



Universal PreK (UPK) Café

October 7, 2020 - Issue 39

Dear Friends,

The Agency of Education's Early Education team would like to thank you for your continued dedication and incredible work done to ensure a safe and healthy start for each and every child, their family and staff.

This issue of UPK Café highlights Vermont's Early Multi-tiered System of Supports (Early MTSS), Guiding Principles and VELS as foundational to ensuring high-quality inclusive practices for each and every child.



Vermont's Early Multi-Tiered System of Supports (Early MTSS) is a tiered framework designed as a balanced approach that encourages systems building to support effective implementation of evidence-based practices. Early MTSS is innovation neutral and designed to be implemented with fidelity and sustained over time. It utilizes research and evidence-based practices to assess, implement and maximize learning opportunities for each and every child. Based on the premise that positive change in practice can only be truly effective and sustainable when they occur within a systemic and comprehensive framework, Early MTSS emphasizes the following five components of system building:

1. Established Leadership Teams
2. Partnership and Collaboration
3. High Quality Inclusive Environments
4. Data-based Decision Making
 - a. System/Program Level
 - b. Teacher Level
 - c. Child Level
5. Professional Learning

Early MTSS embraces and promotes the use [Pyramid Model Practices](#) to support each and every child's social and emotional competence and confidence. For more information about Early MTSS please contact kate.rogers@vermont.gov or amy.murphy@vermont.gov.

Supporting Each and Every Young Child's Full and Equitable Participation is also referred to as Vermont's Early Childhood 'Guiding Principles'. These guiding principles, along with [Vermont's Early Learning Standards \(VELS\)](#), serve as a foundation to promote positive outcomes for each and every child. The principles enhance Early MTSS, state and local early education policy and decision making, implementation of high-quality inclusive practices,

Universal PreK education including assessment, curriculum and instruction, Early Childhood Special Education, and establishing and maintaining family relationships and partnerships.

The guiding principles were created and vetted through a cross sector stakeholder group and adopted in 2018 by Vermont's Building Bright Futures Early Childhood State Advisory Committee (SAC), Agency of Education and various partners. They are consistent with relevant state and national laws, policies and articulate Vermont's commitment to fully include each and every child and their family. The following is an excerpt from the guiding principles:

We believe that each and every child ...

- *Learns within the context of secure and authentic relationships, play, and interactions within their environments.*
- *Deserves equitable access to experiences that acknowledge and build on their uniqueness.*
- *Deserves opportunities to deeply learn and develop to their full potential through joyful interactions in safe, accepting environments.*

For each and every family, we will...

- *Respect and support them as experts, partners, and decision makers in the learning and development of their children.*
- *Pledge to be open, genuine, reflective, and respectful listeners and communication partners. Build caring communities that are accepting of differences and foster a sense of belonging.*

To sum it up--establishing program-wide commitment to the adoption and use of Vermont's Guiding Principles, VELS and Early MTSS, is a surefire way to improve outcomes and ensure equitable access and participation for each and every child and their family.

Check out the following Early MTSS resources:

Pyramid Model Overview

[The Basics: The Pyramid Model for Promoting Social and Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children](#) The Pyramid Model is a conceptual framework of evidence-based practices for promoting young children's healthy social and emotional development. [The National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations \(NCPMI\)](#) provides a wonderful introduction to The Pyramid Model and provides training, support and resources at implementation to continuous sustainability.

Resources for Educators:

[Implementing Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support: The Evidence-Base of the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children](#)

[Recommended Practices Program Practices for Promoting the Social Development of Young Children and Addressing Challenging Behavior](#)

[Pyramid Nation Community Contributions](#)

The Pyramid Nation Community is welcome to share high-quality samples of Pyramid Model practices in this forum. Here you can find submissions that range from a visual support used in classrooms to a professionally produced video and anything else you can imagine!

[Practical Strategies for Implementing the Pyramid Model](#)

The Pyramid Model is comprised of practices that are implemented by teachers and families. Practical Strategies are ideas, resources, and illustrations of strategies that might be used to implement Pyramid Model practices and promote young children's social and emotional competence.

Resources for Families:

The [NCPMI](#) also offers various resources that can be used when welcoming and supporting diverse families. Many of these resources help families and educator create opportunities to learn from each other as they create strategies for partnering to promote child outcomes and provide the supports that might be needed to promote their child's skill development.

[Connecting with Families](#)

[Information Sheet for Families Announcing Pyramid Model](#)

[Positive Solutions for Families: Eight Practical Tips for Parents of Young Children with Challenging Behavior](#)

Backpack Connection

The [Backpack Connection Series](#) was created to provide a way for teachers and parents/caregivers to work together to help young children develop social emotional skills and reduce challenging behavior. Teachers may choose to send a handout home in each child's backpack when a new strategy or skill is introduced to the class. Each Backpack Connection handout provides information that helps parents stay informed about what their child is learning at school and specific ideas on how to use the strategy or skill at home.

Here are just a few of the handouts from the Backpack Connection Series:

[Addressing Behavior: How to Understand the Meaning of Your Child's Challenging Behavior](#)

[Emotions: How to Help Your Child Understand and Label Emotions](#)

[Schedule and Routines: How to Help Your Child Have a Successful Bedtime](#)

Again, thank you for all the work that you do and for your continued work supporting Vermont's young children and families.

If you have received this issue from a coworker and would like to be placed on the UPK Café listserv, please email Leslie at leslie.freedman@vermont.gov.

Be well and stay healthy!

The Early Education Team