

Part 5

Dinosaur School Notes to Teachers

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Dinosaur School Notes to Teachers



Dear _____,

Hello! As you may know _____ is participating in Dinosaur School. This curriculum has been extensively evaluated and has been shown to promote positive peer social interactions between students, to increase cooperation with teachers, and to reduce verbal and physical aggression in the classroom. We will be using video examples, puppets, special activities, books, and games to teach students the important skills needed to make and keep friends and work well in the classroom. Two therapists meet with the children in small groups (5-6 students per group) each week for 2 hours. The program lasts approximately 20 weeks.

WHAT CHILDREN ARE PRACTICING AND LEARNING:

- Understanding school rules;
- How to do one's best in school;
- Understanding feelings in oneself and others;
- Effective problem solving;
- Anger management skills;
- Being friendly and working as a team member at home and at school;
- Using friendly talk to communicate ideas and feelings.

HOW WE WORK WITH TEACHERS: We will send you Dinosaur letters at the beginning of each new unit to let you know what emotional regulation and social skills we are teaching and practicing in Dinosaur School. We hope you will encourage the same skills at school with this student. We also would like to call you several times during the 20 weeks to coordinate individual behavior plans for this student. We would like the behavior goals we set in Dinosaur School to match those you have set for the classroom. Also, the students will have home activities to practice things he or she learns in Dinosaur School with parents at home. In this way we hope to encourage consistency in this child's behavioral goals between home and school.

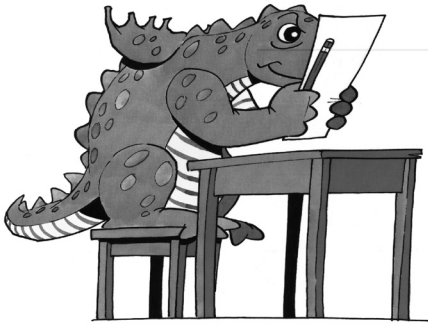
Please let us know if you have any questions about the program. We are looking forward to getting to know you and your student this year!

Our Dinosaur leaders are _____ and _____.

Please feel free to contact them at _____.

Sincerely,

(Letter #1, Introduction)



Dinosaur School Notes to Teachers

Iguanodon Unit How to be Successful in School

Hi!

In these units of Dinosaur School, we are teaching the students about behaviors to use to succeed in school.

Here are some of the things we are practicing with the children:

1. Listening to the teacher and following teacher's directions.
2. Working hard and ignoring distractions.
3. Raising a quiet hand to ask a question (and to wait patiently if the teacher is busy!).
4. Showing the teacher "five." This means - eyes on the teacher, ears open, hands in lap, feet on the floor, and mouth closed.
5. How to "STOP-LOOK-THINK-CHECK and concentrate" while doing school work.

The children are practicing all these behaviors with the puppets Wally, Molly, Dina Dinosaur (the program director!) and other puppet friends. They also watch DVDs of children listening, waiting for a turn, and paying attention to the teacher. Games are planned that help the children listen, follow directions, and wait for turns.

How Teachers Can Help: It will be immensely helpful if you could praise any of the following behaviors that you observe the student using:

- putting up a quiet hand
- listening and cooperating with your directions
- cooperating with school rules
- working quietly and staying on task
- waiting a turn

In addition to reinforcing these behaviors when they occur, we would appreciate it if you could **give the child a note or sticker** to indicate they have demonstrated this good behavior. Please give give this note to the child to bring to Dinosaur School where we will provide special recognition for this school accomplishment. Let us know if you would like to have some of our special reward cards or stickers to use.

A Further Tip: It can be very helpful to review the school rules with this student and ask him/her to demonstrate them for you. (e.g., keep hands to self or raise a quiet hand, etc.). This will provide a clear mental image of the behavior that is expected or the rule to be followed.

For questions you can reach us at _____.

Sincerely,

(Letter #2, Iguanodon)



Happy

Dinosaur School Notes to Teachers

Triceratops Unit: Detecting, Understanding And Talking About Feelings

Hi!

Right now in Dinosaur School we are talking about feelings. Helping children to express their own feelings and recognize feelings in other people is the beginning of learning emotional regulation and empathy for others!

Here are some things that we are doing in Dinosaur School right now:

1. Learning vocabulary for many different feelings: happy, sad, embarrassed, tired, angry, excited, proud, calm, relaxed, scared, patient and loved.
2. We also help children to look for other clues to let them know how others are feeling. For example, children are encouraged to identify feelings by looking at people's faces, listening to their voices, or by looking at their body language.
3. We are talking about things that make people feel different ways and to understand that people can have different feelings about the same event.
4. We play games to practice relaxation skills and to promote positive self-talk when feeling upset.

How Teachers Can Help:

- **Use "feeling talk" with the student.**

Label the student's *feelings*, particularly when s/he is happy, calm, proud, sad, or proud. Focus more on positive feelings than negative feelings. "You look proud you read that whole page."

- **Share your own positive feelings with the student.**

"I am pleased with how well you did that project."

Or, "I am enjoying playing with you."

- **Model your own positive coping thoughts.**

"I am frustrated, but I can calm down." Or, "I can be patient, it just takes practice."

- **Praise the student when s/he successfully manages negative feelings.**

"You are really staying calm, even though you didn't get a turn and are disappointed."

You can reach us at _____ if you have questions or want to learn more about what we are teaching in Dinosaur School. We'll be happy to talk with you.

Sincerely,

(Letter #3, Triceratops)



Dinosaur School Notes to Teachers

Triceratops Unit: Detecting, Understanding And Talking About Feelings

Hi!

We are still working on understanding feelings. This is a big job since there are so many different ways that people can feel!

Here are some things that we are talking about:

1. We are expanding the vocabulary children have for different feelings. They are practicing thinking of times when they have felt different ways.
2. We are also talking about how to change sad or bad feelings to happier ones. Everyone chooses a "happy" thought to think of when he or she is sad or anxious.
3. We are playing games to teach relaxation skills. These are especially good when children are feeling angry. Ask your student to show you how a "TENSE" Tin Man looks. Then have him/her show you what a "RELAXED" Raggedy Wally looks like.

How teachers can help:

- **Continue labeling positive feelings** such as happy, calm, relaxed, excited and proud.
- **Ask your students to show you their happy, sad or mad face.** Ask them to tell you a time when they felt that way.
- **Share** a time when you felt, happy or sad, or frustrated.
- **Encourage this student to use coping self-talk when frustrated,** such as, "I can do it. I can calm down, I can keep trying, I can take deep breaths."
- **Encourage the student to draw pictures or write about his or her feelings.**

For questions you can reach us at _____.

Sincerely,

(Letter #4, Triceratops)



Dinosaur School Notes to Teachers

Stegosaurus Unit: Learning How To Problem Solve—Steps #1, 2, 3

Hello!

This month in Dinosaur School we are learning to be Problem Solving Detectives! Children who use a variety of positive solutions when they play (such as sharing, taking turns, and asking for help) have more friends and are better liked by other children. This is a good start to succeeding in school and managing conflict in life! Our goal is to help the children learn and practice these positive solutions to common conflict situations.

Here are some of the things that we are teaching:

1 What is my problem ?

1. Children learn to recognize when they have a problem. We help the student to recognize that sad, angry or bad feelings usually means there is a problem.
2. Children learn the first problem solving steps to use when solving a problem:
 - Step #1. What is my problem?
 - Step # 2. What are some solutions?
 - Step # 3. What are some other solutions?
3. Some of the solutions we practice with the children are: IGNORING, SHARING, WAITING FOR A TURN, ASKING NICELY, SAYING "PLEASE DON'T," and GETTING AN ADULT TO HELP.
4. At this stage, we focus on helping children think of many solutions as possible to pretend problem situations (e.g., being teased or bullied, or left out). Before children can problem solve in "real life" they need lots of practice learning and using the solutions!

How teachers can help:

- **Help your student recognize problem feelings.** "You look (frustrated, angry) about . . ."
- **Help your student define or verbalize the problem.** "My problem is I want to play with the computer but someone else is using it."
- **Encourage** your student to think of as many solutions as possible. **Praise** the child's efforts and avoid being critical of his or her suggestions. Make your own suggestions if the child is stuck.
- **Pick a fair and safe solution to try** (ignoring, finding something else to do, taking turns etc.).
- **Praise their efforts to make good choices/solutions.**

Sincerely,

(Letter #5, Stegasaurus)



Dinosaur School Notes to Teachers

Stegosaurus Unit: Learning How To Problem Solve—Steps #1, 2, 3

Hi - We are still problem solving!

Problem Solving is a complicated process. We started by teaching the children how to recognize when they have a problem (feeling sad or mad) to solve. We taught them to brainstorm as many solutions as they could think of to lots of different kinds of problems. The children are still working on learning and practicing many new solutions. Here are some other things we are doing:

1. Children are learning to use the Solutions Detective Kit. This is a briefcase with pictures of all the solutions that we talk about. When children have a problem, they can look in the detective kit to see if there are good solutions to their problem. We also have these solution cards on a key chain that children can use if they have a problem on the playground.
2. We are starting to think about CONSEQUENCES of different solutions. We teach the children that consequences can have good outcomes or bad outcomes. We help the children think about their solutions according to three questions: (1) Is the solution safe? (2) Is the solution fair? and (3) Does the solution lead to good feelings?

How teachers can help:

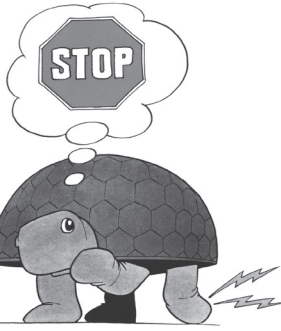
- For preschool children focus on helping them practice many different solutions to common conflict situations (e.g., waiting for a turn, asking politely, sharing).
- For school-age children encourage them not only to generate different solutions to problems but to think ahead to the possible consequences of different solutions.(i.e., whether the outcome will be fair, lead to good feelings or safe?)
- Reinforce the student any time you see him or her using any of the following solutions—*waiting for a turn, ignoring, sharing, asking for a turn politely, getting an adult to help, trading, doing something else, taking a deep breath, staying calm when a solution doesn't work, and apologizing.*

We are enclosing in this letter some sample stickers or reward cards which you may use to reinforce the child's problem solving efforts.

Remember: If the student is too emotionally dysregulated, problem solving will not be productive. Wait until the student is calm to talk about better solutions to a problem situation.

Sincerely,

(Letter #6, Stegasaurus)



Dinosaur School Notes to Teachers

Tyrannosaurus Rex Unit: Tiny Turtle Teaches Anger Management

Greetings! In this new unit of Dinosaur School, we are teaching about anger management. Sometimes children (and adults too) are too mad to be able to be good problem solvers. When that happens, it is important for children to learn how to calm down before they try to problem solve. The children meet a new puppet named Tiny Turtle, who teaches them a way to calm down!

Here are some things we are teaching and practicing:

1. When Tiny Turtle is angry he uses these steps to calm down: STOP! Take a deep breath. Go into his turtle shell. He thinks to himself, "I can do it. I can calm down." When he is calm, he comes out of his shell, and tries again!
2. We talk with children about how their body feels when they are angry (red face, hot feeling, tight muscles, rapid heart). Children learn these feelings are a clue that it is time to use Tiny's Secret.
3. We will practice using Tiny's secret many times. First with a big cardboard turtle shell, then finally with imaginary, invisible turtle shells that no one else can see.

How teachers can help when a child is frustrated or angry:

Step #1: Encourage the child to name the upset feeling.

Step #2: Prompt the child to say "STOP."

Step #3: Ask the child to take 3 deep breaths and say, "I can calm down."

Step #4: Coach children to go in their imaginary shells.

Step #5: When calm, encourage children to "try again" with a solution.

Remember to Model: Model using this "turtle technique" yourself for your students. For example, you have lost your car keys, you say, "I am so frustrated because I can't find my keys. Oh, well, I better go into my shell for awhile and calm down. Guess I'd better take some slow breaths. Well, I feel calmer. Now I can think about what I was doing when I lost them."

(see next page)

Reminder: If the student seems too angry to use the Turtle technique, s/he may need some time alone or a Time Out to calm down before s/he is able to listen to your prompts. Later when everyone is calm, you and your student can talk about the situation and practice Tiny's secret for next time. Remember, maintaining self control is difficult for most adults, but it is even more difficult for children!

Example:

Situation: Sally has been playing with her friend and having a lot of fun. Teacher says it's time to stop playing.

Teacher: I know you're having a lot of fun with Amy, but in five minutes we have to close down the computer.

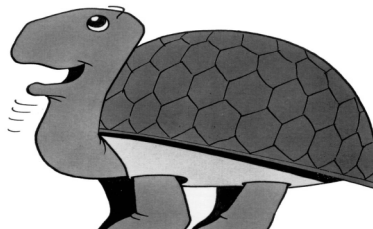
Sally: No fair, I want to keep playing.

[Amy and Sally resume playing for five minutes.]

Teacher: Okay, Sally, Stop the game now.

Sally: *[angry]* I don't want to go. (ignores teacher)

Teacher: You're frustrated and disappointed. I think this is a good time to think about Tiny Turtle. What should you do?



If the student calms down and takes big breaths, ^{Take a slow breath.} praise his/her efforts at self-control. If s/he refuses to comply, you may need to turn off the computer yourself and ignore the protests. Later you can talk about how to use a different solution.

Remember, first the child needs to learn how to get him/herself calmed down and only then can s/he think about what to do about the problem.

Sincerely,

(Letter #7, T-Rex)



Helping

Dinosaur School Notes to Teachers

Allosaurus Unit: Molly Teaches How to Be Friendly "Helping," "Sharing," "Teamwork"

Hi - we are starting another new unit!

Children who are highly aggressive, hyperactive and socially unskilled are not liked by their peers because they do not play well. Often times they have been rejected, left out of parties, and never asked to play by other children. These peer reactions compound their problems because they have less experiences interacting with other children.

In this unit we are practicing friendship skills such as:

1. Helping a friend do something that is difficult.
2. Sharing a book, project, or small group activity.
3. Saying "no" to wrong doing, bullying, or leaving someone out of a game.
4. Helping other children who are being bullied.
5. Talking about friendship problems and learning how to make and keep good friends (e.g., apologizing for mistakes).
6. Learning how to enter in and be part of a group or team (e.g., how to wait and then ask politely to join in a group).

How teachers can help:

- Praise the student whenever you notice s/he is sharing, helping or being a friendly towards other students.
- Coach student in the steps to entering a group by giving them the words to use (roleplay or practice doing this).
- Praise other children for playing with a child who has friendship difficulties and label the friendship act. "You two look like you are having fun together. Jamal is helping you, that is very friendly."
- Set up Compliment Circle time and ask each child to praise another child for something friendly they have done.

Write down or let us know about any positive examples of friendship behaviors you notice in the child.

Sincerely,

(Letter #8, Allosaurus)

Dinosaur School Notes to Teachers



Brachiosarus Unit: Molly Explains How to Talk With Friends

Hi! Our last unit is starting!

Many children have difficulty knowing what to say to get a conversation going and do not know how to give positive feedback. Training in conversational skills has been found to enhance a child's ability to make friends and get along with others. In this last unit, we teach children effective communication skills, such as how to speak up, make suggestions, ask questions, and listen well.

How teachers can help:

Praise and encourage the student whenever you see him/her doing any of the following behaviors with another person:

- listening or waiting to talk;
- taking turns talking;
- asking questions of a friend;
- telling or suggesting an idea to a friend;
- saying something positive to someone (praising others);
- introducing him/herself to someone;
- sharing something about him/herself with someone;
- inviting another child to join in play;
- saying thank you;
- agreeing with another child's idea;
- talking about a problem or a difficult feeling.

Thank you, teachers, for participating with us in implementing the Dinosaur

Curriculum. We feel teacher involvement and encouragement at school has made all the difference!

(Letter #9, Brachiosaurus)