GMPS
Glenview Methodist Preschool
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Positive Behavior Guidance for Little Ones

Notice what's going right. Set children up for success. Teach through the hard moments.

Positive Behavior Guidance starts before there is a problem.

At GMPS, we begin by creating classrooms where children are more likely to be successful. Teachers use positive reinforcement, predictable routines, clear expectations, thoughtful transitions, and warm relationships to teach the social-emotional skills preschoolers are working to develop.

Catch Them Being Successful

Young children respond to attention from the adults they trust. Our teachers intentionally notice and reinforce the behaviors they want children to practice more often. Rather than focusing most of our attention on the child who is having difficulty, we make successful behavior visible.

Ready to listen	Waiting for a turn	Working together
"I see you're ready for the story. Your body is calm and your eyes are watching."	"You waited until Ben was finished and then asked for a turn. That was great problem-solving."	"You two worked together to put the blocks away. You knew exactly what needed to be done."

Specific, genuine praise does more than say "good job." It tells children exactly what they did successfully. It also gives classmates a clear model to follow. A child who is still getting settled at circle may hear a teacher notice someone who is ready to listen and decide to make that same choice. We often find that this positive attention can prevent a small struggle from becoming a bigger one.

My teacher noticed me	I know how to do this	I feel proud that I can do this

The goal is not to compare children or create a need for praise. Over time, positive feedback helps successful behaviors become increasingly their own - moving from adult recognition toward confidence, self-regulation, and internal pride.

Setting Children Up for Success

Positive guidance also happens through the way teachers plan the classroom and the day. We ask ourselves what children need in order to be successful and set that path in the classroom before a problem occurs.

Predictable routines	Clear expectations	Engaging choices	Thoughtful transitions
Children know what comes next.	Teachers show and practice what success looks like.	Children have meaningful ways to participate.	Waits and changes are planned with young children in mind.

Sometimes the most effective behavior strategy is planning for a child's success.

And When Challenging Behavior Still Happens...

Even in a thoughtfully planned classroom, preschoolers will have hard moments. Someone will want the same truck. A child will become frustrated, push, yell, cry, refuse, or lose control. Those moments are handled calmly and used as opportunities to teach.

1	2	3	4
KEEP SAFE	**HELP REGULATE**	**UNDERSTAND**	**TEACH & TRY AGAIN**
Stop unsafe behavior calmly.	Support the child until they are calm enough to learn.	Look for the need, feeling, or skill behind the behavior.	Practice words, actions, or problem-solving for next time.

Behavior Is Communication

Preschoolers are still developing language, self-control, perspective-taking, and problem-solving. Behavior often tells us that a child does not yet have the words or skills needed for the situation. Understanding the reason does not mean allowing unsafe behavior; it helps us know what to teach.

A grab might mean…	*"I want a turn, but I don't know how to enter the play."*
A push might mean…	*"You are too close, and I don't have the words yet."*
A meltdown might mean…	*"This transition is hard, and I'm overwhelmed."*

Clear Limits + Calm Teaching

Safety comes first. A teacher calmly stops unsafe behavior, cares for anyone who was hurt, and helps the child regain control. Once the child is calm enough to learn, we teach a more successful response.

"You're angry. It's okay to be angry. It's not okay to hit."

When a child is overwhelmed, the first job is helping them become calm enough to regain control. We do not expect a preschooler in the middle of a huge emotion to demonstrate a skill they are only beginning to develop. Regulation comes first; teaching comes next.

Empathy Is Still Developing

Young children are still learning to understand another person's point of view - especially while managing their own strong feelings. A preschooler may know that a friend is crying without yet fully understanding how their actions affected that friend or what to do to make things better.

That is why we do not rely on a forced "I'm sorry" as proof of empathy. Teachers help children slow down, notice what happened, and practice repair: "Look at her face. She is crying because she got hurt. What could we do to help?" A child might check on a friend, bring an ice pack, help rebuild something, return an item, or eventually choose to apologize.

What If the Same Behavior Keeps Happening?

Repeated behavior tells us that a child probably needs more support - not simply more correction. Teachers look for patterns and for the skill or situation that may be making success difficult.

When does it happen?	**What happens right before it?**	**Is the environment making it harder?**
What is the child trying to communicate?	**What skill is still developing?**	**What support or practice could help?**

Teachers may adjust the environment, provide extra teaching or practice, increase adult support at difficult times, and work with families when needed. Parents know their child in ways we do not; teachers see the child in a group setting in ways parents may not. Putting those perspectives together helps us understand what the child needs.

What Children Are Learning

Children are learning to…	And over time…
✓ name and manage feelings	✓ solve more problems independently
✓ ask for help or use words in conflict	✓ build empathy and friendship skills
✓ notice how actions affect others	✓ repair mistakes and try again
✓ wait, listen, and follow routines	✓ participate successfully in a group

Challenging moments aren't interruptions to learning. They are part of the learning.

Want to Learn More?

NAEYC - Guidance and Challenging Behaviors - Positive guidance and developmentally appropriate responses to challenging behavior.
American Academy of Pediatrics - Shaping Young Children's Behavior - Why specific praise and positive attention can strengthen desired behavior.
National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations - Practical Strategies - Research-based classroom strategies including routines, expectations, and positive descriptive feedback.
ZERO TO THREE - Helping Children Develop Empathy - How perspective-taking and caring responses develop over time.

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