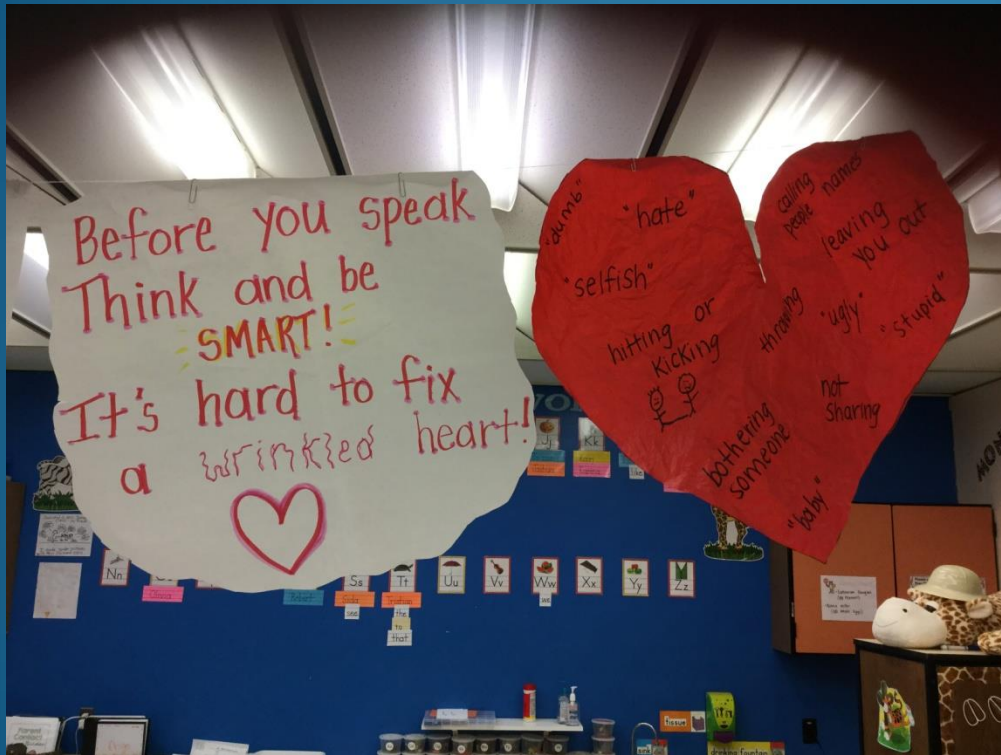


Behavioral Health at Worcester County Public Schools



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Children haven't changed; childhood has. Yes or No?



Then



Now

Did You Know....

22% of instruction time in elementary schools is spent redirecting students and dealing with behavior issues.

79% of general education teachers feel “overwhelmed” by behavior issues that distract from instruction time.

Early Childhood Mental Health

“The science of child development shows that the foundation for sound mental health is built early in life, as early experiences—which include children’s relationships with parents, caregivers, relatives, teachers, and peers—shape the architecture of the developing brain. Disruptions in this developmental process can impair a child’s capacities for learning and relating to others, with lifelong implications. For society, many costly problems, ranging from the failure to complete high school to incarceration to homelessness, could be dramatically reduced if attention were paid to improving children’s environments of relationships and experiences early in life.”

Center on the Developing Child (2013). *Early Childhood Mental Health* (InBrief).

What is Resilience?

- The ability to bounce back in the face of adversity.
- The ability to function well even in difficult or trying circumstances.
- Hanging tough when times are tough.

Resilient children are described as:

- Self-starters
- Leaders
- Creative
- Problem Solvers
- Comfort Seekers
- Hopeful
- Optimistic
- Adventurous



PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Things that guard us against unsafe or unhealthy influences or circumstances.
- Things that help us overcome risk factors.

RISK FACTORS

- Things that are unsafe or harmful.
- Hazards that can increase negative developmental outcome in an individual or group.

Categories:
Environment
Family
Within-Child

Why is RESILIENCE important?



Protective Factors

As Protective
Factors go up,
Behavior concerns
go down!

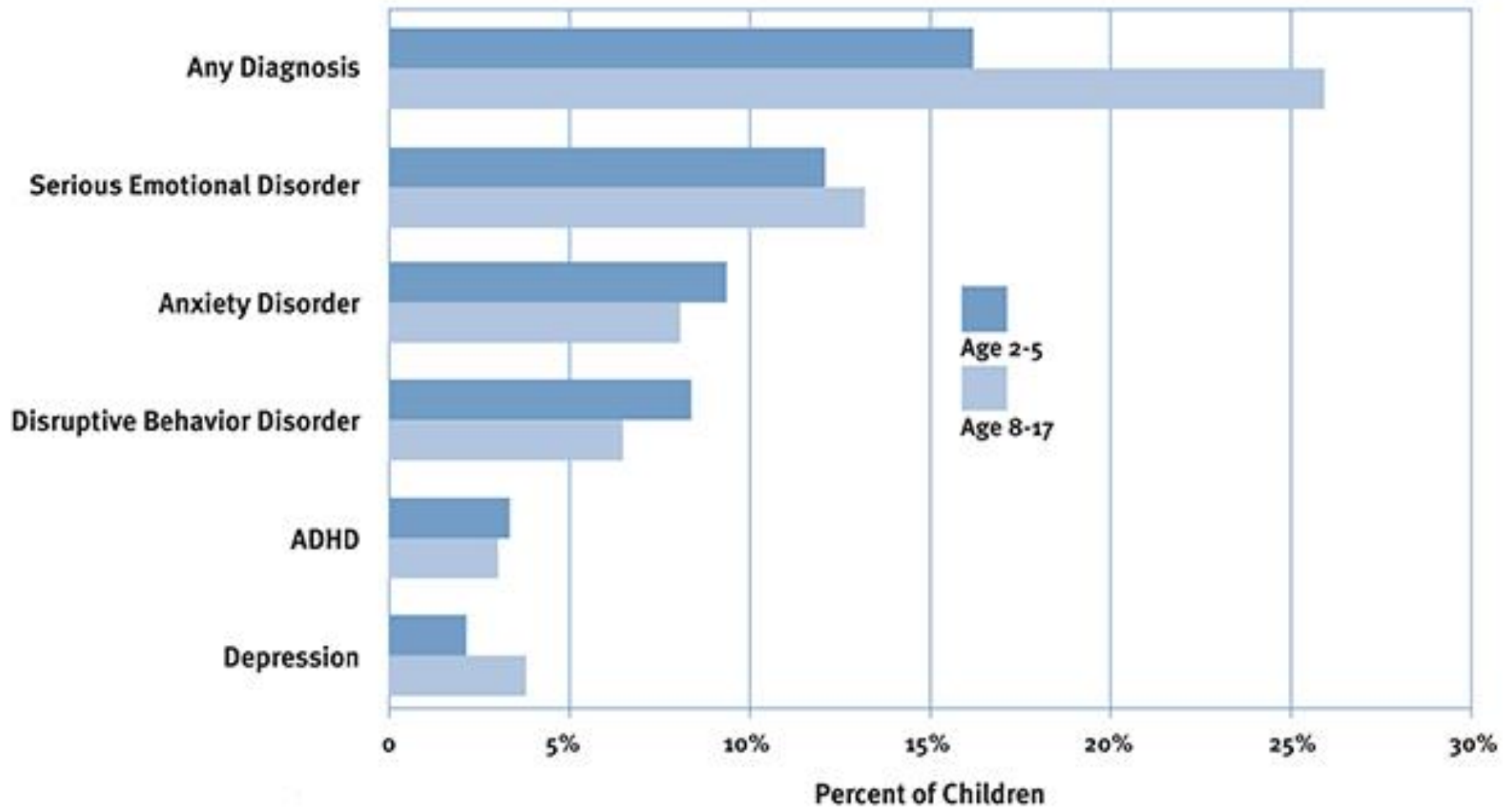


Behavior
Concerns

Why is Early Childhood Mental Health Important?

- Young children's mental health has significant implications for functioning across home, school, and community settings.
- Mental health challenges are surprisingly common among young children under the age of 6.
 - Studies estimate that between 4 and 10% of all young children have clinically significant emotional and behavioral challenges (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 2005).
 - The expulsion rate among children in prekindergarten programs is more than three times the rate for K-12 students (Gilliam, 2005).
- The presence of social, emotional, and behavioral challenges, such as attention problems or aggression, compromise young children's chances for school success.
- Early onset of behavior problems without effective intervention is related to the need for special education services, delinquency, and early school drop-out.

Mental Health Problems Can Occur Across Childhood

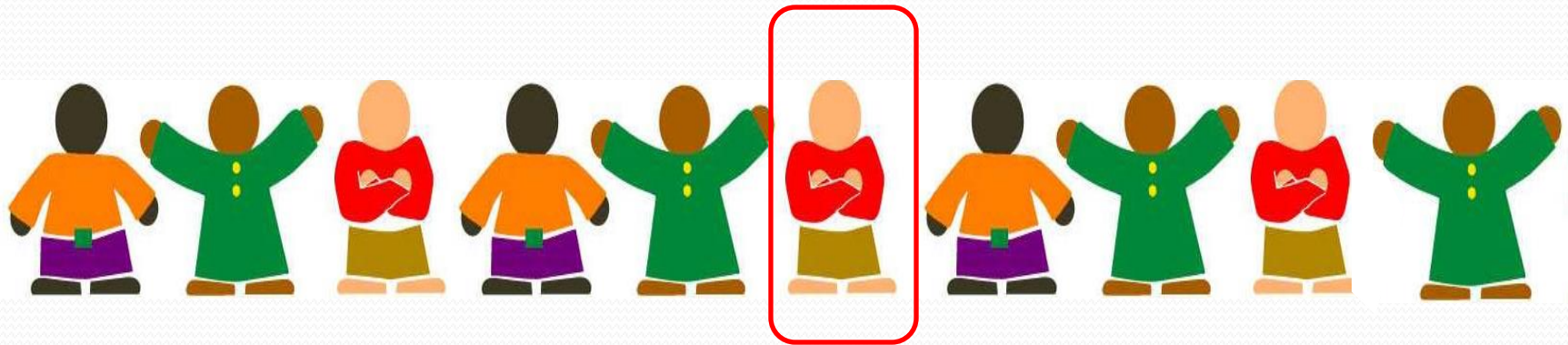


Elementary students receiving school based mental health

- Currently, over 135 WCPS elementary students receive school based mental health services.
- Many more utilize office based mental health services.



*1 in 10 young children
show challenging behavior.*



**What is challenging
behavior?**

Challenging behavior...

- Interferes with children's learning, development, and successful play.
- Is harmful to the child, other children, and adults.
- Puts a child at high risk for later social problems and school failures.

Where Does Behavior Come From?

- Nature vs. Nurture
 - *Biology + Environment*
- Stress (good things can be stressful, too.)
- Developmental Delays
 - Language Delay: Expressing their feelings through behavior because they *do not have the language* to express themselves verbally.
- Other?

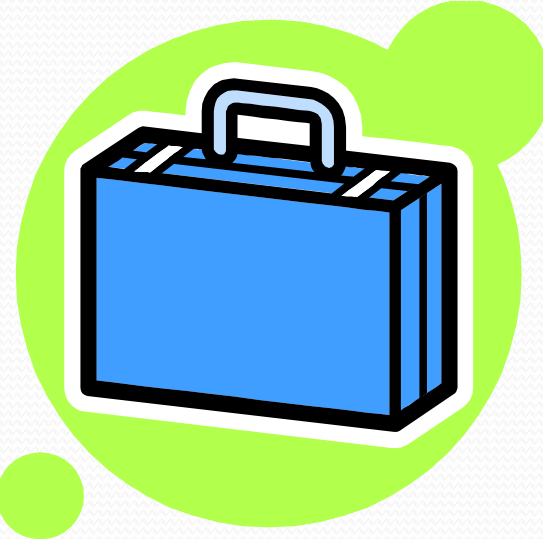


What's in the Suitcase?



Environment * Family * Within-Child

Inside Our Suitcases



Everyone's suitcase is packed differently. Packing begins at birth and continues throughout our lives. We carry the same suitcase throughout life, though some things may change.

Early childhood packing is essential. We learn at a very young age how to survive and get our needs met.

Why do behaviors occur?

- To avoid or escape from a situation or activity.
- To obtain an object or attention.
- To change level of stimulation.

Addressing Challenging Behaviors

First, we need to identify what the challenging behavior is.

Looking at things from the child's perspective is a good way to identify why the child is misbehaving.

“If you hope to tame it, you have to name it!”

--Julie Culhane, Director of Early Childhood Programs,
Hampshire Regional school District

Why do kids misbehave?

What's the **FUNCTION** of the behavior?

Behavior is causal.
It happens for a reason.
If you can find out what
that reason is, you can
help the child find more
appropriate ways (skills)
to meet his/her needs
and wants.



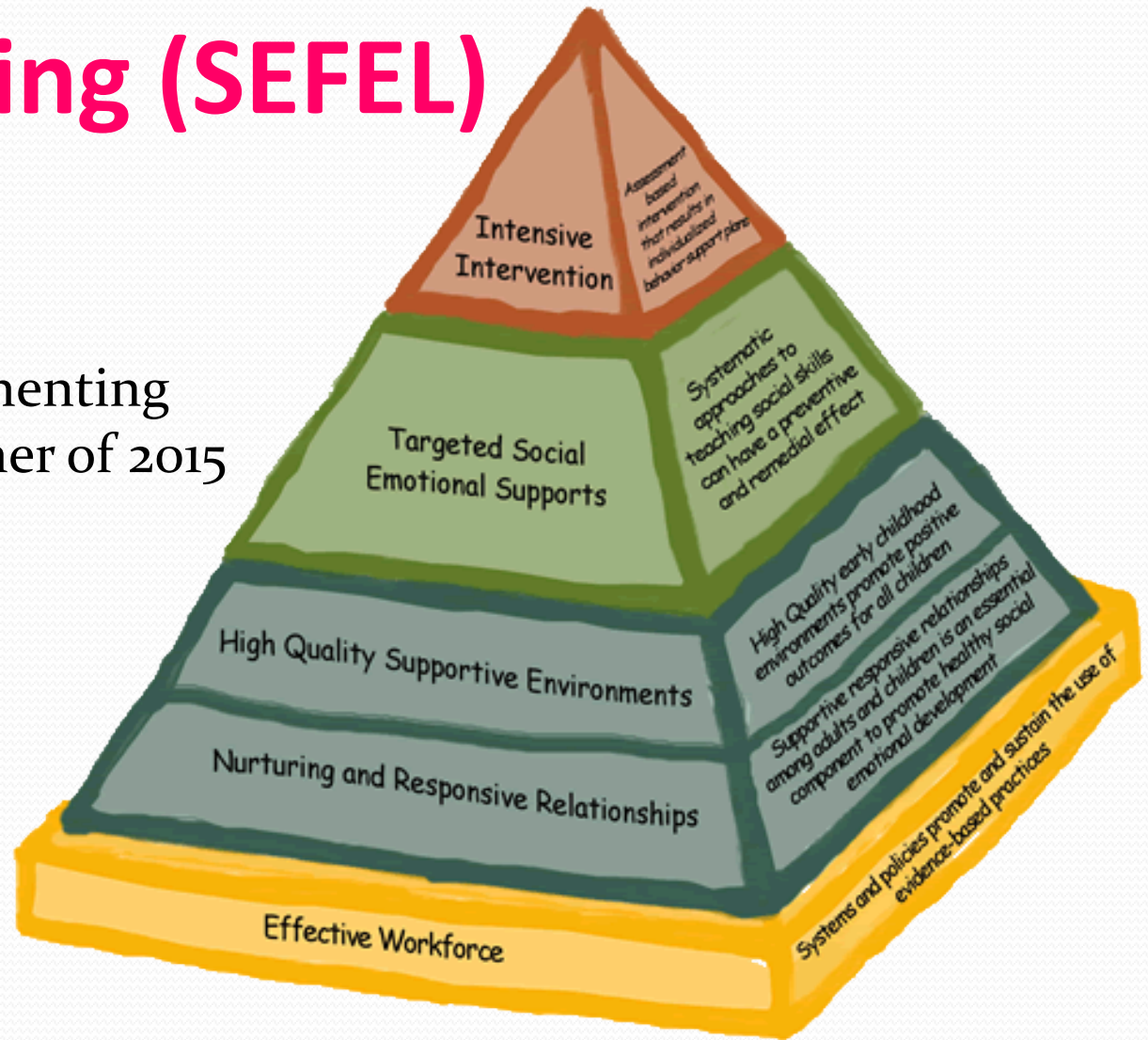
The Importance of Prevention

- “Prevention is the best form of intervention. It is time and cost efficient and appears to be a major avenue by which to eliminate, not merely reduce, the incidence of challenging behavior.”
- Without prevention or intervention strategies, the behaviors will likely get worse over time.

-Division of Early Childhood, Council for Exceptional Children

Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (SEFEL)

WCPS started implementing SEFEL in the summer of 2015

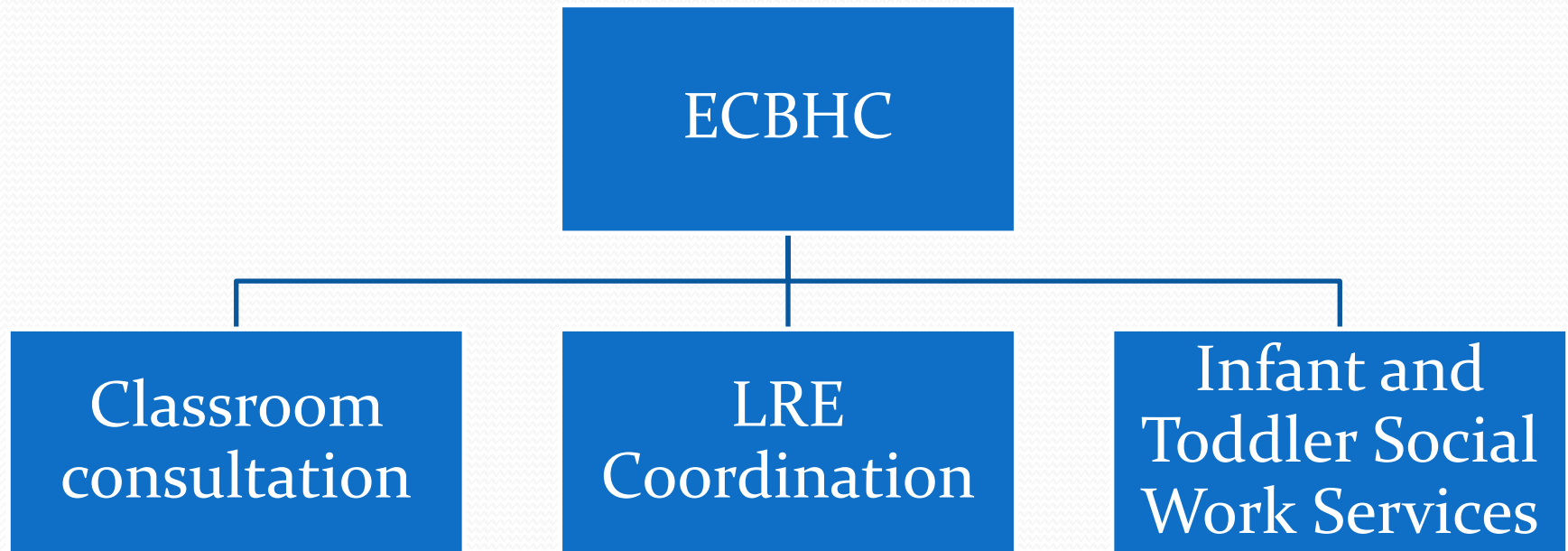


Behavior is likely to improve with changes in:

- **Physical layout:**
 - Room Set Up
 - Environment Checklist
- **Rules:**
 - Create them with the class.
 - Keep it simple and basic.
 - Post rules where they can all see.
 - Make sure they know the consequences.
- **Transition Strategies:** Warnings, audio or visual signals. Let them know what happens next. Picture schedule.
- **Supportive Interactions between teachers and children**



The role of the Early Childhood Behavioral Health Coach



Classroom Consultation

- Weekly at each elementary school
- Early Intervention Students, Pre-K-1st grade
- Observations and Implementation of SEFEL and social-emotional strategies
- Make and obtain appropriate materials
- Assist in grant writing for additional materials
- Home visits and meetings with families to facilitate communication between school and home and assist in parenting support and community resource allocation
- Social skills groups
- Attending community appointments and IEP meetings as needed

LRE Coordination

- Act as liaison between school and child care partner or Head Start
- Assist with coordination on Preschool Inclusive Classrooms.
- Home visiting services, resource allocation and referrals

Infant and Toddler Social Work Services

- Assist Infant and Toddler Team when a client is identified as having behavior concerns
- Observation and assessments
- Home visits and coaching which includes parenting support, resources and referrals and assistance in implementing social-emotional strategies.

Feedback from Educators

“I applaud the decision to target early childhood students for this service. I firmly believe that addressing these young children’s needs sooner rather than later and gaining their families’ trust is a tremendous benefit for everyone. As I said above, I would suggest that each school have its own coach.”

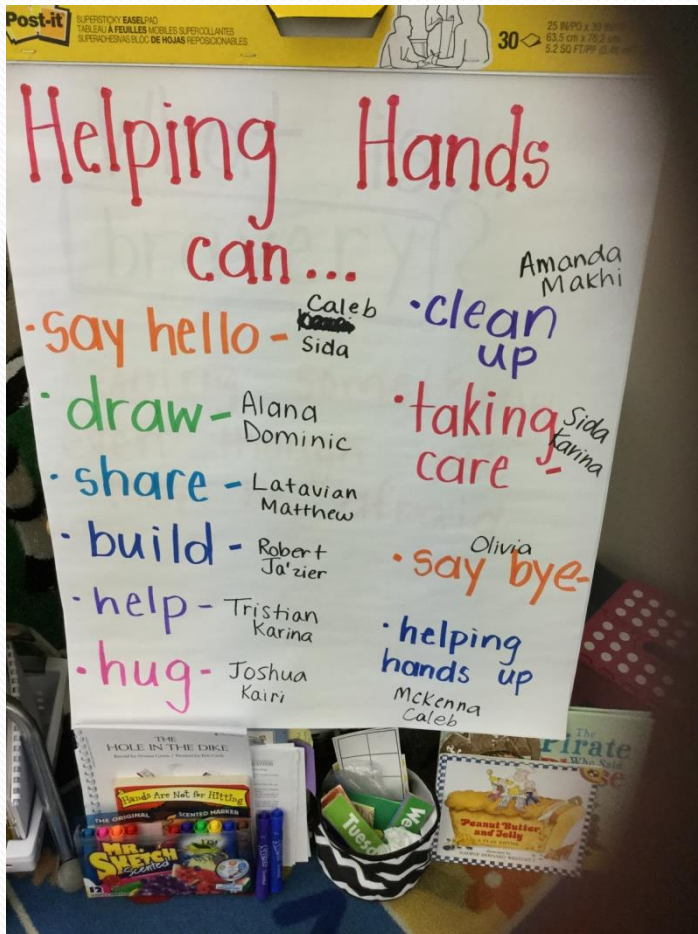
“I have been introduced to so many new resources and strategies this year and I look forward to utilizing them in my future classrooms.”

Feedback

“I noticed my students benefited from the support Anna gave to their parents in the home. She also gave me helpful tips and sensory objects to use with my students with Autism-this increased their attention span in the classroom.”

“She has also been the best resource for contacting and communicating with hard-to-reach parents.”

Helping Hands Can...



“If a child doesn’t know how to read, we *teach*.

If a child doesn’t know how to swim, we *teach*.

If a child doesn’t know how to multiply, we *teach*.

If a child doesn’t know how to drive, we *teach*.

If a child doesn’t know how to behave, we..... *teach*? *punish*?

Why can’t we finish the last sentence as automatically as we do the others?”

Let's Help
Pack Those
Suitcases!

