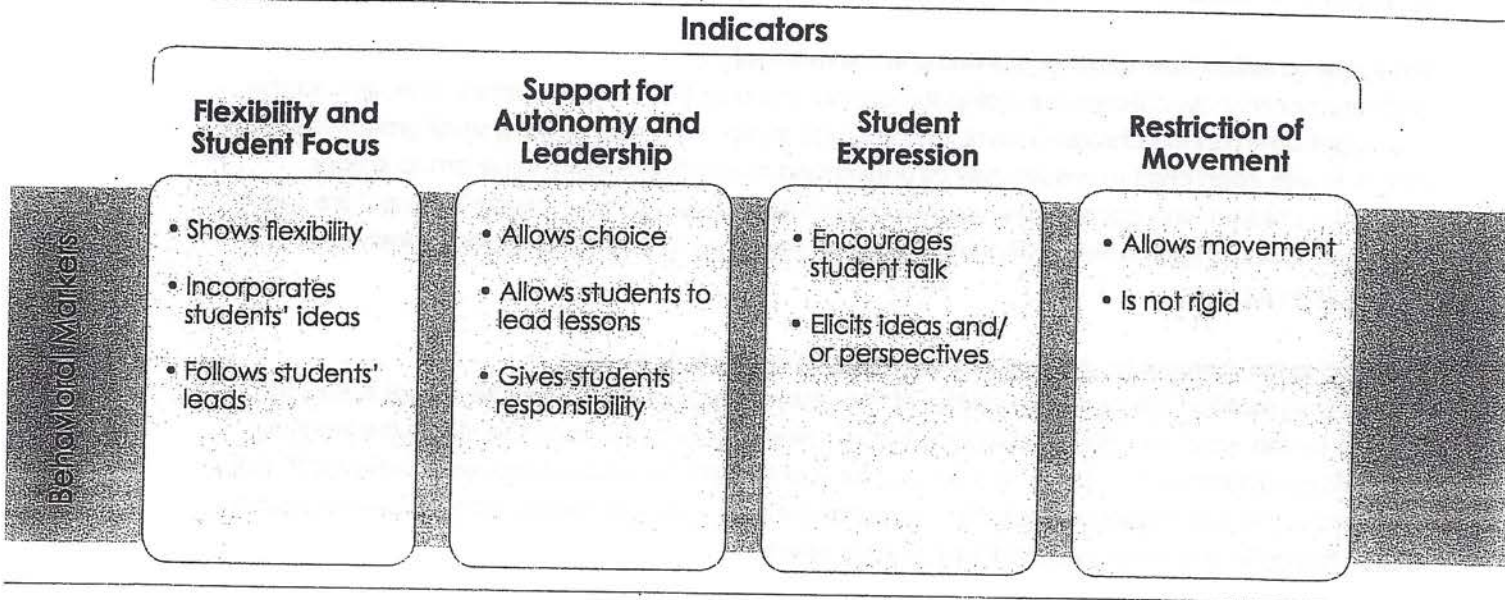


Regard for Student Perspectives



What is it?

Teachers with a high regard for children's perspectives intentionally and consistently place an emphasis on children's interests, motivations, and points of view. In classrooms high on this dimension, teachers promote children's independence by providing meaningful roles for them within the classroom, encouraging them to talk, listening to their ideas, and allowing them to make decisions for themselves when appropriate.

Why is it important?

Few moments are more exciting for young children than realizing that they can do something on their own. By looking for opportunities to facilitate these moments and actively seeking out children's thoughts and ideas, teachers increase children's motivation and desire to learn.

How can I increase my regard for children's perspectives?

Actively seek out, listen to, and support children's ideas, points of view, and active participation.

Take the time to ask children questions that help them develop and express their own ideas. Listen closely to what they say and make sure that your lessons aren't dominated by teacher talk. Provide many opportunities for children to talk and make meaningful contributions in a variety of classroom activities.

Be flexible and go with the flow of children's ideas.

While there are times in the day when you need to follow a schedule or implement a teacher-directed activity, make an effort to be flexible when you can. For example, if you are reading a book on animals and the children start making animal sounds and movements, go ahead and let them do this. Playing an active role will increase their engagement in the story.

Give children a choice.

There are many times during the day when you can give children some choice in what they are doing. If you are planning on singing a song during circle time, ask them which song you should sing. Let a child choose which book to read in the cool-down time after recess.

Provide time for child-initiated activities and learning.

During activities such as center time, allow children to select where they will play and what they will do there. Observe children as they work in centers, then follow their lead, and embed learning opportunities into your interactions with them based on what they are doing and the skills and abilities you observe.

Provide children with real responsibilities in the classroom.

Many classrooms have "jobs" for children. Make sure that these jobs provide some real responsibilities for children and think about ways to increase their level of responsibility as the year goes on. Perhaps at the beginning of the year the calendar leader simply points to the days of the week, but later leads the whole morning calendar routine. Try not to micromanage these jobs, but let the children take them on and make them their own.

Encourage children to mentor others.

Even young children love the opportunity to feel like experts among their peers. Look for opportunities to facilitate these peer interactions. For example, you may identify a child as an expert on block building and structure a construction project in which this child acts as the leader of the group. It is important to monitor and facilitate these interactions as needed to provide the child with an optimal balance between support and independence.

Allow children reasonable freedom of movement.

Recognize that young children tend to move around a lot and that some may have a difficult time sitting still for long periods of time. Provide activities throughout the day that allow children to be active. During activities such as meeting time when children need to sit for a while, allow for movement that is natural and comfortable for them without being disruptive. For example, a child wiggling or sitting up on his knees in the back row may be fine as long as it does not disrupt others.