



# MANAGING YOUR CLASSROOM WITH LOVE

## Guiding Kids' Challenging Behaviors



Children come to us with different personalities, learning styles, life stories and needs. We want every child to have a positive experience in our class: to learn with their friends and to grow closer to Jesus. However, challenging behavior can get in the way of this goal. Here's some ways that you can help children succeed.

### **Start with your expectations – Are you teaching how God has designed kids to learn?**

- ◆ Know the characteristics of the age group you are teaching. This will help you know what you can expect from your kids.
- ◆ Kids are active learners – engage children in their learning and change things up frequently
- ◆ Kids learn in different ways – use a variety of teaching methods
- ◆ Kids want to learn – Use their inborn curiosity to capture and encourage their interest.
- ◆ Carefully consider competitive activities – for preteens competition can make the activity more engaging, but for many kids competition moves the focus away from the learning goal.
- ◆ Mitigate possible pitfalls. For instance, some kids struggle with reading or writing so keep this in mind when planning.
- ◆ Know that life happens. Kids may come in tired, hungry or over-stimulated.

### **Set the stage – Are you preparing the way for kids to be successful?**

- ◆ See your classroom from you students' point of view. What could potentially distract a student from learning?
  - Kids need a welcoming classroom, but also need one that is not overly stimulating.
  - Think about how your classroom is organized. Is there visual clutter? Are there items that could prove a temptation to busy fingers?
  - Consider putting the items for each activity in a tote or plastic storage box. This allows the item to be ready to go, without being a distractor during the preceding activities.
- ◆ Be ready when the first student arrives.
- ◆ Be thoroughly prepared. This will allow you to be ready to modify or adapt if needed.
- ◆ Remember your attitude and tone of voice speaks more loudly than your words.
- ◆ Love and accept each child. Discipline is most effective when it is done inside a nurturing relationship.
- ◆ Don't assume kids know where the boundaries are. Tell them what you expect.
- ◆ Consider a class covenant. Guide children to choose 4-6 guidelines that will help them stay safe and learn together. Write this up, have every child sign and post in the room.
- ◆ Be clear and consistent with consequences. Consequence should relate directly to the child's actions.
- ◆ Implement "talking" rules. Hand raising, or an object that signifies whose turn it is to speak, will allow all voices to be heard.
- ◆ Establish routines. Many kids need to know exactly what is happening and when to learn successfully. If routines need to be changed, explain this in advance.
- ◆ Be brief and specific when giving directions; break tasks into shorter segments.
- ◆ Plan transitions carefully. Tell kids in advance what is happening next.
- ◆ Provide limited choices. This puts the child in the position where they are choosing to learn and are guided to make a positive choice.





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### Reinforce positive behavior – How are you motivating your students?

- ◆ Make sure **every** child knows how special he/she is.
- ◆ Catch the child doing the right thing! Kids need our feedback as they grow in their understanding of what life in community looks like.
- ◆ Encourage class compliance by recognizing the students that are doing the right thing.
- ◆ Kids need to hear many, many more yeas than nays from us.

### Keeping things on track - Are you allowing children to own their own behavior?

- ◆ Monitor constantly. Many potential issues can be redirected before they cause a disruption.
- ◆ Move closer or put a hand on the shoulder. Many behaviors can be redirected without a word spoken.
- ◆ Use humor. Humor can disarm a situation before it gets out of control.
- ◆ Know what can be ignored. Attention can reinforce and even escalate behavior.
- ◆ Remind children what the expectations are. Use positive language.
- ◆ Do not compete with students. Use attention getting methods.
- ◆ Provide choices. This allows children to comply with expectations without the redirect becoming a power struggle.
- ◆ Allow kids time to comply and space to calm down.
- ◆ If a redirect is not effective and the child's behavior is distracting himself or others from learning, remove the child to a quiet place for a private conversation.
  - Gently get the student's attention (get on their eye level, speak quietly)
  - Remind the child how important he/she is to you.
  - Allow the child to express his/her view of the situation. Affirm how they are feeling.
  - Be clear in what the expectations are.
  - Provide strategies for success.
  - End with a positive.

