

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING THE PATHWAYS CURRICULUM

Encouraging Self-Confidence

One of the most common functions of teachers is reinforcing desirable behaviors through the use of praise. If, however, our goal for children is for them to develop self-efficacy regarding healthy eating and exercise, praise can have the opposite effect we intend. When praise is used indiscriminately, children easily get “hooked” on adult approval and fail to develop their own independent judgment and self-discipline. We also know that the most empowering kind of acknowledgment children can receive is the kind they give themselves. The suggestions that follow are intended to help teachers encourage children in a way that also supports the development of confidence in their own ability to make good decisions. Such confidence is an important step for children as they develop self-discipline and assume more responsibility for the choices they make. The common characteristic of all of these suggestions is that teachers are encouraged to substitute their own judgment with statements that help the child analyze his or her own behavior. Many of these ideas are based on the writings of Mary Budd Rowe and Rudolf Dreikurs.

1. **Report what you see.** When a teacher wishes to reinforce a positive behavior, he or she may substitute the usual non-specific praise (“Good work!” or “That’s great!”) with a non-judgmental description of the behavior being reinforced. For example, the teacher might simply report that a child completed his or her work on time, contributed to a group project, listened carefully during a group discussion, or remembered to return a signed Family Pack card. Such observations allow an opening for the child to form his or her own value judgment regarding the behavior.
2. **Link behavior to consequences.** Teachers may go a step further by pointing out the real world consequences of certain behaviors. For example, a teacher might point out that he or she noticed group assignments went well because people remembered to use the group process skill being worked on that day. Another example might be saying to a child, “I noticed that you and your partner were really listening to each other’s suggestions today and that you got a lot done on the project. What do you think?”
3. **Ask “real” questions.** A very effective way to support children is to express genuine, non-judgmental interest and excitement about what they are doing. Asking “real” questions is one way to do this. Many questions teachers ask are

“known answer” questions. That is, the teacher has a specific answer in mind and is simply asking to find out whether the child knows it. Such inquisitions may have a valuable instructional purpose but they are not designed to acknowledge and support children. On the other hand, those spontaneous questions teachers ask which grow out of their genuine interest in what the child is doing can be powerful evidence of their support.

4. **Show that you trust them.** Expressing quiet trust in children to work out problems or determine the value of their own behavior can also be supportive. There are many ways teachers can express their trust in children. Simply giving them the space and time to work out a problem before they intervene can be one of the most important ways teachers show they trust children. Withholding sanctions and redirecting the child to other resources, including the child’s own judgment, is another valuable way teachers show their support. For example, if a child asked whether a specific food was an “Everyday” food or not, the teacher could ask the child whether they can think of any way to figure it out for themselves, or the teacher might refer the child to a Pathways Poster, the food label, or a specific learning activity. The important thing is that the teacher express confidence in the child’s ability to figure it out for themselves, based on the information available, rather than depending upon the teacher for all of his or her information.

Helping Children Stay on Task

The following suggestions for stopping, modifying, or redirecting inappropriate behavior have been chosen because they are positive, non-punitive, and do not require that teachers interrupt their lessons in order to use them. They are based on Fritz Redl’s four-notched scale to classroom management as interpreted by Ruth Newman and Nicholas Long. These techniques have been field tested and found to be effective by teachers in a wide variety of classroom settings.

1. **Signal Interference:** Most teachers have developed a wide variety of non-verbal signals that communicate both positive and negative sanctions to the child. These signals may include eye contact, hand gestures, facial expressions, and body signals. Non-verbal signals are most effective when they are used in the beginning stages of misbehavior or when they are used to acknowledge positive behavior.
2. **Proximity Control:** Teachers know how effective it can be to simply stand near a child who is having difficulty. Moving about the classroom, placing a hand on

the shoulder of a child, or asking a child to come sit near you can alter disruptive behavior while maintaining the classroom program.

3. **Hurdle Lessons:** Disruptive behavior is often caused when a child is frustrated by a classroom assignment. Rather than dealing with the disruptive behavior directly, offering the help necessary to see that he or she can succeed is often more effective.
4. **Removing Seductive Objects:** Teachers have learned that they cannot compete against such seductive items as the latest toy or a note being passed between class members. Even instructional materials, such as an activity sheet or art materials, can distract children from the immediate focus of the lesson. Simply removing these objects in a non-punitive manner can help refocus the child's attention on the lesson at hand. Instructional materials that might be seductive should not be distributed until they are needed in the lesson.
5. **Antiseptic Bouncing:** At times it is best to simply remove a child from the situation. In such cases the teacher can ask the child to come help them with a task, go deliver a message, or get a drink of water. The intent of antiseptic bouncing is not to punish the child but to help him or her get over the feelings that are causing the disruptive behavior. Antiseptic bouncing might be seen as an informal form of "time out."

Planning for Effective Group Work

Working cooperatively in groups can be an enjoyable and effective learning experience for children. It is, however, a complex social situation that requires careful planning and guidance by the teacher. The following suggestions are based on the experiences of teachers who use group work on a regular basis.

1. Form groups in advance so that valuable lesson time is not lost.
2. Carefully select the children who make up a group so that the most compatible groupings are formed. Consideration should be given to leadership abilities, academic skills, and social relationships.
3. After giving directions for a group activity, it may be necessary for the teacher to lead the groups through at least one example to make sure everyone understands how to do the activity.

4. Once groups are working, it is important to monitor the process and offer the assistance necessary to ensure success. Teachers find that group work is most successful when group process skills are taught along with the content of the lesson. Group process skills include (a) sticking to the assigned task, (b) sharing materials, (c) taking turns, (d) involving all members in the activity, and (e) respecting others by listening carefully and honoring their opinions. Teachers often identify one or two of these group process skills as a focus during a group activity. Children receive information from the teacher about both the content of the lesson and how well effective groups skills were used.

Using Overhead Projectors

Most of the difficulties experienced by teachers while using overhead projectors can be avoided by attending to a few simple practices.

1. If possible, set up the machine so that it is at approximately the same height as the screen or adjust the focusing lens of the projectors so that the image projected is approximately the same width at the top and bottom. When “keystoning” occurs, it is impossible to get both the top and bottom portions of the image in focus at the same time.
2. Adjust the size of the image by placing the projector closer to (smaller image) or farther away (larger image) from the screen. It is usually desirable to use the largest image that will fit on the screen.
3. After determining the size of the image by positioning the projector, focus the image by turning the large focusing knob.
4. While teaching, stand beside the projector and face the class. In order to point out something on the screen, maintain your position facing the class and point to the transparency on the projector. By using this technique, you will be able to maintain eye contact with the class as well as refer to the image you are using as a visual aid.
5. Remember that it should not be necessary to darken the room in order to use an overhead projector.
6. Use a piece of paper to cover (block out) parts of the transparency not being used at the moment.
7. Make sure the projector is set-up parallel to the screen so that there is no distortion from side to side.
8. Check to make sure all of the children can see the screen.