



Creating a Positive Climate

MAGIC **8** PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES



METRO
NASHVILLE
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS

THE “MAGIC 8” CLASSROOM PRACTICES

1. Reduce time spent in transition
2. Improving level of instruction
3. Creating a positive climate
4. Increasing teacher listening to children
5. Planning sequential activities
6. Promoting associative and cooperative practices
7. Fostering high levels of engagement
8. Providing math opportunities

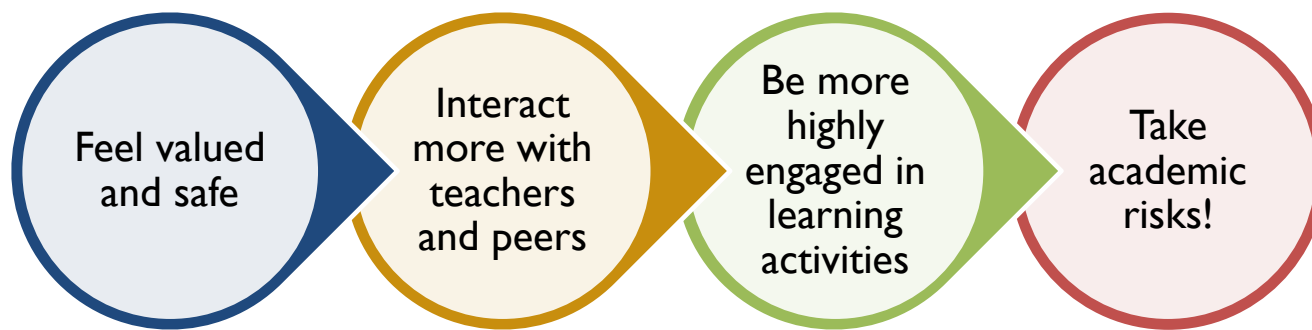
★ 2017-18 Initiative: Focus on Literacy ★

Which classroom practices and experiences improve children's outcomes?



WHY CLASSROOM EMOTIONAL CLIMATE MATTERS

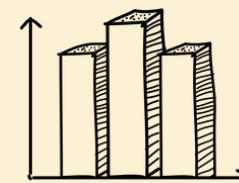
Children who are emotionally supported in their classrooms will



In MNPS ELC Classrooms

Children who experienced emotionally supportive classrooms showed much stronger gains in spelling and writing, vocabulary, and math knowledge.

This was especially true for children who entered pre-k with lower skills than their peers!



MARKERS OF A POSITIVE EMOTIONAL CLASSROOM CLIMATE

Positive classrooms are marked by responsive teachers, who manage behavior and attention challenges, as well as social and emotional needs for individual children.

Key aspects of responsive teaching include using **behavior-approving language more frequently than redirecting**, using **specific praise**, and maintaining a **pleasant affect and tone in teacher-child interactions**.

Using behavior-approving language more frequently than redirecting

Using specific praise

Maintaining a pleasant affect in interactions with children

MAXIMIZE BEHAVIOR APPROVALS & USE SPECIFIC PRAISE

Behavior Approvals are verbal or nonverbal messages that say to a child:

“I like what you’re doing and I want you to keep doing it.”

- Praise is most effective when it is **meaningful and concrete**. Praise should be specific to children’s actions, efforts, accomplishments. **When possible, focus on effort as opposed to ability** – this encourages children to focus on the process, rather than achieving the “right answer”.

“It was **so kind of you** to work together to solve the problem of having too many friends in the art center!”

“That’s a **really creative suggestion** for another ending to the story.”

“I can tell you **really worked hard** to sort all of those dinosaurs.”

LIMIT REDIRECTIONS

With **Redirections**, the intent is to *change the child's behavior*. They say to the child:

“I want you to do something *different* from what you are doing.”

IMPORTANT: Some redirection is necessary for running the classroom and keeping children safe! The goal here is **not** to eliminate redirections, but for children to receive comparatively more positive, affirming messages about their behavior.

- Examples of Redirections:
 - Disapproving facial expressions, verbal comments, tone of voice, physical contact with children.
 - *Statements do not have to be negative in tone to be a redirection.*

“I said stay in your space, Jonathan.”

“Remember, keep your hands to yourself Suzy.”

“Are you making a good choice?”

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

Initial instructions are *not* redirections.

Redirections are *reactive* to behavior that has already occurred.

- Setting expectations upfront can be a great way to limit redirections! For example:
 - “When we all **walk** down the hall, we are using safe bodies. Who can tell me another way we can have safe bodies?”
 - “We have center cards that show you how many friends can be in each center. Use the center cards to help you make your center choice.”



IMAGE SOURCE

AVOID THREATS, SARCASM, & DEROGATORY COMMENTS

Threats and sarcasm are inappropriate forms of redirection. These are disrespectful and potentially damaging to children.

- “You must not want to go to the playground today, Keisha!”
- “If you’re not bleeding or on fire, then I don’t want to hear from you.”
- “I just love repeating myself.”
- Eye Rolling



Derogatory comments made to other adults within an earshot of children should also be avoided.

- “She’s crying because her mom babies her too much.”
- “Well you know he isn’t getting a positive example at home.”

INDICATORS OF TEACHER AFFECT/EMOTIONAL TONE

POSITIVE	Vibrant	Strong positive interaction – genuine excitement for teaching
	Pleasant	Shows positive interest – smiling, eye contact, eyebrows raised, leaning forward
	Neutral	Shows no facial expression – neutral affect, “resting face”
NEGATIVE	Negative	Negative affect — frowning, headshaking, negative gestures, eye rolling, sighing; may use mild threats
	Extreme Negative	Strongly negative affect – sarcasm, yelling, insults; physically dragging/pulling child

FIVE WAYS TO IMPROVE TEACHER TONE

1 Show enthusiasm for activities.

1

Children take their cues from the teacher. If the teacher is barely singing “5 Little Monkeys” with a flat affect, children might assume that the teacher is bored by the song and so it’s not worth their attention either.

2 Match words with tone and facial expressions.

2

If the teacher is praising a child, the teacher should be smiling and looking interested. In describing an exciting new material the teacher wants children to use during centers, the teacher’s expression must convey a high level of interest.

3 Engage in dramatic play and story reading.

3

Taking on a pretend role in a dramatic play scenario or using a character voice during a read-aloud can be an easy way to incorporate a vibrant tone.

4 Develop a positive “listening” face.

4

Children are encouraged to participate in discussions when the audience looks interested! Teachers can do a self-check during sharing time and consider eye contact, posture, and facial expressions. Do they say to a child, “**That is so interesting — please tell me more!**”?

5 Model pleasantness and respect.

5

Teachers who respond pleasantly to children’s requests for attention provide a powerful model for children as they interact with adults and each other. Teachers must remember to say “please” and “thank you” with children, just as they would with a peer or co-worker.

SPECIAL THANKS & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

We are grateful to the following MNPS Pre-K Instructional Coaches and Multi-Classroom Leaders for their invaluable feedback in developing these materials:

SeTara DeThrow
Carrie Head
Susan McClain
Stephanie Mullins
Holly Stone
Ashley Aldridge Wilson
Rhiannon Wilson

Where can I find resources and more information on each of the Magic 8 classroom practices?



<https://my.vanderbilt.edu/mnpspartnership/>

INDIVIDUAL IMAGE SOURCES

FREQUENTLY USED IMAGES*

- [Lightbulb](#) | [myiconfinder.com](#)
- Designed by Vexels.com:
 - [Hand drawn magnifying glass](#)
 - [Hand drawn bar graph](#)
 - [Pie chart hand drawn doodle](#)
 - [Hand drawn wall clock](#)
 - [Hand drawn cloud bubble](#)
 - [Hand drawn open book](#)
 - [Cog wheel hand drawn icon](#)

*These graphics are used as icons throughout the series. For example this [lightbulb](#) clipart appears beside most “Discussion Point” questions.

ADDITIONAL IMAGE SOURCES

Slide 7: [Children lined up](#) | [clipart-library.com](#)

Slide 8: [Grimace emoji](#) | [emojidex.com](#)