

Foundations Leaders,

Recently, some have asked what the best practices are and what Riverbend's approach is regarding disruptions or inappropriate behavior. I first want to outline what our goal is in Foundations and give you practical steps to follow when dealing with certain behaviors.

What is our goal in Foundations?

It is our desire that every child would hear about, experience and understand the love of Christ. We strive to do that through lessons and activities that teach them about who God is. We also do this through our interactions and showing them the love of Christ.

Knowing your audience

We believe that every child is made in the image of Christ. It is important to know and understand where the children are developmentally. I have attached a document that helps you to see the different developmental stages of children. It explains how they play/interact with others and well as where they are emotionally and physically.

A child's attention span is approximately 2-3x their age. For example, a 4 year olds attention span is between 8-12 minutes. Therefore, there are a variety of different activities planned. "Read the room." If you notice students are beginning to lose focus, it is ok to stop an activity and give the students a break.

It is also important to recognize that we have children in our church with special needs. We are so grateful that these families call Riverbend their home church. We will strive to make the accommodations necessary to allow them to feel cared for and welcome. Whenever necessary, we will ask parents to share with us what the needs are for their child which will then be communicated to teachers so we can know how to best serve, teach and love these students.

Classroom management

We want Foundations to be a safe, loving, caring environment for all students and teachers. The first step to classroom management is to "ready your environment." It is our goal to create a classroom environment that is welcoming, inviting and without distractions. It is important that the lesson is prepped and looked at ahead of time. All the materials that you need are in the rooms ready for you. Lessons are posted on Planning Center, so you can look through the activities and familiarize yourself with them. Arriving at 10am allows you time to look over the lesson, see the activities prepped and be fully ready before students arrive. If there is anything additional you would like, you are more than welcome to go to the craft supply closet to get whatever you need. Please make sure your phone is put away and you are fully engaged with the students.

Next, we want to use positive reinforcement whenever possible. Catch the students being good! For example, "Sally, I love the way you raised your hand!" "Bobby, great job sharing with Joey! What a kind friend." "Michelle, thank you for cleaning up when I asked." You are welcome to use stickers/stamps or anything from the craft closet as a "prize" for positive behavior.

Make your expectations clear. For example, “When we go to the large group area, I’d like everyone to walk and find a spot on the blue line. Sit criss-cross applesauce.” Finally, offer the students choices when possible/appropriate.

Responding to behaviors

We understand that even the best kiddos have rough days. Here are some steps you can take if you notice a student displaying disruptive or inappropriate behavior.

First, use redirection. Get down on the child’s level, look them in the eyes and redirect them to a more appropriate activity. For example, a child is coloring on the table. You could say, “crayons are for coloring on paper. Let’s work on this paper.” A child is running around the classroom. “Let’s not run in the classroom, would you like to come build blocks over here?”

Every classroom has 2 teachers. While 1 is teaching or leading an activity, the helper can stay next to students at the table to help them stay on task and listen well.

If a student is being disruptive, you can invite them to help you with something to give them more purpose and direction. For example, helping you pass out papers, pushing the button on the PowerPoint to go to the next slide, etc.

If behavior continues, ask questions to better understand what is happening.

- What are you feeling?
- Are you thirsty/hungry?
- I can see you are... (sad, mad, frustrated)
- What are you...(sad, mad, frustrated) about?
- How can I help you?
- What have you tried to get what you want?
- Would you be willing to try...?

Sensory bins are found in each classroom. They are a white bin located at the top of the shelves. If needed, you can guide students to the bin and allow them to choose something to fidget with while they deescalate their behavior. We will also have bean bag chairs and rocking chairs for students to sit in.

When intervention is necessary

If at any point, a student is exhibiting behavior that is harmful to themselves or others, immediately ask the check-in person for help. Remove the child from the classroom and bring them to the large group area. Check in person will then find Sam Schwarze, Alyssa Schlener, Joe Velarde or Jes Braskie. If needed, parents will be notified and brought to the large group area.

After Foundations is over, please notify Sam Schwarze of anything that has occurred. An incident report will be filled out and Sam will contact anyone involved and talk to parents.

Physical interactions with students

It is important to us to keep all those we are serving safe. In our Foundations Ministry, we value the safety of all our children as well as the volunteers who are serving our children. We take this responsibility seriously and understand that there are laws in place that need to be followed. It is our policy to avoid any need for physical engagement with a child due to behaviors however if there is a concern for a child or volunteers safety it may be necessary to intervene. In other words, if a child is engaging in unsafe behaviors such as climbing or being physical with a peer or volunteer, it may be necessary to move a child to a safer space. Volunteers will make every effort to verbally redirect and support a child, if necessary they may take them by the hand to guide them elsewhere. A volunteer may pick up a child if appropriate and needed to safely move them to a safer space. We encourage parents to share any concerns they may have for the care of their child while in Foundations and welcome suggestions or ideas that can be shared with volunteers to meet their child's needs.

I appreciate your willingness to love and care for the children of our church. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Sam Schwarze