

Building Relationships in the Classroom

Practice these few basic, easily learned skills and soon the children in your class will begin to sense that you truly care for them.

NONVERBAL SKILLS:

- ❖ **Expression** – Greet each child with a big smile and a warm greeting – and don't let it be the last smile of the day!
- ❖ **Posture** – Sit at the student's eye level. Avoid hovering over children or moving mysteriously behind them. Join in the lesson activities whenever you can.
- ❖ **Touch** – Touching says, "I like you, you are worth-while." Look for appropriate ways to build contact with each child through touch. Be on guard to avoid any appearance of inappropriate touching.
- ❖ **Gestures** – Nod your head in response as a child talks with you. Lean forward to show interest. Make movements with an open hand. Include each child in the group with a broad sweep of the arms or indicate specific children with a wave or nod.

VERBAL SKILLS:

- ❖ **Accepting feelings** – This means listening deeply, sensing and "feeling" the child's real emotions, and then responding with honest empathy, even if not always with agreement. Say, "Kelly says she sometimes hits her brother when he takes her toys. Kelly, I know you must feel angry when you brother bothers your things." Then discuss the situation by asking, "What is something helpful to do when you brother or sister makes you angry? What advice does today's Bible memory verse give for a situation like that?"
- ❖ **Accepting Ideas** – Accepting children's helps them dare to think out loud. It provides freedom to ask questions or express thoughts, enabling children to expand their concepts.
- ❖ **Praise and encouragement** – All children (as well as adults) need to feel good about themselves and what they are accomplishing. The most precious gift we can give a child (short of leading him or her to Christ) is a realistic sense of worth and value.
- ❖ **Open questions** – Most teachers ask questions. However, questions that require on correct answer can be threatening to children. Open questions remove pressure by asking for opinion, feelings or ideas, not just facts.
- ❖ **Enabling directions** – Instead of always telling a child exactly what to do, pose a question that allows the child to decide on a course of action. Instead of saying, "Put the glue on the shelf," you can ask, "Where does the glue need to be put?" Enabling questions help a child develop responsibility for his or her own behavior, building feelings of success and value.

Tips for Effective Teaching

- ❖ **Learn all you can about the age group you will be teaching.** Begin to pray for God to prepare the hearts of those who will be your students.
- ❖ **Read the entire teacher's manual.** Note all the learning aims, activities, and schedules. Know exactly what you're doing in each day's session and how each element of your teaching fits in with that day's focus.
- ❖ **Guide the conversation in your classroom.** Listen as much as you talk and look for ways to involve your students in the lesson both verbally and actively.
- ❖ **Be prepared before each day begins.** Have all materials at hand, ready for use, so you can focus on the children and the learning that is taking place.
- ❖ **Know and use each child's name in positive, loving, affirming ways throughout the lesson.** Greet and dismiss each one with a personal word and appropriate touch, if possible.
- ❖ **Prevent Problems by Preparing:**
 - Your lesson, thoughtfully and prayerfully
 - The room, in orderly fashion
 - Supplies, enough for all students
 - Variety in program and activities
- ❖ **Deal with Problems that Arise by:**
 - Learning why there's a problem (home, school, handicap, or conviction of sin are some possibilities)
 - Talking to the Lord about the problem.
 - Showing Christian courtesy.
 - Remembering that some restlessness and indifference result from stages of mental and physical development.
 - Dealing fairly with all; showing no favorites.
 - Being firm in principles of conduct – keep your word.
 - Teaching by example and attitude reverence for God and His Word.
 - Remembering the value of a single soul – Christ died for the problem children, too!
 - Acting sympathetically.
 - Approving good behavior.
 - Seeking help from the VBS Director, if needed.
- ❖ **Steer Clear of:**
 - Assuming that a child who is as motionless as a vegetable is attentive and good.
 - Fearing that a wiggler or a giggler is getting nothing from the session.
 - Using sarcasm as a weapon of discipline.
 - Disciplining a student before others.
 - Giving up; it takes time and patience to overcome discipline problems.

Discipline in the Classroom

Preventing Unacceptable Behavior

- ❖ **Develop an atmosphere of love and acceptance.** Each child who enters your room needs to feel loved and wanted. Children long to feel that someone cares about them, that they matter. Sitting down and listening attentively to what a child has to say of kindly but firmly redirecting a child's out-of-bounds activity demonstrates your love and care in ways a child can understand.
- ❖ **Set realistic standards that can be enforced.** A child feels secure with limits. He or she needs to know what you expect. Establish a few basic rules from the start. Phrase the rules in a positive way whenever you can. Help children remember and observe the rules during their work and play. Give each child consistent and positive guidance. Find a middle ground between rigid authority and total permissiveness.
- ❖ **Recognize accomplishments and good behavior.** Look for ways to encourage all children. Problem children will always be recognized, but those who have already achieved a high degree of self-control will also need to be noticed. When children know they will receive attention for positive behavior, their display of disruptive behavior often diminishes.

Correcting Unacceptable Behavior

- ❖ **Deal with the problem individually.** Avoid embarrassing the child in front of friends. When possible, talk with him or her alone.
- ❖ **Have the child tell what he or she did.** Don't ask why the child behaved in that way. A "why" question merely invites the child to attempt to justify the offense. Deal only with the current situation. Do not bring up past offenses.
- ❖ **Be sure the child understands why the behavior is not acceptable.** Either ask the child to tell you why the action is a problem or offer a clear explanation of the reason you intervened. Phrase your explanation so the child can recognize that the problem is his or her own and that it results in a loss to both the individual and the group.
- ❖ **Redirect the child toward positive behavior.** Focus on good behavior. For example, ask, "Max, Can you think of a better thing you could have done?" Then help the child implement positive changes. As the child makes these changes, give honest and sincere encouragement to reward acceptable behavior.
- ❖ **Let the child experience the consequences of negative behavior.** Attempt to tie a child's actions to natural consequences. When materials are being misused, remove the materials from the child or remove the child from the materials. Let the child choose to correct the behavior voluntarily or to experience the appropriate result.

Dealing with Distracting Behavior

- ❖ **Signal a helper** to sit beside or behind the active child.
- ❖ **Simply state what the child is to do with his or her hands.** It is appropriate to tell the child what will happen if he or she continues to disturb.
- ❖ If the disturbing actions continue, **follow through and do exactly what you said you would do.**

- ❖ If more than one child is showing signs of restlessness, **realize that it's time to do something else.**
- ❖ If a child consistently misbehaves during activities, **remove the child from the scene of difficulty.**
- ❖ **Watch to determine what makes the child want to continue negative behavior.**
Sometime misbehavior is simply a bid for attention. Quite often a child would rather be punished (which is one kind of adult attention) than receive no attention at all.
- ❖ **Avoid repeated threats.**