

I Knew That!

Be the kind of person you want your students to be. If you don't live up to your own expectations and statements, the children can't develop the respect you want from them.

Don't give homework as a punishment. Homework should be a learning experience, hopefully one that the children will anticipate as an accomplishment.

Use purposeful, effective question techniques. Be sure to allow wait time of at least five seconds for a response.

Admit if you've made a mistake. Apologize if you've treated a student unfairly, then learn from the experience.

Keep your classroom cheerful and orderly. Allow space for students to move easily around the room as needed.

Make learning fun, interesting and relevant to students' lives. We all learn better when it's exciting or is immediately applicable.

Communicate often with parents. Encourage parent volunteers in your classroom. It can make a world of difference with student engagement and behavior.

Remember that each student is different. Each has different strengths, weaknesses and needs. Each learns differently and responds to encouragement differently.

Fulfill your responsibilities outside the classroom as well. Be a contributing member of the school faculty and teachers' association. Carry your share of extra duties and you'll receive recognition from your peers.

Principles of Effective Discipline

Treat students with dignity and respect. People who feel powerless will find ways to express their lack of power. For example, refusing to comply with directions, dominating others, etc.

Effective teaching reduces discipline problems. Be prepared and be organized.

It takes time to develop an effective discipline plan. Stick with your plan.

Often, we create our discipline problems by the way we treat people. Know what is acceptable for the grade level and expect students to behave accordingly.

Bored students become discipline problems. Children seek attention — some will endure negative attention if they don't get constructive attention.

Lack of self-esteem is the major reason why students act out. Seek and find ways to give authentic praise. Anything you can do to make students feel good about themselves will minimize discipline problems.

No one wants or likes to fail. A student would rather be deemed bad than seen as stupid. Look for ways to help children find success.

“We deny most students who need to learn responsibility by denying them the experience to HAVE responsibility.”

—“The Effective Teacher” by Harry Wong

Responding to Parent Concerns

Most parents care deeply about their children and how they are doing in school. And most parents are reasonable, respectful and cooperative when dealing with teachers. However, when problems arise, here are some helpful guidelines to follow:

Try not to be defensive. You share a common goal with parents — to help their children succeed in school. Try to approach every conversation with that in mind.

Handling unreasonable requests. Offer to try to work out something that all parties can agree to. For example, if a parent wants you to call them daily, you might say, “I’m sure that you’ll understand that with this number of students, I’m not able to do that. However, I do have a suggestion...”

Maintain confidentiality. Don’t mention students’ names in open settings such as the faculty workroom or lounge and never mention other students’ names or even the child’s social group to other parties. When talking to parents, discuss only their child and that child’s behavior.

Protect yourself. Keep a log of all parent contacts (telephone, email, personal contacts, notes, etc.) noting the date, time, place and what was discussed. Keep copies of all documents for an extended time, possibly years.

Praise students whenever possible. Contacting parents with positive performance lets parents know you care. If they have concerns, parents are more likely to be reasonable and open to alternatives to resolve perceived problems.

Rules...

An effective teacher has rules and consequences that govern student behavior. Do you?

General suggestions for stating rules. The language you use to state the rules is important!

- Direct students to do rather than don't. State your classroom rules in a positive way and use, "Be sure to..." in place of "Don't forget to..."
- Rules should be individual-specific, not group generalities. Avoid rules like, "The noise level of the class should never be louder than..."
- Keep rules short and simply stated.

Some rules always apply. No matter the subject area, grade level or location there are some rules that are always appropriate.

- Follow instructions.
- Always keep safety in mind.
- Wait to be called on before you speak.
- Treat everyone as you want to be treated.
- Know and abide by all of your schools' rules.

Be sure your rules are age appropriate. Elementary students require different rules than secondary students.

Examples of rules for elementary students:

- Complete the morning routine.
- Change tasks quickly and quietly.
- Eyes front when the teacher is talking.
- Keep hands, feet and objects to yourself.
- Stay in your seat unless you have permission to do otherwise.

Examples of rules for secondary students:

- Be in your seat when the bell rings.
- Bring all books and materials to class.
- Sit in your assigned seat daily.
- Items that are forbidden in class: cell phones, MP3 players, hats, sunglasses, personal grooming items, etc.

"The number one problem in the classroom is not discipline; it is the lack of procedures and routines."

—"The First Days of School" by Harry Wong

Stress Busters

Budget your time as you do your money. Create a school schedule that increases your productivity and maximizes learning opportunities for students. But always allow for some variance... you can't predict everything!

Don't procrastinate. Having something hanging over your head can cause more stress than the project is actually worth. Remember, "Once begun is half done."

Make an appointment with yourself and schedule some time for just YOU. A creative hobby, some exercise or even relaxed breathing will give you a chance to revive and recharge.

Leave your teaching at school. It's best to do schoolwork at school, but if you must lug something home, take only what you can do in the time you have. After allowing yourself a break, complete it as early in the evening as possible so you can relax.

Get plenty of sleep. Go to bed early if you are tired. Write down one or two concrete things you are going to do tomorrow and then turn the lights out on school.

Find a friend to be a trusted listener. Talking a problem out won't make it go away but it can relieve some tension. Talking through a problem can prompt new ways of managing it but be careful not to be a chronic complainer.

Observe good eating habits. Water is one of the most important nutrients we take in and lack of water contributes to poor memory, headache and weight gain. When possible, eat fresh foods, rather than processed, so your body takes in sufficient nutrients. When in stress, the body calls on calcium, potassium, iron, vitamins B and C and protein.

Let each day unfold. One study has shown that 40 percent of what people worry about never happens. Concern yourself only with the things you can control or affect.



Keys to A Good Classroom Environment

Be Friendly. Be the kind of person the children like and trust. Be firm, fair, friendly, courteous, enthusiastic, confident and keep your sense of humor.

Keep Your Classroom Organized. An orderly environment encourages orderly behavior. A cluttered and disorderly environment creates mental clutter and may encourage disruptive behavior.

Keep Rules Simple. Establish as few classroom rules as possible and keep them simple. All rules should fit on one chart paper. Have consequences for both positive and negative behavior.

Get to Know Your Students. Know more than just your students' names. Get to know their hobbies and pastimes, show interest in what excites them. You'll soon develop a sense for anticipating trouble before it begins.

Don't Use Threats to Enforce Discipline. Never humiliate a child — especially in front of peers; this may alienate everyone in the class. Use established consequences to enforce rules.

Avoid Arguing with a Student. Discussions about classwork are inevitable, but arguments can become emotional encounters.

Be Consistent. Enforce all rules, all the time. Children test for boundaries. Inconsistency leaves them in doubt and unsure about limits.

Let Students Know You Care. Determine jointly with the class what will be acceptable for both behavior and achievement. Similarly, let them know what is not acceptable. Show interest in what they say and involve them, when possible, in class decisions.

Working with Classroom Volunteers

Survey parents the first week. Send a note to parents outlining ways they can be helpful to you and students. Can they run off materials, correct papers, work with small groups or assist with bigger projects? Give examples of ways they could contribute; provide a checklist of volunteer options and include space for them to say when they are available.

Organize your resources. Make a card file of volunteers' contact information and what each is willing to do. Organize your groups, activities or special projects around the use of those volunteers. Many parents say they will volunteer but are never taken up on the offer. Not only do you send the message that parents aren't welcome in your classroom, you also miss out on some helpful assistance.

Establish routines. Establish a check-in procedure for volunteers which doesn't interrupt your teaching. Provide routine tasks that can be done easily by anyone at any time. Identify meaningful, routine tasks for volunteers who come regularly. They feel valued for what they are able to contribute and you have one less thing to do.

Train your volunteers. Take an hour or more and invite all of your volunteers to meet together and thank them for being involved in their child's education. Show them where to find materials, how to operate machines and where to put their belongings when in the classroom. Explain your expectations of them such as confidentiality, managing student behavior and punctuality.

Assign meaningful work. No one likes to have his or her time wasted. Always have something planned for volunteers to do. Parents don't want to do busywork, they need to feel they have helped you or a student.

30 Questions You Should Ask During the First Days of School

1. Where and how do I secure supplies (staplers, white board markers, paper, etc.)?
2. What are my responsibilities as far as inventory is concerned?
3. How do I check out regular and supplemental texts?
4. With whom should I consult as I make decisions on the use of supplemental materials?
5. How do I order videos, etc.?
6. What are the procedures for use of audio-visual equipment?
7. What machines are available for me to use — copiers, computers, tablets, etc.?
8. How do I make arrangements for my students to visit the media center?
9. What are the procedures for taking my classes to assemblies?
10. When am I responsible for locking my room?
11. What are the attendance accounting procedures for students and what are my responsibilities for attendance record keeping?
12. What are the grading guidelines for the school? What documentation must I provide?
13. Is there a computer grading program I should be using?
14. What student records must I maintain in cumulative folders?
15. What should I do if I must leave my room during class?
16. What should I do in case of a medical emergency in my classroom?
17. What are the procedures for crisis events such as fire, earthquake or lock-down?
18. What procedures should I follow for contacting parents by letter or phone call?
19. To whom do I report serious problems with a student's health or behavior?
20. How do I handle a fight among students?
21. How do I report a disciplinary problem?
22. What should I expect from a parent conference?
23. How do I arrange for a substitute?
24. How do I apply for personal, professional, vacation or sick leave?
25. Are there any unwritten rules for teachers in my school?
26. Where do I go if I am having trouble?
27. When can I expect paychecks?
28. What is included in my health plan?
29. What should I be doing to prepare for my evaluations?
30. Who is my mentor? Who is my association rep? (Write in below)

Mentor's name and room number: _____

Association rep's name and room number: _____

Office phone number, in case of emergencies: _____

