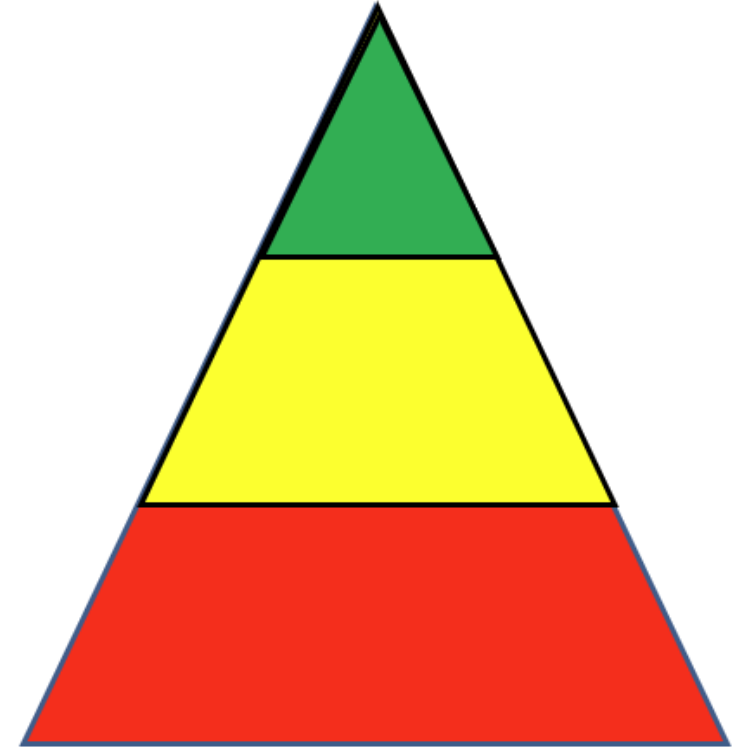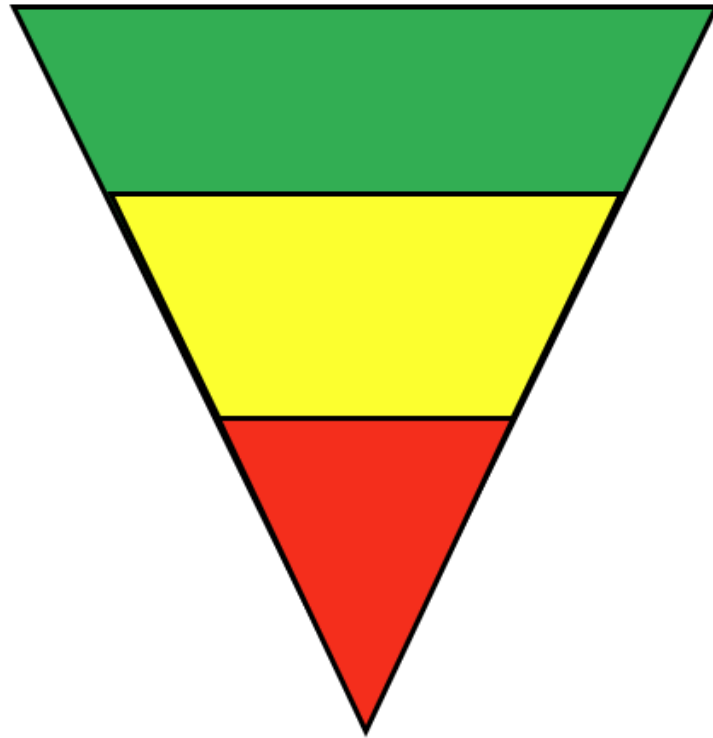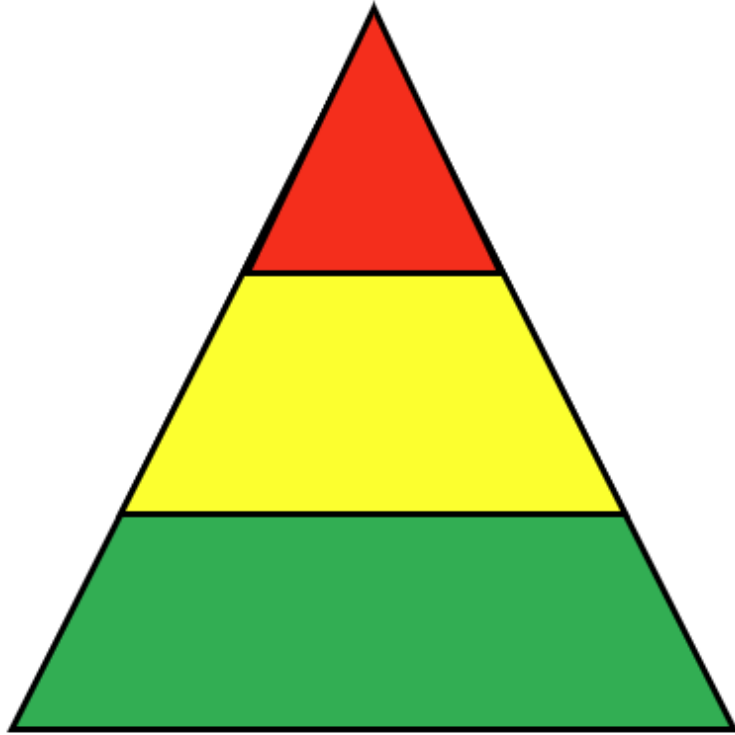
- Research consistently shows long term benefit of quality early childhood programs on the lives of children.

- **Most children are very excited about getting to go to school for the first time!**

Many children do not have all of the skills they need to be successful though.

Preschool children are suspended 3 times more than Kindergarten through 12th grade students-Gillam, 2005

"Across all types of settings, the average school day sees roughly 250 instances of a preschooler being suspended or expelled."-Center for American Progress, 2017

In 2017-2018, 2,822 preschoolers received on or more out-of-school suspensions. -United States Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights

2023

2017–2018

New report and data will be released this year

Definitions

Suspension

- **In School/Program Suspension:** The child is temporally removed from classroom and/or class peers. Child is sent to some other part of the school/ program (e.g., other classroom, director's office) for part of the day or multiple days in response to problem behavior. This includes when the child is removed from the classroom to spend extended time with administrator, counselor, or other adult.

- **Short Term Out-of-School/Program Suspension:** Child is sent home for some part of the school/program day in response to problem behavior.

- **Out-of-School/Program Suspension:** child is not allowed to return to school/program for one or more days in response to problem behavior.

Expulsion

Expulsion/Dismissal: Permanent dismissal of the child from the program in response to problem behavior. Does not include transition to another program, service or classroom (e.g., special education, transitional classroom, or therapeutic preschool program) deemed more appropriate for the child if done in collaboration with the family and the receiving classroom, program or service.

Definitions

- **Exclusionary Discipline**
  - Expulsion
  - Restraint
  - Corporal punishment
  - Suspension
  - Sending children to another room (temporary or permanent)
  - Reducing the time child spends in early childhood classroom
  - Sending children home for the remainder of the day
  - Sending the child to the office
  - Loss of activity that other children are participating in

Factors Linked to the Use of Exclusionary Discipline

Lack of resources to support children with challenging behavior (Giordano et al.,2021)

Higher depressive symptoms of teachers (Silver & Zinsser, 2020)

Negative perceptions of families (Zulauf & Zinsser, 2019)

Lack of program support to establish relationships with families (Zulauf & Zinsser, 2019)

Patterns of Racial and Gender Disproportionality

Black preschool children accounted for 18% of total enrollment, but 43% of one or more out-of-school suspensions and 38% of expulsions.

Preschool boys were suspended and expelled much more often than girls.

Black preschool boys received both suspension and expulsions more than 3x their enrollment

How old is this child?

Implicit Bias

- a form of bias that occurs automatically and unintentionally, that nevertheless affects judgments, decisions, and behaviors.

Awareness is always the first step.

Miguel Ruiz

- Research has found that Black boys are viewed as less innocent than their white peers and are thought to be 4.5 years older even by teachers that understand child development. (Goff et al, 2014)
- Black girls are believed to need less nurturing, less compassion , and less comfort than white girls the same age. (Epstein et al, 2019)

Remember: Implicit Bias is Unconscious

It is the natural tendency of the brain to sift, sort, and categorize information about the world that leads to the formation of these implicit biases.

-The brain looks for patterns

-The brain likes shortcuts

-The brain is influenced by experience and social conditioning

DON'T BE HARD ON YOURSELF

I am not immune….

Different types of biases:
-Race
-Ethnicity
-Gender
-LGBTQIA+
-Ability
-Age
-Religion

Children with Special Needs

Children with special needs are 43x's more likely to be expelled or suspended than their typically developing peers.

(Center for American Progress, 2016)

The Expectation Gap

Having expectations and rules for children that aren't developmentally appropriate.

"A disconnect between what is expected of children and the reality of their actual abilities and brain development to manage and exert self-control with their emotions and body"

-(Zero to Three, 2017)

- Teachers and administrators aren't always knowledgeable on early child development and aren't prepared to address behaviors they find challenging
- This misunderstanding often results in harsh and exclusionary discipline

Examples

- Undeveloped spatial awareness or rough play perceived as aggressive
- Labeled disruptive for giving answers without raising their hands
- Labeled inattentive for not being able to sit through a long circle time activity
- Having a lot of energy and a need to move perceived as hyperactive

Short- and Long-Term Negative Outcomes

Young children who are suspended or expelled:

experience greater academic failure

experience more grade retention

have more negative views about school

are less engaged

have higher dropout rates

face increased rates of incarcaration

What are WV's numbers?

| Student Category	A % of Students Suspensions	B % of WV's Total Student Population	C A/B=C Over or Under Representation
White	82.6	89.1	0.93
Black	9.8	4	2.45
Multiracial	5.5	4.1	1.34
Hispanic/Latino	1.7	2.1	0.81
Other Minority	0.3	0.7	0.43
Students Without Disabilities	67.3	8.2	0.82
Students With Disabilities	32.3	17.9	1.8
Not Low SES	30	50	0.6
Low SES	70	50	1.4
Not In Foster Care	95.4	93.5	1.02
In Foster Care	4.6	1.5	3.1

Compiled by: Matthew Watts and the WVDE

Consistent with national averages:

Black, multi-racial, special ed, low SES and children in foster care are over-represented in number of suspensions.

Pre-K data may not be represented in this data

So, here's the big question….
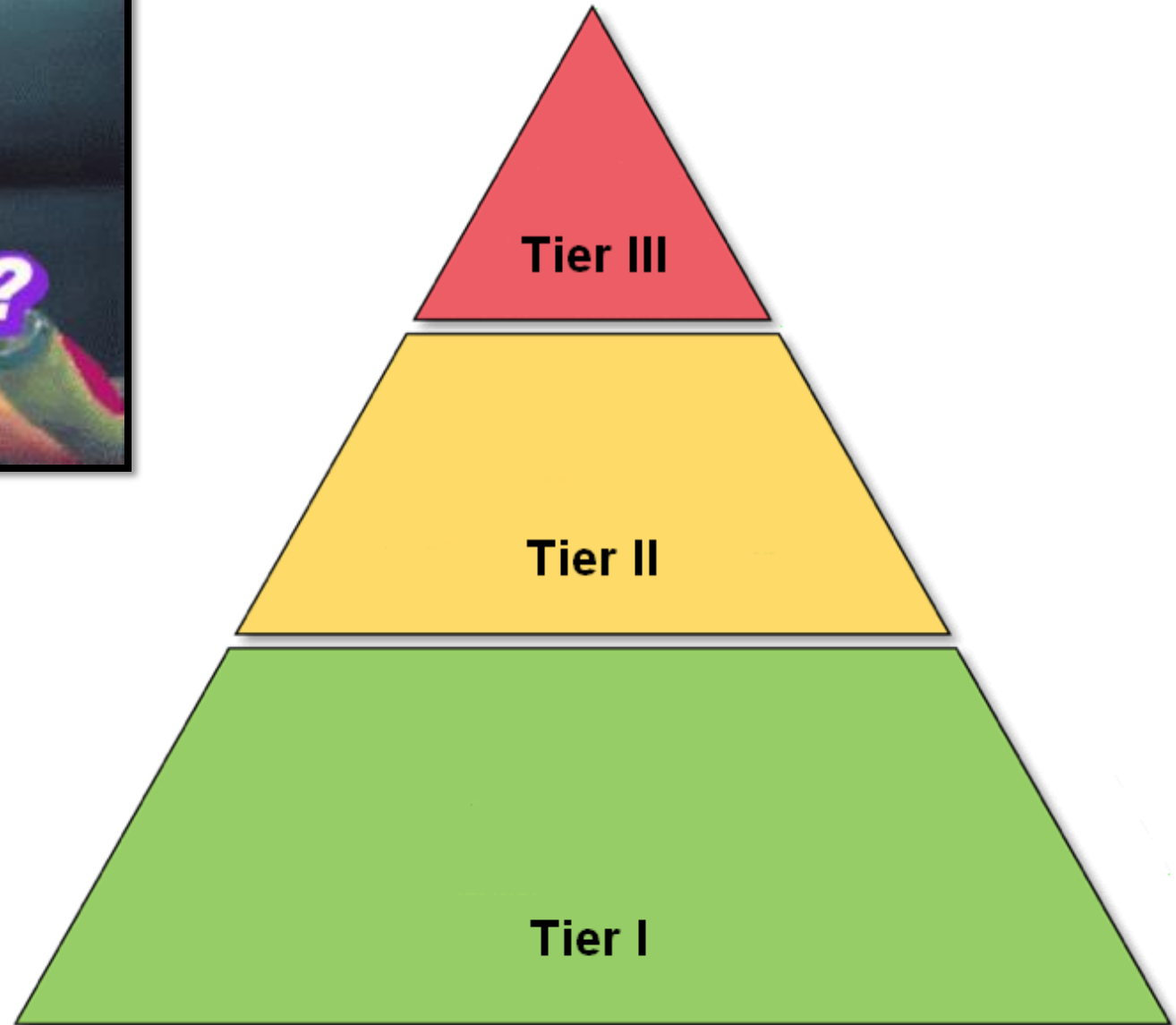
Are you surprised?

Tier III

Tier II

Tier I

Preventing Suspensions and Expulsions in Early Childhood Settings

A Program Leader's Guide to Supporting All Children's Success

preventexpulsion.org

SRI International®

SRI International (formerly Stanford Research Institute) is an American nonprofit research institute focused on world-changing solutions and innovation.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS CHICAGO

SETL
Social-Emotional Teaching & Learning Lab
University of Illinois at Chicago

Katherine Zinsser, Ph.D., is an applied developmental psychologist with expertise in early childhood education systems and their impact on children's social-emotional development. She runs the SETL Lab at the University of Illinois Chicago.

Katherine M. Zinsser

No Longer Welcome

THE EPIDEMIC OF EXPULSION FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Tier 1: Program/School-wide Supports
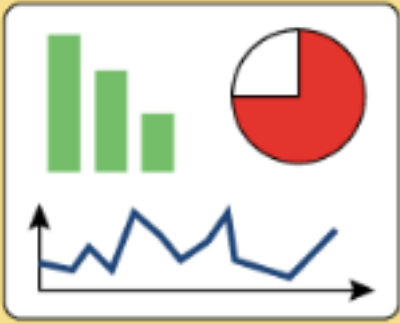
1.1 Using Data

1.2 Family Partnerships

1.3 Developmental Screening

1.4 Teacher-Child Ratios

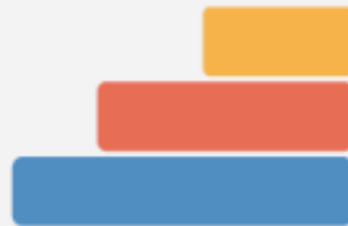1.5 Teacher Work Hours
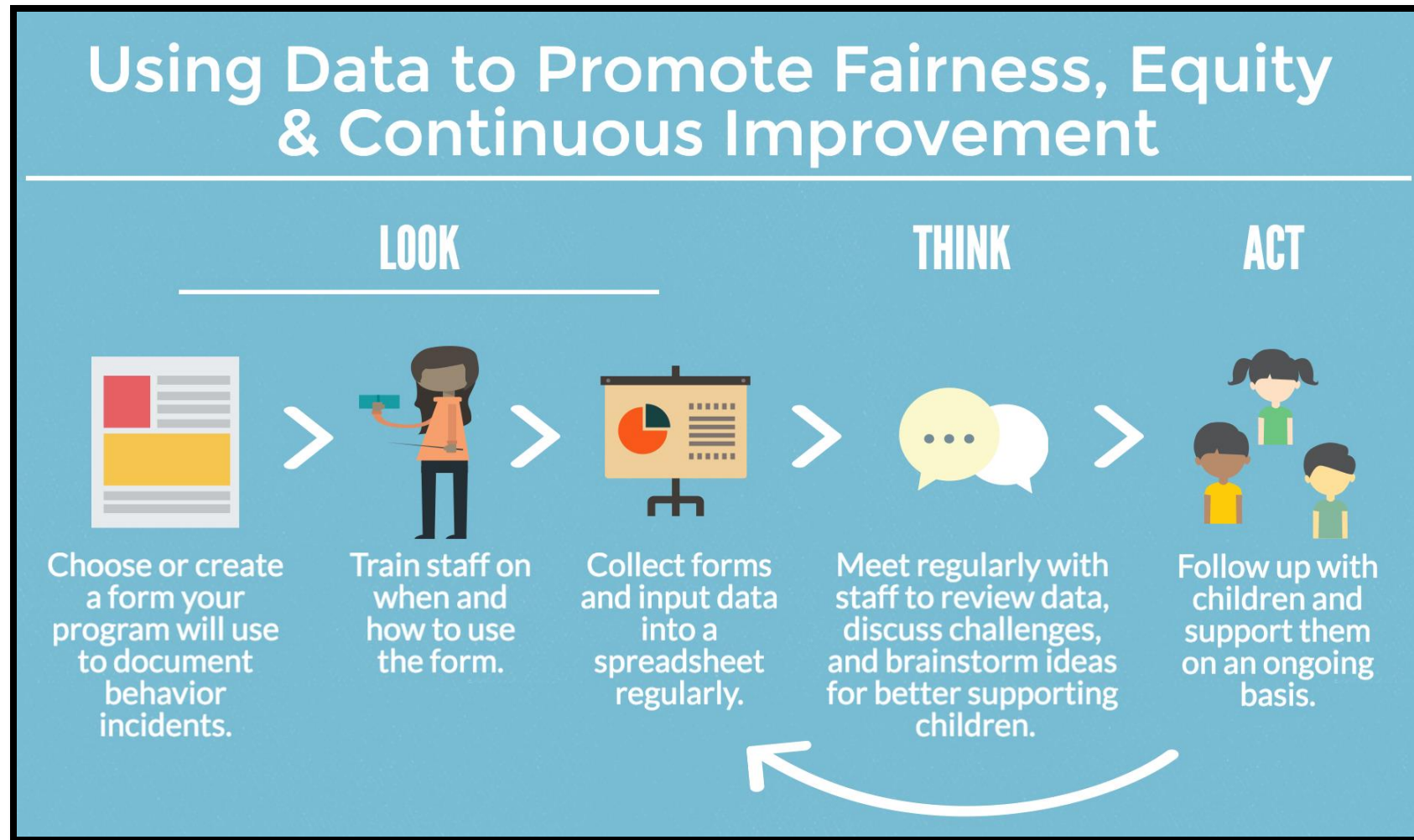

1.6 Supportive Staff Culture

1.7 Cultural Awareness

1.8 Multi-tiered Systems

Preventing Suspensions and Expulsions in Early Childhood Settings

A Program Leader's Guide to Supporting All Children's Success

1.1 Using Data

Using Data to Promote Fairness, Equity & Continuous Improvement

LOOK

Choose or create a form your program will use to document behavior incidents.

Train staff on when and how to use the form.

Collect forms and input data into a spreadsheet regularly.

THINK

Meet regularly with staff to review data, discuss challenges, and brainstorm ideas for better supporting children.

ACT

Follow up with children and support them on an ongoing basis.

1.2 Family Partnerships

- Make your program a welcoming place

- Learn more about the children and families in your program

- Construct a family-school partnership plan

- Develop staff capacity

- Try to bridge cultural differences between home and program

- Empower parents to assert themselves as true partners

1.3 Developmental Screenings

- Select a screening tool

- Determine the process for implementing the tool

- Consider logistics and infrastructure needs

- Create staffing and implementation procedures

- Use the results to inform supports and services
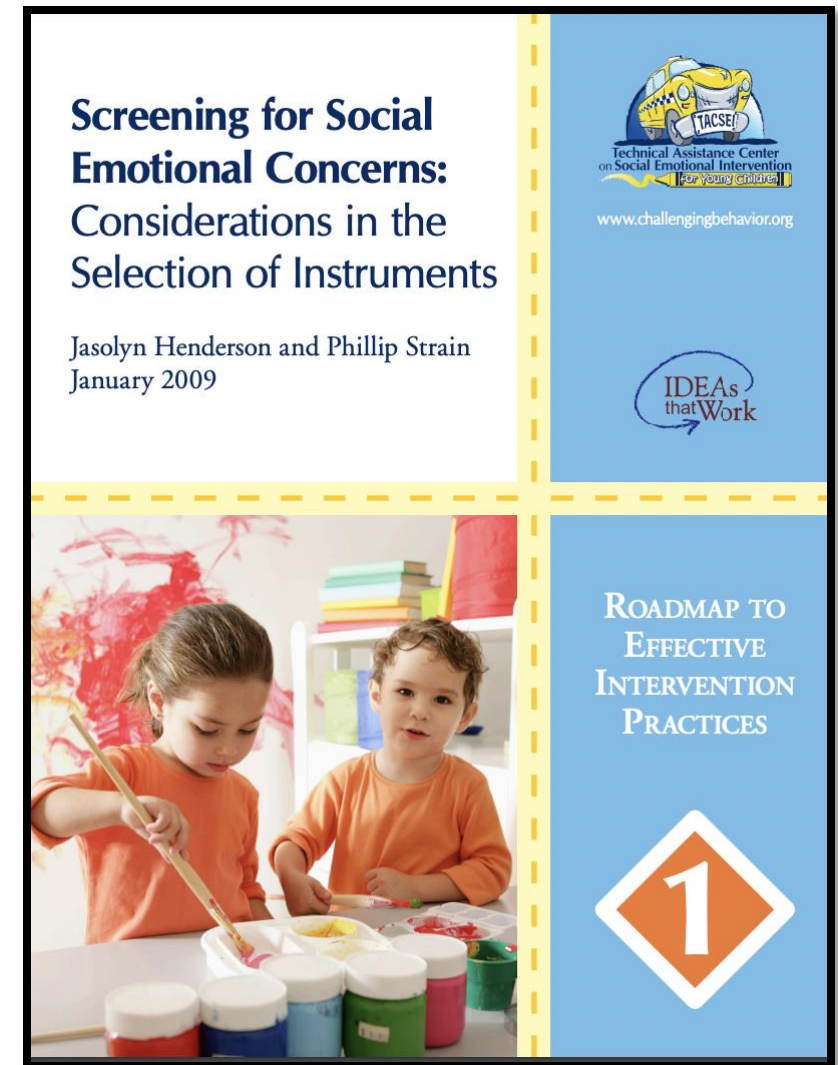
https://challengingbehavior.org/docs/roadmap/roadmap_1_screening-for-social-emotional-concerns.pdf

https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/pubs/screening.pdf

1.4 Teacher-Child Ratios

- Collect teacher-child ratio data and compare to NAEYC and Head Start Standards

- Use the data to move forward by considering where to focus, staffing, budgeting, space, creative scheduling, PD, etc.

- Weigh the costs and benefits

- Consider how to use parent volunteers, student teachers, and interns for support

NAEYC Teacher-Child Ratios within the Group Size Chart

Age Category	Age Range[1]	Teacher-Child Ratios within Group Size (assessed in Criterion 10.B.12) Group Size[2]										
		6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	30
Infant	Birth to 15 months	1:3	1:4									
Toddler /Two	12 to 28 months	1:3	1:4	1:4[3]	1:4							
	21 to 36 months		1:4	1:5	1:6							
Preschool	30 to 48 months (2½ to 4 years)				1:6	1:7	1:8	1:9				
	48 to 60 months (4 to 5 years)						1:8	1:9	1:10			
	60 months to Kindergarten Enrollment (5 years to Kindergarten Enrollment)						1:8	1:9	1:10			
Kindergarten	Enrolled in any public or private kindergarten								1:10	1:11	1:12	

Head Start Program Performance Standards on Teacher-Child Ratios

Program Option	Age of Children	Group Size	Adult/Child Ratio/Case Load
Center Based	0-3 years	8	1 Teacher for every 4 children
Center Based	4-5 years	17-20 children, with a maximum of 20 children enrolled in any one class.	2 paid staff people per class – Teacher and Teacher Aide, or Two Teachers.
	3 years	15-17 children, with a maximum of 17 children enrolled in any one class.	
	3 years	13-15 children. With a maximum of 15 children	

1.5 Teacher Work Hours

- Journal time spent each day to learn about breaks and stressful blocks of time.
- Evaluate program schedule by considering transitions, breaks, etc.
- Adjust classroom schedules as needed
- Allow time for other responsibilities including work taken home, meetings, and PD

VLS VirtualLabSchool.ORG

Preschool | Learning Environments | Lesson 5 | Apply

Day Planner

Are you struggling with any parts of your workday? This guide will help you problem-solve.

Daily Schedule	Is it Difficult? (Yes or No)	What usually happens that makes it difficult? (For example, do children run around? Do you feel you don't have enough help? Do kids not follow directions?)
Arrival	No	
Group time	Yes	Children get squirmy and start touching each other. They feel far away from me.

1. Do you see any patterns in your daily "trouble spots"?
   a. Are they all transitions?
   b. Are they all times when the other adults in your room are busy?
   c. Are they all teacher-guided or child-guided times?
   d. Are the problems all related to an individual child? (If yes, see the Guidance Course.)
   e. Are there other reasons you see?

2. Choose your most difficult routine. Describe exactly what you want children to do during that routine (break it into steps):

3. Work with your coach or another teacher to decide how to teach the children these steps.

1.6 Supportive Staff Culture

- Provide time and structures for collaborative teams to meet

- Identify teacher leaders to act as mentors, liaisons, and facilitators

- Build trusting relationships with staff by checking in with teachers, keeping an open-door policy, and focus on a "us/ours" instead of "yours/mine" mentality

1.7 Cultural Awareness

"Discuss and reflect with staff, identify training needs, create policy and procedures, and acknowledge progress!"

Access to professional development focused on:

- Implicit bias and its impact on decision making

- Culturally responsive practices and how to implement

- Role of critical reflection in challenging assumptions, and interpreting, understanding, and reframing experiences

- Strategies for preventing and addressing challenging behaviors

- Early childhood development (link to earlier slide)

https://www.learningforjustice.org/professional-development

1.8 Multi-tiered Systems

- Choose a diverse team for input on decision-making

- Consider MTSS options by looking at other successful programs, what it takes to implement, and costs (money and time)

- Promote buy-in and commitment to consistency with a formal kickoff, training, how to monitor fidelity (e.g. TPOT), and acknowledge progress

Tier 2: Individual Classroom Supports

2.1 Mental Health Consultation

2.2 Classroom Environment

2.3 Social-Emotional Development

2.4 Culturally Inclusive Climate

Preventing Suspensions and Expulsions
in Early Childhood Settings
A Program Leader's Guide to Supporting All Children's Success

2.1 Mental Health Consultation

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC)

- Individuals with expertise in supporting the mental health of infants and young children (often social workers) collaborate with teachers, centers, and families to develop SEL

- Provides an outside, informed perspective

- Self-reflection "early childhood's superpower" (page 111)

- Has the potential to interrupt bias

- **"Inquiry as intervention"**

I/ECMHC

Table 1. Examples of Child- and Classroom-Specific Consultation Services

For Children:

Conduct individual child observations

Design and implement program practices responsive to the identified needs of the child

Provide one-on-one modeling or coaching to support an individual child

Provide crisis intervention services for staff regarding a child's behavior

Advise and connect staff to community resources and services

Provide support for reflective practices

For Families:

Offer training on behavior management techniques

Provide one-on-one modeling to support an individual child

Educate parents on mental health issues and refer them to health services located in community

Conduct home visits

Advocate for parents

Table 2. Examples of Consultation Services for Programs

For Staff:

Conduct classroom observations and evaluate the center or learning environment

Train staff on behavior management techniques and accessing mental health resources

Suggest strategies for classroom management

Support staff working with children with challenging behaviors

For Programs:

Promote staff wellness by addressing issues related to communication and promote team building

Train staff to use culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate practices

Design and implement early childhood mental health best practices for your program context

Consult with the program director and advise on issues related to program needs and policies

2.2 Classroom Environment

The Teaching Pyramid

Practice Implementation Checklist:
High Quality Environments

Schedules & Routines
- Post daily schedules and routines with visual displays
- Review schedule and refer to it throughout the day
- Plan both large and small group activities throughout each day
- Include a balance of teacher-directed and child-directed activities
- Prepare children for changes that will occur in the regular schedule
- Make special preparations for individual children who may need more support to follow the routine

Classroom Design
- Children can easily move around the classroom
- The learning centers have clear boundaries
- No wide open spaces in the classroom where children can run
- Adequate number and variety of centers to maintain children's interest and support the number of children at each center (1 center for every 4 children)

Promoting Engagement
- Structure activities so that children are actively engaged almost all of the time (i.e., actively participating)
- Change your activity plan when children lose interest
- When children begin to show challenging behavior, help them become actively engaged in the activity or provide a new activity
- Comment positively and descriptively on children's engagement

Transitions
- Provide a whole class warning prior to transitions
- Develop transition games, songs, or others to ensure all children are actively engaged in the transition
- Specifically teach the steps and expectations for transitions
- Provide positive and specific feedback to children who transition appropriately
- Provide individual prompts (e.g., verbal, visuals) to children who may have difficulty transitioning
- Actively engage all students in the transition even those who are waiting for their turn

Expectations & Rules
- Post behavior expectations and regularly review during large group instruction
- Provide instruction on posted behavior expectations to individual children, during play, and small group activities
- Give specific feedback on appropriate child behavior linking back to the posted behavior expectations
- Facilitate conversations with children to think about the behavior expectations and why they are important for them and the class

- Discuss and reflect with staff about developmental/cultural appropriateness of expectations and rules and what high-quality classroom practices are including but not limited to:
  - Adult-child interactions and nurturing relationships
  - Predictable schedules and routines with visual schedules
  - Appropriate transitions and warnings
  - Descriptive praise
  - Developmentally appropriate classroom rules and expectations

- Identify training needs, set a plan of action, and acknowledge progress

- Assess progress and new needs in a continuous cycle

2.3 Social Emotional Development

"Discuss and reflect with staff, identify training needs, create policy and procedures, and acknowledge progress!"

"Children are developing social and emotional skills in the classroom, whether or not teachers are intentionally providing instruction. To ensure that the lessons learned are pro-social and positive, a preliminary step toward eradicating expulsion must be to ensure that all early childhood teachers know how to intentionally and proactively support this development."
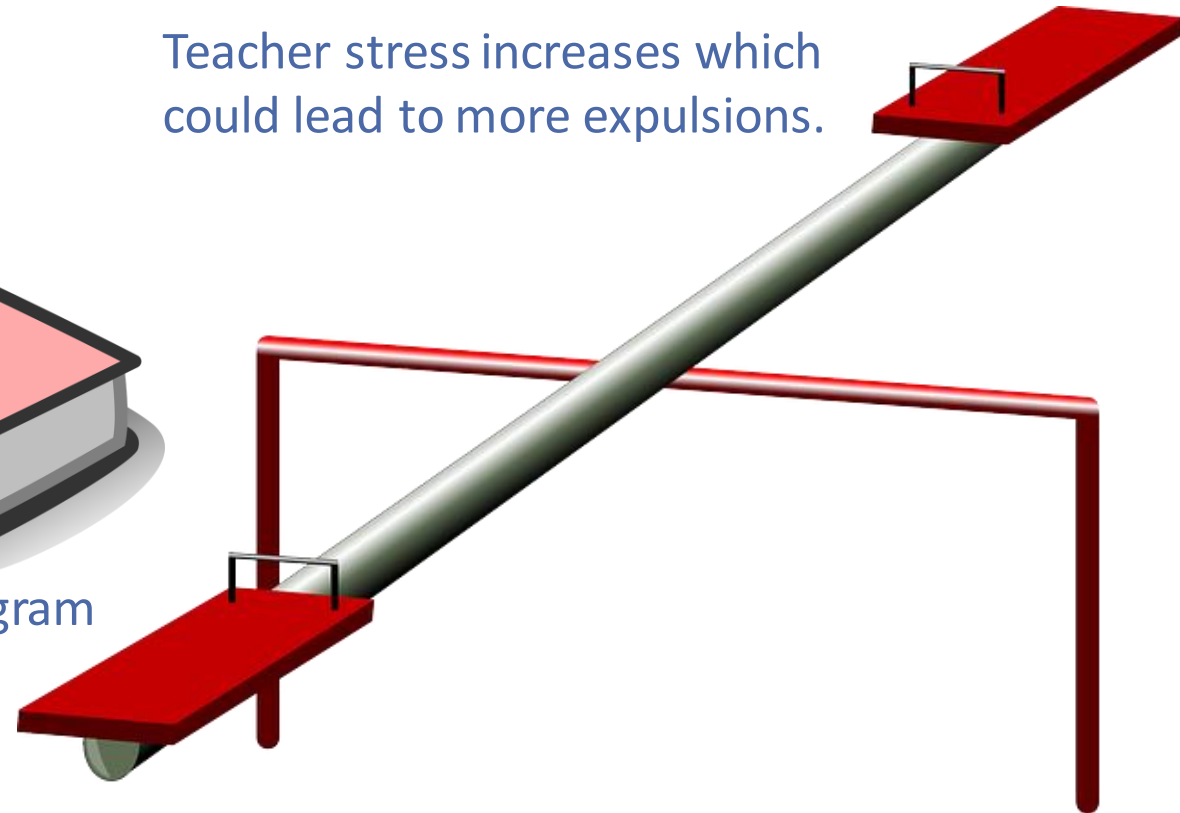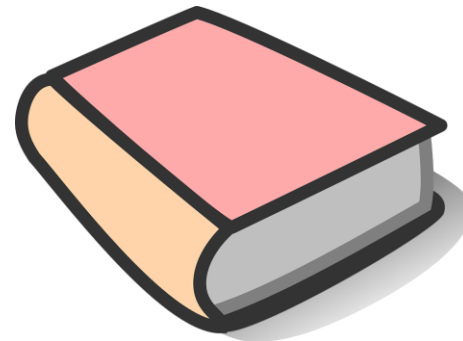
No Longer Welcome (p. 105)

A Word of Caution

Teacher stress increases which could lead to more expulsions.

Introducing a new curriculum or program and not providing time or support.

2.4 Culturally Inclusive Climate

"Discuss and reflect with staff, identify training needs, create policy and procedures, and acknowledge progress!"

Tier 3: Individual Student Supports

3.1 Assessment-based Behavior Support Plan

Functional behavioral assessment (FBA) is mandated by law and is a systematic process for collecting information about why a child's challenging behavior occurs. FBA gives a clear description of the challenging behavior and its context, and helps explain why the child engages in that behavior.

The information gathered from an FBA is used to develop an individualized behavior support plan. Behavior support plans address what events or circumstances trigger the challenging behavior. Plans also include instruction on how to help the child learn more appropriate social and communication skills and strategies that caregivers can use for responding to the behavior so that it is not reinforced.

Not sure where to begin?

A Program Leader's Guide to Supporting All Children's Success

Self-assessment Questionnaire

Welcome!

Welcome to the Program Leader's Guide to Supporting All Children's Success self-assessment! To help you prioritize what recommended policies and practices are most necessary and timely to implement in your program, we have developed this brief self-assessment questionnaire. The questions are meant to help you reflect on your program's current policies, practices, and needs. The results of the self-assessment will provide you with a roadmap to navigating the guide and examining your strengths and needs.

The self-assessment should only take approximately 5-7 minutes to complete. All data retrieved through the self-assessment will be confidential and will help you to prioritize and individualize your experience with the guide.

National and State-wide Considerations

"Combating this national crisis cannot happen at the program level. It is going to take coordinated systemic change, driven by inclusive public policy."

No Longer Welcome page 117

- Policy and research
- How to collect data on formal and informal exclusions
- Long-term effects of early childhood exclusion
- Invest in evidence-based models
- Interventions before preschool
- Linking families to other services

"It isn't the behavior of the children that threatens community; it is the response to that behavior, the use of exclusion, that threatens community. When a child is excluded, it teaches the other children that belonging to the classroom community is conditional, not absolute, contingent upon their willingness and ability to be a certain kind of person. In this paradigm, belonging is a privilege to be earned by docility, not a basic human right that is ensured for every child."

Troublemakers: Lessons in Freedom from Young Children at School (Shalaby, 2017) p. 162

"If we genuinely wish to dismantle the school-to prison pipeline, to prevent the costly and harmful effects of exclusion, we have to start where the pipeline begins—in early care and education."

No Longer Welcome (Zinsser, 2023) p.143

"Ultimately the children who need preschool programs—who need a school readiness program—the most are the children we would want to expel from a preschool program. That's who needs to be in there—that's why we have preschool programs in the first place."

Walter Gilliam (Director at the Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy)

> Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.
>
> Maya Angelou

Final Thoughts

- Early suspensions and expulsions have negative outcomes for young children and families.

- Teacher stress, child trauma and bias are often not in our control.

- Awareness is key! Now that we know, we can put systems in place to prevent it!

Thank You!

Sara Wolfe: strother3@marshall.edu

Sara Wines: sara.wines@marshall.edu

 Like us on Facebook **@WVECPBIS**

www.marshall.edu/bmhtac/

www.wvecpbis.org

www.challengingbehavior.org

Evaluation

References

- *No Longer Welcome: The Epidemic of Expulsion From Early Childhood Education* (Zinsser, 2023)
- https://ocrdata.ed.gov/assets/downloads/crdc-DOE-Discipline-Practices-in-Preschool-part1.pdf
- https://unconditionallearning.org/2023/02/01/what-about-the-other-kids-in-the-room/
- https://challengingbehavior.org/pyramid-model/suspension-expulsion/
- https://challengingbehavior.org/docs/expelling_expulsion.pdf
- https://preventexpulsion.org/recommended-policies-practices/
- https://www.iecmhc.org/
- https://challengingbehavior.org/docs/roadmap/roadmap_1_screening-for-social-emotional-concerns.pdf
- https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/pubs/screening.pdf
- https://www.learningforjustice.org/professional-development