

Module 5: Child Guidance

Section B: Communication and Interactions with Children

Introduction

The most important element of a quality early care and education program is the teacher. Although many early educators have believed this statement for many years, researchers have recently confirmed that the number one indicator of a quality early care and education program is the teacher. Furthermore studies have found that the quality of interactions and communication between the teacher and the children are essential in building relationships to enhance children's learning and social development. Young children who experience warm and respectful relationships are more likely to develop positive relationships with peers and teachers in elementary school. In this section you will learn methods of communicating and interacting with young children that influence social/emotional development and behavior.

Learning Objectives

After you have completed this section you will be able to:

- Explain how your personal beliefs and values affect your interactions with children.
- Name 3 positive strategies for communicating with young children.
- Summarize the teacher's role in creating positive communication and interactions with young children.

Guiding Your Learning

As you work through this section reflect on your beliefs and values about young children and child care. How do your beliefs and values affect your interactions with young children?
As you read the handout on [Winning Ways to Talk with Children](#) reflect on your communication with children. What is one way you can improve your "teacher" communication skills?

NOTE: The information contained in these sections are partial summaries of the DHS Child Care Licensing Regulations, are not intended to replace or provide an official interpretation of the Arizona Administrative Code and Arizona Revised Statutes for Child Care Facilities.

Summary of Key Arizona Child Care Licensing Regulations

Article 4 Facility Staff

R9-5-403 Training Requirements

- A.** All staff are required to complete an orientation within the first 10 days of employment. The orientation includes learning the names and ages of children in the new employee's classroom, developmental expectations and child guidance and methods of discipline.
- B.** Part B of the training requirements for staff states that each staff member must complete a minimum of 18 hours of training every year. One of the topics for on-going training is child guidance and methods of discipline.

Article 5 Facility Program and Equipment

R9-5-510 Discipline and Guidance

- A.** Child care programs are required to develop and implement consistent and reasonable behavioral guidelines. Teachers model and encourage positive conduct and personal control, and explain the reasons for behaviors that are not appropriate while providing an alternative behavior.
- B.** Licensing standards prohibit types of discipline that result in harm to a child including corporal punishment and abusive language.

Teaching and Personal Beliefs

Our personal beliefs and values influence our perspectives on what is important, how we treat and interact with others, and how we spend our time. Beliefs and values are influenced by our family, cultural background, and through our personal experiences, education, and influences of society. A value is a deeply held view of what we feel is important and worthwhile. A belief is a personal conviction that specific things are true and factual.

We all have core beliefs and values on how we view and interact with children. Our core beliefs and values affect how we make daily decisions including how we view and react to children's behavior. Early childhood teachers need to be aware of the way their personal beliefs and values impact their behavior and interactions. Taking time to check initial reactions to situations, behaviors, and children is one way to ensure that our decisions are respectful, caring and appropriate to the situation.

Teachers apply beliefs and values in developing their classroom routines, activities, and responses to individual children. Young children are influenced by how teachers communicate, demonstrate caring, and respond to their behavior. Creating an environment of positive interactions and relationships is essential to a caring and responsive classroom. Communication and conversations between a teacher and the children are essential in building trusting teacher-child relationships.

- Teachers that provide nurturing care and demonstrate acceptance of each child help develop children's sense of competence and self-esteem.
- Teachers can influence young children in developing appropriate behavior, understanding unacceptable behavior has consequences, and acquiring positive character traits.

Teaching Styles

Green and Valles (2006) wrote that teachers, like parents, use a variety of disciplinary styles with children. Some disciplinary styles are more effective than others in achieving positive outcomes with children. Below are the three most common styles.

- **Authoritarian style:** Teachers are inflexible, highly directive, and controlling of children's activities. Teachers who apply this style do not communicate or interact in a nurturing manner. Children who are cared for by authoritarian teachers tend to be irritable and look for ways to obtain control in the classroom.
- **Permissive style:** Teachers who apply this style of discipline are warm and accepting of the children but do not expect them to act in an age-appropriate manner. Teachers with a permissive style allow children to regulate their own behavior, do not give children expectations, use little discipline, and avoid confronting problem behaviors. Children who are in this type of setting tend to be less assertive, less cognitively competent, show less self-regulation and less social responsibility.
- **Authoritative style:** Teachers are restrictive and set expectations, while providing children with positive communication and warmth. Teachers with this style are flexible but firm, maintain control and discipline, and provide clear expectations for behavior that are monitored. This balanced approach to discipline is the most effective style. Children who are raised by authoritative parents and teachers are more likely to develop responsibility, cooperation, and self-regulation.

Communication Strategies

Winning Ways to Talk to Children (Vincell), a booklet developed for child care professionals, explains communication techniques and methods to create a nurturing, enriched, and respectful environment for young children. Teachers who use positive verbal guidance are respectful of children, validate children's feelings, and clearly communicate expectations. The following methods for using communication to create a winning environment for children are described in the booklet:

- Positive words communicate acceptance for each child.
- Use door openers to say more, share ideas, and feelings.
- Listen attentively.
- Use "you messages" to reflect children's ideas and feelings.
- Say "do" instead of "don't".
- Talk with and to children- not **AT** them.
- Use "I" messages to talk about your thoughts and feelings.

- Make sure you have children's attention before you talk.
- Keep requests simple.
- Make important requests firmly.
- Talk at the child's eye-level.
- Be courteous.
- Let children tell their stories.
- Speak kindly.

Creating a Positive and Respectful Classroom

Positive communication is a significant element in creating a classroom atmosphere that is welcoming to children. Warm, nurturing, and respectful teacher-child relationships create cooperative interactions and reduce the incidence of negative behaviors. The following tips are useful in developing an environment that is conducive to positive teacher-child and peer interactions.

- Get to know each child as a unique individual with special talents, skills, abilities, learning styles preferences, temperament, family and culture. This will also aid you in planning activities.
- Warmly welcome each child as they arrive.
- Hug children.
- Promptly comfort children who are unhappy or in distress.
- Smile!
- Listen to your tone of voice. How would it sound to a child?
- Engage in respectful listening by actively seeking the child's point of view to understand their perspective.
- Non-verbal behavior indicates that you are happy to be in the classroom.
- Engage in pleasant conversations with children about their interests or questions. If teacher talk is mostly instructions and activity related, observe the children and talk about their activities and interests.
- Set clear and fair expectations for the children.
- Involve children in challenging activities and tasks.
- Give children feedback that makes them think and expand their understanding.
- Guiding children's behavior requires considering the child's age, developmental stage, and temperament.
- Provide clear behavior expectations and hold children responsible for meeting the behavioral expectation.
- Implement consequences for negative behavior in a fair and consistent manner.

Applying Your Knowledge

How does this information affect your work with young children?

A positive and nurturing classroom atmosphere is a key to developing guidance strategies. Reflecting on your personal beliefs and values helps to clarify your perspectives and reactions to children's behaviors as you learn new teaching and guidance strategies. Awareness of teaching styles and strategies can assist you in establishing a classroom environment that encourages positive behaviors by understanding the individual child, creating expectations, using communication skills, and providing caring teacher-child interactions.

Check Your Understanding

- ✓ Explain how your personal beliefs and values affect your interactions with young children.
- ✓ Select a communication strategy that you can improve from Winning Ways to Talk with Children and explain the reasons you selected the communication strategy.
- ✓ List 3 ways you can create a positive classroom atmosphere.

Resources

Handout

"Winning Ways to Talk with Children" (Vincell) Retrieved from <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/Publications/22-649.pdf>

References

Green, S. & Valles, D. (2006). Positive teacher-child interactions. *School-Age Connections*, 15(3), Retrieved from: http://fcs.tamu.edu/families/child_care/newsletters_school_age/sac_wologo/sac15_3wologo.pdf

Excerpt from Promoting Positive Behavior: Guidance Strategies for Early Childhood Settings, by S.K. Adams, J.

Baronberg, 2005 edition, p. 40-44. Retrieved from <http://www.education.com/reference/article/positive-guidance-techniques/>

Module 5 Section B Worksheet

Explain how your personal beliefs and values affect your interactions with young children.

Select a communication strategy that you can improve from Winning Ways to Talk with Children and explain the reasons you selected the communication strategy.

List 3 ways you can create a positive classroom atmosphere.

1.

2.

3.
