



MISSISSIPPI
BEGINNINGS: **PRE-K**

Set Up For Success - In The Classroom

EFFECTIVE PRACTICE AND PRACTICAL STRATEGIES
FOR THE *FIRST THREE WEEKS* OF SCHOOL



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

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Special thanks to the Boston Public Schools Department of Early Childhood for their guidance and support in the creation of MS Beginnings Pre-K.

Everyone wants a classroom that works together cooperatively, purposefully, and peacefully.

Getting there requires time, effort, and intentional teaching.

The first three weeks of school lays the foundation for a successful year by establishing a positive, supportive classroom climate.

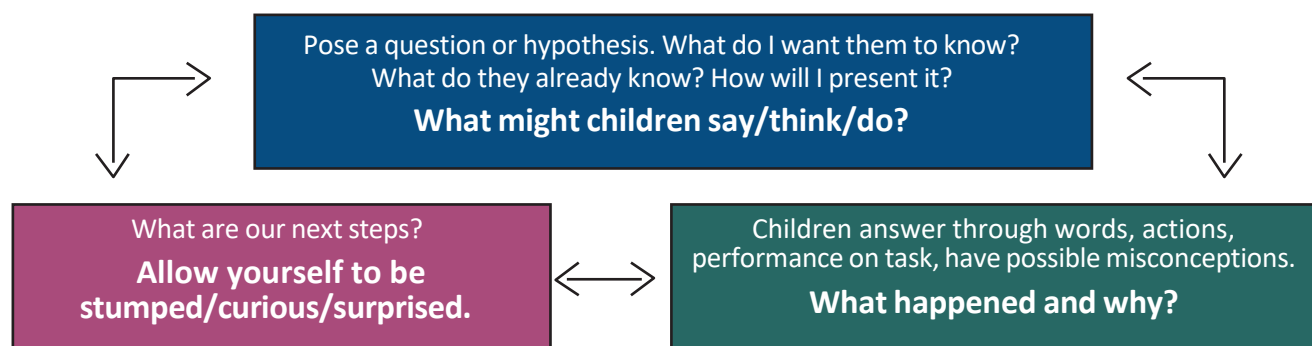
Young children will have varying experiences of being in a group, but this will be everyone's first experience of being in your classroom. You will need to explicitly teach them every skill they will need to be successful: from sitting in a circle, to washing their hands, to resolving conflicts. It is a wise investment with continuous returns. Set high expectations for children, believe they can reach them, and help everyone get there.

Purposeful Planning: The Classroom Blueprint

Preparation in an early childhood classroom involves organizing the materials and space in a thoughtful, engaging manner. More importantly, it is reflecting on the goals, defining the objectives, and distilling the messages of the teaching and learning to take place. Clarify the values that are important to you; what will the demonstration of these values look like in your classroom?

Questions to Ask Yourself:

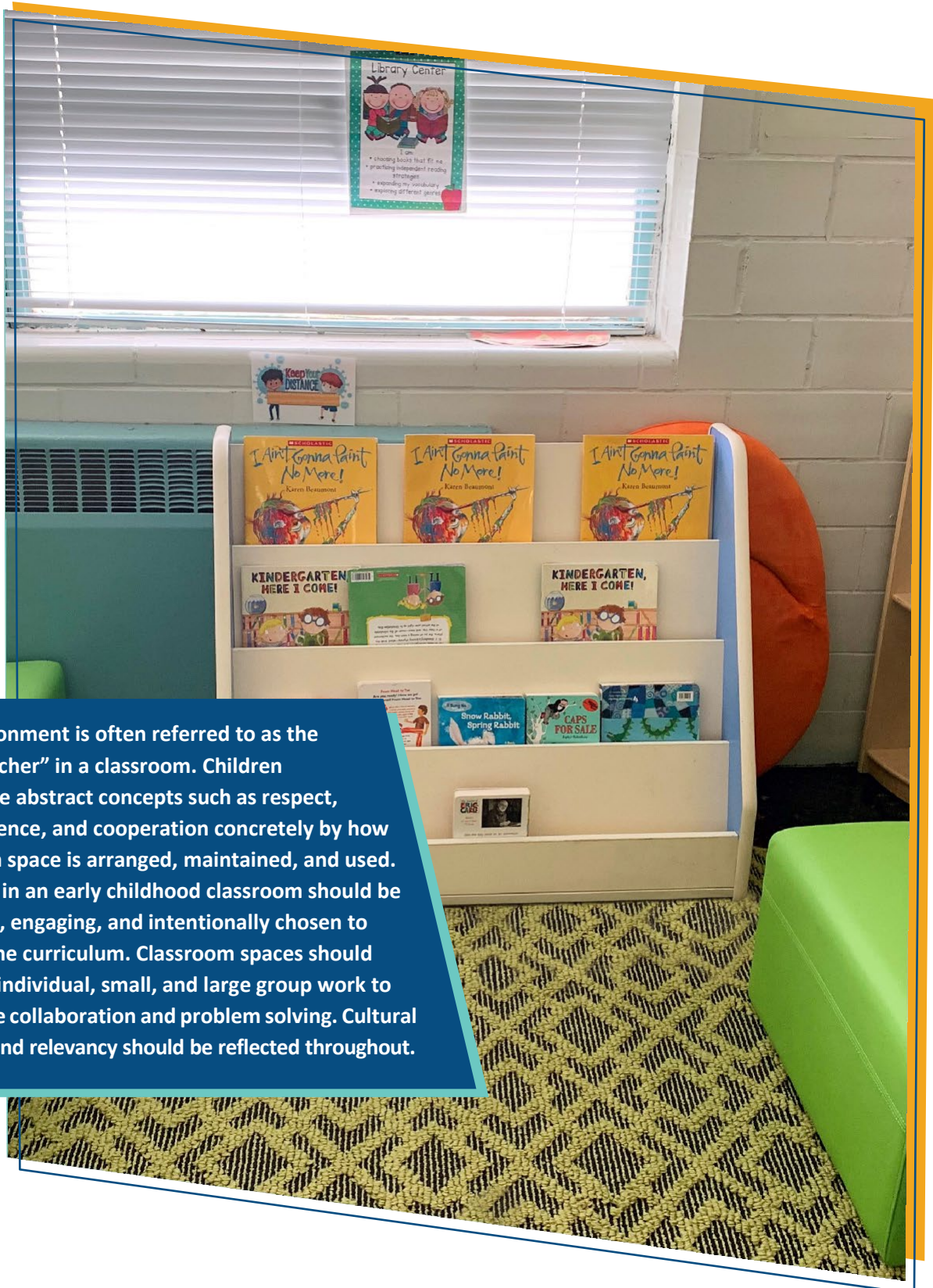
- What do I want children to know and why is it important?
- What do they already know that I can build from or connect to?
- What implicit messages am I conveying through my explicit teaching?
- What are important considerations for age, developmental levels, and needs?
- What adjustments will I need to make for different learners?
- What opportunities can I create for children to practice and reflect on what they have learned?
- What is the evidence of their learning?



Be RESPONSIVE. Be INSPIRED. Be INTENTIONAL.

Environment and Materials

In Your Classroom



The environment is often referred to as the “third teacher” in a classroom. Children experience abstract concepts such as respect, independence, and cooperation concretely by how classroom space is arranged, maintained, and used. Materials in an early childhood classroom should be organized, engaging, and intentionally chosen to support the curriculum. Classroom spaces should allow for individual, small, and large group work to encourage collaboration and problem solving. Cultural diversity and relevancy should be reflected throughout.

Questions to Ask Yourself

When Preparing Materials



1. Do I have everything I need ready and on hand for an activity?

Precious momentum is lost, along with children's attention, when you have to scramble for materials in the midst of a lesson.

2. Do I have enough of everything so that children aren't spending most of their time waiting?

3. Do I have too many materials or materials that are unfamiliar to children?

For example, for a drawing activity, are children given pens, pencils, markers, and crayons? Too much choice can be overwhelming, and the point of the activity can be lost.

4. Do they know how to use the materials?

If not, build in "tutorials" or provide visual supports to show them how.

5. Where will children put their finished work?

Is there a place for "work in progress"?

6. Can children independently put away materials after working?



Do children have adequate space for activities?

Make sure there is enough room for children to spread out or work in more defined spaces.

Are materials easily accessible to children?

Use pictures/icons on containers. Model how to take out and put away materials properly.

Is the area stocked appropriately?

Stock areas need an appropriate amount of materials to engage children, but not too many to overwhelm them. Define work areas.

Organizing The Space

A well-organized classroom encourages cooperative learning, independence, and lessens the need for behavior management. Children will develop ownership in work and play spaces where they feel comfortable and secure while engaging in activities.

Being organized and prepared eliminates wait time, which is a typical trigger for challenging behavior.



ENTRY TO CLASSROOM
welcoming, transition into the classroom routine



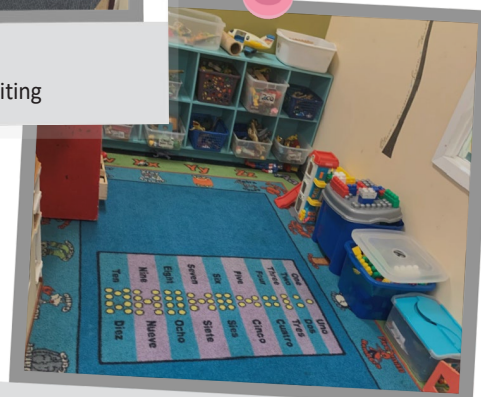
MESSY (near sink)
sand/water, art, easels



QUIET AREA
library and listening, writing



NEUTRAL ZONE
clearly designated pathways and boundaries between areas that allow for ease of movement



ACTIVE (adequate space)
blocks/dramatic play

Rotate Visual Materials

On A Weekly Basis

In all areas, limit materials to avoid visual and physical clutter. This also allows children to be more imaginative and creative with fewer materials. However, rotate materials on a weekly basis to encourage engagement. Post visual supports such as prompts, real-life images that reflect diversity, and children's own work in each center/area.



Do not open a center/area before teaching children how to use it properly!

- What are the expectations for the work and play here?
- What are the materials and how are they to be used?

Don't just tell children these things; but model, demonstrate, and actively involve children in launching the center.



Everything Must Be Taught

Imagine being at an airport in an unfamiliar place. You have some idea of what is going on, but you are generally confused, maybe a bit anxious. What do you do? You look around for clues to help you, i.e., a sign with a picture of a suitcase is probably where you get your luggage. You look at what other people are doing—is this a line for food or to check into a flight? You look around for someone in charge to help you.

That is very much what it’s like for a child starting in your classroom. They may have an idea of why they are here, and may absorb a lot from watching others, but ultimately, they look to you as a primary source of information. **Explicit teaching gives children a clear expectation of what’s to be done and how to do it.** How we teach, including the language we use and the mindset that informs our choices, communicates **implicit messages** about the relationships that glue the classroom together. Relationships are between child and teacher, between children, and between the children and the curriculum.

GUIDING PRINCIPLE	STRATEGY
<p>Teach fewer things really well, rather than many things superficially. There are many routines children have to learn to be successful in school, but trying to cover them all in a few days is frustrating and overwhelming for both you and the children. Teach slowly.</p>	<p>Focus on two to three routines each day for the first three weeks that build on each other, e.g., getting in a line and walking to the classroom on one day, sitting in a circle and washing hands on the next, etc.</p>
<p>Set the expectation with the whole group and follow up in small groups and individually to review and practice.</p>	<p>Role-play with assistant teacher (paraprofessional) working together to use materials and put them away.</p>
<p>Break down tasks into a manageable 2-3 step process.</p>	<p>“When I flash the lights, stop, and look at me.”</p>
<p>Always use visuals to illustrate steps. Post them prominently for children to reference.</p>	<p>Use simple figure drawings or icons for visuals. Eventually, use pictures of the children.</p>
<p>Children need more than just verbal direction to be engaged.</p>	<p>Create simple auditory or visual signals, e.g., “When I say ‘hey’, you answer ‘ho’ and then look at me for directions.”</p>
<p>Children need to make mistakes and more importantly, given a chance to fix them.</p>	<p>Instead of “making” children apologize to each other, have them ask the other child, “Are you okay?” followed up by, “What can I do?”</p>
<p>Children need encouragement and specific feedback.</p>	<p>“You worked really hard to put away all the blocks. That was helpful in getting us ready to go outside. Thank you for meeting our expectations.”</p>

: Arrival/Free Play	
: Breakfast	: Bathroom
: Circle Time	: Center Time
: Play Outside	: Bathroom
: Lunch Time	: Story Time
: Rest Time	: Bathroom
: Circle Time	: Snack
: Specials	: Free Play
: Dismissal	

Planning Daily Routines

Plan how will you teach the following daily routines. Ensure consistency in messages and expectations by including other involved adults, e.g., administrators, assistant teacher (paraprofessionals), lunch monitors, and specialists.

See below for more charts and suggestions.

These time cards/icons (to the left) are available for print at the end of this document.



Routine Suggestions

ROUTINE: Mealtimes
CONSIDER: Cafeteria or the classroom?
 Can children help set table/serve food?

ROUTINE: Arrival/Dismissal
CONSIDER: Transition routines, attendance, bus/walker procedures

Sitting scrambled egg style



ROUTINE: Whole Group
CONSIDER: Assigned spots? How do they get a turn to speak?
 What formation will they sit in/differently for different instruction?

ROUTINE: Clean Up
CONSIDER: Is there a countdown/5-minute signal?



Sitting fried egg style

ROUTINE: Rest/Quiet Time
CONSIDER: Do they get their own mats?
 What can children who do not sleep do during rest time?

Routine Suggestions *Continued*

ROUTINE: Recess

CONSIDER: Safety rules, games/equipment children can use.



ROUTINE: Line Up

CONSIDER: Single file or with a partner?

What are the school expectations for walking through the halls?

Teacher says each line,
children repeat with hand gestures:

“Magic Finger in the air.

Magic Finger in my hair.

Magic Finger on my hips.

Magic Finger on my lips

I am standing straight and tall.

I am ready for the hall.”

Suggestion: Designated line-up spot with children’s pictures.



ROUTINE: Hygiene

CONSIDER: Hand-washing, bathroom/accident procedures,
nose wiping, covering mouths with an elbow.

“Be a hero, use your cough cape!”



A Strong Partnership

Between Teacher and Assistant Teacher



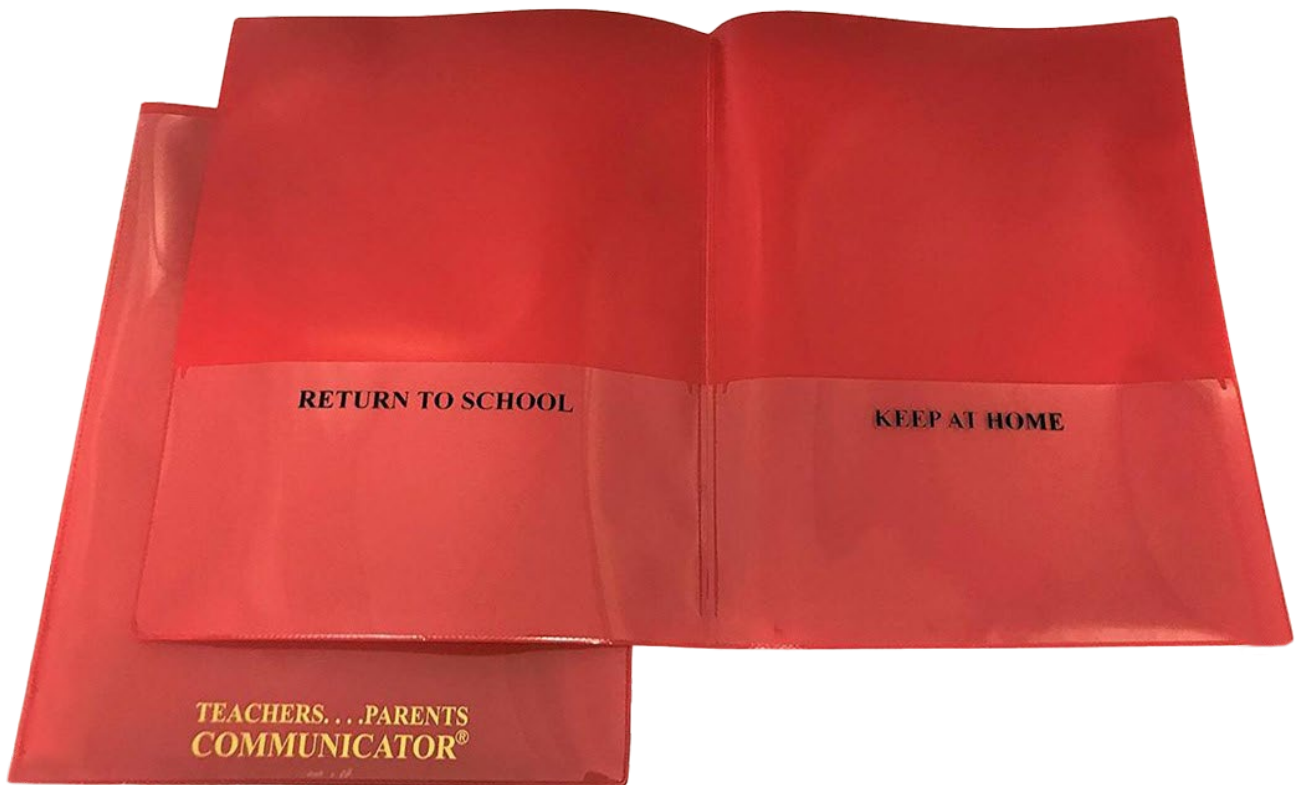
In order to implement the curriculum effectively and make the classroom run efficiently, ***teachers and assistant teachers work together as a team.*** Your styles can be different, but should be ***complementary***, and above all, united in the support of children.

- Before the chaos of the first day, meet, however briefly, to establish basic ground rules to optimize support for children.
- Decide roles and responsibilities, e.g., while the teacher reads the story, assistant teacher (paraprofessional) sits next to child who needs extra support. Coordinate lunch/break schedules. How will you communicate in the classroom, e.g., if one of you needs to leave the classroom, how will you let the other know?
- It is crucial that all adults agree to a clear and consistent approach in dealing with children, especially when they are in crisis, e.g., what is the response to crying, refusing to participate, etc.?
- ***Commit to communicate!*** Schedule a weekly meeting time to reflect on what's working, plan curriculum, to plan instruction, and to determine/discuss how to support each other.

A Partnership With Families

Just as it is important to establish a good working relationship with other adults in the classroom, it is important to create a connection with the part of the teaching team **outside** the classroom.

Set the tone for a collaborative relationship by making your first contact with families positive. Call all families in the first few days to share successes like new friendships, a newly acquired skill, or just a great day.



- Designate a place/procedure for communication with families—including school and classroom updates and a more private mailbox for confidential information.
- Make newsletters windows into classroom life with children’s work, photographs (with consent), quotes from the children, and questions that stimulate conversation, e.g., “What games did you play today?”
- Set “office hours,” a couple of hours a week when you are available to families either in person or by phone/email.
- Create folders that go between home and school every day. Include children’s work and quick notes about positives throughout the week, a book or activity the child particularly enjoyed, a new friend, or anything that helps families feel they are part of their child’s school life.

WEEKS 1-3:

**Establishing Classroom
Agreements and Expectations**

Community Building

**Problem-Solving
Conflict Resolution**



WEEK 1: Establishing Classroom Agreements and Expectations

The task of this week is to establish agreements (as opposed to rules) and expectations **with** children. Enlisting children in the process builds connections and encourages more investment in upholding them.

Consider a young child's developmental understanding of "rules." A rule is an abstract concept and young children are concrete thinkers. Use visuals (you don't have to be an artist, use simple drawings/icons) to literally draw a picture of what is expected. Pictures are concrete reminders of what to do and how to act.

All children want to do well, but are just beginning to understand cause and effect. They will need frequent reminders, chances to practice, and **support when they make mistakes** as they learn what to do. Affirm that you care for them and like them, even when they make mistakes.

Sample Meeting to set up classroom agreements:

Teacher: Friends, I am really excited about this year, and all the things we will do and learn together. Before we do that, can you to help me with something?

Children: nod.

Teacher: I can see we have a classroom of helpers. Have you ever heard of a "Wewillbe"?

Children: shake their heads or might say what they think it is.

Teacher: A "Wewillbe" is how to do the right thing. Today, I have the first "Wewillbe" in this box. Open a shoebox and take out a piece of paper and tape it to the easel or wall. This says: **We will be safe.**

I'm going to draw a picture of what it means. **We will be SAFE. That means: we take care of each other** (draw a simple stick type drawing). This is someone being kind to someone else. I'm going to draw a symbol to show "YES" (draw a green circle around it, with "YES" under it). Do you have other ideas of how to take care of each other?

Typically children chime in with a series of "no pushing, no kicking," etc. Affirm these ideas by pointing out that each of these are examples of **Yes, we will be safe.** Ask, "will everyone feel safe and taken care of if no one hurts them, on the inside **OR** on the outside, here at school?"

Children: nod.


Teacher: Let's agree that one of our "We will be's" is **We will be SAFE by taking care of each other.** You helped our friends understand what "We will be safe" means. I'm going to leave this up on the board to remind us.

We will be SAFE.
That means...



We take care of each other.

We will be RESPECTFUL.
That means...




We take care of the things in our classroom.

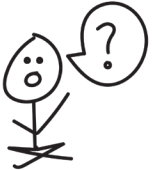
These graphics are available for print at the end of this document.

Hold other class meetings during the week, using the same structure/symbol system.

We will be LEARNERS.
That means...



It's okay to make mistakes.



It's okay to ask questions.


Post these prominently in the classroom, at children's eye-level for easy reference. Sometimes, just pointing to the pictures is enough to remind children of the agreement/expectation.




I will keep my watchful eyes on my teacher today.

I will use my listening ears in class today.

I will use my inside voice in class today.



I will use walking feet today.



I will use a gentle touch today.

This graphic and pieces above are available for print at the end of this document.

Use positive/affirmative language to address challenges. "Throwing blocks is unsafe for people and our things." vs. "You better stop doing that!" Saying "pushing people isn't like you" names the behavior as the anomaly/problem, rather than the child. Encourage other adults who work with your children to use similar language.



Classroom Examples



WEEK 2: Community Building

In Week 1, you helped children form the agreements and expectations of the classroom. This week, focus on community building, bridging the gap between “you” and “me” to becoming “us.” It is more than getting along; it is about building empathy, appreciating individuals for their unique strengths, and working together as a team.

Every community needs a set of rituals and traditions that bind its members together.

Below are activities to celebrate joy and build attachment.

Group Puzzle | Cut large tag/poster board into puzzle pieces. Give each child a piece to draw on or put each child’s picture on one. The class works together to assemble the puzzle.

Touch Blue | Play music. Stop music and call out, “Touch blue!” Children put their hands on something blue. Alternate with other objects, e.g., “Touch elbows...etc.,” “Touch shoes,” etc.

Link Up | Put children in pairs, arms linked. Play music. Stop music and call out, “Link up!” Pairs link up with another pair. In the next round, quads link up with other quads. Keep going until you have one long line.

Cooperative Class Drawing | Children “sign in” to the classroom by making a mark or drawing on a large piece of blank paper. By the end of the week, you’ll have a piece of art created by the whole group. Or start with a simple drawing such as a house or face, and have each child add on something to the drawing.

Birthday Beans | Instead of birthday parties with cupcakes and balloons, celebrate each other with a ritual of good wishes. The birthday child sits in a circle of friends with a cup of dried beans and a cup of water in front of him/her. Each child in the circle takes a turn to grant the birthday child a wish by placing a bean (the wish) into the cup of water. The birthday child then plants the beans and watches his “wishes” grow throughout the year. It is helpful if you model wishes, e.g., “I hope you read lots of books this year.”



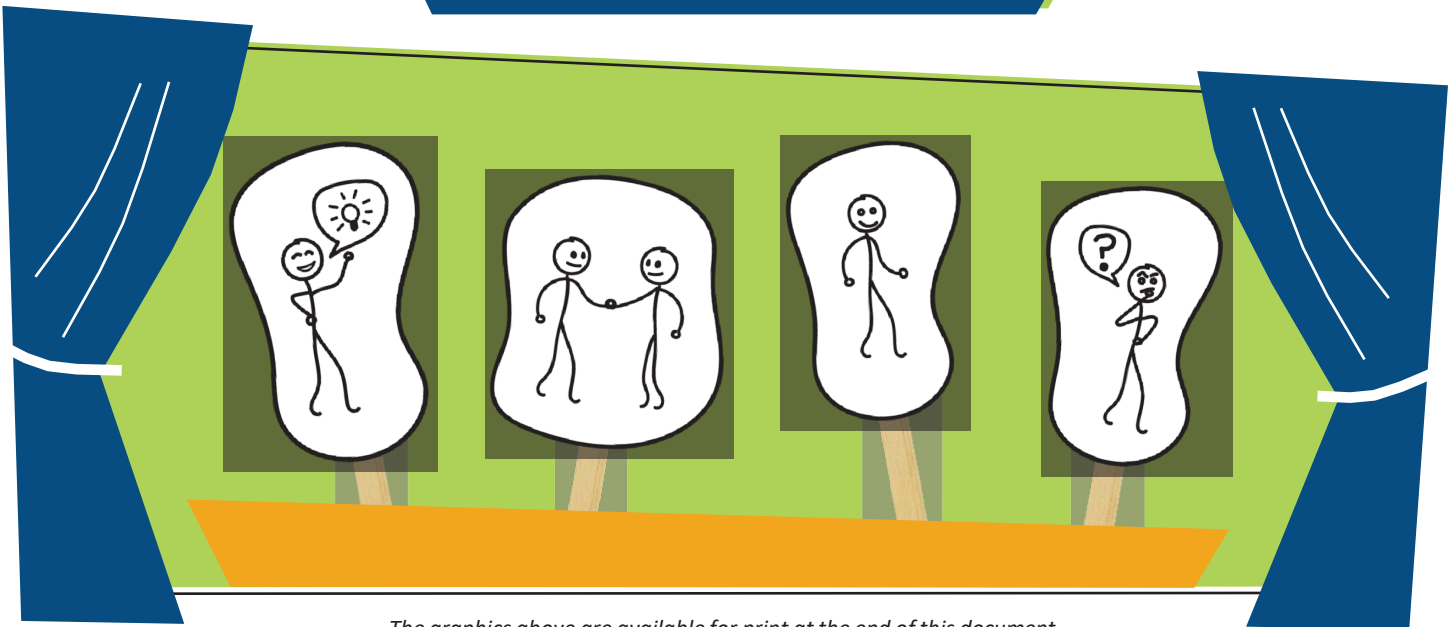
WEEK 3: Problem-Solving and Conflict Resolution

Inevitably, every group will have its conflicts. The goal should not be to eliminate conflict, but to create an atmosphere where conflict can be dealt with peacefully and productively.

In order for young children to solve problems and resolve their conflicts peacefully, they need to be able to:

- identify the problem and accompanying emotions
- manage strong emotions non-violently
- brainstorm solutions
- maintain relationships with each other after a conflict

Problem Stories



The graphics above are available for print at the end of this document.

Young children are perpetually trying to make sense of their world, their role in it, and the people around them. The process of social-emotional development is pivotal during the early childhood years and is foundational to the classroom experience.

Although children look to adults for much of their information, they do not learn simply because an adult tells them something. Children must construct knowledge for themselves in order to truly learn it. The best way to describe the process of constructing knowledge is guided reinvention. The role of the teacher is that of facilitator and problem-stimulator. When teachers engage in dialogue and inquiry with children, they elaborate and complicate their thinking, rather than impose an adult's way of thinking upon them.

A powerful classroom practice that allows for all of the above is weekly *Problem Stories*. These help children develop higher-order and critical thinking skills, as well as strengthen community with their peers and teachers.

The Problem Story is a story/scenario presented to children for discussion in a whole group. The story always sets up, or poses, a social-cognitive problem. The children are then invited to discuss possible solutions. Frame questions and comments in a neutral way. Saying "good answer" and "correct" cause children to think there is a right answer they must produce. Comments like, "I wonder why you think that," or even a simple, "Hmm, I see," invite more critical thinking. In addition to developing their communication and problem-solving skills, children experience listening and respecting the thinking of others (even though they may disagree). Moderate the discussion by allowing children to offer different ideas.

Problem Stories do not necessarily offer a pre-determined solution, but allow children to consider many options that they construct for themselves. The source of the problems in the Problem Stories are specific events that occur in children's daily lives or are relevant to their diverse experiences. Problem Stories can also be opportunities for teachers to present hypothetical situations that engage children in thinking about a socio-moral issue.

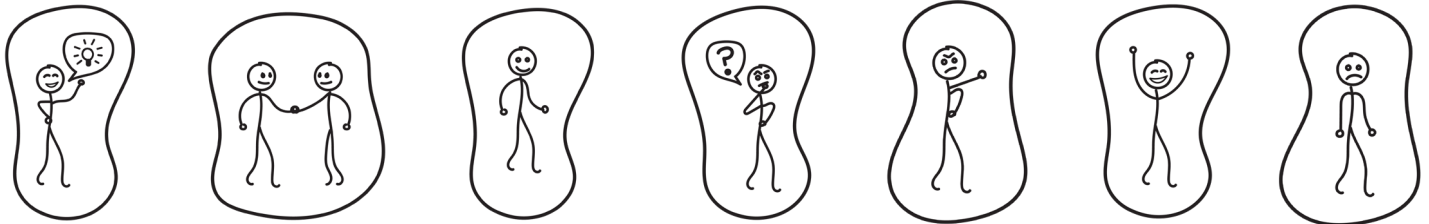
Helpful Guidelines

for Conducting Problem Stories



Suggested Materials:

Wooden unit blocks with pictures of children,
OR stick figures with popsicle sticks



The graphics above are an example but are also available for print at the end of this document.

Preparation:

Tape character pictures on unit blocks.

A key element to the Problem Story is to create characters that the children become familiar with and can relate to. The characters should be like the children in the classroom with some variation. It is good to introduce each character in a simple story that includes information about his/her family and other specifics relevant to the particular character, e.g., "This is Joe. He is 4 years old and learning how to ride a bike."

Procedure:

Like other whole-group times, the length of the Problem Story should be about 15 minutes, maximum. The story is presented in a simple, clear, yet dramatic manner. Children can become confused or forget the key elements if the story is overly involved, but will maintain their engagement when the emotions and events are presented with animation.

While problem-solving with children in the moment of a conflict is important, Problem Stories let children ponder through different perspectives and potential solutions without having to manage their emotions at the same time.

Sample Problem Story

Addressing a Classroom Conflict

Tape character pictures on unit blocks.

<p>“Today I want to tell you a special story called a Problem Story. Here are the children in my story. Say hello to Jaden and Isabel. Jaden is playing with a red truck. Let’s see what happens.”</p>	<p>Bring out Block People.</p>
<p>Isabel: “That looks like fun. Can I play? Jaden: Not now, I’m playing with it. Isabel: But I want to play with it now. Jaden: I said no! GO AWAY! Isabel: That’s not nice, we’re supposed to share! I’m telling!”</p>	<p>Act out the story with animation.</p>
<p>“Now I’m going to STOP the story and ask you some questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the problem in the story? • How does Jaden/Isabel feel? • Has this problem ever happened to you? What might they do to solve their problem?” 	<p>Hold up stop sign.</p> <p>After each question, take a couple of children’s responses. Allow children to “speak” to the characters directly, offering them their solutions.</p>
<p>“Let’s see how that will work.”</p> <p>“In today’s Problem Story, we saw Jaden and Isabel argue over who can play with the truck. You gave them solutions to their problem. Thank you for being so thoughtful. If you have any more ideas later, I would like to hear about them.”</p>	<p>Act out a couple of the generated solutions.</p> <p>Summarize the main parts of the discussion and invite children to continue thinking about it.</p>

Follow-Up: Problem Stories have the most impact if they are connected to related situations and activities in the classroom. For example, recall solutions generated in Problem Stories when a conflict arises. “This reminds me of the problem that Jaden and Isabel had in the Problem Story we watched yesterday. What solutions did friends think of? Which solution do you want to try to solve this problem?”

Another effective technique is to follow up a Problem Story with a repeat presentation a week later, modifying a few minor details to make it seem new. Young children enjoy and benefit from tackling the same problem more than once, and the elaboration of their solutions and dialogue tends to deepen from the first presentation to the second.

Sources: *Anti-Bias Curriculum*. Louise Derman--Sparks, NAEYC, 1992
Promoting Social and Moral Development in Young Children. Carolyn Pope Edwards with Patricia G. Ramsey. Teachers College Press, 1986.

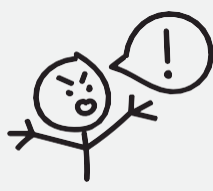
Simple Problem-Solving Techniques

1. Visual prompts at eye-level:

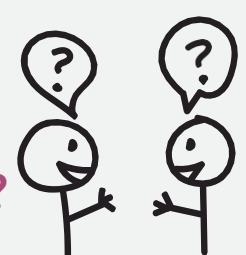
Teach children this method and display it prominently in the classroom at children's eye-level as a visual prompt.

What's the problem?

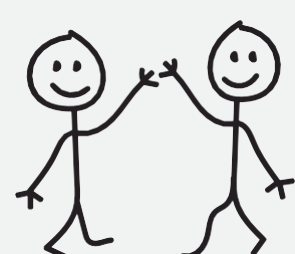
1. SAY IT OUT LOUD.
How do you feel?



2. TALK ABOUT IT.
What can you do?



3. WORK IT OUT.
How did it go?



Are you stuck? Get help!

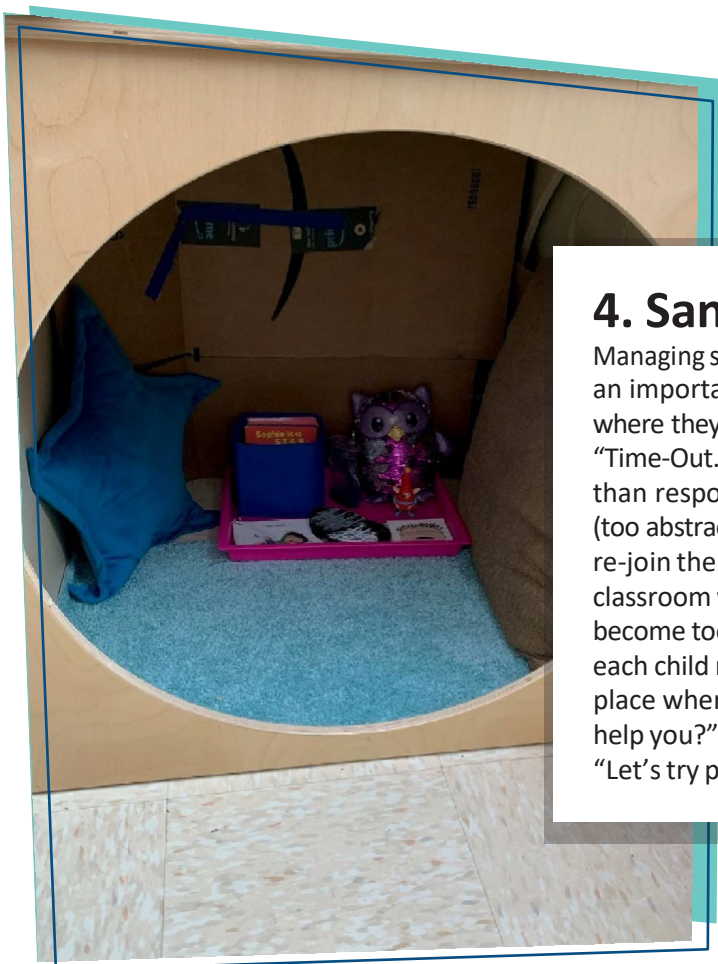
2. The Toolbox

Use a basket or a real toolbox with cards that represent different solutions (including those generated by children). Introduce the toolbox with a few simple solutions that are familiar to children, such as “share” and “take turns.” Invite children to use any of the tools when they have a problem that needs fixing. As children create and become more familiar with more solutions, add them to the toolbox. Make sure you (or the children who generated them) explain to the class what the tool is and how it could be helpful in a problem. A particularly creative solution children generated was “Use Your Honey Voice,” which meant use a friendly tone with your friends.



3. The Tattle Phone.

Tattling is a very common and developmentally appropriate behavior that young children exhibit. Often, the response to a seemingly endless parade of tattling is to tell children not to tattle, or to “Worry about yourself.” These responses send messages that children’s concerns are not legitimate, or worse, irritating to the adults. “Worry about yourself” values individual interest over group affiliation and responsibility. Often, children tattle to express: a legitimate concern, a need for information, or a lack of problem-solving skill. A more concrete way for children to address these needs is the Tattle Phone, a phone where children can “leave a tattle message” to you. Often, just giving children the outlet for their tattle is sufficient. A child leaving many messages may indicate a more direct discussion is needed.

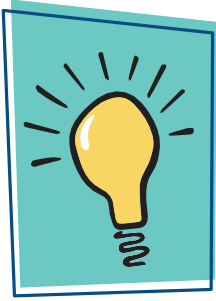


4. Sanctuary/a Safe Place for...

Managing strong emotions is an essential skill for self-regulation. Often, an important step in this process for children is to retreat to a place where they can deescalate and re-set themselves. This is different from “Time-Out.” Time-Outs are often initiated by the adult (reactive rather than responsive), directing the child to “think” about what they did (too abstract for young children), and offer little support for the child to re-join the group. An alternative to Time-Out is creating places in the classroom where children can go of their own volition when emotions become too overwhelming. It is important: to know what kind of space each child might need—some children need a secluded spot, others a place where they can be more active; to offer to join the child “Can I help you?”; and finally, to help them return with supportive follow-up “Let’s try playing in the blocks together.”

Sample Activities

To Help Children Identify Emotions



Emotion Dice:

Make a cube with different emotions on it. Roll it, children act out the emotion on the cube. This activity can be played as a whole group, in small groups, or in pairs.

Class Books:

Give each child a page to write and illustrate, e.g., Jonathan feels...
_____ when _____.

Label the Feelings:

Take pictures of children displaying different emotions. Make Velcro cards to match the name of the emotion on the picture.

Make a Face:

Use a flip-book format that separates the face into top, middle, and bottom of the face. Each section reflects different facial expressions, e.g., sad mouth, laughing mouth. Children create different faces with different emotions by flipping pages. Or make a flannel/Velcro board with different face parts to put together in various ways.

Different Faces Collage/Mirrors:

Make a class collage of faces, cut out of magazines, expressing emotions. Collect a diverse array of faces - old, young, male, female, variety of ethnicities. Post on a wall with locker-sized mirrors or Mylar paper interspersed with pictures so children can imitate emotions and see themselves among the variety of faces.

Components of the Day



Curriculum in early childhood classrooms is all the teaching and learning that happens. Along with the **explicit** curriculum (skills and concepts) is the **implicit** curriculum (messages, values, perspectives learned through interactions). The more integrated these are, the more authentic and impactful on children. Below are descriptions of the components of the curriculum, intentionally crafted around the principles of guided play in centers, a balance between large and small group instruction, and transitions as targeted learning opportunities. Children are active agents in learning facilitated by caring, supportive adults.

Arrival/Transition to school:

Children arrive, put their belongings into cubbies, and are greeted warmly by adults. Make personal, specific connections to children, e.g., “Are those new shoes you’re wearing? They’re so shiny and bright!” Create a morning routine, simple steps to transition into the classroom, e.g., answering a “Question of the Day,” moving their picture from “Home” to “School.”

The first weeks can be emotional for children (and for the adults who drop them off). Expect that some will have difficulty (crying, resistance) especially after the “honeymoon” period. Strategize how to support struggling children (and adults).

Morning Meeting/Intro to Centers: (10-15 minutes)

A brief greeting activity, such as a Good Morning song, builds connections and sets a positive tone for the day. Intro to Centers demonstrates the expectations and potential for the kind of work to happen in Centers.



This whole group time is fundamentally different from “Circle Time,” which is typically a prolonged series of routines (jobs, calendar, weather). A calendar more meaningful to young children shows only one week at a time, designating “yesterday,” “today,” and “tomorrow.”



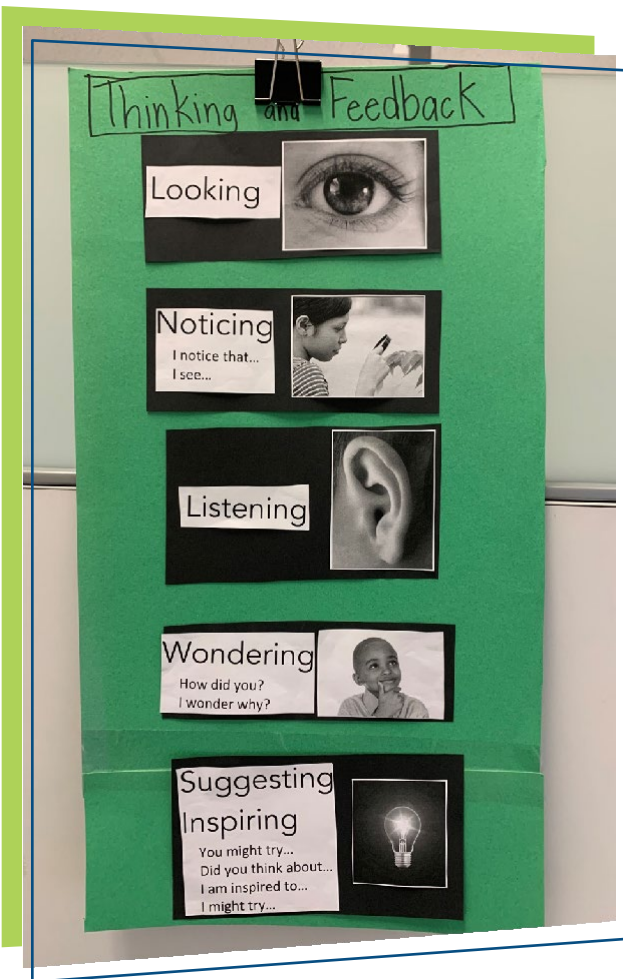
In the beginning of the year, it is wise to stick to the “Plus 2 Rule” of whole group time: children’s age, plus 2 is the **maximum** time children can actively attend in a large group, e.g., 4 years old plus 2 = 6 minutes is the amount of time you can hold their attention. Build slowly from this formula as they build stamina and familiarity with being in a whole group.

Centers: (120 minutes)

Children select from prepared activities in various classroom areas. Adults support and facilitate learning through guided play and exploration, use intentionally rich language, and help children make connections with each other. The 120 minutes required time for learning centers in PreK classrooms does NOT have to be consecutive. The learning center minutes may be divided throughout the day, as fits the classroom daily schedule.

Thinking and Feedback: (10 minutes)

Children gather to discuss and reflect on the activities just explored in Centers. The conversations during this time help build a supportive, intellectually engaged, and dynamic classroom community.



Read-Aloud: (15 minutes)

See attached list for books for the first three weeks of school. Pose discussion questions that build vocabulary, oral language development, and story comprehension. These stories provide a rich springboard for classroom investigations and conversations. Refer to *Read Alouds 1-4* page 39.

Small Groups: (15-20 minutes)

Made up of 4-6 children, Small Groups are targeted instruction of literacy and/or math skills facilitated by an adult.

Songs, Wordplay, and Letters (SWPL) and Building Blocks (BB) Whole Group: (10-15 minutes)

During SWPL children develop phonological awareness, alphabet and letter knowledge through poems, songs, and predictable texts. Building Blocks Whole Group ensures that mathematical understanding is built through activities that include number sense and shape awareness.

Let's Find Out About It (LFOAI): (15 minutes)

Children focus on non-fiction texts and first-hand exposure to objects, processes, and phenomena. In the first few weeks, it is an opportunity to familiarize children with materials and classroom routines, e.g., the importance of hand-washing.

Problem Stories: (see Week 3)

Recess (minimum 40 minutes) Lunch (minimum 20 minutes) Rest (minimum 30-60 minutes)

These are times when other adults may be in charge of your children, but during the first week in particular, you may want to be present for some of those times to set expectations, model appropriate behavior, and generally support children as they become familiar with these routines.

Throughout the day:

Transitions:

Use familiar songs, poems, finger plays to move children from large to small groups, in and out of the classroom, and any time children are waiting between activities, e.g., getting dressed for outside, waiting for their turn in the bathroom, etc.

Conversations:

Engaged conversations encourage children to express their feelings and process their experiences. Talking with children in a genuinely interested manner is one of the most powerful ways to build meaningful relationships and establish a climate of trust and respect.



Patterns

A simple, yet effective way to organize your classroom is a system that assigns each child a pattern unique to them, but similar to others. Each pattern should be one color contrasted with white (a more complicated pattern does not look the same when it is scaled larger or smaller.) The pattern can be from fabric, wrapping paper, or Google images. This pattern can be used in a variety of ways to indicate the child's cubby, nametag, work folders, etc. Because everyone has one (including you), it communicates a shared affinity and sense of belonging.



Use as signage for child's belongings.

Other ways to organize with patterns:

1. Make a pillow or cushion that can be used for rest time, as a comfort object, or to show a child where to sit.
2. Designate a space on the wall for the child's work.
3. Designate spaces shared by everyone.
4. Mount on cards to organize children into small groups.
5. Bright Idea:
Digitize patterns and print them onto sticker paper.

More patterns are available for print at the end of this document.



Greetings



1

Hello Neighbor

Hello Neighbor, whaddya say? (children bow)
It's going to be a happy day. (clap hands)
Greet your neighbor (children shake hands)
Boogie on down (wiggle hips)
Give a little bump (bump hips or fists)
And turn around.

2

Picture of Name Card Greeting

Place cards with children's names and pictures in the center of the circle, face down.
Turn over top card. Greet that child with a handshake.
That child turns over next card and greets the child on that card.
Continue until the last child greets the first child.

3

Pass the Handshake

Start at one end of the circle and greet child next to you with a handshake.
Pass handshake around until everyone is greeted.
Alternate with high-fives, fist bumps, waves, etc.

4

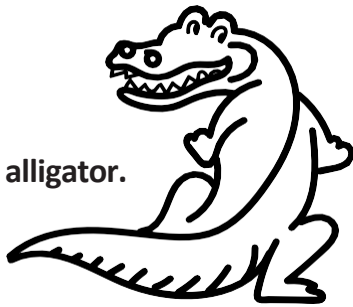
Number Jump

Show children a number written on a card, the easel, or show with your fingers.
Ask children to do the same number of jumps or other body motions.

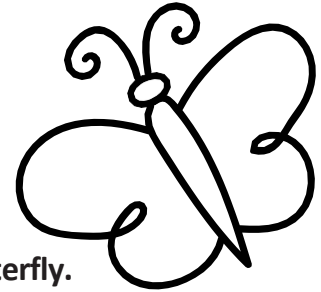
Goodbye Chant

(can be done as a call and response led by teacher and/or child)

See you later, alligator.



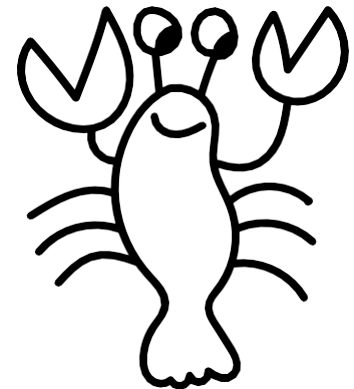
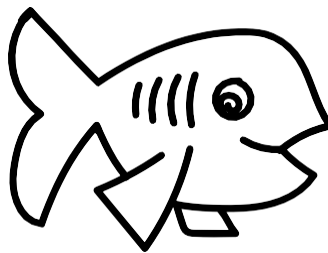
Bye bye, butterfly.



Be sweet, parakeet.



Blow a kiss, goldfish.

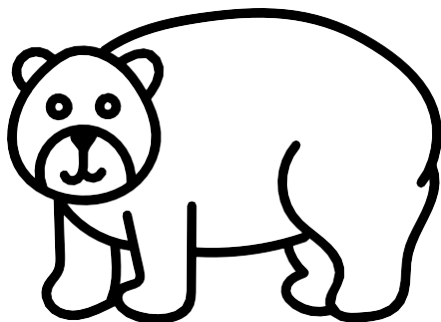


Yee-haw, lobster claw.

Give a hug, ladybug.



Out the door, dinosaur!



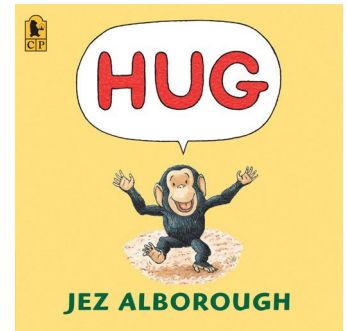
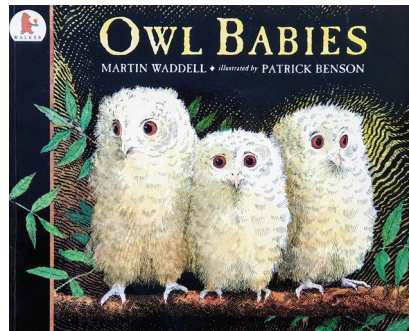
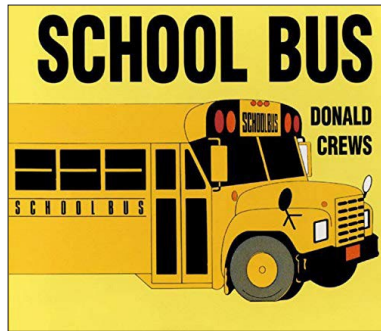
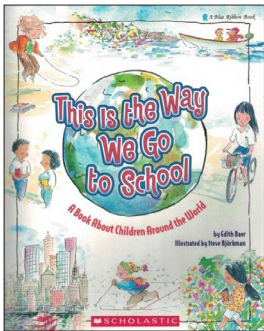
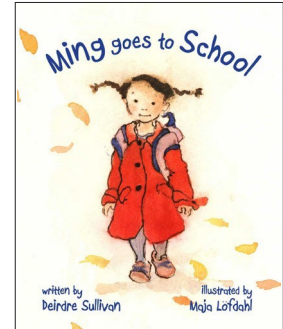
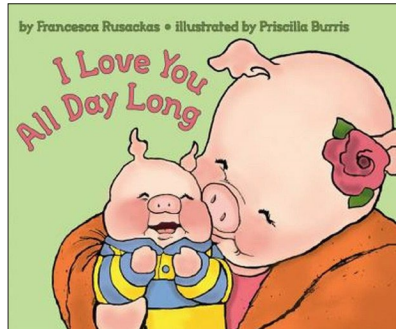
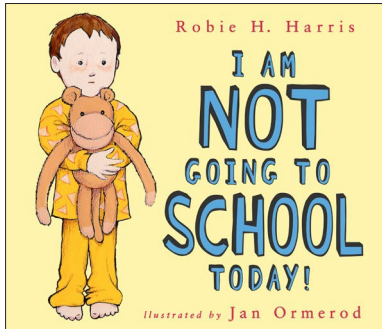
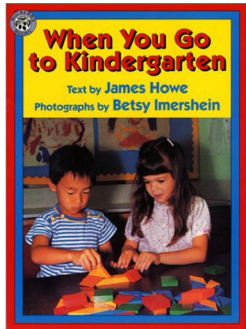
Take care, grizzly bear.



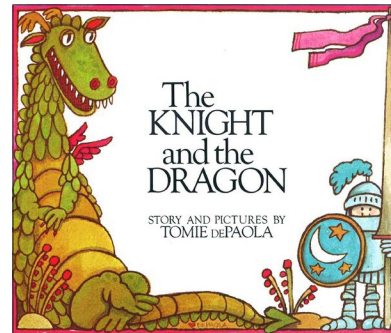
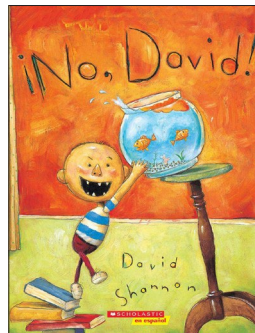
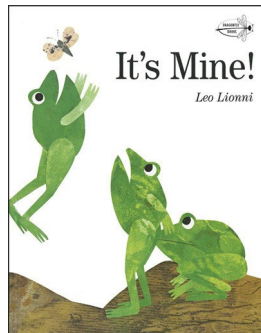
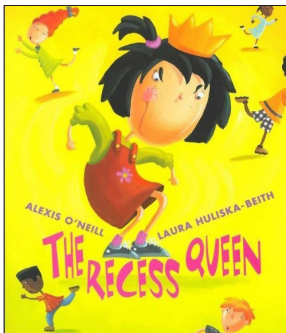
See you soon, raccoon.

Book Suggestions

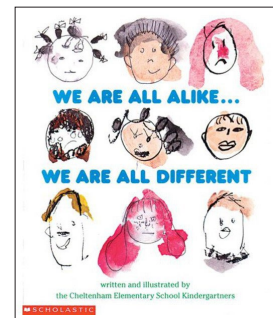
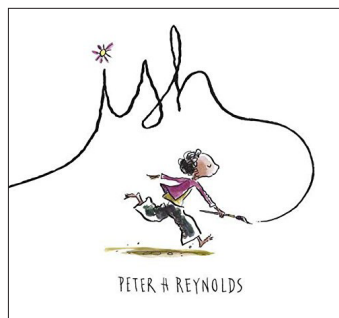
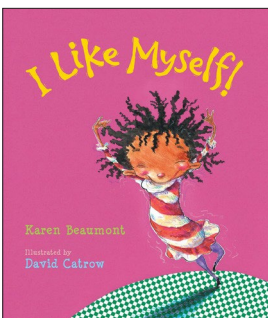
Starting School and Separation Issues



Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution



Community Building and Appreciating Differences



Creative Arts: Easel

Language Support Guide

Naming Words	Action Words	Describing Words
technique style artist inspiration detail	create imagine draw sculpt paint design	colorful bright creative inspired

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS/EXPANDED CONVERSATION EXAMPLES

Use Parallel Talk (describe what the child is doing):

You mixed red and yellow and made orange.

Use Self Talk (describe what you are doing):

I am spreading some glue on the paper so I can stick the yellow circle.

I think I'll stick a red rectangle in the middle of the circle.

Expand Children's Comments:

Child: I make pizza.

Teacher: You painted a pizza.

It looks like you added a red sauce and different toppings.

Use Open-Ended Questions:

What other colors do you want to use in your painting?

Use Limited-Choice Questions:

Do you want to use red paper or blue paper?

Model Social Skills (sharing and turn-taking):

I notice you are sharing the glue with Amber.

You are letting her use the same glue that you are using.

Encourage Problem-Solving:

Terrence, if you would like to use the red paint, you can ask Amber to share with you when she is finished with it.

CONNECT TO TEXT EXAMPLES

Remember in the book, *Ming Goes to School*, Ming traces, glitters, and glues. She created art!

That red paint reminds me of the red apples in the window when Ming was waving good-bye to her dad.

NON-IMMEDIATE EVENT EXAMPLES

Your painting reminds me of the clouds we see in the sky when we go outside for recess.

Blocks

Language Support Guide

Naming Words	Action Words	Describing Words
<p>shapes (cylinder, arch, etc.) foundation side edge face base architect engineer structure plan construction</p>	<p>build plan design construct stack balance measure repair</p>	<p>tall short long heavy light hard sturdy strong stable wobbly positional words like... (over, under, next to, inside, etc.) symmetrical wide narrow</p>

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS/EXPANDED CONVERSATION EXAMPLES USE

Use Parallel Talk (describe what the child is doing):

You are adding two rectangular blocks to the top of your tower.

Use Self Talk (describe what you are doing):

I am going to try and balance this cylindrical block on this square block.

Expand Children’s Comments:

Child: I have a block.

Teacher: You are putting the triangular block next to the rectangular block.

Use Open-Ended Questions:

Why did you decide to put this small square block next to the larger blue block?

Use Limited-Choice Question:

Are you going to work with Jonathan or are you going to work with Alexandra?

Model Social Skills (sharing and turn taking):

Lily, can you please hand me three cylindrical blocks like this one?

Encourage Problem-Solving:

Kendra, please do not bump into Daniel’s tower.

If you want to get by, please walk around his work carefully.

CONNECT TO TEXT EXAMPLES

In the book, *Ming Goes to School*, the children worked together and made a train track.

NON-IMMEDIATE EVENT EXAMPLES

I saw a tall building yesterday that looked very much like yours.

Language Support Guide

Naming Words	Action Words	Describing Words
smock bucket container shovel tools sand water	pour fill spill scoop stir mix experiment	full empty wet dry texture (soft, hard, smooth, etc.)

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS/EXPANDED CONVERSATION EXAMPLES USE

Parallel Talk (describe what the child is doing):

You are pouring sand into the bucket and filling the bucket to the top.

Use Self Talk (describe what you are doing):

I am going to blow the boat as hard as I can.

Expand Children’s Comments:

Child: I have a rock.

Teacher: You used your shovel and dug up a very small rock, a pebble.

Use Open-Ended Questions:

What do you think will happen if you pour too much water in the bucket?

Use Limited-Choice Question:

Is your boat moving fast or slow?

Model Social Skills (sharing and turn taking):

Ethan, can you please hold this funnel for me while I scoop some water?

Joe, you can ask Maria, “Can I use the bucket after you?” Maria, please tell Joe when it is his turn.

Encourage Problem-Solving:

Kendra, it looks like you are mad at Dwayne because he splashed water on you.

You can tell him “Dwayne, it makes me sad when you splash water on me. Please stop.”

CONNECT TO TEXT EXAMPLES

Remember in the book, *It’s Mine!*, the frogs lived on an island that was surrounded by water.

NON-IMMEDIATE EVENT EXAMPLES

We can pretend to make an island like in the book, *It’s Mine!*

Or, we could pretend we are making castles at the beach.

Dramatic Play

Language Support Guide

Naming Words		Action Words	Describing Words
role play script character	drama scenery action	act pretend imagine create	emotions (happy, sad, angry, etc.)

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS/EXPANDED CONVERSATION EXAMPLES USE

Use Parallel Talk (describe what the child is doing):

You are rocking your baby to sleep.

Use Self Talk (describe what you are doing):

I am going to give the baby a bottle. I think she is hungry.

Expand Children's Comments:

Child: I made vegetable soup.

Teacher: You made a tasty vegetable soup.

It looks like it has corn, tomatoes, celery, and potatoes

Use Open-Ended Questions:

What will you buy at the grocery store?

Use Limited-Choice Question:

Are you going to make cookies or bake a cake?

Model How to Join in the Play:

I want to paint furniture too. Can I help you paint the chair? Is there another paintbrush I can use?
It looks like your friends are cooking dinner. Maybe you can set the table for everyone.

Model Talking About Feelings:

I am scared of sleeping in the dark. Maybe the mommy can turn on the lights.
What makes you feel better when you are scared?

Look at Jada's face. She looks really sad. Let's ask her what is making her feel sad.

Encourage Problem-Solving:

It looks like other friends are using the baby dolls right now. Let's ask them when we can have a turn

CONNECT TO TEXT EXAMPLES

Do you remember in the book, *Ming Goes to School*, how Ming and her friends dressed up for a pretend tea party?
Ming and her friends also pretended to be pirates walking the plank.

NON-IMMEDIATE EVENT EXAMPLES

When my daughter was a baby, I used to sing to her to help her fall asleep.
Sometimes my dog gets sick, and I need to take him to the veterinarian.

Library and Listening

Language Support Guide

Naming Words		Action Words		Describing Words
book cover (front, back) author illustrator(-ion) title table of contents word letter page	sentence story character setting plot detail fiction non-fiction	read comprehend close narrate illustrate describe	turn listen write open imagine	front back short long detailed sequence words (first, then, next) before after

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS/EXPANDED CONVERSATION EXAMPLES USE

Use Parallel Talk (describe what the child is doing):

You are turning the pages in the book gently and carefully.

Use Self Talk (describe what you are doing):

I am looking at the illustration on this page, it helps me understand what the author is saying.

Expand Children's Comments:

Child: I see the girl. **Teacher:** You can see Ming's dad walking her to school.

Use Open-Ended Questions:

What was your favorite part of this story?

Use Limited-Choice Questions:

Do you want to read *Ming Goes to School* or *Owl Babies*?

Model Social Skills (sharing and turn-taking):

I notice you are sharing the book with Jayden.

I notice how you are taking turns turning the pages and reading the words.

Use Encouragement to Support Effort:

You are being so careful to not rip the pages of the book.

You remembered how to hold the book gently in your lap with the front cover facing up.

Encourage Problem-Solving:

I can see that you want to read the book that Sasha is reading.

You can ask her for a turn, or you can ask her to give the book to you when she is finished.

CONNECT TO TEXT EXAMPLES

Remember in the book, *Ming Goes to School*, Ming brought her teddy bear. It was an old teddy bear. I'll bet she had to be gentle with the bear just like we need to be gentle with the books in the library.

NON-IMMEDIATE EVENT EXAMPLES

The way you are holding that book and reading it reminds me of how our guest reader read to us yesterday during Read-Alouds.

Creative Writing

Language Support Guide

Naming Words			Action Words		Describing Words
word sentence letter paper illustration detail	straight line curved line slanted line name fiction non-fiction	illustrator title author page mark	write draw imagine illustrate describe tell	sketch mark explain communicate research	detailed top bottom

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS/EXPANDED CONVERSATION EXAMPLES USE

Use Parallel Talk (describe what the child is doing):

You are making a curved line to write the letter 'C' for Christina.

Use Self Talk (describe what you are doing):

I am going to use a light blue crayon to draw the sky on my picture.

Expand Children's Comments:

Child: I made mommy.

Teacher: You drew a picture of your mommy; it looks like she is smiling and giving you a hug.

Use Open-Ended Questions:

What will you draw on your paper?

Use Limited-Choice Question:

Are you going to draw a rabbit or a kitten?

Model How to Join in the Play:

I want to draw a picture; can you please hand me a piece of paper? Thank you.

Model Talking About Feelings:

I feel happy when I draw pictures of my family.

I love the people in my family, and I like thinking about them.

I'm going to draw my mommy.

Encourage Problem-Solving:

It looks like Janyla is using the red marker right now. Let's ask her if you can use it when she is finished.

CONNECT TO TEXT EXAMPLES

You are illustrating your story, just like Patrick Benson created illustrations of the owl babies in their tree home.

NON-IMMEDIATE EVENT EXAMPLES

When my son was 5 years old, I used to write stories for him and draw illustrations, and I would read the stories to him at bedtime.

Sometimes I like to write stories when I am at home. I make illustrations with markers and pens.

Math (Hands-On)

Language Support Guide

Naming Words		Action Words		Describing Words	
shape (square, circle, rectangle, triangle, trapezoid, rhombus, hexagon, oval) number	pattern size weight face edge line vertex angle	measure combine sort describe subtract move	count take apart classify add (on) take away	more less equal heavy light long	short symmetrical small big attribute

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS/EXPANDED CONVERSATION EXAMPLES USE

Use Parallel Talk (describe what the child is doing):

You are pointing to and touching each teddy bear as you count them.

Use Self Talk (describe what you are doing):

I am going to measure how long this table is using Unifix cubes.

Expand Children's Comments:

Child: I made a pattern.

Teacher: You made an AB pattern that goes red/blue, and red/blue, and red/blue, and red/blue.

Use Open-Ended Questions:

How do we know that this shape is a triangle?

Use Limited-Choice Question:

Is this shape a triangle or a square?

Model Social Skills (sharing and turn-taking):

Ethan, can you please take five LEGOs and give five LEGOs to Dayjonna?

CONNECT TO TEXT EXAMPLES

These five green blocks remind me of our song, *"Five Green and Speckled Frogs,"* that we sing during SWPL.

I wonder how many different ways the children got to school in the book, *This is the Way We Go to School?*

Let's look at the illustrations and count the ways the children got to school to find out.

NON-IMMEDIATE EVENT EXAMPLES

I had to measure my table at my house to see how long it was, because I wanted to make sure it would fit in my car.

When we go outside for recess, let's see if we can find any shapes.

Let's look for squares, triangles, and circles today!

Puzzles (Manipulatives)

Language Support Guide

Naming Words	Action Words		Describing Words
puzzle piece shape corner edge image solution pattern	rotate flip match attach solve find	search put together turn connect sort	similar different few many difficult simple

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS/EXPANDED CONVERSATION EXAMPLES USE

Use Parallel Talk (describe what the child is doing):

You are gathering pieces with red on them here in a pile.

Use Self Talk (describe what you are doing):

I am looking at the illustration on the cover of the puzzle box. I think I will look for all these blue pieces here.

Expand Children's Comments:

Child: I found a piece.

Teacher: You had three red pieces, and you found one more red piece, and now you have put them together.

Use Open-Ended Questions:

What was the hardest part about completing this puzzle?

Use Limited-Choice Questions:

Do you want to work on the alphabet puzzle or the forest animals puzzle?

Model Social Skills (sharing and turn taking):

I notice you are collaborating on this puzzle with Alex. It looks like he is finding pieces and handing them to you to put into the puzzle.

Use Encouragement to Support Effort:

You are being very patient and thoughtful; you are taking your time to look at each piece and deciding whether it will help you right now or not.

Encourage Problem-Solving:

I can see that you want to work on the puzzle that Sasha is using.
You can ask her for a turn, or you can ask her to give the puzzle to you when she is finished.

CONNECT TO TEXT EXAMPLES

You are working together like the frogs worked together to make their island a friendly place in the book, *It's Mine!*

NON-IMMEDIATE EVENT EXAMPLES

We have worked on many different kinds of puzzles in our classroom. When you first started in pre-k you worked on board puzzles, and now you are working on jigsaw puzzles with many more pieces.

Read Alouds 1-4

Texts selected for each unit are sophisticated, use advanced vocabulary, have complex characters, and require higher-order thinking and conceptual learning.

Each read has a distinct goal or purpose:

Read Aloud 1 – Orientation

The title, author, and illustrator are read. The book is read in its entirety as the teacher reads fluently with minimal stops, highlights key vocabulary that is briefly defined in child-friendly terms, and conveys meaning and enjoyment. This is the ONLY time the book is read all the way through.

Read Aloud 2 – Reconstruction

The title, author, illustrator are read, along with the first 2 – 3 pages. The teacher turns to specific pages in the book where children can consider significant events. Children are allowed to think about what is known about the plot, characters, and to make connections with their own experiences. They can retell and demonstrate comprehension of the story using key vocabulary and link characters' emotions with characters' actions. The book is NOT read cover to cover.

Read Aloud 3 – Chime-In

The title, author, and illustrator are mentioned and the first 2 – 3 pages are read. The teacher selects 4 – 5 places in the book for children to analyze the text and practices with the children saying and using story vocabulary. Children “chime-in” to recall/retell main events and characters. As the teacher stops to leave out a word or phrase, the children can fill in with phrases from the text or retell what is happening. The teacher provides scaffolding for this process. The book is NOT read cover to cover.

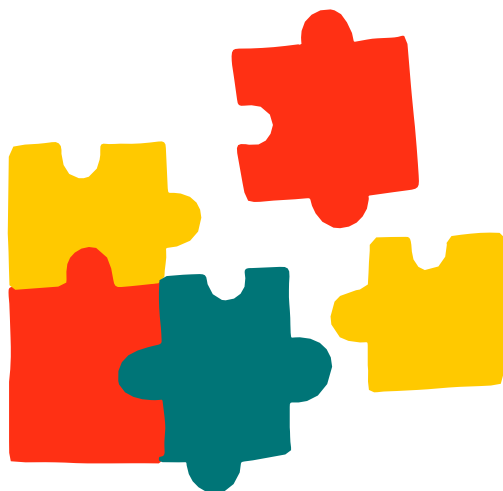
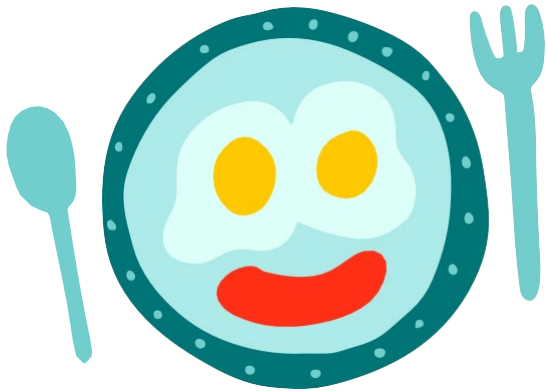
Read Aloud 4 – Act Out (Story Acting)

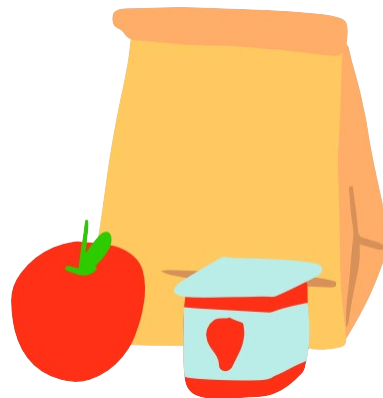
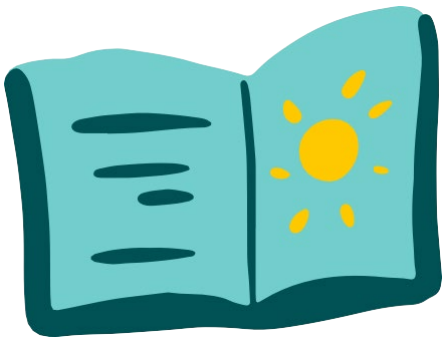
The teacher chooses 2 – 3 scenes from the book for small groups of children to act out; exploring character motivations and emotions. Different children may act out the same scenes, so everyone has a turn. This provides children with many opportunities to deepen understanding. The teacher can gain insight into the children's' understanding of vocabulary and story comprehension.

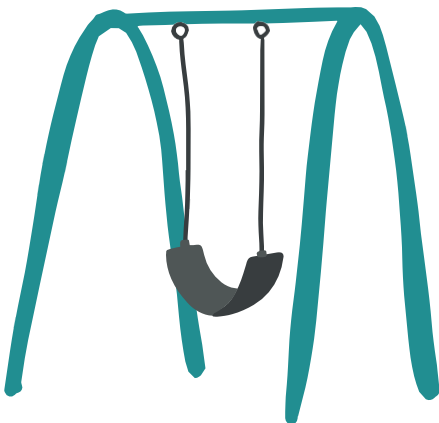
Read Alouds of the same text should be staggered throughout the week. With this schedule, children can explore concepts and vocabulary while engaged in Learning Centers, Small Groups, and Let's Find Out About It (LFOAI) activities to achieve the goals of each read. As the teacher facilitates these activities through questioning and conversations, children will be able to bring understanding to the next Read Aloud of the text.

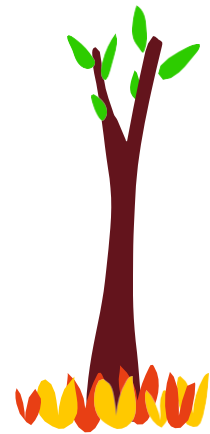
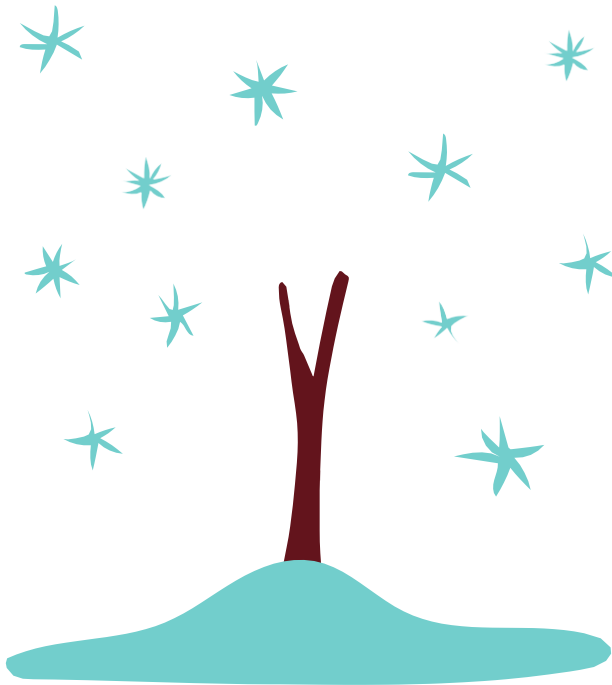
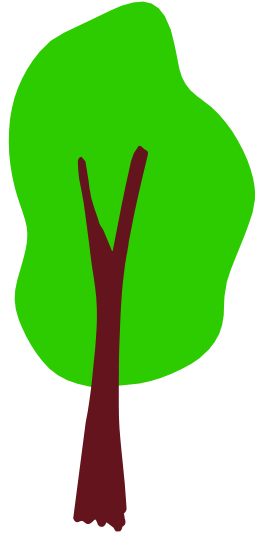
PRINT/CUTOUTS

- 1) Icons for:**
Class Time, Seasons,
and Weather
- 2) WeWillBes**
- 3) Stick People**
- 4) I Will Use My...**

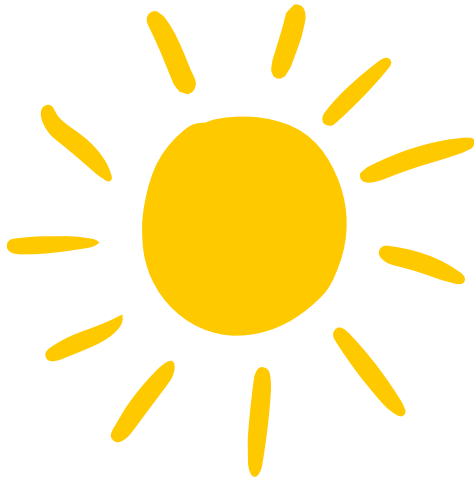
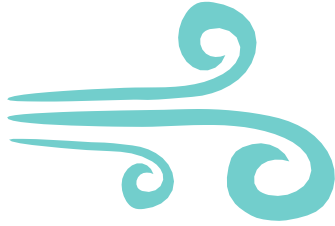






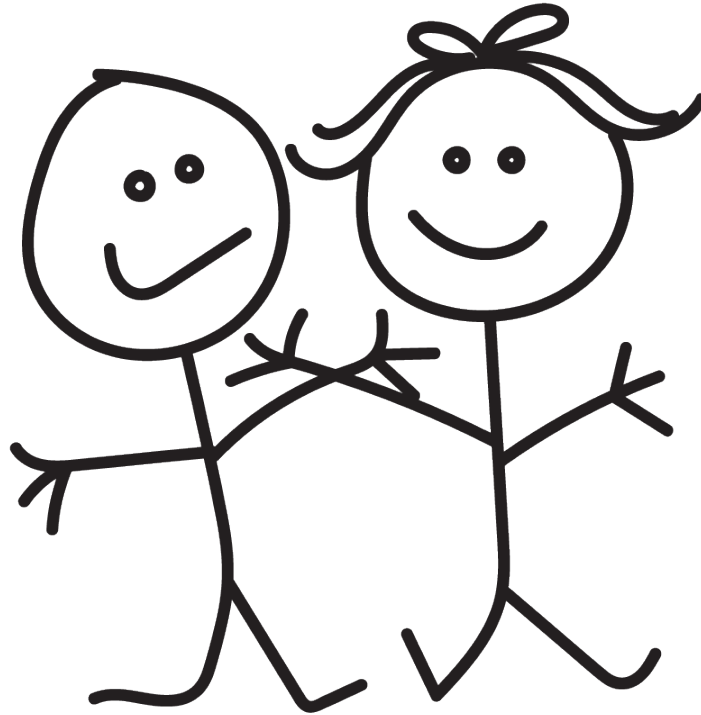






We will be **SAFE**.

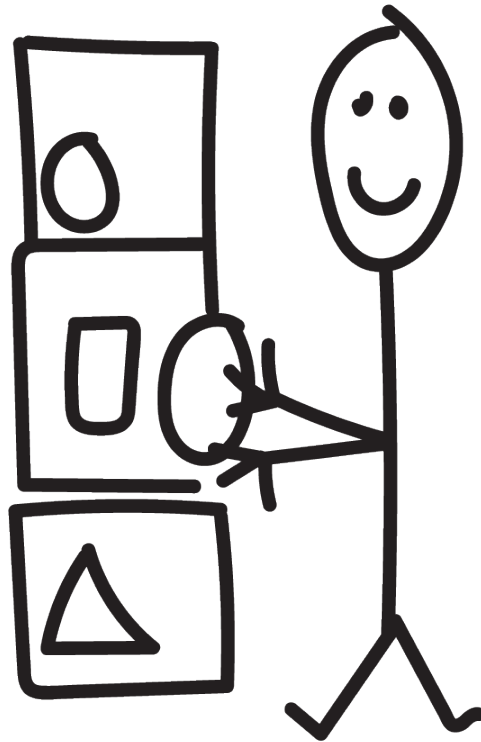
That means...



We take care of each other.

We will be **RESPECTFUL**.

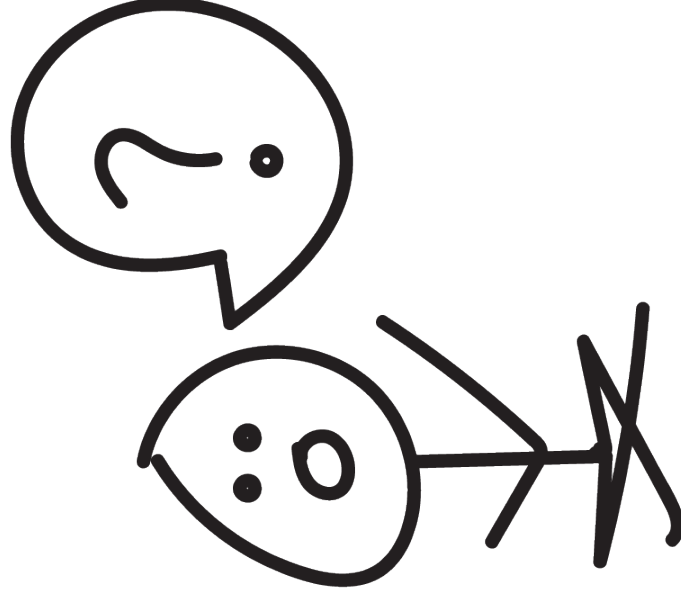
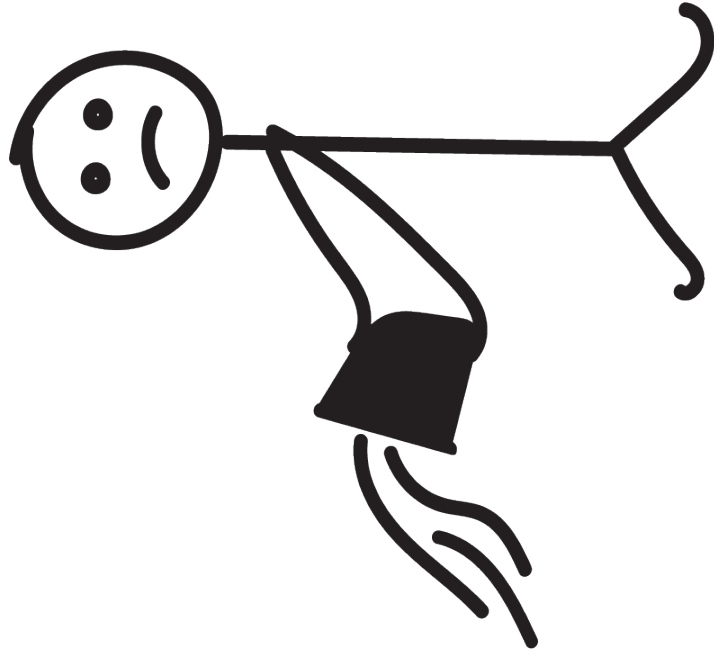
That means...



We take care of the things in our classroom.

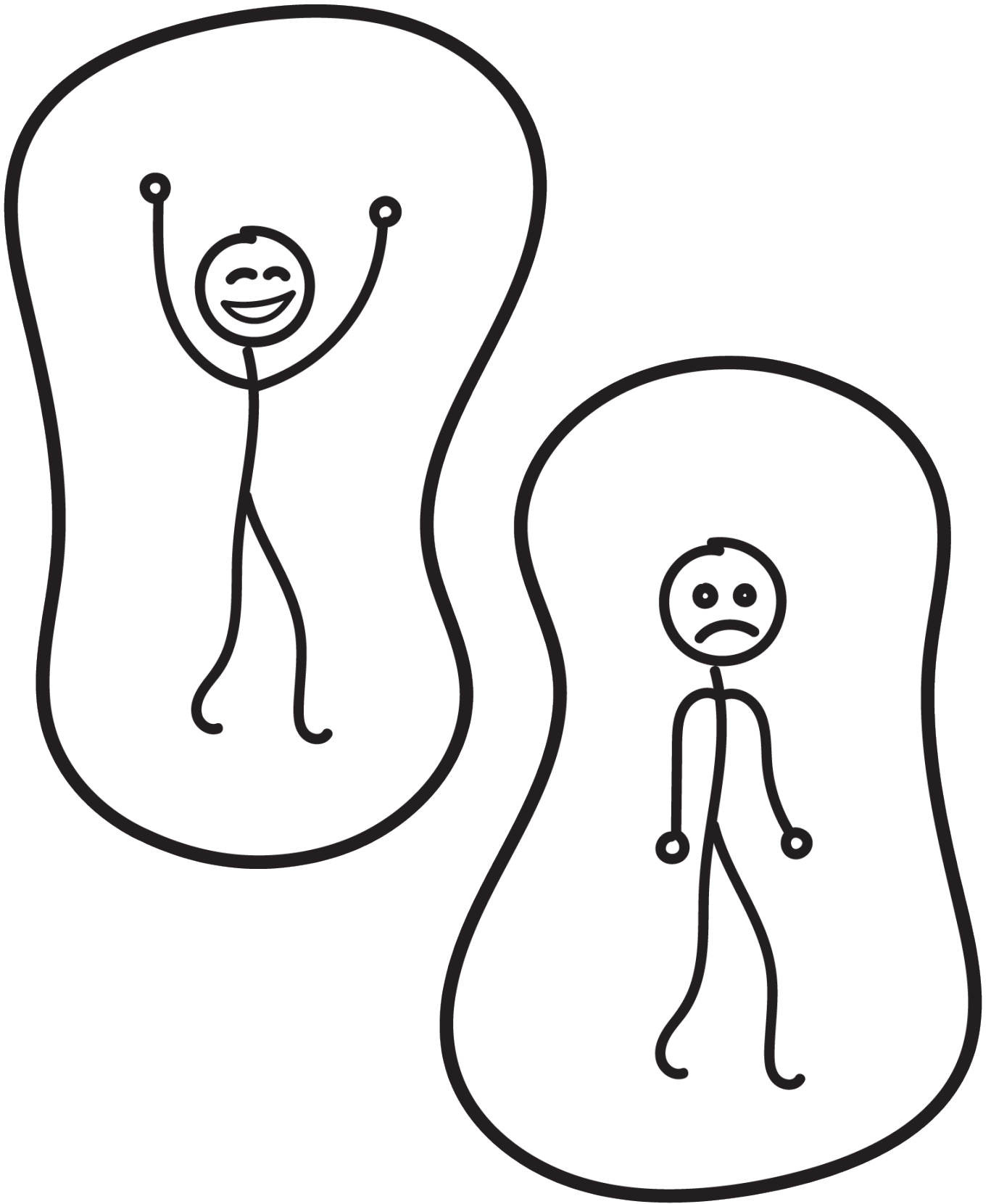
We will be LEARNERS.

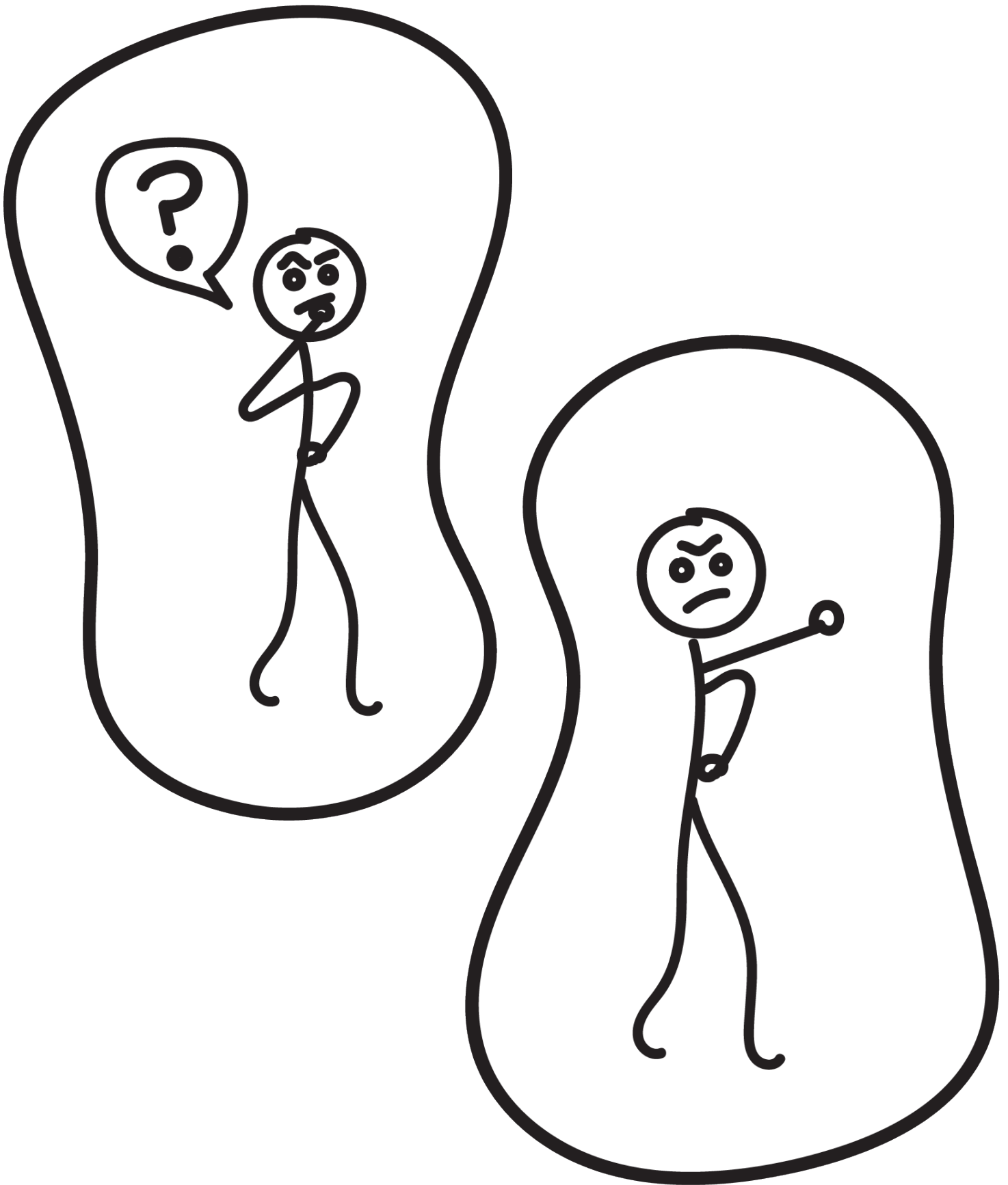
That means...

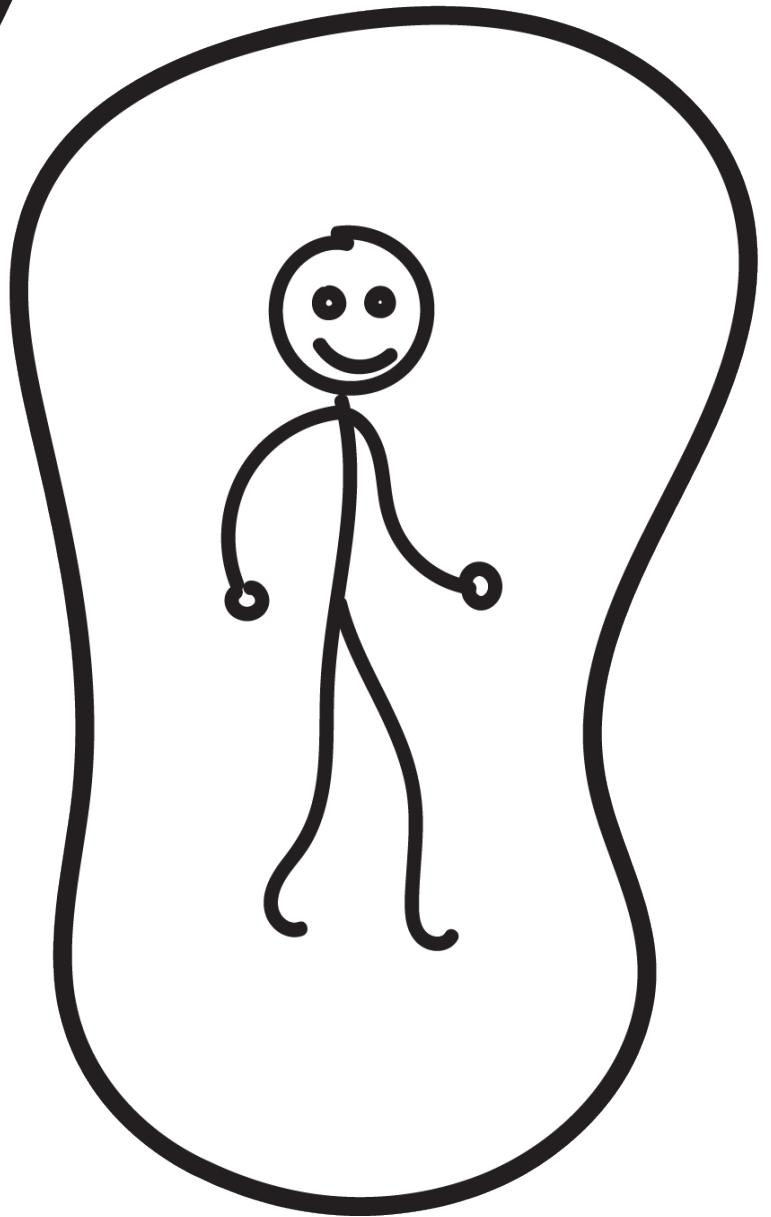
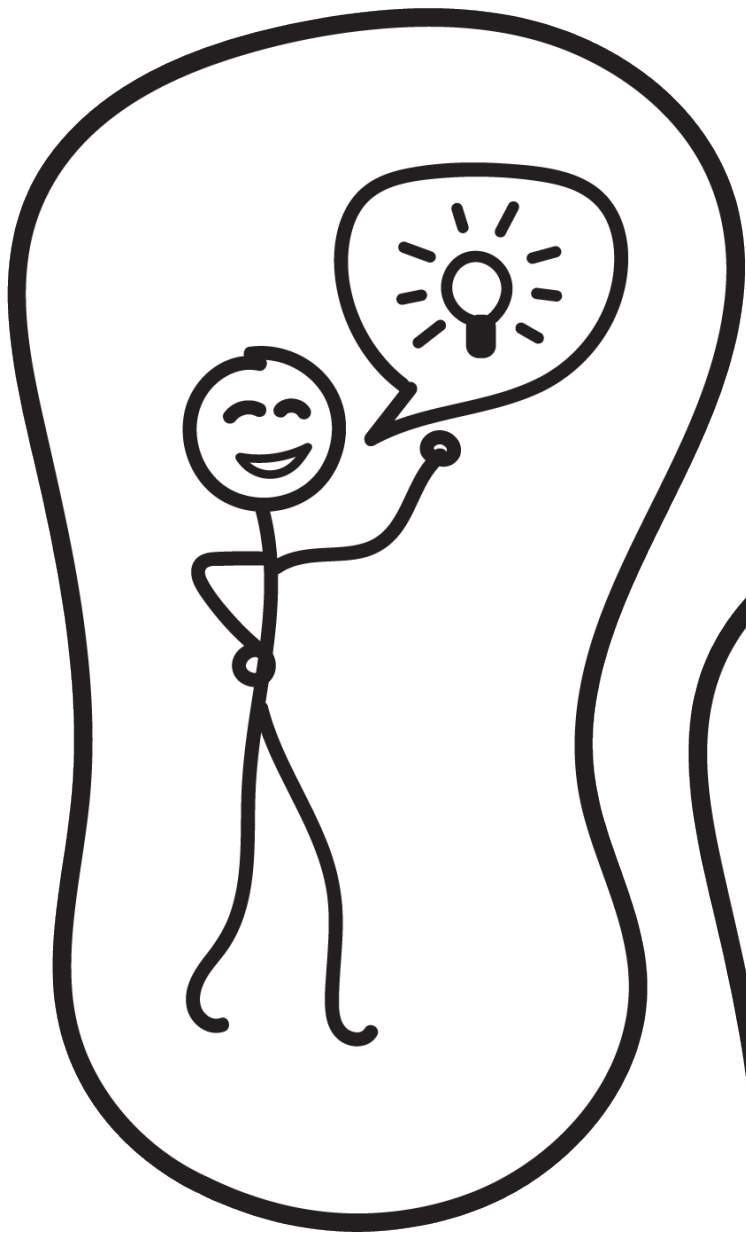


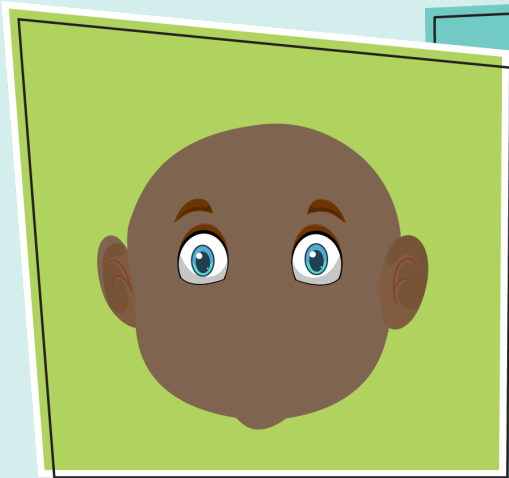
It's okay
to make mistakes.

It's okay
to ask questions.

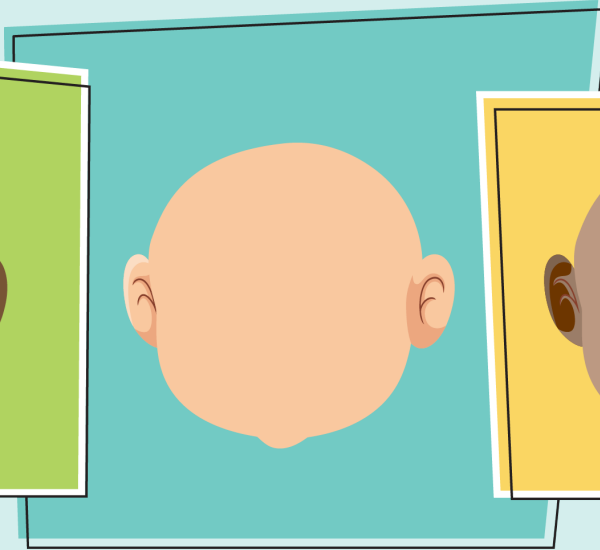




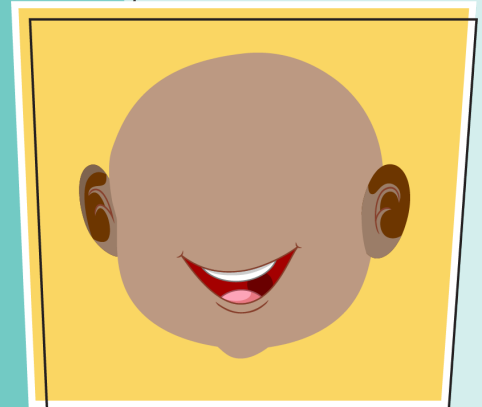




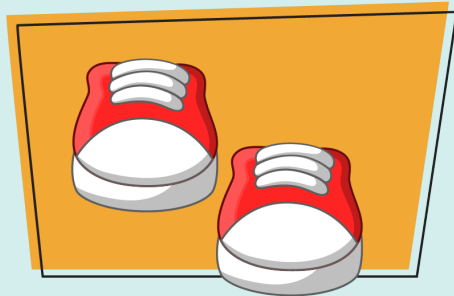
I will keep my **watchful eyes** on my teacher today.



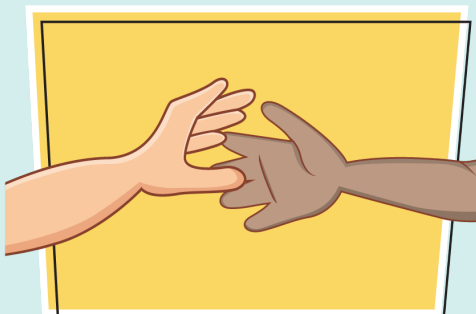
I will use my **listening ears** in class today.



I will use my **inside voice** in class today.



I will use **walking feet** today.



I will use a **gentle touch** today.

