



Barrington Village School Begins Pyramid Model Coaching

Donna Massucci knows a thing or two about challenging behaviors.

She has gone to countless trainings on the subject since she founded [Barrington Village School](#) in 2001. Her family and child enrichment program has been in operation for over 17 years. "We have some spirited children," she said affectionately.

Donna decided to try something different when an opportunity came up to be part of a [Pyramid Model](#) implementation cohort and have her center coached on [program-wide implementation](#).

"Julie and Deborah gave us a recipe [Julie Sackett and Deborah Stokel, [NH Master Cadre members](#) who are working with BVS as Program coaches]. They taught us steps and gave us a frame to work with." During their coaching meetings, "We started to understand that we needed to look at what was happening **before** the behavior happened. The issue happens before the moment."

One example occurred recently when a new child started attending their center. This child was coming to their program part day. "He was crying and we didn't know why he would cry at this time [afternoon]." Donna shared that they tried to divert his attention but nothing worked. "He had been with us for three weeks and we were trying to figure it out. The fourth week we were on Zoom with Julie and Deborah and they said, 'Let's try this.'" It was then the team realized that quite a few **morning transitions** were contributing to his unease. With the help of Julie and Deborah, they made a **visual schedule** showing each child's pick up time. "**When a child was getting picked up, we would show him the child's photo and let him know that soon it would be his turn.**"

Recently, a classmate was leaving for the day and the child went to the timeline, "**grabbed his own photo and said 'not now, not now.'**"

When she heard that BVS experienced this success, Julie Sackett hoped it was something that could help motivate the team to keep going [with their implementation of the Pyramid Model]. "It's [Program coaching] about **listening** to the needs of the program and finding **individual strategies** for them to support children and families." Deborah Stokel agreed, "**Every program is different.** We meet them [BVS] on their terms. The Pyramid framework [wants] us to coach practitioners to understand that all behavior was a form of communication and teachers should look for the underlying purpose."

Since they began coaching with BVS, Julie and Deborah have been introducing the idea of [systems building](#) to the staff. Both of the Program coaches understood that success lies with **sustainability**. "Having ideas [to reduce challenging behavior] can be beneficial for a short time, but they will fall away," said Deborah. Julie added, "We want to explain systems-building in a relatable way, so it feels doable and teams feel empowered to develop and implement the systems needed for sustainability. Systems-building involves thinking through what we need to

do to reach the goal, and making decisions that ensure it gets done consistently as part of our process going forward. They already have systems in place for many things, such as for enrollment, payroll, daily cleaning, or getting supplies. It starts with establishing a goal or vision, and a compelling "why", which is our reason or purpose, that will motivate us to keep working through the challenges that will inevitably come." Julie and Deborah are supporting BVS as they build a foundation using the Pyramid Model framework. "We find opportunities to discuss the content, for example classroom [expectations] and the daily schedule and the strategies by which teachers could make sure that there is no confusion on the part of the child as to what is expected in that regard," explains Deborah. "Also, [building systems] **doesn't have to be complex.**" Ultimately, "We are trying to get the children the best trajectory with our care," stated Julie.

Donna also spoke about the families getting on board with what the program is learning, "Our parents help too! One of our father's helped out with this child one day at pick up. He said 'I'm picking up [child's name]. Soon it will be your turn.'"

"We need this," Donna said emphatically, "Everyone needs this. I hope my staff stays with me forever but if they don't, they can take what they've learned to another center. It's like spreading seeds."

For more information about BVS [click here](#).

For more information about the NH Pyramid Model's State Leadership Team, [click here](#).