

Yesenia's Journal

I watched this video of Denise, <http://youtu.be/l4dmrhHINK8>. Hearing Denise talk about how she focuses the first 6 weeks of the school year really opened my eyes. I can remember preparing for my first job as a preschool teacher when I made a big poster with a long list of rules that I wanted the children to follow. Things like no hitting, no running, use your inside voice, and put toys away when you are finished (now I see you can even buy commercial versions of this online!). Every day during circle time we went over the rules. When I think back I can now see that I spent the majority of my time enforcing those rules. I wasn't enjoying being with the children and didn't feel like I was really getting to know them. And the rules weren't helping the children's behaviors; they seemed to get even worse.

Classroom Rules:

Use your words

You can't say, "You can't play"

Be kind to one another

Put away your toys

No hitting, pushing or teasing

No running inside

Ask before you touch someone

Use your inside voice

But Denise starts her group off, not with rules, but with conversations about the kids being a community that need to feel safe together. I remember she asks them things like, "What do we want our community to look like?" and "What does being friends feel like?" She said she tries to play the role of facilitator rather than judge or jury.

So now I'm trying to figure out how I can do some of this stuff, even though it's the middle of the school year and I didn't start off the way Denise did. So today during our circle time I brought in two dolls and had them act out a scene where they weren't getting along.



I asked the kids to give them ideas of what they could do. I made a poster with the heading “If you want to be friends, you can.....” and then wrote down the kids ideas. It was amazing what they came up with.

The Children's Ideas:

“They should stop arguing and just be friends.”

“You can tell them you like them.”

“Don't get too close so you don't scare them.”

“Say please, not just grab the toy.”

“Invite her to your birthday party.”

(Boy that's always a big theme for four year olds!)

Now I see that if I make a poster with their ideas, it might do more good than my old idea of a rules chart. The next time kids are having behavior issues, I'm going to get this chart out and remind them of the ideas they could use to try to make our classroom friendlier.