

Preschool Teacher/ Parent Classroom Toolbox

Quick Reference

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- **Always remember FFC- be Firm, Fair and Consistent with everyone.**
- **Focus on positives/ encourage-** what are they doing that is working well? How can you use that to encourage better behaviors?
- **Slice of pie-** clusters are ineffective, when managing a class or large group always have the adults divided so that they can supervise different areas. This allows for more effective supervision and faster response times.
- **Give choices-** giving direct orders rarely works with children with behavioral problems (and many children in general) instead of strict orders to stop a behavior give the child a few choices for different activities- "That play circle is full, you can use the water table, reading area or the puzzle table instead" generally works better than "get out of that play area, its full."
- **Aid transitions-** give notice that activities are getting close to change. Lower distractions by removing known impediments to transactions (piles of toys, snacks, radios, TV etc).
- **Eye contact-** a common mistake is to either look down upon a child or avoid eye contact all together. Whenever possible get low enough to look into the child's eyes, keep an even, calm voice and discuss an issue with a child. This lowers the chances of intimidation and the risks of a behavioral issue related to the child's natural tendency for a "fight or flight" reaction to stress.
- **Model behavior you want them to have-** children with parents who smoke have a greater potential to smoke later in life than non smoking parents. People learn from what they see. Act in a manner that you want the children to act. If you yell, they will tend to yell, if you throw tantrums they will likely follow suit. Everything is a learning experience, if you make a mistake own up to it and explain to the child how you made a mistake and then show them the proper way to address it. Your very presence in the child's life can make a huge impact on who they become.
- **Follow through- avoid empty threats-** do not give empty threats or penalties/ consequences that are unrealistic. I remember a teacher who once told a student that they lost their recess privileges until they saw the first robin of spring (this was mid winter). This was unenforceable and ineffective as was the teacher I once observed that always threatened to take away recess, snack and other privileges but never did. Think before you speak and make the sure that you are realistic and follow through. If you say no recess for a day, then there is no recess. If however you let anger and impulse lead you to say something that is unrealistic, use this to your advantage by modeling positive behavior. Explain to the child that you like all adults make mistakes too and feel that you were not fair in this instance. Discuss what is fair and issue a new decision. This will show the child how to handle mistakes. If you find yourself having to backtrack a great deal, this is likely an indication that you are making too many snap decisions and you should review your techniques.
- **Developmentally appropriate behavior- is this normal for their age?** When reacting to a child's behavior it is important to have a developmental perspective-

what is a sign of behavioral problems and the need for a referral in a 4 or 5 yr old is often normal behavior for a 2-3 yr old. Consider the age when assessing behavior. Just because it gets on your nerves and is a distraction as times, does not mean they have a behavioral issue.

A few reasons for bad behavior and how to improve the situation

- **Fear, self preservation-** When a child feels they are in danger they will react like all living beings through what is often termed the “fight or flight response” or reaction. This means they will tend to either try to escape the situation though running away or leaving the area or like a caged and cornered animal strike out at whomever and whatever is making them feel unsafe. Try to keep possible threatening situations out of the classroom and playground. Monitor your reaction styles- hovering over a child; finger pointing, yelling and invading a person’s personal space can trigger a bad reaction.
- **Feel bad- act bad (address self esteem issues)-** A child with low self esteem and or one that is exposed to trouble at home or at school can react in many negative ways. They can react internally (view themselves poorly, ignore or deny their personal needs, hold in anger/ pain etc.) or externally (verbally or physically aggressive, refusal to work with others, taunting, bullying etc.). Any of these issues can affect the classroom and the child. Address these issues yourself when possible and refer to behavioral specialist as needed.
- **Schedule based on potential behavioral issues-** if you see a pattern of behavioral issues that emerge during certain activities or certain times of the day, altering the schedule slightly may be effective. An example would be when a classroom finds itself in turmoil during naptime everyday due to the children being hyper after lunch; you may consider adding a physical activity prior to naptime to help them get out extra energy. Another example would be to move an activity to the end of the day when it has proven to be too exciting for the class and leads to disruptions when trying to transition to other important but less exciting activities.
- **Safe environment- safe kid:** monitor the classroom and grounds for what insurance analysts call “attractive nuisances.” Attractive nuisances are things that may look nice but have the tendency to become liabilities such as low hanging tree branches that are inviting to climb but that can lead to injury when not monitored, beehives that children tend to love to throw rocks at, broken glass etc.). If you see potential safety issues report it immediately and limit traffic to that area.

Preschoolers tend to:

- **Learn what they see-** If they see the behavior be it at home or school, they likely will repeat it. see modeling for more information.
- **Be independent/ needy-** it is not uncommon for them to refuse help or refuse to admit they do not know something. They also may have times when they are ultra needy.
- **Sudden changes in behavior-** few things are faster than the transitions children have in behavior. Happy, sad, angry, defiant, they all can occur in a child within a very short time. Superman may be faster than a speeding bullet but my money is

that a preschooler changing emotions could give him a run for his money. Be prepared for this and do not be overly alarmed.

- **Short/ intense relationships-** BFF's quickly become sworn enemies and vice versa. It is common for friends to suddenly have loud fights and for enemies to become friends while the adults are still collecting information and deciding how to react to a fight.
- **Quick anger-** many times you will see a child becoming angry, other times it appears to come out of the blue. Look for warning signs like being tired (yawning, bags under their eyes, lack of normal energy level), sick (fever, change in normal skin tone, color, snuffing, coughing etc.) less outgoing, unwilling to share etc. as these are all signs that a tantrum may be coming on. React appropriately in order to limit behavioral issues.
- **Sensitive-** children tend to be sensitive to feedback, redirection, lack of personal space, privacy etc. Learn when to react and when to let them work it out for themselves. Children will not always act calmly- so long as they are safe and the class room can function you do not always have to implement a plan.

Dealing with behavioral issues: Safety is key!

- **Explain and contain-**talk to children about behavior, contain them when necessary to maintain safety.
 - When safety is a concern remove child from the area of concern. If the child is the danger and you cannot remove them, remove other children from the area.
 - Use time out when necessary- do not exceed 5 mins for preschoolers.
 - Listen to the child- use active listening skills.
 - **Let punishment fit the crime- be realistic and developmentally appropriate.**
 - Use distraction and redirection- yelling does not work.
 - Give choices
 - **Don't overreact-** keep voice level and calm, raise your voice only when needed, it will give more effect and gain attention when needed if used sparingly.
 - **Praise not punishment-** Praising a child for doing good works better than focusing only on when they act out. Focus on the positive aspects of the child and offer suggestions to improve weaker areas. Smile, hug, listen and encourage.
 - **Avoid material rewards-** We all like gifts but do not give them only when a child does well- this sometimes sends a message that they should be good only if they want something. Gift gifts only periodically in order to avoid the child trying to negotiate for larger rewards, or acting out until they are given a reward. **Do not use food.**
 - **Look for patterns in behavior-** themes. Are there times when the behavior always seems to degrade? Look for triggers.

Remember- when in doubt consult! Talk to peers, specialists, review reading materials etc. when faced with a difficult situation.