



Child Care Resources Inc.

CCRI tip sheet

Ideas and information about child development and early education for parents, professionals and the community-at-large.

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When Children Are Rejected

Most teachers can think of a child in their classroom who is rejected - a child who is repeatedly excluded from activities by their peers. Children are rejected for many reasons. They are aggressive, disruptive, have limited play skills, try to control play, have trouble entering play or lack boundaries. Often these are the children that teachers find difficult to handle because they are demanding and take a lot of time and effort.

It is a challenge for adults to not become frustrated and refrain from rejecting these children. Directly and indirectly, through body movements, tone of voice, facial expressions, verbal comments, and gestures, the teacher affects the atmosphere in the classroom, including the children. A teacher's positive attitude can ensure the acceptance of all children. It is up to the teacher to set the tone of the classroom.

It is critical to steer children away from establishing a negative reputation and being rejected by fellow classmates. Having a child be accepted back into the class once they have developed a negative reputation can require more than changing the child's behavior. It may be necessary to change the behavior of the entire class by highlighting the positive changes in the child's behavior and having the children respond to the child in a positive manner.

Children who are rejected miss opportunities to learn social skills such as fairness, sharing, taking turns, following rules, negotiating, compromising and cooperating. Lack of friendship-making skills during the early years can contribute to later

difficulties in social, emotional, cognitive and academic development. Teachers are in a position to help young children develop the skills needed to interact successfully with their peers.

For example, when adults assume children are being intentionally aggressive, an expectation for the child to always be aggressive can become established. This can lead to a repeated cycle where the child fulfills the expectation set for him. The goal is to replace negative behaviors with more socially acceptable behaviors.

Young children can be helped to develop socially acceptable behaviors by labelling and verbalizing their feelings and those of others, developing problem-solving skills, and understanding the consequences of their actions. Additionally, positive interactions must be reinforced to reduce or eliminate the negative.

Planned activities can help children generate alternative solutions to challenging social situations. Puppet shows, friendship games, role-playing, stories, or group discussions can encourage potential solutions. These activities can benefit the whole classroom, not just children who are rejected.

A teacher's attempts to help rejected children feel included may be more successful if the family is involved.

The family can use some of the same strategies at home when peers and siblings interact. Children who can feel good about themselves and experience improvement in their relationship with family may translate their success to the classroom.

