



Teaching All God's Children



Fall 2014

Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas

Volume 11 Issue 2

Six Components Of An Emotionally Safe School

**Reprinted with permission from Dr. Jane Bluestein. For more information on Dr. Bluestein go to <http://janebluestein.com>.*

The importance of a physically safe school environment is at the front of the minds of most school leaders. We take steps to control access to schools. We develop emergency response plans and establish rules to keep weapons and other dangerous objects out of the school environment. However, we may not be giving as much attention to creating a school environment that is emotionally safe for students. Author Jane Bluestein has outlined six general areas to which we need to give attention if we hope to create and maintain an environment that is emotionally safe for students:

The first component of an emotionally safe environment is the presence of a reward orientation within the structure of positivity. Bluestein describes this element as a school environment that is reward oriented, where rules and boundaries include an emphasis on positive consequences for cooperation and compliance. She also points to a focus on motivating students through access to positive outcomes rather than fear and punishment. Further, this element includes anticipating and preventing problems and consistent follow-through.

The second element of an emotionally safe school environment deals with respect, belonging, and dignity. Humiliation, ridicule, and sarcasm are not accepted. Student worth is not associated with behavior or achievement, but with respect, including attention to needs for dignity, purpose, acceptance, success, attention, and belonging. Student mistakes are treated as learning opportunities. Adults treat students using the same standards they expect from students.

The third aspect involves respecting student needs for power and control within reasonable limits. Students are taught and encouraged to practice self-

management with regard to materials and other resources. Students are allowed and encouraged to have input in decisions about their learning, but they are also held accountable for their behavior choices without shaming or blaming.

A fourth element of an emotionally safe environment concerns recognition and attention. In this dimension the impact and benefit of rules are focused on the needs of students rather than adults. The need for power, attention, and recognition is nurtured in constructive and proactive ways as a means to reduce the tendency to search for power and attention in negative ways.

The fifth area provides respect for learning styles and personal preferences. Student interests and motivation are taken into account for purposes of planning and instruction. Learning styles are identified and considered in selection of instructional strategies, including teaching to different modalities, such as kinesthetic and tactile learning experiences, as well as visual, verbal and auditory.

The sixth and final dimension is the need for student success. In this dimension, student ability and current functioning are taken into account before instruction begins and tasks are assigned. The goal is to build on what students know while providing opportunities for success, even if students are well behind in learning. This dimension also includes reinforcement of positive behavior and positions students for positive outcomes whenever possible.

Many, most, or even all of these elements may be in place in your school. If not, now is a good time to give attention and begin planning to ensure your school is an emotionally safe place for students.

Jesus, You invite all to come to You.
Touch our souls with compassion for others.
Touch our hearts with Your infinite love.
Touch our minds with your wisdom,
That our mouths may always proclaim
Your name.
Most Loving Heart of Jesus,
unite us in One Spirit
as we work for the common good of all children.
Help us to know that our efforts on their
behalf are done in Your name
for the glory of Your kingdom.

Amen

Transition Reminder

Elementary/Middle Grades

- Call parents of students with special needs to discuss student's adjustment to the new grade
- Meet with parents to adjust the plan if necessary

High School

- Talk with the resource teacher or counselor to discuss any concerns regarding students
- Review student files to obtain accommodation/modification information

Upcoming Training Opportunities

**This is not to be considered an endorsement of these in-services, merely a listing of upcoming in-service opportunities.*

Autism, Asperger, PDD-NOS, and other related disorders, World Conference and Expo

September 4-7, 2014

Marriot Country Club Plaza

Kansas City, MO

Registration fee: \$110

To register go to www.usautism.org/conferences/

KSDE 7th Annual MTSS Symposium

September 4-5, 2014

Hyatt Regency

Wichita, KS

For more information or to register, go to www.kansasmtss.org

Down Syndrome 101 for Educators

September 18, 2014 or January 15, 2014

Down Syndrome Guild

Mission, KS

8:30 - 11:30

FREE!

For more information go to www.kcdsg.org

Executive Function Junction: Where ADHD and LD Meet in KC!

October 3-5, 2014

Johnson County Community College-Regnier Center

Overland Park, KS

For more information go to www.adhdkc.org

Keeping Your Students with Down Syndrome Motivated and Engaged

October 9, 2014 or April 13, 2015

Down Syndrome Guild

Mission, KS

8:30 - 11:30

FREE!

For more information go to www.kcdsg.org

Kansas Association for the Gifted, Talented and Creative- Full STEAM Ahead: Inspiring the Future

October 5-7, 2014

Marriott Hotel

Overland Park, KS

For more information go to www.kgta.org

Practical Solutions for Modifying and Adapting Curriculum for Students

November 13, 2014 or March 26, 2015

Down Syndrome Guild

Mission, KS

8:30 - 11:30

FREE!

For more information go to www.kcdsg.org