

Mountain Sprouts Children's Community

Behavior Guidance:

How we support children in their development of prosocial, kind, and safe behavior.

Prosocial: /prō'sōSHəl/

adjective: **prosocial**; adjective: **pro-social**

relating to or denoting behavior which is positive, helpful, and intended to promote social acceptance and friendship.

Included in this packet:

- Our Belief Statement
- Classroom limits
- Behavior Management Practices
- Steps to Dealing with Challenging Behavior
- Procedures for Dismissal of Care
- Outline of an Individual Guidance Plan

Belief Statement

We believe that all children deserve to be treated with respect regardless of age, demographics, behavior history, or any other identifying label. We speak to them with kind language, include them in developmentally appropriate decision making and honor their competence.

We believe that all children should be cared for responsively and that the adults in their life should be attuned to the unique and varying needs of each child. We make the effort to understand what motivates and triggers each child because we believe that all behavior is communication. Punishing unwanted behavior does not lead to growth, but understanding the “why” and supporting each child uniquely allows them to flourish. This is our true motivation as early childhood educators.

Through our interactions and environment we have the privilege of setting students up for success from the moment they arrive at school. Our spaces are intentional, developmentally appropriate, accessible to all students, and encourage positive engagement. We want our students to feel safe and free to be themselves.

We believe that clear communication with students, families, and other staff is critical. This packet is the first step in that communication. We want all our families to know and participate in setting their child up for positive behavior. Social-emotional growth is an important pillar of early childhood education. In our program, we talk with students about what is expected of them and support them as they learn to operate within a group. Our staff regularly communicates with each other about best practice and developmentally appropriate classroom management.

We are honored to teach your child and excited to partner with you while they attend Mountain Sprouts.

Classroom Limits

1. Be kind, be safe, be together.
2. We respect all living things.
3. Students always try, then ask a classmate, and then ask a teacher for help.
4. When we are inside, we practice having calm bodies and quiet voices.

Behavior Management Practices

Evidence-based best practice for guiding student behavior begins with an intentional environment, established expectations and consistent routines. We set clear expectations using pre-teaching and we set up the environment for students to be successful. Within this framework, we use both indirect and direct guidance techniques to help students learn and grow through challenges. We never punish or shame our students for making mistakes. We guide children toward positive and prosocial behavior in accordance with the standards outlined by the Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF).

We offer developmentally appropriate environments which include the physical learning spaces as well as the atmosphere fostered by staff. We do this through:

- Offering ample opportunities for engagement with a variety of materials, especially loose parts.
- Ensuring children have enough space to exercise their bodies as needed throughout the day.
- Maintaining consistent, yet flexible routines so students know what to expect.
- Keeping transitions short.
- Communicating calmly and respectfully (words, tone, and body language).
- Prioritizing intentional & positive interactions with students.
- Responding consistently to all students needs (physical, emotional or social)
- Inviting families to share about their child, family, and culture.

Indirect guidance techniques take into consideration the individual child (strengths, culture, age, etc...) as well as the nuances of their school environment. Indirect guidance is a set of tools to be adapted to circumstances, not a one-size-fits-all approach. Our techniques include:

- Pre-teaching so that our students know the expectations of our program.
- Modeling prosocial skills in our interactions with students and other staff.
- Offering choices so that students can exercise control and autonomy.
- Encouraging all students to practice teamwork as well as identifying mentor students who can help when appropriate.

- Using consistent positive language such as:
 - “Your body is calm and/or safe” or “Your ears are listening” (affirming desired behavior)
 - “I see child's name packed up their backpack and is ready” to highlight peer modeling and encourage peer learning when class is transitioning
 - “I know you can, I believe in you” or “it looked like that was hard, but you tried anyway” to support children through frustration.

As needed, we implement direct guidance techniques such as:

- Redirecting to a different activity or helping a student take a break.
- Encouraging students to be the key players in solving problems.
- Inviting students to do a classroom job like passing out supplies, helping a classmate pack up their backpack, or leading the group hike.
- Using consistent positive language such as:
 - It looks like you're having a hard time being safe/being kind/using teamwork, I'm going to help you find something else to do.
 - I see you want to throw, you can throw a ball instead of a shovel. The shovel might hurt someone.
 - I don't feel safe/I worry you will get hurt when... What can you do instead?
 - I can see you both want to use that. How can we find a solution? (and then we stick close by to support the discussion & outcome)
 - Do you like that game? (checking in if everyone wants to play or participate in what's going on)

For more information on the guiding behavior DCYF WAC regulations, visit:

INTERACTIONS AND CURRICULUM: Emotional Support and Classroom Organization. Foundation Quality Standards for Early Learning Programs . Chapter 110-300 WAC. Washington State Legislature. Updated 1/7/22. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/>

Steps for Dealing with Challenging Behavior

If your child exhibits repeated challenging behavior, we first check our expectations and environment. Is what we are asking of them developmentally appropriate and is the student set up for success? We will gain insight to these questions through observation & documentation. As we work toward solutions, we will let you know what we are working on with ongoing communication including the weekly report, verbal check-ins at drop off/pick up, or email/phone communication. Please let your child's teacher know your preferred method of communication. Maintaining a strong home-school connection is vital for supporting your child. You know your child best and you are their best advocate. We welcome your partnership! If changes to our expectations, communication, routine, and/or environment do not help, then we will proceed with the steps below.

Supporting Continuous Challenging Behavior

Step 1: Conference

At this point, we will invite you in for a conference. Together we will discuss the specifics of your child's circumstances including their strengths, challenges, and possible triggers. We will collaborate on positive behavior guidance strategies that can be implemented consistently both at school and at home. Corporal punishment is never permitted in our program and will not be tolerated in any form. Physical restraint will only be used if it is necessary to prevent a student from harming themselves or anyone else.

Step 2: Behavior Plan *(see sample plan on the last page)*

Our teaching team and administration will bring a draft of a behavior plan to the conference to share with your family. This will be created using our knowledge and experience of child development and individualized for your child based on observations. This plan will include your child's strengths as well as behavior goals. The draft will be reviewed with you as we seek your input. We will ask about behavior observed at home and invite suggestions for supporting your child based on your intimate knowledge of him/her. The behavior plan will be fine tuned and considered complete when your family and the teaching staff sign off on it. We will schedule a time to revisit the plan at a later date (a few weeks or a month, depending on the situation).

Step 3: Implementation

The behavior plan will be implemented immediately following the conference. Your child's teachers will continue to observe and document your child's behavior and will have consistent communication with you throughout the process.

Step 4: Re-assessment

At the next conference, we will revisit the behavior plan and assess your child's progress. Based on observations and assessments, our collaborative team may choose to modify the plan, continue with the plan as is, or celebrate success in overcoming a challenging behavior.

Supports our program offers include:

- Vast outdoor spaces for children to exercise their bodies and clear their minds.
- Low teacher/student ratio (1:6/7) and small class size (max 13 students at Evergreen, 12 at Willow) to optimize opportunities for 1:1 engagement and support.
- Administrators on site, trained in classroom management, child development, and observation/documentation, to provide support for students and teachers as needed both in and out of the classroom.
- Consulting services through Early Achievers/Catholic Charities including an Infant and Child Mental Health Consultant (MHC)
- Regular opportunities for ASQ & ASQ-SE screenings accompanied by parent-teacher conferences
- Information (delivered in person and on our website) about where to access professional support like early intervention evaluation or other child development specialists.
- Regular communication through weekly reports, sent home at the end of each week, daily as needed.

Procedures for Dismissal of Care

Dismissing a child from care will only be considered if the continuous challenging behavior is **unsafe** to others at the school and we cannot meet the child's needs for support. If your child exhibits unsafe behavior, we will first work through a behavior plan, but ultimately we cannot allow a child to remain at our school if their classmates or teachers are at risk of harm. Should the director determine that it is necessary to dismiss a child from the program because of unsafe or violent behavior, our staff will make every effort to help your family find a program better suited to meet your child's needs. Any family dismissed from care will be given written notice and permitted two weeks to transition out as long as we have the ability to keep the child in class for those two weeks while also keeping their classmates safe.

Individual Behavior Plan

Student name:

Conference Date: **Follow up conference date:**_____

Child's strengths:

Observed triggers:

Behavior Goals:

Plan to set up the environment for success at school:

Plan to set up the environment up for success at home:

Positive Language (agreed upon & used by teachers & family):