



YOUTH PREVENTION EDUCATION & CLASSROOM CULTURE

Professional Development
Resource Guide



PREVENTION FIRST

Prevention First is a nonprofit dedicated to preventing adolescent pregnancy before it starts. Since 1980, Prevention First has provided training, technical assistance, and resource materials to thousands of schools, community groups, parents, and youth.

We specialize in building the capacity of practitioners to develop strategic plans to address local adolescent pregnancy prevention needs, select and implement the best programs, curricula, and strategies to promote social and emotional health and prevent adolescent pregnancy.

The adolescent pregnancy prevention programs are funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services.

OUR MISSION

We equip communities with resources and support to build pathways that prevent adolescent pregnancy and promote safety and lasting well-being for all through training, education, and partnerships.

WELCOME

This Youth Prevention Education & Classroom Culture Resource Guide will answer general questions and meet specific needs associated with your role as a facilitator of Youth Prevention Education (YPE). *Foundations of Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (APP)* is a required training for APP prevention professionals implementing a YPE program. If you have already attended *Foundations of Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention* at Prevention First, then the information included in this resource guide will serve to build upon the techniques introduced and covered during the training. If you are registered and waiting to attend the YPE training, the information included in this guide should be helpful as you navigate the journey of implementing your YPE program. This Youth Prevention Education & Classroom Culture Resource Guide provides general information, guidance and websites that can be used as resources as you plan and implement your Youth Prevention Education program.

Visit www.prevention.org to view additional resources and information regarding current training opportunities.

EVIDENCE-BASED MODEL AND PROGRAMS

Overview

Evidence-based programs are research-based, rooted in theory, and feature a variety of strategies proven to be effective. Evidence-based programs undergo rigorous evaluation and demonstrate outcomes when comparing youth who participated in the program versus youth who did not participate in the program. While each curriculum is different, most evidence-based programs aim to increase prevention-related drug knowledge and help students develop resistance skills.

The Illinois Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) uses the Making Proud Choices curricula.

Making Proud Choices is an Evidence-Based, Safer-Sex Approach to Teen Pregnancy and HIV/STI Prevention. It is an 8-module curriculum that provides adolescents with the knowledge, confidence, and skills necessary to reduce their risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV, and pregnancy by abstaining from sex or using condoms if they choose to have sex. It is based on cognitive-behavioral theories, focus groups, and the authors' extensive experience working with youth. There is also a 10-module adaptation for youth in out-of-home care.

The program has four major components. The first component focuses on goals, dreams, and adolescent sexuality. The second is knowledge, covering information about etiology, transmission, and prevention of HIV, other STIs, and teenage pregnancy. The third focuses on beliefs and attitudes. The fourth focuses on skills and self-efficacy, covering negotiation-refusal skills and condom use skills, and providing time for practice, reinforcement, and support.

The Illinois Sexual Risk Avoidance Education (SRAE) program uses the Choosing the Best Curricula.

The **Choosing the Best** curriculum is a comprehensive, age-appropriate program designed to support students' healthy development through a series of grade-specific lessons. **Choosing the Best WAY** is intended for 6th-grade students and consists of six 45-minute sessions delivered in school and community-based settings. **Choosing the Best PATH** is designed for 7th-grade students and includes eight 45-minute sessions, while **Choosing the Best LIFE** is designed for 8th-grade students and includes eight 45-minute sessions. For high school students, **Choosing the Best JOURNEY** is designed for 9th- and 10th-grade students and consists of six 45-minute sessions. All four curricula are appropriate for students of all genders, races, and ethnicities and can be implemented in both school and community settings. Each program focuses on promoting healthy relationships, adolescent development, and healthy life skills, with preparation provided for adult facilitators to effectively deliver the curriculum.

Fidelity

Fidelity is defined as the degree to which a program is implemented according to its design. Rigorous evaluation studies of model programs indicate that implementing the program according to the program design will produce predictable outcomes. Delivering the program with a high degree of fidelity helps demonstrate accountability and predict effectiveness. Once a model program is chosen, the provider should commit to delivering the program according to the developer's guidelines. Additionally, IDHS DBHR has identified standards for implementation. These standards reflect the best practice/research in program implementation and delivery of all evidence-based programs. APP providers must adhere to every standard.

APP YOUTH PREVENTION EDUCATION STANDARDS

STANDARD 1:

Demonstrate that the **core curriculum** was implemented in an appropriate setting. When using a model program, the curriculum should be implemented in a setting recommended by the program developer.

- The selected curriculum was implemented in an appropriate setting for ALL of the core curriculum participants.

STANDARD 2:

Demonstrate that the **core curriculum** is age appropriate for ALL core curriculum participants. When using a model program, the age of the program participants should adhere to the recommendations of the program developer.

- The selected curriculum was age appropriate for ALL of the core curriculum participants.

STANDARD 3:

Demonstrate that the prescribed number of **core curriculum** sessions is being offered to the majority of core program participants. All required sessions of the core curriculum are implemented. Optional sessions created by the program developer may be added to the implementation of the required sessions.

- All core curriculum sessions were offered to at least 80% of the core program participants.

STANDARD 4:

Demonstrate that **core curriculum** sessions are implemented at a minimum of 30 minutes per session for the majority of core program participants.

- Sessions of the core curriculum were not less than 30 minutes long.

STANDARD 5:

Demonstrate that the **core curriculum** is offered no more than twice per week for the majority of the core program participants (regardless of program developer recommendations).

- Sessions of the core curriculum were offered no more than twice per week.

STANDARD 6:

Demonstrate that most program participants have consistent program attendance (students are receiving most of the program).

- Among all cycles, the number of participants attending 80-100% of offered program sessions is 75% or higher.

STANDARD 7:

Demonstrate that most program participants received enough of the required program sessions (according to program developer specifications) to benefit from the program outcomes.

- Among cycles where all required sessions were delivered, the number of participants attending of sessions is 75% or higher as compared to participation in all cycles.

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

It is important to prioritize proactive communication with the school and classroom teacher to clarify expectations. A formal linkage agreement, memorandum of understanding (MOU) or district-specific vendorship agreement plays a key role in clarifying expectations. Additionally, consider other opportunities to check-in and discuss successes and challenges as often as possible. Schools and teachers are partners in implementing Youth Prevention Education programs and to get them fully invested in the success of the program we need to stay in constant communication with them.

Collaboration is a process through which people, groups, and organizations work together to achieve desired results. Collaborations achieve a shared vision and positive outcomes for the audiences they serve and build an interdependent system to address issues and opportunities. Collaborations also involve the sharing of resources and responsibilities to plan, implement and evaluate programs to achieve common goals.

Collaboration is vital to the success of a Youth Prevention Education program. Collaboration is essential because various levels of support are needed to ensure a successful program. Listed below are some suggestions to help prevention professionals build strong and meaningful collaborations with the community and school.

- Work to stay in contact with your school partners, follow through and complete tasks assigned on-time and always be professional.
- Examine your personal attitudes and biases, keep things positive, recognize your deficiencies, build your skills, and make sure you always represent your program and agency in a skillful, knowledgeable and positive way.
- Find allies in your partner schools beyond just the classroom teacher. While it is vital to have the support of the classroom teacher, you should also work to include the building principal, school nurse, school counselors and anyone else focused on achieving positive outcomes for young people.
- Make the most of the time you set aside for meetings. Whether a stakeholder meeting, coalition meeting or a simple check-in, use the time wisely. Take the time to learn effective meeting facilitation skills and remember most people are impressed more by actions than talk.
- Look for opportunities to provide pregnancy prevention information to the staff at the schools you are working with. Work with the principal to be included in a teacher/staff institute day or school you are working with. Work with the principal to be included in a teacher/staff institute day or school improvement day to present information about your program to the staff. This is also a great opportunity for you to get to know more of the staff at the school and for the school staff to know who you are, what students are learning and your investment in their school and students.
- Look for opportunities when sending home materials with students to include both your signature and the signature from a representative of the school. This sends a positive, collaborative message to parents that the school supports your program and you are partners in helping young people learn skills to help them make good decisions and be happy and healthy.
- Aim to establish stable and sustainable working relationships with all collaborators within the school. While you want to nurture and develop the professional relationship you have with the classroom teacher or school administrator, personal connections are vulnerable to the mobility that characterizes school staff and administration. If you focus only on the classroom teacher or the principal, and they leave the school, you are at square one and will have to rebuild relationships to ensure the continued delivery of your program.

- Invest fully in the time and effort it takes to negotiate a strong linkage agreement. A linkage agreement is a necessary component of successful collaboration. A linkage agreement should be reviewed each year, updated and renegotiated as needed, and shared and revisited when new personnel are hired. A linkage agreement allows for both the provider and the school to share expectations, define roles, and outline responsibilities. A linkage agreement should also provide dates of services, name of the curriculum being implemented, resources needed, a plan to make up missed sessions and a commitment by both parties to adhere to best practices and program standards. It is important that both the provider representative (typically a manager) and the school representative (typically the principal or superintendent) sign the linkage agreement, and each retains a signed copy. It may be beneficial to obtain at least one additional signature from a school representative to account for any mid-year changes in staffing. Lastly, it is important to provide a copy to all collaborators who have roles and responsibilities in the linkage agreement.
- Engage a variety of community stakeholders in prevention work. Every school and community have its own unique set of circumstances, and no one knows more about these complexities and nuances like members of the community. Create a steering committee to guide YPE implementation. Collaborate with the local PTA or Parent Council. Without stakeholder expertise and buy-in, it can be difficult to determine what is truly best and needed within a school. When in doubt, keep this adage in mind: **“nothing about us, without us.”**



CLASSROOM CULTURE STRATEGIES

Students cannot learn in chaos. Classroom culture emphasizes creating an environment where students feel safe to learn, and motivated to participate in their learning. It involves every aspect of the time spent in the classroom, including the way in which the curriculum is delivered as well as how the teacher and students interact with one another. These moment-to-moment and day-to-day interactions will directly impact the overall classroom environment. A student might not remember everything you teach, but they will remember how your classroom feels.



Classroom culture differs from what is traditionally known as classroom management. Creating a positive classroom culture places emphasis on expectations for the individual student, the entire class, and the classroom facilitator. While you may find the need to manage student behavior during sessions, an established and positive classroom culture is the most effective form of classroom management. Formalized, evidence-based strategies are becoming increasingly popular such as Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports or Responsive Classroom. In many cases, these strategies are adopted district-wide for the sake of consistency. Before implementing a Youth Prevention Education program, prevention professionals should inquire about and become familiar with district, school, and classroom behavior management strategies. This allows for uniformity and creates an opportunity to build upon the established strategies.

Most school administrators, principals and teachers have clearly defined classroom norms which outline how students should interact with substitute teachers, guest facilitators and visitors. As a prevention professional delivering YPE in a classroom-based setting, you will likely be welcomed and received as a guest during your time in the school building. In most cases, the classroom teacher sets the tone for a safe, cooperative learning environment and assumes responsibility for any needed disciplinary measures. However, your role as a YPE facilitator puts you in a unique position to reinforce and establish a positive atmosphere. Oftentimes YPE facilitators have an allotted or fixed window of time to deliver lessons and this necessitates being able to do so with minimal distractions and disruptions to ensure program standards are met.

Building a Strong Foundation Day One

Students are less likely to be disruptive or exhibit challenging behaviors during class time when they are engaged, connected and on-task. Keep in mind that a positive classroom culture will add organization for the students and classroom but should not impede on planned lessons or the fidelity of the curriculum. This means you might find the need to schedule an additional session before curriculum sessions to allow for time to establish your YPE classroom culture. Remember, as a facilitator, you set the stage by being on-time, prepared, organized, and able to move the lesson along at an appropriate pace.

Finally, one of the best ways to establish a strong foundation for your YPE curriculum is to plan your implementation with the classroom teacher. If you can, schedule a planning meeting/s to ask about the existing classroom culture. For example, does the class have existing norms in place that are important to maintain? Are there diverse learners in the class that will need special attention? What role will you play in managing distracting behavior? Your classroom teacher can provide insight to all these questions and more during this meeting.

As you prepare with the classroom teacher, discuss how you might use these strategies to set yourself up for success on the first day:

Develop classroom norms. Although developing classroom norms is a short activity, it is crucial in establishing how the classroom will function. Classroom norms should be posted during every lesson, reviewed often and referred to when challenging behaviors arise. Classroom norms help establish a community of care and trust between students and the facilitator. Note: some YPE curricula include a session wherein classes develop classroom norms. Make sure to review your YPE curriculum before planning to develop classroom norms.

Take time to learn names. If possible, learn the existing seating chart and students' names. Play a name game or make name tents for students to write their names and pronouns during your first session with students. Young people want to be addressed by name. Taking the time to learn names will show students that you care.

Set a positive tone. Work to create a classroom that is warm, inviting, and inclusive. Show enthusiasm for the lessons you are teaching and show students you are excited about being able to spend time with them. We want students to leave the classroom after the first day looking forward to the next lesson and the time they will spend in the classroom while you are facilitating. Greet students as they enter the classroom. Simple phrases like, “I’m glad you are here today,” or “welcome to class,” will help students feel connected and engaged. Icebreakers and energizers throughout facilitation will help chunk learning into pieces appropriate for adolescent minds and promote fun in the classroom.

Think about the configuration of the classroom. The physical setup of a classroom is critical to an effective learning environment. Do they have any ideas on different desk configurations that might better suit a YPE curriculum? A specific and intentional classroom arrangement can help promote engagement and prevent behaviors that might distract others. If your YPE curriculum is student-focused and discussion driven, perhaps a large circle will promote student driven discussion. If your YPE curriculum is primarily lecture based, perhaps rows will direct student attention to the facilitator.

Answer questions. Students might have questions about why you’re there. Ask students what questions they have about you and your job and answer them honestly (as appropriate). Be clear about what your goal is during your time delivering your YPE curriculum and be specific about what your role is in their classroom.



Classroom Norms: Setting Expectations with Students

Developing classroom norms does not have to be lengthy, complex, or intricate. The classroom norms should be simple and succinct. When developing classroom norms, make sure to identify clear rules, expectations, and consequences.

A simple set of norms and consequences, hand-written on flipchart paper, is all that is needed. Classroom norms should be developed with the input of your students and classroom teacher. This creates student buy-in and ownership of the rules and consequences and serves as their commitment to participate in the YPE program in an engaged and enthusiastic manner. Once developed, it should be clearly communicated that everyone—meaning the student, classroom teacher and you—will be expected to adhere to it throughout the program.

Some important points to keep in mind when developing classroom norms:

- Involve students in creating the classroom norms.
- Keep it simple. Make it a quick but engaging activity by creating no more than five norms. Too many rules can overwhelm students. Aim to phrase the norms as what students are expected to do, as opposed to what they shouldn't or can't do. The following are common examples:
 1. Use appropriate and positive language
 2. Raise our hands before speaking or leaving our seat
 3. Keep our hands, feet, and materials to ourselves
 4. Listen and follow directions
 5. Ask questions
- Speak with the classroom teacher in advance to determine appropriate consequences if a rule is broken. You will want to create class norms that are enforceable and that complement the teacher's rules and norms. Also, the teacher will likely have valuable insight into what works well in keeping the students on track. Consequences should be progressive, i.e., a three-step plan with a warning for the first rule violation, possibly a timeout for the second, etc.
- Display the flip chart paper with your classroom norms during every lesson. Make time at the beginning of every class session to quickly review the norms, consequences, and the benefits of classroom norms. A simple statement like, "We created these norms and agree to follow these norms because they keep us safe and help us learn," will help create buy-in and purpose for your classroom expectations.

Strategies for Managing Participation

Create and review an agenda for each lesson

Students want their time in the classroom to be productive and they want to learn. Oftentimes disruptions occur when students aren't engaged or aren't clear on the purpose of the lesson. Start on time and briefly review the lesson agenda with students. Check off completed agenda items to build a sense of accomplishment and announce what is next. This paves the way for transitions and assists students in adapting to the routine followed during your class time together.

Balance teaching and facilitating

While maintaining fidelity to the curriculum, look for ways to balance teaching and facilitating. While teaching and facilitation have similarities, they look different. Teaching tends to be more didactic while facilitation tends to be more interactive. Look for opportunities to have students actively respond and participate. Offer opportunities for students to read aloud, write on the board/smart board, answer questions out loud, and assist you during the lesson. Some students learn best when reading, while others learn best by listening, writing information down, or even moving around the classroom a bit. Try to integrate a variety of activities into each lesson that address all learning styles.

Circulate the room

Facilitators should circulate the room to keep students engaged and attentive. Not only do students have to pay attention and follow where you are, but it allows you the opportunity to check to make sure students are on task. Circulating the room is also considered a behavior management technique known as Management by Walking Around (MBWA).

Provide directions

It is important to give clear and concise instructions. Once you have gained students' attention it is important to:

1. Wait until students are seated.
2. Give one instruction at a time.
3. Use a clear voice.
4. Wait for student compliance.
5. Provide an opportunity for students to acknowledge their understanding of the instructions. This can be done by asking for thumbs up or thumbs down. Provide clarification if needed.
6. For multi-step instructions, write out and post directions for activities ahead of time. A posted copy of the instructions can alleviate confusion, as sometimes students are hesitant to say they don't understand or are embarrassed to admit they were distracted when directions were given the first time.

Encourage questions

Always offer an opportunity for students to get questions answered or concerns addressed even when time does not permit during class. Put up a “Parking Lot” flipchart sheet in the same location each class period with Post-It notes and pencils or pens nearby. Instruct students at the beginning or end of each class to post any questions they have. Assure them you will read them prior to the next class and address them as appropriate. A question box is another helpful tool that can be used for this purpose. Provide Post-it notes or index cards near the box. Be sure to read and address all questions prior to or during the next session.

Handle disagreements with respect

Information may be presented during your lessons that a student might disagree with. Create a classroom atmosphere where students know it is okay to disagree, but disagreements are always to be respectful. Communicate with students what respectful disagreement can look like before disagreements happen.

Integrate students’ lived experiences when appropriate

During activities, such as role plays, try to use examples, language and names youth can connect with as part of their culture. Students are more likely to learn in a classroom that is responsive to their unique circumstances and makes connections to their lived experiences. As a facilitator of YPE, you have an opportunity to make students feel seen and heard. If you make any adaptations to your YPE curriculum, remember the goals and messages of the lesson must remain unchanged and curriculum fidelity must not be compromised. Make sure to contact your curriculum developer and IDHS when considering adaptations.

Be genuine and sincere with praise

While praise is very important, empty praise or praising for small tasks or less than adequate work can cause students to disengage and lose interest in your feedback. Be thoughtful in what you say to students and find ways to offer genuine praise and feedback. Always focus genuine praise on the work and behavior of a student and not the student themselves.

Be willing to give a little to get a lot

Some days students enter the classroom and you can tell the energy level is high and it is going to be an enormous challenge to keep students focused and on task. Whether it’s the weather, an upcoming holiday or break or a student birthday, offering a small incentive might be just the key to get students to tune in and be alert. Incentives don’t have to cost money but can offer students an opportunity to interact with each other and relax. You can tell students if they work hard, stay focused and on task for the 45-minute lesson they can have the last 2-3 minutes of class to talk to each other, stand up, and use up some of their energy. While we don’t want to give up class time, this type of incentive can help focus students’ attention on the lesson and minimize disruptions.

Strategies for Managing Behavior

Apart from encountering a student who is actively causing harm in a classroom, most disruptions can be handled by you or the classroom teacher. Proactive, class-wide strategies alone are rarely sufficient in dealing with all classroom behaviors. Typically, the classroom teacher will know more about students' behavior patterns and have awareness of each student's academic skills and challenges. In most cases (but certainly there may be exceptions), the classroom teacher should handle any major behavior



issues; however, when disruptive behavior occurs you should always remind students of the rules and be prepared to assert yourself with a strategy to quickly quell the disruption and keep the lesson on track.

Challenging behaviors might range from certain students wanting to dominate discussions, to students who don't wait to be called on, to students who can't sit still. You will likely encounter a student who either intentionally or unintentionally asks too many questions, seeks to discover personal information about you or one who consistently debates the information presented. While these behaviors would be considered low-level distractions or disruptions, they can potentially have high impact on your ability to facilitate and finish the lesson. The following strategies can help mitigate distractions and disruptions:



CONSIDER THE BEHAVIOR: Before you stop facilitation to address a behavior, ask yourself whether the behavior changes, affects, or disrupts the classroom learning environment. As a facilitator, you bring your own preconceived notions of what engagement looks like. Consider that engagement might look different in each classroom. Only intervene on behaviors that impede your ability to deliver the lesson and students' ability to learn.



PHYSICAL PROXIMITY: Place yourself near the student and conduct a few minutes of the lesson while standing by them. You don't need to be overly obvious about moving toward the student, but many times having you near will subdue the disruptive behavior.



STOP AND WAIT: On occasion you might need to simply stop the lesson, pause, make eye contact with the student and wait for the student to quiet down and focus. This can also cue the classroom teacher in on which student is being disruptive and that their assistance may be needed.



SEATING ARRANGEMENTS: Many teachers are deliberate and intentional when creating seating charts. If you notice consistently disruptive behavior, arrange a time to meet with the classroom teacher to determine if changing the seating arrangement during your time in the classroom is an option. Sometimes moving a student to a different location or closer to the classroom teacher is an effective means of mitigating disruptive behavior.



SIGNALS: Using signals is a common method for managing classroom behavior and a classwide strategy. Ask the teacher if signals are already used in the classroom and adopt them as your own. If not, consider these few helpful ones: without uttering a word, raise or hold up your right hand and wait until each student follows suit. This is a powerful way to get students to focus and quiet down. Other examples are: “All eyes on me” or “Clap once if you hear me. Clap twice, if you see me.” Remember to communicate with students beforehand the meaning and purpose of any signals used and always acknowledge students who cooperate quickly. A good time to introduce signals is on the first day when you and your students come up with the class norms.



USE YOUR VOICE: Students often match the volume of the teacher’s voice in the classroom. To gain a student’s attention or the attention of the entire class, try decreasing instead of increasing the volume of your voice. It is not productive or effective to yell or talk over a student. The same goes for side conversations.



STAY COOL: Remember, stress is contagious. Students will respond to and even mirror their teacher’s classroom behavior. Keep your composure and remain calm. You do not need to tolerate disruptive, disrespectful behavior, but you will lose credibility by getting pulled into an argument or a dispute with a student about their behavior.

In a mildly disruptive situation, try the following steps:

1. Speak privately and quietly with the individual student after class; however, remain in an area where you can be observed by the teacher. Asking the teacher for permission to have a private conversation is always wise.
2. Speak for yourself and not for the classroom teacher or other students. Keep the conversation between you and the student and make it solution-oriented.
3. Seek first to understand and then to be understood. Use empathetic listening to genuinely understand. This creates an atmosphere of caring and positive problem solving. (Reference: The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, Habit 5)
4. Think Win-Win. Remember adolescents are often not able to see beyond the moment and don't always understand how their behavior can influence others. Remind the student of your role and purpose as a youth prevention educator. You're there because you care about positive youth development. (Reference: The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, Habit 4)

In an unusually disruptive situation, consider these three R's:

1. Remain professional.
2. Refrain from arguing, venting or complaining.
3. Reach out to the classroom teacher or an administrator.

Persistent disruption by a student may ultimately mean the classroom teacher will have to intervene and possibly remove the student from the room. While we value having each student in the classroom, at some point we must prioritize the needs of the whole class.

Thoughtful Transitions

Teachers commonly report that transitions are among the most perilous times of the day in the classroom. When students are moving from one place or space to another, the potential for problem behaviors increases significantly. Being thoughtful and planful is the key. A planned, predictable transition can flow smoothly every time. The secret, according to Smart Classroom Management, is standardizing these brief moments by having students do the exact same thing regardless of where they are transitioning to or from. Many of the model programs move quickly from one activity to the next; therefore, your preparation and organization are critical pieces to successful transitions. The likelihood of students staying focused, and on-task will depend largely on how effortlessly the facilitator moves the class from one activity to the next.

Below is a list of ways to help students master activity and even class period transitions:

- Arrive early and be ready to start your lesson as soon as the class is turned over to you. In some instances, you may have to wait for the teacher to take attendance which may give you time to set up. Other times, students may be in the class awaiting your arrival.
- Be organized and prepared. Have your teacher's manual readily available and clearly marked. Make copies of any handouts in advance.
- Use signals for attention. Some teachers use chimes, bells, and/or hand signals. Be sure to establish the meaning of your signals beforehand.
- Develop a routine at the start of every class such as a brief review of the last week's lesson and a preview of today's lesson.
- Provide directions for the lesson activities and always inform students of how much time they will have to complete their assigned tasks. Tell students when to start their work and at certain intervals announce how much time is left, e.g., five minutes, then two minutes, then thirty seconds, etc. so that they can prepare for the end of the activity and the transition ahead.

The Role of a Linkage Agreement in Establishing the Classroom Culture

A formal linkage agreement, memorandum of understanding (MOU), or district-specific vendorship agreement outlines shared expectations and responsibilities of administrators, teachers and the prevention professional. Among other things, the linkage agreement is a means of establishing a positive classroom culture before the program even begins. Consider the following tips when writing the linkage agreement:

- The linkage agreement should reflect the agreement already solidified between the prevention provider and the school. Meet with the school to discuss and build consensus on key aspects of program implementation before developing the linkage agreement.
- Make sure the agreement spells out that the program is evidence-based and that fidelity must be maintained by adhering to the curriculum and the IDHS APP YPE Standards.
- Outline any agreed upon classroom management systems or processes to be utilized and clarify how disciplinary measures will be handled.
- State that the classroom teacher, or another certified teacher, will remain in the classroom as required by Illinois law.
- Communicate clearly that YPE is designed to be delivered in a classroom-based setting and that students will need desks or tables and chairs.

****NOTE: As a APP prevention professional, your role is to advocate for best practices in prevention. Gym rooms, basements and other less-than-optimal settings do not contribute to the goal of maintaining program fidelity. Having students sit on floors or in bleachers is simply not an appropriate setting for YPE. When students are in a gym setting, they are naturally inclined to be active and on their feet. Respectfully but firmly communicate this point with partner schools. The Foundations of Youth Prevention Education training addresses in greater detail how to negotiate a strong agreement.***

TRAUMA-INFORMED CLASSROOM PRACTICES

Overview

Trauma is a physiological and psychological response to an adverse experience. While we tend to think of trauma as a single life-threatening incident like a car accident or natural disaster, trauma can take many forms. Chronic stressors like racism, poverty and community violence can also cause trauma.

According to the [Trauma-Informed Care Statistics. Market Data Report 2025](#), Nearly 60% of girls and 40% of boys experience at least one traumatic event by age 16.

While trauma aggravates risk factors that can cause substance misuse, it also affects learning. Trauma can make it difficult for a student to learn and might alter their behavior in the classroom. What might be a simple misunderstanding between two students might turn into an emotional disruption for the entire class. While not every student has

experienced trauma, every student can benefit from a facilitator who demonstrates care and empathy in the classroom. Therefore, it's important for all facilitators to know how to infuse trauma-informed care into their YPE facilitation.

Many teachers, classrooms and school districts have already implemented trauma-informed care in their day-to-day practices. In fact, all the strategies found in this guide are trauma-informed! Simple changes to classroom structures and interactions with students that prioritize student comfort and engagement can be especially impactful for students who have experienced trauma. If you are considering using trauma-informed practices when implementing your YPE curriculum, it's best to first speak to your classroom teacher. They are the experts in their own class and will be able to inform you which strategies have been most successful for their students.



The Four Pillars of Trauma-Informed Care

Behavior is a form of communication. When dealing with trauma in the classroom, it can be helpful to assess what each behavior tells you about what that student needs. When we understand what a student's behavior is communicating to us, we can create an environment that addresses these needs.

When implementing a trauma-informed approach to classroom facilitation, keep in mind the four pillars of Trauma-Informed Care (TIC):

1

CONNECT

Create an environment where students can connect to each other and you. Take the time to learn about the students in your YPE class. Use icebreakers, energizers, or set aside time each lesson to get to know each other on a more personal level. Young people feel safe when they know who you are and that you care.

2

PROTECT

Create an environment where students feel safe. Some YPE curricula can bring up negative feelings associated with their own or a loved one's substance use. Make sure that you work with the classroom teacher to create an environment where these topics are broached with care. Additionally, consistency is safety! Show up on time, always be prepared and avoid rescheduling your YPE sessions when at all possible. Young people feel safe in environments where things stay the same.

3

RESPECT

Create an environment where students are shown respect. This means providing students with choices. Let students vote on which icebreaker to conduct, choose which task or assignment to complete, choose a partner to work with, or determine which incentive to receive. There are also many ways we can show respect to students. First and foremost, treat all students with kindness and empathy. Practice active listening and let them know they matter. Learning and addressing students by name is another basic way to show respect. Even asking for volunteers to help with lesson tasks such as collecting papers or reading instructions shows respect.

4

REDIRECT

Create an environment where energy can be redirected in positive ways. Encourage skill-building and competence. Celebrate your students' successes! If they stayed on task, have a 30 second dance party at the end of class to celebrate. Be specific about what students are doing right and how it makes you feel. A simple sentence like, "Thank you for your discussion today. It makes me happy to watch you all respond to these questions thoughtfully." can go a long way to encourage positive behavior and redirect student energy.

SOURCES & RESOURCES

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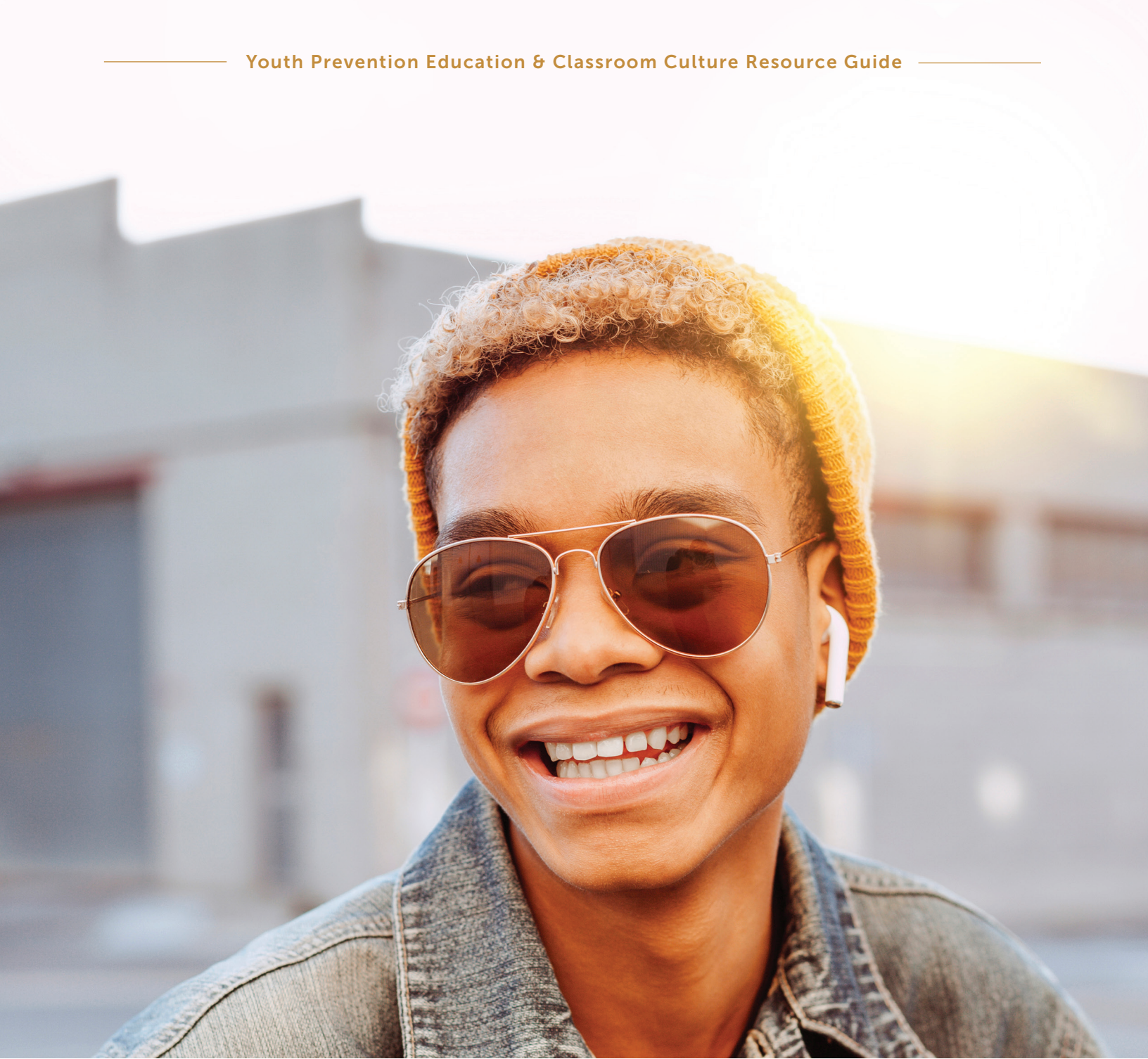
- www.responsiveclassroom.org
- [“Teaching the Students of the 2020s: Classroom Wisdom from a Master Teacher” by Bruce Hansen.](#)
- [Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support: https://www.pbis.org/](https://www.pbis.org/)

Trainings

- [Adverse Childhood Experiences and Strategies for Trauma-Informed Care](#)
- [The Dynamic Adolescent Brain](#)

Resources

- [Classroom Management Strategies That Empower High School Students](#)
- [Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators](#)
- [Classroom Management](#)
- [Classroom Management Techniques](#)
- [Culturally Responsive Teaching: Definition, Strategies & Examples](#)
- [5 Effective Middle School Behavior Management Strategies in 2025](#)
- [What is Trauma- Informed Teaching?](#)
- [20 Classroom Management Strategies and Techniques](#)
- [Prevention Makes Cents](#)
- [Supporting Every Learner](#)



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