



# **Guidelines for Teaching Preschoolers**





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## About This Paper

This paper was developed by Jennilee Miller and Connie Dever for the teachers and Preschool Coordinators at Capitol Hill Baptist Church. While some elements are applicable to only our church's preschool department, most are of a broader use.

## Why Working with Preschoolers Matters

*"We will walk together in brotherly love, as becomes the members of a Christian Church; exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require."*

*"We will endeavor to bring up such as may at any time be under our care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving exempt to seek the salvation of our family and friends."*  
-- Capitol Hill Baptist Church Covenant

Playing with dolls, reading stories, singing songs, giving out snacks, settling squabbles and potty breaks. These are among the normal activities that take place in the preschool classes each week. They may seem trivial or even tiresome, sometimes. They certainly may seem to have very little to do with fulfilling the covenant promises we make to each other as members. But in fact, these activities are of great importance. Those that are willing to serve the preschoolers are part of an important work, not only in proclaiming Christ to the next generation, in building up and bringing unity among church members, and even in growing as Christians, themselves.

How can such small tasks bear such great fruit? Let's look at each and find out.

## Proclaiming Christ to the Next Generation

Deuteronomy 6:4-7, NIV

*"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."*

God made people busy. God made people with lots of daily needs. Nowhere do we see this more, perhaps, than with preschool children. They are in perpetual motion. They are in perpetual need of help from others...except when they are sleeping. This passage from Deuteronomy 6 reminds us that it is not just children's bodies that are in constant motion and need. Their hearts are spiritually in constant motion and need, too. It is an encouragement not to relegate the spiritual training of children to a particular time of devotion in the morning or evening, but to see the daily events of life as opportunities for spiritual training.

While the spiritual raising of children is primarily the task given to parents, we as members have an opportunity to partner with the parents in this great task. In the few hours we have each week to be with the preschoolers, we intersect with their lives. It is our opportunity to fill the little events of their day with stories and songs of God, and model lives that seek to love God and others in all that we do.

## **Building Up and Bringing Unity among Church Members**

When you serve the preschoolers, you are not only serving them by being with them, you are also serving them by allowing their parents opportunities to grow spiritually through the teaching and preaching of the Word. Some parents choose to keep their children with them through the worship services. But many choose to let other members teach and tend to their children in the preschool classes while they go to Core Seminar Classes (*Sunday School a la CHBC*) and/or the worship services for a time of undistracted teaching and worship. As parents listen and grow, they become better equipped to be godly parents as well as godly people. Sharing in the same teaching and worship with other members fosters unity as we grow and worship together. Do the math: 100+ preschoolers + 200 parents...that's some 300 people you serve when you serve in the preschool department. A three for one deal! That's hard to beat!

## **Growing as Christians, Ourselves**

Working with children is great for the children. It's great for the parents. But that's not all. It's great for you! Seasoned teachers will tell you: "What you teach, you learn." Seasoned parents will tell you: "Caring for children grows your appreciation for God's care for His people and your dependence upon Him."

Volunteering with our preschoolers, on a weekly or even monthly basis, can provide you with an opportunity to learn more about God yourself as you teach them about Him. And, it can be a great way to grow in your reliance upon God for grace to live godly lives before them, as well as wisdom to teach and train them well.

## **Teaching Biblical Truth to Preschoolers**

### **Teaching Biblical Truth in Safety**

The top priority of all of our children's ministry programs is to provide a safe environment for children to learn and play while their parents attend Core Seminar classes (*Sunday School a la CHBC*) or the worship services. To this end, require all potential children's workers to:

- Attend a Childcare Training Class
- Go through a Screening/Application Process
- Learn and adhere to our Child Protection Policy procedures

### **Child training classes**

This class is led by one of the Deacons of Child Care or the Pastor of Families and Children. Child Training Classes take place about two or three times a month, immediately after the morning worship service. Attendees learn about the Child Protection Policy and why it is so important that we follow it carefully. The class takes about one hour. For more information, contact Gio Lynch, Children's Ministry Administrator, at Capitol Hill Baptist Church, (202) 543-6111.

### **Screening/application process**

As another precaution, all potential children's workers must fill out a Children's Ministry Workers Application. This application requests basic information about each worker, as well as questions about your previous experience working with children. It also asks for a number of references that will be contacted and questions related to any criminal offenses or instances of abuse. Each person's name is also submitted to the Department of Justice Screening System which does a background check for similar offenses. All application information is treated with the utmost confidentiality by the Pastor of Families and Children. While it may feel awkward to have to ask such questions, they are a necessary part in achieving our goal for a safe environment for the children. For further information about this process, please contact Deepak Reju, the Pastor for Families and Counseling at Capitol Hill Baptist Church.

### **Child protection policy**

Our child protection policy have been developed around two key principles:

1. No one adult should be alone with one child at any time.
2. When in doubt, call a hall monitor or a parent.

It includes the use of:

- Matching wristbands for all children and their parents so that the right children go home with the right adults
- Red wristbands for children with special allergy alerts
- A family number identification system which flashes up on number boards in the worship hall' if a parent is needed during the worship services
- Procedures for taking boys and girls to the bathroom
- What to do in an emergency or when an accident occurs

The full Child Protection Policy is reviewed in the Child Training meetings and is also available in the church office and on the church website.

## **Teaching Biblical Truth Developmentally Appropriately**

Successful teaching involves conveying truth from teacher to student in a way that is understandable and memorable. A teacher needs to not just know the truth he wants to teach, but what his students are like in order to achieve this goal. Here are brief descriptions of what 2-5 year olds that may help you know how to best teach our children.

### **TWO YEAR OLDS**

#### **A Snapshot of Two Year Olds**

- Full of life and curiosity
- Can be very stubborn and demanding
- Growing awareness of capabilities of their mind, body and language, but with only a fledgling skill level in the use of them

#### **Speech and Communication Skills**

- 2's may only start out with a fairly limited vocabulary and 2 word sentences but develop into 3-5 words sentences by the end of the year.
- Pronunciation may be difficult to understand by others not familiar with the child.
- Are able to understand most of the speech in your regular conversation, even with other adults by the end of the year

#### **Play and Socialization**

- Largely plays alongside other children, but not with them (this is called parallel play)
- Playing with others begins to develop by the end of the year
- Loves to imitate others' speech and actions
- Begins to engage in pretend play

#### **Emotional/Intellectual Development**

- Can have rapid, emotional swings from very happy to very sad
- Can be destructive and throw things when angry
- Has a hard time control his impulses
- Often tests limits and rules
- Many enjoy answering "no" when asked to do something, even when they mean "yes"
- Their perspective of the world is largely "me-centered"
- Starts to show consideration of the feelings and needs of others
- Can be very willful, yet still have a strong desire to please adults
- Frequent separation anxiety when parents leave
- May often act shy around new people
- Wants to try to do tasks by themselves

#### **Fine Motor Skills**

- Fine motor skills gradually develop. Learns to hold crayon and make basic strokes.
- Can make a low stack of blocks



**Large Motor Skills and Other Physical Milestones**

- Runs, jumps, begins to climb and may even be able to pedal a tricycle
- Enjoys rolling, throwing, and catching a large ball
- By 2 ½ years, many are ready to begin toilet training

**Classroom Skills and Behavior**

- Enjoys simple stories, action rhymes and songs over and over again. Tries to sing along.
- Extremely short attention span, especially for structured group activities
- Largely engages in individual activities rather than group activities
- Has a hard time sitting still for long periods
- Often plays with the same toy for more than a few minutes
- Enjoys pouring, sifting, sorting, moving things
- Does best with simple 1 step directions

## **THREE YEAR OLDS**

### **A Snapshot of Three Year Olds**

A year of growing confidence in use of body, language and socialization

#### **Speech and Communication Skills**

- Expanding vocabulary and sentences (up to 6-word sentences) though with grammar errors
- Speech becomes clear enough to be understood by many people
- Stuttering may develop in the child's language

#### **Emotional/Intellectual Development**

- Enjoys asking who, what, where, and especially why questions
- Many still enjoy testing limits and rules, particularly to see the adult's reaction.
- Separation anxiety largely gone
- Seeks the approval of adults
- Often enjoys helping
- Enjoys laughing and acting silly
- Often looks for and thrives under praise

#### **Play and Socialization**

- Is able to get along better with other children. Less "me-centered. Learning to cooperate, take turns and share (with promptings)
- Begins to notice typical roles of their gender and engages in pretend play using them.
- Plays with groups of other children her age, but still enjoys playing alongside other children (on his own)
- Pretend play become much more complex. Expands into stories. Can include imaginary friends.
- Moves between the world of real people/friends and pretend people/friends. May have a hard time differentiating between what is pretend and what is real. Even G rated movies can be scary because they seem so real.

#### **Large Motor Skills and Other Physical Milestones**

- Growing confidence in ability to use body. Walking, running, jumping, climbing come easily, with little thought
- Balancing on one foot or standing on tiptoes still difficult
- Can kick a ball
- Can use the toilet by himself

#### **Fine Motor Skills**

- Fine motor skills are developing. Can hold a crayon with confident grip. Older three's often are able to make simple drawings of shapes, animals and people with a few body parts. They can use child's scissors fairly well.
- Can dress self and feed self with spoon and fork
- Can put on shoes, put not tie them

**Classroom Skills and Behavior**

- Enjoys hearing familiar stories, doing familiar action rhymes and singing familiar songs. Will often ask for the same stories, action rhymes and songs again and again.
- Enjoys short books and stories
- Does best with activities/games in which everyone is busy at the same time, rather than waiting for their turn.
- Growing attention span for group activities, but still quite short.
- Enjoys moving and dancing to music. Can sing a simple song
- Enjoys simple puzzles, playing with play dough, matching games
- Enjoys acting like different animals (hop like a rabbit, slither like a snake, etc)
- Likes to count things
- Does best with simple, 1 step directions
- Loves follow the leader games
- Thrives under praise

## **FOUR YEAR OLDS**

### **A Snapshot of Four/Five Year Olds**

- Most are confident in their ability to use body, communicate and socialize with others
- They like to talk and make plans
- They are often excited and happy

### **Speech and Communication Skills**

- Vocabulary is expanding rapidly to include a few thousand words.
- Sentences can be fairly complex.
- Speech gets quite clear, though the pronunciation of some letters may still not be completely correct. Many fewer grammatical errors. Asks many “how” and “where” questions. Can answer many “why” questions.
- Most talk with adults with greater ease and have learned to look them in the eyes when speaking.
- Often likes to talk and can carry on extended conversations with adults and others.

### **Emotional/Intellectual Development**

- Asks “why” questions a lot!
- Boasting, lying, name-calling may begin
- Begins to understand danger and become fearful. Fears may center around loud noises, the dark, animals and strangers
- May begin to experience feelings of jealousy
- May be quite bossy
- Seeks adult approval
- May begin to misbehave to get attention
- Many 5's like to take risks
- Understands and respects rules. Wants others to respect them, too

### **Play and Socialization**

- Regularly plays with other children. Best friends become very important.
- More in tune with the feelings and needs of others. May take them into consideration in their actions and words.
- Expects to share and take turns. Usually does so without adult help.
- Makes up games with simple rules to play with others.
- In group play, one child is usually the leader who organizes the other children and what they will play.
- May exclude other children from playing with the group.
- Their imagination and ability to engage in pretend play continues to expand, but they are more able to differentiate between pretend and real life.
- Likes collecting things

### **Large Motor Skills**

- They are quick and confident with most body movements. They develop the ability to do somersaults and skip. 5's like to test their physical strength.
- Fine motor skills are more developed. Begins to tie shoes, dressing self and brushing teeth.
- Catches a ball, move up and around obstacles easily. 5's begin to be able to throw a ball overhead.

**Fine Motor Skills**

- Can draw simple patterns and shapes and print (some) letters. Enjoys painting with a paintbrush, cutting and pasting.
- Likes to count and sort objects.
- Can stack high towers of blocks
- Can use a spoon, knife and fork

**Classroom Skills and Behavior**

- Can begin to learn to raise hand to answer a question, rather than blurting out comments.
- Can understand and follow multistep rules.
- Growing ability to play games in which they must wait their turn.
- Enjoys mastering a skill, idea or story. Enjoy getting to share their ability/information with others.
- Still enjoys listening to familiar stories, doing familiar action rhymes and singing familiar songs repetitively.
- Enjoys dancing and moving to music. Often can sing fairly well.
- Expanding attention span for structured group activities
- Can organize objects from smallest to largest
- Can recognize and maybe write his own name
- Can recognize familiar words, like "Stop" on a stop sign. Some 5's begin to identify letters of the alphabet, sound out letters and do simple reading.
- Can follow multi-step directions
- Loves play-acting and role-playing
- Enjoys creating and telling their own stories
- Loves follow the leader games
- Can tackle more complex puzzles and games
- Likes to thread beads, form shapes out of play dough, including simple animals and people
- Likes to count.
- 5's can understand yesterday, today and tomorrow
- 5's like to plan and build more elaborate pictures, buildings, scenes
- Loves nonsense rhymes

## **Teaching Biblical Truth through Play**

Preschoolers learn through play! They learn to compare things; they learn how things work; they learn to imagine and create; they learn how to use their bodies and minds. Preschool play is a beginning of the answer to God-given command for humans to fill and subdue the earth, as these little children first discover and learn to use the bodies and the world around them. But preschool play does more than that. Preschool play lays the foundation for teaching them about God, the Bible and His glorious plans for His people. How? As they develop abilities to compare objects, they are developing skills which will help them discern between right and wrong. As they learn how things work, they are developing skills which can help them understand the cause-and-effect of their actions upon others and God's holy response to them. As they imagine and create, they are being prepared to understand that God has plans for His world and has created it for His glory. As they learn how to use their bodies and minds, they are being prepared to be able to serve and love God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love others as themselves.

Playtime also can provide you with time to talk to the children about the Bible truths they learned as their hands are busy or to re-create what they have learned in their play. Their interactions with other teachers and children allow opportunities to speak to them about God's holiness and forgiveness, and about His good laws to obey Him and love others.

Yes, playtime is an important time in any preschool program! We should pray that God would use it to prepare these children to do great things for His glory one day!

## Teaching Biblical Truth through Structured Instruction

As important as play time can be in laying a foundation of skills on which to place future understanding of God's truth, preschoolers are ready even at the age of two to begin to hear and understand God's truth now. This is done with age-appropriate amounts of structured teaching time and activities.

### Teaching Two Year Olds

Two year olds have a very, very limited attention span for group teaching, say about five minutes. Keep it short. Keep it simple. And keep it moving. Incorporate movement and use plenty of visuals. Use an interesting tone of voice.

Two year olds love repetition. It's how they learn. About the time you are perhaps getting beyond bored with a story or concept, your two year olds are beginning to really love it. They love to be able to participate and predict what will happen, so they thrive on routine and hearing the same stories again and again.

Change activities frequently. Tell a little story, then sing a song incorporating movement. Prioritize what you want to teach them, realizing that you may only get to a small portion of what you would like to do with them.

Having the children sit together for a short Circle Time can be quite a chore in itself. They will probably wiggle around, even when they are sitting together. Don't be discouraged by this! You can't make a two year into a five year old... at least not without waiting three years! These first attempts at teaching group behavior are so important for preparing them for group learning in the future.

Use carpet squares. Two year olds are not used to sitting in a circle time, so having a clearly defined area in which to sit helps them learn that circle time is a time for them to sit still and listen & participate.

Use wisdom with the lessons. If you are on week one of a new month and have five new two year olds, you should probably limit your circle time to five minutes of activities.

Train two's to transition from activities. Make it a game (move to circle time by hopping like a bunny, creeping like a caterpillar, etc) or a race.

### Typical Classroom Skills and Behavior

- Enjoys simple stories, action rhymes and songs over and over again. Tries to sing along.
- Extremely short attention span, especially for structured group activities
- Largely engages in individual activities rather than group activities
- Has a hard time sitting still for long periods
- Often plays with the same toy for more than a few minutes
- Likes to learn about new things by tasting, touching, smelling, listening, etc.
- Enjoys pouring, sifting, sorting, moving things
- Does best with simple 1,2 or 3 step directions

### **Summary: Key Goals for Teaching Two's**

- Keep children safe
- Teach them truth from God's Word
- Help ease separation anxiety
- Acclimate children to functioning & participating in a group,
- Give no more than 2 or 3 step directions
- Train them to sit still for 5+ minutes in structured group story time

### **Teaching Three Year Olds**

Three year olds are growing in their ability to sit still and to be interested in structured group activities for longer periods of time. However they are still very young and still very new to the concept of structured group learning. Proceed with lots of visuals, movement and an interesting voice. Keep your expectations low for their attention span, especially with the youngest threes.

Change activities frequently. Tell a little story, then sing a song incorporating movement. Prioritize what you want to teach them, realizing that you may only get to a small portion of what you would like to do with them.

This is another important year for beginning good group behaviors. Within Circle Time, this is a good age to begin really working on taking turns talking and raising their hands. They will often forget to raise their hands (I mean... when else are they practicing this. They don't have to raise their hand to talk to their parents or friends), but be patient and persistent to help train them.

The more familiar you are with the lesson, the more comfortable you will be keeping your eyes on the kids instead of your teaching binder, which significantly helps your ability to manage the children.

Don't feel chained to the lesson plan! The classroom is not a theatrical performance where teachers follow a script word-for-word. Gauge how well children are engaging. Do you have a handful of boys with excess energy that would benefit from a quick, impromptu game of "Duck, Duck, Goose" or "Simon Says" to get out some of their energy so they can listen to the lesson? Does the lesson seem to be running long and your kids are losing interest? Shuffle things around, and perhaps do the game right after the story, and then get back to the music at the end of class.

### **Typical Classroom Skills and Behaviors**

- Enjoys hearing familiar stories, doing familiar action rhymes and singing familiar songs. Will often ask for the same stories, action rhymes and songs again and again.
- Enjoys short books and stories
- Does best with activities/games in which everyone is busy at the same time, rather than waiting for their turn.
- Growing attention span for group activities, but still quite short.
- Enjoys moving and dancing to music. Can sing a simple song
- Enjoys simple puzzles, playing with play dough, matching games
- Enjoys acting like different animals (hop like a rabbit, slither like a snake, etc)
- Likes to count things
- Does best with simple, 1 step directions
- Loves follow the leader games
- Thrives under praise



### **Summary: Key Goals for Teaching Three's**

- Keep children safe
- Teach them truth from God's Word
- Grow children in their ability to function & participate in a group
- Give them no more than 3 or 4 step directions
- Sitting still for 10+ minutes in structured group story time

### **Teaching Four/Five Year Olds**

Four and five year olds are beginning to hit their stride. They are getting more confident in their ability to communicate with others and more used to group behaviors. Their attention span allows them to sit in a group for longer periods of time. But, preschoolers are still preschoolers. You still want to incorporate lots of visuals, movement and use an interesting voice as you teach.

By the time a child is four, they are familiar with the group-norm of raising their hand when they want to talk. Because they are not usually in large groups, it's easy for them to forget, yet it is a great habit to encourage. You can encourage children by lavishing the positive reinforcement when they do raise their hand. "Oooh! I love how Lisa is raising her hand because she has something to say! What a good example! Thank you, Lisa." If you have lots of blurting out going on and you have just asked the kids to raise their hand when they have something to say, you can be lighthearted with them and say "Wow! I hear a lot of noise right now, but my ears just can't listen because no one has raised their hand and so all I hear is 'blah blah zzzzzzzz blah wooooo.' What should we do? I know someone has something good to say?" When children correctly raise their hands, immediately encourage and compliment them.

### **Typical Classroom Skills and Behavior**

- Can begin to learn to raise hand to answer a question, rather than blurting out comments.
- Can understand and follow simple rules. Many fives can understand and follow multi-step rules.
- Growing ability to play games in which they must wait their turn.
- Enjoys mastering a skill, idea or story. Enjoy getting to share their ability/information with others.
- Still enjoy listening to familiar stories, doing familiar action rhymes and singing familiar songs repetitively.
- Enjoys dancing and moving to music. Often can sing fairly well.
- Expanding attention span for structured group activities
- Can organize objects from smallest to largest
- Can recognize and maybe write his own name
- Can recognize familiar words, like "Stop" on a stop sign. Some 5's begin to identify letters of the alphabet, sound out letters and do simple reading.
- Can follow multi-step directions
- Loves play-acting and role-playing
- Enjoys creating and telling their own stories
- Loves follow the leader games
- Can tackle more complex puzzles and games
- Likes to thread beads, form shapes out of play dough, including simple animals and people
- Likes to count.
- 5's can understand yesterday, today and tomorrow
- 5's like to plan and build more elaborate pictures, buildings, scenes
- Loves nonsense rhymes

**Summary: Key Goals for Teaching Four's/Five's**

- Keep children safe
- Teach them truth from God's Word
- Grow children in their ability to participate and share in a group
- Following 3 or 5 step directions
- Sitting still for 10-15 minutes in structured group story time

# Teaching Biblical Truth by Training Behavior

## Key Principles

1. Children are Foolish by Nature

“Folly is bound up in the heart of a child,” Proverbs 22:15

We can expect foolish behavior from children in the classroom.

## 2. Responding to Foolish Behavior is an Important Part of Our Teaching

Since we can expect foolish behavior, we can plan how to use foolishness to train children in the biblical truths we hope they will learn from our lessons. Foolish behavior fills the pages of the Bible; and, it often fills the lives of our children. Why? Because foolish behavior is the outworking of foolish, sinful hearts. We enjoy good behavior from our children because it makes our jobs as teachers easier and more effective. But, it is important to remember that our primary objective in all our teaching is to help the children learn about the Creator God, see their sinful, rebellious hearts, understand the consequences of their sin; and turn to Jesus as their Lord and Savior. We can use their foolish behavior and our teaching as opportunities to point out foolish behavior, its consequences and our need for a Savior. As you prepare your lesson, ask yourself: What foolish behavior do I see the people in this story exhibiting? What wise behavior? Do any of these behaviors look like the heart issues or actions of the children in my class? What questions could I ask them to help them see these issues/actions and apply them to their lives? How could I point the children to their own heart issues and their own need of a Savior through this story and the issues/actions highlighted, as well as, of course, through any foolish classroom behaviors?

## 3. Training and Turning of Hearts and Actions

As we address foolish behavior in our classroom, it is important to think about how we change. Any kind of training takes time, even more so the training of behaviors overflowing from sinful hearts. Since children are by nature foolish, then we need to help train them in wise behavior, encourage them to turn away from it. We need to make sure they understand how they are to act (through learning classroom rules as well as through learning biblical truths in our lessons). We also want to lead them to see their sinful hearts, ask God for forgiveness, and for the Holy Spirit’s help to change both their hearts and their actions. We need to be praying for God to be at work in the children even during the week. How easy it is to forget the children until Sunday morning when we are faced with teaching them again! What opportunities we waste when we do this!

How important it is that we also remember that changed behavior does not necessarily mean changed hearts! Changed hearts are a work of the Holy Spirit alone! We also should pray that God would make us gentle, wise and consistent in our training of the children.

## 4. Train and Turn Only with Great Compassion, Gentleness and Graciousness

Behavioral problems, especially with “repeat offenders”, can be very frustrating. It is very, very important that we only train and turn with compassion, gentleness and mercy. Not only can this often help a situation more quickly resolve (cf. Proverbs 15:1 “A gentle answer turns away wrath and a harsh word stirs up anger.”), but when we act and speak from a heart of compassion, gentleness and graciousness, we reflect our merciful and loving Father to the children. Pray that God would fill your heart with His mercy and love as you deal with any behavior issues. Then of course there’s the work that God will do in our heart and lives as we ask Him to cultivate this attitude in ourselves. Be aware of growing frustration on your part. If you feel that you cannot speak or act towards a child with the right attitude, it would be better to leave the situation to another teacher.

## **5. An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Correction**

### **out of temptation's way**

When you become familiar with the children in your classroom, you will become aware of the things that typically tempt them. You may prevent many mishaps by looking over your lesson plans and classroom for situations, objects, etc. that will tend to draw out misbehavior and adjusting them accordingly. Do you have a group of especially wiggling children? Look for ways to add in more movement. Do you have some very competitive children? Change the games to be group cooperation games rather than team vs. team. Are there things in the room that regularly distract? Find a place to put them away.

### **working as a team**

When one teacher is leading the teaching, the other teacher(s) should be actively looking for ways to facilitate focus and learning. This includes everything from noticing if the lead teacher needs a dry erase marker and bringing it to him, hold visuals, etc. to sitting next to a wiggly child, to quietly pulling aside a child who has a behavioral issue. Whenever possible, avoid the lead teacher interrupting his teaching to deal up with these issues. It will be distracting the other students and be more embarrassing to the student who is struggling.

## **6. Choosing your battles**

Issues which must be addressed each time

- Safety issues
- Pattern behaviors that reflect heart
- Issues that affect feelings of another child
- Deliberate disobedience

Issues in which you can choose your battles

- Classroom training (like raising hands, etc.)

## **7. A Note about the Children of Visitors**

Children of visitors may face extra anxiety in child care. They are surrounded by new teachers, new children and are in a new setting. While the above guidelines are useful for all children--visitors or regular attenders--you may need to spend a little extra time and show an extra measure of patience with the visiting children in most issues. However, issues of safety or physical harm must be treated with the same immediate response as with the children of members.

## **8. We Serve the Children Best by Partnering with Their Parents**

The Lord has primarily given parents the honor and challenge of nurturing and admonishing the children we teach in our classroom. By gleaning from their knowledge and experiences of their children, we can learn how to best teach them and train them. By sharing with them both encouragements and concerns, we may be able to help them to better understand and shepherd their children.

### **engaging with parents**

Parents appreciate a report on how their child did during class, so don't be afraid to touch base with them with a one-sentence feedback. "Mikey did a great job answering questions during Circle Time." "I could tell Katie really liked our songs today." "Ask Lewis to tell you what grasshoppers had to do with our story today."

If you had a discipline issue that warranted time out, you should tell the parents about it, even if you feel like the issue was resolved.

Don't be afraid to ask parents for advice about their children. If you have had trouble with a particular child (be it girl drama, throwing, not participating) or if you simply feel perplexed, share your observations with the parents and humbly ask if they have any suggestions on how you can help their child.

When a parent has left a child in your care, they have temporarily transferred their authority to you in the care of their child. However, the teacher is still not the primary caregiver or the one primarily accountable to the Lord for the shepherding and training of that child. We can partner with the parents helping to train, encourage and correct (when needed) a little one, but sometimes, you may find a "tough cookie" who does not respond to your correction. In these situations, where you cannot help turn their heart from sin, or their behavior from a behavior that is persistent and distracting or even harmful to the class, it is very appropriate that you have the hall monitor call the parents to your room to help. While we, as teachers, of course want to extend grace and understanding when possible, we also need to realize that we do not benefit the child (or his/her parents) when we ignore consistent issues, hardening hearts, etc.

### **encouragements**

Dismissal time can be a particularly wonderful time to share encouragement. Share signs of spiritual growth or turning away from tempting behaviors. Tell the parents what their child learned that day. Even if you had trouble with behavior earlier in class, share ways that the child acted positively during your time with them. If possible, make these encouragements with the child present. Even small comments make a big difference to a parent and a child. An encouraging e-mail or a card to your children or parents can have an even greater impact.

### **concerns**

Dismissal time can also be a time to share lesser concerns (or give a brief behavior update for on-going issues already addressed). However, since conversations about behavior concerns may bring up delicate issues that are usually better discussed out of earshot of child or other parents, a brief comment after class, followed up by a conversation at a later time is often best. Sharing concerns about the children we teach can be difficult. Perhaps you are not a parent yourself and have little experience with behavioral issues except as you volunteer at church. Perhaps the child is new to the class or a visitor and you do not know the child or the parents. Perhaps you think you observe a serious problem. Perhaps the thought of talking to any parent, no matter how well you know them, is a terrifying thought. While you are right to humbly consider your shortcomings, we would encourage you to ask God to help you speak to the parents. Pray that He would give you the right words to say and that your words would be well-received. Use words that describe what you have observed of the child instead of those that make judgments about the child or the parents. Make sure to express your gratitude for the parents and the child and your desire to serve them. Feel free to talk to the Pastor for Families about concerns you have either about the child or about speaking to parents. He is here to help you.

### **insights**

Since the parents spend most of the week with their children as we have them for an hour or two a week, it is easy to see how we can greatly benefit from their insights into their children. They very likely have already observed issues or giftings that we see in the children and can give us helpful tips in how to train or encourage the child. Their insights can help us teach the children better and often save lots of time in figuring out how to train them.

### **prayer**

Nothing is done well without prayer! We are God's servants and need His Holy Spirit to work in both our hearts and the hearts of our children and their parents. He delights in the praise of children. He gives parents their children as a good gift. And He gives us the opportunity to glorify Him in speaking

words of truth and living that reflect Him. And, for a few hours each week, He gives us this opportunity to do before and to serve children and their parents. We need His Spirit to be at work in us all. He is the One True Turner and Trainer of Hearts. He is the Shepherd who shepherds the parents and the children. He is the Giver of Wisdom and the Producer of the Fruit of Love, Gentleness and Patience. Pray with the other teachers before class for both the instruction and the behavior and hearts of the children. Pray during class with the children, that God would be at work in you all. Pray after class, to thank God for how He answered your prayers and about insights into the children you received during the time. Take home your class list and pray for the children and parents during the week. Look ahead to the topic of the next week's lesson and begin to pray it for all of you. In conclusion: PRAY!

## **Common Behavior Scenarios by Age**

### **TWO YEAR OLDS**

#### **separation anxiety**

Separation anxiety is a developmentally normal and expected part of being a two year old. Follow the parents lead when they know what is comfortable, though most experts recommend that "sneaking off" is not always helpful for teaching a child to make a healthy transition.

#### **Tips for easing a child into a classroom**

- Tell them what they're going to be doing in class
- Have a specific toy or book in mind that you think they'll like. Tell them about it, or show it to them before they come into the class.
- Stoop down to communicate w/ them on eye-level. You are less scary when you aren't so big
- Invite parents in to help them settle their child into an activity. Generally, parents should make their exit within about 5 minutes, so as to not prolong disruption of class/teaching that may occur when they leave.
- Don't forget about the windows in your room. if the distractions of the toy shelf hold no interest for an upset child, try walking them to the window and point out cars, trees, people on the street, animals, houses, colors, etc.
- If a child grows increasingly inconsolable after 5 - 10 minutes, have the hall monitor page the parents for assistance.
- If a child is brand new to the class and struggling with separation anxiety, invite to stay in the room for the duration of class to help them get used to their environment (but do not leave a parent alone with the other children)
- When Sunday School transitions to Church Hour, teachers should try to overlap for at least a few minutes and make the departure of Sunday School teachers as quiet as possible.

#### **a child won't participate**

If they're not being disruptive, but quietly listening, consider what might make them feel more comfortable to participate.

#### **a child refuses to come to circle time, especially if they want to play:**

Give a child two choices: "You may come sit on a carpet square with the group, or you may sit in a chair at the table. But, it is not play time and no one may play with the toys. Would you rather sit on the carpet or on a chair?"

**a child disobeys**

As with all things, consider the heart. Did the child disobey because they were confused or didn't understand what the teacher was asking? Teacher should clarify. Did they understand and willfully disobey? Start by explaining the problem and giving a warning. "Timmy, Mrs. Miller said it was Katie's turn to play with the dump truck, but then you took the truck away from her. That made her sad AND it was disobeying Mrs. Miller. We are learning to share, and if you will not share, Mrs. Miller will need you to sit in time out." If a similar thing happens again, repeat your little speech, and say "Mrs. Miller warned you that if you took toys from someone else again that you would sit in time out. Please come sit in this chair until I tell you it's time to play again."

**note about time outs for two year olds**

**Two minutes** is an appropriate amount of time for a 2 year old time out. Longer than that and you lose the teachability of the moment.

Before letting a child return to the group, have a conversation. "Timmy, do you remember why you sat in time-out?" "You took a toy away from Katie, and then you took a toy away from another friend. This is not good sharing, and one of the ways we can show love to other people like God has loved us is to be kind. Are you ready to play with your friends and share? Let me pray for you that God would help you to obey God, thank you for giving us friends to love. Please help Timmy to love his friends and share with them. Amen." Dismiss Timmy to play, and then (hopefully within 5 minutes or so), "catch" Timmy being good and encourage him in the way he is obeying and sharing with friends.



## THREE YEAR OLDS

### **a child won't participate:**

If they're not being disruptive, but quietly listening, consider what might make them feel more comfortable to participate. Would giving that child a special role help them? Perhaps you can ask them to be your special helper and let them sit next to you and hold up the big question signs.

### **a child refuses to come to circle time, esp. if they want to play:**

Give a child two choices "You may come sit on a carpet square with the group, or you may sit in a chair at the table. But, it is not play time and no one may play with the toys. Would you rather sit on the carpet or on a chair?"

### **a child disobeys**

As with all things, consider the heart. Did the child disobey because they were confused or didn't understand what the teacher was asking? Teacher should clarify. Did they understand and willfully disobey? Start by explaining the problem and giving a warning. "Timmy, Mrs. Miller said it was Katie's turn to play with the dump truck, but then you took the truck away from her. That made her sad AND it was disobeying Mrs. Miller. We are learning to share, and if you will not share, Mrs. Miller will need you to sit in time out." If a similar thing happens again, repeat your little speech, and say "Mrs. Miller warned you that if you took toys from someone else again that you would sit in time out. Please come sit in this chair until I tell you it's time to play again."

### **note about time outs for three year olds**

**Three minutes** is an appropriate amount of time for a 3 year old's time out. Longer than that and you lose the teachability of the moment.

Before letting a child return to the group, have a conversation. "Timmy, do you remember why you sat in time-out?" "You took a toy away from Katie, and then you took a toy away from another friend. This is not good sharing, and one of the ways we can show love to other people like God has loved us is to be kind. Are you ready to play with your friends and share? Let me pray for you that God would help you to obey God, thank you for giving us friends to love. Please help Timmy to love his friends and share with them. Amen." Dismiss Timmy to play, and then (hopefully within 5 minutes or so), "catch" Timmy being good and encourage him in the way he is obeying and sharing with friends.

### **a child throws something**

This warrants an immediate time out. Kneel down so you are eye level with the child and explain "we never, ever throw things in our classroom. It is not safe and someone could get hurt. Because this is very serious, you need to come sit in this time out away from your friends for a little bit so you can calm down. Mrs. Miller will come back in 3 minutes and see if you are ready to go back and play." After 3 minutes, go back to the child and see if they can articulate why they are in time-out (this can be hard, especially for young 3 year old, so you may need to help them with the words.) Remind them that we do not throw toys in our classroom and that if it happens again, you will call Mommy or Daddy right away. If they are ready to go back and play, briefly pray with them that God would give them kindness toward their friends as they play.



## **FOUR/FIVE YEAR OLDS**

### **a child won't participate**

If they're not being disruptive, but quietly listening, consider what might make them feel more comfortable to participate. Would giving that child a special role help them? Perhaps you can ask them to be your special helper and let them sit next to you and hold up the big question signs.

### **a child refuses to come to circle time, esp. if they want to play:**

Give child two choices: "You may come sit on a carpet square with the group, or you may sit in a chair at the table. But, it is not play time and no one may play with the toys. Would you rather sit on the carpet or on a chair?"

### **a child disobeys**

As with all things, consider the heart. Did the child disobey because they were confused or didn't understand what the teacher was asking? Teacher should clarify. Did they understand and willfully disobey? Start by explaining the problem and giving a warning. "Timmy, Mrs. Miller said it was Katie's turn to play with the dump truck, but then you took the truck away from her. That made her sad AND it was disobeying Mrs. Miller. We are learning to share, and if you will not share, Mrs. Miller will need you to sit in time out." If a similar thing happens again, repeat your little speech, and say "Mrs. Miller warned you that if you took toys from someone else again that you would sit in time out. Please come sit in this chair until I tell you it's time to play again."

### **a child throws something**

This warrants an immediate time out. Kneel down so you are eye level with the child and explain "we never, ever throw things in our classroom. It is not safe and someone could get hurt. Because this is very serious, you need to come sit in this time out away from your friends for a little bit so you can calm down. Mrs. Miller will come back in 4/5 minutes and see if you are ready to go back and play." After 4/5 minutes, go back to the child and see if they can articulate why they are in time-out (you may need to help them with the words.) Remind them that we do not throw toys in our classroom and that if it happens again, you will call Mommy or Daddy right away. If they are ready to go back and play, briefly pray with them that God would give them kindness toward their friends as they play.

### **girl drama**

By age four, the girl-drama phenomenon begins to emerge (sometimes even earlier). Whereas a four year old boy is more likely to just chuck a dump truck at his friend when he's mad, the ways of a girl are much more under-the-radar and catty. Because there's no blood with a hurled word or attitude, it's easy to let this slide, but we do our little gals no favors when we don't address it.

### **note about time outs for four/five year olds**

**Four/five minutes** is an appropriate amount of time for a 4/5 year old's time out. Longer than that and you lose the teachability of the moment.

Before letting a child return to the group, have a conversation. "Timmy, do you remember why you sat in time-out?" "You took a toy away from Katie, and then you took a toy away from another friend. This is not good sharing, and one of the ways we can show love to other people like God has loved is to be kind. Are you ready to play with your friends and share? Let me pray for you that God would help you to obey God, thank you for giving us friends to love. Please help Timmy to love his friends and share with them. Amen." Dismiss Timmy to play, and then (hopefully within 5 minutes or so), "catch" Timmy being good and encourage him in the way he is obeying and sharing with friends.

**Proactive measures**

If you have a few girls known for their drama with each other, proactive separate them, especially during lesson time. When you do see them being kind to each other, encourage them in it. It is good to even pray with them and praise God that you see them reflecting his kindness in the way they are treating each other.

**Reactive measures**

When something does happen (usually it is an unkind comment or exclusion), take the time to teach the girls about what God-honoring friendship looks like. Speak to them individually, and try to help them see how their words and actions affect others. Try to help them identify how they would feel if their friend treated them that way. Encourage apology and reconciliation AND then give them instruction on how to play together in kind way (be it sharing toys, taking turns, listening to each other, etc.)

## **CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS: Classroom Learning Expectations**

### **Reasonable Learning Expectations**

- God answers prayers to help children learn
- God answers prayers to help you teach the children well
- God answers prayers to work in the children's hearts
- Children can learn important things about God
- Children can know God and desire to please Him
- Children learn best when doing a variety of activities within a familiar structure
- Children can learn best when first given a model or example
- Children learn best when you give them clear instructions
- Children learn best with review and reinforcement
- Children can participate cheerfully

### **Unreasonable Learning Expectations**

- You can teach well without preparing in advance
- You can teach well without asking for God's wisdom and grace
- You will teach without mistakes
- The best teaching is only about transferring information and not about heart or behavior issues
- Children can sit still as long as adults
- Children do not need to move
- Children learn well in a lecture format
- Children enjoy all activities the same amount
- All children will have equal ease or difficulty in doing activities
- Children of all ages will be able to do the same things and act the same way
- Children will know what to do without your clearly communicated instructions
- Giving directions once will be enough for the children to know what to do You only need to teach a child something once for them to know it, understand it and remember it
- Children learn best with review and reinforcement
- Children can participate cheerfully
- You only need to teach a child something once for them to know it, understand it and remember it

## **Expected Behavior Goals, by Age**

**NOTE: All these behaviors will only come with lots of coaching and prompts within each session! Be patient and consistent!**

### **TWO YEAR OLDS**

#### **Introducing these classroom behaviors:**

- Sitting (ok, really just basically staying) on carpet squares during circle time activities about 5 to 7 minutes
- Learning to share comments and toys
- Learning to take turns
- Listening to the teacher
- Obeying the teacher

### **THREE YEAR OLDS**

#### **Working towards a pattern of these classroom behaviors:**

- Listening to the teacher
- Obeying the teacher
- Sitting (staying) on carpet squares during circle time activities about 7 to 10 minutes
- Sharing comments and toys
- Introducing raising hands to make comments and answer questions
- Taking turns

### **FOUR/FIVE YEAR OLDS**

#### **These classroom behaviors fairly well established**

- Listening to the teacher
- Obeying the teacher
- Sitting (staying) on carpet squares during circle time activities about 10 to 13 minutes
- Sharing comments and toys
- Raising hands to make comments and answer questions
- Taking turns

## **Responses to Behavior Issues**

### **1. Give the “Look”**

- This can take place without stopping the class
- At this point, it may be helpful for a co-teacher to position themselves near the child
- The “look” becomes more effective as children get older and become more perceptive to body language. Some preschoolers will not be attuned to the “look” and so be patient with them if they miss the non-verbal clue you’re trying to give them.

### **2. Give a Warning**

- Stop teaching and give warning for specific behavior
- Alternatively, a co-teacher can give a warning for specific behavior while the lead teacher is teaching

### **3. Have a Private Conference**

- For 2 and 3 year olds, explain to the child why you wanted to talk to them. Explain your expectation & follow the other points below.
- For 4 years and up, you can ask child if they can tell you why you have called them aside. Ask the child if they can explain what it is about their behavior that is unacceptable
- Tell child what you expect
- Give the child a warning of what their consequence will be if they repeat the same behavior
- Briefly pray with the child/ren involved before returning to the group
- Foster reconciliation with others involved
- Praise child for changes in behavior you see
- Speak to parents at end of class if behavior is a pattern

### **4. Remove from Activity**

- Give them some “time out” to cool off and consider behavior (5 minutes is an appropriate time out)
- Remind the child of expectations before they can continue to participate in the activity
- You may need to ask the hall monitor to step into your class while you remove the child
- Speak to parents at pickup time

### **5. Call for the Parents to remove child from class immediately**

- Call for the hall monitor to get the child’s parent(s)
- Have another teacher or the hall monitor step into your class while you speak to the parents
- Tell the parents what behavior you expect, what steps you took to correct it, and what the child’s response has been
- Call Deepak Reju, Jennilee Miller, or a Deacon of Children’s Ministry if you need help

### **6. Communicating with Parents**

- Speak to parent about notable issues or concerns (parents need to be know about and/or may have good advice)
- Speak to parents at the end of class if pattern behavior is IMPROVING!!!

### **7. Discuss and pray about any major issues or patterns after class**

- Pray for God’s wisdom for both the families and the teachers.
- Speak with a member of the Children’s Ministry team about particularly troubling situations that you have questions about or that seem to not be resolving.

## **Expected Behavior Tips**

**1. Pray for God's help, both before class and with the class...and don't forget to pray afterwards, both thanking Him for how He worked and asking Him for more help, based on what you saw that day.**

### **2. Give Clear, Specific Expectations of Expected Behavior**

- Give these at the beginning of class, or at the beginning of each section (Opening Large Group Time, Small Group Time, Closing Large Group Time)
- Tell them how you will deal with their misbehavior (for example, "If you cannot share the toys in our room with your friend, then you will need to sit in a chair and take a break from playing.")

### **3. Do not ignore flagrant disobedience of clearly explained behavior expectations. Be willing to wait for obedience.**

- Do not just plow ahead and speak over the children or ignore their behavior.
- Disobedience does typically multiplies rather than disappears when ignored
- Remind the children of behavior expected.
- Do not be afraid to stop your activity and wait until they are cooperating.

### **4. Prepare the children for transitions between activities with clear instructions. Many difficulties in behavior arise during transitions; partly because we do not give clearly tell children how we want them to behave.**

- Tell them WHEN you want them to move
- (for example, "When I say "go" I want you to....")
- Tell them HOW you want them to move
- (for example, "When I say "go", I want you creep like a little mouse...")
- Tell them WHERE you want them to move
- (for example, "when I say "go," I want you creep like a little mouse and walk quietly and sit down on a carpet square...")
- Review with them WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO DO

## **Important Guidelines for Preschool Teachers**

### **Come Observe!**

Especially if you have never taught the 2-5's before, we encourage you to come up and observe our classes in progress. This is a great way to see what preschoolers are like and what each of the different volunteer opportunities involves. Contact Gio Lynch about scheduling a visit.

### **Choosing Months to Teach**

Please be careful to choose months in which you will be available all Sundays. We understand there may be times when this is not possible, but it is extremely important for continuity's sake to try to keep the same teachers in place all month. Structure and repetition is important to preschoolers.

### **Finding a Substitute**

- The Children's Ministry Administrator and the Deacon of Children's Ministry are available to help you find a substitute.
- It is important that you choose someone who has taught in the preschool department before.
- Often times, you can get someone assigned a different month to switch a week with you. (They teach a week for you and you teach a week for them).
- Please let the rest of the team know who your substitute is. It may affect their preparations.
- Please do NOT use the unofficially CHBC Google Group to find subs!! This is an important part of our Child Protection Policy. There is a special Google Group expressly for the purpose of Children's Ministry. If you would like access, the Children's Ministry Administrator would be happy to give you access.

### **Preparing to Teach**

- Read through your first week's curriculum before Sunday. There are sometimes things that you need to get ready and Sunday morning may be too late to get them done adequately. There may be questions you need to ask someone else regarding content, activity or supplies.
- Pray during the week for your teaching and the children's learning during the session.
- It is also extremely important that you pray as a group before the session.
- Feel free to contact Jennilee Miller or Gio Lynch with your questions.

## OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

### Two Year Olds

#### 2's Sunday School

**SERVE:** As one of four teachers for one year. The four teachers teach as teams of two, splitting up the year's worth of teaching among the two teams. This system helps prevent burn-out and has built-in substitute teachers, when needed.

**TEACH:** The Sunday School hour includes a brief time of teaching using a very short version of Teach, Take & Tell.

#### 2's Sunday Morning Service

**SERVE:** Once a month.

**TEACH:** The worship hour time is devoted solely to play time.

#### 2's Sunday Evening Service

**SERVE:** Once a month.

**TEACH:** The evening service time is devoted solely to play time.

### Three Year Olds

#### 3's Sunday School

**SERVE:** As one of four teachers for one year. The four teachers teach as teams of two, splitting up the year's worth of teaching among the two teams. This system helps prevent burn-out and has built-in substitute teachers, when needed.

**TEACH:** The Sunday School hour includes teaching time using Teach, Take & Tell.

#### 3's Sunday Morning Service

**SERVE:** For two, non-consecutive months (such as May and October, but not May and June). This is so that volunteers do not miss too much of their own "spiritual feeding."

**TEACH:** The worship hour time is a continuation of Teach, Take & Tell.

#### 3's Sunday Evening Service

**SERVE:** Once a month.

**TEACH:** The evening service time is devoted solely to play time.



## **Four/Five Year Olds**

### **4/5's Sunday School**

**SERVE:** As one of four teachers for one year. The four teachers teach as teams of two, splitting up the year's worth of teaching among the two teams. This system helps prevent burn-out and has built-in substitute teachers, when needed.

**TEACH:** The Sunday School hour includes teaching time using Big Questions & Answers for little people.

### **4/5's Sunday Morning Service**

**SERVE:** For two, non-consecutive months (such as May and October, but not May and June). This is so that volunteers do not miss too much of their own "spiritual feeding."

**TEACH:** The worship hour time is a continuation of Big Questions & Answers for little people.

### **4/5's Sunday Evening Service**

**SERVE:** Once a month.

**TEACH:** The evening service time is devoted solely to play time.