

Open Classroom Parent Handbook

Working in the Classroom:

A successful experience for the children and for you is based on:

- establishing a relationship with each and every child
- changing your past ideas about what school and learning look and feel like
- catching children being successful and praising them for it
- opening yourself up to the joy of learning and teaching

When working with a group:

- Make sure everyone is looking at you and listening before you begin giving instructions.
- Maintain expectations of work and personal interaction: Be firm. Be kind.
- Remind the children of your name and whose parent you are.
- Tell them what the activity will be. Give instructions in short, clear, direct statements.
- Let the children do their own work (their own gluing drawing, cutting, creating, writing, etc.) They need to gain comfort and confidence and skill doing things for themselves. *Remember, in a true learning environment the product is not important as the process.* Everyone is at different stages and ages; let them each work at their own ability level.
- Direct clean-up of the area and materials before the group time is over.
- Make sure work is labeled with names.
- As you begin to know each child better, you will learn which ones to push, cajole, and stretch... and which to ease up on and simply offer encouragement to... See the teacher with questions about this.
- Use positive reinforcement, compliments, friendliness, support and encouragement—it works wonders!
- Notice all the children in your group; their strengths, what they are less comfortable or struggling with?
 - Who needs one-on-one support?
 - Who was focused the whole time and able to exceed expectations?
 - What was their behavior like?
 - How can you help them succeed? Without doing it for them?
 - Notice their work and how they do it.
 - Keep anecdotal notes or tell the teacher what you observed that you think is significant as appropriate.

Group/Center Management:

- Stay calm, be gentle, be firm, model kindness and patience
- Ask for help if you feel frustrated or that you are losing patience
- Check in with yourself - Do you need to take a deep breath and try to relax? Are there stresses that you are bringing into the classroom?
- After re-directing a challenging child, send them to talk to the classroom teacher if the behavior re-occurs
- Keep materials out of reach so that children do not immediately grab them upon arrival at the center
- Hand out the materials AFTER giving instructions
- Sit challenging children next to you

- Ask a distracted or fidgety child to help by handing out materials or collecting additional supplies
- Look at the groups of children for the day, organize and sort center materials by groups if time permits.

Things you can say to children who are not properly engaged:

Where are you supposed to be right now?
 What are you supposed to be doing right now?
 Do you need help with anything?
 Can you help me with....?
 Come sit by me and let's work together... on....
 Do you need to move to another place?

Things you can say and do with children that do not respond to you or respond slowly:

Move close to them (so you do not have to disrupt others).
 Try to establish eye contact
 Ask them to look at you in the eyes.
 Speak quietly, kindly, but be firm.
 If the child seems concerned or upset inquire about what is happening:

As much as possible, re-direct children with choices—

Examples...

- A child won't come to a center: "You can work on your own, or with your group."
- A child is whipping clothing around: "You need to put the [*clothing item*] on or hang it up."
- A child keeps taking a toy out of his pocket: "You need to put that in your pocket or your cubby. If I see you playing with it again [*classroom teacher's name here*] will have to take it away for the rest of the day."
- A child wants to keep talking with the child next to him: "If you want to sit with each other, you need to show me that you can focus on the activity. If you keep talking to each other, you will not be able to sit next to each other."
- A child is not finishing his or her work and is instead choosing to socialize with other children: "You need to finish your project. You can do it here with the group, or you can do it on your own at the quiet table."

Things you can always do to help in the classroom:

- Check project list or ask the teacher what can be done.
- Listen to a child read.
- Read aloud to a child or small group of children.
- Help redirect kids that are not constructively engaged
- Play a game (checkers, mancala, chess, etc).
- Clean tables and/or surfaces.
- Straighten. Put materials away.
- Wash dishes.
- Clean out the back-up snack cupboard/shelf.
- Clean out the classroom fridge/coffee pot/microwave.
- Hang artwork