



Transcript for the [video](#):

## ***Building Supportive Environments for Young Children: Setting Rules and Expectations***

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**Narrator:** For children to feel safe and supported in an early childhood setting, they need to know both what to expect, and what is expected of them. But how do you decide on the rules? And how do you clearly communicate your expectations to young children?

### **Building Supportive Environments for Young Children: Setting Rules and Expectations (0:23)**

**Karen:** Our voices are...

**Karen and children:** Quiet.

**Karen:** Good job. We sit criss-cross applesauce.

**Mary Watson Avery, Aspire Institute at Wheelock College:** Adults have to make sure they're letting kids know what they expect them to do and how they expect them to act. And if we're so ready to babble at kids to get them to learn to talk, then clap and cheer when a baby's trying to take steps, we have to be that invested in getting across to kids what they need to know in order to behave in a way we want them to and expect them to.

### **Communicating Expectations to Children (1:05)**

**Cathy:** Ok, then where do the blocks go? Where do we pile them up? Let's go put them away.

**Cathy Tormey, Family Child Care Provider, Cathy Cares:** Well, I think it starts early, where I will say, "Okay, I'm going to pick up this, and then when this is put away, we can take out that. If we do this now, then we'll be able to do that later." And so, they've seen me do it, and then as they become more capable of doing that, they want to help.

**Girl:** Avery, you want some?

**Cathy:** Avery has cracker sticks. She brought them from home.

**Cathy Robacker, Home Child Care Provider, Out Came the Sun Child Care:** Some of the ways of letting them know what I expect is through positive reinforcement.

**Cathy:** That was nice of you to ask her, though.

**Cathy Robacker:** “I love the way you’re doing this; you’re such a great helper. Gee, you’re so thoughtful.” Then they know: oh, I like that. And children want to please; they really do. When you respond to them in that way, you’re setting the criteria for them to know that this is what we do.

**Cathy:** Put your juice on the table, then you can come back over here. How’s that?  
Thank you, Claire.

**Cathy Robacker:** Once they realize that, “This isn’t something I should be doing right now,” they’ll just look at me and they’ll wait, almost, for me to say, “Should you be doing that?” And they know, and they stop, and they stop doing it. So they’re really self-regulating by looking at me, and they wait because they know that they are going to get a response. The older they get, the more structure I see they like and they need. Because that’s how they make sense of the world, really, and their environment.

### **Deciding on and Evaluating Expectations (2:54)**

**Mary Watson Avery:** Identify really what are your expectations and then just ask yourself: Why? Why is that the expectation? Is it age appropriate? Is it appropriate to what you know that kid’s able to do? And then, once you’ve thought of that, are those expectations realistic for the setting you’re asking for them in?

**Heather Mulrooney, Infant/Toddler Teacher, Windham Early Head Start:** In the infant/toddler classroom, our behavioral expectations are really based around safety. Infants and toddlers climb. That’s what they do at this age. So we’re teaching them, you know, “Oop! Our table’s not for climbing on,” and kind of redirecting them. If they’re throwing a block, making sure we’re providing materials in the classroom where they can throw something. So, “Oh, blocks are for building, stacking,” showing them, “Let’s go use a ball if you want to throw.”

### **Communicating Expectations through the Environment (3:47)**

**Ashley Anderson, Preschool Teacher, Plainfield Head Start:** The classroom environment is set up in a very purposeful and intentional way to foster as much independence as possible in my classroom. All of the materials that they need for mealtimes are in a special little shelf that’s child-height so that the children can set the tables. If they drop their cup, they know where to get another one. They don’t need teacher support; they can do it on their own. We have a menu available so they know how many they can take, and they help each other with that for the younger children.

**Amy Figueroa, Preschool Teacher, Women’s League Child Development Center:** We post up a Classroom Expectations chart that we have in our block area, and every week we try to cover some of the different aspects of the classroom expectations. We also do a buddy system, so one child supports the next child to make good decisions.

### **Involving Children in Defining Expectations and Rules (4:39)**

**Jennifer:** That’s a great idea, so “Keep our legs inside.”

**Jennifer Wolff, Preschool Teacher, Cook Hill Integrated School:** We noticed that some of the children hadn’t been experienced with the slide. There were some accidents going on outside, so we talked about different rules for each area of the playground.

**Jennifer:** Yes, Max.

**Boy:** First, get up the stairs, and we slide down to the slide.

**Jennifer:** Yeah, so walk up the stairs.

**Boy:** And slide down.

**Jennifer:** Ok, walk up the stairs and slide down.

**Jennifer Wolff:** When children help to come up with the rules, they definitely own it a lot more. It’s in child-appropriate language instead of the teacher telling you, “This is how you’re gonna do it.”

**Boy:** We’re going up the big slide!

**Jennifer Wolff:** They need to understand how to keep themselves and each other safe in the classroom and how to have the best experience there.

**Cathy Robacker:** They need to be taught. Because that’s how they learn to regulate themselves.

**Mary Watson Avery:** Kids really do flourish when they know what to expect. So really it’s a component of social-emotional wellness. It’s a way that children can feel at rest in order to devote energy to other things, like learning and playing, and getting to know another kid.