6.3: Redirecting Behavior

Redirecting is a proactive teaching strategy used to address challenging behavior (something that interferes with learning and engagement in prosocial interaction) BEFORE it escalates or continues. Redirecting:

- Allows a teacher to guide children to engage in alternative behaviors that are more acceptable.
- Consists of instruction and simple cues teachers can easily embed into teachable moments throughout the day.
- Is one of multiple proactive teaching strategies teachers use in combination with other strategies (e.g., creating classroom rules, clearly stating expectations for classroom behaviors).
- Stops a child from engaging in a challenging behavior before it escalates.
- Re-engages a child with appropriate activities which is key to maximizing learning time.
- Maximizes learning time for all children in the classroom as they will not be distracted by the challenging behavior.

Teachers redirect challenging behavior by

- Minimizing attention to the challenging behavior.
- Providing a clear description of the behavior expected from the child (e.g., “You can ask for a turn nicely,” or “We play with the trucks by driving them on the carpet.”)
- Providing positive attention and/or feedback (e.g., “That’s playing with the trucks safely, Miguel! I see you are driving them on the carpet.”), or access to the desired material as soon as it is available.

Redirection can be used when a child

- is off task to redirect attention to the task.
- uses materials inappropriately to provide a reminder of how to use the materials properly.
- talks out of turn to help the child wait for a turn.
- gets upset by a situation to guide the child away from that situation, to address the child’s feelings, and to engage
the child in an alternate activity

Four types of redirecting are most commonly used in the preschool classroom:

- **Verbal redirecting**: A teacher gives an instruction which distracts the child from the challenging behavior and directs him to a more appropriate activity.
- **Physical redirecting**: A teacher physically prevents a child from engaging in a challenging behavior and redirects her to an alternative or new activity.
- **Redirecting with a cue** that is visual or gestural (e.g., a picture or gesture).
- **Redirecting attention** to a positive model in a child’s proximity (proximal attention): For example, a teacher draws attention to a nearby child who is engaged in an appropriate behavior.[1]

References

[1] Presenter Notes Redirecting Behavior by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is in the public domain