

Biting Policy

Biting is a natural developmental stage that many children go through. It is usually a temporary phase that is most common between 13-30 months of age, although we have seen that children may repeat this phase later in their development if they have had difficulty with it as a toddler. Biting is often a way that children express themselves when they do not yet have the language to do so. Common causes of biting include: teething, excitement, over-stimulation, impulsiveness, lack of self-control, and frustration. Biting during this developmentally appropriate age usually is not an aggressive behavior with the intent to hurt.

That being said, the safety of all children is very important to all of us at Anchor ELA, and we also want children to learn that biting is not an acceptable form of communication. Our goal with these policies is to lay out our strategies to keep children safe, and to help children who bite learn to grow past this phase.

What happens when a bite occurs

- Anchor ELA staff work to stop any biting as quickly as possible.
- We separate the children immediately.
- We give love and comfort to the child who was bitten.
- If first aid is needed, we will wash any injuries with soap and water and/or apply an ice pack.
- We help the child who has bitten to calm down—this may involve a short time in the classroom's calm area.
- When the child who has bitten has calmed down, we encourage empathy by involving the biting child in the care of the bitten child.
- We notify both sets of parents of the incident via a ProCare note/report.
- We will maintain confidentiality for all children throughout the communication with parents.

Strategies to Eliminate Biting

- Encourage use of words—give children specific words to use to verbalize their feelings and needs.
- We redirect children to other appropriate sensory options. i.e.,- chewelry, straws, snacks, etc., with the children who need something to occupy their mouths a little more.
- Our classroom spaces are set up to have separated areas to divide up children to form smaller group sizes.
- We use social stories and lessons to teach children how to interact appropriately.
- We use visual reminders in the classroom.
- We may ask children to take a break to calm down and refocus – perhaps in a calm area, on a walk with a teacher, or to work with our support teacher for a bit.
- We do praise the child for using effective communication rather than for biting.
- We do not punish a child for biting. Natural consequences such as taking a calm-down break or having to talk through it with the teacher will occur, but this is not a punishment or beratement.

Repeated Biting Incidents

- If a certain child becomes a repetitive victim of biting, we work to keep specific focus on those children, and separate the children when needed.
- We look for any triggers that may be causing the biting to happen (i.e., A child is repetitively taking toys away from another child, who is in turn biting them because he/she does not have the communication skills to voice their frustration.) We proactively coach both children through the social situation.
- When biting has become a repeated issue (more than 3 times in one week), a meeting will be set up between the lead teacher and parents to discuss causes and a plan going forward.
- We will have open communication between families and teachers regarding these incidents.

Steps when biting becomes excessive:

1. If a child is having a very difficult day managing their emotions/stress/frustration and is repeatedly (more than 2 incidents in one day) biting children in the classroom, the parents will be asked to pick up their child. This allows the child who is biting to see the importance of appropriate communication/ways to use their mouths, as well as have an opportunity to regroup and try again the next day. It also is an effort to protect the other children and teachers in the classroom.
2. If a child inflicts 3 bites in a one-week period (5 weekdays) in which the skin of another child or staff is broken or bruised or the bite leaves a significant mark (significant=welt, bruise, and/or broken skin), a meeting will be held with the parents to discuss the child's behavior and how the behavior may be modified.
3. If the child again inflicts 3 bites in a one-week period (5 weekdays) in which the skin of another child or teacher is broken or bruised or the bite leaves a significant mark, the child will be suspended for 2 school days.
 - If a child, who has been through #1 and/or #2, goes 3 weeks (15 school days) without biting, we will go back to step one if the child bites again.
 - If we are not seeing any improvement in biting after all these steps have been taken, the teacher and administration may request that the parents enlist the help of a third-party: pediatrician, behavioral specialist, speech therapist, etc. If the parents refuse to seek additional help, expulsion may be necessary.

We want all of our parents to feel loved, cared for and supported if their little one is struggling through this phase, but we also want every parent to feel confident in the safety of their little one while in our care at Anchor ELA. We value our opportunity to help these little ones grow physically, emotionally, cognitively, and, most importantly, spiritually.

I understand and agree to abide by the Biting Policy of Anchor ELA as the parent/guardian.

(Name of Parent/Guardian - Print)

Date

(Parent/Guardian Signature)