



## 2009 NDTAC National Conference

### Session Notes

<b>Session Title</b>	<b>Making the Walls Disappear: How Can We Improve Outcomes for Our Youth?</b>
<b>Presenter</b>	David Osher
<b>Date and Time</b>	Tuesday, June 23, 12:15–1:45 p.m.

#### Summary

This keynote address focused on moving the field from a model that labels children based on their individual deficits (e.g., substance abuser, criminal) to a model that is strength-based and fosters skill development and resilience. When strength-based strategies are implemented effectively, they can instill hope and provide the necessary academic, social, and emotional skills that youth, especially those in the juvenile justice system, need to succeed. This session identified several strength-based strategies:

- **Treat students like you would your own children.** When deciding how best to affect positive outcomes for youth who are neglected, delinquent, or at risk, stop viewing them as “someone else’s child” and start treating them as if they were one of your own. When making discussions, use the simple litmus test: “Would I want that for my child?” If the answer is “yes,” then it is most likely the right thing to do for the child.
- **Be sensitive to child development.** Appropriate support and conditions can enable all students to overcome potential barriers (e.g., physical, social, emotional, and cognitive) and to experience successful outcomes after being released from the system. Student outcomes are not inevitable or predetermined. Instead, such outcomes result from organizational conditions and appropriate interventions.
- **Improve social and emotional conditions for learning.** Research shows that powerful social emotional factors affect learning. The underlying principles of social and emotional conditions for learning require that youth (1) feel emotionally and physically safe, (2) receive ample adult and peer support, (3) be taught to manage their emotions and relationships positively, (4) be surrounded and challenged by peers who have socially responsible behavior, and (5) be challenged academically and personally.
- **Use a tiered approach to delivering services.** A tiered approach to delivering services ensures that resources are allocated effectively and efficiently to meet the diverse needs of youth. This model is based on a strong foundation of universal services that are then supplemented by targeted and individual services for those students who have more intense needs.
- **Use dashboards to make data accessible and to hold the system accountable.** Although States collect and archive a plethora of data, they often struggle to make the data accessible and useful to stakeholders; stakeholders often “drown in data.” Dashboards that are based on a few key data elements that relate to performance measures of multiple agencies, can promote transparency, accountability, continuous improvement, and interagency collaboration.

## **Q&A / Comments**

---

*There were no questions or comments in this session. If you have a question about the session or the topics discussed, please contact the Center at [NDTAC@air.org](mailto:NDTAC@air.org).*

## **Relevant Resources**

---

[\*Strengths-based foundations of hope\*](#)

[NDTAC Brief: Improving Conditions for Learning for Youth Who Are Neglected or Delinquent](#)

[NDTAC Webinar: Conditions for Learning: Promoting Social, Emotional and Academic Growth in N and D Programs](#)