Open Door School

Educational Articles Booklet

Supplement to Family Handbook

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This booklet contains a number of articles that will help you understand the basis for many of our school's practices.

At Open Door School we believe that children are naturally curious and intuitive people who thrive by exploring and discovering the world around them. Our school environment is created to be an opportunity to nurture those qualities in young children as they play, question, experiment and problem-solve, make meaningful connections and work through resolving conflicts. Experiencing such processes leads our children to developing their moral and ethical values which, we believe, are integral to their happiness and fulfillment in life.

We hope you enjoy this reading.

Table of Contents

Click on the article name below to navigate directly to that article.

Educational Philosophy

Why Are The Children Playing?
Talking About Children In Their Presence
Helping That Hinders
Good Guys/Bad Guys
Five Reasons To Stop Saying "Good Job!"
Emotional Development: Beyond Just Being Happy

Curriculum

The Benefits To Ease In
Centers
The Woodworking Room
Why Red Paint?
The Little Boy

Discipline

Living With A Small Child Can Be Fun! Setting Limits
A Note On Time Out

Additional Educational Opportunities

Educational Philosophy

WHY ARE THE CHILDREN PLAYING?

Let's take an imaginary trip to a kindergarten classroom. Heather and Calvin are in the Pretend Corner setting the table and *cooking supper.* Christian and Kenzie are in the Manipulative Area putting puzzles together. Jason and Michelle are building in the Block Area. Casey and Andrea are in the Book Center looking at books and talking together. Toshia and Daudi are in the Writing Center drawing with crayons. In the Art Area Jennifer and Matthew are cutting and pasting. Terrainio is painting a picture at the easel. Lorenzo is washing dishes at the sink. There is so much for preschoolers to learn. *Why are the children playing?*

Current trends toward *competency based education* and *back to the basics* result in pressure on younger and younger children to begin learning their ABC's, writing their names, and learning to count. Among the hardest questions preschool teachers must answer are: *Why are the children playing? When are you going to start teaching them something?* Early childhood educators must have their objectives in mind and state them clearly to avert pressure from parents, administrators, or other teachers to teach the 3 *R's* to preschoolers. In this paper, we will discuss the preschool curriculum and explain how it lays the essential foundation for the 3 R's--reading, writing and arithmetic.

Why Are The Children Playing?

To Develop Essential Reading Skills

Educators know that a child must master certain skills before he or she is ready to read. The child must be able to tell the difference among objects and shapes--he must have *visual discrimination.* He must establish left to right progression--called *tracking.* He must have a sufficient *vocabulary* so that written words will have meaning to him. He must be skilled in *auditory discrimination* so he can hear the differences among sounds and words. He must *understand the relationship among speaking, w:iting and reading.*. He should have *knowledge about books* and how to use them. She should *understand the storyline* (that stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end). She should have an *attention span* that allows her to concentrate on what she is doing. She should have a *good self-concept* and a *desire to ,read.* How does the preschool curriculum provide for mastery of these essential reading skills?

Reading Skills	Preschool Activities to Develop Mastery
Visual discrimination	Learning colors, learning shapes, looking at pictures, sorting objects, working puzzles, copying bead patterns
Tracking	Looking at books from the front to the back, seeing children's names written in the left hand comer of their papers, watching and listening as flannel board stories are told with left to right progression .
Vocabulary	Listening as the teacher talks about activities (The *jello dissolved when we put in the hot water.); reading* picture books with the teacher; hearing books read; talking with visitors in the classroom; going on field trips

Outside is the most natural place to work on large muscle development. but development of the large muscles can also occur inside. Some of the activities provided inside are: (1) Building with blocks; (2) Wiping off tables; (3) Painting; and (4) Creative movement.

How does the preschool curriculum provide for mastery of the six essential prehandwriting skills?

Handwriting Skills	Preschool Activities to Develop Mastery
Small muscle development (necessary in order to manipulate a pencil)	Playing with Legos, bristle blocks, puzzles, tinker toys, small cars, small blocks, play dough; screwing lids on jars; painting; coloring; drawing; tearing paper; pasting
Eye-hand coordination (necessary in order to be able to do what the eye and brain select to be done)	Building with Legos; balancing with blocks; stringing beads; sewing cards; weaving; pouring water, beans, and sand; developing self-help skills; pasting; fingerpainting; fingerplays
Holding a tool (necessary in order to be able to manipulate a writing tool—felt tip marker is easiest writing tool for children	Using sponges, straws, basters, funnels, and squeeze bottles at a water table; pails, shovels, sifters in the sand area; hoes, rakes, and watering cans in the garden; spoons, egg beaters, and spatulas in the cooking center; paint brushes, chalk, crayons, pencils in the art center
Basic strokes (circles, squares, lines that connect to form people, houses, and letters)	Painting; drawing; stirring and sand play; water play; fingerpainting
Letter Perception (necessary to be able to recognize the Alphabet)	Completing puzzles, reading pictures, playing classification games; following bead patterns; watching the teacher write his name on paper; dictating experience stories as the teacher writes
Orientation to printed word	Making books, greeting cards, letters, signs (the adult does the writing and the child *reads*)

To Develop Essential Math Skills

Pre-math skills must be acquired before children are expected to do pencil and paper arithmetic. How does the preschool curriculum provide for mastery of essential math skills?

Math Skills	Preschool Activities to Develop Mastery
Seriation (Putting things in order)	Playing with blocks and balls of different size; hearing the story of *The Three Bears* and *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*
Classification	Helping teacher arrange a room so that the books are in the books center, blocks are in the blocks center; keeping all toys that are alike in the same container; sorting

	objects according to size, shape, and color; putting objects that are alike together
One to one correspondence	Setting the table for snack or lunch; each child gets a napkin, one spoon, one fork, and so on
Understanding of sets	Keeping crayons in the crayon box, pencils in the pencil can, cars in the garage
Cardinal numbers	Counting blocks, counting children, jumps, pockets, colors and so on
Ordinal numbers	Using number in conversation: *This is the second day it has rained*; learning fingerplays and songs that use ordinal numbers
Measurement	Measuring and weighing children and other things in the classroom; using the balance scale; cooking
Fractions	Cooking experiences; pouring a ½ cup of juice; hearing teacher comment *You have eaten half of your sandwich*
Pre-number concepts (next to, around, between. heavier, lighter, tall, taller)	Listening; talking while playing in the block area; in the sand area, at the water table, on the playground; following musical directions
Concept of mass and form (necessary for understanding Mathematics)	Working with 3 dimensional media such as clay and play dough

To Develop Other Academic Skills

The preceding part of this paper describes how math, reading and writing are taught in the preschool curriculum. But these are certainly not all the subjects that are taught in the classroom. Physics is taught when children play bowling, throw a ball in the air, try to blow objects off the table. Zoology is taught when children find a spider, watch it move, and count its legs. Social Studies is taught when the children learn about holidays and have visits from community helpers. Children learn best through doing and being involved in their learning. Piaget says young children learn about the world through acting on objects and by observing the objects' reaction. Children need an opportunity to communicate with others what they observe. This is the kind of responsive environment provided in a good preschool program.

To Develop Social and Emotional Skills

But are the academic subjects all we want our children to learn? No, we also want children who can think for themselves, solve problems, create, get along with others, express themselves, act responsibly, behave independently, demonstrate self-discipline, show curiosity, display an eagerness to learn, and feel good about themselves. These social and emotional skills are also developed in a comprehensive preschool program.

Skills	Preschool Activities to Develop Mastery
Decision making	Choosing centers to work in; colors to place on art paper, and toys to play with
Problem solving	Working with puzzles, building with blocks, and interacting with other children
Creativity	Completing art experiences that have no *right* or *wrong;* constructing with toys such as Legos; cooking creatively; creative movement
Getting along with others	Playing with other children
Self-expression	Completing open-ended art activities; having freedom to express thoughts and a constructive outlet for feelings (pounding clay. instead of hitting, role play, dramatic play)
Responsibility	Helping in the classroom, taking care of plants or pets, being responsible for actions
Independence	Learning self-help skills, pouring milk, serving food and running errands
Self-discipline	Experiencing limits set by the teacher and logical consequences of personal behavior
Curiosity and eagerness to learn	Experiencing discovery learning; answering questions such as: *I wonder what would happen if...?*
Good self-concept	Experiencing challenging tasks which can be successfully accomplished; experiencing success at open-ended art activities; receiving positive reinforcement from the teacher

The preschool curriculum must provide for the development of the physical, cognitive, social and emotional aspects. Preschool teachers must be concerned about laying the foundation for caring, responsible, and successful adults. But these goals should not be the goals of the preschool program exclusively. Instead, they should be the goals of schools everywhere; for all age groups.

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Back to Table of Contents

TALKING ABOUT CHILDREN IN THEIR PRESENCE

We all talk about children in their presence, in our thoughtlessness, we all have at some time done it—before we had our eyes opened to its cruelty and discourtesy. We have all undoubtedly been the victims of it, as children. And the memory of our discomfort and embarrassment should have been enough to deter us from its practice forever.

But strangely, when we become adult in years, we often forget what it was like to be a child. We forget how keenly children feel, how insufficient their understanding of the ways of grownups is, what it is like to be small and defenseless and to have to stand miserably by while your shortcomings are discussed.

Why do grownups talk about children in their presence? Do we really think children have no ears, no comprehension of words, no sensitivity to glances, no ability to catch implications from adult talk? And what kind of example in manners, in courtesy to others, is communicated to a child who must listen in while he is being discussed?

Such conversation gives sanction to two kinds of behavior (which adults often at great pains try to teach children NOT to indulge in)—namely, gossiping about other people and eavesdropping on adult conversation.

We must believe that this is simply thoughtlessness and not intent. But it is well to think of its meaning to everyone.

> Mother stops for a minute's conversation with Janet's nursery teacher. Since Janet is the one thing they have in common, the talk inevitably swings to Janet, no matter where it began. Mother, wanting to be friendly and give the teacher evidence of her approval and support says, " I really don't understand how you get her to drink juice at nursery school. She spits it out at home."
>
> …And if you happen to be in a position to see Janet's face, you see the flicker of a satisfied smile on her face at this confession of Mother's helplessness.

We would not suggest, of course, that adults should not talk together about children—their own and other people's. This is part of adult responsibility, especially that of parents and teachers who share in the guidance and teaching of children. But we do suggest that much of what is said about children in their presence borders on gossip and is destructive to morale. Often the adult uses the device of talking about a child's problems and difficulties in an effort to teach a lesson obliquely. And the child knows this. He readily gets the slant of the conversation and discovers that it is directed to him, although his actual physical presence is ignored.

Perhaps as a child you had an experience in which interesting adult talk suddenly stopped, and the bewildering comment was made—"Little pitchers have big ears." If you do have such a memory, you will also recall your sudden sense of guilt, although you had done nothing to feel guilty about. You didn't know what the silly words, "Little pitchers have big ears," meant. But it was something that had to do with you, and disagreeably at that.

One of the great needs of the child, and one which does not diminish greatly with age, is the need to feel that not only is he accepted by the important people in his world—and all grownups are important in a child's world—but also that he is respected. A child doesn't have the words to label the relationship that accords him respect for what he is and what he tries to do. But he has the feeling. And when this feeling is

violated, as it must be when he must stand by and know that he is the subject of secretive conversation (or of conversation that is not at all secretive but that is disregarding his presence), he loses a little of his faith in the grown-up world."

Please Note

If parents wish to talk about problems their child is having with another child in the class, the problem should be discussed in general terms or in reference to their own child's behavior (and not the other child's behavior or supposed "problem"). For example, if a parent claims another child is hitting their child frequently, the teacher and parent may wish to discuss strategies their child is using (and the teacher is using) in those situations. The teacher may draw on knowledge of the other child; however, it is inappropriate to discuss another child's behavior or development with anyone other than her own family members. If a parent remains concerned about the behavior of a child other than his own, the teacher may suggest a conference with the director and the parents of the other child.

Written by Katherine Reeves, professor of Child Development and Family Relationships at Cornell University first printed in "Growing," volume 14, number 2, January-March 1962, pp. 16-18.

Back to Table of Contents

HELPING THAT HINDERS

Our classroom has a steady, hummy feel to it in the mornings. Your children enter, greet friends and teachers and dig into the work of childhood—exploration! We adults are excited to see children learning as they play, and most of us want to join in, perhaps in fond remembrance of our own early days. We are often quite eager to share with them what we know.

However, there is a fine line between imparting helpful information and interfering with the child's exploration of materials. Some adults may think it's fun and educational to demonstrate play dough techniques such as worm rolling and snowman crafting. For example, really nifty drawing with crayons by adults is entertaining to a child. One might also conclude that when an adult demonstrates the art of bridging in the block corner it would be useful for a preschooler.

Unfortunately, adult modeling (showing how) robs a child of the chance to discover creativity on her own, in her own good time. It really doesn't ***teach*** these skills. ***Modeling does train a child to wait, to follow directions, to follow someone else rather than think*** **ONE'S OWN** ***ideas.***

Most of us are aware of the scribble stage that children go through with art. They actually need time to "scribble" with sand, blocks, and other materials as well. A young child playing with blocks for the first time will probably enjoy piling them and moving them around the room. The child is getting a sense of the blocks' weight and feel. Later comes stacking and placing side by side. There are decisions to be made here. With enough opportunity to really experience the blocks, the children will discover on their own that by placing a block lengthwise across two other blocks they have built a bridge. What joy! What a great satisfaction!

A well-meaning adult may build a structure with blocks that pleases the child. But what frustration the child may feel as she tries to reproduce it. The child has been robbed, for the block building has become something to watch, not do.

Children who are given the chance to explore materials freely grow up to be creative thinkers, problem solvers. Their creativity is not stifled because they do not stumble over the thought, "What am I supposed to do with this? I don't have any ideas." Creative children work to please themselves, not to please someone else. They grow up to be our thinkers, our doers.

Of course we still want to join in their play, and we can if we follow their lead. Poke the play dough, sift the sand, but don't call the shots.

This article, formerly "Helping that Doesn't Help, but Hinders," is a revised version of a letter written by an Open Door teacher Barbara Travell to the parents of her class, edited by Sue Riley.

Back to Table of Contents

GOOD GUYS, BAD GUYS

This article is adapted from an ODS-staff led workshop at the NAEYC conference. It is intended to help you understand children's need to explore hero/villain, princes/witch concepts as they develop their autonomy and provide you with appropriate guidance techniques for superhero play.

We hope that this session will widen your perspective on the subject of superhero play, suggest supportive techniques to guide superhero play in the classroom, and provide materials to help you work with parents on this topic.

It is our belief that having more supportive adults, who understand the importance of superhero play for the social development of preschool children will ultimately allow more children a healthy exploration of the concept.

Outline

- What is Superhero Play?
- Why Superhero Play worries adults?
- Why should we let children explore Superhero play?
- How do we balance children's developmental need for uninterrupted Superhero Play with our desire to work against sexism, violence, and prejudice?

    a) Allow the play and monitor safety (i.e. set safety limits, redirect, negotiate their ideas)

    b) When is it time to stop Superhero Play?

Tips

Play is a concrete expression of children's wonder. It allows children to explore ideas and share them with friends.

Why does it worry us?

Superhero play is one of the places where the dilemma of how to balance children's need for uninterrupted play with our desire to work against prejudice and violence becomes real. While many children love it many adults worry about the lessons they might be learning from it, such as these:

- Differences are threatening
- Conflicts must be won
- Dominance and aggression are appropriate ways to win and maintain power
- Weapons are the magic keys to power and victory
- Toys are the magic keys to happiness

Important facts to keep in mind:

- ✓ We have to keep in mind that young children use our vision as a guide when they create their own dreams for future.

- ✓ They are building a picture of how the world works, of how the people relate to each other and to our planet.
- ✓ They are learning what people do to feel powerful and how people who have power use it.
- ✓ They are exploring how to handle their fears and desires.
- ✓ While we can shield them for a short time from those who abuse their authority, sooner or later they will confront violence, racism, and other corruptions of power, both in media and in the real world.
- ✓ Superhero play is a way children say to us, "I want to know more about these things. I want to know what I should do about them. What can you teach me?"
- ✓ When we ignore their play we are telling them that the answers they get from TV and toy store are the best ones and we do not have worthwhile answers for them.
- ✓ When we ban the play we are telling them that their questions scare us and that the best thing to do when you are afraid of a question is to stop the person from asking it.

<u>What is Superhero Play?</u>

- ✓ Space aliens digging on the moon for treasures,
- ✓ Forest fairies and a witch preparing magic spells and poison potions to make their friend disappear
- ✓ Army action figures on search-and-destroy mission
- ✓ Martial arts experts kicking on top of the climbing structure
- ✓ Princesses issuing orders to everyone around them
- ✓ Good guys and Bad guys fighting each other with every kind of high-tech and low-tech weapon imaginable

In Superhero play children do not just mimic adult activities; they become larger-than-life characters that help them explore their fears, hopes, and passions. They use imaginative stories and props to symbolize these feelings.
Superhero play supports complex aspects of growing up: adult power, independence, and control. Superheroes use capes, power bracelets, wings, masks, costumes that exaggerate human or animal features, and the ultimate power symbols- guns and other weapons.

<u>Why Superhero play?</u>

Children get involved in Superhero play for reasons that cover all aspects of their growth: physical, mental, spiritual, social, and emotional. Superhero play attracts children as they start

- o Investigating power and autonomy
- o Balancing the desire for power with the need for friendship
- o Testing physical limits
- o Exploring feelings
- o Answering the big questions about the world such as:

What is right and wrong?
What is fair?
What is life and what is death?
What is a girl and what is a boy?
What is real and what is fantasy?

<u>Safety</u>

- ➢ Unless the children who are in the play are being reckless, there is no need to stop them.

- On the other hand attacking another child because she won't play the game is dangerous, and should be stopped.
- Fortunately, there are several ways to start supporting the play so it can succeed. Some of this strategies work best when they are implemented before superhero play even shows up.

Setting clear, respectful limits

- The more children can learn beforehand about staying safe, getting help with they need it, and negotiating with one another about their play ideas, the simpler it will be to keep the Superhero play within bounds.
- Children need clear rules about physically unsafe behavior, but they also need rules about other hurtful actions. When young children use threats, ethnic slurs, name calling, intimidation, exclusion or coercion as a part of their superhero play they don't always understand the full meaning of the words but they do understand that words have power to hurt. Adults must react quickly to help children express what they want in positive ways before insults become an excepted part of their play.

What boundaries help superhero play happen safely?

- Limiting where the children can play
- Giving them adequate time outdoors
- Whatever boundaries you set they need to be clearly defined (using tape, chairs, draw lines in the sand, etc); because children in the middle of fantasy play do not remember invisible lines.
- Clear limits on use of materials as weapons

Using Children's Healthy Impulses to Redirect Play

- It encourages self awareness while modeling listening skills, empathy, and respect

Redirection vs. Distraction

- Distraction is an attempt to get children to ignore their feelings and needs. Distraction can be useful when it allows children to step back from overwhelming emotions.
- Redirection focuses on the child's feelings while distraction focuses on adults (When we constantly distract children they are missing the opportunities that help them learn better ways to handle their emotions)

Negotiating with Children

- Involving children in the process of setting rules teaches them that people fell respected when everyone feels empowered, rather than one group always deciding for another.
- A discussion with young children about limits is not the same as conversation. When we talk informally with children we use active listening techniques to follow the children's lead. We ask questions that help children turn their thoughts into words, then we repeat the words so that the children can judge whether they had said what they wanted to say. The adult does a lot of listening, and lets the conversation wonder.
- In a guided dialogue about rules we still use our listening skills, but we also ask questions that keep it on track, and bring in more of the adult perspective. (p.74 - example)

Knowing When to Stop Superhero Play

- If the danger is too great or if it's recurring
- Important Question to ask when thinking about stopping superhero play is, "Am I seeing any immediate physical or emotional danger?"

Research:

- Magic Capes, Amazing Powers : Transforming Superhero Play in the Classroom (Paperback) by Eric Hoffman
- The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales,
- by Bruno Bettelheim
- Superhero Play In The Early Childhood Classroom: Issues In Banning Play From The Classroom (Article), by Brenda J. Boyd Ph.D
- Maximize Your Child's Potential, by Gloria DeGaetano
- Parenting Preschoolers, Issue #3, 'War play, gun play, superhero and violent play … why won't it go away?' at http://www.ext.nodak.edu/extnews/pipeline/pp-3w.htm (1 April 2004)
- Haddam, J (2001) 'Preschool Passions' at http://www.parents.com/articles/ages_and_stages/3019.jsp (24 April 2004)
- An Evolutionary Theory of Right and Wrong (Article: NY Times 10.31.06), by Nicholas Wade

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Back to Table of Contents

FIVE REASONS TO STOP SAYING "GOOD JOB!"

Hang out at a playground, visit a school, or show up at a child's birthday party, and there's one phrase you can count on hearing repeatedly: "Good job!" Even tiny infants are praised for smacking their hands together ("Good clapping!"). Many of us blurt out these judgments of our children to the point that it has become almost a verbal tic.

Plenty of books and articles advise us against relying on punishment, from spanking to forcible isolation ("time out"). Occasionally someone will even ask us to rethink the practice of bribing children with stickers or food. But you'll have to look awfully hard to find a discouraging word about what is euphemistically called positive reinforcement.

Lest there be any misunderstanding, the point here is not to call into question the importance of supporting and encouraging children, the need to love them and hug them and help them feel good about themselves. Praise, however, is a different story entirely. Here's why.

1. Manipulating children. Suppose you offer a verbal reward to reinforce the behavior of a two-year-old who eats without spilling, or a five-year-old who cleans up her art supplies. Who benefits from this? Is it possible that telling kids they've done a good job may have less to do with their emotional needs than with our convenience?

Rheta DeVries, a professor of education at the University of Northern Iowa, refers to this as "sugar-coated control." Very much like tangible rewards – or, for that matter, punishments – it's a way of doing something to children to get them to comply with our wishes. It may be effective at producing this result (at least for a while), but it's very different from working with kids – for example, by engaging them in conversation about what makes a classroom (or family) function smoothly, or how other people are affected by what we have done -- or failed to do. The latter approach is not only more respectful but more likely to help kids become thoughtful people.

The reason praise can work in the short run is that young children are hungry for our approval. But we have a responsibility not to exploit that dependence for our own convenience. A "Good job!" to reinforce something that makes our lives a little easier can be an example of taking advantage of children's dependence. Kids may also come to feel manipulated by this, even if they can't quite explain why.

2. Creating praise junkies. To be sure, not every use of praise is a calculated tactic to control children's behavior. Sometimes we compliment kids just because we're genuinely pleased by what they've done. Even then, however, it's worth looking more closely. Rather than bolstering a child's self-esteem, praise may increase kids' dependence on us. The more we say, "I like the way you…." or "Good _____ing," the more kids come to rely on our evaluations, our decisions about what's good and bad, rather than learning to form their own judgments. It leads them to measure their worth in terms of what will lead us to smile and dole out some more approval.

Mary Budd Rowe, a researcher at the University of Florida, discovered that students who were praised lavishly by their teachers were more tentative in their responses, more apt to answer in a questioning tone of voice ("Um, seven?"). They tended to back off from an idea they had proposed as soon as an adult disagreed with them. And they were less likely to persist with difficult tasks or share their ideas with other students.

In short, "Good job!" doesn't reassure children; ultimately, it makes them feel less secure. It may even create a vicious circle such that the more we slather on the praise, the more kids seem to need it, so we praise them some more. Sadly, some of these kids will grow into adults who continue to need someone

else to pat them on the head and tell them whether what they did was OK. Surely this is not what we want for our daughters and sons.

3. Stealing a child's pleasure. Apart from the issue of dependence, a child deserves to take delight in her accomplishments, to feel pride in what she's learned how to do. She also deserves to decide when to feel that way. Every time we say, "Good job!", though, we're telling a child how to feel.

To be sure, there are times when our evaluations are appropriate and our guidance is necessary -- especially with toddlers and preschoolers. But a constant stream of value judgments is neither necessary nor useful for children's development. Unfortunately, we may not have realized that "Good job!" is just as much an evaluation as "Bad job!" The most notable feature of a positive judgment isn't that it's positive, but that it's a judgment. And people, including kids, don't like being judged.

I cherish the occasions when my daughter manages to do something for the first time, or does something better than she's ever done it before. But I try to resist the knee-jerk tendency to say, "Good job!" because I don't want to dilute her joy. I want her to share her pleasure with me, not look to me for a verdict. I want her to exclaim, "I did it!" (which she often does) instead of asking me uncertainly, "Was that good?"

4. Losing interest. "Good painting!" may get children to keep painting for as long as we keep watching and praising. But, warns Lilian Katz, one of the country's leading authorities on early childhood education, "once attention is withdrawn, many kids won't touch the activity again." Indeed, an impressive body of scientific research has shown that the more we reward people for doing something, the more they tend to lose interest in whatever they had to do to get the reward. Now the point isn't to draw, to read, to think, to create – the point is to get the goody, whether it's an ice cream, a sticker, or a "Good job!"

In a troubling study conducted by Joan Grusec at the University of Toronto, young children who were frequently praised for displays of generosity tended to be slightly less generous on an everyday basis than other children were. Every time they had heard "Good sharing!" or "I'm so proud of you for helping," they became a little less interested in sharing or helping. Those actions came to be seen not as something valuable in their own right but as something they had to do to get that reaction again from an adult. Generosity became a means to an end.

Does praise motivate kids? Sure. It motivates kids to get praise. Alas, that's often at the expense of commitment to whatever they were doing that prompted the praise.

5. Reducing achievement. As if it weren't bad enough that "Good job!" can undermine independence, pleasure, and interest, it can also interfere with how good a job children actually do. Researchers keep finding that kids who are praised for doing well at a creative task tend to stumble at the next task – and they don't do as well as children who weren't praised to begin with.

Why does this happen? Partly because the praise creates pressure to "keep up the good work" that gets in the way of doing so. Partly because their interest in what they're doing may have declined. Partly because they become less likely to take risks – a prerequisite for creativity – once they start thinking about how to keep those positive comments coming.

More generally, "Good job!" is a remnant of an approach to psychology that reduces all of human life to behaviors that can be seen and measured. Unfortunately, this ignores the thoughts, feelings, and values that lie behind behaviors. For example, a child may share a snack with a friend as a way of attracting praise, or as a way of making sure the other child has enough to eat. Praise for sharing ignores these different motives. Worse, it actually promotes the less desirable motive by making children more likely to fish for praise in the future.

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Once you start to see praise for what it is – and what it does – these constant little evaluative eruptions from adults start to produce the same effect as fingernails being dragged down a blackboard. You begin to root for a child to give his teachers or parents a taste of their own treacle by turning around to them and saying (in the same saccharine tone of voice), "Good praising!"

Still, it's not an easy habit to break. It can seem strange, at least at first, to stop praising; it can feel as though you're being chilly or withholding something. But that, it soon becomes clear, suggests that we praise more because we need to say it than because children need to hear it. Whenever that's true, it's time to rethink what we're doing.

What kids do need is unconditional support, love with no strings attached. That's not just different from praise – it's the opposite of praise. "Good job!" is conditional. It means we're offering attention and acknowledgement and approval for jumping through our hoops, for doing things that please us.

This point, you'll notice, is very different from a criticism that some people offer to the effect that we give kids too much approval, or give it too easily. They recommend that we become more miserly with our praise and demand that kids "earn" it. But the real problem isn't that children expect to be praised for everything they do these days. It's that we're tempted to take shortcuts, to manipulate kids with rewards instead of explaining and helping them to develop needed skills and good values.

So what's the alternative? That depends on the situation, but whatever we decide to say instead has to be offered in the context of genuine affection and love for who kids are rather than for what they've done. When unconditional support is present, "Good job!" isn't necessary; when it's absent, "Good job!" won't help.

If we're praising positive actions as a way of discouraging misbehavior, this is unlikely to be effective for long. Even when it works, we can't really say the child is now "behaving himself"; it would be more accurate to say the praise is behaving him. The alternative is to work with the child, to figure out the reasons he's acting that way. We may have to reconsider our own requests rather than just looking for a way to get kids to obey. (Instead of using "Good job!" to get a four-year-old to sit quietly through a long class meeting or family dinner, perhaps we should ask whether it's reasonable to expect a child to do so.)

We also need to bring kids in on the process of making decisions. If a child is doing something that disturbs others, then sitting down with her later and asking, "What do you think we can do to solve this problem?" will likely be more effective than bribes or threats. It also helps a child learn how to solve problems and teaches that her ideas and feelings are important. Of course, this process takes time and talent, care and courage. Tossing off a "Good job!" when the child acts in the way we deem appropriate takes none of those things, which helps to explain why "doing to" strategies are a lot more popular than "working with" strategies.

And what can we say when kids just do something impressive? Consider three possible responses:

* Say nothing. Some people insist a helpful act must be "reinforced" because, secretly or unconsciously, they believe it was a fluke. If children are basically evil, then they have to be given an artificial reason for being nice (namely, to get a verbal reward). But if that cynicism is unfounded – and a lot of research suggests that it is – then praise may not be necessary.

* Say what you saw. A simple, evaluation-free statement ("You put your shoes on by yourself" or even just "You did it") tells your child that you noticed. It also lets her take pride in what she did. In other cases, a more elaborate description may make sense. If your child draws a picture, you might provide feedback – not judgment – about what you noticed: "This mountain is huge!" "Boy, you sure used a lot of purple today!"

If a child does something caring or generous, you might gently draw his attention to the effect of his action on the other person: "Look at Abigail's face! She seems pretty happy now that you gave her some of your snack." This is completely different from praise, where the emphasis is on how you feel about her sharing.

* Talk less, ask more. Even better than descriptions are questions. Why tell him what part of his drawing impressed you when you can ask him what he likes best about it? Asking "What was the hardest part to draw?" or "How did you figure out how to make the feet the right size?" is likely to nourish his interest in drawing. Saying "Good job!", as we've seen, may have exactly the opposite effect.

This doesn't mean that all compliments, all thank-yous, all expressions of delight are harmful. We need to consider our motives for what we say (a genuine expression of enthusiasm is better than a desire to manipulate the child's future behavior) as well as the actual effects of doing so. Are our reactions helping the child to feel a sense of control over her life -- or to constantly look to us for approval? Are they helping her to become more excited about what she's doing in its own right – or turning it into something she just wants to get through in order to receive a pat on the head?

It's not a matter of memorizing a new script, but of keeping in mind our long-term goals for our children and watching for the effects of what we say. The bad news is that the use of positive reinforcement really isn't so positive. The good news is that you don't have to evaluate in order to encourage.

Written by Alfie Kohn this article was published in Young Children, September 2001;
and, in abridged form (with the title "Hooked on Praise"), in Parents Magazine, May 2000.

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Back to Table of Contents

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT: BEYOND JUST BEING HAPPY

Emotions are an essential part of any human being. Emotional development is recognized as a separate area that needs attention during the growing years. However often when we talk about emotional development we only consider HAPPY emotions. When children are not happy or excited, we see it as a problem and try to offer solutions to make them happy. What message are we delivering to our children by allowing them to ONLY be HAPPY?

There is a spectrum of all different kinds of emotions from happiness and excitement to sadness and anger. Here at Open Door we believe that all of the emotions that people express deserve attention, that they all are OK to express as long as they are expressed in a safe and respectful manner. Our task is to teach children how to do it. Not an easy task, but what a valuable one!

Every year there are a few children who have difficulty starting the school year or start having problems shortly thereafter. Often during the period of difficulty they will cry to demonstrate their unwillingness to cooperate or to simply express their opinion towards the situation. Imagine that you see a child who is crying. You might or might not know why. It actually does not matter. I bet the first thing that comes to our mind is to rush and help the child - pick him up, give him a hug, ask what is wrong, etc. What we forget is that a young child's brain perceives the same information differently from adults. When we rush to offer a solution we simply ignore the child's feelings and distract him to a resolution that is acceptable. The message that we deliver with our action is – "You are doing something that worries me. It is unacceptable and must stop. Let's think of something else." None of us intentionally delivers this message, however it gets into a child's mind. When that practice goes on for a while sadness could grow into anger or aggression, complete discomfort to express any feelings and thus withdrawing from the environment or fear to be without a person who can distract - depending on the personality of a child. I am sure those are not the lessons we want our precious ones to learn. Is it possible to avoid this complexity? Sure it is. It is possible by simple acknowledgement of any emotion a child expresses. In our example it will be getting on his level, looking at him and stating the fact - "I see that you are crying. What can I do to help you?" In other words they hear – "She heard me. She really wants to know what is going on. It is safe for me to cry. She wants to help me." All our children need from us in the aspect of learning how to handle their emotions is TO BE HEARD and to feel secure.

Children usually solve their problems easily. They need less of our imposed solutions. They need trustworthy adults who can help them understand their own emotions by guiding them through tough times. Different children have different reasons that bring out different emotions and it is our task to hear them, acknowledge the difficulty they are struggling with and guide them through it. This is what they need from us.

Written by Irina Ly, Open Door School Director, 2002-2010.

Back to Table of Contents

Curriculum

THE BENEFITS TO EASE-IN

What is "Ease-In"? Why does it take so long? These are two questions parents often ask at the beginning of each year. This is an attempt to help you understand the importance of Ease-In and the benefits it provides to your child and the classroom.

Have you ever worked in a job that threw you right into the regular routine without giving you the opportunity to figure out with whom you were working, a tour of the facility where you worked, and an orientation to give you expectations and schedules? It can be a bit overwhelming for us as adults. Now imagine a child two, three, or four years of age jumping feet first into a new situation. At school, the children come to a new environment, encounter new and interesting tools for learning, meet and interact with new adults and lots of new children, and are asked to conform to a new routine.

Now, multiply that one situation times 16 and you have a class of 3's and 4's at Open Door!

At Open Door, our goal is to make this transition into school as smooth and gentle as possible. Of course, children develop at different rates, and some may be able to handle coming to school all day on Day One. The reason for Ease-In is not based solely on the individual child, but rather on the class as a whole. The ideal situation is that, together, the children and teachers experience the routine a little bit at a time, adding on as the routine becomes familiar and the month progresses. This has been successful in helping children learn all the transitions they have to face each day at school without being overwhelmed and stressed by the big picture (the whole day).

It is sometimes hard to remember that time and simplicity are gifts. We are caught up in this fast-paced society, which expects that we go until we can't go any more, and then we collapse or break down and cry. At Open Door, we prefer the gentle, slow and steady pace of the Turtle to the hurried and frenzied pace of the Hare.

So, as we move through Ease-In each fall, remember that we have the best interest of your child, as well as the whole class, at heart.

Former Family Handbook article

Back to Table of Contents

CENTERS

Art

Art is a means of expression and a path to individuality. The artistic process is an important creative outlet for children. Image-making helps children process life experiences and fantasies. It heightens their aesthetic awareness and sensitivity to beauty. The artistic process generates many opportunities for problem solving; creative, critical, and, especially, intuitive thinking; and developing decision making skills. Manipulative, pre-writing, reading, and social skills are enhanced as children code and decode the world around them through their creations. Art is a matter of seeing—both literally and intuitively. It aids in cultivating senses. It is also pleasurable and satisfying. It gives children opportunities to say something about themselves, by themselves, through unique marks on paper. There is little better chance for growth.

Open Door teachers…

- Give no pre-direction, modeling, or expectation to children in terms of finished product or use of materials;
- Respect the right of children to discard what they have made;
- Recognize and accept age and child appropriate skills;
- Change plans at the children's suggestions;
- Observe children carefully to identify and meet their needs and let them go about their discoveries in peace.

Blocks

Almost all aspects of a child's development can be enhanced through the use of blocks. Because blocks are designed in mathematical units, they aid in the development of concrete understanding of concepts essential to logical thinking. Awareness of sizes, shapes, numbers, order, area, length, and weight develops as the children select, build with, and put away blocks. The child's physical development of both large and small muscles is enhanced. Language, aesthetics, and social development grow, along with problem solving skills, cooperation, and respect for others and their work.

Books

Books are the traditional backbone of learning. In addition to the many materials now available to children of all ages, books remain integral to the learning process. Today's offerings in books have grown in range and expertise. The primary goal at Open Door is to teach the children to develop a love of books and a love of reading them, the wealth of vocabulary building, and the evolution of communication skills. Through exposure to books and reading, the children learn to foster creativity and imagination. Books reinforce the recognition of cause and effect and sequencing of sentences and events. At Open Door we hope to excite as many senses as possible to stimulate holistic growth.

Dramatic Play

In dramatic play, children take their real experiences with people and things, combine them with their thoughts and feelings about those experiences, and come up with new ideas. They can then use these ideas to create new experiences, which in turn produce more ideas—and so on it goes.

A wonderful creative outlet, role-playing allows children to try out new ideas in a safe environment, work out emotions, and share experiences. It promotes interaction with peers, and aids in the development of vocabulary and social skills.

Manipulatives

Manipulatives not only promote versatility and creativity, but also provide opportunities for learning in several areas at once, including math, physics, spatial relations, verbal and social growth, problem solving, decision making, small and large muscle coordination, aesthetics, and imagination.

Music & Movement

Music and rhythmic movement are a natural part of all cultures, which is why we include it in so many aspects of our classrooms. Our objective is to provide opportunities for children to have fun with music, and to experience rhythm, mood, and melody in a relaxed and joyful atmosphere. While music is a creative, social, emotional, physical, and cognitive outlet, above all it is fun! Music in the classroom encompasses singing, listening, instrument use, and creative movement. It allows children to express their moods, assimilate information, and develop language.

Music is used in the Open Door classroom to…

- Transition from one activity to another, i.e. from group time to the lunch table.
- Focus the attention of a group of children.
- Inspire!
- Rest our bodies.
- "Practice" sound, rhythm, patterns, numbers, and language.
- Allow children to be living participants in the oral traditions of our culture.
- Enjoy!

Outdoor Play

The major difference between indoor and outdoor play is the presence of more space, more freedom, more movement, more noise, and different construction materials—especially sand and dirt. The outdoors is a place where adults and children can make music, cook and eat, enjoy stories and make them come to life, play with water, work with tools, care for dolls and dress up, and create with paint or with clay and other natural materials.

Play Dough & Clay

Play dough and clay are basic raw materials included in a quality preschool program. They are forms of three-dimensional art that are easily used by children of various ages. Play dough is soft and made from a flour and salt base[1] whereas clay is derived from raw earthen material and is stiffer. Both materials are easy to manipulate and appealing to the sense of touch. Clay is especially appealing to the need to be "messy" because of its damp feel. Pounding, smashing, and pulling apart clay and play dough can allow children to vent intense emotions.

Sand & Water

Sand and water are naturally soothing substances. Children have a powerful desire to explore these media, which provides them with both sensory stimulation and opportunities for scientific discovery. They develop cognitive and observation skills while determining how the addition of water to sand changes its weight, texture, and cohesive properties, and while determining why certain objects sink in water and others float. As with many of the centers, children play together at the sand and water tables, building friendships and developing social skills.

Woodworking

Woodworking uses such a variety of skills, tools, and materials that the opportunity for unstructured conceptual learning is almost unlimited. Mathematics and basic laws of physics are part of measuring, fitting, balancing, and use of force. Practice in coordination is constant. Decision making and planning are a large part of the experience. The children are free to learn on their own.

Former Family Handbook article. Much of the information on the centers is excerpted or adapted from *Pathways to Learning*

Back to Table of Contents

[1] To make play dough at home, mix 1 cup white flour, ¼ cup salt, 2 teaspoon cream of tarter, 1 cup water, 1 tablespoon vegetable oil in a saucepan over low heat. Dough is ready when it rolls into a ball. Keep dough fresh in an airtight container. If you want to make different colors, add food coloring while mixing over heat. Microwave method: Mix one 16 oz box of baking soda and 1 cup corn starch, and add 1¼ cup water, mixing until smooth. Microwave 4–8 minutes, stirring after each minute. Stop when dough is stiff but still stirrable. Cover with damp cloth to cool.

THE WOODWORKING ROOM

Each week, all classes, except for the 2's, spend a morning in the woodworking room. Parent volunteers help supervise children in the classroom, allowing one of the teachers to take small groups of children to the woodworking room. Please look for the sign-up sheet in your child's classroom.

(Wood)Working with Children

Woodworking at Open Door is about process, not product. Three-year-olds are curious about the tools and the materials and, most of all, enjoy making sawdust. Four-year-olds experiment with combining pieces, and, if their work reminds them of a boat or plane, they may name it. A five-year-old may have an idea of a product in mind before beginning his work. However, children of the same age may have vastly different skill, interest, and frustration levels in woodworking. Tools are introduced one at a time—first the hammer, then the drill and, finally, the saw. We let the children handle the tool, discuss how the tool can be used and demonstrate use of the tool. Before the children arrive, all tools which the children are not yet ready to use, are put away. We always let the children select (and often reselect) wood pieces, nails and other available additions. Introduce additions only after the children have mastered the basic skills or have plateaued in their development or interest. This special time is for building woodworking skills, so please reserve artistic embellishments for the classroom.

We observe children for signs of fatigue and frustration to determine when to offer help. "Help" may be offering the child a break at the water fountain or a rest on the step-stool; it may be eliciting assistance from another child in removing a bent nail; it may be making a starter hole for the child after she has decided where the nail should go; or it may be asking questions to help a child think through her ideas. But, we always keep in mind that when an adult does all the work, the child learns very little and is robbed of the feeling of accomplishment and belief in her own ability.

To avoid dangerous situations at the workbench, we adhere to the following guidelines:

- Never leave children unattended, even for a minute.
- Everyone, including the adults, must wear goggles.
- Maximum four children at a time, one child on each side of the workbench.
- Each child may select and use one tool at a time.
- When using the saws, wood should be in the vise and both hands must be on the saw handle.

Woodworking Supplies & Donations:

- Wood donations are very much appreciated. However, please note we can only use soft, untreated and unpainted wood. Cedar and white pine are best.
- Roofing nails (¾"–2") are most popular, followed by box and common nails.
- Drill bits up to ¼".
- Desirable additions include rubber bands, wooden beads, twist-ties, corks, potholder loops, and sandpaper.

Former Family Handbook Article

Back to Table of Contents

WHY RED PAINT?

A parent of a two-year-old said to us one autumn day, "You sure are hung up on red paint, aren't you?" It was good that she said that, because it brought to mind our reasons for what we are doing, and gave us an opportunity to communicate our thinking with you. Yes, it is true that so far every time we have had paint, it has been red, and will continue to be red for a long time. Very young children have had little opportunity to experience painting, and we want them to explore the process of applying paint to the paper without being distracted by making choices about which color to use. We see the amazement in their eyes as they take the brush, dip it into the paint, and actually make red appear on the paper. Some have learned already that the use of paint is soon followed by the very popular washing of hands. They are learning that an adult will put their name on the paper, and that they can take the wet painted picture to the hall to dry. They have learned to make strokes with the brush, or to dip with a sponge or another object. They are beginning to learn the difference between painting on paper and painting on the table. They are learning to sponge off the table, floor, and hands when they, too, become red. This is a lot for them, and for now, it is enough. Other colors will come along as the children mature. Right now, they are simply into painting for painting's sake. Learning is a process, not a product. Please feel free to ask about this or anything else; it's good to make us think.

Written by Connie Glass, Open Door School Mentor

Back to Table of Contents

THE LITTLE BOY

[Editor's note: this will NOT happen to your child at Open Door]

Once a little boy went to school. He was quite a little boy and it was quite a big school, but when the little boy found that he could go to his room by walking right in from the door outside he was happy and the school did not seem quite so big any more.

One morning, when the little boy had been in school a while, the teacher said, "Today we are going to make a picture." "Good," thought the little boy. He liked to make pictures...he could make all kinds—lions and tigers, chickens and cows, trains and boats, and he took out his box of crayons and began to draw. But the teacher said, "Wait...it's not time to begin," and she waited until everyone was ready. "Now," said the teacher, "We are going to make flowers." "Good," thought the little boy, he liked flowers and he began to make beautiful ones with his pink and orange and blue crayons, but the teacher said, "Wait—and I will show you how." And it was RED with a green stem. "There," said the teacher, "Now you may begin."

On another day when the little boy had opened the door from the outside all by himself, the teacher said, "Today we are going to make something with clay." "Good," thought the little boy...he could make all kinds of things with clay...snakes and snowmen, elephants and mice, cars and trucks, and he began to pull and pinch his ball of clay. But the teacher said, "Wait and I will show you how." And she showed everyone how to make one deep dish. "There," said the teacher, "Now you may begin." The little boy looked at the teacher's dish. Then he looked at his own. He liked his dishes better than the teacher's, but he did not say this—he just rolled his clay into a big ball again and made a dish like the teacher's. It was a deep dish.

And pretty soon the little boy learned to wait and to watch and to make things just like the teacher. And pretty soon he didn't make things on his own any more. Then it happened that the little boy and his family moved to another house in another city and the little boy had to go to another school. This school was even bigger than the other one and there was no door from the outside into his room. He had to go up some big steps and walk down a long hall to get to his room. And the very first day he was there, the teacher said, "Today we are going to make a picture." "Good" thought the little boy and he waited for the teacher to tell him what to do. But she didn't say anything. She just walked around the room. When she came to the little boy, she asked, 'Don't you want to make a picture?" "Yes," said the little boy. "What are we going to make?" "I don't know until you make it." said the teacher. "How shall I make it?" asked the little boy. "Why, any way you like," said the teacher. "And what color?" asked the little boy. "Any color," said the teacher. "If everyone made the same picture and used the same colors, how would I know who made what and which was which?" "I don't know," said the little boy. And he began to make a RED flower with a green stem.

Written by Helen E. Buckley, author of *Grandfather and I, Grandmother and I*, and *Where Did Josie Go?*, lives in Bradenton, Florida, and Pulaski, New York.

Back to Table of Contents

Discipline

LIVING WITH A SMALL CHILD CAN BE FUN!
SETTING LIMITS

Important points:

1. It is a child's job to test limits. Depending on their age, they are supposed to grab, to cry, to have trouble waiting, to tantrum, to be impulsive. Expect a certain amount of these behaviors in young children as a normal development. They are works in progress. We look for small increments of success and do not expect the perfect child. We assume that he does not know better and it is our job to "teach" (not punish).
2. There are several basic steps you can take to teach and guide your child through the events of your day (examples below). Try to be calm and plan to help, redirect or distract your child towards the end result. Punishments, in our experience, do not create an internal desire in young children to act appropriately. In fact, we think it might be true that when punishments are used as the most consistent discipline technique, some children internalize a "bad" image of themselves and learn to illicit negative reactions from the adults.
3. Language can be fleeting for children. Try to use simple language without long, involved explanations. Try to be visual whenever possible: show in addition to telling, when referring to items point to them, use pictures, use transitional items to move from one task to another (put slippers in his hand when it's time to get ready for bed).
4. Direct consequences speak very clearly for children. You can nudge, cajole and threaten, but when the toy is put away the message, 'I will not allow you to play that way' is clear. This may have to happen a lot of times but fairly quickly the type of behavior you expect will happen.
5. Set appropriate expectations. Many, many problems can be eliminated by lowering expectations that are too high. For example, a one or two-year-old cannot sit in a restaurant, take part in conversation and wait for his food. If you must take a young child to the restaurant, be sure to pack some of his favorite quiet activities (a small container of play dough, crayons and paper, some building toys, etc.)
6. Give warnings. Imagine your boss announcing to you, 'Put on your coat we are leaving now'. You wouldn't know where you were going, what you were doing, how long you will be staying and if you are coming back here when you are finished. What a difference when your boss says, "tomorrow we will be having lunch with our new clients, I have made reservations for 1:00". Show respect and concern for their needs. Children deserve it.
7. In very challenging moments when all else fails we sometimes take a child by the hands and do the task with them (i.e., hanging a coat on the hook, throwing trash in the barrel, cleaning up, etc.). Occasionally children get themselves into a power struggle and have no way out. This ends the event with neutral adult intervention.
8. Children learn patterns very quickly. If crying and tantrums work this time, it's certainly worth trying again. Let your child tantrum, remove yourself emotionally during tears. Be available when the passion is over. Sit next to your child and say, "It's hard to not get what you want, isn't it?" You are being supportive of their feelings without giving in to manipulation.
9. Ignore the negative, emphasize the positive. This is a basic rule of thumb and very important to understand. Punishments, although negative, still give children attention and therefore reinforcement.

Ignoring inappropriate behavior sometimes is more effective and over the long run helps your child develop into a person who feels good about him or herself. This rule of thumb doesn't mean that your child has control of the limits. For example, you want your child to put on his coat, but he says "no" and runs away. Ignore the contrary behavior, get a coat, walk over to him and give him a choice, "Should I put your coat on or can you try?" If there is no positive response within a short time, put a coat on him. Then say, "I know you don't want to go to the store, I don't want to either. But after we are done we can come back home and you can help me make dinner." Stick to your guns, pick him up go to the store and remember your promises. Do not give attention to her negative behavior, be neutral. Most importantly, next time he cooperates, don't forget to mention it!

10. Acknowledge your child's feelings. You don't always need to fix things. "I see that it makes you sad when you want something you cannot have." This is not appropriate in every situation. Try it out and see the amazing results when you hit on the right words and situation.
11. Be specific. If you say, "I want you to be good at the mall", you are asking your child to interpret "good". Say, "For you to be safe, I need you to hold my hand at the mall and use a quiet voice." That also explains your reason for asking for a specific behavior.
12. Use direct consequences. If she is throwing blocks, see if you both can find another way to use them or put the blocks away if the previous technique fails; do not send a child to her room. If she is throwing food on the floor, ask your child if she is finished, and involve him/her in putting food away, don't threaten no TV. Remember the next snack or meal is just around the corner. She will survive a missed meal!
13. We are all human and can become angry on occasion. What we do with anger is an important lesson to our children. If we lose control and scream and throw things (i.e., an adult tantrum) we teach our children to do the same. However, if we have ways to cope with anger in a productive fashion we teach children that anger is okay, throwing things is not. For example, "I'm really mad right now because I don't think you are listening to me! I'm going to my room and I'll be back!" Sometimes anger means that the adult ran out of the ideas and has reached his limit. This is more the adult's problem than the child's. If you find that you are angry with your child often, please allow us to suggest learning more strategies and techniques. Having this knowledge will be very calming. "Time out", if used as a break for one or both parties from the passion of the moment, can be useful. For example, if your child has pushed you to your limit you can say (with passion!) "I'm very angry right now. I'm going into the kitchen for a few minutes to calm down." You may also say to your child, "When you (list the behavior, i.e., yell) it tells me that you are not ready to eat dinner with us. I want you to go look at some books, for example, and come back when you are ready to speak quietly." These "time outs" are not punishments, which emphasize the negative; rather, they are coping techniques for your child to internalize and use independently as he matures.
14. As a parent you have to be creative and take into account all of the variables: is she hungry, tired, ill, etc. However, do not allow your child to manipulate the situation due to these circumstances. Your expectations should remain the same (i.e., no throwing food) but you can soften your response, allow more time for your child to respond, and express your understanding, 'It's hard to remember when you are tired, I'll help you.'
15. Have fun with your child. Laugh and joke together. Don't take everything seriously. Allow him a bit of leeway. If he says a word that you prefer he doesn't use, simply explain. People deserve a chance to make a mistake, hear an explanation calmly, and try again. If you make a mistake, simply explain to your child. "I shouldn't have said that. It's not a good word. I'm going to say 'apples' now whenever I get angry. Will you help me?" Your child will adore you for making a mistake, and for needing his help. If he won't go to sleep because of the scary shadows, sit down on the bed and give those shadows a good talking to! Make a sign to put on the door "Only friendly shadows allowed!"

Let's pretend that this happened at your house:

Child will not clean up toys

Give a warning, "After this song is finished it will be time to put your toys into the box. Then we will all have dinner together."

Return when the song is over with a transitional object (i.e., her special bib).

Child refuses to clean

Ignore any negative responses. Get down to the child's level. Make a game of it (i.e., "Let's have a race, you'll clean up the red ones and I'll clean up the blue ones. First one done gets to pour the juice.") Distract with future plan, "Look here's the book that we are going to read at bedtime tonight. It's about the little kitty-cat. I can't wait! I'll put it on the stairs so we don't forget about it. Let's put the toys away and we can get to another thing!" Be understanding ("Does it look like too much to clean up?) I'll help you." If all else fails, take your child's hands and clean up the toys with this physical prompt.

Even though you have done the work hand over hand with your child, hug him and look together at the clean space and reinforce "Doesn't it feel good when the room is clean?" or "don't you like it if your toys are just in the right place?" Remember to grab any future moments of success and reinforce with meaningful praise.

Maybe you are doing all of these things and more, and more, and still are frustrated. Keep in mind that children go through many stages of development and you should expect easy times and tricky times. Our teachers can help in many ways and we are very willing to do so. We can let you know of any strategies working for us, we can brainstorm possible solutions with you, and we can put your concerns in perspective.

Written by the teachers of Lexington Playcare Center, Lexington, MA; edited by Open Door School staff in Summer of 2004.

Back to Table of Contents

A NOTE ON "TIME OUT"

"Believe it or not, time-out need not be a punishing confinement or a battle of wills between parent (or teacher) and child. Positive time-out, effectively used, is an opportunity for children to feel better. And when children feel better, they behave better. (Thinking of it as a cool-off rather than a time-out may help.)

"Wise adults realize that all people have moments when they just can't seem to get along. A few moments in positive time-out (when it's not shaming or punishing) provides a cooling-off period, and children know they're welcome to return when can get along and behave properly."

Former Family Handbook Article

Back to Table of Contents

Additional Educational Opportunities

Books:	Riley, S. *How to Generate Values in Young Children*
	ODS Curriculum Guide, *Pathways To Learning*
	Glass, Connie. *I Wanted to Marry Emma, But She Went to Kindergarten* (a collection of anecdotal stories about ODS children collected through the years)
	Gerber, M. *My Self-Confident Baby* –M. Gerber
	Faber A., Mazlish E. *How To Talk To Children So They Will Listen and Listen So They will Talk*
	Kohn, A. *Punished by Rewards*
	Holt, J. *How Children Learn*
	Nielsen, J. *Positive Discipline*
Forums:	Every year parents have an opportunity to express their interest in gaining more knowledge in certain curriculum areas, child development, and/or parenting techniques. We put together two evening forums and three morning discussion sessions which follow topics that capture interests of the majority throughout the year. Schedule for such events is outlined in our school's annual calendar.
Publications:	Weekly *Discoverer*

Back to Table of Contents