

Administration for Children's Services & Department of Education
Statement on Behavior Management

Position

The NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and Department of Education (DOE) are committed to ensuring that all children and families leave our early childhood programs and enter kindergarten ready to succeed. This means that children have a strong foundation in all domains of development and that families are ready to support their child's learning.

EarlyLearn NYC and Universal Pre-Kindergarten programs are responsible for structuring an environment in which children and families feel secure and supported in their growth. Teachers and school leaders should work with children and families to ensure that children in their program develop their social emotional skills and approaches to learning as outlined in the [NYS Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core](#) and the [Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework](#).

Children in EarlyLearn NYC and Universal Pre-Kindergarten programs should never be expelled or suspended for behavioral reasons.

Please see the following pages for additional guidance regarding:

1. [Proactive Measures](#)
2. [Challenging Behavior](#)
3. [Additional Supports](#)

If you have questions, please reach out to ACS or DOE for additional information and support.

ACS: sar@acs.nyc.gov or 212 487 2453

DOE: earlychildhood@schools.nyc.gov or 212-374-0351

Proactive Measures

All EarlyLearnNYC and Universal Pre-Kindergarten programs are required to develop and implement proactive, developmentally appropriate behavior management strategies.

These strategies must be:

- Grounded in the program's overarching philosophy about how children learn best
- Part of a comprehensive approach to behavior management that promotes development in all domains and includes specific strategies to create a safe, welcoming environment for all children
- Responsive to the linguistic, cultural, and social needs of children and families
- Clearly communicated to families and stakeholders
- Aligned with the NYC Health Code and other statutes and regulations applicable to specific funding streams

Specifically, these strategies may guide children to:

- Recognize their responsibilities as part of a community of learners
- Care for themselves and others (e.g. building empathy)
- Maintain and care for an ordered environment
- Independently make positive choices
- Manage and regulate strong emotions
- Share and take turns with materials and classroom activities
- Resolve conflicts between peers and adults
- Seek help when needed

Challenging Behavior

All EarlyLearnNYC and Universal Pre-Kindergarten programs are required to develop and implement strategies for responding to challenging behavior.

Program staff needs to understand the root cause of a child's challenging behavior in order to effectively support the child. The root cause of the challenging behavior could be related to:

- Programmatic structures such as the daily schedule, arrangement of the classroom, etc.
- The child's feeling of security within the classroom or program
- The child's unique circumstances. Specifically, the challenging behaviors may be a result of:
 - Behaviors the child has not yet learned
 - Behaviors that come from the child's individual needs

Once the adults determine the root cause of the behavior, they can work collaboratively with the children and families to help the child develop solutions and help children exhibit appropriate behaviors. Some strategies for this include:

- Modifying programmatic structures as appropriate
 - Staff may make modifications to daily schedules or room arrangement to accommodate the needs of children and minimize their frustration throughout the day
- Supporting the child's sense of security
 - Staff may collaborate with the child and family to strengthen the child's relationships with children and adults in the program
 - The child may be encouraged to bring a "security object" (e.g. blanket, teddy bear) to help feel more comfortable in the classroom
- Helping the child develop appropriate behaviors
 - Staff may use different strategies depending on the program's philosophy and the unique needs of the child and family. One possible strategy is outlined below:
 1. Identify the challenging behavior in a non-judgmental, factual way
 - Ex: "I noticed that you threw a block."
 2. Calmly communicate with the child about the impact of the behavior on him/herself and others
 - Ex: "That block came very close to your friend's head. If it hit him, it would have really hurt."
 3. Help the child identify the root cause of the behavior
 - Ex: "I noticed that your face was scrunched up. Were you feeling angry?"
 4. Identify the targeted replacement behavior and strategies the child can use to exhibit the targeted replacement behavior
 - Ex: "Next time when you feel angry, you could go to the cozy corner to relax."
 5. Celebrate with the child when he/she makes progress over time
 - Ex: "I see that you're relaxing in the cozy corner. Are you feeling better?"

Punishment should not be used as a strategy for correcting behavior because it does not teach children appropriate replacement behaviors. In some cases, staff may need to reward the child for positive behavior. Rewards should be intrinsic whenever possible. Food should not be used as a reward or punishment for behavior except in unique circumstances when recommended by a behavioral specialist or medical doctor.

Families should always be informed about their child's behavior and strategies that are being employed at the programs. When applicable, programs should work collaboratively with families to ensure that they are equipped to implement consistent expectations and strategies at home.

Additional Supports

All EarlyLearnNYC and Universal Pre-Kindergarten programs are required to provide additional supports to children and families when a child's challenging behavior is persistent or extreme.

These supports may entail:

1. Behavior modification plans
2. Adjusted schedules
3. Referral to outside agencies

Behavior modification plans

Behavior modification plans can be grounded in two approaches – positive reinforcement or conditional reinforcement.

- Positive reinforcement
 - Providing external rewards when the child demonstrates appropriate behavior
 - Ex: getting a chance at the computer, sitting next to the teacher at lunch
 - Providing intrinsic rewards when the child demonstrates appropriate behavior
 - Ex: "I bet you feel good about cleaning up your spilled milk," "It is fun when you get to paint at the easel with your friend."
- Conditional reinforcement
 - Providing the child a choice of when to demonstrate behavior
 - Ex: "You can go outside when your blocks are cleaned up," "You can come back to the circle when your body is calm."
 - Providing the child a choice between two acceptable solutions
 - Ex: "You can clean up the milk with a paper towel or with the sponge."

Adjusted schedules

In some cases, a child may benefit from shorter hours of attendance for a limited time. In these cases, programs should contact their ACS Team Leader or DOE Instructional Coordinator to determine appropriate next steps for the child and family.

Referral to outside agencies

In some cases, the program and family may need support from an outside agency. These supports may include, but are not limited to:

- Parenting or family support classes
- Psychological evaluation and intervention
- Referral to the Committee for Preschool Special Education (CPSE)

In some cases, the outside agencies may not be able to provide services to the child or family immediately. In these cases, the child may require more direct supervision than his/her peers for a period of time. This will help ensure a safe, nurturing environment for the child and his/her peers.