

Teacher Support Reduces Preschool Expulsion

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Life's most urgent question is: what are you doing for others?

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Preschoolers are expelled at three times the rate of their older peers,” declares Sara Neufeld in an article in the *Hechinger Report*. Neufeld explains about one resource for teachers that is helping stem the tide of expulsion in a program in Chicago:

“A few years ago, 4-year-old Danny was on the verge of being expelled from a Chicago preschool for violent behavior when a woman named Lauren Wiley was called in to help.

She met with the boy’s teacher, who thought he needed to be medicated for attention deficit disorder. But as Wiley listened, the teacher admitted she was angry at Danny, whose name has been changed to protect his identity. Her job was to keep her students safe, she said, and the boy’s aggression made her feel like a failure. Next, Wiley and the teacher met with Danny’s mom. As the teacher dropped her judgmental attitude, it came out that Danny had watched his father beat his mother and get taken away in handcuffs. No one had ever talked to the child about what he saw. He did not have ADD. He was reeling from trauma, and he needed his teacher to like him and want to help him, not to be rid of him. That began to happen when she heard his story...

Wiley is an early childhood mental health consultant. The job title often evokes an image of a baby on a couch talking to a therapist, but her work is about listening to adults so they can create an emotionally healthy environment for children. She trains teachers and others who work with young children to recognize the trauma that so often causes misbehavior. She supports them in confronting cultural biases and forging relationships with parents. She shows them how to recognize families’ strengths and promote mental wellness before problems develop.”

Source: "[Expelled in preschool](#)," by Sara Neufeld, *Hechinger Report*, February 22, 2015