

SEEDS

Strategies and Exercises for Emotional and Developmental Success

Over the years the ECDC has incorporated several popular approaches to classroom management including Love and Logic, Conscious Discipline, The Montessori Method, and others. Our staff developed the following plan by taking the best of these evidence based approaches in combination with their own experiences in the classroom. The result is a highly effective program for classroom management and self regulation used in all the ECDC classrooms and by all staff members to support the growth of each student in mind, body, and spirit.

A Brain In Crisis	When children are stressed, they are not capable of regulating their behavior and emotions. If a child is experiencing stress, the teacher should first encourage strategies to calm the child before attempting to regulate. Some examples of stressful situations are separation anxiety, frustration with a peer, and trouble transitioning from one activity to another.
Consequences Over Punishments	Natural consequences are beneficial when teaching children to make right choices. Punishments such as taking away play time or toys only address the wrong behavior, not the source of the behavior. By allowing children to encounter consequences for their actions, they learn that right choices often result in positive consequences and wrong choices result in negative consequences.
Identifying Emotions	In order for children to regulate their emotions, they must first learn to identify specific characteristics of emotions in themselves and in peers. The emotions sad, happy, angry, scared, and their cousin emotions disappointed, calm, frustrated, and anxious, are the most common emotions preschoolers encounter. Once they are able to identify these emotions by the way they look, sound, or feel, they can begin the process of emotional regulation for themselves or reacting appropriately when seeing them in others.
A Carefully Prepared Environment	A well prepared classroom environment invites children to explore developmentally appropriate materials using all their senses. This exploration aids in the children reaching their full and unique potential.
Developmentally Appropriate Expectations	Children develop skills at varying rates. ECDC students range in age from 3 years to 6 years. Expectations for behavior are not only based on a child's age, but on his level of development. Making adjustments after monitoring a child's ability is an important piece to classroom management.
Model Ideal Behavior	Children often learn behaviors by observing the peers and adults in their lives. Teachers use modeling as a tool to encourage positive behaviors in the classroom. Some ways they model behavior are dramatic play, puppets, or literature.
Develop Relationships	Establishing a positive rapport between teacher and child fosters healthy habits and behaviors. Teachers strive to build positive relationships with students and their parents early in the school year. Frequent communication between teacher and parent is crucial for the success of any behavior management. Mutual respect, positive reinforcement, and consistent practices also aid in building a positive relationship.
A Structured Approach	Children learn best in an environment that promotes predictable routines. Teachers develop a daily routine conducive to the active needs of young children. The daily routine is reviewed every morning so children are aware of the day's activities. A structured approach to learning provides a sense of security, one of the most basic needs of children. Once their basic needs are met, active learning can take place.
Common Language	ECDC Staff use a variety of phrases when redirecting children or reinforcing appropriate behavior. Children become familiar with the phrases and the expectations associated with them. Using the same phrases at home strengthens the home to school connection.
5-4-3-2-1	ECDC Staff use this phrase when aiming to move a group of children from a loud activity to a quieter one. The teacher puts a hand up with all five fingers and counts aloud down to one. The expectation is for the noise level to reduce all the way to no sound at 1.
Check Your Body	This phrase is used when a child has trouble controlling his body movements (e.g. being distracting at group times or using running feet inside).
Right (Thumbs Up) Choices and Wrong (Thumbs Down) Choices	Children are often reminded of their responsibility to make right choices vs. wrong choices. Staff reinforce that right choices result in favorable outcomes and wrong choices result in non-favorable outcomes. This approach teaches children the concept of natural consequences from their actions. Staff also strive to instill in the children an awareness that the saints are honored for their "Thumbs Up" choices and by imitating them we bring honor to God.
Bubbles	Respecting the personal space of peers and adults can sometimes be challenging for young children. Staff use the concept of a bubble to explain personal space. Children imagine blowing a huge bubble, big enough to fit their whole body. Children are encouraged to recall the image of a bubble around themselves and others. They are taught not to enter another person's bubble.
1-2-3 Eyes on Me	Teachers use this phrase, often along with flashing of lights or some other visual cue, to get the children's attention.