

Discipline Guidelines

I. Maintaining a Positive Environment

- Maintaining a positive environment (classroom, practice, Sunday school, UMYF, etc.) will encourage good behavior by the students and improve the learning process. As the teacher or leader in the learning environment, you should seek to find the most positive way of speaking and working with the young people in your care.
- Keeping your voice on a level tone goes a long way in keeping the noise level in the classroom to an appropriate level. The louder you talk, the louder the noise level will be.
- Always find as many positive ways to acknowledge the students in your care as possible.
- No physical punishment or verbal abuse, e.g., ridicule, are to be used at any time.

II. Appropriate Discipline

A well-designed and managed program contributes to good behavior by:

- limiting the number of children in a classroom
- having adequate staff
- discouraging competition
- encouraging children to express feelings, and to be empathetic
- developing and discussing rules of conduct

The purpose for setting disciplinary guidelines is to enable children to develop internal control mechanisms that foster growth and promote societal values. Children must be trained in basic rules of conduct.

Discipline Plan

1. If a child or youth is behaving inappropriately, the leader or worker will tell the child specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state the expected behavior, e.g., "We do not throw blocks. We use blocks for building."
2. If measure #1 is not effective, the child or youth will be guided to another activity.
3. If the inappropriate behavior continues, the child or youth may be placed at a table to work alone away from the other students.
4. If the child or youth's disruptive behavior continues after these steps have been taken, the child or youth may be taken to the supervising program director or pastor for a conversation or to contact the parents. If isolating the child or youth within the classroom or removal from the room becomes necessary, the situation should be discussed with the parents or guardian as soon as possible.

III. Age-Level Characteristics

Ages 3-6

Moral Development: Preschoolers are very “me-oriented.” They are the center of their own worlds. Their entire view of right and wrong – along with their faith – is based upon what influential models (such as parents and teachers) tell them.

Cognitive Level: Preschoolers’ play is symbolic of real life.

Ages 6-8

- Moral Development: For younger children, the moral code is “an eye for an eye.” If they are pinched, they pinch back. Personal values are rooted in a “law and order” approach. Things that benefit young children are almost always seen as right, whereas harmful things are almost always viewed as wrong. The world, like their faith, is black and white.
- Cognitive Level: Young children think in concrete terms about the ideas and concepts they are learning. They need help understanding symbolic or abstract ideas.

Ages 9-12

- Moral Development: Children at this age begin to see shades of gray in their world. They question authority more and understand that individual values can impact the lives of others. They also begin to understand that doing “wrong things” means more than just “getting into trouble” or facing punishment from parents or teachers. Faith becomes a working, personal faith.
- Cognitive Level: Older children continue to think in concrete terms, although by the end of childhood they can more readily understand abstract concepts.

Ages 13-15

- Moral Development: Adolescence is a time of accelerated moral development. Youth begin to face complex moral questions. Often they feel a great deal of struggle between what their family has taught and what peers are telling them. A strong sense of right and wrong develops, but deciding which to do puts them in constant dilemmas. Youth of this age are vulnerable to predators because they are so willing to follow those who will affirm them. Status and self-identity in relation to peer groups are major issues.
- Cognitive Development: At this age youth begin to think in more abstract terms and the desire to explore concepts and ideas accelerates. Questioning of concepts and ideals is common.

Ages 16-18

- Moral Development: These years see the continued struggle between the moral codes learned in childhood and the moral codes of the peer group. Rebellion can lead to choices that place these youth in serious circumstances.
- Cognitive Development: The ability to think abstractly is strong, though sometimes set aside to accommodate the peer group. Individual creativity blossoms with encouragement.

IV. Discipline While on Trips

For all programming which involves out-of-town travel or overnight stays, a covenant of conduct will be signed by all youth and adult volunteers.

Suggested Guidelines to Follow to Help Reinforce Positive Behavior:

1. Warning for first infraction, unless a major infraction.
2. Child or youth will be escorted for a time by an adult chaperone.
3. Child or youth will call home to conference with a parent.
4. Child or youth will be sent home at parent's expense.
5. Child or youth will not be allowed on next outing.