

## Guidelines for Family Members and Volunteers

We are so glad you have decided to partner with us in helping children grow in their whole development. The families of students and teachers really appreciate the time and talent you give. In order to keep children safe, all volunteers who come on any regular basis must complete a criminal background check. A regular basis is defined as twice a month or more that is regularly scheduled. Any volunteer who has not completed a criminal background check will not have any unsupervised access to children. The cost of the background check is the responsibility of the volunteer and is \$20.

Now for some guidelines to help you understand your role as a family member or volunteer. Sometimes working with children, especially children from other families, can be frustrating, even if you are a trained caregiver. At times we aren't sure how to respond to their behaviors. It can also be a challenge to know who should respond when both the teacher and parent, or volunteer is in the room together. We all have our own style of discipline and it may not be the same one that the teacher might use or another adult. Please be sensitive to this. We want to support each other without creating conflicting emotions that can create distance and unwelcome feelings. Here are a few guidelines that can help. If you are unclear, or uncomfortable with any of these guidelines, please talk to the director.

1. Try to avoid negative statements like "No" and "Don't do that." Children respond better to positive statements that tell them what they "should" do rather than what they should not do. Believe me, this takes practice.

- "Crayons are for writing on the paper." (not on the wall or desk).
- "Use your inside voice." (instead of yelling)
- "Rice stays in the tub."
- "This is the time for nap."
- "This is the time for listening to the story."
- "This is clean up time."

2. Try to give clear directions without saying "Ok?" afterwards, or asking if they want to do something, like clean up. (This is very difficult to remember.) If you ask, that gives them the right to say no. Try to say what needs to be done instead of making a demand, such as, "You" need to...". Again, they can reason that they don't need to clean up now because they "need" to play. It seems to work better with children to declare "your" need for them to do something.

"I need you to pick up the toys now."

3. Try not to get into a power struggle by making a demand without an alternative you can live with if they refuse.

- "I can see that you want to keep playing with the blocks."
- "You can come right back and play again when the story is over. But now it's story time."
- "That's not what we are doing now. It's time to listen to the story now." (rather than, "Come over here now.")

(Knowing play time is not over forever helps children transition from one thing they want to do to another. They may not have mastered the concept of things not being permanently gone or ended. For this reason, we don't clean up when we do circle time, class work, snack, or outside. Especially with younger children. Before lunch we divide the tasks and clean up everything, giving them a choice of putting away the blocks "or" the cars, etc.)

4. Sometimes new children are reluctant to join the group for circle or story time. They will usually join in once the story begins. In the meantime, you can ask,

"Do you want to listen to the story with the other children, or from the big chair?"

This helps them slowly accept the change and gives them a choice "they" can make.

5. When two children are fighting over a toy, try not to take sides or figure out who had it first. They may both think they had it first anyway. Work on a solution.

- “I can see you both want that truck. What can you do to solve this problem?” Give them a minute to come up with some ideas. If they don’t know, offer a few solutions.
- “How about taking turns?”
- “How about one of you playing with another truck?”
- “How about when Johnny is done, he lets you play with it?”

Let them decide which thing will solve the problem and be an “ok” solution. If they will, ask them what they will do next time they both want the same toy. In some cases, neither of them will budge. You can suggest they roll a dice and whoever has the largest number gets a turn first. If all else fails, you can let them know the toy will have to be put away until they can find a solution. Help the one who has the toy to say, “I’m not ready to share. When I’m done you can have a turn.”

6. Try to get low when talking to children, this puts you at their level and removes uncertainty and fear that might block their ability to respond. Make eye contact if you can. This removes the distractions around them and helps them connect to what you are saying.

7. When they accomplish tasks, be supportive by saying something like,

- “I can see you finished that. You should be proud of yourself.” (Instead of “I’m proud of you.”)

This helps them be self-motivated in their own sense of accomplishment instead of needing approval of others all the time.

8. When working with art or other activities that you’re not sure what they are trying to accomplish, such as a block structure, ask,

- “Tell me about what you are making, or your picture.”

This allows them to tell you what it is, rather than you making an incorrect guess. You will be surprised at their creativity and imagination. Don’t be surprised if what they describe does not look at all like what you might imagine. For example, a lion might only be a couple brown and yellow lines or dots on the paper. It doesn’t have to look like a lion to be a lion in their world.

9. Avoid doing your own painting or block structure, instead hand them a block and ask,

- “Where can this one go?”
- “What would happen if you put one on top of that?”

Let them explore these options. This helps them learn the relationships between objects and gravity, etc.

10. If you need to move something in the classroom or have a project or idea to contribute, check with the teacher to make sure there are no schedule problems or other considerations that might need to be worked out before it can be done.

11. Please do not correct each other in front of the children. If another adult does something you feel is incorrect, take them aside and talk to them. We discourage raising voices to direct children’s behavior, and we do not use any physical discipline at the School. If you find yourself getting out of control, let someone know you need to take a break and leave the room. If someone else notices you are getting frustrated, they may ask if you need to take a break. This is a signal that you should step away for a bit and let someone else manage the problem, even if it’s your own child.

12. Please don’t engage the teacher or other adults in long involved conversations about controversial issues that could create strong emotions, even if the emotions are directed toward a third party. Small talk is a good thing for children to see adults doing. But don’t forget the children. They need your attention; they are your first priority. If they interrupt you, that’s a signal it’s time to finish up. You can say,

- “I need you to wait until we are done talking.”
- “When we are finished with our conversation, I’ll take care of that.”
- “It’s our turn to talk. It will be your turn in just a minute.”

Again, thanks so much for your desire to work with the children here and be of assistance. We look forward to getting to know you better.

Champion's Choice Staff