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## Supporting Children’s Positive Behaviors during COVID-19

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### INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the webinar “Supporting Children’s Behavior.” The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

### Goals

- ◆ Understand how implicit biases influence expectations for children’s classroom behavior.
- ◆ Evaluate behavior expectations and adjust them to be fair and reasonable.
- ◆ Explore intentional teaching practices to support children’s positive behaviors in any learning format.
- ◆ Reflect on your current practices and plan to use concrete strategies to support children’s positive behaviors.

### Activity

- ◆ Watch the webinar.
- ◆ After watching, use the questions below to reflect on how you can support children’s positive behaviors.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support children’s positive behaviors.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention in the webinar? What made that fact, idea, or example meaningful to you?

- ◆ What were some behavior expectations you remember from when you were a child?
  - Were expectations at school the same as expectations at home? Why or why not?
  - How do the behavior expectations from your childhood compare to the behavior expectations you have for your students?

- ◆ We set some preschool expectations because we think they help children “get ready” for kindergarten. Common indicators of kindergarten readiness include how long a child can sit quietly and how well a child follows rules. Some readiness indicators focus on children’s compliance rather than their engagement.
  - What is the difference between compliance and engagement? When are we looking for compliance more than engagement?
  - How do your expectations for children’s behavior change when you’re focused on engagement rather than compliance?
  - How do children respond when expectations support engagement rather than compliance?
- ◆ When our expectations are unfair or unreasonable, some children may demonstrate more challenging behaviors. For example, if you expect children to wait silently in a line to wash their hands before a meal, children may struggle to meet that expectation because it is unreasonable to ask them to do so. With a partner, reflect on your expectations for part of the day when children seem to struggle the most. Brainstorm ways to adjust your expectations to make them fairer and/or more reasonable.
  - During which part of the day do you notice that children struggle to meet your expectations?
  - What are your expectations for children’s behavior during that time? Are those expectations fair and reasonable?
  - How could you adjust your expectations to make them fairer or more reasonable?

- ◆ Virtual, hybrid, and physically distant learning add new barriers to supporting children’s positive behaviors. Teachers can use four effective practices (*see p. 4*) to overcome these barriers:
  - *Acknowledge positive behaviors*
  - *Promote autonomy*
  - *Use cues and visuals*
  - *Engage in alternative, appropriate behavior*
  1. Pick a strategy and share how you have used it in the past. How have you adapted it for this year?
  2. Based on the needs of the children in your classroom and your current learning environment, plan to use a new strategy to support children’s positive behaviors.
    - When will you use this strategy?
    - How will you modify this strategy to work in your current learning environment? To support and meet each child where they are?
    - How will you adjust your strategies when or if your school changes its learning format?
  3. Regularly check in on your plan. Assess its impact on children and adjust as needed, using the examples provided on the last page of this guide.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To learn more about how COVID-19 adaptations may affect the ways we support children's behavior:

- ◆ **Source:** TEDx Talks
- ◆ **Video:** School Suspensions are an Adult Behavior
- ◆ **Link:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8nkcRMZKV4&ab\\_channel=TEDxTalks](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8nkcRMZKV4&ab_channel=TEDxTalks)
- ◆ **Description:** In this presentation, Rosemarie Allen asks, "When dealing with the difficult behavior of children, what if we turned our focus inward?"

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- ◆ **Source:** Office of Head Start- National Center of Quality Teaching and Learning
  - ◆ **Presentation Summary:** Challenging Behavior: Prevention Strategies for Children with Disabilities
  - ◆ **Link:** <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/no-search/dd-webinar-01-2015-followup.pdf>
  - ◆ **Description:** This handout shares positive behavior support strategies that you can individualize for children with (and without) disabilities.

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- ◆ **Source:** TEDx Talks
  - ◆ **Video:** Transforming the Heart of Teaching: CARE for Teachers
  - ◆ **Link:** <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/36448/why-its-imperative-to-teach-empathy-to-boys>
  - ◆ **Description:** In this presentation, you will learn about the importance and impact of incorporating mindfulness practices into your classroom routine.
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<p><b>ACKNOWLEDGE POSITIVE BEHAVIORS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Point out positive behaviors when you see them. Be specific when narrating the behavior. For example, instead of saying “good job,” say “I see you are waiting patiently for your turn to share. You are listening nicely to your friends.”</li> </ul>
<p><b>USE CUES AND VISUALS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Use gestures and pictures to remind children what they should be doing. For example, you can show a picture of a mouth when you want children to join into the conversation or cup your ear with your hand when it’s time to listen.</li> </ul>
<p><b>PROMOTE AUTONOMY</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Present children with selective choices to promote autonomy while following health and safety protocols. For example, you can ask a child, “Would you like to play in blocks or science area today?”</li> </ul>
<p><b>ENGAGE IN ALTERNATIVE BEHAVIORS</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Modify an activity or engage children in a different activity when they show signs of decreased engagement. For example, you could sing a song or blow bubbles to engage the children while they wait in line.</li> </ul>
<p><b>CHECK-IN ON YOUR PLAN</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ <b>Set a reminder!</b> Build in time bi-weekly to reflect on how your new expectations work for children and how you’ve used these teaching practices. If they aren’t working, consider why and ways to adapt.</li> <li>◆ <b>Find a buddy!</b> Sharing goals with a co-worker and checking in with each other can help keep us all on track.</li> <li>◆ <b>Keep a journal</b> and make a quick entry when you try out a new practice. Note how the children react.</li> <li>◆ <b>Record yourself</b> (live or video) and observe your interactions with children. Take note of how often you use these practices and how children react.</li> </ul>