



The Teaching Pyramid Model:

Supporting Social-Emotional Competence and
Preventing Challenging Behavior in Young Children

Training & Technical Assistance Outline

June, 2010

The **Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)** is a national center focused on strengthening the capacity of child care and Head Start programs to improve the social and emotional outcomes of young children. The Center has developed and disseminated evidence-based, user-friendly information to help early childhood educators meet the needs of the growing number of children with challenging behaviors and mental health challenges in child care and Head Start programs. The *Teaching Pyramid* Model is a systematic framework developed by CSEFEL that incorporates Early Childhood Positive Behavior Support (EC-PBS) through promoting social-emotional development, providing support for children's appropriate behavior, preventing challenging behavior, and addressing problematic behavior. (Please see the accompanying articles from the July 2003 issue of *Young Children* and their partner project for a complete description of this model.)

Through a partnership with CSEFEL, WestEd Center for Child & Family Studies, San Marcos Office (WestEd San Marcos) is able to offer the comprehensive, program-wide *Teaching Pyramid* Model to districts and organizations. There is a preschool version as well as a version for infant/toddler programs.

There are four components to the implementation of the model:

- 1. Leadership**
- 2. Training**
- 3. Technical Assistance**
- 4. Specialized Training for the Top of the Pyramid and Family Modules**

WestEd's service for each component is briefly described below.

1. Leadership

The program(s) receiving the training first identifies a Leadership Team consisting of, at minimum:

- An administrator
 - This should include a site-level administrator as well as a program-level administrator if multiple sites from a single program are participating
- A classroom teacher or teachers
- Whoever will facilitate and develop behavior support plans (individuals could work with multiple sites), including mental health partners, school psychologists, disability specialists, educational coordinators, special education partners, etc.

Generally there are at least five (5) leadership team meetings during the training cycle. The Leadership Team meets one full day prior to the training and continues to meet regularly during the training and after training is finished to act as the Steering Committee for implementation of the *Teaching Pyramid* approach, to monitor technical assistance and additional training needs, and to problem-solve as needed for classroom- or site-specific issues. The length of the meetings depends on the make-up of the team. When there are multiple programs coming together more time is needed than when a single district or program group is being trained.

Provided by WestEd San Marcos

WestEd San Marcos will work with a contact person or small team to set-up an initial Leadership Team Meeting. In addition to the 5 meetings with the Leadership Team, WestEd San Marcos will be

Teaching Pyramid Model

available to provide a short overview of the model to other interested administrators, such as the site principals in the district. The Leadership Team also attends the training sessions. This participation is crucial in order to help the training become more meaningful during the training and effective during implementation.

2. Training

The program(s) receiving the training sends all staff to the training, including:

- All members of the leadership team, including the administrator
- All direct teaching staff (teachers, teaching assistants, teacher aides)
- Any support staff who works regularly with the children and/or staff
 - Disability specialist
 - Education specialist
 - Special education staff
 - Speech & language therapists
 - Behavior specialists
 - Family advocates
 - Curriculum specialists
 - School psychologists

There are four full days of training content (minimum six hours not including breaks and lunch). It is most helpful for classroom teams to attend together (teachers, assistants, etc.). If that is not possible, it is important to design a plan for training that will accommodate all staff. Generally the program provides a meeting space that can accommodate the staff comfortably seated at tables. Audio-visual equipment, including a projector, screen, sound system (for video clips and presenters) are also provided by the site. Food for participants can be provided as part of the proposal from WestEd or can be provided by the site.

Provided by WestEd San Marcos

WestEd San Marcos will supply two experienced trainers for four full days of training. Trainers may travel the day prior to the module session in order to be available first thing in the morning for training. The trainers will consult with the Leadership Team in preparation and follow-up. WestEd San Marcos provides the training materials for participants as part of the proposal.

3. Technical Assistance/Coaching

The program(s) receiving the training will also receive a number of technical assistance/coaching visits. During these visits, a WestEd staff member will support implementation of strategies from the training modules.

- The Leadership Team from each program/site determines how to utilize the time available to their site.
- Each classroom develops an action plan as part of each training module.
- Generally the coach spends one to two hours observing in a classroom and an hour meeting with the teacher or classroom team.
- The coach can attend existing meetings, such as those for the entire staff, to discuss implementation.
- It is helpful for the teaching staff to have time away from the classroom for meeting with the coach.
- Programs are asked to identify a staff member who will be supporting the implementation, and have that person visit jointly with the coach.

Provided by WestEd San Marcos

To support implementation, the WestEd San Marcos team is available to provide technical assistance (TA) over the course of the training. It is recommended that the trainers visit the sites involved in the training prior to the initial training and then spend one-half day at each site

Teaching Pyramid Model

immediately following each training. Part of the TA includes a pre and post assessment of selected classrooms as well as coaching reports for teachers.

Additional TA days can be included for other possible uses such as:

- Meeting with and supporting the internal implementation team
- Additional meetings with the Leadership Team in person or via phone
- Additional meetings of the training group for activities such as “Make-it & Take-it” sessions, feedback, support, problem-solving based on implementation, refresher of skills, and so on.

The methods can be combined to occur within one day, so that one day of TA may include a meeting with the Leadership Team and an observation of two classrooms.

4. Specialized Training for the Top of the Pyramid and Family Modules

At the end of the training for teaching staff, two additional trainings are offered for a subset of the participants. **Each training is one full day and is intended for participants who have been through the Teaching Pyramid training.** If some of the participants have not been through the Teaching Pyramid training, additional time for an orientation to the Teaching Pyramid will be needed. Each of these is described below:

The “Top of the Pyramid” training is a full day focused on the development of Positive Behavior Support Plans based on the Teaching Pyramid materials. Participants will go deeper with materials introduced in the final module (3b) and practice developing plans based on case studies. This training is intended for:

- Administrators
- Anyone who typically supports the process of developing behavior plans (school psychologist, mental health consultant, special education staff, director, etc.)
- Teachers (optional for most teachers, as they are generally participants in the development of behavior support plans, but do not have responsibility for leading the development)

The “Solutions for Families” modules for use with parents will be introduced for use by the programs. The program(s) receiving the training identifies teams of two individuals who can conduct groups for parents or family members.

- At least one member of the team should have experience facilitating parent groups.
- Many programs have classroom teachers as part of the team.
- One staff can be the lead on facilitating the groups with support from various members of the staff. All interested staff members are encouraged to attend.

Provided by WestEd San Marcos

Strong partnerships with family members are an important component when implementing the *Teaching Pyramid Model*. In addition to weaving family perspectives throughout the teacher training, a separate set of materials are designed for parent groups. There are a series of six sessions available and WestEd San Marcos will provide a one-day “training of trainers” to appropriate parent meeting facilitators for conducting the parent groups. These materials are available in Spanish as well as Chinese.

Additional Benefits

Once a program has been trained in the *Teaching Pyramid Model*, they are eligible for additional benefits. These include:

- Connection with other California programs implementing the *Teaching Pyramid Model* through the website, listserv, and networking
- Invitations to state-wide events for Leadership Teams
- Notification of new resources as they become available through the national CSEFEL center

Teaching Pyramid Model

The cost of this comprehensive Teaching Pyramid Model is dependent on the number of sites being trained and the number of technical assistance days desired. A deeper evaluation of the impact of the training can also be added as a fifth component.

For more information, please contact Linda Brault, Project Director, at lbrault@wested.org.

The Teaching Pyramid has given myself and the children I teach a more positive way of communicating in my classroom. The Teaching Pyramid gives the children some positive strategies when it comes to handling their emotions. It also helps the teachers break down their emotions and reminds us that children often times don't understand why they are feeling the way they are. This program gives us the tools to teach children how to handle situations that become stressful to them. We are giving children the language and the tools to strengthen their self-regulation and most important their self-esteem. Another important part of the program for me is that it is pretty simple to follow, which allows me to refer some of the strategies to parents who want to improve their child's behavior at home as well as in the classroom. I know the parents are buying into the program when I hear them use the same lingo we are using in the classroom. The solution kit and problem-solving tools really work. This helps the teachers teach the children how to problem solve."

Merced Head Start Teacher

"In January 2008, we launched a District-wide expansion effort, embracing CSEFEL's Pyramid approach. With the assistance of Linda Brault, Project Director WestEd Center for Child & Family Studies, all staff received a series of five full-day trainings over five months, followed by technical assistance at the beginning of this school year. While CSEFEL's Pyramid Model has only just begun to be fully implemented in this first year in all thirteen State Preschool classrooms, our local community has already experienced positive changes in supporting children with challenging behaviors.

All District State Preschool staff engages in self-reflection completing CSEFEL's "Inventory of Practices" to evaluate Tier 1 implementation of nurturing and responsive relationships while creating and maintaining high quality supportive environments and modifying them as needed by students. This has required a paradigm change from all staff. They have begun to understand the first premise of the Pyramid Model: prevent the challenging behavior by establishing an environment based on best practices and evidence-based strategies for social and emotional development. Children who continue to present challenging behaviors are intentionally taught specific strategies for self-regulation, appropriate social skills, and /or emotional self-expression during Tier 2 interventions. There are a limited number of students who require more structured supports, and as a program we are in the learning stages of creating, implementing, evaluating and modifying behavior support plans.

The most magnificent change has been the asset-based approach with which all staff in State Preschools approach children with challenging behaviors. This implementation has empowered teachers to value modification of their environment and instruction in order to address students' needs. They are developing instructional techniques that make inclusion successful. Their outlook, when challenged by a student's behavior or developmental differences, has become asset-based, focusing on preventative (teacher-controlled) modifications and diminishing the years-long habit of blaming kids, their families, their upbringing, etc. Our State Preschool teachers count on administrative support and a Leadership Team who meets regularly to evaluate our efforts, progress, challenges and next steps."

Chula Vista Elementary School Administrator