POSITIVE CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

by

Jennifer E. Lopez

T-III, Dinalupihan Elementary School

Classroom behavior is one of the trickiest issues teachers face today. Disruptive behavior results in lost curriculum time and creates a classroom environment that is not always conducive to learning. One key to nipping behavior problems in the bud is to promote positive behavior before problems arise.

It probably won’t surprise you that classroom control/discipline is rated among the top four challenges teachers face in public schools today.

In fact, almost half the teachers polled said that discipline was a serious problem in their schools. Not surprisingly, when the public was polled the same issues, they ranked classroom control/discipline as the number one challenge.

Unfortunately, teachers face not only the challenge of managing their student’s behavior while teaching the curriculum. They also face many conflicting theories about how to manage it: logical consequences, behavior management and assertive discipline, to name just a few.

Of course, there is no one “correct” way to encourage positive classroom behavior. But if you begin with a good foundation, it is possible. Here are a few time-tested suggestions that can help you build that foundation.
THINK ABOUT YOUR APPROACH

Take some time to think about strategies you plan to use to encourage positive classroom behavior. Clarifying your strategies will make it easier for you to lead the class confidently and effectively.

VISUALIZE POSSIBLE CHALLENGES

Imagine possible classroom challenges and review your strategies for dealing with them. Having clear-cut strategies will keep you grounded when these challenges do arise.

MAKE YOUR EXPECTATIONS CLEAR FROM THE BEGINNING

Make sure that students know what you expect of them. The classroom rules you present should be positive, specific, and concise. You may wish to post them in the classroom or distribute them for students to sign. You should also spell out what will happen if students do not meet expectations.

MODEL POSITIVE BEHAVIOR

Occasionally, you may have to remind yourself to follow your own rules. For example, if you ask students not to drink beverages in class, refrain from keeping a cup of coffee or juice on your desk, even if you do not drink it during class.

ENCOURAGE, ENCOURAGE, ENCOURAGE

When you praise students who are excelling, don’t forget to encourage those who are trying, but struggling. These students often lack confidence and need more positive reinforcement.
SHOW RESPECT

Showing respect for your students includes listening to their needs and preserving their dignity. It also means living up to their expectations of you, such as greeting them at the beginning of class or returning corrected homework in a time fashion.

BE CONSISTENT

Be sure to address student behavior in a consistent manner. Be wary of shifting strategies when misbehavior occurs. To students, this may show a lack of decisiveness. Find a strategy you like and stick with it.

KEEP STUDENTS BUSY AND CHALLENGED

Busy children are far less likely to exhibit disruptive behavior. Be sure that students are working at appropriate levels; boredom and frustration often lead students’ acting out.

LISTEN TO STUDENTS SUGGESTION

When building your foundation, you may able to draw from students’ and other teachers’ past classroom experiences. Ask students to make suggestions about what should be expected of them and how misbehavior should be addressed. Students are often more responsive to rules they helped created.

Creating an environment in which students know and follow the rules is challenging, but not impossible. With a little patience and perseverance, you can lay a foundation for respecting and positive behavior in your classroom that lasts all year.