

10 WAYS

to Increase Positive Behavior in Early Care and Education Centers

by Angela Percival-Porter

*Those who bring sunshine to
the lives of others cannot
keep it from themselves.*

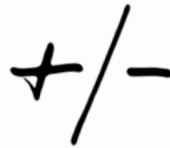
J.M. Barrie

Having a variety of tools and techniques to use in the classroom helps the whole classroom environment. While they will not work for all children, having several tricks up your sleeve will increase positive behavior in the classroom. Here are 10 ways to increase positive behavior in early care and education programs.



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1.

“Do the Dos,” not the “Do nots”

Tell children exactly what you do want them to do. Children habituate to “Do not,” “No,” “Stop,” “Quit,” etc. For instance, instead of saying “No standing in the chair,” say, “Put your feet on the floor.” Instead of “stop hitting,” try, “please keep your hands to yourself.” It takes practice, but you will be surprised at the results!



2.

Offer Choices/Avoid Asking

Choices empower children and smooth the way through transitions. For example, instead of asking “Do you want to go inside?” say, “It is time to go inside. Do you want to tiptoe or fly in?” Instead of asking “Do you want to paint?” say, “It is time to paint. Do you want the red paint or blue paint?” Offering choices gives children control, which decreases pushback by allowing them a genuine sense of independence.



3.

Use Healthy Touch

Touch is not a want, it is a need. It is an interaction that shows respect and is required for proper physical and brain development. It is critical for social/emotional development and it stimulates all the systems of the body and releases hormones that reduce stress. When we reduce stress, we will experience happier, better behaved children and happier teachers. Incorporate healthy touch throughout the day.



4.

Drink Water

Children need water at least every two hours for their systems to function properly and to set the stage for learning. When a child is thirsty, they have already begun the dehydration cycle. In addition, their cognitive abilities decrease 10 percent when they are thirsty. Offer water frequently and daily for optimal learning and positive behavior.

5. Play



We use play to connect and engage with children. We use play to teach social skills. We even use play to correct our children and reconnect with them after correction. Play—in its sweetest, most tender form—permeates all that we do. Be silly, have fun, swing and sing.

6. Warnings with Consistent Boundaries



Provide boundaries that are simple, necessary and minimal. Remind children of them often—we learn through repetition. If it is a rule, then it is a rule; be sure to follow through. For example, “George, if you throw the sand again you will have to go to another area.” If George throws the sand again, follow through and take him to another area.

7. Use Creative Games



Have clean up time races, play the quiet game, sing while washing hands, dance your way outside and so on. Using your imagination will invite children to use theirs, too.

8. Ask Questions to Prompt



“Hmmm, I wonder where this toy truck goes?” “Does anyone know where this book belongs?” “I wonder which activity is next?” “Is it outside time or lunch time?” Questions can smooth transitions and invite children to share their ideas and opinions.

9. Cues or Signals



Pick a few signals to use during transitions. You can flicker the lights, use a bell, use a timer or sing a song.

10. Visual Aids



Visuals are powerful tools when guiding a child through their day. Visuals give us an additional clue as to what is going to happen next. For instance, posters of children playing cooperatively in the dramatic play area. Visual schedules can also be used to guide children’s daily routines. When children know what is coming next, they feel less anxious, which in turn promotes positive behavior. Remember, when we reduce stress, we support happier, better behaved children and happier teachers.

Happy teaching; our future awaits!

