



## **SUPPORTING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND BEHAVIOUR POLICY**

Whitegate Nursery School strives to provide a happy, caring and understanding environment, where each individual is valued and is able to develop to their full potential within the Early Years Foundation Stage.

We aim to create an integrated approach which involves and supports parents in the care and education of their children. For very young children, care and education are inseparable.

### **Rationale**

At Whitegate every person is valued for who they are, and differences are appreciated. We aim to make everyone feel included and understood, whatever their personality, abilities, ethnic backgrounds or culture, as stated in the Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage, May 2008

This policy is also intrinsically linked to the Fundamental British Values as our Holistic Practice supports the development of Democracy, Individual Liberty, Rule of Law and Mutual Respect and Tolerance.

### **Aims**

We aim to give all children the best opportunities to succeed. Where children are supported to understand and control their emotions they develop positive self regulation mechanisms that in turn support the development of a range of tools that can enable positive interactions and skills in a range of social situations.

We aim to provide environments where each UNIQUE CHILD has opportunities to interact in positive relationships that enable them to become competent, capable self – assured learners.

A Unique Child – every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.

By:

- Making choices
- Being involved
- Being able to concentrate and persist
- Discovering boundaries
- Being safe and protected

Positive Relationships – children learn to be strong and independent from a base of loving and secure relationships with parents and/or a key person.

By:

- Behaving in a socially acceptable way
- Understanding feelings
- Making friendships
- Forming secure attachments
- Positive interactions

Enabling Environments – the environment plays a key role in supporting and extending children’s development and learning.

By:

Planning for all environments in school and at home, both indoors and out, taking into account children’s emotions and needs. We work to support the family to ensure a consistent approach between school and home.

Learning and Development – children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of Learning and Development are equally important and inter-connected.

The school’s ‘*Image of the Child*’ underpins our approach to actively supporting learning and development through the CHARACTERISTICS of LEARNING;

- Playing and Exploring
- Active Learning
- Creating and Thinking Critically



Our staff team will show a commitment to continuing professional development and will reflect on and refresh their understanding of child development.

Positive Relationships are vital, not just between children but between practitioners and families. Staff will engage with all families to support their developing understanding of a child's learning and development journey. Staff will also ensure families have opportunities to participate in developing greater awareness of child development and how this might impact on children's social and emotional development.

### **Our adult's will consistently:**

Provide emotional warmth, attachment and responsiveness

Sensitively support play, exploration and thinking

Model positive language and talk

Communicate through positive and encouraging language

Provide challenge

Encourage thinking and talking together

Create positive environments where children have time and space to explore and make choices in both thinking and doing.

As a school we will celebrate and share desirable actions.

When we praise it will always be specific, have meaning and be related to an action not a person.

We will listen to children's voices ( verbal and non verbal ) and respect opinion. Attention and time is given to positive actions. Negative actions should not be rewarded with attention.

We will not condone blaming and shaming.

*'As children learn to be together in a group, they will inevitably experience conflict with another child....when adults are thoughtful and skilled in their approach to this conflict , children benefit . Conflict resolution is an important foundation for future growth and learning.'*

Finch and Wirtmen.

### **Positive interactions and peaceful conflict resolution**

This involves working through a problem or conflict in a way that does not physically , emotionally or socially hurt anyone involved. Working in this way provides children with opportunities to feel competent in handling situations and relationships. It fosters feelings of respect for the self and other people as well as respect for new ideas.

### **The adult will:**

- **Anticipate** that conflict will occur
  - Know each individual child enables calm adults to use differentiated responses with children involved.
  - Ensure children know and understand boundaries, routines and rhythms of the day
  - Children (depending on stage of development) will be involved in agreeing these as classroom promises. All staff and children apply consistently

- **Respond** to children as conflict occurs naturally in the classroom environments – indoors and out.
  - Assess the situation.
  - Sportcasting** – modeling language and commenting on what you can see happening
  - Make judgements between not stepping in too soon and stepping in quickly to stop dangerous behaviours
- **Support** all children in conflict with the intent to support positive emotional growth
  - Adults provide the framework to help children know where and how to begin to resolve conflict. Giving children a voice.
  - Where children are hurt then the adult will always give positive attention to the hurt or injured party , empathizing with how they are feeling.
  - They name feelings and assist children to understand their feelings.
  - They model language and encourage talking and respectfully listening to each other often reinstating and summarizing what they see and hear. Facilitating conversation and problem solving. (solution focused)

*(See appendices for supporting materials)*

### **Promoting positive behaviour management.**

We see children as role models and good citizens and use opportunities to reinforce positive behavior within school.

We will use our photographic code to promote good behaviour both in the school and at home.

We will always label actions /feelings rather than the child.

We will take opportunities to talk to families about positive behaviour/learning together / supporting each other ensuring that we talk about the processes and examples.

### **Intrinsic Versus extrinsic motivation**

Children enjoy and are motivated by the feeling of achieving or learning something new . When children automatically feel good about their achievements this should be celebrated and where possible adults can reinforce this through their conversations and talk.

Adults can also support children to enjoy their individual successes and achievements by offering positive support during the process or talking about the process at the end.

Adults will always aim to praise action and process rather than linking it to a person or end product.

### **Sanctions / consequences**

Some actions / incidents may involve sanctions developmentally appropriate to age. With an explanation, a practitioner may / ask a child to leave an area / activity and play elsewhere ( time limited) ( this is not time out).

Where individual children / groups of children deliberately damage or break equipment - it will be dealt with as part of the conflict resolution process and the actions may also be discussed by the class group ( citizenship) linked to our Aspirations and class promises.

## **Where children are struggling with Self Regulation and Behaviour**

We will support children who more regularly struggle to manage their behaviour with the guidance of the SENCO, by introducing the ABC [antecedent behaviour consequence]. See behaviour observation sheet. This will help us to identify patterns of behaviour. The classteacher will work with the family to look at strategies to share with the family to manage the individual child's difficulties with behaviours. Regular family meetings ( conferences) will be organised to support the management of the behavior. A TLP may be agreed and implemented.

In situations where children continue to struggle with behavior or where behavior becomes extreme this will be discussed with the family and interventions agreed.

- 1) If behaviours are likely to cause damage or harm others – adults should calmly and quickly move other children away and should move objects out of the way that may injure the child or cause damage. Once the child is calm – talk to the child about the actions and consequences.  
All instances of extreme / unusual behavior should be discussed with HT / DHT so that further strategies can be agreed and recorded. Family should be informed and each incident should be logged on the CPOMS system.
- 2) **CARE AND CONTROL**: it is extremely unusual for children within Nursery school to exhibit behaviours that require care and control strategies. If the situation arises. Then HT / DHT should be called upon to manage the situation.

## **Anti-Bullying Policy**

Whitegate Nursery School understands bullying to be a deliberate, persistent attempt to hurt or humiliate someone, and this is unacceptable within the environment. This could be

### **Physical**

e.g. hitting, punching, kicking, pushing, biting

### **Psychological**

e.g. name calling, threatening, teasing, excluding

### **Racial**

e.g. racial taunts, negative stereotyping and gestures

### **Sexual**

e.g. inappropriate physical contact, use of sexist language, negative stereotyping

### **S.E.N./Disability**

Name calling based on disability or SEN [special educational needs]

As a Nursery school we understand that for children under 5years it is extremely unusual for children to deliberately and persistently hurt or humiliate other children. However where parents have concerns about this will be taken very seriously and referred to the Heateacher. Incidents and agreed actions will be recorded on the CPOMS system

Agreed: Spring 2017

Review: Spring 2020

*Working together to make a real and lasting difference.....*

## **5 benefits of sportscasting our children's struggles.**

**'Sportscasting' (or 'broadcasting') is the term infant specialist Magda Gerber coined to describe the nonjudgmental, "just the facts" verbalization of events she advised parents to use to support infants and toddlers as they struggle to develop new skills.**

**Sportscasters don't judge, fix, shame, or blame. They just keep children safe, observe and state what they see, affording children the open space they need to continue struggling until they either solve the problem or decide to let go and move on to something else:**

*"You're working very hard on fitting that puzzle piece. You seem frustrated."*

*"Savannah, you had the bear and now Ally has it. You both want to hold it. Savannah is trying to get it back... Ally, I won't let you hit."*

*"You're trying to climb back down from that step. I will keep you safe. I won't let you fall."*

### **5 Benefits of Sportscasting**

#### **1. When we do less, children think and learn more**

Surprisingly, these mini-commentaries are often all our children need to persevere with challenging tasks and resolve conflicts with siblings and peers. When more help is needed, we can transition into 'interview' mode by calmly asking open-ended questions like: "You both want that ball. What can you do?"

If struggles continue and feelings escalate, we might parse out a suggestion or two, like, "Did you notice there's another ball in that basket?" Or, "you might try placing just one foot down off that step first."

If the struggle is about physical play between two (or more) children and one of the children seems concerned, we can check-in by asking, "is that okay with you?" and if the child indicates that it's not, we might suggest, "you can say 'no' and move away" (and then we gently stop the action if necessary).

Less is always more.

RIE Parent/Toddler Guidance Classes typically end at around age two, but one of the classes I facilitate has chosen to remain together through the children's third year, so I've had the unique opportunity to practice sportscasting with preschoolers. Since these children are more verbal than the under-two's, I've been able to hone my "interview" skills and been stunned by how well this approach still works. (Granted, these children are RIE-advantaged by having become accustomed to solving problems with minimal intervention.)

When the children are struggling over a toy, I sportscast and then ask:

“Laura, what were you planning to do with that car?”

“I want to roll it down the ramp.”

“Jake, you look upset. What do *you* want to do with the car?”

He demonstrates that he wants to roll the car up the wall.

“Oh, Jake wants to roll the car on the wall. Hmm... What can you two do?”

To my amazement, asking these three-year-olds to consider and express their desires is often all they’ve needed to resolve the struggle. The children end up deciding to either do the activities together, take turns and watch each other, or let go and move on to something else, all by themselves.

The temptation to lead, direct or solve problems can be great, but if we can control these impulses, children will learn much more and build confidence.

## 2. Trust empowers

Sportscasting is our most minimal intervention tool and the most empowering, because it communicates trust and belief in our children. By sportscasting we are essentially saying, “I’m here and I support you, but feel confident that you can handle this situation”. Sportscasters are not afraid of their children’s age-appropriate feelings of loss, frustration, disappointment and anger. They patiently [acknowledge](#) those, too:

“You are still so disappointed about that tower you were building. It’s really upsetting to have it fall down.”

We let whatever happens happen, and rather than creating for our children an unnecessary dependence on adults to fix situations for them, we foster resilience and self-confidence.

## 3. Reminds us not to judge or take sides

Sportscasting keeps our natural tendencies to judge or project in check. This is critical, because whenever we judge a child and/or her behavior we create shame, guilt and distance, which hinders our connection, undermines learning and self-confidence.

I’m so sensitive to projecting a problem where there isn’t one or shaming children that I don’t even like using the word ‘took’. For me, there’s a subtle, but important difference between, “You had that and now Tommy has it” and “Tommy *took* that from you”.

Children often define ‘play’, ‘fun’ and ‘problems’ [quite differently](#) than adults do. I’ll never forget the *one time* I tried to stick up for my son when he was on the receiving end of (what seemed to me) a relentless, over-the-top verbal blasting from his older sister and having him point me to the door to “stay out of it”. He’s no masochist, so I can only assume he was enjoying himself.

By sportscasting, we confirm our acceptance of the situation as is, which helps us to keep our eyes and minds open.

#### **4. Encourages children not to identify as aggressors or victims**

One of the biggest problems with responses that over-protect, shame or take sides is that the children involved can get stuck in the victim/aggressor roles we unwittingly assign them. Aggressors believe they are bad and mean. Victims feel weak and powerless. Both believe they are dependent on adults to intervene and solve their problems for them.

#### **5. Provides children a clearer understanding of situations, teaches language, social and emotional intelligence**

By sportscasting we facilitate experiential learning, which is education at its best, most meaningful and profound.

#### **Sportscasting is *not* enough when there are:**

- Safety issues – always our first priority
- Disruptive or destructive patterns of behavior. Children need gentle, firm reminders to not keep removing every toy from another child's hands, etc.
- Children focused on a project should have their work protected if possible. But if we don't arrive in time to prevent a child from dismantling another child's project, we should still sportscast and interview.

Like all of the best child care practices, sportscasting works because it is about trusting our child's innate abilities...and staying attentive and supportive, but otherwise *out of the way* so she'll be empowered to use them.

## 5 reasons why we should stop distracting toddlers.

Distraction is a popular “redirection” tactic for dealing with an infant or toddler’s undesirable behavior. Its appeal is understandable, because it’s about aiming a child to another activity rather than confronting an issue directly. It helps us dodge the bullet of our child’s resistance, which might include anger, tears or a total meltdown (and we’re all eager to avoid those things, especially in public).

Apparently, distraction often works — at least momentarily — and I can appreciate that it allows mom, dad or caregiver to remain the good guy. I love being the good guy! Instead of saying, “I can’t let you draw on the sofa. Here’s some paper if you want to draw,” (or better yet, not leaving young children unsupervised with markers in the first place) it’s easier and less likely to cause friction if I change the subject enthusiastically: “Can you draw me a silly face on this piece of paper?”

So, I may save my sofa in the nick of time, but my child has no idea that drawing on it is *not* okay, and he may very well try it again. Well, at least there are no tears, and I’m still the good guy!

And right there is the first of several problems I have with distraction:

**1) Phoniness.** I don’t like acting perky and upbeat when I’m really a little annoyed. Besides making me feel like a big phony, I don’t think it’s good modeling or healthy for my relationship with my children. As uncomfortable as it is to face the music (or markers on the sofa), I believe children deserve and *need* an honest response. No, we shouldn’t react angrily if we can possibly help it, but we don’t have to perform or be inauthentic either. Staying calm and giving a simple correction and a real choice (like “You can draw on paper or find something else to do.”) is all that’s needed.

Yes, the child may get upset — he has a right to his conflicting opinion and his feelings. It’s good for him to vent and for us to acknowledge, “You really wanted to draw on the sofa and I wouldn’t let you.” Children are capable of experiencing these kinds of safe, age-appropriate conflicts. Which brings me to my second objection to distraction....

**2) Wastes opportunities to learn from conflict.** Our children need practice handling safe disagreements with us and with peers. When our infant or toddler is struggling with a peer over a toy and we immediately suggest, “Oh, look at this cool toy over here...,” we rob him of a valuable opportunity to learn how to manage conflicts himself. Directing our child to another identical toy, if there is one, might be helpful if children seem really stuck, but even then the infant or young toddler usually wants the one that has ‘heat’ in another child’s hands. Often the children are far more interested in understanding the struggle than they are in the particular toy. But whatever their focus, young children need time and our confidence in them to learn to resolve conflicts rather than avoiding them.

**3) No guidance.** What does a child learn when we direct him to draw a silly face rather than just telling him we can’t let him draw on the sofa? Infants and toddlers need us to help them understand the house rules, and eventually internalize our expectations and values. Distraction erases the possibility of a teachable moment instead of helping children benefit from it.

**4) Underestimates and discourages attention and awareness.** Distracting a child means asking him to switch gears and forget what has taken place. Is this lack of awareness something to encourage? An article I read recently on the subject ("[Understanding Children](#)") suggests: "Since young children's attention spans are so short, distraction is often effective."

Even if I agreed about children having short attention spans, which I don't ([see video](#)), distracting them from [what they are engaged in](#) seems a sure fire way to make them even shorter.

On the other hand, children who aren't used to distraction don't buy it. They can't be fooled, coaxed or lured away from marking up the sofa (unfortunately). Encouraged to be fully present and aware, they need a straight answer, and they deserve one.

An aware child may be less convenient sometimes (when we can't trick him with sleight of hand, "Oops, the cell phone disappeared, here's a fun rattle instead!"), but awareness and [attentiveness](#) are essential to learning and will serve him well throughout his life.

**5) Respect.** Distracting is trickery that underestimates a toddler's intelligence — his ability to learn and comprehend. Toddlers [deserve the same respect we would give an adult](#), rather than this (from a [website about parenting toddlers](#)):

***Distract and divert.** The best form of toddler discipline is redirection. First, you have to distract them from their original intention and then, quickly divert them toward a safer alternative. Give them something else to do for example, helping with the household chores and soon they will be enjoying themselves rather than investing a lot of emotional energy into the original plan.*

How distraction can be construed as discipline is beyond me, but more importantly – would you distract an adult in the middle of a disagreement and direct her to mop up the floor? Then why treat a younger person like a fool? I believe that we can trust babies to choose where to invest their emotional energy. Only babies know what they are working on and figuring out.

Here are some alternative responses that not only work, but also feel respectful and authentic:

**Breathe first.** Pause and observe, unless there is a marker making contact with our sofa or a fist making contact with our toddler's buddy's head, in which case we quickly take hold of the hands and/or markers as gently as possible. But then we breathe.

**Remain calm, kind, empathetic, but firm.** In the case of a peer conflict, narrate the situation objectively without assigning blame or guilt. Infant expert [Magda Gerber](#) called this '[sportscasting](#)'. "Jake and John are both trying to hold onto the truck. It's tough when you both want to use the same thing... You're really having a hard time..." Allow the struggle, but don't let the children hurt each other. "I see you're frustrated, but I won't let you hit."

**Acknowledge feelings and point of view.** When it's over, acknowledge, "Jake has the truck now. John, you wanted it. You're upset."

Be fully available to respond with comfort if the child wants it.

After our response to a behavior like drawing on the sofa, and after we've allowed the child to cry, argue, or move on as he chooses, while offering empathy and comfort, we can acknowledge his point of view. "You thought the sofa needed decorating. I said no."

**Recognize achievement and encourage curiosity.** The use of distraction as redirection reflects our natural tendency to want to put an immediate end to a child's undesirable behavior. And in our haste, it's easy to forget to recognize and encourage positives in the situation – positives like inventiveness, achievement, curiosity. When the situation *isn't* an emergency, we can take a moment to acknowledge: "Wow, you reached all the way up to the counter and picked up my sunglasses!"

Then we can allow the child to examine the sunglasses while we hold them. If he tries to take them out of our hands, we might say, "You can look at these and touch them, but I won't let you take them." Then, if that turns into a struggle, we might say finally, "You really want to hold these yourself and I can't let you. I'm going to put them away in the desk."

Dealing with these situations openly with patience, empathy and honesty — braving a child's tears and accepting temporary 'bad guy' status — is the path to a loving relationship, trust and respect. This, believe it or not, is *real* quality time.

## Children and conflict in the classroom

### Cindy Finch and Lisa Wirtanen

**Among the many tasks of early childhood**, two stand out: to communicate needs in a respectful way to other children and to listen with respect to the ideas of others. These areas of learning are important to all young children, but especially to those who participate in group settings away from home – preschool and child care programs, playgroups, or summer camps. With the support of knowledgeable adults, children are able to learn the skills necessary for effective communication within peer groups.

As children learn to be together in a group, they will inevitably experience conflict with another child. Many adults find conflict among children frustrating and feel uncertain about how to be helpful. However, when adults are thoughtful and skilled in their approach to classroom conflict, children benefit. Conflict resolution is an important foundation for future growth and learning.

#### *What is conflict?*

Conflict is defined as a challenge to the way a person thinks or behaves. It can be an uncomfortable process for young children, causing one, both, or all children involved uneasiness, fear, or a range of other strong emotions.

Conflict is a natural and daily occurrence in early childhood programs. It is typical for young children in early childhood programs to experience conflict over:

- toys
- relationships
- ideas
- space
- power
- incomplete understanding

Through conflict, children learn. Conflict can be a positive or negative force in learning. In order for the learning to promote positive growth – emotionally, socially, and intellectually – two conditions are recommended:

1. That classroom conflict is kept at an *optimal level*. Too much conflict is overwhelming and can lead to overstimulation or withdrawal. Too little conflict is under-challenging for children and can lead to educational complacency.
2. That classroom conflict is met with support from adults who facilitate *peaceful conflict resolution*.

#### *What is peaceful conflict resolution?*

Peaceful conflict resolution in the early childhood classroom is working through a problem or conflict in a way that does not physically, emotionally, or socially hurt anyone involved.

Peaceful conflict resolution provides children with opportunities to feel competent in handling situations and relationships. It fosters feelings of respect for the self and other people, as well as respect for new ideas.

#### *What is the teacher's role in peaceful conflict resolution?*

The teacher's role in peaceful conflict resolution is to

- *anticipate* that conflict will occur within groups of children
- *respond* to children as conflict occurs naturally in the classroom
- *support* all children in conflict with the intent to promote positive growth

Teachers often find their role in peaceful conflict resolution a challenge. The following six strategies assist teachers in defining their role and relationship to children and conflict:

1. Preparing for conflict
2. Knowing about children
3. Knowing each child
4. Creating a culture of respect
5. Making decisions
6. Refocusing conflict to teach

Children have opportunities to learn positively when teachers respond to conflict with peaceful conflict resolution strategies.

#### *Preparing for conflict*

A prepared teacher is ready to spend the day with children. **A prepared teacher knows that some of the day with children will include child-child conflict.**

Peaceful conflict resolution is supported or hindered by the role a teacher takes when conflict occurs between children. Teachers who unintentionally hinder peaceful conflict resolution may try to avoid classroom conflict, punish children who experience social conflict, fix classroom conflict for children, or let children work out conflict for themselves. Teachers who consistently respond to typical classroom conflict in any of these ways teach children to comply with the teacher's expectations at the expense of the child's development, to withdraw in conflict, to be helpless, or to survive in conflict. None of these outcomes for children are supportive of peaceful conflict resolution. **A prepared teacher approaches child-child classroom conflict by being supportive to children in very intentional ways.**

One of the reasons a teacher may hinder peaceful conflict resolution in the classroom is because she has not taken the time to reflect on her personal or professional experiences with conflict. Everyone has experiences with conflict – from early childhood days to the present. These experiences produce strong feelings and memories that guide personal and professional responses to conflict. These feelings and memories can lead teachers to miss the value of classroom conflict and to seek a conflict-free teaching environment. **A prepared teacher knows that conflict has educational and social value in children's development.**

Many teachers find that thinking about teaching, evaluating the effectiveness of the day with children, and planning for the future is a helpful process. Reflection is the professional process of thinking, evaluating, and planning. Reflection is:

- becoming aware of feelings about conflict
- acknowledging the real experiences with conflict that guide personal and professional feelings about conflict
- observing or being aware of teaching practices
- being aware of children's responses to teaching
- thinking about the decisions made and the actions taken as a teacher
- celebrating successes and preparing for professional growth where it is needed

Reflection is a recommended process for new and experienced teachers. **A prepared teacher is reflective about her or his feelings, knowledge, and practice in response to conflict in the early childhood classroom.**

Educational resources are available for teachers who want to explore peaceful conflict resolution practices. Resources can be informal or formal. Colleagues, supervisors, classes, professional readings, and discussion groups can all provide support to

teachers. **A prepared teacher is open to learning about peaceful conflict resolution and will seek out resources to support learning.**

Teachers and early childhood programs have choices about what is emphasized in classrooms. When peaceful conflict resolution is a priority, teachers handle conflict as it occurs, without feeling that it interrupts real learning. When **a prepared teacher is committed to peaceful conflict resolution, handling conflict effectively becomes a classroom priority.**

#### *Other strategies*

Anticipating conflict and preparing for its occurrence in the classroom are important first steps in effectively handling children's conflict. Other strategies are critical for teachers to develop: the knowledge of child development and early childhood curriculum; respect for and sensitivity to children and families that shows in every interaction, in every communication, and in every area of the classroom; the knowledge, skill, and confidence to decide how to respond to conflict based on the situation and the children involved; and, the ability to use common conflict situations in teaching in ways that benefit everyone in the classroom.

Manageable conflict situations in the classroom provide children with opportunities to feel competent, to handle and learn in new situations and relationships, and to foster feelings of respect for other people and new ideas. Therefore conflict and conflict resolution are not viewed as interfering with the child's experience or the teacher's plans in the classroom, but rather as an expected and essential part of early childhood curriculum.

#### *Four recommended strategies for teachers of young children*

### **1) Stepping in quickly to stop dangerous behaviors and to keep children from getting hurt.**

#### *Examples:*

- Teachers use differentiated responses and strategies based on the individual children involved. Therefore, teachers are able to assess, and children are able to express intention. An accident is an accident and is treated differently from intentional aggression.
- Opportunities for restitution are available and handled positively. Both/all children are respected in every conflict.

### **2) Not stepping in too soon when conflict begins.**

#### *Examples:*

- Teachers' calmness about conflict is pervasive.
- Classroom systems reassure and empower children.

### **3) Watching children as they interact with others or use materials.**

#### *Examples:*

- Teachers analyze children's behaviors by observing and being physically close to children at play. They are alert to chronic conflict seeking behaviors in children, are sensitive to all children, and approach children in conflict without prejudging children's behaviors.
- Teachers realize that they are a resource and that children are capable people ("what can I do?" and "what can you do?"). Children are trusted to succeed.

### **4) Interacting with children actively.**

#### *Examples:*

- Teachers provide the framework to help children know where and how to begin to resolve conflict, and to help children see conflict situations accurately and in an understandable context. ("You wanted the window blocks and so did you. You took them from her so you could have them right now.")
- Talking and listening to each other is encouraged. Teachers are respectful. They often restate and summarize as well as describe what they see and hear. ("I'll hold the blocks so they'll be safe while we work this out. You look mad that he took the window blocks from you". The teacher listens. "You look upset that you can't have the blocks now. Hmm, you both want the blocks." What are your ideas about how we could figure this out?" The teacher listens and continues to facilitate conversation and problem solving.)

Time and time again I see toddlers benefitting from impulse control – *ours*, not theirs. Our natural tendencies to project and protect when our children seem challenged invariably lead us to intervene too much or too soon. These good intentions can then spoil rich opportunities for physical, cognitive, creative, social and emotional development.

Rule #1: More often than not, struggles and conflicts we might perceive negatively are viewed by infants and toddlers through an entirely different lens. Here's an example... During a recent RIE Parent/Toddler Guidance Class, a 14-month-old girl stood holding a miniature blue rubber bowl in her hand and a red one in her mouth. A boy a couple of months older walked over and took the bowl out of her mouth. I was sure the girl would be upset or, at least, complain, but I waited to gauge her reaction. She just looked at the boy with interest. Then the boy took a "sip" from the red bowl. The girl followed his lead, sipping from the blue bowl still in her hand. After this jovial toast they separated, moving on to other activities. A grandfather visiting that day had also witnessed the exchange, and we shared appreciative smiles. This would never have happened had I stopped the boy from taking the bowl or insisted he give it back.

Through infant expert [Magda Gerber](#), I've learned that observing sensitively, taking cues from our children, intervening as minimally as possible and allowing situations to play out can bring surprising, positive results.

To demonstrate, here's a new favorite video of mine depicting two types of toddler struggles. The first is a conflict of desires between two 21-month-old girls. Neither get's upset. In fact, they seem to enjoy the mini-drama! See how the conflict ends triumphantly. The second is a struggle within this struggle in which a girl does get upset. Her screams might have compelled her mom to swoop in and scoop her up, but she instead remains calm and intervenes in a manner that allows her daughter to feel more able and successful. (All this in 2 minutes! No actors were hired.)

Experiences like these encourage children to develop:

**Language** – words like "blue", "box", "sit down" and even abstract concepts like "right now" are understood and verbalized.

**Social skills** – communication, taking turns, self-control, delayed gratification.

**Self-confidence and resiliency** – I can do it (figure it out, handle it).

**Here are some guidelines for facilitating learning through [healthy infant and toddler struggles](#):**

If it looks like there might be a struggle or conflict developing, **move closer** as calmly and quietly as possible.

**Observe and wait.**

Keep children safe. **Block any hitting, pushing, biting or hair pulling with your hand** and say something brief and simple to the child like, "I won't let you push. I see you want the toy. Joey is holding it now." Be there to spot when children are struggling with a physical challenge—close enough to break a fall.

**Reflect the situation evenly and non-judgmentally.** ([Magda Gerber](#) called this "[sports casting](#)".) "You both want the toy. You're both holding onto it."

**Acknowledge the feelings you see.** “You seem frustrated. It’s hard to get out of the box, isn’t it?” (By the way, the girl in the video had climbed out of the box twice on her own quite easily, so I knew she could do it.)

If children continue to struggle and intervention seems necessary, **try doing just a little to help** so the children can learn and accomplish more. For example, if two children are both determined to have a toy, first point out an identical one (but don’t hand it to them). Or if a child is physically struggling, give direction and a bit of help the way the mom in the video does.

**Reflect on the incident afterwards** (if the child seems interested) to help her absorb, process and learn from it.

*“Following the RIE approach, we start with the least amount of help and intervention and then slowly increase it. We do expect and trust that even infants eventually learn most by working out conflicts all by themselves. If every time adults jump in and bring in their version of what is right, the children learn either to depend on them or defy them. The more we trust they can solve, the more they do learn to solve.” –Magda Gerber, [Dear Parent: Caring For Infants With Respect](#)*