

## 4. ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN

### General Guidelines

- When talking with children, place yourself at their level.
- Sit down whenever possible while supervising.
- Answer questions and talk to the children when the occasion calls for it, but avoid interrupting their conversations or talking all the time.
- Be relaxed.
- Be consistent.
- If you ask a child to do a task, follow through with that child to see that the task is completed and that s/he is acknowledged for the effort.
- When children are playing well, don't interrupt or interfere.
- Avoid talking about a child in his/her presence.
- Look for what children are doing right or well.
- Let children do what they can themselves and give them time to try before offering assistance.
- Listen to them.
- Encourage children to give and receive help from each other.
- If a child appears to be struggling, ask if help is desired before stepping in.
- Tell children what you want them to do rather than what to stop doing ("Please walk" rather than "Don't run").

### Parent Helpers' Roles in Classroom

The most common set of questions about parent helping surround "What do I do?," "When should I intervene?," and "How can I facilitate play in our setting?"

You will spend the major part of the day interacting informally with individuals and small groups of children and facilitating learning rather than in adult-directed activities. You will spend little time correcting, stopping, hurrying, reminding, referring, reprimanding or timing-out the children. You will have time to respect and respond to individual needs and to relate to each child with warmth. Remember to have fun!

*In the creative play program, it is assumed that a caring and understanding adult is involved at all times in whatever activity the children are participating. The role of the adult is not that of an instructor or entertainer, but rather of a friend whose presence will insure the quality and appropriateness of the experiences in which the children engage.*

*There are three primary types of involvement:*

1. **Participant:** *The adult actually participates with the children in the activity.*
2. **Facilitator:** *The adult gives necessary guidance and assistance as needed, but does not participate.*
3. **Observer:** *The adult can see the children and be seen by them, giving them the security of knowing that they will have help if they lose control of the materials they are using or of their emotions.*

—Clare Cherry, Early Childhood Educator and Author

You will spend your classroom time in all three of these roles. Each one is essential to the life and success of the program.

### **PARTICIPANT**

*Player:* You will usually be accepted because the teacher/parent is desirable and has good ideas. It's also a wonderful experience for the children to engage in safe play situations with other caring adults. Wait to enter—then be careful that you maintain and extend the children's general theme and direction. Be careful that your intervention doesn't identify or change their play. Enter by making statements that reflect what the children are doing. Observational statements communicate approval without judgment. They let children know you recognize what they are doing is important.

There may be times when you need to initiate a game. Continue to try and follow the child's lead as you develop the game together.

### **FACILITATOR**

*Stage manager:* Usually done before class as it is easier and more appropriate to move around and manipulate things rather than children.

*Mediator:* When an adult imposes solutions, this interrupts play and the children do not have ownership in the resolution. When an adult helps to mediate solutions, play is enhanced and continues in a child directed manner.

To extend play scripts you can aid by offering materials, ideas and problem solving/negotiating. Ask open-ended questions. These kinds of questions require no specific or correct response, but rather inspire a variety of answers. Wait at least three seconds to encourage a child-generated solution. Count slowly and silently to three before responding, and then to another three after the child has made a response to allow the child to elaborate if s/he thinks of more. Step away so children can resume their play, or when they gain control over the play themselves.

### **OBSERVER**

When the teacher/parent is not needed to sustain play s/he can be a scribe, assessor, communicator, and planner. Writing while children play gives something important for adults to do without interrupting their play.

## **Techniques for Behavior Management**

- When talking with a child maintain eye contact. Have your face at their face level. If you lose eye contact, ask for it: "I need you to look at me." "Look in my (blue, green...) eyes."
- Don't ask a question unless there is a choice. Say, "It's clean-up time," not "It's time to clean up, okay?"
- Give one or two warnings, then take action. Follow through. Be consistent. This will probably require you to stop doing what you're doing and stay near the child until

the entire requested activity is completed. If you leave the area or divert your attention, you will likely lose their cooperation.

- Use “I” statements. “When you do that, or say that to me, I feel...,” “When you do that to (person) they feel ...” or “Look at (person’s) face, s/he looks ....”.
- Give choices. “You may stay in this area and (state the behavior that is expected), or you may go do something else.”
- Use natural or logical consequences. Following the above example, say “I see you chose to do something else.” Then follow through at getting the child involved in an alternate activity. If you just send them away, they will likely wander into trouble somewhere else. Frequently a redirected activity that is quiet will help the child collect herself before going onto something else. Being read to, having snack, moving outside or inside, playing a game or working with playdough are likely candidates for redirected activity.
- Acknowledge feelings. “I know you are angry (frustrated, excited, etc.), but I can’t let you (fill in the inappropriate behavior). You could (fill in an appropriate release).” Some possibilities might include having the child draw a picture of how s/he feels, telling the responding adult how s/he feels, hammering some playdough, talking about it and having help to write it down.

## Conflict Resolution

Remember that the solution does not have to seem fair to you; it only needs to be acceptable to all involved parties.

- Remove the danger if there is one—intervene only enough to prevent injury.
- State the problem as you see it: “I see two children and one truck.”
- Ask for possible solutions: “What could we do to make it right for both of you?”
- Get agreement on a solution.
- Look for more ideas if not agreed, “Would you like to know some things other people with the same problem have tried?”

If a child has already been hurt:

- Get teacher, if possible, or another parent if you need help.
- Attend to the child’s injuries, involving the other child if possible (getting a cold towel, Band-Aid etc.).
- Talk with the child about how the other was hurt, how s/he could have gotten his/her needs met without hurting, etc.
- Do not force an apology. This breeds resentment, not empathy. You can encourage the child to come up with a way to show care or how to help the other feel better.
- Reinforce that adults are here to help **everyone** get what they need.

## Developing Self-esteem

One of our goals is to increase self-esteem. Try the following at home and at school:

- Use language of acceptance and support (honesty, I-messages, non-judgments, encouragement).
- Do not use or allow children to use put downs, toward themselves or others.
- Give children focused attention.

- Discipline with respect.
- Allow children to grow at their own pace. Provide choices and make no comparisons to different children. Encourage each child's independence. Don't do something for a child that s/he can do for himself/herself.
- Cherish each child's uniqueness. Help children find their own special qualities. Focus on the doing, not the product.
- Reduce the emphasis on external measures of success such as grades, awards, etc. Encourage internal self-evaluation; "You must feel really proud."
- Be available to your children for listening, problem-solving, sharing.

## **Additional Resources**

### **PARENTING LIBRARY**

The preschool has a small lending library of parenting books. Parents are encouraged to sign books out. Suggestions and donations are gratefully accepted.

If there is a parenting/child development topic you would like to see addressed at a General Meeting or other forum, please speak to the Anti-bias/Parent Education Coordinator, or the teacher.

If you read a good parenting book or article, you might consider writing a brief review for the newsletter, including where you found the item. This would be very beneficial to our community.