**Language Guide by Seattle Learning Center**

This is a language guide that the teachers at SLC use. The goal is to help both teachers and parents best communicate effectively and clearly with children. In general, these are the goals of our communication:

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| * Use Positively-framed words and sentences. |
| * Use as few words as possible. This will help them focus on your main point. |
| * Use positive redirection to something you want. Instead of "don't go out onto the street" you can instead say, "Stay over here in the safe grass." |
| * "Keep" and "Stay" are two great words to start a sentence with. |
| * "Please and thank you" are used often. * Use calm and soft inside voices. |
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Below are common situations and the typical responses we will use:

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| **Situation** | **Response** |
| Too rough | "Gentle touch" |
| Running indoors | “Walking feet" |
| Not listening | "Listening ears" |
| Hurting someone | "Ouch that hurts" |
|  | "That makes (other child's name) sad when you hit him" |
| Getting angry | "I see that you are sad. Let’s take a deep breath." |
| Climbing | "Feet on the ground" |
| Dangerous | "Be careful, let’s make a safe choice" |
| Throwing an object | "We don’t throw inside the classroom." |
|  | "Let's throw some balls outside later" |
| Touching | "That's teacher/parent touch" |
| Naptime | "It's time to rest" |
| Stop an action | "All done" |
|  | "Let's go work with…until… is finished with \_\_\_" |
| Too energized | "Calm bodies" |
| Moving an object | "Let's keep the X in the X." Ex. "Let's keep the sand in the sandbox" |
| Ignoring request | "Please listen to my words" |
| Response to your request | "Thank you for listening to my words" |
| Grabbing | "Keep your hands to yourself" |
|  | “That's Bob's body. Please be gentle" |
| Getting too close | "I need some space" |
| Seriously misbehaving | "Uh-oh, child's name" |
| Wrong action | "Please stop" |
| Eating wrong object | "Out of your mouth. That's not for eating." |
|  | “Out of your mouth please. You may chew on this instead" |
| Inattention | "Focus on your…" |
| Need a solution | "Let's look at the solution book" |

A common situation is when a child gets hurt. Our typical response is, "I saw you fall down. Are you okay?" We say “are you okay” instead of “you're okay” because we want the child to come to us with their needs, especially when they are older in their teenage years. We should not under or overestimate the child’s hurt body. If they come to you in their younger years and do not feel support and empathy, they will likely see no reason to come to you with important matters in their older years. It is also not helpful to overestimate a small hurt.

Another common situation is when putting a child to nap or at bedtime. If you say “you need to go to bed/take a nap,” the child might likely disagree with that need statement. To the child, there is sometimes an unnecessary negative tone involved with the word “need.” The child wants to keep playing and having fun. We recommend saying “it’s time to take a nap now.” Or in regards to washing hands: we would say, “it’s time to wash your hands now” instead of “you need to wash your hands.” Remember that when you ask a yes or no question, you need to be okay with either a yes or no response. If you ask the child “do you want to go to bed now?” they will likely respond with a simple no. In response you could say “Okay, you can keep playing for 20 minutes more and then it will be time for bed.” Or you could say, “It’s okay if you don’t take an afternoon nap to rest. Your bedtime will be a little bit earlier at 8pm tonight so that you can get some rest. But for right now, you can keep playing. Does that sound fair?” And if the child doesn’t want to go to bed at 8pm, you can remind them of your earlier conversation that they agreed to going to bed earlier.

Encouraging a child for proper behavior is very important. Below are some great ways to show encouragement to your child.

**25 Ways to Encourage**

**Say thank you when you mean it – explain why you are grateful for your child’s actions.**

* Thank you for helping with…
* It makes mornings/dinner/outings easier when you…. thank you
* I really appreciate it when you…
* Thank you for doing that… it means I/we can now…

**Make an observation based on facts – just say what you see without emotions or judgment.**

* We did it together.
* Wow! You made a building/drawing/etc.
* You did it on your own.
* You did x and then y and worked it out.
* You used lots of red paint/blocks/tape/etc.
* You made it really big/small/colourful/complicated/etc.
* That took you a long time, and you did it!

**Extend and encourage – extend learning and encourage conversation by asking questions about what you see while also recognising their efforts.**

* How did you do that?
* You did X, what will you do now?
* Can you tell me about it?
* What is your favourite part?
* How did you think of that?

**Put feelings into words – explain how something makes you feel, help your kids notice how their actions make others feel and acknowledge your children’s own feelings.**

* I really enjoy doing this with you.
* I love watching you create/help your sister/play soccer/ etc.
* I’m so proud to be your mum, every day, no matter what.
* Look how happy your friend is when you share/help/smile/etc.
* You kept going, even when it was hard.
* You look so pleased to have done that!
* You made X feel so pleased when you did that.
* It makes you feel good when you do X.

**Say nothing – we don’t need to praise every little action, or fill every space with noise. It is enough to sit back and watch our children’s delight in their own achievements**

* Say nothing – just smile.

(Source: <http://picklebums.com/25-alternatives-good-job/> )

We hope you found this guide helpful. If you have any questions, please ask your director. Please feel free to share this article with anyone who you think will benefit. Thank you!

Kindest regards,

The Teachers at SLC

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