



Social and Emotional Wellness

Social and Emotional Strategies for School-Age Children

Overview

School-age children are defined as children 5–12 years of age who attend compulsory schooling (NCASE, 2019). School-age children represent roughly 45 percent of all children served through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) (NCASE, 2020). School-age care takes place both before and after school, on weekends, on school holidays, and during the summer. In an effort to provide effective care to school-age children, it is important to understand how they develop relationships, manage their emotions, cope with stress, and develop social skills, as young children and through adolescence.

Access to developmentally appropriate frameworks and strategies can help school-age care programs and family child care educators meet the social and emotional health needs of school-age children. The following information is based on the understanding that relationships are essential for healthy development. Responsive, nurturing relationships with caring adults and peers provide safety and support for school-age children to develop a sense of security and discovery, and to excel socially, emotionally, and academically.

The Pyramid Model and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Both the Pyramid Model and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) emphasize evidence-based practices, behavior analysis, prevention and behavioral sciences, learner outcomes, embedded training and coaching, capacity building, explicit teaching and instruction, and continuous progress monitoring and evaluation (Farrell, A; Collier-Meek, M; & Pons, S., 2013). They differ primarily with regard to the chronological age and developmental stages in focus—that is, infants, toddlers, and preschoolers as compared to school-age children and youth.

PBIS is a proactive approach that schools and out-of-school programs can use to improve environmental safety and promote positive behavior by teaching children positive behavior strategies. Some relevant PBIS guiding principles are as follows:

- ◆ Children can learn behavioral expectations for different situations.
- ◆ Children learn expected behaviors for each setting through explicit instruction and opportunities to practice and receive feedback.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

Social and Emotional Strategies for School-Age Children

- ◆ Each child is different, so programs need to give many kinds of behavioral support.
- ◆ How programs teach behavior should be based on research and science.
- ◆ Tracking a child's behavioral progress is important.
- ◆ Programs gather and use data to make decisions about behavior interventions.
- ◆ Program staff members are consistent on how they encourage expected behavior. (Farrell, A; Collier-Meek, M; & Pons, S., 2013).

Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) Framework

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which all young people acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions (CASEL, 2020). According to CASEL, the goal of programs should be to foster the development of five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies: *self-awareness*, *self-management*, *social awareness*, *relationship skills*, and *responsible decision-making* (CASEL, 2020). These core competencies provide children with a foundation for social relationships and academic achievement.

- ◆ *Self-Awareness* is the ability of the child to recognize and name her or his emotions. It also includes the ability to understand her or his own needs, as well as her or his strengths and limitations. This awareness of self is crucial to early school success. (CASEL, 2020).
- ◆ *Self-Management* is the ability to regulate emotions and behaviors so that goals are achieved. In addition, it involves persevering with difficult tasks and in complex social interactions. It requires children to remember and generalize what they have been taught, initiate changes in their behavior, and constantly monitor their behavior in varying situations. These foundational self-management skills emerge during the preschool years as the brain develops and continue to evolve throughout early childhood and adolescence. (CASEL, 2020).
- ◆ *Social Awareness* is the ability to understand what others are feeling and have the understanding to take their perspective. Theory of mind is the ability to understand how different beliefs, motivations, moods, and levels of knowledge affect our own behavior as well as the behavior of those around us. It is a necessary component of perspective-taking, which is the child's ability to relate to others, empathize with them, and see things from their viewpoint. (CASEL, 2020).
- ◆ *Relationship Skills* refer to the child's ability to form positive social relationships, work together, and deal effectively with conflict. Research suggests that when children are intentionally taught social skills, given practical opportunities, and receive guidance during teachable moments, they develop positive relationships and friendships. (CASEL, 2020).
- ◆ *Responsible Decision-making* is when children learn to make positive choices about their personal and social behavior, and thereby make responsible decisions. Focus in the classroom and school community needs to be placed on problem-solving, reflection, perceptive thinking, self-direction, and motivation skills that will contribute to lifelong success (CASEL, 2020).

Positive Youth Development (PYD) Principles

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is a prosocial approach that engages young people within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances young people's strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and equipping them with the support needed to build on their strengths (Youth.gov, n.d.).

PYD promotes positive asset building and considers young people as resources, illuminates the role of resiliency as protective factors that allows them to overcome adversity. Thus, as a set of interventions and programs, PYD principles were developed to reduce risks and strengthen protective factors (Youth.gov, n.d.).

PYD Programs work with youth to improve their:

- ◆ **Assets:** The necessary resources and skills to achieve desired outcomes.
- ◆ **Agency:** The ability to employ assets and aspirations to make their own decisions about their lives and set their own goals, and to achieve desired outcomes.
- ◆ **Enabling environment:** An environment that maximizes young people's assets, agency, access to services and opportunities, and ability to avoid risks, while promoting their social and emotional competence to succeed.
- ◆ **Contribution:** To be involved in and lead through various channels as a source of change for their own and their communities' positive development.

When connecting youth to positive experiences, programs should include the following PYD (Youth.gov, n.d.):

- ◆ Be intentional—proactively promote protective factors in young people.
- ◆ Complement efforts to prevent risky behaviors and attitudes and support efforts that address negative behaviors.
- ◆ Acknowledge and further develop (or strengthen) youth assets in all youth.
- ◆ Enable youth to thrive and flourish and prepare them for a healthy, happy, and safe adulthood.
- ◆ Involve youth as active agents—youth participation in the design, delivery, and evaluation of the services; creation of a partnership.
- ◆ Instill leadership qualities in youth, but do not make leading a requirement.
- ◆ Encourage civic involvement and civic engagement; youth contribute to their immediate environment and broader communities through service.
- ◆ Involve and engage every element of the community—schools, homes, community members, and others; youth and adults work together to frame and implement the solutions.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

Social and Emotional Strategies for School-Age Children

The Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, composed of representatives from 21 federal agencies that support programs and services focusing on youth, provides additional information and resources on Positive Youth Development Principles, which can be found at their website.

Other relevant strategies to consider:

Trauma-informed practices (TIP) are practices incorporated into an organization or system's protocols and interactions that demonstrate the organization's awareness of the pervasiveness of trauma; recognition of the impact of trauma on physical and mental health, inclusive of behaviors and reactions to services; and that organizational and systematic practices can retraumatize individuals (SAMHSA, 2014). TIP for school-age children reflect an understanding of early and middle childhood development that includes comprehension of the increased adaptive and academic expectations (NCASE, 2019).

Healing-centered engagement (HCE) is a strength-based practice developed from the idea that trauma does not happen in a vacuum, and that well-being arises from participating in changing the circumstances which led to the trauma. Therefore, it focuses on what is right with an individual and the healthy assets they possess, in an effort to diminish the impressions of the trauma experienced (NCASE, 2019). Healing-centered engagement seems to be powerful in the fostering of hope, which is vital when recovering from trauma.

These strategies can be accomplished through training program staff on employing trauma-informed practices and/or healing-centered engagement with children, and/or adopting a trauma-informed curriculum that prevents and mitigates adverse childhood experiences and supports social-emotional learning.

References

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- Farrell, A; Collier-Meek, M; & Pons, S. (2013). Embedding positive behavior interventions and supports into afterschool programs. *Beyond Behavior*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264977490_Embedding_positive_behavior_interventions_and_supports_into_afterschool_programs
- National Afterschool Association (2018). Guide to Positive Interventions and Supports in Afterschool <https://naaweb.org/professional-development/item/938-guide-to-positive-behavioral-interventions-and-supports-in-afterschool>
- National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment. (2019). Adverse Childhood Experiences and the School-Age Population.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

Social and Emotional Strategies for School-Age Children

<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/adverse-childhood-experiences-and-school-age-population>

National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment (2020). National Data Profile of Federal Supports for Afterschool and Summer Child Care.

https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/ncase-national-saccdataprofile-full-report-2020_3_0.pdf

SAMHSA (2014). SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf

Smith, T. (2018). Tier 1 Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports in Afterschool Programs Regent University, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Youth.gov (n.d.). Youth Development Principle Retrieved from: <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/positive-youth-development>

NCASE Resources

More information on these and other strategies can be found in the NCASE published resources listed below.

National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment (2019). OST Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Toolkit.

<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/responding-adverse-childhood-experiences-strategies-out-school-time-field>

National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment (2020). NCASE ACEs Resources. <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/ncase-aces-resources>

National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment. (2018). School-Age Consumer Education Toolkit. <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/school-age-consumer-education-toolkit>

National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment. (2019). Addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences in Out-of-School Time.

<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/addressing-adverse-childhood-experiences-out-school-time>

National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment. (2019). Adverse Childhood Experiences and the School-Age Population.

<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/adverse-childhood-experiences-and-school-age-population>

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

Social and Emotional Strategies for School-Age Children

National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment. (2019). Experiencias infantiles negativas y población en edad escolar. <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/node/16113>

National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment. (2019). Strengthening Systems and Supports to Build Positive Social-Emotional Climates in Out-of-School Time. <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/strengthening-systems-and-supports-build-positive-social-emotional-climates-out-school-time>

National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment. (2019). Supporting Positive Social-Emotional Climates in Out-of-School Time Webinar – Part I. <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/supporting-positive-social-emotional-climates-out-school-time-part-i>

National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment. (2019). Supporting Positive Social-Emotional Climates in Out-of-School Time Webinar – Part II. <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/supporting-positive-social-emotional-climates-out-school-time-webinar-part-ii>

National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment. (2020). Herramientas para la educación del consumidor en edad escolar. <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/node/16146>

National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment. (2020). NCASE SEL Resources. <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/ncase-sel-resources>

National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment. 2019. *Addressing ACEs in Out-of-School Environments*. Administration for Children and Families. <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/ncase-resource-library/addressing-aces-out-school-environments>

Out-of-School Time Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Toolkit. <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/resource/ost-emergency-preparedness-response-and-recovery-toolkit>

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