

*'In the spirit of reconciliation PRECI acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today. '*

## **TITLE**

Promoting children's social-emotional learning through early education: Piloting the Pyramid Model in Victorian preschools.

### ***What you need to know (background):***

The Pyramid Model is an evidence-based, early educational framework designed to promote all young children's social-emotional-behavioural learning. This framework, developed in North America, embeds strategies for children with exceptional needs naturally and coherently integrates apparently divergent approaches to promoting young children's social-emotional-behavioural skills. The Pyramid Model is an example of a tiered model of support, designed to provide increasing levels of support for children with increasing levels of problems.

### ***What is this research about?***

This study investigated the potential use of the Pyramid Model in Victorian preschools. The key research questions were:

1. To what extent did educators trained and coached in the Pyramid Model implement the model with fidelity?
2. Did Pyramid Model implementation fidelity increase and was this increase sustained over time?
3. Were there measurable differences in behaviour change between the educators trained and coached in the Pyramid Model and those who were trained but did not receive subsequent coaching?
4. Did educators' perceptions of the importance of children's social-emotional skill building change over time with Pyramid Model intervention?
5. Did the Pyramid Model intervention promote the social-emotional skills of the preschool children?

### ***What did the researchers do?***

Eight educators and 65 4–5-year-old children from four metropolitan preschools in two Melbourne preschool cluster groups participated. Each cluster preschool leadership nominated two preschools, which they matched for the educators' skills and the socioeconomic status of the preschool groups. The schools were randomly

allocated to intervention or contrast conditions. All teachers receiving a 3-day training in the model, but the intervention group receiving 16 coaching sessions over the 6 months after the training while the contrast group received no additional support. The coaches who supported the intervention group during and following training used practice-based coaching techniques.

The fidelity of educator implementation was assessed by an independent assessor who did not know what group they were from. The children's behaviour was assessed on two occasions: immediately before and immediately after the 6 month intervention. Educators rated the importance of children's social-emotional skills immediately before and immediately after the intervention.

### ***What did the researchers find?***

- The intervention group educators showed significant and sustained change in their teaching practices when compared to contrast group educators, consistently using more of the Pyramid Model tiered practices.
- The largest changes were in teachers using intentional teaching of social-emotional skills to help the children learn behavioural expectations, initiate and sustain friendship skills, express their emotions, and socially problem-solve.
- Teachers increased their ratings of the importance of social-emotional skills over the course of the project.
- After 6 months, all the 4–5-year-old children were rated to have made significant progress in social-emotional development by all the teachers, but the intervention group teachers reported significantly more progress in their children.
- The changes to educators' ratings of children's social-emotional skills applied equally to those who had previously been diagnosed as severe behavioural challenges and those without, but only the intervention group educators rated the children they initially identified as having as no longer requiring intensive intervention support.
- Both educators and leaders became very positive about the skills developed by educators and children, and both preschool cluster groups commenced plans to implement the Pyramid Model in all of their preschools

### ***How can you use this research?***

This study has provided preliminary evidence of the effectiveness of the Pyramid Model in enhancing preschoolers' social-emotional skills, whether they were typically developing or had behavioural challenges, in an Australian context.

The study is valuable in showing how an early childhood setting can effectively cater for children with diverse needs.

The study also indicates that training without follow up practice-based coaching is insufficient to produce significant and lasting change.

### ***Where to from here:***

- **Resources**

US Pyramid model

- **Links to related topics**

- PD and the pyramid model in Australia,  
<https://www.pyramidmodel.org.au/events/>

***About the researchers:***

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