

Chapter 7

Guiding Children's Behavior



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Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define important terms related to behavior management.
- Discuss the behavioral and emotional expectations for children at different developmental stages.
- Share ideas for encouraging prosocial behavior in the early childhood classroom in order to set a foundation for democratic living.
- Suggest ideas for guiding children when their behavior is especially challenging and difficult.
- Apply appropriate approaches to guidance when creating a curriculum.

Introduction

An important aspect of the early childhood curriculum relates to children's behavior. Just as competence in academic subjects develops over time, so does an understanding of appropriate behavior. Infants are not born knowing how to negotiate the social world around them any more than they can understand how to read or classify plants. Thus, it is just as important for adults to be patient with children's developing behavioral skills as it is to demonstrate these qualities during academic lessons. In this chapter, the approach taken to guiding children's behavior will be a positive one, with added suggestions for dealing with more difficult situations.

An explanation of some terminology starts the discussion, followed by a review of development applied specifically to expectations of behavior. Because the children in your care are growing up in a democratic society, the next section will explain how democracy can be introduced at an early childhood level. Important to democracy are prosocial behaviors, and these are discussed within the same section. What to do when the usual positive approaches to guidance do not work, especially for children with special needs, follows next. To round out the chapter, we revisit the teaching models from Chapter 4, because no matter how excellent a theme, unit, or project, if behaviors are not planned for, success may be difficult to achieve.