



## **Wander in Wonder Transition FAQs**

### **July 2024**

#### **Age of Children**

2 to ~3 years old

#### **Adults in Classroom**

1 adult for every 5 children

#### **Number of Children in the Classroom**

There may be up to 15

#### **Agreements**

We establish a positive classroom community every year during the first month of school. The teachers and children begin by creating shared agreements. We discover how we will live together in this space; how we will treat each other, our materials, and our physical environment:

- We are safe.
- We are kind.
- We are respectful.
- We are responsible

In collaboration with teachers, children define how each would look and feel. When children participate in the creation of the agreements, they learn valuable lessons in group problem solving, have increased investment in their space and community, and have agency in their class governance.

#### **Anti-Bias Education**

Wander in Wonder is committed to Anti-Bias Education. In early childhood settings, anti-bias work involves a lot of identity exploration, being mindful about the inclusivity of the books and materials in our classrooms, and having thoughtful conversations about fairness, empathy, inclusion, activism, and social justice. We want all people in our community to feel included, safe, valued, and respected.

Our agreements for children, staff, and classrooms:

- We are safe with our bodies and our words

- We listen to each other
- We learn about and value the ways we are the same and different
- We work for equity and justice in our play, in our classroom, and our communities

### **Communication/Family Participation**

Daily communication and strong, respectful relationships are vitally important to your child's success at school. Good communication between families and teachers can build support for and strengthen the important work happening in the classroom and at home.

There are a variety of methods that teachers and families can use to communicate effectively:

#### **Daily Logs**

Daily logs share information about eating, sleeping, diapering/toileting, and pick up and drop off times. Please complete the top portion of a daily log each morning at drop-off, and teachers will complete the bottom portion throughout the day. Daily logs will come in paper or laminated versions. Take a picture or log home each evening.

#### **Drop Off and Pick Up**

Always check in with a classroom teacher before leaving your child. It's important to let your child's teachers know of any changes to your routine or any changes at home. We encourage "short goodbyes and long hellos" during drop-off and pick-up.

It is imperative to check in with a teacher and sign your child out at the end of the day. Some good questions to ask might be: What activities did my child participate in today? Did they have a favorite one? Were they engaged with anyone in particular? Are there any items we need to take home? We welcome you to spend time with your child in the classroom at the end of the day. Please be mindful and aware of your teacher's time. You should plan on arriving by 5:45 pm to exit the building no later than 6:00 pm.

#### **Daily Photos/Reminder Emails**

Teachers will send photos and reminders to families each day so you can see a snapshot of the learning happening in the classroom community each day.

#### **Family/Teacher Conferences**

Conferences are an excellent way for families and early childhood educators to discuss the child in depth. Conferences occur formally twice a year. Additional meetings can

be arranged and are encouraged. Please contact your child's teacher/director to find out the best time to schedule those.

### **Direct Email**

All classrooms have a Wander in Wonder email address. Families are welcome to email teachers directly with thoughts or questions. Teachers may not respond immediately but will do so as soon as time allows.

### **Volunteering**

Families are a valuable asset to the program and are encouraged to be active participants in their child's learning by volunteering in the program. Families can regularly volunteer for projects in the classroom and for school-wide events. Sharing your expertise (i.e. are you a firefighter, an architect, a rocket scientist, etc.) expands and supports authentic project work experiences in our classrooms.

### **Toilet Learning**

The toddler-aged classrooms all have a child sized toilet located in the classroom and children may engage in toilet learning. There are three categories of toilet readiness that we look for:

**Physically Ready:** The child exhibits bladder control (mostly dry diapers in between changes), the child can reach the toilet and pull pants/underwear up and down independently.

**Cognitively Ready:** The child understands what needs to happen in order to go to the bathroom (pull pants and underwear down, sit on the toilet, pee or poop, wipe, and then flush and wash hands).

**Emotionally Ready:** This can be the most difficult part for the majority of children. The child is ready to give up diapers and diaper changes, which for many children have been a moment of bonding and relationship building with primary caregivers.

The child will show us verbally (or non-verbally) if they have an interest in using the toilet. We offer that the child sit on the toilet nonchalantly (without any expectations or coaxing) during stand-up diaper changes, "Do you want to sit on the toilet?" and we always respect their answer and then move on accordingly. We work with families to create a supportive home-school toilet learning plan as they approach their transition to Preschool.

### **Supporting Children Through Challenging Behavior**

We create classroom communities focused on respectful relationships and shared excitement for learning. Teachers plan for and respond to children's curiosities with shared inquisitiveness. They encourage children to learn about each other and the world around them. Classrooms focused on relationships will be lively, not quiet or

orderly. They are a living, breathing community for learning to negotiate individual desires while participating as citizens in a greater community.

The classroom environment and routine, as well as our interactions with children, help scaffold the children's ability to focus and collaborate with others. We believe children have a huge capacity for offering support to others, developing relationships with others, and also for accepting and benefiting from the gifts of others. While children develop these relationships there will be interactions in which conflicts arise.

Challenging behaviors serve a function for the child. These behaviors communicate a need. The behaviors are context related, meaning that they are social interactions between people, materials, and the environment.

Effective interventions and support plans should be guided by a positive focus on the child's strengths and continually developing skills. Every child (every human) is learning on a continuum and acquiring skills at different times and rates. The goal in supporting children's development is that each person is continuing on their spectrum of growth in an upward and positive fashion. **This growth curve will be unique to each child.**

When a teacher begins to notice challenging or unusual behavior we want to follow a clear process to assess the child and their existing behaviors. We begin by looking in the classroom at the following items:

1. **Observation and analysis of challenging behavior** – determine the when, where, what, and how of the behavior.
  - **Needs of Young Children:**
    - Need for inner body regulation- rest, nutrition, routine, consistency of care, stable emotional environment, and avoiding overstimulation (noise, visual, sensorial)
    - Need for positive emotional tone- consistent and stable teachers who provide emotionally supportive language, facial expressions, physical openness, and mental connection.
    - Need for assistance in self regulating- children need our help in gaining these skills. This is done through modeling, role-playing, clear and consistent expectations, and responsiveness from teachers.
    - Need to learn and have varied opportunities to practice pro-social behaviors and empathy – including trading, taking turns, listening, waiting, asking for needs, recognizing others emotions and responding to those emotions.
    - Need to continue developing an understanding and respect for the personal space, belongings, ideas and creations of others.
  - **Thoughts to consider:**
    - Under regulation – not enough limits or boundary setting
    - Over regulation – too many expectations, not age-appropriate limits
    - Irregular regulation – teacher not consistent in expectations
    - Chaotic environment – structure and routine not set, materials not

intentional, physical space not well utilized

- Is their behavior an attempt at self-regulation? Do they need to be redirected to a safe/appropriate space or way to achieve that emotional release or physical stimulation?

## **2. Family meeting**

- Share your observations of the child so far.
- Ask families to share their observations and perspectives.
- Collaboratively plan the steps you will take next - this may include creating a behavior modification plan using the Support Planning Chart.
- Schedule a series of follow-up family meetings (2-3 weeks out and 5-6 weeks out).

## **3. Environmental changes**

- Environment as the 3rd teacher - Children's behavior can be an indicator of a need for changes to the physical environment. Teachers might reduce opportunities for conflicts by very carefully considering arrangement of furniture, materials and traffic patterns.
- Materials – Ensure that materials are engaging and very carefully selected based on the children's emerging interests. Thoughtfully arranged materials allow for deeper explorations. Materials must be challenging, yet open-ended and aesthetically pleasing. Teachers offer materials that have many possibilities, can be layered, are regularly rotated, and that extend children's interests.
- Routine – Teachers implement a consistent schedule and predictable routines to reduce opportunities for challenging behaviors.
- Promoting positive behaviors - Teachers should model social and self-regulation skills to encourage positive peer and adult relationships.

**4. Natural and Logical consequences to behavior** – Teachers reinforce positive behaviors and set consequences for negative behaviors. These consequences should be:

- Meaningfully related to behavior
- Appropriate- shorter is better
- Prompt- quick but thoughtful response
- Private and respectful- older children (4 or 5 years) often become self conscious
- Decided with the child - key factor in effectiveness

*“Teachers who practice guidance believe in the positive potential of children, manifest through a dynamic process of development”. - P. Greenberg*

**5. Individual plan** Talk with the child respectfully to work out a plan together. Be sure to listen for and encourage the child's views and ideas. The child's plan is documented with a drawing and writing (with the teacher acting as a scribe). It is a working, proactive document, useful for consistency and gentle reminders. The plan is shared with families and administration. Progress is noticed, documented, and celebrated.

**6. Anticipation and prevention of behavior-** Teachers work with children to create a guiding document of their classroom agreements – ways of being

together. These agreements usually include being safe, kind, respectful, responsible and as a classroom community, children and teachers define what this looks and feels like. When children *have ownership over the "rules"* they have higher levels of buy in and investment in following them.

**7. Observe and acknowledge positive behavior-** Children want to connect with teachers. Often the behavior may be a sign for attention seeking, but their ultimate goal is connection with the adult, whether positive or negative. At every opportunity, acknowledge the child for exhibiting positive behaviors.

- **Examples of promoting appropriate behaviors:**

- It was responsible of you to clean up your spill. Thank you for caring for our community.
- I saw how you hung your coat on the hook and placed your shoes in the bin. That was responsible of you.
- I noticed that you gave your glue to Cory, even though you weren't finished yet. That was kind of you.
- You asked a friend for permission before you gave them a hug, that was very respectful.
- You were being safe when you walked with the scissors pointed down.
- You were being safe when you went down the slide on your bottom.

**8. Direct intervention of conflicts (shadowing) –** Depending on the behavior, teachers stay in close proximity to the child. When a potentially challenging interaction is happening, they will be ready to assist the child through the conflict. Using their best judgment as to the intent of the behavior, they do the following:

- Have all children stay in close proximity to the event and to the teacher.
- Verbalize the child's feelings, wants or desires and actions
- Take turns talking and listening (the teacher may want to pass an object to designate whose turn it is to speak).
  - What was happening?
  - How did you feel?
  - What would work out better?
  - Do you agree?
  - Are you ready to try again?
- Ask the child about a "do-over" or "do again". If they could go back in time, how could they do that differently? Reenact or role-play the situation if possible with their problem solving ideas.
- Check in with each other, or the friend who was hurt.
- Teachers ask: Are you okay? Is there anything I can do to help you?
- No forced apologies.
- Discuss problem-solving strategies.
- Take a deep breath "thinking time".
  - Child may need to "take a break" (have a more extended calm-down time) before resolving the conflict. This can be a pre-designated calming spot in the classroom or on the

playground. The child decides when they are ready to be part of the resolution process (but the resolution needs to be completed before other activities occur). This should be modeled and practiced ahead of time.

- You can talk to them. / Have you tried talking to them?
- Walk away.
- Ask for help – from either a peer or a teacher.

**9. Schedule and routine adjustments** – Does the schedule and daily routine best meet the needs of the group and this individual child? If not, teachers will look into ways to adjust the schedule to better meet everyone's needs.

- **Questions the teaching team will ask:**
  - How many transitions do we have? Are they necessary? How can they be streamlined?
  - Do we have enough free play time?
  - Do we offer outlets for large motor play while inside?
  - Are there sensory experiences daily?
  - Are we getting outside for physically stimulating and challenging play?

**10. Ongoing family meetings to continue collaborating on the behavior plan:**

We recognize that growth takes time and that regular meetings to note progress, regression and to review current goals will be necessary. Some steps that are typically included in behavior plans are:

- Having a nightly check in with families about the child's day.
- Collaboratively setting one or two specific behavioral skills/goals **with teachers, families, and children** and monitoring and documenting success.
- Make prior arrangements for the child to have "reset" time away from the classroom in a buddy room or in another setting in the school. (Can be used as a preventative intervention or as an alternative for times when the child's behavior is making it difficult for the rest of the class to function successfully.)
- Asking family for permission to have a formal observation by an outside professional.
- Ask family member to spend the day with the child shadowing them when identified behaviors are exhibited.
- Ask a family member to pick their child up for the day.

***Extreme aggressive or dangerous behaviors that are outside the acceptable limits for the age group that occur after intervention steps have been followed, a family meeting detailing the concerns and potential consequences has occurred, and a collaborative plan has been completed may result in the child being sent home for the remainder of the day and/or the possibility of permanent dismissal from school. The center reserves the right to discontinue the enrollment of any family.***

## **Biting Behavior**

Biting behavior is quite common with infants and toddlers, as they are exploring the world around them through their senses and are on the brink of mastering verbal communication. A child might bite in order to:

- Relieve pain from teething.
- Explore cause and effect ("What happens when I bite?").
- Experience the sensation of biting.
- Satisfy a need for oral-motor stimulation.
- Imitate other children and adults.
- Feel strong and in control.
- Get attention.
- Act in self-defense.
- Communicate needs and desires, such as hunger or fatigue.
- Communicate or express difficult feelings, such as frustration, anger, confusion, or fear ("There are too many people here and I feel cramped"). (From NAEYC for Families)

When biting does occur, we:

1. Comfort the child who was bitten-- hugs if desired, first aid if necessary, always wash with soap and water. "I am sorry that happened to you, \_\_\_\_\_. That hurt. I'm going to try to help you feel better..."
2. Calmly talk to the child who used biting behavior (if we escalate the situation, it is more likely to become a pattern). "Ouch, that hurt \_\_\_\_\_. Next time you can (varies depending on the situation). Would you like to check in with him/her?" At this point, the child who used biting behavior and the teacher may approach the child to see if they want help washing the mark or if they would like to accept comfort from them.

When a child is regularly using biting behavior, we track the biting using a Behavior Incident Report (BIR) to better understand the timing and motivation patterns. We also shadow children, which means that we remain within one foot of the child at all times to help prevent the behavior from happening (coaching them through conflicts, and physically blocking any biting behavior attempts.) Additionally, for those who are experiencing a need for oral stimulation or who are teething, we offer materials the children can chew safely on (chewy tubes).

## **Meal Times**

Wander in Wonder collaborates with families to meet their children's nutritional and emotional needs. We are always willing to work with families to accommodate special needs, within our industry guidelines, for health, safety, and best practice.

- We do not use feeding in lieu of other forms of comfort.
- Feeding is family-style at Wander in Wonder. According to their ability, children are allowed and encouraged to serve themselves from community serving

bowls at every eating opportunity.

- Adults sit with children at tables during feeding times.
- Every water bottle must come from home labeled with the child's first and last name.
- Families take water bottles home at the end of each week
- Children do not carry bottles, sippy cups, or regular cups with them while crawling or walking.
- If families provide pre-mixed, ready-to-eat foods it will include all food groups for lunch and at least 2 food groups for snacks.
- Solid foods are not served directly from the container.
- Leftovers in serving containers are discarded after feeding.
- The program prepares written menus, posts them where families can see them, and has copies available for families.

Note regarding bottle weaning: Wander in Wonder practices align with American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommendations for beginning to wean children from bottles around one year of age, and weaning children from bottles entirely by 18 months of age.

### **What does a typical day look like in a Transition Room?**

When providing group care, it is essential to establish a daily rhythm for each room, this allows children to know what to expect during the day. We look at each classroom as a whole by identifying each child's individual patterns and use that information to establish a routine for the group. A typical day in the school will include:

- a) Sensorial exploration
- b) Art experiences
- c) Large motor development
- d) Language/Literacy opportunities
- e) Interactive songs
- f) Outdoor Time
- g) Family style meals
- h) Rest time
- i) Time for self care
- j) Social/emotional learning

The following are broad examples of a daily rhythm:

7:30-9:00 Greetings, Free Play

9:00-12:00 Snack, Morning Meeting, Provocations specific to the classroom  
Inquiries, Outdoor Time

12:00-1:00 Lunch Time

1:00-3:00 Rest

3:00-6:00 Snack, Continued Provocation work, Clean-Up, Outdoor Time

## Curriculum/Philosophy

We are inspired by RIE (Resources for Infant Educators), which means that respectful relationships are our priority when working with young children. We communicate authentically, allow children to develop their cognitive and motor skills naturally, provide time for uninterrupted play and exploration, and include children in their caregiving routines. More information about RIE can be found here:

<http://www.janetlansbury.com/2013/12/rie-parenting-basics-9-ways-to-put-respect-into-action/>

Curriculum unfolds naturally from teachers closely observing and listening to the students play, stories and theories about their world. Curriculum can arise from a child or family member sharing their recent experiences.

*Example: A child shares information about sharks after a trip to the coast. The teachers watch and listen as the children explore what it means to be a shark swimming through the deep dark sea, preying on smaller fish. The teachers might then begin to bring in materials that support the ocean study and reference books for the children to look at and read. Teachers would have questions for children, and hope the children have questions for them in return. From this place an inquiry emerges. The inquiry could ebb and flow from sharks to whales to migration, to birds that migrate, to nest building, to investigating animal homes or shelters to human structures. Some projects may last two weeks, and some could last the entire year.*

*Teachers support the inquiry by offering provocations and proposals that explore sharks through carefully chosen materials. Teachers may propose the language of storytelling, imaginative and dramatic play, music, and scientific experiments that all support the interest in sharks. Through thoughtful and intentional planning the teacher supports the children's changing and developing theories.*

At Wander in Wonder we have a strong image of children as **protagonists** of their learning, as **collaborators** in search of relationships, and as **communicators** who use a multitude of languages to discover and express what they know, understand, wonder, feel, and imagine. It is because of this strong image that we know children carry the capacity and thrive on big ideas. More information about project work and the philosophy of Reggio Emilia can be found here:

<http://projectapproach.org/about/project-approach/>

<https://www.reggiokids.com/the-reggio-approach/fundamentals>