

Eliminate Transitional Disruptions!



As early educators, we stay on the run so much that we have difficulty finding the thoughtful planning and focus time that we would like to have. When we are finally able to take a step back and look at all the times in a day when classroom problems originate, we will probably learn that most disruptions occur during transitions, whether moving to and from classroom areas, shifting into and out of activities, or just switching from loud to quiet periods. It is important to take the necessary time to think through these transitions ahead of time and plan ways to eliminate chaos before it has a chance to happen. Chaos can begin with disruptions, so I have listed my top ten ways to eliminate disruptions.



Be encouraging to the children!

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.... Let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24–25, NIV

Children are very sensitive to our body language. They read our faces as much as they hear our words. We need to consider how everything we say or do may impact young minds and hearts. Yes, even children are part of the *one another* mentioned in the above verses! Children need affirmation on a consistent basis in order to grow, just as adults do. Authentic encouragement is more important than positive reinforcement. Used alone, positive reinforcement does not always generate internal motivation in children. But affirmation and encouragement

draw people to one another and to the Lord. Children feel drawn toward those who encourage them with words and actions such as nods of approval and smiles.



Repeat activities and instructions often.

So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. 2 Peter 1:12, NIV

Young children learn through repetition. By following repeated instructions and by repeating activities, children can master concepts and feel successful. They do not retain long strings of directions. But when they receive one or two directions at a time, they can repeat and follow through, especially with helpful reminders.

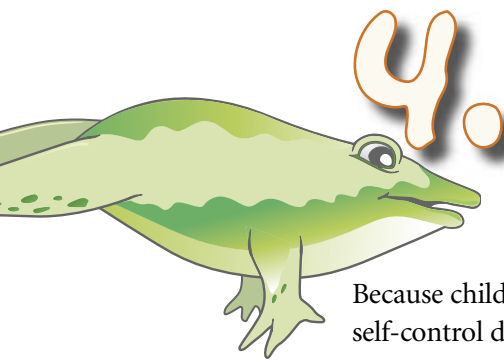


Always model what you expect.

You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers. 1 Thessalonians 1:6–7, NIV

Remember, “preschoolers are social creatures; they imitate what they see other people do” (Carey and Henry 1988, 23). Is there enough repetition in your classroom to cause children to learn from each other? Are you calling attention to the behaviors that you want to see?

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4. Assist children in learning self-control.

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. Galatians 6:1, NIV

Because children are just beginning to learn self-control during the early education years, encourage and model appropriate behavior regularly during lessons. Children will model their behavior after the way you interact with their classmates. Do you restore children gently?

5. Speak positively.

Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. Proverbs 16:24, NIV

We must consider the type of communication that we use with children of various ages. Tell children what you want to have happen rather than spending a great deal of time on what you do not want. Soften your tone of voice and speak humbly with appeal. Then you will invite participation and cooperation from many strong-tempered children. Do you invite them to try, or do you demand participation?

6. Keep activities age appropriate, challenging, and interesting.

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 1 Corinthians 13:11, NIV

As early educators, we will give account for our actions in the classroom. Are you planning appropriate activities, or do you hinder children by expecting behaviors beyond their capabilities?

7. Watch children's behavioral communication for signs of interest and weariness.

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Hebrews 13:17, NIV

Because those in authority are to have a watchful eye, you need to watch continually for fatigue, interest levels, and opportunities to assist children in pleasantly communicating with their peers. Events will not get out of control if you prevent bad behaviors from happening.

8. Separate children who do not get along with each other.

But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Matthew 5:22, NIV

While teachers need to plan a time for teaching social skills and conflict resolution, these lessons do not have to be a part of each activity. Decide before you begin an activity whether you want to spend the time teaching a social skill such as cooperation or whether you have another goal in mind. If the lesson does not require the teaching of cooperation, for example, increase the likelihood of the activities' success by separating those who cannot get along without adult assistance.

9. Show consistency.

We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised. Hebrews 6:11–12, NIV

The importance of developing routines is no secret to the veteran teacher. Children are much more comfortable with patterns and routines than a new teacher is, who may see

these patterns as boring. When you teach children how to practice a skill, you are teaching them how to continue doing a task or to come back to it time and again until their skill improves. Repetition helps improve attention span as well as skill.



Plan “quiet spaces” in the classroom.

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways. Psalm 37:7, NIV

Children feel reassured when their classroom has space set aside for them to play quietly. Introverted children especially need time to get away from others and reflect quietly to themselves. Even extroverted children need downtime. Providing a quiet space for children gives them the opportunity to reflect and ponder, two skills that will greatly enhance their transition to school. Make sure this area provides an object or activity that is mentally challenging or thought provoking for the children.

The Necessity of Planning for Transitions
But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way. 1 Corinthians 14:40, NIV

Planning ahead of time to eliminate disruptions includes careful thought and preparation regarding the transition times, which are disruptions waiting to happen. Planning for order requires planning for times of transition. Identifying transition times such as the following, along with anticipating the children’s response, is a precursor to using transition activities effectively.

Arriving. How will children enter the room, in partners or single file? How accessible are their storage areas and their daily planned activities? Will they be crowded into one space, or do they have ample room to move?

Gathering in a large group. What designates the individual spaces of the children and defines

their boundaries with regard to other children and objects that may look appealing to them?

Cleaning up. How many items will they have to pass by before arriving at destinations such as the sink or restroom? What clutter will block them from finding the soap or cleaning rags?

Exiting to the playground, lunch, or the library. How many people will they have to pass by? How noisy is the area?

Resting at designated times. Are the lighting, temperature, and mood in the room conducive to resting at these times?

Making changes by groups of a few children at a time. Are the children dismissed all at once or by category, song, or activity?

Getting the children’s attention for an activity. What unique feature of the coming activity would pique the children’s interest?

Waiting for others. Do the kinesthetic children have something to touch or hold, and do the visual children have something to keep their eye and mind focused on?

Ending the day. Are the steps easy to follow, and is the routine clear to the children?

Receiving parents. Do the parents know where to find their child’s projects, and does everyone have plenty of room to move away from others?

Ideas for Dealing with Transitions

Ask yourself, Do I have too many transition times? Can any be consolidated? Do I have enough variety in my transition activities? Your director will be glad to hear that implementing transition activities does not require purchasing equipment or software! You already have all you need to bring a new climate to your classroom! How many of these ideas do you already use? How many are new? How many do you use that are not on this list and that you can share with fellow teachers?

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Using the Environment

- Use lighting by flickering the lights or by shining flashlights.
- Use musical sounds, tapes, and songs.
- Provide organization by using seasonal tags that arriving children can put in an envelope or can hang on a wall or bulletin board.
- Add place markers to show the children where to put their chairs or use rug spots to show them where to sit.
- Match up personal items with pictures or symbol representations to help the children store or find items.

Using Peers

- Assign a child to be a peer helper who checks in the other children and their belongings.
- Give many class jobs so that each child can practice responsibility and feel responsible.
- Let the children use microphones or tape recorders to lead others in songs or stories.
- Give out tickets as invitations to play in centers. Then the children can deposit them in a can upon entry into a center.

Using Songs

- Create songs from familiar tunes by singing instructions to the tune of the songs.
- Build identity by naming children who are going to take a turn.
- Sing in a whisper to encourage the children to become quiet.
- Gain attention by turning the volume up or down or by increasing or decreasing the speed of something the children are hearing.

Using Your Body

- Indicate which child has the answer by motions such as putting your thumbs up, blinking, or touching your nose.
- Use parades, including various steps, walks, and items to hold up for display.
- Play games such as Copycat and Mirror, Mirror.

Using Props

- Use song cards for choice selections.
- Display picture cards for sequencing songs or events.
- Use hats and costumes to represent certain times of the day.
- Create a tennis ball puppet that has a cutout mouth and added eyes and hair. Squeeze it when talking!
- Wrap sticky tape around a child's hand, with the sticky side out, for picking up items found out of place.
- Direct the children to follow a light as you shine a flashlight in the direction you want the children to move.
- Put books in a cloth bag with handles and hang it by the door for ready use during times of waiting.

Using Thinking Strategies and Language Games Such as Ones That Include Descriptions

- Say, "What's missing?"—focusing the children's attention on something such as a person, an object, an item from the board, or a toy.
- Say, "I'm going on a field trip and I need to take..." Let the children think about their part and fill in the blank. Use this for the preparation of any activity.
- Say, "I'm thinking of something that is [description]." Let the children guess what it is, whether by color, shape, size, or other language descriptor. 🗨️🗨️

Reference

Carey, Geraldine Addison, and Kay Vandevier Henry. 1988. *Teaching in church weekday education*. Nashville, TN: Convention Press.

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