



YOUR ROLE AS A TEACHER IN ENDING EARLY CHILDHOOD EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE

A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH BEGINS **EARLY**

Children's mental health is like the levelness of a table.
Stable, level tables do what we need tables to do.
A wobbly table can get back to stable with the right supports,
especially if the wobble is found early.¹

EARLY EXPERIENCES BUILD THE

ARCHITECTURE OF THE BRAIN²

Early childhood educators can provide the supportive relationships
and environments that **build healthy brains and solid kids**.
Educators and parents can spot delays early to **help prevent mental health issues**.

BUT TOO MANY KIDS MISS OUT BECAUSE OF **SUSPENSION OR EXPULSION**

When kids are **excluded** like this, they end up **farther behind**.
Some kids are **excluded** far more often than others.

BLACK PRESCHOOL STUDENTS

Enrolled

18%

Suspended

42%

Boys are
suspended
4.5 times as
often as girls⁴

WHITE PRESCHOOL STUDENTS³

Enrolled

43%

Suspended

26%

WHAT CAN **YOU DO TO END THIS PROBLEM?**

Teachers have a stressful job
to keep classrooms safe,
healthy, and learning.
However, this often means
looking for "bad" behavior,
which leads most to
expulsions and suspensions.⁴



Instead, teachers can play
a vital role in spotting delays.

**Take a breath and look for kids
who need support.**

We can work together to build
healthy brains & keep kids in school.

CHECK THE BACK FOR WAYS TO IGNITE INCLUSION & BUILD HEALTHY BRAINS

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO RETHINK DISCIPLINE

EVERYONE HAS BAD DAYS, EVEN YOUNG KIDS

Name your emotions
and help kids name theirs.

Show kids how to de-stress
(i.e. practice deep belly breaths).

Resilience is built with
supportive people like you.²

Give extra support to kids
who are tired, hungry, or angry.

Take the kid's perspective,
especially if they are
from a different background.



ALL PARENTS NEED SUPPORT

Build partnerships with families
We are all in this together.

Guide parents to
community resources.
Parents do well if they can.⁵

Work with parents to
name kids' emotions.

Help parents track their
kids' developmental milestones.
Celebrate milestones together.

see resources below as a start

RESOURCES to get YOU started

CDC Developmental Milestone Tracker:
<https://www.cdc.gov/MilestoneTracker>

Practical Strategies for Teachers:
<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html>

THANK YOU for keeping kids in school!

KIDS DO WELL IF THEY CAN⁵

Behavior is communication.
The way kids act is how they
tell you what they feel and need.

"Children aren't born knowing
how to make friends, wait patiently,
care for others, or manage emotions."²

Like any skill, **kids need practice**
and support with **expressing their**
emotions in a helpful way.

Give permission to kids,
especially to boys, to do so.

CAN'T KNOW IT ALL, BUT YOU CAN DO A LOT

One stable, caring adult relationship
is the biggest help for kids.

All kids, no matter where they live,
need positive experiences.

Serve and return: if a kid smiles,
you smile; if a kid claps, you clap.

Show appreciation for kids'
diverse cultures and backgrounds.

When you are unsure how to help, talk
to a **mental health professional.**

For more resources, check out the full toolkit on: mkekids.org/how-to-help/toolkit.html

1. Lynn, D. (2010). *How to talk about children's mental health: A Frameworks message memo*. Frameworks Institute. https://frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/CMH_MM.pdf
 2. Early Childhood Colorado Partnership. (n.d.). *Shared message bank*. <http://eccp.civiccanopy.org/message-platform/>
 3. Child Mind Institute. (2016). *2016 children's mental health report*. <https://childmind.org/report/2016-childrens-mental-health-report/>
 4. Meek, E.S., & Gilliam, S.W. (2016). Expulsion and suspension in early education as matters of social justice and health equity. *NAM Perspectives*, National Academy of Medicine, Washington, DC. doi: 10.31478/201610e
 5. Greene, R. (2010). *Step one: Kids do well if they can*. Lives in the Balance. <https://livesinthebalance.org/step-one-first-video>
- Zero to Three. (n.d.). *Preventing expulsion from preschool and child care*. <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/series/preventing-expulsion-from-preschool-and-child-care>