

Creating a Positive Climate

Markers of a Positive Classroom Climate


Positive classrooms are marked by responsive teachers who manage behavior and attention challenges as well as the social and emotional needs of individual children.

Strategies for cultivating a positive climate include:

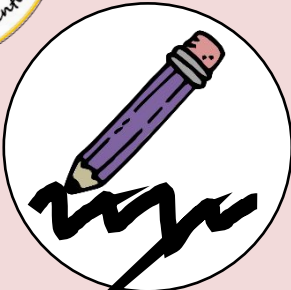
- Using behavior-approving language more frequently than redirecting
- Eliminating damaging forms of redirection
- Giving specific praise
- Maintaining a pleasant affect and tone when interacting with children

Why Children Need a Positive Classroom Climate


Highly positive interactions with teachers have lasting effects on children's academic achievement, social competence, and self-regulation. A positive classroom climate allows children to feel valued and safe, encourages them to interact more with teachers and peers, take academic risks, and more deeply engage in learning.



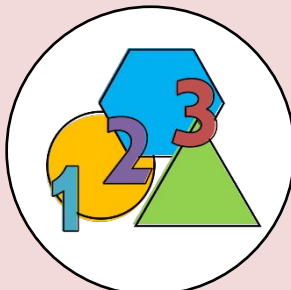
Children who experienced emotionally supportive pre-k classrooms showed much stronger gains in:



Emergent Writing Skills



Vocabulary




Early Math Skills

This was especially true for children who entered pre-k with skills lower than their peers!

In a previous Vanderbilt University research study, children who experienced preschool settings with

- more positive peer interactions
- teachers who had a more positive emotional tone who
- spent more time positively reinforcing behavior

...had **significantly greater social competence** and **fewer problem behaviors** in **first grade!** (Spivak & Farran, 2014).



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Maximize Behavior Approvals & Use Meaningful Praise

Keeping it positive: Behavior approvals **reinforce** a particular behavior. These messages can come in the form of verbal comments, facial expressions, or physical contact with the children (e.g., high fives, hugs, pats on the back).

THE CHILD HEARS:

"I like what you're doing and I want you to keep doing it."

Praise is most effective when it is **meaningful and concrete**. Praise should be specific to children's actions, efforts, accomplishments.

When possible, focus on effort as opposed to ability – this encourages children to focus on the process, rather than achieving the "right answer".

"I like the way you are **thinking**."

"It was **so kind of you to work together to solve the problem** of having too many friends in the art center!"

"You must have stacked the blocks **very carefully** to make that tower so high!"

What **messages** are you sending about which actions and traits are **most valued** in your classroom?

"Wow, that puzzle was tricky but **you stuck with it!**"

Limit Redirections & Eliminate Threats and Sarcasm

THE CHILD HEARS:

"I want you to do something different from what you are doing."

Behavior redirections are messages meant to **disapprove** of or **change** the child's behavior. These can come in the form of verbal comments, facial expressions, or physical contact with children. Statements do not have to be angry or negative in tone to be a redirection.

Some **redirection is necessary for running a safe classroom**. The goal here is for children to receive **comparatively more positive, affirming messages** about their behavior.

"I said stay in your space, Jonathan."

"Please put a bubble in your mouth, Jesse."

"Trisha, are you making a good choice?"

Examples of Threats and Sarcasm

"I just *love* repeating myself."

"We are all going to sit here and wait until Mark is ready."

"You must not want to go to the playground today, Keisha!"

"If you're not bleeding or on fire, then I don't want to hear from you."



Threats and sarcasm are **disrespectful** and **potentially damaging** to children. These are **inappropriate** forms of redirection.

