

Methods and Class Management: Tips on Discipline

First Question

Recall one of your teachers whom you consider a good disciplinarian. What were their behaviors or characteristics as you remember them.

Article

Whether you are a new teacher or one who is very experienced, you know that discipline or orderliness during a session is important so that both you and the students benefit from the time you spend together. This article describes ten things you can do to maintain discipline or good order.

1. Get Focused

Be sure you have the attention of everyone in your group before you start the session. Refrain from talking over the chatter of students, who are not paying attention. In most cases, students do not see that things are underway, and it is time to get to work. If you accept their inattention, they may think that it is permissible to talk while you are presenting information. To avoid this confusion, get everyone's attention before you begin. Wait and do not start until everyone has settled down. Silence on your part can be very effective. Some students may need a cue to focus on the session. For younger students, you might try saying something like, "1-2-3, eyes on me." A special sound, like a bell or triangle might be helpful. Some students might benefit from a visual cue, such as flickering lights.

2. Frame the Conversation

Uncertainty increases the level of anxiety in the group. Begin each class by telling the students exactly what will be happening. Provide a brief outline of what you and they will be doing during your time together.

3. Walk Around

When students are doing activities, move around the classroom. This will help you check on their progress. You will also become aware of students who do not understand the activity or who are distracted, and you will be able to assist them. Sitting and waiting for students to complete an activity encourages disorder.

4. Model the Behavior You Wish to See

“Values are caught, not taught.” Courteous, prompt, enthusiastic, patient, and organized teachers provide an example of what is expected through their own behavior. “Do as I say, not as I do” just invites confusion and a lack of motivation.

5. Organize the Environment

Adjust your classroom space as you plan your session. Have a place to do activities that is adequate for students to work and where they have access to materials needed. Create a prayer space with a prayer table and appropriate symbols. Be sure there is enough space for movement when your activities call for movement. This may mean configuring your space differently for different class sessions.

6. Be Positive

Use rules that describe the behaviors you want instead of giving

a list of “can-nots.” For example, say, “let’s walk in line down the hallway,” in place of “no-running in the hallways.” Instead of “no gum chewing,” use “leave gum at home.” Refer to your rules as expectations. Let your students know this is how you expect them to behave in your classroom. Always praise them when you see good behavior. Acknowledge it either verbally or with a gesture such as a nod, a smile, or a “thumbs up.” This will reinforce good behavior.

7. Confront Privately

Whenever there is a confrontation between a teacher and a student, there will be a winner and a loser. Obviously, you need to keep order and discipline within your group. In the long run, it is much better to deal with discipline issues privately than to cause a student to “lose face” in front of his or her friends. Do not make examples of students who cause difficulty.

8. Over-Plan

If students get bored, chaos can sometimes result as they find their own things to do. Plan more activities than you need just in case. You can also fill up any leftover time with a mini-lesson, such as the story of a Saint or the use of a pre-planned game of questions and answers modeled on a game show.

9. Be Consistent

Enforce your rules consistently. If one time you ignore misbehaviors and the next time you scold someone for the same infraction, students will lose respect for the rules. They need you to be consistent.

10. Make Rules Understandable

Students need clear, understandable rules. They should understand from the beginning what is and what is not acceptable. They also need to know ahead of time what the consequences are for breaking rules.

Reflection Questions

- Which of the ten suggestions will you incorporate easily into your classes?
- Create three or four “rules” that you think will enhance orderliness during your classes.