

# TEACHER TIPS

## SUCCESSFUL CLASSROOM STRATEGIES TO TRY AT HOME

### GROUND RULES: SET THEM ONCE, REFER TO THEM ALWAYS



**GRETCHEN  
AMBERG,  
HEAD TEACHER,  
GARDEN**

In the Garden classroom a handmade illustrated poster describes our basic ground rules:

**Be Kind, Be Safe, Be Gentle.** These statements shape just about every action taken in our classroom community. We remind children to treat every material with care and every person with respect. We offer reminders to remain safe while traveling up and down the stairs: walk slowly, eyes forward, and keep one hand on the railing at all times.

We remind children to be kind, and we offer specific gestures and language to use in various situations. For example, to get someone's attention politely, a child may rest a hand on that person's shoulder until he or she responds. To courteously decline a friend's invitation to work together, a child might reply, "No, thank you, I'm feeling like I want to work alone."

We also offer precise language for gently resolving a conflict. We consistently insist that children "use their words" when they encounter a disagreement. We begin by introducing "I statements" such as "I feel sad when..." or "I am frustrated because..." Our goal is to keep children's self-esteem intact by having them explain their feelings and offer a resolution for the conflict (for example, "I am frustrated because you took my paint brush before I was finished using it. I can show you where you can find another one, if you like").

These strategies can easily be adapted at home. Have a family discussion about what ground rules are essential to creating a strong and supportive family unit. Have your child help you create a poster that depicts them. Place the poster in a prominent place in your home—the fridge door may be the place. And, refer to them consistently and often.



### OK, KIDS, LET'S CHECK THE CALENDAR



**CHELSEA  
PETROZZO,  
HEAD TEACHER,  
3WAM**

We have an activity calendar in our classroom to let children know in advance what to expect, and to help them make transitions more easily from one activity to another. The calendar is composed of photos of children with captions: **Arrival, Work, Group, Gym, Lunch, Roof**, etc. By checking the calendar, a child can orient herself to where she is in the day, know that she's doing what's expected of her, and see what comes next. This strategy helps foster a sense of competence and builds some great habits for understanding sequencing and time. Creating a simple calendar at home with your child can make it easier to establish routines at home and gain your child's cooperation in the bargain. Your child can help make the visuals for the calendar: photos, drawings, or collage. And he can help with creating the captions (Wake Up, Brush and Wash, Home from School, Bed and a Story, etc.), pasting letters cut out from magazines to make the words, or using his newly developing writing skills.

