

Understanding Challenging Behavior

Rebecca McFarland, Franklin County Family and Consumer Sciences Agent

Teaching Guide

Learner Objectives

- Participants will be able to describe challenging behavior
- Participants will be able to describe how challenging behavior serves as a function for children.
- Participants will be able to describe the importance of building relationships with children, families and colleagues.
- Participants will be able to describe the relationship between environmental variables and children's challenging behaviors.
- Participants will be able to identify strategies that can be used to build positive relationships.

Suggested Agenda

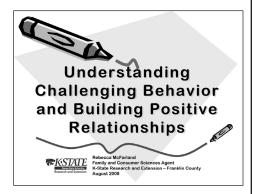
- I. Introduction and logistics
- II. Examining our attitudes about challenging behaviors
- III. Understanding challenging behavior
- IV. Why does challenging behavior occur?
- V. Using the teaching pyramid to prevent challenging behavior
- VI. Building positive relationships
- VII. Pulling it all together: Summary and action plan

Materials Needed

- Agenda
- PowerPoint
- Training Guide
- Chart paper or White Board and Markers

Handouts:

- MF2842, Participant powerpoint slides
- Hot Button Activity, (p. 13)
- Reframing Activity (p. 14)
- MF2843 Inventory of Practices for Promoting Children's Social Emotional Competence, "Inventory of Practices for Building Social Emotional Competence – Building Positive Relationships," pp. 2-3 and "Action Plan for Promoting Social Emotional Competence – Building Positive Relationships," pp. 15-16
- MF2843 Building Positive Relationships with Young Children
- Certificate of Completion (p. 15)
- Session Evaluation Form (p. 16)



Slide 2

Objectives

After participating in this workshop, participants will be able to:

- · describe challenging behavior.
- describe how challenging behavior serves a function for children.
- describe the importance of building relationships with children, families and colleagues.
- describe the relationship between environmental variables and children's challenging behaviors, and
- identify strategies that can be used to build positive relationships.

Slide 3

Examining our Attitudes about Challenging Behavior

- · What behaviors push your 'hot button'?
- · How do these behaviors make you feel?
- How does this impact your relationship with a child and his/her family?



I. Introduction and Logistics

During this time, you will want to accomplish the following things.

- 1. Begin with introducing yourself as well as any other speakers. Give a brief overview of who you are, where you are from, and information about your background that is relevant to this training event. (Show **Slide 1**.)
- 2. Have the participants introduce themselves to each other and provide you with a brief overview of who they are. Have each table of participants introduce themselves to each other and then report back to the whole group what roles the participants at their table represent (e.g., teachers, assistants, directors). Or, choose another introductory strategy depending on the size of the group and the time available.
- 3. Review the learner objectives (**Slide 2**).
- 4. Distribute all handouts including participant PowerPoint slides, activity pages, Inventory of Practices and Action Plan.
- 5. Take care of logistical issues (e.g., breaks, bathrooms, etc).
- 6. Encourage participants to ask questions throughout or to post them in a specially marked place.

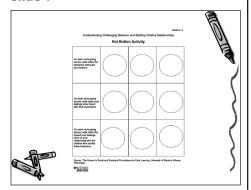
II. Examining Our Attitudes about Challenging Behaviors

A. Show **Slide 3**. The purpose of this discussion (Hot Button Activity described below) is to acknowledge how difficult it is to deal with children with challenging behavior. Explain how important it is for teachers and other caregivers to have support when they are working with children with challenging behavior. It is difficult to see beyond the challenging behavior, and it helps to have someone else who can brainstorm possible solutions.

B. Hot Button Activity (show Slide 4)

- 1. Ask participants to identify children's behaviors that "push their buttons."
 - a. Distribute copies of the Hot Button Activity from page 13 of this guide. Have participants individually fill in the top row with their "hot button behaviors." Each participant can complete several circles.
 - b. Ask for volunteers to name some of the behaviors that push their buttons. Keep going until you have an extensive list on the flip chart. Make the point that what pushes one person's button might be very different from what pushes another individual's buttons. Past experiences with children, training experiences, and level of support for dealing with challenging behaviors are just some of those factors.
- 2. Ask participants to think of children they have worked with who have these types of behaviors.
 - a. Have participants complete the second row of circles by listing feeling words (how they felt when they were working with that child or how they felt when people were sharing their list of behaviors that "pushed their buttons").
 - b. As group members share their ideas, write them on the flip chart paper or a blank overhead. They will most likely say things like: "It makes me frustrated." I feel like I don't know what I am doing." It makes me mad." I feel like a failure." It makes me want to get another job."
 - c. Ask participants to write responses to the statement on the third row of circles regarding how these feelings affect their interactions with children when they engage in these behaviors. Participants might say they avoid children when they act like this or that adults interact in a not-so-pleasant way after children engage in these behaviors, etc. Make the point that it is difficult to be effective with children when you are feeling this way. It is important to plan a strategy for dealing with these situations.
 - d. Let's talk about how we can use this emotional signal or "feeling" as a positive thing it tells you that you need to think of positive ways to deal with the situation (e.g., focusing on the positive, asking for help, reframing).

Slide 4



- 3. Have participants take each of their "hot buttons," reread it, and consider how they can reframe the behavior to interact with the child to build a positive relationship with him or her. For example, one might consider: "If Devin starts to whine when he can't get his shoes on or off, or his bookbag stored in his cubby, I will use these interactions as opportunities to teach him how to ask for assistance in a more appropriate way."
- 4. Distribute copies of the Reframing Activity from page 14 of this guide. Review the four examples listed then have participants list two to three of their own and restate the problems to make them more manageable. Do not generate solutions at this time.
- 5. Make the point that there are individually and culturally based beliefs that affect our attitudes about challenging behavior. Most children don't come to school knowing what teachers expect them to do. This could be due to the child's lack of experience in group care settings or to differences in families' and teachers expectations of children's behavior. Studies show that parents and teachers sometimes have differences in their expectations about children's behavior, which may influence children's understanding about expectations in the classroom.

III. What is Challenging Behavior?

- A. Show **Slide 5**. Challenging behavior is defined as any repeated pattern of behavior, or perception of behavior, that interferes with or is at risk of interfering with optimal learning or engagement in pro-social interactions with peer and adults. Challenging behavior is thus defined on the basis of its effects.
 - 1. For infants and toddlers, challenging behavior must be considered within the context of the relationship of the child to the caregivers. Behavior that is challenging, for example, may manifest as attachment difficulties, sleeping and eating difficulties, excessive crying, and difficulty in soothing.
 - 2. Challenging behaviors may be defined as behaviors that interfere with the development and maintenance of reciprocal, positive, and nurturing relationships with the parent or caregiver.
 - 3. It is critical that educators use the developmentally appropriate term "challenging behavior" to describe a behavior a preschool child exhibits rather than to describe it as "bullying." Bullying is a specific type of aggression that:

Slide 5

What is Challenging Behavior?

Any behavior that:

- Interferes with the child's development and success at play.
- Is harmful to the child or others.
- Puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure (Klass, Guskin, and Thomas, 1995; Ritchie and Pohl, 1995.)



Kaiser, B., & Rasminsky, J. S. (2007). Challenging behavior in young children, understanding, preventing, and responding effectively. Pearsc Education. Inc.

Why does challenging behavior occur?

Children often use challenging behavior when they lack more appropriate behaviors or skills to accomplish the same goal or to communicate the message.



Slide 7

Basic Assumptions

- Challenging behavior usually has a message – "I'm bored, I'm sad, you hurt my feelings, I need some attention."
- Behavior that persists over time suggests that it is allowing the child to accomplish their goal (explicit or implicit).



Slide 8

Two Types of Risk Factors

- Biological
- Environmental



- Intends to harm.
- Is repetitive.
- Thrives on a power differential; the more powerful (physically, socially, financially) attacking the less powerful. (Johannes and Hardman, 2007).

IV. Why Does Challenging Behavior Occur?

- A. Show **Slide 6**. Make the point that children often use challenging behavior when they lack more appropriate behaviors or skills to accomplish the same goal or to communicate the message. This means our focus must be on "teaching children new skills" rather then "trying to get them to stop using challenging behaviors." We need to teach children what to do, rather than what not to do.
- B. Show **Slide 7**. Emphasize that challenging behavior often occurs when children don't have the appropriate language or social skills to achieve the same purpose. It is important to point out that children with challenging behavior most often do not have disabilities.
 - 1. Talk about other variable that might contribute to children's challenging behavior such as lack of sleep, hunger, stress in the home, temperament, genetic factors, different contextual expectations (e.g. home versus early childhood center) and second language development. (We'll discuss this more during the next few slides).
 - 2. Explain that when children use challenging behaviors over time, those behaviors are working for them.
 - 3. Point out that there is a lot we can do to prevent challenging behavior, such as having a positive relationship with the child, having schedules and routines that support the child, having activities that are engaging, and teaching a child the skills he/she needs to be successful.
- C. Show **Slide 8**. Children with challenging behavior have real needs that must be met before they can begin to succeed.

Understanding why a child behaves in a particular way makes it much easier to meet those needs and to manage behavior effectively. There are two types of risk factors that contribute to children's challenging behavior – biological and environmental. Biological risk factors are defined by Kaiser and Rasminsky (2007) as anything that impinges on a child starting from conception to birth; anything that influences him/her after birth is considered an environmental risk factor, whether it acts on him/her directly (such as physical punishment) or indirectly (such as poverty).

Biological Risk Factors

- Genes
- Temperamen
- ADD/ADHD
- · Complications of pregnancy and birth
- Substance abuse during pregnancy
- Malnutrition
- Brain based language and cognitive disorders
- Gender



aiser, B., & Rasminsky, J. S. (2007). Challenging behavior in young children, inderstanding, preventing, and responding effectively. Pearson Education, Inc.

Slide 10

Environmental Risk Factors

- · Family factors and parenting styles
- Poverty
- · Exposure to violence (including media)
- Turbulent times (terrorist attacks, hurricanes, earthquakes, etc.)

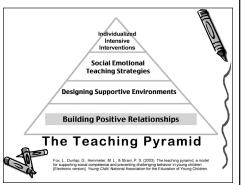


Kaiser, B., & Rasminsky, J. S. (2007). Challenging behavior in young children, understanding, preventing, and responding effectively. Pearson Education, Inc.

1. Biological Risk Factors. Show Slide 9.

- a. Aggressive behavior is very complex, and it is likely that many genes and traits are associated with its development, including impulsivity, novelty seeking, difficult temperament, lack of empathy, low IQ, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
- b. Traits of temperament are neither good nor bad in themselves; what matters is how the environment responds to them. Families and teachers who understand and accommodate temperamental traits will manage more successfully, gradually extending the child's capacity to cope.
- c. Women who experience high stress in early or mid-pregnancy are more likely to have pregnancy complications, early deliveries, and low-birthweight babies. As toddlers, these children are prone to language and intellectual difficulties; later they may develop symptoms of ADHD, anxiety, aggression and other behavioral and emotional problems.
- d. Substance abuse during pregnancy leads to children born with developmental delays and difficulties with learning, memory, attention, planning, problem-solving, impulsiveness, hyperactivity, problems regulating emotions, as well as perception and sensory integration.
- e. Babies who are malnourished in utero are irritable and unresponsive, and their high-pitched cry makes them difficult to care for. They also have trouble handling stress and focusing their attention.
- f. Children need language to convert the reassurances and instructions they get from adults into tools for self-control. If they don't really understand the words or principles involved, they may try out many varieties of misbehavior, eliciting punishment instead of positive responses from their parents and teachers.
- g. Boys are at greater risk for aggressive behavior than girls; however, girls score higher on indirect aggression than boys.
- 2. Environmental Risk Factors. Show Slide 10.
 - a. Inappropriate parenting practices continue to increase the risk of challenging behaviors as children grow older. When parents aren't involved with their children, don't respond warmly to them,

- and use harsh, inconsistent discipline, the children may react with defiant, aggressive, impulsive behaviors.
- b. Poverty has an enormous impact on children's lives and puts them at risk for challenging behavior even before they are born.
- c. Children who encounter violence at close range find that it has a deep and powerful effect, even when they aren't its direct victims. It affects their ability to learn, to establish relationships with others, and to cope with stress. Even verbal conflict upsets children, and when it's combined with physical conflict it contributes to both emotional problems and challenging behavior.
- d. Catastrophic events such as terrorist attacks and natural disasters create a sense of helplessness and make everyone feel frightened. Children are particularly vulnerable because they depend on the adults around them to make them feel safe. Their ability to recover is intimately connected to the ability of their families and teachers to comfort and reassure them.



V. Using the Teaching Pyramid to Prevent Challenging Behavior (Slide 11)

- A. The Teaching Pyramid (Fox, Dunlap, Hemmeter, and Strain, 2003) is a model for supporting social competence and preventing challenging behavior in young children. Increasing evidence suggests that an effective approach to addressing problem behavior is the adoption of a model that focuses on promoting social-emotional development, providing support for children's appropriate behavior and preventing challenging behavior.
- B. This pyramid framework includes four levels of practice to address the needs of all children, including children with persistent challenging behavior. The focus is on promotion and prevention (the bottom three levels of the pyramid) and moving to more intensive individualized interventions only when the bottom of the pyramid is in place and children continue to engage in challenging behavior.

VI. Building Positive Relationships

A. Before beginning this section, ask participants to identify the skills (MF2843, "Inventory of Practices for Promoting Social Emotional Competence – Building Positive Relationships," pp. 2-3) and indicators that may or may not be present in their early childhood

Building Relationships

- Is the foundation of an effective early childhood program.
- Occurs between teachers and children as well as with families and other professionals.



Slide 13

Building Relationships

- · Helps each child feel accepted.
- Assists children in learning to communicate and get along with others (pro-social skills).
- Encourages feelings of empathy and mutual respect among children and adults.
- Creates a supportive environment in which children can learn and practice appropriate and acceptable behaviors as individuals and as a group.



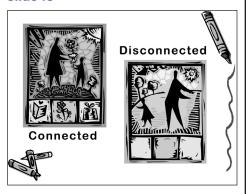
Slide 14

Why invest time?

- As adults build positive relationships with children, their potential influence in children's behavior grows significantly.
- Children develop positive self-concept, confidence, and a sense of safety that help reduce challenging behavior.



Slide 15



setting. At the end of the session they will have the opportunity to identify what strategies they will use to help them implement the new practices (Action Plan).

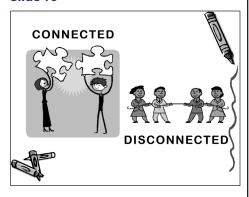
- B. Show **Slides 12 and 13**. The relationships we build with children, families, and colleagues are at the foundation of everything we do with children. We know about the importance of relationships in terms of children's development and success in school. It is important to build these relationships with all children as a context for supporting their social emotional development and preventing challenging behavior. It will be easier to address challenging behavior if we already have a positive relationship with the child.
- C. Show **Slide 14**. There are two reasons why early childhood educators need to invest time in getting to know children. First, as adults build positive relationships with children, their potential influence on children's behavior grows significantly. Children notice responsive, caring adults. Children pay particular attention to what a teacher says and does, and they seek out ways to ensure even more positive attention from the teacher.

Second, in the context of supportive relationships, children develop positive self-concept, confidence and a sense of safety that help reduce the occurrence of challenging behavior.

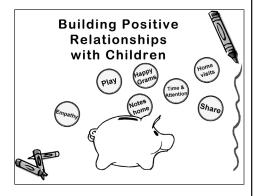
- D. Introduce the Connected/Disconnected Activity. Show **Slide 15**.
 - 1. Use the graphic for Connected/Disconnected. Show the slide and write responses on chart paper. Ask the group to think about when teachers are disconnected from children. What would they see in the classroom? What would it look like? Write the ideas on chart paper. Focus on the graphic for Connected.

What does it look like when teachers have good connections with children? What do you see? What is happening? Write the ideas on chart paper. Make the point that this is what we are seeking to put in place to build relationships with children.

2. We should also examine the relationships between adults (including family members) on the team (**Slide 16**). What does it look like if adults are disconnected in a classroom or in a program? Write ideas on chart paper. What about when adults work together well and are really connected. How can you tell?



Slide 17



Slide 18

Activity: Building Relationships How do you build positive relationships with - Children?

- Families?
- Colleagues?
- Brainstorm a list of things you could do to build or strengthen relationships with children, families, or other colleagues
- Share with the large group
- Identify 2-3 things you are going to do to build stronger relationships with children, families, and colleagues.

Slide 19

Building Positive Relationships with Children

- · Adults gain a thorough understanding of child's preferences, interests, background and culture.
- Adults must also share information about themselves, i.e., information should be reciprocal.

- 3. Then move into what we should do to build these relationships (**Slide 17**). How do we build relationships with children? Present the metaphor, adapted from the work of Carolyn Webster-Stratton, of a "piggy bank" to illustrate "making deposits into children's emotional banks" as a way of building positive relationships (Webster-Stratton, 1999).
- E. Group Activity: Strategies for Building Relationships with Children, Families, and Colleagues (Slide 18)
 - 1. Have participants work with people at their table or select a partner, depending on the size of the group. Give each group markers and chart paper.
 - 2. Assign each group one of the following: (a) children, (b) families, or (c) colleagues.
 - 3. The small groups should brainstorm a list of things they can do to build relationships with children, families, or other colleagues.
 - 4. Give participants about 10 minutes to complete this task.
 - 5. Teams should report back to the large group with examples. Other participants can be encouraged to add to the list.
 - 6. After the groups have reported back, ask them to take five more minutes in their small group to answer the following question: "What specific strategies might you use to build a relationship with that one child, family, or colleague who is most challenging to you or who most pushes your buttons?"
 - 7. Have teams report back.
 - 8. Included below are some examples of the types of things that you might highlight or use to prompt participants to think more broadly about how to build relationships with children (Slides 19 and 20 have some ideas for relationship building with children):
 - Pay attention to each individual child.
 - Joke and laugh with children.
 - Know what interests each child and talk to the child about that interest.
 - Respect each child's approach to situations and people.
 - Talk to the child seriously when the topic is serious or important to the child.

Ideas for Making "Deposits"

- Greet every child at the door by name.
- · Post children's work around the room
- Have a "star" of the week who brings in special things from home and gets to share them during circle time.
- Call a child's parent in front of them to say what a great day she is having or send home positive notes.
- Call a child after a difficult day and say, "I'm sorry we had a tough day today. I know tomorrow is going to be better!"
- Give hugs, high fives and thumbs up accomplishing tasks

Slide 21

Building Relationships with Families

- · Keep lines of communication open
- · Support and encourage parental involvement.
- Learn from family members about their children, home and family life.
- Share resources with parents.
- Share positive things.
- Conduct meetings with parents in an environment and time convenient for them.

Slide 22

Building Relationships with Colleagues

- Encourage teamwork
- · Provide support
- Build trust
- · Be honest and kind
- Respect co-workers' talents and abilities

 Have a sense of humor
- Acknowledge accomplishments
- Understand and respect each other's backgrounds
- Develop a shared vision, goal and mission

 - · Build cooperation

- Ask children to tell you what makes them happy and sad, and respect their feelings.
- Show children that you are happy they are there.
- Learn and remember personal information about children (e.g., best friend's name, pet's name, type of pets, sibling, activities they do outside of school), and use this information in your conversations with them.
- Give children genuine choices, and assist them in following through with their choices.
- Show respect for children's cultural, linguistic, and religious beliefs.
- Listen to children when they speak to you, and respond appropriately to their questions.
- Spend time with children doing what they love to do.
- Smile at children.
- Respond to children consistently.
- 9. **Slide 21** lists some ideas for building relationships with families:
 - Keep lines of communication open between program and families (e.g., notes, orientation, or phone calls).
 - Support and encourage parental involvement in activities.
 - Learn from family members about their children, and home and family life.
 - Share resources with parents about how to support the child's social emotional development.
 - Share positive things the child did at the program (e.g., Happy-grams).
 - Conduct meetings with parents in an environment and time convenient for them.
 - Assure parents about confidentiality and privacy rights.
 - Implement activities that bring families together.
 - Show respect to parents by acknowledging the good things that they are doing with their child.
 - Ask parents to share their unique resources with your program (e.g., talents, access to other resources).
- 10. Here are some ideas for building relationships with colleagues (Slide 22):
 - Encourage teamwork.
 - Provide support.
 - Build trust among colleagues.
 - Be honest and kind to one another.
 - Respect co-workers' talents and abilities.

- Acknowledge accomplishments.
- Understand and respect each other's backgrounds.
- Develop a shared vision, goals, and mission.
- Have a sense of humor.
- Build cooperation.

VIII. Pulling It All Together: Summary and Action Plan

A. Summary (Slide 23)

- 1. Remember that children often use challenging behavior when they lack more appropriate behaviors or skills to accomplish the same goal or to communicate the message.
- 2. The first and most important thing that we can do is build positive relationships with every child and family (as well as with the other professionals who work with the child and his/her family).
- 3. Focus on prevention and teaching appropriate skills. This means that our focus must be on "teaching children new skills" rather then "trying to get them to stop using challenging behaviors." We need to teach children what to do, rather then what not to do.
- B. Action Planning. (**Slide 24**) Have participants complete their Action Plan Form (MF2843, *Inventory of Practices*, pp. 2-3), filling in the grid with ideas of what they are going to do when they get back to their classrooms to improve their relationships with all children or a particular child, family or colleague, or things that they will do to help others improve their relationships with the children, family or colleagues.
 - 1. Encourage participants to consider resources or supports they might need to make these changes.
 - 2. If time allows, have one or two people share with the group what changes they are going to make.
- C. Answer any final questions.
 - 1. Thank participants for their input and attention.
 - 2. Have participants complete the evaluation (copy from page 16) and return it to you.

Slide 23

Summary

- Remember that children often use challenging behavior when they lack more appropriate behaviors or skills to accomplish the same goal or to communicate a message.
- The first and most important thing that we can do is build positive relationships with every child and family (as well as with the other professionals who work with the child and his/her family).
- Focus on prevention and teaching appropriate skills. This
 means that our focus must be on "teaching children new
 skills" rather then "trying to get them to stop using
 challenging behaviors."



Slide 24

Action Planning

- Fill in the grid with ideas of what you are going to do to improve your relationships with all children or a particular child, family or colleague.
- Consider the resources or supports you might need to make these changes.



References

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Resources:

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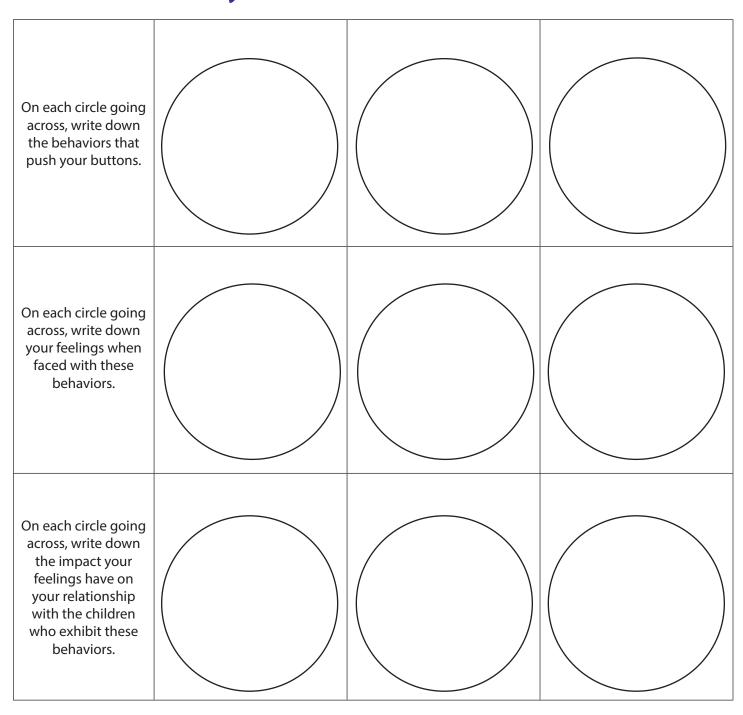
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Understanding Challenging Behavior and Building Positive Relationships

Hot Button Activity



Source: The Center for Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Rebecca McFarland Family and Consumer Sciences Agent Franklin County K-State Research and Extension August 2008

Understanding Challenging Behavior and Building Positive Relationships

Reframing Activity

REFRAMED STATEMENT
He must really miss his family.
She might be slow to warm up in new settings or in the presence of other children and adults.
He may not understand my expectations about staying with the group.
He is very active.

Source: The Center for Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Rebecca McFarland Family and Consumer Sciences Agent K-State Research and Extension – Franklin County

This certifies that	has successfully
completed two clock hours	of KDHE approved early childhood
learning activities.	
Course ID# 2008-000141-001	
Title of Learning Activity: Understanding C	Challenging Behaviors and Building Positive Relationships
Kansas/ Missouri Core Competency: Inter	actions with Children, Providing Individual Guidance
Skill Level: 3	
Date	Instructor Name, Title and Agency
	Location of Activity

Understanding Challenging Behavior and Building Positive Relationships

Evaluation Form

Directions: Please take a moment to provide feedback on the training you received. Check the box that corresponds to your opinion for each statement or check N/A if not applicable. Please add any additional comments that you may have at the bottom of the page. When the survey is completed, leave it with your trainer. Thank you for your participation.

Location: _______ Date: ______

Program Affiliation (check one): ______ Other ______

Position (check one): ______ Other ______

Position (check one): ______ Teacher Assistant _____ Other ______

Please put an "X" in the box that best describes your opinion as a result of attending this training	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
I have learned more strategies to promote children's social emotional development.					
I have increased my comfort and confidence in working with children with challenging behaviors.					
I can describe the relationship between a number of environmental variables and children's challenging behavior.					
I can identify strategies that can be used to build positive relationships with children.					
I understand how to use positive feedback and encouragement effectively to support children's positive social behaviors.					

Please respond to the following questions regarding this training:

Suggestions for improvement

Other comments and reactions I wish to offer

The best features of this training session were

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MF2841 October 2008