

An AfterSchool Leadership Lesson

Effective Classroom Management

Classroom management and discipline are often misconstrued. Discipline is an important part of managing students in any learning environment. Discipline originates from the word *disciple*, which means to follow prescribed teachings. Management deals more with organizational structures. For children and youth to attain the qualities of good discipline (whatever that might mean to you), they must be taught. Effective classroom management involves both teaching and supervising (continuous checking for understanding). Daily organizational routines focused on guidelines that teach good behavior greatly reduce most management issues and challenges. Classroom management strategies combined with teaching and clearly defined structures help create a positive learning environment. What follows are some time honored strategies.

Know Your Students

Talk with them. Ask questions. Help them dream and learn communication skills and work habits that lead to positive accomplishment. You can't create a family or team concept in an afterschool program without allowing students to freely express themselves, help them get know each other, and permit them to openly interact with the staff. Establish time, routines, and activities that support appropriate sharing and bonding.

Encourage Participants to Help Develop Guidelines

The older students become, the more they understand what is expected from their own behavior as well as others. Most want to learn in a positive environment. They dislike the tension that a lack of structure creates. So, allow them to describe for each other what good behaviors should look, sound, and feel like, especially regarding their respect for self, others, property, and the learning environment.

Establish Consistent Routines

Program staff must work together from a set of common knowledge and expectations for managing students. Students will respond well in most settings

if they are provided with clear directions and consistently taught appropriate behaviors for listening, speaking, interacting, transitioning, respecting personal space – alone and in teams. It is the responsibility of the afterschool program site director to teach the details and expectations of management and supervision expectations to the staff, who in turn teach the students.

Set the Tone, Creatively

Creating a learning environment that is different from school, yet complementary to it, is challenging, especially when the program is housed in a school. Effective planning is essential, especially with the school's principal. There are many creative ways to structure learning environments, yet none attain effectiveness without the leader's vision and commitment to developing a positive workplace. A leader's positive attitude is essential.

Provide an Engaging Curriculum

Boredom is an indicator of ineffective management. You'd eventually act out if you were placed in a work climate with purposeless routines and lack of expectations. Everyone does better when they feel involved, respected, share a sense of belonging, have a voice, and recognize relevant challenges that have a clear purpose and meaning in their lives. Children and youth respond appropriately when they are properly engaged.

Celebrate Diversity

Conflicts may occur when teachers and students come from different cultural backgrounds. Definitions and expectations of appropriate discipline, behavior, and supervision are culturally influenced. Encourage open discussions of culturally responsive classroom management strategies. Recognize and celebrate students' cultural backgrounds. Commit to building a caring learning environment. Identify common understandings and goals. Calmly respond to adversity with a reinforcement of routines, structures, and expectations that are essential in a middle class learning environment – afterschool.

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