Positive Preschool Guidance:

Tips for Minimizing Disruptions and Maximizing Learning

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Understand and Respond to Challenging Behavior

**ASK YOURSELF, IS THIS A CHILD PROBLEM OR AN ADULT PROBLEM?**

1. Reduce *no’s* by adjusting the environment and/or childproofing the room.
2. Consider stressors such as poor rest, illness, family stress.
3. Give frequent positive interactions
4. Have age-appropriate/individually appropriate expectations. Are your expectations realistic?
5. Validate child’s feelings (I can tell you are having a rough day. Can you tell me about it?)
6. Take cues from the child and try to head off poor behavior before it starts.
7. Have an area in the room where the child can cool down. (It might just be an empty box. 😊)
8. Give several positive choices rather than “my way or the highway” approach (You may sit on the floor or on a chair. Which would work best for you?)
9. Let the child know that mistakes and messes are okay
10. Build confidence through independence and self-help skills
11. Distract and redirect
12. Use logical, DAP consequences. (If we use up all the glue, we won’t be able to make our collages.)
13. Involve parents in problem solving. Be kind and tactful. This child is their world!

Foster Self-Regulation

1. Give longer time periods in learning centers (at least 60 minutes) to allow children to get deeply involved in an activity and sustain dramatic play, construction, and other activities at a complex level.
2. Choose from a variety of formats (including large and small groups, choice time, and routines) to find the format that seems best for that specific purpose. For example, if children become restless during circle time, shorten it, make it a small-group activity, or eliminate it. Consider the goals of the activity and find a format that better fits those goals.
3. Set clear limits on unacceptable behaviors and enforce these with explanations in a climate of mutual respect and caring. Then attend to children consistently, not only when they are engaging in inappropriate behaviors.
4. Integrate learning through themes, projects, play opportunities, and so on to help children make connections across content areas.
5. Plan open-ended activities that have many correct ways of doing them and many correct answers. For example, rather than pasting a precut (by the teacher) penguin, children tear pieces of black paper and glue them into the shape of penguin, adding eyes and feet they create themselves.
6. Incorporate play! Play is the focus of a child-centered environment. When children play, their brains are engaged in numerous pattern-seeking processes that construct, organize, and synthesize knowledge. These processes include sorting, ordering, classifying, counting, patterning, measuring, problem solving, comparing, describing, storytelling, predicting, questioning, symbol making, creating, constructing, inventing, deciding, explaining, mapping, cooperating, experimenting, imagining, and organizing (Nell, Drew, & Bush, 2013).

Notes:

Establish DAP Routines for Circle Time

1. Set up an area for circle time so that children face away from an open door, ongoing preparations for another activity, or any other distractions. Use cushions, tape outlines, or patterned rugs to designate personal space.
2. How the children sit at circle time is important, too. Discourage W sitting with knees turned in and feet out to the sides. Criss-cross apple sauce may hurt some children’s knees or backs. Encourage children to sit comfortably but politely so that others may see and hear. Maybe even include a back row of chairs to allow all children to see.
3. Keep your circle times short. Most toddlers have a maximum attention span of five to 10 minutes and most three- to five-year-olds can only attend for up to 15 minutes. Plan to do several circles times throughout the day rather than one or two LONG ones.
4. Involve everyone, but do not force children to participate in circle time. Being “actively involved” to some children is watching, listening, and sensing. Encourage shy children to join in when they are comfortable and ready. If a child is disruptive, ask him to sit in a nearby chair and watch circle time as part of the “audience.” Encourage the child to return when he is ready to join in and cooperate. Acknowledge and reinforce appropriate behavior. Tell the children what good listeners they are, how well they can control their bodies, what great inside voices they have, etc.
5. Don’t waste children’s time waiting for them to be quiet and still before being individually excused from circle time. Just get ‘em moved on to their next activity. “Before you go, show me the number of sides on a triangle.” “If you’re wearing the color blue, you may choose a center.”

**SKIP THE WORKSHEETS**

You can help children to build fine motor skills in many developmentally appropriate ways. Don’t spend time doing worksheets, coloring pages, or other tasks. Instead try these fun tasks:

**DAP Fine Motor Activities**

* Molding or rolling play dough into balls between both hands.
* Rolling play dough into tiny ball with fingertips.
* Tearing newspaper into strips then crumpling them into balls.
* Scrunching up a single sheet of newspaper in one hand.
* Lacing and sewing activities such as stringing beads, cereal, macaroni, etc.
* Turning cards, coins, checkers, or buttons without bringing them to the edge of the table.
* Making pictures using stickers or self-sticking paper reinforcements.
* Poking large pins into the back of a carpet square.

**Scissor Activities**

* Cutting up junk mail.
* Cutting straws or shredded paper (making confetti).
* Making fringe on the edge of a piece of paper.
* Cutting out pictures from a toy catalog or newspaper ad from a toy store.
* Cutting alphabet letters out of a magazine and creating an anonymous letter to a friend.

Notes: