

CLASS PREK

TIPS and TRICKS

An Appetite for Mealtime Learning

Focus:

REGARD FOR STUDENT PERSPECTIVES (RSP) – The degree to which teachers’ interactions with children and classroom activities place an emphasis on their interests and points of view.

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT (CD) - How teachers use instructional discussions and activities to promote higher-order thinking skills.

QUALITY OF FEEDBACK (QF) – How teachers extend children’s learning through their responses to children’s ideas and comments.

LANGUAGE MODELING (LM) – The extent to which teachers facilitate, stimulate, and encourage children’s language.

What is a CLASS observer looking for when they observe your classroom?

They are looking for instructional interactions between the teacher and children, the frequency of conversations taking place in the classroom, and the level and frequency of questioning between the teachers and children. This includes during open centers, activities, snack time, as well as mealtimes.

REGARD FOR STUDENT PERSPECTIVES (RSP):

- Teach the children how to be responsible for washing hands, cleaning, throwing away trash, etc.
- Give them jobs in the classroom.
- Allow choice of activities when they finish eating. Don't let them sit and wait until everyone else is finished. Make sure they know the expectations of where or what they can do next.
- Allow opportunities for children to talk to one another and talk with the teacher.
- Be flexible. If a child wants to share or talk about something, listen, respond, and have a conversation regarding.

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT (CD):

- Ask “WHY” and “HOW” questions to get children to think. Let them explain.
- Allow them to problem solve. Present an issue and allow them to come up with ideas to solve the issue.
- Connect concepts to one another and to previous learning.
- Make connections to the real world and to their personal lives to help children understand new concepts.
- Stay away from questions that will allow for one-word answers. Restate your questions so children will have to explain their thinking.

QUALITY OF FEEDBACK (QF):

- Respond to a child’s comment or question by having a conversation... back and forth exchanges.
- Provide additional information to help a child understand more clearly.
- Encourage children for their effort, but make sure you tell them why you are encouraging them. Example: “Great job unpacking your lunch. You are getting good at opening your lunchbox and getting everything ready.”

LANGUAGE MODELING (LM):

- Model language by using a wider range of new vocabulary to describe foods (crunchy, juicy, slimy, etc.)
- Participate in conversations with the children. Use unfamiliar vocabulary when possible and define when necessary. Continue to use those new words throughout the day and/or weeks so that children will remember them and can use them on their own correctly.
- Ask open-ended questions. Ask questions that will allow children to respond using language. Ask questions that will get them to explain what they are doing or thinking.
- Repeat and extend a child's comment or action. If they ask for "more milk," you would respond with, "You want more milk? Would you like the milk in your cereal?"
- Self and/or Parallel Talk is when you narrate exactly what you are doing at that moment or exactly what the child(ren) is/are doing at that moment. This does not include telling them what they will be doing that afternoon. Example: "I am passing out a fork and napkin to each of you right now." (SELF-TALK) Example: "John has finished his lunch and is cleaning up his area before going to wash his hands." (PARALLEL-TALK).

WHAT TO DO DURING MEALTIMES:

- Sit with the children and talk.
- Allow the children to talk to the teachers and to one another.
- Ask questions to get them talking.
- Allow them to get up and do something when they are finished eating.
- Connect ideas, skills, and concepts to what they already know.
- Connect what they are eating to what they eat at home. Ask questions about the food itself.
- Have lots of conversations with them. Listen to what they are saying and join in.
- Enjoy the mealtime together.

WHAT NOT TO DO DURING MEALTIMES:

- Don't make them sit and wait until everyone has finished eating.
- Don't make them sit quietly.
- Don't use this time for clerical work or prepping. That can be done during naptime.
- Don't just sit with them without having conversations.

Mealtimes are a great time to come together, have conversations, build on learning, and promote children's social, emotional, language and communication. Use the time to engage and interact with children by asking questions, getting involved in their conversations, introducing new vocabulary, and modeling language development for them.