

Mentally Healthy Classroom Practices

1. Adults are frequently in close physical proximity of children and interact at eye level. They consistently use eye contact throughout the day to initiate and maintain relationships with students.
2. Classroom climate, including adults and children, is characterized by smiling, laughter and enthusiasm.
3. Adult-child and peer-peer interactions are demonstrated by eye contact; warm, calm voices; respectful language; and cooperation and sharing.
4. Adult-child interactions are characterized by verbal and physical affection as well as positive expectations.
5. Adults consistently individualize facial expressions, body postures, and gestures to meet individual student and situational needs. Adults match affect of children.
6. Adults consistently use verbal and nonverbal cues throughout the day to shift children's attention to classroom priorities and to meet the needs of others in the group.
7. Adults consistently encourage body organization (calming) and emotional control (containment) before beginning activities or transitioning to new activities, supporting individuals, as needed.
8. The classroom has a few important rules and guidelines that are posted in the classroom at children's eye level.
9. Expectations for children's behavior are clear and applied consistently. Expectations match the individual and developmental characteristics of the children in the class.
10. Adults model and role-play expected behavior for all routines, rules, procedures, and caring behavior. Teachers model compassion and respect when dealing with inappropriate behaviors.
11. Adults provide proactive directions using few words and /or visual cues to guide children's behavior as well as redirections and reminders as necessary.
12. Adults are responsive to children's feelings. They acknowledge children's emotions, provide comfort, assistance and individualized support. They help children to understand their feelings and the feelings of others. They provide positive support to children in expressing their feelings in appropriate ways.
13. Children seek support and guidance from adults and are clearly comfortable taking risks and freely participating in activities.
14. Children are encouraged to talk and share their ideas and perspectives in a variety of settings (i.e. large group, small group, one-on-one interactions, meals, work-time).
15. Adults maintain a predictable and consistent schedule, making adjustments when appropriate to respond to children and circumstances. Adults are flexible, with their plans incorporating children's ideas and to follow the children's lead.
16. Adults observe, support and extend play following the children's lead. They consistently use comments and questions to help children elaborate on their plans and reflect on their play experiences.
17. Adults plan and lead small groups throughout the daily routine.
18. Children are provided meaningful opportunities for choice throughout the day.
19. Adults provide a variety of activities and experiences that are open ended and process rather than product oriented.
20. Children are regularly given developmentally appropriate responsibilities.

21. Adults plan for children's roles as both followers and leaders, consistently using positive guidance and positive noting to promote turn-taking in group work.
22. Children have options for seating and moving throughout the classroom; movement is not restricted.
23. Children are encouraged to initiate their own activities, alone or with others.
24. Adults offer activities and experiences that encourage cooperation, responsibility, physical and emotional safety and social problem solving. They positively note and scaffold these skills through play.
25. Adults use books, puppets, songs, self-talk and other strategies/activities to talk about feelings with the group and individuals. They help children calm themselves by using relaxation techniques.
26. Adults offer physical activities that use large muscles and expend energy. They incorporate physical activity throughout the daily routine, using it as a way to promote self control.
27. Adults teach children problem solving skills and encourage them to use their skills to resolve conflicts. They respond with interest and share in problem solving when children seek help.
28. Adults thoughtfully respond to the meaning of children's actions.
29. Adults treat mistakes in a matter of fact manner and view them as learning opportunities. They help children understand that some actions are accidental rather than intentional.
30. Adults intentionally plan transitions that support children by individualization, child involvement, advance notice and forecasting, and visual, verbal and/or auditory cues.
31. Adults help children and families cope with separation at arrival and reunions at the end of the day.
32. Adults establish clear and consistent expectations for behavior. They monitor children accordingly. They anticipate challenging behavior and use proactive strategies to prevent it and teach new skills to replace it. When misbehavior occurs, they use redirection and reminders as well as positive noting to recognize effective behavior and as a means to target emerging skills.
33. Classroom has a home-like atmosphere that reflects children's families, cultures and home languages.
34. Classroom has a soothing and relaxing atmosphere with appropriate noise and activity levels.
35. Interest areas are well-defined, well stocked, and reflect children's current skills and interests.
36. Classroom materials promote flexibility in play and accommodate a range of development. They include a range of open-ended materials, from simple to complex, that offer different levels of challenge.
37. Materials support social emotional growth and development such as encouraging children to explore and express feelings, promoting cooperation and group play, and accommodating a range of dramatic play skills.
38. Environment supports children's growing independence in several ways. Toys and materials are easily accessible to children and shelves/containers are well labeled. Spaces are designated to save unfinished work, display individual work, and store belongings. Children have supplies and equipment for personal care and clean-up.
39. Classroom includes a few be-by-myself spaces that are private, but still visible to teachers.
40. Classroom includes areas for large group activities as well as indoor gross motor activity.