

Increase School Readiness Resources Overview:

Summer Pre-K Planning Guide

Developing a Quality School Readiness Program

http://www.first5alameda.org/files/sr/Final_SPK_Guide_2014.pdf

Studies have proven that achievement gaps between children living in low-income communities and those in affluent areas already exist by Kindergarten. Children from low-income families are more likely to start school with limited language skills, health problems, and social and emotional problems that impede their learning. The larger the gap at school entry, the harder it is to close. If we make wise investments in the early years in order to support healthy transitions and the optimal development of young children, they grow into healthy and productive adults.

A Summer Pre-K (SPK) program is a low-cost investment with beneficial outcomes for both children and parents. There is an abundance of research in the field that points to the importance of preparing children for school. School readiness programs help children build the social and emotional skills necessary for academic success in Kindergarten and beyond. Summer preschool programs offer enormous early learning opportunities to children that are cost-effective, evidenced-based, and help narrow achievement gaps prior to children entering school.

With over a decade of experience implementing a Summer Pre-K program, First 5 of Alameda County has identified the following basic components as essential elements in providing an effective SPK program:

- A 5-6 week, part-time SPK program model provides quality transitional, early childhood experiences for children without prior preschool or formal child care experience who are entering Kindergarten in the Fall. The program runs from Monday through Thursday in order to familiarize children to the standard school week.
- The SPK program, generally co-taught by preschool and Kindergarten teachers, supports a smooth transition from Early Childhood Education to the standard curriculum of the K-12 system. Emphasis is upon familiarizing children with the basic expectations for Kindergarten, such as following a structured schedule, standing in line, and raising their hand.
- For parents, the program should include a minimum of five (5) hours of mandatory parent education opportunities that support a smooth transition to school and help to enhance the parent's awareness of children's social and emotional development, as well as provide them with linkages to community supports and resources.

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“You Got It!”

Teaching Social and Emotional Skills

Lise Fox and Rochelle Harper Lentini

Beyond the Journal • Young Children on the Web • November 2006

http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/do/resources/documents/yc_article_11_2006.pdf

EARLY EDUCATORS REPORT that one of their biggest challenges is supporting young children who have problem behavior beyond what might be expected (Buscemi et al. 1995; Hemmeter, Corso, & Cheatham 2005). Some children engage in problem behavior that is typical of a particular stage of development as they build relationships with peers and adults and learn to navigate the classroom environment. For example, a toddler might grab a cracker from another child's plate because she is still learning to use words to ask for what she wants or needs. What troubles teachers is how to meet the needs of children who have persistent problem behavior that does not respond to positive guidance or prevention practices. The extent of this problem is highlighted by recent reports on the rates of expulsion of children from preschool programs (Gilliam 2005).

The teaching pyramid

The teaching pyramid model (Fox et al. 2003) describes a primary level of universal practices—classroom preventive practices that promote the social and emotional development of all children—built on a foundation of positive relationships; secondary interventions that address specific social and emotional learning needs of children at risk for challenging behavior; and development of individualized interventions (tertiary level) for children with persistent problem behavior (see the diagram “The Teaching Pyramid”). The model is explained more fully in “The Teaching Pyramid: A Model for Supporting Social Competence and Reinventing Challenging Behavior in Young Children,” in the July 2003 issue of *Young Children*. The foundation for universal practices begins with nurturing and responsive caregiving that supports children in developing a positive sense of self and in engaging in relationships with others. At this level, teachers focus on their relationships with children and families. Universal classroom practices include developmentally appropriate, child-centered classroom environments that promote children's developing independence, successful interactions, and engagement in learning. While universal practices may be enough to promote the development of social competence in the majority of children in the classroom, teachers may find that there are children whose lack of social and emotional skills or whose challenging behavior requires more focused attention. In this article we look at the secondary level of the teaching pyramid, which emphasizes planned instruction on specific social and emotional skills for children at risk for developing more challenging behavior, such as severe aggression, property destruction, noncompliance, or withdrawal. Children who may be considered at risk for challenging behavior are persistently noncompliant, have difficulty regulating their emotions, do not easily form relationships with adults and other children, have difficulty engaging in learning activities, and are perceived by teachers as being likely to develop more intractable behavior problems. Research shows that when educators teach children the key skills they need to understand their emotions and the emotions of others, handle conflicts, problem solve, and develop relationships with peers, their problem behavior decreases and their social skills improve (Joseph & Strain 2003). Emphasis on teaching social skills is just one component of multiple strategies to support a child at risk for challenging behavior. Additional critical strategies include collaborating with the family; addressing the child's physical and mental health needs; and offering the support of specialists and other resources to address the child or family's individual needs.