

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning



*Project funded by the Child Care and Head Start
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Human Services*

Introduction to the What Works Briefs

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SERIES

WHAT WORKS BRIEFS

Introduction to the What Works Briefs

What Are the “What Works Briefs”?

What Works Briefs are a series of short, easy-to-read, “how-to” information packets that:

- ✦ Promote practices that support young children’s social and emotional development and prevent challenging behaviors.
- ✦ Highlight practices, strategies, and intervention procedures that have been found to effectively prevent and address children’s challenging behaviors.
- ✦ Offer a variety of evidence based practices, strategies, and intervention procedures.
- ✦ Present clear scientific and value-based support for the practices’ effectiveness.
- ✦ Are designed to help early childhood professionals and families of young children select practices, strategies, and intervention procedures.
- ✦ Offer procedures that have been used in various settings such as homes, classrooms, centers, and other community environments with a variety of children, families, and professionals.

Practices, strategies, and intervention procedures described in each *What Works Brief* are based on scientific research and recommended practices in the fields of early childhood education, early intervention, and early childhood special education. This research provides support for the efficacy, efficiency, and production of long-term outcomes of the practices described in the *What Works Briefs*.

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What Do “What Works Briefs” Include?

The scope of the *What Works Briefs* is limited to prevention and intervention practices in the social-emotional domain for children ages 2 through 5. *What Works Briefs* also include policies and procedural and administrative practices needed to support the use of evidence-based practices.

The *Briefs* are organized around six general topics related to social and emotional development and challenging behaviors (with several *What Works Briefs* included under each category):

1. Strategies for promoting social skills and emotional development
2. Classroom practices that are designed to prevent challenging behavior
3. Positive parenting practices that promote young children’s social and emotional development and prevent and remediate challenging behavior
4. Individualized intervention for use when preventive strategies are not successful

5. Policy, procedural practices, and administrative practices that support the adoption and use of evidence-based practices

Each *What Works Brief* contains:

1. Examples and vignettes designed to illustrate how specific practices might be used in early childhood centers, homes and other community settings.
2. A one-page handout for practitioners and families that provides a summary of the practice described in the *What Works Brief*.
3. Resources that provide additional information for implementing the practices described in each *Brief*. These resources include Web sites, curriculum, Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community, and “how-to” articles published in peer-reviewed journals.
4. Selected articles that provide scientific evidence for each of the practices.

How Do I Use the “What Works Briefs”?

What Works Briefs can be used as:

- 📌 Practical “how-to” guides for professionals and families.
 - 📌 Handouts at meetings, training sessions, and conference presentations.
 - 📌 Starting points to learn more about various topics.
 - 📌 Quick references to stimulate discussions among professionals and families in small or large formal and informal gatherings.
 - 📌 Links to relevant resources available in various formats including Web-based, video, and print media.
 - 📌 Additional resources to be placed in early childhood libraries and parent centers.
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Who Can Benefit from the “What Works Briefs”?

What Works Briefs were developed to address the need for information related to children’s social and emotional development expressed by early childhood professionals including training and technical assistance specialists, teachers, child care providers, and administrators. Additionally, families of young children have expressed a desire for such information packets.

Guiding Principles

The evidence-based practices that are the foundation of the Center’s work can be expected to produce powerful and socially meaningful change for children and families when the following principles of sound teaching are in place.

- 📌 **Individualization** – To implement these practices successfully, we need to ask, “How does this child’s (family’s) unique interests, strengths, and needs affect how the strategy will be implemented?” For example, individualization may require modifying materials, simplifying goals, increasing activity time, or providing extra help to ensure success.
- 📌 **Intensity** – There is no general, simple formula to indicate how much instructional time and practice children will need to master a skill. Appropriate and positive behavior in the social-emotional domain can be acquired at any time and at any place. Caregivers need to plan systematically to promote social-emotional skills throughout the day and throughout the early childhood years. Successful intervention often demands a greater focus on teaching; thus adults need to plan so that opportunities to learn and practice new skills in the social and emotional domain are plentiful.
- 📌 **Normalized and Naturalistic** – The strategies described in the *What Works Briefs* have been implemented in routine activities with groups of children. Thus, adults should consider children’s typical routines when planning for

opportunities to support social and emotional development. Early childhood recommended practices supports teaching and learning in young children’s natural environments.

5 GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Individualization
 - Intensity
 - Normalized and Naturalistic
 - Fidelity of Use
 - Cultural and Linguistic Competence
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- 📌 **Fidelity of Use** – The strategies identified in the *What Works Briefs* generally produce powerful outcomes, when they are used in a systematic way. Sporadic or inconsistent use of the strategies is less likely to result in positive change. “How-to” manuals are referenced with each *What Works Brief*. These can provide adults with specific guidelines for implementing the practices.
- 📌 **Cultural and Linguistic Competence** – None of the strategies described in the *What Works Briefs* have been studied with all possible groups of children. Providers always need to consider if a strategy might better serve particular children and families if modifications are made to create a closer match between the intervention and the child and family’s interests, values, culture, and language.

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<http://csefel.uiuc.edu>

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning

Where Can I Get a Copy of the "What Works Briefs"?

What Works Briefs are available at no cost by downloading each from the Center's Web site at <http://csefel.uiuc.edu>.

Copies of the *What Works Briefs* may also be obtained by contacting the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning at:

61 Children's Research Center
51 Gerty Drive
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Champaign, IL 61820

»»» voice: 217.333.4123
»»» fax: 217.244.7732
»»» v/tty: 800.583.4135
»»» email: csefel@uiuc.edu

OVERVIEW OF THE CENTER

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 to improve the social and emotional outcomes of young children. The Center will develop and disseminate evidence-based, user-friendly information to help early childhood educators promote the social and emotional development of all children and meet the needs of the growing number of children with challenging behaviors and mental health needs in Child Care and Head Start programs.

CSEFEL is funded by the Head Start and the Child Care Bureaus in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is a multi-site collaboration among:

- ✦ University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- ✦ University of Colorado at Denver
- ✦ University of Connecticut
- ✦ University of South Florida
- ✦ Education Development Center, Inc.
- ✦ Tennessee Voices for Children

For more information, visit the Center's Web site at <http://csefel.uiuc.edu>.

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