

This Issue: **PRESCHOOL**

Preschool educators today often find that difficult and challenging behaviors are replacing the fun, playful antics commonly associated with young children. Consequently, many who work in early childhood settings feel ill-equipped to handle the behavioral issues that they face on a regular basis.

In this issue, we explore preschool development and differentiate between “normal” behavior and potentially problematic behavior.

What IS Normal Development In Preschoolers??

Mental, social-emotional, and motor development in children occurs along a relatively predictable continuum. By 24 months of age, it is common to see a child’s evolution follow an equilibrium/disequilibrium pattern, where during disequilibrium periods (usually halfway between birthdays), children are often more challenging. The following list of descriptive terms is designed to help educators and parents understand what a “normal” challenging behavior may look like at each age.

The Terrific Twos: Mine! No! Stuttering, repeating, believing, imitating, active, parallel play, aggressive, caring, wobbly, adventurous, dependent, trusting

The Thrilling Threes: Here and now, excitable, lively, imaginative, talkative, comparative, self-confident, imitative, sensitive, persistent, rule-oriented, joker, well-balanced on feet, agile, self-dresser, large movements

The Fearless Fours: Age-conscious, full of ideas, dramatic, name caller, experimenter, judicial, insistent, tall tales, domineering, show-off, silly, bravado, explosive, impatient, acrobatic, limitless energy

The Fabulous Fives: Curious, big words, dramatic, assertive, information seeker, self-centered, builder, self-confident, imitative, sensitive, persistent, rule-oriented, joker, tool dexterity, coordinated, increased attention, rhythmic.

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Promoting Cognitive Development In Preschoolers

Children think differently and make different choices from adults and thus need a safe and nurturing environment to explore.

Materials and objects of differing texture, shape, size, color, and weight promote thinking, talking, and creativity.

As children broaden their experiences and begin to use oral language in more meaningful contexts, educators and parents need to encourage self-expression of wants, needs, and ideas through interaction and play.

By providing children with choices and encouraging decision-making, you are helping to develop their self-confidence



Also In This Issue:

- Handling Power Struggles Proactively
- Managing Behavior in a Preschool Setting

Tips for Dealing With Power Struggles

Power struggles are virtually guaranteed when dealing with young children. They want to be in charge of EVERYTHING they do and they don't hesitate to let you know, primarily because children of this age are testing the boundaries of their newly found independence. The most important thing to remember when you feel a power struggle creeping up on you is to pick your battles carefully. Make an issue only when it is really important because the child will almost always win and that can become very frustrating for the adult.



Here are some proactive suggestions for avoiding power struggles:

- Provide choices and time to make a decision
- Use “I” messages
- Give options for consequences
- Give positive reinforcement when possible
- Make sure that your expectations are understood
- It takes two to tango – refuse to engage in a power struggle

Behavior Management In The Preschool Setting

In order to effectively manage behavior in a preschool setting, you must direct your attention to some specific areas.

Room Environment:

- Your classroom needs to be well organized and supplies and toys must be clearly labeled (fun pictures paired with words work great!).
- Provide cubbies for students to store their own things and large bins for classroom items to keep clutter to a minimum and reduce distractions.
- Have communal supplies so they can be easily identified and retrieved.
- Use natural lighting whenever possible.

Rules and Routines:

- Using colorful words and pictures, develop a set of classroom rules and after discussing it, post it in the classroom; remember to revisit it frequently to reinforce the ideas.
- Forewarn, teach, and coach through transition times. Young children need to have the opportunity to prepare for the next activity so that they feel more in control of their lives.
- Be consistent in all areas, as children feel more secure when they know what to expect.

Instruction:

- Employ cooperative learning, either with partners or small groups. Make sure roles and procedures are well defined and understood by children.
- Instructions need to be simple and direct.
- Use hands-on instruction, imaginative play, movement, and music as alternatives to seat work.
- Intersperse quiet times with active lessons for a balance of activity levels.