

## Behaviour expectations

Developmentally the Penguin student is able to remember what happened at break and who was there (a bit) although most of the time they were only focused on what they and their friend were doing. This means that “the truth” can be difficult to glean as it can literally depend on their perspective and what they saw. Lying will often start to emerge as they try and protect their friendships, and anxiety over being “liked” becomes hugely important. Taking another perspective is only just developing and when stressed they need support from an adult to do this.

For example, the same instance can elicit both these statements as true:

James: *“She thumped me on the arm and grabbed the ball!”*

Jill: *“ We were just playing a game with the ball and I tagged him!”*

Therefore the teacher’s role is to facilitate empathetic listening and perspective-taking by asking questions and refocusing the roles the participants are taking.

Teacher: *“So did you ask him if he was playing a game?”*

Jill: *“No.”*

Teacher: *“If you had asked him what may have happened differently? Do you want to ask him if he was playing now?”*

Jill: *“Ok, were you playing?”*

James: *“No!!! I didn’t even know you guys were playing a game!”*

Teacher: *“Ok, so if James didn’t know you were playing a game it would have seemed like you were just thumping him. Do you want him to think that you would have thumped him?”*

Etc.

Conflict negotiation becomes very important at this developmental level as it is a very effective way for the students to learn to “step into another’s shoes” and empathise. The

negotiations are very teacher-led to make them fairly swift so that student's limited attention spans can stay focused for participation. The teacher must also ensure that everything is "fair" as an often-heard phrase at this level is "it's not fair!", meaning that it did not follow what they thought were the rules.

**"It's not fair! He wasn't following the rules!"**

a Rule-Oriented Penguin Student

## **Completing Focused Tasks**

Penguins are interested in learning about the rules of the "world" as presented by the teacher and their friends. Teachers often need to work one-on-one with students during this stage, if the topic is not a popular one with their friends. Once the child is removed from their friends they are usually more than happy to work on whatever they need to with the teacher or aide. OMNI projects (own choice projects) tend to always be small group plans or individual ones that "happen" to be just like their friends.

However, the bulk of learning happens in small groups or pairs. The teacher's role is to keep everyone on track and support the individual child to complete tasks to an ever improving level that fits their goals. This is often the first time that we start to hear the phrase "this is boring", which is secret Penguin code for "I am not sure how to do this." The Penguin learner is eager for feedback, wanting to know how to do it "right". The teacher needs to ensure that the classroom environment remains emotionally safe for students to share confusion or lack of understanding. Lots of enthusiasm and encouragement is heard from the teacher in the Penguin room:

*"Keep going you are almost done."*

*"I can't wait to see what you wrote."*

*"I am so impressed that you have got your work finished."*

This stage is desperate for feedback so the teacher has to give them a judgement response when they show their work otherwise they may assume you don't like it. This is the stage when as an adult giving feedback, you learn to own your response. This means that you are not saying "great work!" (an externalised judgement), rather you are saying "I love that you made that blue because I love blue!" (an internalised feeling-based judgement) followed by "How do you feel about it?". Sometimes this age

group will need to know some aspect of their work is incorrect. This is fine as long as we don't give it an arbitrary grade or mark that they cannot see how to improve. The Penguin is fine with knowing that they need to change something as long as they have the chance to get it "right".

## **Transitioning to Caring and Sharing**

The Penguin student is beginning to feel empathy, when looking to see the feelings on other people's faces or in learning to listen to their stories. The Penguin is just beginning to understand consequential thinking and to reflect on their choices. They are beginning to look for feedback and often need explicit help to understand the behaviour of others. Taking into account where they are in their development and the perspective we want them to move to (seeing the other's perspective as different to their own), the teacher's role is complex.

The Penguin teacher must focus experiences for this growth into thinking about others whilst helping the individual student to still hold onto their sense of self, rather than give it up to be accepted by others. This is a difficult balancing act and the ability of the student to begin to do this indicates their readiness to transition into the Otters.