

Scavenger hunters discovered plenty of treasures at The Children's Learning Center (TCLC) at Cheshire Medical Center/Dartmouth Health in Keene during a recent family event. These treasures came in the form of positive social emotional supports designed and implemented by the creative and thoughtful staff at the center, based on their Pyramid Model work.

TCLC has been working with a Pyramid Model program coach for the past 4 years to implement this framework for social emotional competence in infants and young children. The program was initially funded through the NH Department of Education *iSocial* grant, which ended in June 2022. Gap funding from Impact Monadnock (Monadnock United Way) kept the initiative going until the program was awarded a Step on the Granite Steps for Quality Pyramid Model Pathway. Program coaching and ongoing support for program-wide implementation is now funded through the PTAN contract with the NH DHHS Bureau of Child Development and Head Start Collaboration.

Deb Hunter, TCLC Director, wanted to showcase the work of their center and inform families of the wonderful things that are done everyday to promote social development and prevent challenging behavior in the infant, toddler, preschool and school-aged classrooms. This is especially important as families haven't been allowed in the classrooms due to COVID19 restrictions.

The Impact Monadnock Community Pyramid Model Leadership Team members were treated to a preview of the scavenger hunt. Participants were given a clue sheet to guide them to search throughout the center for evidence of the "Big 5" (positive reinforcement, visual schedules, routines within routines (for example: breaking skills down into small steps), teaching of behavior expectations and teaching peer social skills).

Dottie Bauer, who consults with Impact Monadnock and is a retired Keene State College professor and Pyramid Model coach, commented, "It was clear in each TCLC classroom that the teachers had carefully connected the Big 5 concepts to the developmental level of their children. These concepts are visible to families as well as to the children in the group. The Big 5 came to life in developmentally appropriate ways as we moved through the rooms. Bravo!"

Last minute health and safety restrictions forced the event to be outside on the playground, but the thrill of seeing the impact of the strategies was not lost. The staff captured photos of the strategies and then displayed them outside so families could still "see" the strategies being used in the classrooms.

Family-friendly handouts were available to encourage carry-over of the learning at home. One parent commented on their feedback form that "the handouts were comprehensive and we have started using strategies at home." Another

family member shared that they appreciated the opportunity to “talk to the teachers and learn how kids are learning and playing and how they’re protected and encouraged in a positive manner.”

The TCLC staff has embraced these positive teaching practices and have engaged in systems development to ensure success and sustainability of the model over time. Annie Dintino-Cucci, the current program coach for TCLC, commented, "The staff at TCLC is dedicated to Pyramid Model implementation and improving the social and emotional outcomes of ALL children through thoughtful and intentional teaching and responsive relationships with families."

At the base of the Pyramid Model framework is an “effective workforce.” It is easy to see that the teachers are the real treasure behind the great things happening at the TCLC and other Pyramid Model sites in the Monadnock Region. Deb Hunter, TCLC Director noted, “Implementing the Pyramid Model at TCLC has been instrumental in keeping our teachers engaged in evidence-based practices that support strong social emotional connections between children, staff and families. Pyramid Model is the best retention and recruitment tool I have.”

For more information about TCLC's Pyramid Model implementation work, contact Deb Hunter, M.Ed, Director, dhunter@cheshire-med.com

Visit <https://www.muw.org/pyramid-model> to learn more about Monadnock United Way's Pyramid Model efforts.

For more information about the Pyramid Model visit: The National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI) at <https://challengingbehavior.org/> or the Pyramid Model Consortium at <https://www.pyramidmodel.org/>.



Participants used a clue sheet to find strategies that promote social and emotional development throughout the hallways and classrooms.



Children are less likely to engage in challenging behavior when they can predict what comes next. This is an example of a picture schedule that is displayed, taught and used throughout the daily routine.



TCLC adopted program-wide expectations: STAR - We are Safe, We work Together, We are All included and We Respect each other. These expectations apply to not only the children, but also the staff. The logo was selected through a contest held at the center.



Handouts on related topics were available for families to carry over the strategies at home.



By intentionally teaching social skills, children learn to use strategies to successfully interact with peers.