

Behavior Procedures for Children and Youth

At WES, we strive to live the values of Ethical Culture, which include respecting other people and supporting one another's learning and ethical development. Children and adults are expected to behave in ways that are consistent with these principles in SEEK classes and at SEEK events. Appropriate behavior includes:

- Listening to others who are speaking;
- Speaking respectfully to others;
- Taking care of the physical space and materials;
- Helping the teacher/leader and the other children when asked;
- Being respectful during activities and discussions; and
- Taking responsibility for one's words and actions.

At the beginning of the program year, members of each class are invited to discuss additional agreements that will help create an inclusive and welcoming environment. These agreements are in addition to the basic expectations listed above. New class members are invited to join the agreement when they enter, as well. Subsequently, class participants are reminded of the agreement at the start of each class. When children and youth behave in a way that violates that agreement, a member of the class (teacher/leader or child) will point out to the individual that they are violating the class agreement.

If the member of the class does not stop the behavior after this reminder, the teacher/leader should explain the consequences (as outlined below) should the behavior continue. If the child's behavior does not improve after the consequences are explained to them, the teacher/leader should take the following steps:

1. The child will have time in the classroom apart from the other members of the class; the length of time should be related to the age of the child; severity of the incident; and the child's willingness to follow the agreement. The goal during this time is not punishment, but rather a break and time to think.
2. If the disruptive behavior reoccurs, the child will step into the hallway outside the open classroom door with the assistant such that no adult is left alone with children. The assistant will ask the child to think over why such a behavior does not work for the class, and remain with the child. After the class, the teacher should let the DLL know of the incident. The length of the "out of classroom" time and whether the child should return to the classroom that day is up to the discretion of the teacher and assistant.
3. If these steps do not improve the behavior once the child returns to the classroom, the child's parent/guardian will be notified in the Main Hall. The DLL will follow up by contacting and speaking with the child's parent or caregiver.

These steps should be taken only when a child or children's behavior is disruptive to the class. **A child who does not choose to participate in the class but does not interfere with other children's learning is not behaving disruptively and may stay in the class.**

If the behavior is acutely aggressive, whether physically (hitting, biting, kicking, etc.) or verbally (swearing at someone, using ethnic or other slurs), the offending child should be removed from the classroom immediately and the DLL notified. The DLL will then notify the parents or guardians of the children involved and schedule a meeting to talk with the disruptive child's parent or guardian . Of course, the age of the child and context of the incident should be considered. For example, a three-year-old swatting another child who grabbed their toy should be handled differently from a nine year-old punching a classmate.

Any worker/volunteer who knows of child/youth behavior that occurs off-site and may have ramifications for the safety of others at WES activities, should inform the Senior Leader or the DLL of this behavior as soon as possible. The Senior Leader and/or the DLL will determine whether the off-site behavior reported needs to be addressed further with the parents or guardians of the child/youth involved. All efforts will be made to keep such information confidential.

By insisting that each of us respect the dignity of every person, we teach one another how to live according to a central Ethical Culture principle. We also ensure that classrooms are a safe place for our kids, not only physically, but emotionally and spiritually as well. We hope that our SEEK classes can be a place for our children to reveal their genuine and best selves, and to explore what's on their minds and in their hearts, and to be welcomed in a safe, supportive, and loving community.