

10 Simple Things You Can Do to Decrease Challenging Behaviors: Develop Positive Relationships with Children’s Families

When we have a good understanding of children’s development and their individual needs (including their experiences at home), we are poised to provide meaningful, developmentally appropriate classroom learning experiences. Put simply, having good relationships with families assists us in building good relationships with their children; those relationships can help boost children’s social competence and in turn, decrease challenging behaviors. As an added benefit, communicating about difficult issues (including challenging behaviors) is much easier with good relationships in place!

Reflect on your responses to determine how you can enhance your relationships with children’s families.

	REFLECT ON YOUR CURRENT PRACTICES:	Area of strength	Room to grow
1	I greet families by name, with eye contact and a warm smile. <i>A warm, personalized greeting sets the tone for a positive school experience.</i>		
2	I have family photos displayed at children’s eye level. <i>This simple gesture can help children and their families feel comfortably “at home” in the classroom environment.</i>		
3	I have an open-door policy; families can visit the classroom at any time. <i>Communicating this policy in writing, regularly reminding/inviting, and warm welcomes when they arrive helps families feel valued.</i>		
4	I demonstrate a genuine interest in getting to know families. <i>When families reliably and repeatedly get an “I care. I’m interested in you. I value your opinion.” messages from teachers, they feel trusted and respected.</i>		
5	I personalize communication strategies to align with families’ needs. <i>Knowing how families want to communicate (email, phone call, face-to-face) and honoring those preferences demonstrates professionalism and respect.</i>		
6	I use positive language when communicating with families. <i>This means consistently being both honest and empathetic, while regularly reiterating a message of “parents as partners.”</i>		
7	I regularly ask for families’ input and feedback. <i>Intake surveys, satisfaction surveys, parent conferences, and simply asking questions are all examples of ways families can provide input and feedback.</i>		
8	I am accessible to families, for both formal and informal meetings. <i>Do families know how/when to reach you by phone, email, and in person?</i>		
9	I make an effort to communicate using families’ home languages. <i>While fluency isn’t expected, a little effort (as simple as using Google Translate!) is appreciated and can help families feel valued.</i>		
10	I share positive feedback every day. <i>Communicating at least one “good thing” daily is essential to maintaining positive relationships with families.</i>		

You may also be interested in the following related resources:

- http://extensiononline.tamu.edu/online_course_material/Course224/file/m8relationshipswithfamilies.pdf
- <http://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200703/BTJOlson.pdf>

Want to learn more? Visit www.wnybehaviortoolbox.com and connect with us at www.facebook.com/wnybehaviortoolbox.