Guides to Speech and Action

Guides in Speech

- State suggestions or directions in a positive form. A positive direction tells a child what to do; instead of what not to do
  - “Please, ride your tricycle around the bench” instead of “Don't bump the bench”.
  - “Please, give me the ball to hold while you are climbing” instead of “Don't climb with the ball”.

- Give a child a choice ONLY when you intend to leave the situation to her. Children need to learn to make decisions and to know they have some responsibility in their own affairs. They should never be given a choice when the adult has already decided how she wants her to choose.
  - “It's time to leave school now” rather than “Do you want to leave now?”
  - “Do you want your eggs scrambled or fried?” instead of “Do you want eggs?”

- Your voice is a teaching tool. Use words and tone of voice which will help the child to feel confident and reassured. Decreasing speed is more effective than raising pitch. Never shout at a child, go over to the child and speak to him.

- Avoid trying to change behavior by methods which may lead to loss of self respect such as shaming a child or labeling his behavior as ‘naughty’, ‘selfish’ or ‘bad’. Neither children nor adults are likely to develop desirable behavior patterns as the result of fear, shame or guilt. Acceptance and respect help change behavior.

- Avoid motivating a child by making comparisons between one child and another, or by encouraging competition. Competition does not build friendly social feelings. Children should feel acceptance whether they succeed or fail. Children should not feel their only chance for attention or acceptance depends on being ‘first’ or ‘best’ or ‘beating someone’.

- Redirection is most effective when consistent with the child’s motives and interests. In other words, turn a child’s attention to something which has an interest for her.

- Effective guidance depends on knowing how to prevent trouble.
Guides in Action

- Avoid making models in any art medium for the children to copy. Art is valuable because it is a means of self expression; a language to express feelings.

- Give the child the minimum of help in order that s/he may have the maximum chance to grow in independence. Give her enough time to work out a problem rather than stepping in to solve it for her. Give a child the minimum of help in order to allow him to grow by himself.

- Make your suggestions effective by reinforcing them when necessary. “It’s time for lunch” may need to be reinforced by “I’ll help you park your wagon”.

- Foresight and prevention are effective ways of handling problems. Learning to prevent problems is important because, in many cases, children do not profit from making mistakes. Help at the right moment may mean a supporting hand before the child loses his balance and falls, or settling the issue before two children come to blows.

- When limits are necessary, they should be clearly defined and consistently maintained. It is important that the limits set are necessary limits, and that they are clearly defined so the child can understand them. There will not be too many ‘nos’ but the ‘nos’ will be clearly defined.

- Use the most strategic positions for supervision. Observation of the total situation is essential for effective guidance and safety. The teacher’s suggestions are more acceptable if her presence reinforces it. Trouble is seldom avoided by a suggestion given at a distance.

- The health and safety of all the children are the primary concern of all staff.

- Observe and take notes, increase your awareness. Underlying all these guides is the assumption that teaching is based on the ability to observe behavior objectively and to evaluate its meaning.