TATS *e*Update
Program Effectiveness/Quality

Classroom Management – Rules, Routines, and Schedules

January 2010

Early childhood classrooms are wonderful places for children to learn the social skills necessary for entry into kindergarten and later school success. Research indicates that the structure of the classroom environment, paired with planned instruction, supports the development of social emotional skills as well as prevents behavioral issues.

> *"Studies have documented that schedules and routines influence children's emotional, cognitive, and social development. For example, predictable and consistent schedules in preschool classrooms help children feel secure and comfortable. Also, schedules and routines help children understand the expectations of the environment and reduce the frequency of behavior problems, such as tantrums and acts of aggression. Activity schedules that give children choices, balanced and planned activities (small vs. large groups, quiet times vs. active times, teacher directed vs. child directed, indoor vs. outdoor), and individualized activities result in a high rate of child engagement. In addition, the duration of the play period can affect children's social and cognitive forms of play..."* (Ostrosky, Jung, Hemmeter, & Thomas, 2008, p. 2).

Best Practice
The *Administrators' Walkthrough Checklist for Prekindergarten Classrooms* developed by the Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS) project addresses positive classroom management strategies using routines and schedules in the classroom through the following indicators:

Teaching staff to use positive classroom management strategies and discipline procedures through:
- Establishing, posting, and teaching rules and routines
- Organizing the environment to avoid behavior problems
- Being aware of what is happening at all times, monitoring classroom activities and the use of materials, and intervening when necessary
- Ensuring that an ample number of educational activities and materials are available to prevent unnecessary conflict among the children
- Planning transitions between activities and keeping those times as minimal as possible

- Planning transitions and routines (including toileting and hand washing) so that they are well-planned, are efficient, and limit the amount of time children spend waiting
- Using visual cues, including gestures, written labels, pictures, or objects, to assist children in understanding routines and managing time as needed
- Encouraging and assisting children in identifying problems and developing solutions, using incidental or spontaneous situations as teaching opportunities

The pictures below give examples of how these strategies can be used throughout a classroom.
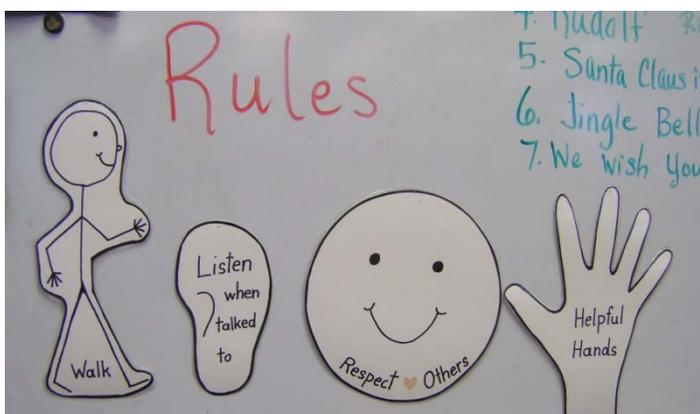

Description: Daily review of classroom rules (posted with pictures and words) will promote the understanding of classroom expectations. These rules should be developed with input from the children.

Description: Posting and reviewing the daily schedule assists children in understanding adult expectations. Children are provided opportunities to work in adult-directed as well as child-directed activities, in small or large groups, and participate in passive or active activities.

Description: Placing the names of the children on the table tops is one classroom management strategy that helps the children learn adult expectations and provide order in the classroom. Children know where to sit, the teacher can separate children who have difficulty working together, and children are provided enough space to work without interfering with each other.
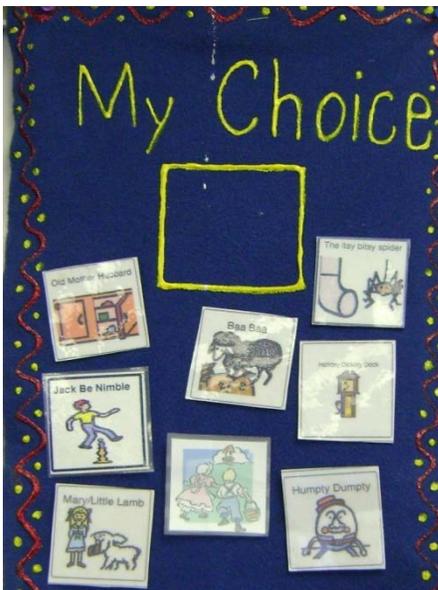
Description: Allowing children the ability to make meaningful choices is essential. This is one example of a choice board developed for a child to allow him or her to make appropriate choices.

Description: By moving around the playground and working with the children during their child-directed activities, the teacher is able to intercede if difficulties begin to arise, such as a child becoming frustrated or conflict beginning between two children. The teacher is also able to model social, motor, and language skills in a meaningful fashion.

Description: Simple strategies, such as matching blue squares on the puzzle boxes to the shelf marked with the blue square, can help minimize clean-up chaos.

Description: Provide children with their own space and prepare the table in advance support smooth transitions between activities. This teacher has snack set out to minimize wait time.

Description: On the right, fine motor/manipulatives are neatly stored in clear bins to promote easy access and clean up. Clear shelves that are labeled help children follow the rules for classroom clean-up.

Description: This classroom provides a space for children to work through their conflict resolution strategies. The posted pictures illustrate the Tucker the Turtle technique. This is a method of teaching young children strategies for coping with anger, disappointment, and frustration. The Tucker the Turtle technique is part of Teaching Tools for Young Children with Challenging Behaviors from the Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children (TACSEI).

Reflection
- How do rules and regular routines support the learning of social skills for young children?
- How can young children be involved in the development of classroom rules?

Many instructional arrangements seem "contrived," but there is nothing wrong with that. It is the teacher's function to contrive conditions under which students learn. It has always been the task of formal education to set up behavior which would prove useful or enjoyable later in a student's life.

–B.F. Skinner

References and Resources

Bredekamp, S., & Copple, C., Eds. (2004). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood program: Revised edition.* Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Cryer, D., Harms, T., & Riley, C. (2003). *All about the ECERS-R.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute.

Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children
The Division for Early Childhood is a division within the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) that promotes polices and advances evidence-based practices that support families and enhance the optimal development of young children who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities. This page provides links to journal articles and publications related to the field of early childhood exceptional education.
http://www.dec-sped.org

Division for Early Childhood (DEC). (2007). *Promoting positive outcomes for children with disabilities: Recommendations for curriculum, assessment, and program evaluation.* Missoula, MT: Author.

Feldman, J. R. (1997). *Wonderful rooms where children can bloom!* Peterborough, NH: Crystal Springs Books.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
A national association with a primary focus on the provision of educational and developmental services and resources for all children from birth through age 8. This page provides information about NAEYC and current research and information about early childhood education. http://www.naeyc.org

Ostrosky, M. M., Jung, E. Y., Hemmeter, M. L., & Thomas, D. (2008). *Helping children understand routines and classroom schedules (What Works Brief Series, No. 3).* Champaign, IL: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning.

Sandall, S., Hemmeter, M. L., Smith, B. J., & McLean, M. E. (Eds.). (2005). *DEC Recommended Practices: A Comprehensive Guide for Practical Application in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education.* Division for Early Childhood, Council for Exceptional Children. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

Sandall, S. R., & Schwartz, I. S. (2008). *Building blocks for teaching preschoolers with special needs* (2nd ed.). Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing Company.

Technical Assistance & Training System (TATS)
TATS is a statewide project providing technical assistance and training to programs in Florida serving prekindergarten children with disabilities. The TATS web site provides information and resources on curriculum and instruction, evaluation and assessment, family involvement, inclusion, program effectiveness/quality, and transition as well as links to early childhood partners. http://www.tats.ucf.edu

Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children (TACSEI)
TACSEI promotes evidence-based practices for improving the social-emotional outcomes for young children with, or at risk for, delays or disabilities. The Pyramid Model framework is used as the conceptual model to promote social-emotional competence and address challenging behavior. One resource is Teaching Tools for Young Children with Challenging Behaviors, developed to assist teachers to support young children who are having challenging behaviors. http://www.challengingbehavior.org