

# Behaviour Management

## in Early Childhood: Guidance & Activities That Work

Research has shown that a young child's ability to cooperate, listen and interact with self-control is an essential indicator for school success. The child who cannot get along with the group has a difficult time focusing on classroom activities. As preschool and prep teachers know, behaviour management is essential for creating a positive early childhood learning environment. This guide explores how behaviour management is much more than discipline as it helps you create a learning environment that works!

### Classroom Management That Promotes Positive Behaviour and Prevents Conflict

#### Teacher's Role in Creating a Positive Environment

Young children are very aware of how their thoughts, opinions and feelings are being accepted. They naturally use YOU as a model for interactions with others. Your eye contact, attentive listening, body language and positive communications (particularly with a difficult behaviour) tell children that they are respected and valued even when times are tough.

#### Impacting Behaviour Through Environment

- Offer soft areas for rest and renewal. Pillows, books, dolls and stuffed toys can be a quieting influence. This is a positive alternative to being chastised in a "time out" area.
- Create a place to work out emotions and extra energy. Use a small clay or play dough table as a place for children to express anger and frustration. It's better to pound clay than another child!
- Avoid clutter! Studies have shown that a cluttered room can disturb children. If the shelves look too full, put things away. Rotate toys for novelty.
- Use visual cues for indirect guidance. Pictorial sign-in boards, directions, centre markers/labels, and tags help children know what is expected without unnecessary repetition.
- Provide colour, beauty and nature. Choose pastel colours that calm, or one primary colour to create a monochromatic setting. Too many primary colours can be jarring. Periodically, bring in fresh flowers or plants, a beautiful shell, or rock for a breath of fresh air.



#### Involving Children in Creating a Caring Community of Learners

- Cooperatively create classroom rules. If children feel you are the only one that makes the rules, then they have someone to rebel against. Ask children to work together to create classroom rules and observe how they not only follow the rules, but also monitor each other!
- Promote personal responsibility. Children who feel responsible usually have positive social and behavioural interactions. Give the disruptive child a "job" – such as holding the book at story time – to stop disruptive

behaviour. Ask the child who wants to run down the corridor to be the line leader and watch him/her rise to the occasion.

- Inspire caring and concern. Children are just learning to recognise the feelings of their peers. Encourage them to comfort others who are upset or hurt.
- Set up a negotiation area. This can be a "peace" table, pillows or throw rug where two children can meet to talk, listen and discuss a problem with teacher support. Encourage children to "use their words" to solve problems.

#### Using Self-Reflection as a Resource

When encountering an issue with a child or the entire class, try self-reflection. It's normal to see the problem as something you have to solve/fix with the child/children, but you also need to see if you are unwittingly encouraging the problem. For example, if you find that you are "losing" children at circle time, it may be that your activity is too long, academic or not lively. You walk a fine line between providing activities and expectations that are both developmentally appropriate and challenging.



### A Proactive Attitude That Boosts Confidence

Following are several suggestions for boosting your confidence in handling misbehaviour in your early childhood program:

- Make sure that you enforce/reinforce the rules that you have established with your children and that they know the consequences of not following them.
- Give praise and reinforcement for children who follow rules – establishing a strong bond with each child helps promote positive behaviours and self-esteem.
- Provide meaningful/interesting lessons and activities that ensure success for all students. Do not get discouraged when a lesson doesn't turn out the way you expected. Learn from your experiences and from your students' response to an activity or lesson.
- Draw on the know-how and expertise of other professionals with whom you work, establishing a network of invaluable contacts. Don't be afraid to ask for help.
- Exude confidence in what you do each day. You will find it easier to maintain control when you see that your teaching and actions are getting results.

