

INTERACTIONS - So important!

Each day, you are engaged in many different interactions. Sometimes, you interact with an individual child. Other times you interact with a small group or even the entire group. You also interact with parents/caregivers. When you think about how many different interactions you actually engage in each day, you will probably be amazed!

The interactions you have with each child, the group and parents/caregivers are all very important! This section will help you identify ways you can enhance your interactions throughout the day to further create a positive learning environment.

INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN:

Talk, Talk, Talk! We cannot say this enough...the more you talk to children, the more language they will absorb. Even children who are nonverbal will build future vocabulary and language skills by listening to you talk. So, when children are playing or participating in experience, describe their actions. Use plenty of robust vocabulary as you do so.

Be Proactive, Not Reactive. See a child with the block in his/her raised hand? What do you do? Wait for it to go flying through the air or in a calm voice state, "(Child's name), blocks belong on the ground"? Which do you think is more proactive? The second option, of course. The key to being proactive is to be attentive to what is going on around you. Remember, young children do not yet have a well-established understanding of cause and effect as well as "right" and "wrong." Most are still working on the skill of understanding these concepts. Therefore, you need to be alert and prepared. Also, make sure your "school rules" are stated in the positive so children know what to DO and not what NOT to do. For instance, "We go down the slide" instead of "Don't climb up the slide." Another example would be, "Please put the lids back on the markers when you are done using them" instead of, "Don't leave the lids off the markers." Stating rules in the positive is an easy way for children to remember what they should do.

Listen, Listen, Listen. As important as it is to talk, it is equally important to listen. Young children are just beginning to use language to share needs, wants and ideas. Be patient! Sometimes it takes them a little while to say what they want to say. It is also helpful to reflect back to a child what you think you heard them say in order to verify. This is especially important when children are sharing feelings. For instance, if a child is upset because he/she lost a favorite stuffed animal and is sharing these feelings with you in his/her own way, you can reflect back with something like, "It sounds like you are very upset because you cannot find your toy (name of animal)." Not only does doing this assure you understood what the child is saying, it provides you with an opportunity to help the child put words to emotions.



INTERACTIONS WITH PARENTS/CAREGIVERS:

Guess what? Everything we listed above for children applies to interactions with parents/caregivers as well...especially listening and being proactive! It is very important to really listen to parents/caregivers when they share information with you. Not only is this respectful, the information they share can provide keen insight into each child that you would not otherwise have. Take time to listen carefully and, if needed, make notes as well. Additionally, be proactive and not reactive with parents/caregivers as well. For instance, make sure that new parents/caregivers have copies of your attendance policies IN WRITING when they enroll. This will make things much easier for you if issues arise in the future. The same goes for issues regarding a child's behavior. Address the problem the first time it occurs and not the 10th. View the parents/caregivers as an ally. After all, you are both on the same team and you ultimately want the best for the child.