
BUILDING THE SCHOOL FAMILY

Step One – The Survival State

Purpose: *“Connections on the outside create connections on the inside that wire the brain for willingness and impulse control.”—Becky Bailey*

Congratulations on starting on your Conscious Discipline journey with your staff! For the next several months, your School Family will practice the skill of composure and assertiveness with some connections through rituals. Tackling one item every month may curb some of the anxiety and facilitate buy-in with your staff. To further build this buy-in with families and staff, be sure to communicate the implementation of each step both in person, and through other forms of communication.

Please remember that everyone’s CD journey is different. Some may jump in with both feet ready to go, some may need more time to watch as other implement. Communicate with all school family members equally and respect the choices of those who choose to pass while encouraging them to participate next time.

The most important step in this process is you. You are the role model for your center and set the tone for how this implementation will progress. Your internal state dictates the internal state of your students/employees, and it greatly influences the internal state of those around you!

Step One focuses on the Survival State. Remember that children and adults cannot teach, learn, or exhibit positive behaviors if they don’t feel safe and connected. Step One focuses on creating a felt sense of safety. Once we feel safe, we are willing and able to form relationships with others. Once we feel safe and have formed relationships, we’re able to solve problems and move smoothly through the day.

Implementation Schedule

Introduce each new item in a staff meeting the month prior; define and explain how they each strengthen the School Family and will increase outcomes for your program. Provide time for preparation, role play, and problem solving. Review old items as you introduce new ones. Have staff assess their practice of the skill of composure and assertiveness and devise ways to be successful in the future. Each structure will be accompanied by a “Tip Sheet” for administration, staff, and families.

Month 1: The Greeting and Safekeeper Rituals and Goodbye Ritual

The transition from home to school (and back) is hard for children and adults. The Greeting, Safekeeper, and Goodbye Rituals help ease this transition and set everyone up for success. The Greeting and Safekeeper rituals provide a way to connect and build a felt sense of safety with every family and child that enters your center and each classroom. These greetings are as helpful for the family as they are for the child, especially those with infants and toddlers. All families want to know their children are going to be safe and valued and have a fun day of learning while at school. For children this felt sense of safety and connection is essential to a day of cooperation, caring, learning, and fun. The Goodbye Ritual helps children as they transition from school to home. As with all structures, they require intention, consistency, and practice to be successful.

Month 2: The School Family Board and I Love You Rituals

The School Family Board at the center level, and the Friends and Family Board at the classroom level, provide children, families, and staff with a sense of connection that promotes a felt sense of safety in their environment. For staff, knowing they are a part of a caring and committed team helps promote a high level of excellence in their work. And contrary to popular belief, pictures of home soothe children rather than upset them. When we see those that we know will keep us safe, we feel safer. As with all structures, they require intention, consistency, and practice to be successful.

I Love You Rituals are one-on-one interactions intentionally designed to build connections between both individuals. I Love You Rituals can be an intentional moment of connection with a staff member in the morning, and a nursery rhyme game with a child on the changing table. As with all structures, they require intention, consistency, and practice to be successful.

Month 3: The Visual Schedule and Visual Rules

Visuals promote a felt sense of safety by clearly communicating expectations. A Visual Schedule promotes safety by providing a predictable pattern. Visual Rules show exactly what to do in a situation, which helps create a felt sense of safety. As with all structures, they require intention, consistency, and practice to be successful.

Month 4: Visual Routines

Visuals Routines promote a felt sense of safety by clearly communicating expectations. We often assume children and adults should know how to do something. However, if a specific skill or routine has not been internalized through sufficient practice, we can't be successful at it. As with all structures, they require intention, consistency, and practice to be successful.

Month 5: The Safe Place

We all get upset. The goal of self-regulation is not to avoid upset (all emotions are just information), but to work to regain your self-control so that you can be in a state to teach and learn. The Safe Place is a location where children and adults can go to change their inner state from upset to composed in order to optimize learning. This space can easily become a "Time Out" space for punishment instead of a space for regulation and learning. As with all structures, they require intention, consistency, and practice to be successful.

Month 6: School Family Jobs

We feel safe and connected to our community when we feel of value to that community. Jobs provide each child and adult the opportunity to contribute to the School Family with meaningful responsibilities. These jobs must have value to the individual performing them and are outside the regular responsibilities of staff and students to teach and learn. Each job must be able to be done regularly. As with all structures, they require intention, consistency, and practice to be successful.

Recommended Resources:

- Book - Creating the School Family: Bully Proofing Classrooms Through Emotional Intelligence, Dr. Becky Bailey
- Read the daily quote from the CD calendar and reflect on the words throughout the day.
- Explore Shubert's School at <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/>
- Explore Shubert's Classroom at <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/shuberts-classroom/>
- Explore Sophie's Classroom at <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/sophies-classroom/>