

Five Tips for Effective Discipline

By Michael Watters

1. Be prepared, be prepared, be prepared

The best way to avoid problems is to show students you are prepared. Plan activities for every minute of the day, and have backups in case your lesson doesn't take up all the class time. Be ready to begin when the bell rings. Part of preparation entails establishing classroom routines.

The first five minutes and the last five minutes of class are the most problematic if students don't have a task to keep them busy.

2. Build Relationships

Positive relationships are the basis of good discipline. Getting to know your students early and well is one way to ensure that discipline problems will be easily resolved.

Deal with individual students as much as possible. Ask each student how they are doing every day. When you build a relationship with your students you are comfortable handling discipline problems in one-on-one conferences. A conference rather than a confrontation gives you an opportunity to work things out without bringing it up in front of the whole class.

Building relationships with your students doesn't necessarily take a lot of time. Many teachers combine classroom routines with building student-teacher relationships.

3. Get the students involved

Student involvement in making class rules often gives them a feeling of ownership. It is important that rules are posted in a visible location and be sure the type is large enough to read from any place in the room.

Post only the most important non-negotiable rules and be sure that those rules cover the "big stuff."

4. Know school and district policies

When you come up against a tough discipline problem, you need to know the procedures for assigning detentions, sending students to the office and making parent contact.

Before the first day, read everything in the faculty handbook. Many problems can be avoided by knowing what the policies are in advance.

5. Keep trying

No matter what you do to prepare yourself, you will inevitably deal with a situation that seems too difficult to handle. Don't give up! Ask another teacher, your mentor, an administrator, the counselor, or the student's parents for help.

And don't worry. Sometimes solving a discipline problem is as simple as taking a step back to look at the problem. Everyone has bad days. Often you just need to regroup, refocus and get back out there.