

One Page Resource: Reframing Language

Say this...

“I see you used paint, blue crayons, red crayons, and yellow crayons on your picture. Tell me about it.”

Because: For young children, art is often about the process not the final product. We should acknowledge the process they used to create the work, not give our approval of the final product. Also, telling children their artwork is “pretty” or “beautiful” teaches them to create things for teacher approval, not for self-satisfaction. It is also worth mentioning that children sometimes create pictures of monsters, bad guys, and other things they intend to be “mean”, “scary”, or “ugly”. Telling them these pictures are pretty is not meaningful to them.

“Walk in the classroom”

Because: Behavior directions should be clear and concise. There are many ways to “not run” in the classroom (crawling, jumping, skipping, etc.) but there is only one way to walk. When children receive clear directions with no room for interpretation, they are more likely to respond with desired behavior.

“John, do you see Mary waiting for a turn with the truck? She is waiting very patiently and hopes you are almost done.”

OR

“Mary, John is playing with the truck right now. Tell him you would like a turn when he is finished. I’ll help you find something else to do until then.”

Because: When a child wants a toy that another child has, it is an opportunity for the teachers to assist the children in developing good social skills. Teachers should help children recognize the feelings of the other child and validate both children’s desire for the toy. By assisting children in using their language skills to make their desires and frustrations known, teachers aid children in learning how to solve conflicts on their own.

“This is kiwi fruit; it’s sweet like a strawberry”

Instead of that...

“Pretty picture, I like it!”

“No running”

“Share with your friend”

“Eat that for me.” OR “I really wish you’d try a bite.”

Because: Teaching children to eat for adult approval can lead children to develop unhealthy behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs about food. Instead, encourage children to explore new foods by pointing out the sensory qualities of the food.