

Foster Classrooms

A meaningful intervention within the Continuum of Interventions in Schools

Class groups of all ages bring forth a wide range of personalities, needs and challenges. It is an absolute 'dance' to manage groups of students. Some are easier to come into connection with, others lead us to use all our tools and strategies. It is important to realize the benefit of working as a team when we have challenging students in our care.

Prevention, Intervention vs. Reaction

Prevention – We know who are the students that struggle to manage themselves. Their behavior and demeanor can sometimes make it challenging to maintain them within the class group. It can be beneficial for the student, the group and the teacher to provide a visit to a Foster Class to maintain the attachment with the student and preserve the learning environment of the group.

Intervention – It is key that all parties are introduced to 'Foster Classing' as part of an Intervention Continuum. It is part of the strategies and tools implemented to help students in our school. This is not and should not be presented as a consequence, nor should it have a negative connotation. It is of utmost importance to nurture and preserve the attachment links in the student-teacher relationship at all times.

The keys to a setting up a '***Foster Classroom***' arrangement:

- 1. Determine which students would benefit from a break in a foster class**
 - Which student struggles with following your cues even when you intervene to help him/her to get back on track
 - Which student struggles to stay within his/her assigned space
 - Which student struggles to get on task due to the distractions surrounding him/her
 - Which student struggles emotionally to switch from one task to another when an event has left them emotionally charged
 - Which student benefits from a change of scenery when emotionally charged, to help him/her to get back on track

- 2. Choosing their Foster Class destination - Consider with which adults they have an attachment**
 - This may be a teacher they have had in the past
 - This may be an adult with a common interest
 - This may be an adult who is in close proximity to your room
 - It is key to work at priming and maintaining an attachment between a foster teacher and the foster student.

3. Preparing for a Foster Student

- Choose a location within your room that will be away from distractions but in clear view of the adult
- Provide an individual station – this facilitates getting on task
- Have basic school supplies (pencils, erasers, sharpener, pencil crayons) in a container to facilitate getting on task, if the student has not arrived to the Foster Class fully equipped.
- Have coloring pages/mandalas/search'n find pages -these may be used as a distraction and to help the student work through his emotions. Then the student can get on to the work that he/she was sent with.
- Inform parents that Foster Class visits will be an intervention implemented with their child when they struggle to manage themselves within their class group. This is an opportunity to get themselves back on track and continue their day in a positive manner.

4. Putting things into action

- Explain to the student that going to a Foster Class will become an additional intervention tool that you will use to support him/her in being successful in school.
- Ensure to matchmake between the student and the receiving teacher
- Have the student visit the Foster Class when he/she is calm and receptive. Show them the designated place for him/her. This will help to set the stage positively. Show them that there will be 'Work Tools' should he/she forget to bring his/hers.
- Review what is expected of them when they go to the Foster Class
 - Enter quietly, go to assigned place with work brought from homeroom
 - The student can take some time to recentre himself and is then encouraged to get to task.
 - When help is needed, the student is expected to request this respectfully in order to not disturb the receiving group.
 - When the student is calm and/or work is completed, the Foster teacher will review and determine if/when the student will be able to return to class.

5. Tracking Foster Class visits

- Frequency and duration (please see "Tracking Foster Class Visit" templates)
- Demeanor and behavior, responsiveness to Foster Class teacher
- Tracking this information can be very useful when reviewing a student's progress and ongoing challenges.

Foster Class visits provide a 'pause' in a student's day when they are struggling. It is a venue and opportunity to 'get back on track,' meanwhile preserving the working attachments with their teacher and peers. When used in a warm supportive manner, Foster Classrooms can become a very helpful and humane intervention strategy to help children recognize their need for change and to help them grow.

