



# Unpacking the Pyramid Model

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A Practical Guide for Preschool Teachers

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Mary Louise Hemmeter, Michaelene M. Ostrosky, & Lise Fox

FOREWORD BY ROSEMARIE ALLEN

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## A Practical Guide for Preschool Teachers

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# Introduction

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## CREATING A FRAMEWORK OF EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES: BUILDING THE PYRAMID MODEL

Teaching young children is rewarding, inspiring, fun, meaningful, exhausting, and challenging! Teachers of preschool children have responsibility for providing a welcoming, engaging, and nurturing classroom that fosters early academic skills and promotes social-emotional competence. In addition, early educators need to be prepared to guide the development of children from a variety of backgrounds, and with diverse interests, and abilities. *The Pyramid Model for Promoting Social Emotional Competence In Infants and Young Children* (See Figure 1) (Fox et al., 2003; Hemmeter et al., 2006) was developed to provide early educators with guidance on the research-based practices they can use to promote the social-emotional competence of all children, prevent social-emotional delays in children who are at risk for emotional and behavioral issues, and intervene effectively with the few children who engage in ongoing, persistent challenging behavior.



There is strong evidence for the importance of social-emotional learning and addressing challenging behavior in early childhood programs. Research has shown that children who engage in persistent challenging behavior in the early years are at greater risk of emotional and behavioral disorders as they grow older (National Research Council, 2009; Shaw, 2013). Children who enter Kindergarten without the skills to regulate their behavior and strong emotions, establish relationships with other children and adults, and engage in social problem solving are less likely to experience positive outcomes in learning. Early educators also are becoming increasingly aware of the impact of trauma on the development of young children and know that trauma can be related to a child's difficulty in relationships and social interactions with others and challenges in self-regulation and social skill development. Additionally, there is evidence that early educators have a difficult time meeting the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of children who have challenging behavior and knowing how to promote resilience in children who might have experienced trauma. National data have shown that preschool children with challenging behavior often are suspended or expelled from their programs, and exclusionary procedures disproportionately impact children of color, especially African-American boys (Gilliam, 2005; Office of Civil Rights, 2016). Early educators also report that addressing children's challenging behavior is one of their most significant professional development needs (Joseph et al., 2003). The importance for addressing challenging behavior during the early years and the frustrations of early educators in not knowing how to respond to challenging behavior were key to the design of the Pyramid Model.

In addition to addressing challenging behavior in the early years, we know that focusing on the development of social-emotional skills should be a core component of every early childhood curriculum. Young children who have a strong foundation in social-emotional skills are more likely to experience later academic success and positive post-school outcomes. The preschool years are a time when children rapidly develop social skills, emotional understanding, the ability to regulate emotions, and social problem solving. In addressing the needs of children exposed to trauma, educators are guided to build nurturing relationships with children, help children feel safe and secure, provide predictable routines and classroom structure, and teach social-emotional skills (National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2017). Preschool classrooms that provide nurturing and responsive relationships, a high-quality and predictable classroom environment, and programming for social-emotional learning can promote children's development and reduce the risk of negative outcomes that often occur when children enter school without these skills (Bierman & Motamedi, 2015).

The challenge for preschool teachers is identifying what strategies they might use to promote children's social-emotional skill development and how to implement those strategies in already busy early childhood environments that include children who have a range of developmental levels. The unique context of the early childhood classroom requires that instruction in social-emotional skills is developmentally appropriate and culturally, racially, and linguistically responsive; delivered in the context of routine, planned, and play activities; and provided in a way that children will find engaging. The Pyramid Model framework provides early educators with the guidance and practical strategies needed to promote social-emotional competence in each child in preschool classrooms and effectively address challenging behavior when it occurs. In the sections that follow, we describe the guiding assumptions and development of the Pyramid Model.

## Guiding Assumptions

The Pyramid Model was developed based on several assumptions about young children's social-emotional development (see Guiding Principles for the Pyramid Model Framework). These assumptions are grounded in research and are recommended practices in the fields of early childhood and early childhood special education (DEC, 2014; NAEYC, n.d.). The Pyramid Model focuses on promotion and prevention, rather than being reactive and concentrating primarily

on intensive interventions. In other words, the emphasis is on enhancing social-emotional skill development and preventing challenging behavior through the careful and intentional arrangement of early childhood environments that are inclusive, developmentally appropriate, and validating of the different lenses teachers, children, and families bring to the classroom. Responsive relationships with each young child, well-orchestrated routines and transitions, and the creation of a well-prepared and effective workforce are also critical components of the Pyramid Model. Family engagement is critical across all tiers of the Pyramid Model. Family members play an important role in supporting their children's social-emotional development. Therefore, we believe that families and professionals should partner to develop their understanding of the Pyramid Model practices and learn from each other ways to adopt and adapt the practices for use at home and in the community. Further, we believe that we should engage families in promotion and prevention and develop positive relationships. These positive relationships provide the context for collaborating on more intensive interventions if needed.

### **Guiding Principles for the Pyramid Model Framework**

- The focus is on promotion and prevention.
- Family engagement is critical.
- There is a need for individualized support.
- Dosage and intensity are important.
- Practices/interventions are developmentally appropriate and culturally, racially, and linguistically relevant.
- Interventions are provided in authentic settings.
- Behavior support is collaborative with consideration given to cultural relevance and unique family interests, strengths, and needs.
- There is a need for program support.
- It takes a village.

There is a need for individualized support when implementing Pyramid Model practices, and dosage and intensity are important considerations. Although there is a strong emphasis on universal strategies that are appropriate for all children, and which support the development of social-emotional skills and prevent challenging behavior, consideration of different family circumstances, children's unique needs, and the concomitant support that is necessary for young children to develop and learn are guiding assumptions of this model. Additionally, paying attention to dosage and intensity (i.e., how much is needed to result in positive behavior change) and providing the right amount of practice or intervention that is guided by data-based decision making is more likely to result in positive child outcomes than a hit or miss approach. In other words, skill building needs to be promoted with enough intensity to effect change.

When we designed the Pyramid Model, we were committed to a model that was developmentally appropriate and that allowed for the use of a range of practices that reflect and are responsive to the individual linguistic, cultural, and developmental backgrounds of each child. Further, it was important that the Pyramid Model practices could be provided in authentic settings, those places where preschoolers typically spend their time. These inclusive settings include but are not limited to childcare programs, Head Start, family childcare, and a range of publicly funded and private preschool environments.

When providing behavior support to children and their families, practitioners should begin with a foundation built on respect and collaboration. They need to acknowledge how their conscious and unconscious biases influence their interactions with families and colleagues. Recognizing the impact of their own thoughts and actions on others is a necessary step for practitioners to combat prejudices and inequities that negatively and unjustly affect the quality of supports families are able to access and receive. Practitioners should also learn to appreciate and accept each family's unique interests, strengths, and needs that may not always fall within what they currently know and perceive as normative standards. Practitioners who are willing to learn, who are open to different ideas, and who engage in ongoing self-reflection are more likely to develop meaningful and productive partnerships with families in support of children's social-emotional development and the prevention of challenging behavior.

Another important guiding assumption of the Pyramid Model is the need for program supports, including ongoing professional development, implementation supports, and assistance with data-based decision making. Support from program leadership includes prioritizing social-emotional competence and creating early childhood communities in which promotion and prevention are at the forefront. The final guiding assumption is that it takes a village to support all children's social-emotional development. This village includes classroom staff, behavior support personnel/mental health consultants, families, and other professionals who engage with young children. The focus should always be on working together to support the implementation of promotion and prevention practices, while also having a team approach for developing behavior supports that can be implemented in authentic settings like classrooms, children's homes, and other places where young children spend time in their daily lives.

## The Development of the Pyramid Model

Although we developed the Pyramid Model in response to concerns about children's challenging behavior, we knew that the most effective practices would be those that prevented challenging behavior and promoted appropriate social-emotional behaviors that children could use in place of challenging behavior. We wanted to develop a model that would address the needs of all children in inclusive early childhood programs, including those who are developing typically, those who are at risk for developing social, emotional, or behavior challenges, and those who engage in persistent challenging behavior. We also wanted a model that would guide behavior support practices across a range of early childhood settings. This required a tiered model of supports that included prevention, promotion, and intervention practices.

The development of the Pyramid Model was influenced by public health models and by Positive Behavior Interventions and Support models that are used in many K–12 settings. Although these models informed the Pyramid Model, we were careful to ensure that the framework was developmentally appropriate for children from birth to 5 years of age. As a result, the Pyramid Model includes the following tiers of practices: Nurturing and Responsive Relationships, Supportive Environments, Targeted Social and Emotional Supports, and Intensive Interventions. The Pyramid Model practices are based on research on effective instructional strategies for promoting engagement and appropriate behavior, strategies for promoting children's social skills and emotional competencies, and implementation of assessment-based behavior support plans for children with persistent challenging behavior. A variety of materials have been developed to support the implementation of the Pyramid Model, including but not limited to 1) comprehensive training materials; 2) the *Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool* (TPOT™; Hemmeter et al., 2014) and the *Teaching Pyramid Infant Toddler Observation System* (TPITOS; Bigelow et al., 2019); 3) practical tools for teachers; 4) program-wide leadership guides and tools; and 5) materials for families.

The Pyramid Model has been examined in two randomized trials. These studies evaluated the effects of professional development on teachers' implementation of Pyramid Model practices and children's social skills and problem behaviors (Hemmeter et al., 2016; Hemmeter et al., in press). The professional development intervention was effective for supporting

teachers' implementation of Pyramid Model practices, and teachers' use of the practices was related to children's social and behavioral outcomes. Also, teachers continued to use the practices after coaching ended. Teachers reported high levels of satisfaction with the professional development and also reported positive changes in children's social skills and challenging behavior.

## Supporting the Implementation of the Pyramid Model

Changing day-to-day teaching practice is hard. Working with hundreds of early childhood programs has underscored what preschool teachers have told us for many years: in order to actually adopt and use Pyramid Model practices in their classrooms with children, teachers need more than just access to one-time training. Teachers need ongoing coaching support, and they need a way to measure their progress in using the practices. Additionally, teachers need support and encouragement from their whole program. These program supports are an important part of the Pyramid Model. The model not only identifies evidence-based practices, but also provides guidance to programs and states about how to support teachers in using the practices with fidelity. Teachers in school districts, childcare settings, Head Start, and other early childhood programs have said that when they get the support they need, they are able to adopt and adapt Pyramid Model practices and see improvements in their classrooms and in children's social-emotional competence and behavior. They feel more successful and less stressed, and they enjoy their work more. When they are supported, preschool teachers in any classroom can do it!

So, what does it take to implement the Pyramid Model with fidelity? It takes serious attention and commitment by programs *and* state leadership. At the program level, a program implementation team (which includes program leadership, teachers, and families) makes sure that:

- Teachers' voices are heard regarding what they need in order to use the practices.
- Teachers receive ongoing coaching on the practices, and this coaching is relationship-based and responsive to their needs.
- Teachers have the opportunity to engage in safe conversations and guided self-reflections that help them understand how their biases influence their interactions with and attitudes towards children, families, and colleagues who differ from them based on race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, gender identity, language, ability, social status, and other defining characteristics.
- Coaches and teachers work together to set goals and use data to measure the teachers' progress on reaching those goals.
- Teachers have the support they need when they need it to address children's challenging behavior.
- The whole program uses Pyramid Model practices, and all teachers, coaches, families, support personnel, and program leaders are on the same page and help each other succeed.
- The program uses data to pinpoint what professional development, coaching, and other support is needed.
- The program uses data to make sure that all children are making progress.

At the state level, the various state agencies (Division of Child Care, Head Start Collaboration Office, Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood, etc.) work together as a leadership team to make sure that all early childhood programs in the state have consultants or other support staff to help them:

- Adopt Pyramid Model practices program-wide.
- Establish coaching for teachers.



- Collect data on teacher progress in using the Pyramid Model practices and identify the professional development and support that is needed.
- Collect data on child progress.

Taken as a whole, this implementation approach begins with teachers and families (“What do they need?”). Next, it is important to identify what the program needs to meet the teacher and family needs. Then, as developers of the Pyramid Model, we ask the question, “What do the state agencies need to do to help the programs?” When these three levels of support are in place, teachers and families can use the Pyramid Model practices with fidelity, they feel supported and successful, and children’s social, emotional, and behavioral needs are met.

## Overview of the Book

The focus of this book is on Pyramid Model practices for preschoolers ages 3–5 years. Resources exist to support implementation of specific aspects of the model; these are highlighted throughout the book, when appropriate. After the introduction and Chapter 1 that describe the Pyramid Model framework, we move to Chapters 2–4 that provide guidance on making connections and building relationships with children, families, and colleagues. Chapters 5–9 address practices that promote social-emotional competence and prevent challenging behavior through the design of physical, social, and temporal environments. Topics covered in these five chapters include classroom environments, schedules and routines, transitions, expectations and rules, and promoting children’s engagement. Chapters 10–14 focus on the next tier of the Pyramid Model and include information about effective teaching strategies, positive descriptive feedback, and teaching friendship skills, problem solving, and emotional literacy. Chapters 15–16 address the top tier of the Pyramid Model, with details about addressing challenging behavior and designing and implementing individualized behavior supports. The final chapter is intended to provide guidance on implementing the Pyramid Model in your classroom or program. Throughout the chapters in this book, we have embedded information about partnering with families, collaborating as teams, and being intentional about implementing practices equitably. Our hope is that you will embrace the Pyramid Model framework and work diligently with your team and families in your program to support preschoolers’ social-emotional competence and prevent challenging behavior.

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# 1

## Overview of the Pyramid Model

Lise Fox, Mary Louise Hemmeter, Michaelene M. Ostrosky, and Robert M. Corso

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The Pyramid Model is a framework for organizing effective prevention, promotion, and intervention practices that are related to supporting young children's social-emotional development and preventing and addressing challenging behavior (Fox, Dunlap, Hemmeter, Joseph, & Strain, 2003; Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox, 2006). As a framework, the Pyramid Model provides the context in which a curriculum and evidence-based practices can be implemented. The Pyramid Model is designed to support all children in preschool classrooms. In this book, we focus on classroom-based practices for preschool children. In this chapter, we provide an overview of the tiers of the Pyramid Model and the practices associated with each tier in the model (Hemmeter, Fox, & Snyder, 2014). The practices are described more completely in the chapters that follow, which provide examples and checklists for implementation. The practices are supported by an effective workforce, which means teachers have opportunities to engage in self-reflection, are open to learning, respect ideas and perspectives that may be different from their own, and have access to the supports they need to implement the practices with fidelity.



## THE PYRAMID MODEL PRACTICES

### Tier 1: Universal Practices

Tier 1 involves two sets of practices: responsive and nurturing relationships and high-quality, supportive environments. These practices are designed to promote children's social-emotional development and prevent challenging behavior. They are intended to be used with all children in preschool classrooms. Although the practices are universal, it will be necessary to individualize the delivery of the practices based on each child's needs and abilities and the unique experiences they bring from their homes and communities.

Responsive and nurturing relationship practices include practices that are designed to build relationships between children, between children and teachers, and between adults (e.g., parent-teacher, teacher-teacher, teacher-colleague). Relationships form the foundation of any good early childhood program. Relationships provide a context in which children can learn, grow, and try new things. Practices related to relationships between children and teachers include positive time and attention, supportive conversations, positive descriptive feedback, joining children's play, and giving directions that are short and tell children what to do. It is important to learn ways to use these practices with all children including those who are non-verbal or who are learning English as a second language.

The Pyramid Model also includes practices that focus on building relationships with families. It is important to help families learn about supporting their children's social-emotional development at home and in the community. We also focus on building relationships with families so that if there is a challenging behavior, a positive relationship is already established, and the relationship provides a supportive context for working to develop supports for the child. Practices related to promoting relationships with families include sharing family-friendly resources to support children's social-emotional development at home and in the community, linking these resources to how teachers are working on social-emotional skills at school, exchanging information with families about positive things children are doing at school and home, using a variety of strategies to engage families in their children's educational experience and maintain communication between home and school, and making home visits.

Relationships with colleagues are critical to implementing the Pyramid Model. Relationships among colleagues provide a model for children and families and are important to ensuring that everyone is on the same page in supporting social-emotional development and addressing challenging behavior. These practices include modeling appropriate social behaviors and emotions during interactions with colleagues, developing a classroom-wide approach to behavior support and working together to plan and implement these practices, sharing roles in the classroom so that all adults are engaging meaningfully with children, and providing positive feedback to colleagues.

High-quality, supportive environment practices are designed to promote engagement and provide structure and predictability to early childhood classrooms. These practices help children know what to do in the classroom, understand expectations, and follow rules and routines. Environments that are predictive and consistent help children feel safe and engage in meaningful ways with their peers and learning experiences. These practices are related to 1) schedules and routines, 2) environmental design, 3) promoting engagement, 4) transitions, and 5) rules and expectations and these practices are described in detail in the chapters in this book.

### Tier 2: Targeted Social-Emotional Supports

This tier of the Pyramid Model is focused on supporting children's development of social-emotional competence by providing high-quality instruction that includes increasing levels of support to meet the needs of all children. This involves knowing what to teach, when to teach, and how to teach.

**What to Teach** In the Pyramid Model, we focus on teaching a variety of social skills and emotional competencies that will help children learn to interact with peers and adults in socially appropriate ways. These skills and competencies include rules and expectations, friendship skills, social problem solving, anger management, and calm-down strategies. These are complex skills, and children will need intentional instruction to learn to how to use these skills across contexts and people.

**When to Teach** It is important to teach social skills and emotional competencies across the day. They might be taught intentionally during teacher-directed instruction and then practiced throughout the day. Children often engage in challenging behavior when they do not have the social skills and emotional competencies to engage in more appropriate social behaviors. Appropriate social skills and emotional competencies should be taught when children are not engaging in challenging behavior. Additionally, children should be supported to use these skills during challenging situations.

**How to Teach** This book is all about *how to teach*, so we will make only some general comments here. For children to learn social-emotional skills, they need lots of practice in a variety of different situations. Social skills instruction can be implemented in large group, small group, and one-on-one contexts. In addition, these skills can be practiced throughout the day when children are engaged with peers and adults in classroom activities. Social skills also can be embedded in classroom routines, such as having a child who is working on initiating with peers practice serving as the greeter when other children arrive in the morning.

### Tier 3: Intensive Interventions

This tier of practices is designed for children whose challenging behavior is persistent and not responsive to the practices implemented in the other tiers of the Pyramid Model. Children who engage in more frequent, more persistent, or more intensive forms of behavior will need the practices in this tier. Intensive interventions are developed by a team that includes the family, the teacher, a behavior support person, and other adults who work with the child. To develop intensive interventions, a comprehensive functional assessment is implemented, and a behavior support plan is developed. The behavior support plan includes prevention strategies, replacement skills, and new responses to a child's behavior. Teachers and family members are supported to implement the behavior support plan in the child's natural settings, activities, and routines.

## POWER UP THE PYRAMID MODEL THROUGH FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

The foundation of the Pyramid Model—nurturing and responsive relationships—includes the development of strong relationships with families as a key component. However, working in partnership with families is part of each tier of the Pyramid Model and all the key practices. We often describe our partnerships with families as *powering up* the Pyramid Model practices. We use the phrase *power up* the practices because when we work in partnership with families, the outcomes for the children will be more consistent and durable. We hope that as you read each chapter, you notice the family strategies that are offered and consider what you might use with consideration for the different backgrounds and experiences families of the children bring to your program. Moreover, we want practitioners to consider what it means to become partners with families. We want practitioners to think about strategies they can use to learn more about and from each family, listen to family perspectives, and create a welcoming environment that fosters strong relationships with families.

Teachers are encouraged to develop multiple ways to connect with the families of every child in the classroom. Teachers will want to use a variety of strategies because each family is different and might not be responsive to just one way of making a connection. Some of the

strategies that teachers have used are 1) conducting home visits, 2) establishing bidirectional communication systems via notebooks or an app, 3) representing families in the classroom through photos of the families for every child, 4) establishing an open-door policy so that family members can drop in the classroom when they want or can, and 5) offering structured opportunities for families to contribute to the classroom, such as volunteering, sharing a story, going on a field trip, or helping prepare materials. Materials should be shared with families in their preferred language. The goal for the teacher should be to identify the best way to connect with each family that allows for the sharing of information by the family to the teacher and from the teacher to the family (i.e., bidirectional communication).

At the high-quality environments level of the Pyramid Model, we guide teachers to think about sharing with family members practices that are used in the classroom to help children understand schedules and routines, transitions, expectations, and rules. Many of the practices in this book can be very helpful to families as they guide their children at home and in the community. Strategies for sharing this information might include: 1) hosting an open house for families to learn the routine of the classroom and see the visuals that support children's participation in activities, 2) sending home information about expectations that are taught in the classroom, 3) producing short podcasts about classroom activities, and 4) providing visuals for families to use in guiding their children at home and on community outings. In addition to sharing information with families, it is just as important to encourage what families are willing and able to share with the teacher. This might include what food a child eats at home, the level of independence in self-care or daily routines the family expects of their child, a child's preferences, or the experiences a child has had with other children at home or in the community. The classroom should reflect children's homes and families as much as possible, including mementos or photos representing each family group posted where children can see them. Families can contribute important information that will help teachers connect with each child and promote each child's engagement in classroom activities.

Family engagement is particularly important as we think about the social-emotional teaching level of the Pyramid Model. Teachers will want to share information about social-emotional development and why it is important for children. There might be some families who have not thought about how children develop social-emotional skills and why they are important to the child's relationships with others and with future academic learning. The teacher also should be prepared to share information if there is a concern about a child's social-emotional development or challenging behavior and to link to other program supports (e.g., team-based behavior support planning) when a child needs more intensive supports to be successful in the classroom.

Families and teachers benefit greatly from learning from each other how to teach the same skills in their everyday routines and interactions at home, school, and in the community. We encourage teachers to share materials and ideas with family members, along with tips about how materials and ideas might be used at home and in the community. We also encourage teachers to collaborate with families to address social-emotional issues that might be a concern in home environments. When we establish strong relationships with families, those relationships serve as a context for providing additional support when children need it. In each chapter that follows, we provide ideas of materials to use in supporting families.

Providing individualized instruction and developing individualized behavior support plans are components of the Pyramid Model in which partnerships with families are critical to children's skill development. Programs should partner with families from the beginning to identify goals and design individualized intervention plans. Families have valuable information to share about their child, daily opportunities to teach skills, their child's preferences, and challenges the child might encounter outside of school. This information can provide a rich context and key considerations as the program and family develop an intervention plan together. After an instructional or intervention plan is designed, the family remains a key change agent in helping a child learn new skills.

## WHAT IT MEANS FOR A TEACHER TO USE THE PYRAMID MODEL

A preschool teacher who uses the Pyramid Model framework can reflect on his or her teaching practice with his or her team by using the checklists provided at the end of Chapters 3–16. The team notices and celebrates what they are doing well and targets Pyramid Model practices for improvement. Pyramid Model teachers make sure that all children in their care are supported by tailoring and adapting practices and interventions to meet the unique social-emotional needs of these preschoolers. Pyramid Model teachers also reflect on the cultural and linguistic relevance of practices for the children in their care to ensure they meet the needs of each child. They monitor progress regularly and revise instruction if it is not working by using data to make decisions.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Here are some frequently asked questions about the Pyramid Model:

1. *Is the Pyramid Model a curriculum that I can purchase?* The Pyramid Model is not a curriculum; rather, it is a conceptual framework of evidence-based practices for promoting young children's social-emotional development. The Pyramid Model organizes evidence-based practices that include universal promotion practices for all children, practices for children who need targeted social-emotional supports, and individualized behavior support practices for children with significant social skill deficits or persistent challenging behavior.
2. *My program has required that we use a particular social-emotional curriculum in our classroom. Can I also use the Pyramid Model with the curriculum?* The Pyramid Model is not intended to replace or supplant a child-level curriculum. To the extent programs use an evidence-based child curriculum, it is likely that the curriculum is consistent with the Pyramid Model framework. The Pyramid Model provides a framework in which teachers can implement a curriculum. Many teachers use a curriculum to structure their social-emotional lessons along with the Pyramid Model, which provides guidance about how to create a social context in which to implement social-emotional teaching practices.
3. *My school is implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). Can I still implement Pyramid Model practices?* An MTSS is a framework that is used to ensure successful education outcomes for *all* students by using a data based problem-solving process to provide and evaluate the effectiveness of multiple tiers of integrated academic, behavior, and social-emotional interventions matched to student need. Many programs have successfully implemented, scaled up, and sustained the implementation of the Pyramid Model as an MTSS for promoting young children's social-emotional competence and addressing challenging behavior.
4. *My school is implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS). How does the Pyramid Model work with that school-wide intervention?* The Pyramid Model is a PBIS framework that early educators can use to promote children's social-emotional development and prevent and address challenging behavior. Many schools that implement PBIS use the Pyramid Model to guide the implementation of practices in early childhood classrooms. (PBIS.org includes information about the use of the Pyramid Model in the implementation of PBIS in early childhood classrooms and programs.) PBIS uses data, systems, and evidence-based practices to improve social competence and academic outcomes for all students in the school. The Pyramid Model offers data decision-making tools and evidence-based practices that are developmentally appropriate for preschool children.
5. *Is there a child assessment component with the Pyramid Model?* The Pyramid Model has no specific child assessment associated with the framework. In recent years, there has



been a growing emphasis on the mental health and the social, behavioral, and developmental needs of very young children. In response, state administrators and local providers of infant and preschool programs have worked to strengthen their screening and assessment of children's social-emotional development.

6. *Can I use the Pyramid Model with children who have special needs?* When the Pyramid Model was developed, it was designed to include practices that promote the social-emotional competence of all children, including children with or at risk for developmental disabilities. Research on the implementation of the Pyramid Model has been conducted in inclusive classrooms and in classrooms that serve children with special needs. Data reveal that implementing the Pyramid Model in these types of classrooms results in teacher-reported growth in social skills and a reduction of challenging behavior.
7. *I am interested in reducing challenging behavior in my classroom. Will the Pyramid Model help with that?* Yes! We have found that implementing the promotion and prevention practices in the Pyramid Model help teachers manage their classrooms and reduce challenging behavior for most children. If children have persistent challenging behavior that is not responsive to the promotion and prevention practices in the Pyramid Model, intensive, individualized interventions are developed to resolve challenging behavior and support the development of new skills. At this tier of the Pyramid Model, program staff and family members collaborate to conduct a functional behavioral assessment and to develop a behavior support plan that is implemented during everyday routines and activities.
8. *I am interested in something that will help me reach out to families about guiding their children's social-emotional development. How does the Pyramid Model address family engagement?* The practices that are highlighted in the Pyramid Model are reliant on the participation of families. Each chapter in this book provides you with ideas and strategies for reaching out to families. Teachers who implement the Pyramid Model exchange information with families about how to promote their child's social-emotional development. When children need more instruction or intervention to address social, emotional, or behavioral needs, teachers partner with families to provide increased opportunities for their children to learn and practice new skills in the context of everyday activities and routines in their homes and communities. When children have persistent challenges, families and other persons involved with the child form a collaborative team to develop and implement individualized, comprehensive interventions and supports that are applied in all of the child's routines and activities.
9. *Is the Pyramid Model only for preschool children, or can it be used with infants and toddlers?* The Pyramid Model was designed for use with all children from birth to age 5. This book describes practices that are designed to be used in preschool classrooms. However, training materials and implementation resources are available for using the Pyramid Model in home-visiting programs and in infant and toddler classrooms. In the future, we hope to publish a book that focuses on infants and toddlers.

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