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To: Superintendents of Schools with Prekindergarten Programs
Prekindergarten Program Contacts

From: Betsy Kenney, Supervisor of Education Programs

Subject: Guidelines for Supporting Toilet Learning

This memorandum responds to the many questions our office receives in regard to whether or not children must be toilet trained to attend a New York State-funded prekindergarten (Pre-K) or kindergarten program.

Must children be “toilet trained” to attend Pre-K or Kindergarten?

Children who are not toilet trained cannot be excluded from either Pre-K or kindergarten enrollment. The definitions of an “eligible child for New York State-funded Pre-K programs and for public school kindergarten are established in state law.

- The definition of an “eligible child for New York State-funded prekindergarten for four-year-olds requires that school districts must accept for enrollment any child who resides in the district and is four years of age on or before December 1st or otherwise first eligible to attend kindergarten the following school year.
- Similarly, an “eligible child” for State-funded prekindergarten for three-year-olds is defined as a child who is three years of age on or before December 1st or will otherwise be first eligible to attend a four-year old State-funded prekindergarten program the following school year.
- A child who is five years of age on or before December 1st is entitled to enrollment in the public school district in which he resides.
- The district does not have the authority to apply additional criteria, such as being toilet trained, as a condition of enrollment or attendance.

Toilet Learning

Toileting is a skill that must be learned by the child. It is not a skill that can be developed overnight. The district should include the family in development of a plan that supports the child using the toilet independently. Work with the family to establish vocabulary words and a routine that can be used consistently at both home and school.

Classroom Guidelines:

- Build bathroom times into the classroom schedule so a consistent routine is established while still allowing children to use the bathroom on an as needed basis, especially those who are being toilet trained.
- Check in with children who are being toilet trained frequently rather than depending on them to tell the adult. This will remind the child to use the toilet facilities before an accident occurs.
- Read books and have them available on the book shelf about toilet learning.
- Be encouraging to the child. When there is an accident talk to the child about what happened in a non-shameful way.
- Decide who will change the child when there is an accident so as not to disrupt the classroom routine.
- Provide praise and support for the child's efforts.

Sanitation and Safety:

- Child size toilets or modified toilet seats with step stools are recommended. Potty chairs are not recommended for use in a preschool classroom setting because sanitary handling of bodily fluids is difficult.
- For guidance on appropriate diapering and handwashing procedures, please refer to the local county health department or the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) if the prekindergarten program is provided in an OCFS licensed agency; or the school medical director/school nurse if the program is provided by a school.
- Equipment used for diaper changing needs to be appropriate to the size of the child. Diaper changing equipment (e.g. table or pad) should be cleaned after each use with approved green cleaners in accordance with school policy; or per OCFS guidance.
- Wet or dirty clothes should be placed in a plastic bag that can be sealed tightly and stored out of reach of children until sent home to be laundered. Rinsing children's clothing or laundering soiled clothing at school is discouraged because it provides an opportunity to contaminate hands and other surfaces.
- Each child should have one or more sets of extra clothes available. Parents may need to be reminded to send in a replacement set of clothing each time that the child has a toileting accident.

Web-site Resources:

Caring for Our Children Nationally Health and Safety Performance Standards, Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, 3rd Edition from the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education located at <http://cfoc.nrckids.org/StandardView/>

New York State Office of Children and Family Services Child Care Regulations located at: <http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/>

New York State Education Department Office of Facilities Planning
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/facplan/forms.html>

New York State Department of Health Handwashing Guidelines located at: <http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/handwashing.htm>

Books for Adults:

Stress-Free Potty Training: A Commonsense Guide to Finding the Right Approach for Your Child by: Sara Au

On Becoming Pottywise for Toddlers: A Developmental Readiness Approach to Potty Training by: Gary Ezzo & Robert Bucknam

Potty Training 1-2-3: What Works, How it Works, Why it Works by: Gary Ezzo & Anne Marie Ezzo

Books for Children:

Diapers Are Not Forever/Los Panales no son para siempre by: Elizabeth Verdick

The Potty Book for Boys by: Alyssa Satin Capucilli

The Potty Book for Girls by: Alyssa Satin Capucilli

Once Upon a Potty – Boy by: Alona Frankel

Once Upon a Potty- Girl by: Alona Frankel

Everyone Poops (My Body Science Series) by: Taro Gomi