

GROUP CONFERENCE HANDOUT – Parent Participation

10/15/09

Interacting with the children in the classroom

Behavior and Discipline

Behavior and discipline guidelines are modeled after the practices described in the book, *Discipline* by J.G. Stone. This book is available in our school library—read it at your leisure.

Corporal punishment, verbal abuse, punishment that is humiliating or frightening, threats, and derogatory remarks about a child, person, or family are not permitted at any time. Positive guidance techniques and modeling are to be used.

Guides to Speech and Action

These guides to action will give you support and be useful to you throughout your experiences with the children. The preschool atmosphere should be a warm, friendly, and relaxed one. You can do much to help create this nurturing environment.

- 1.** Concentrate on learning the children's names as quickly as possible. Being able to call a child by her/his name is a good way to gain the child's friendship. It makes you seem less of an outsider or a "new teacher."
- 2.** Make your name known to the children in a natural, casual manner. This makes you seem more of a person to them.
- 3.** Use positive rather than negative statements. For example, "Carol, ride around John," rather than "Carol, do not bump into John". Such statements tell children specifically what they should do rather than just what not to do. Positive statements are less likely to arouse resistance.
- 4.** Offer children choices only when there is a choice and you are willing to abide by their decisions. Say, "It is time to go home now," rather than "Do you want to go home now?" Say, "Do you want to pick up the round or square blocks?" instead of "Do you want to pick up the blocks?"
- 5.** Children learn to talk by imitation of others. Provide good models of language rather than by correction of errors you may hear.
- 6.** Avoid using judgmental terms such as "cute", "good", "naughty", or "not nice". Express approval or disapproval of the specific action or ignore it. "It made Karen happy when you shared the paint." "It makes him sad when you grab the book."
- 7.** Avoid using comparison or competition among children as a means of motivation. These techniques cause negative individual feelings and hinder group relationships. For example, "Look, Johnny, see how quickly Susie drank her milk? Let's see if you can drink yours that fast." This technique does not make Johnny like milk any better. We all know it is not fair to make children feel that to gain approval they must be "first," "best," or "fastest".

8. A child needs to be prepared a few minutes before a change in activity. For example, if Corey is painting at the easel, tell her that it will be time to clean up for snack when she finishes her picture.

9. Go to a child or children when you wish to speak with them. Since language is an integral part of the program, it is important for adult voices to be quiet and calming.

10. Limits have positive value. They give children feelings of confidence and security. You need to decide what limits are essential, make them clear to the children, and maintain them consistently. Limits must also be adapted to the individual needs of the children and the specific situation. You should not feel threatened when a child tests your limits. This resistance is healthy, but you need to encourage a respectful resistance.

11. Control should be by substitution of desirable activities or by a brief explanation. Whenever possible, redirect children in ways that are related to their own motives or interests. However, it may be necessary to hold a child for a few seconds to prevent injury to another person. A toy may be removed if it is being used in a destructive way. A very angry, frustrated child may need to be removed from the group until s/he regains self-control.

12. Language is often a mode for expressing hostile feelings. Do not be threatened when a child shouts at you, calling you "stupid dope," for example. You might respond, "I know you are angry, but it hurts to be called something unkind. Let's talk about other ways to show your anger."

13. Verbally acknowledging children's feelings. Language can serve to moderate strong emotions. Assuring children that these emotions are universal helps them to feel they have an ally in the understanding adult. Anger, frustration, hunger, fatigue, sadness, and excitement can all be part of a young child's day.

14. Supervision is an important part of participation. Our first concern is the health and safety of the children. Supervision is more important than snack preparation, cleaning, etc. Be ready to stop such tasks at a moment's notice if you become aware of a situation needing adult attention.

15. Give children help when they need it but do not complete the task for them. Often with a minimum of help, they can succeed in becoming more independent. For example, you can **start** the zippers, hold the boots in position while they push, or show them how to flip their jackets over their heads.

16. Generally speaking, allow the children to settle their own disputes. Intervene when a child becomes frightened or when there is danger of physical injury. Encourage them to tell each other what they need: "I want you to share the train with me."

17. Treat spills and toilet accidents in a matter-of-fact and sympathetic way. Extra clothes are kept in the children's shoe box for changes. Only the teachers are to assist with diaper changing or toileting. Paper towels or

towels may be used for wiping up. Encourage the children to participate in the clean-up.

18. Avoid making models in any art media for the children to copy.

Remember that for the child of this age, the art process rather than the art product is the important thing. It is more appropriate to talk about the colors or the patterns or what fun it is to paint than to ask "What are you making?" or "What is it?" You might ask, "Would you like to tell me about your painting?" Resist any judgmental comments, and say, "How did you think of that?" or "How did you decide on those colors?"

19. A child's work is important and should be respected. You can express interest, offer to put the child's name on the work—also the date—and help her or him to put the product in a safe place, their cubby or hanging up to dry.

20. Remember that all behavior is caused; there is a reason for the way each child acts in each situation.

21. Be ready to recognize and accept the wide individual differences in the group. Respect each child's need to grow in her or his own way.

22. Sit on the floor or a child-sized seat so that your physical size does not overwhelm.

23. Listen carefully to what children say. This indicates adult respect of their ideas and models listening behavior that the children will eventually imitate.

24. Be available but not intrusive. If children are productively engaged, it's okay to watch. Be aware that preschool-aged children learn more by doing than by talking (or listening to adults). Too much adult chatter is a distraction, and in the case of the youngest children it prevents them from practicing newfound

25. Go to the teachers for help whenever you are uncertain about your work with the children or if children ask for materials that are not obviously available. The teachers, in turn, will make suggestions or offer help when it is needed.

Your help in the classroom is essential to the smooth operation of our program. You are making an important contribution. Perhaps above all, ENJOY yourselves and the children!

Some limits and positive ways of handling them—When to intervene

1. Except for balls, beanbags, and other similar soft objects, toys and materials should not be thrown nor should they be used as "weapons of defense." Comments such as "Bob, that will hurt someone" or "Susie, blocks are for building" are better than sharper reprimands like "Stop that!" or "Don't do that again."

2. Although the materials are sturdy, we do expect children to stop an activity that is destructive to the equipment. Throwing chairs around or

pounding the furniture with heavy blocks, for example, are not acceptable behaviors. Comments like "You need to be more careful, since that might break our chairs" or "That will hurt our furniture, and I can't let you do that" are appropriate. Help the child think of another acceptable way to use the material or to find another activity.

3. Children should not climb on tables, chairs, shelves, or any equipment meant for other purposes. Redirect the children to safe climbing equipment. Adults should likewise sit only on chairs and not on tables or shelves. Providing a good model is important.

4. "Messy" materials like clay, play dough, bubble-liquid, and finger-paints should be kept at the tables. These tables are easily cleaned and are designed for this kind of activity.

5. Puzzles, pegboards, and other table games with small pieces should be used at the designated table they were set out when children haul them around in trucks; there is too great a risk that essential pieces will be lost. Ask the teacher for some materials that can be carried around.

6. Children should be helped to learn that good books deserve proper care and respect. Books are not to be thrown, slid across the floor or be left lying on the floor where they will be walked on. Neither are the children to write in the books with crayons or pencils. We want to encourage children to enjoy the books independently—they are free to take books to any quiet spot in the room. Since it is difficult for a small child to care for a large number of books at one time, it is wise to encourage selection of two or three books from the bookshelf at one time and then returning for others if desired.

7. So that all children have the opportunity to use the materials, encourage children to return materials and so that all children have the opportunity to use the materials, encourage children to return materials and puzzles, for example, to the shelves when they are finished with them.

8. When two children are in a conflict that they seem unable to resolve (watch for signs of fear, distress, or physical aggression), an adult should intervene. Stop the fighting by physically moving between the children and separating them gently, but firmly. Acknowledge that they have a problem and encourage them to verbalize their views of the problem. Help them to express feelings and needs in words and to find a solution that is acceptable to both—"Tell her what you would like her to do. She has the sled now and you want it. How could we work this out?" You might help the child to ask, "How many more minutes will you need that toy?" Give the children a chance to suggest their own solutions before you impose one on them. They will be more likely to accept and adhere to their own ideas. You may need to stay near and help them follow through.

9. Ask the teacher if you are unsure of the limits or expectations or how to handle certain children.