

Voices for Safety Certified Facilitator Guide

Being well prepared for facilitation is essential. The facilitation tips and techniques in this guide are intended to compliment the Voices for Safety certification training. The strategies in this guide can help create a positive classroom environment and allow completion of the lessons in the time allotted. Please feel free to suggest additional strategies.

I. Creating a Learning Environment

In Voices for Safety, children are taught that each of them is special and has the right to be safe. Throughout the curriculum, teaching techniques are purposely used to create an atmosphere of safety and to acknowledge each child's unique value as an individual.

- 1. Circle time:** The preschool curriculum is designed to be taught in the form of circle time with the teacher sitting with the students on the floor in a circle. Circle time facilitates a secure atmosphere where open communication and ideas are validated and encouraged. Circle time should be interactive and last no longer than 15 minutes for preschool children, or as long as the children are engaged. It is important to observe whether the children are engaged or fidgeting. If they are fidgeting, the teacher may want to encourage more direct involvement.
- 2. Validate participation with positive responses:** The teacher should take each opportunity possible to encourage and acknowledge individual children's efforts to participate. Validating means that anything the child says or feels is valid and should not be negated. For example, if a child says that if someone was scaring her she would tell her dog, the teacher should respond positively and then reframe the response. To respond positively the teacher might say something like "I'm glad you said that. Pets can be very important and comforting to us." This is a very different response than "That is not a good idea," or "It wouldn't be helpful to tell your dog, does anyone else have an idea?" Making a child feel like their ideas are not worthy or silly, or ignoring their responses will close rather than open communication.
- 3. Check for understanding and reframe:** It is very important that the teacher not assume that the children understand what is being communicated in the lesson, and that the teacher checks for understanding. If a child's response is not quite fitting with the discussion and could present a future safety issue, it is important to address it as a teachable moment and reframe the response. The teacher should be open to teachable moments and willing to deviate temporarily from the plan. As in the above example, after validating the child's response with a positive statement, the teacher might respond as follows, "Besides telling your dog, it would be important to tell a trusted adult right away so that they could help you." Who is a trusted adult that you could tell if you were feeling scared?"
- 4. Redirect:** By observing the children during circle time the teacher will be able to pick up on any disruptive behaviors as they arise. Classroom teachers will already know the personalities of the children and how they interact, allowing the teacher to avoid situations that may lead to disruption. If a child shows signs of disruptive behavior, the teacher may redirect his or her attention to another activity or somehow engage the child in active helping. The teacher should separate children who may have difficulty focusing when they are sitting together; the

For more information please visit voicesforsafety.com or email info@voicesforsafety.com

teacher may do this in a positive way by asking one of the children to come and sit beside him or her to be the helper for the lesson. The need for redirection is normal. The teacher should move through redirection as quickly as possible without giving it much attention so that the lesson can be continued without disruption to the other students or loss of time.

- 5. Non-verbal communication:** Creating a climate that facilitates learning and retention demands good nonverbal and verbal skills. It is not only what teachers say in the classroom that is important, but it's how they say it and what their eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, and body language communicate that can make the difference to students. Nonverbal messages are an essential component of communication in the teaching process. Teachers should be aware of student's nonverbal communication in the classroom because it will allow them to better understand how students are processing the material, check for understanding and add clarification when needed, and reinforce learning.

Teachers should be aware of important differences in non-verbal communication between cultures to reach students from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Teachers in a multicultural classroom can increase their own and their students' awareness of varying non-verbal communication styles and can resist the tendency to judge or infer meaning from differing cultural styles.

II. Classroom Management

The following three steps are designed to assist with classroom management and challenging behaviors.

- 1. Routine:** Using classroom management strategies that the children are already familiar with will be comforting to the children. Teachers typically have certain or unique procedures for managing their classrooms.
- 2. Broad participation:** The teacher must work hard to involve as many children in the program as possible. When children participate they learn. Involvement and validation enables the child to feel special.
- 3. Understanding and responding to challenging behavior:** Children sometimes have trouble communicating because they may not know the words to describe how they are feeling or what to do in a difficult situation. The purpose to challenging behavior may be to get someone's attention, to avoid something they don't like, or to gain sensory pleasure. Since children often use their behavior to tell us what they need, teachers can help the child by figuring out the meaning behind the child's behavior. Once adults understand what children are communicating through their behavior, they can respond better. Yelling at or punishing a child for a behavior may stop the behavior for the moment, but it does not give the child support or provide alternate ways to act in difficult situations. When adults help children find positive ways to communicate their needs to others, children learn important social and problem-solving skills that will help them throughout their life.

For more information please visit voicesforsafety.com or email info@voicesforsafety.com