

Classroom Management Guidelines For

Teachers Of Elementary- Aged Children,

Capitol Hill Baptist Church

This is an article/letter created by the Children's Ministry Team at Capitol Hill Baptist Church for use by their teachers. Perhaps it will foster thoughtful conversation among your own team as to particular situations your teachers may face with the children they teach.

Dear Teachers,

Thank you so much for volunteering to teach our children! We have developed this tip sheet to give you some ideas about how to deal with common classroom management situations. We hope that it helps both you and your students to better learn about God and to love one another.

Child Protection Issues

Key Principles

- 1. No one adult should be alone with one child at any time.
- 2. When in doubt, call a hall monitor or parent.

Some Scenarios:

A Boy Needs to Go to the Bathroom

A male teacher or the hall monitor (always male) should accompany the boy and another boy of similar age to the bathroom. The adult stands outside the door and makes sure the children have washed their hands before returning to the classroom. If teacher leaves, hall monitor should be called to take place in classroom until their return.

A Girl Needs to Go to the Bathroom

A woman teacher takes the girl and another girl of similar age to the bathroom. Teacher stands outside the bathroom door and waits. Hall monitor takes teacher's place in their classroom until they return.

A Child Gets Badly Hurt, Significant Nosebleed, Throws Up, Etc.

Call for hall monitor to page parents. Write up incident on an injury report sheet. Inform parents when they pick up their child.

A Child Gets Slightly Hurt (A Cut Requiring a Band-aid)

Use the first aid kit to clean and cover any small wound. Write up incident on an injury report sheet. Inform parents when they pick up their child.

A Child's Parents Do Not Show Up to Pick up Their Child within 15 Minutes of the End of Session

Call for hall monitor's assistance in finding the children's parents. If the hall monitor is not reachable, send one teacher to find the child's parents or contact the Children's Ministry Administrator. Make sure that there are two teachers or certified children's workers with the remaining child as he waits for his parents to collect him.

Behavior Management

Key Principles

1. Children are Foolish by Nature

"Folly is bound up in the heart of a child," Proverbs 22:15

We can expect foolish behavior from children in the classroom.

1. Responding to Foolish Behavior is an Important Part of Our Teaching

Since we can expect foolish behavior, we can plan how to use foolishness to train children in biblical truths we hope they will learn from our lessons. Foolish behavior fills the pages of the Bible; and it often fills the lives of our children. Why? Because foolish behavior is the outworking of foolish, sinful hearts. We enjoy good behavior from our children because it makes our jobs as teachers easier and more effective. But, it is important to remember that our primary objective in all our teaching is to help the children learn about the Creator God, see their sinful, rebellious hearts, understand the consequences of their sin; and turn to Jesus as their Lord and Savior. We can use their foolish behavior and our teaching as opportunities to point out foolish behavior, its consequences and our need for a Savior. As you prepare your lesson, ask yourself: What foolish behavior do I see the people in this story exhibiting? What wise behavior? Do any of these behaviors look like the heart issues or actions of the children in my class? What

questions could I ask them to help them see these issues/actions and apply them to their lives? How could I point the children to their own heart issues and their own need of a Savior through this story and the issues/actions highlighted, as well as, of course, through any foolish classroom behaviors?

1. Training and Turning of Hearts and Actions

As we address foolish behavior in our classroom, it is important to think about how we change. Any kind of training takes time, even more so the training of behaviors overflowing from sinful hearts. Since children are by nature foolish, then we need to help train them in wise behavior, encourage them to turn away from it. We need to make sure they understand how they are to act (through learning classroom rules as well as through learning biblical truths in our lessons); as well as lead them to, see their sinful hearts, ask God for forgiveness and the Holy Spirit's help to change both their hearts and their actions. We need to be praying for the children during the week to this end. How important it is that we remember that changed behavior does not necessarily mean changed hearts! Changed hearts are a work of the Holy Spirit alone! We also should pray that God would make us gentle, wise and consistent in our training of the children.

1. Train and Turn Only with Great Compassion, Gentleness and Graciousness

Behavioral problems, especially with "repeat offenders", can be very frustrating. It is very, very important that we only train and turn with compassion, gentleness and mercy. Not only can this often help a situation more quickly resolve (cf. Proverbs 15:1 "A gentle answer turns away wrath and a harsh word stirs up anger."), but when we act and speak from a heart of compassion, gentleness and graciousness, we reflect our merciful and loving Father to the children. Pray that God would fill your heart with His mercy and love as you deal with any behavior issues. Then of course there's the work that God will do in our heart and lives as we ask Him to cultivate this attitude in ourselves.

Be aware of growing frustration on your part. If you feel that you cannot speak or act towards a child with the right attitude, it would be better to leave the situation to another teacher.

1. An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Correction

Out of Temptation's Way

When you become familiar with the children in your classroom, you will become aware of the things that typically tempt them. You may prevent many mishaps by looking over your lesson plans and classroom for situations, objects, etc. that will tend to draw out misbehavior and adjusting them accordingly. Do you have a group of especially wiggling children? Look for ways to add in more movement. Do you have some very competitive children? Change the games to be group cooperation games rather than team vs. team. Are there things in the room that regularly distract? Find a place to put them away.

Working as a Team

When one teacher is leading the teaching, the other teacher(s) should be actively looking for ways to facilitate focus and learning. This includes everything from noticing if the lead teacher needs a dry erase marker and bringing it to him, hold visuals, etc. to sitting next to a wiggly child, to quietly pulling aside a child who has a behavioral issue. Whenever possible, avoid the lead teacher interrupting his teaching to deal up with these issues. It will be distracting the other students and be more embarrassing to the student who is struggling.

1. We Serve the Children Best by Partnering with Their Parents

The Lord has primarily given parents the honor and challenge of nurturing and admonishing the children in our classroom. By gleaning from their knowledge and experiences of their children, we can learn how to best teach them and train them. By sharing with them both encouragements and concerns, we may be able to help them to better understand and shepherd their children.

Share Encouragements

Dismissal time can be a particularly wonderful time to share encouragements. Share signs of spiritual growth or turning away from tempting behaviors. Tell the parents what their child learned that day. If possible, make these encouragements with the child present. Even small comments make a big difference to a parent and a child. An encouraging email or a card to your children or parents can have an even greater impact.

Share Concerns

Dismissal time can also be a time to share lesser concerns (or give a brief behavior update for ongoing issues already addressed). However, since conversations about behavior concerns maybe bring up delicate issues and are usually better done out of earshot of child or other parents, a brief comment followed up by a conversation at a later time is often best. Sharing concerns about the children we teach can be difficult. Perhaps you are not a parent yourself and have little experience with behavioral issues except as you volunteer at church. Perhaps the child is new to the class or a visitor and you do not know the child or the parents. Perhaps you think you observe a serious problem. Perhaps the thought of talking to any parent, no matter how well you know them, is a terrifying thought. While you are right to humbly consider your shortcomings, we would encourage you to ask God to help you speak to the parents. Pray that He would give you the right words to say and that your words would be well-received. Use words that describe what you have observed of the child instead of those that make judgments about the child or the parents. Make sure to express your gratitude for the parents and the child and your desire to serve them. Feel free to talk to the Children's Ministry Administrator or the Pastor for Families about concerns you have either about the child or about speaking to parents. They are here to help you.

Obtain Insights

Since the parents spend most of the week with their children as we have them for an hour or two a week, it is easy to see how we can greatly benefit from their insights into their children. They very likely have already observed issues or giftings that we see in the children and can give us helpful tips in how to train the child or encourage the child. Their insights can help us teach the children better and often save lots of time in figuring out how to train them.

Pray!

Nothing is done well without prayer! We are God's servants and need His Holy Spirit to work in both our hearts and the hearts of our children and their parents. He delights in the praise of children. He gives parents their children as a good gift. And He gives us the opportunity to glorify Him in speaking words of truth and living that reflect Him. And, for a few hours each week, He gives us this opportunity to do before and to serve children and their parents. We

need His Spirit to be at work in us all. He is the One True Turner and Trainer of Hearts. He is the Shepherd who shepherds the parents and the children. He is the Giver of Wisdom and the Fruit of Love, Gentleness and Patience. Pray with the other teachers before class for both the instruction and the behavior and hearts of the children. Pray during class with the children, that God would be at work in you all. Pray after class, to thank God for how He answered your prayers and about insights into the children you received during the time. Take home your class list and pray for the children and parents during the week. Look ahead to the topic of the next week's lesson and begin to pray it for all of you. In conclusion: PRAY!

General Guidelines for Behavior Issues:

Children of Members and Regular Attenders

For many situations, training and turning might look like this:

Situation: Child Misbehaves in Front of Class

(disrespectful attitude, unwillingness to participate joyfully, unkind words or actions towards others, purpose distracting of others in class, etc.)

Make it private:

Teacher says to child: "Hearing you say that/seeing you act that way/etc makes me sad. Let's talk about this over here." Pull the child aside to a place where you can not be overheard by the

others. When at all possible, this should be handled by an assisting teacher to allow the lead teacher to continue to teach with as little as distraction as possible.

Help them to identify and understand the offense

Ask the child: "Why do you think I want to talk to you?"

If they respond with "I don't know", say "I'll give you a minute to think about it. I think you can figure it out." (Usually they can give a pretty good reason.)

Then ask them, "What is bad about the choice you made to....?" If necessary, you can point them back to the classroom rules.

If they respond with "I don't know", say "I'll give you a minute to think about it. I think you can figure it out." (Usually they can give a pretty good reason.)

Then ask them, "What is bad about the choice you made to....?" If necessary, you can point them back to the classroom rules.

Help them understand how their choice affected others with an "I" statement:

"It makes me sad/worried,/disappointed/etc to see Suzy get hurt when you tripped her.

Help them think about what they could have done differently

"Sounds like you were angry with Suzy for winning the game, etc. What could you have done

differently?"

Help them correct the behavior

"What should you do now, do you think?" Help them come up with a good plan.

Restore the relationship between you and the child; the child and others involved

"I think that's a very good idea. Can you tell me what you would say to Suzy? What you have decided to do/I think your idea to say sorry is a wise choice. It shows you want to make things right between you and her. That pleases me; and, even more importantly, that pleases God! Another important part of making things right with Suzy would be asking for her to forgive you. You could say something like, 'I'm sorry Suzy for pushing you. Will you please forgive me?' Would you like us to pray right now for God to help you? Would you like me to go with you when you talk to Suzy?"

Build upon the experience

As you see the child turn away from their behavior and restore the relationship with the other child, the teacher, etc., remember to tell the parents in front of the child how you saw them be trained and turn that day. Also, remember to look for opportunities the next session to praise the child quietly when you see them in a similar situation and they respond wisely-or at least MORE wisely!

The Child that Will Not be Trained and Turned

Sometimes a child refuses to change in a particular situation. Sometimes there is a pattern of behavior and heart issues that becomes apparent. In these cases, you need to be speaking to the parents about what you observe. Usually this can be done after the session during sign-out time. In extremely rare cases, you may need to call the hall monitor to page the parents

immediately. Be sensitive as to whether this is a conversation that should take place in the child's presence or not. As a guideline, one time issues may be best addressed with the child present, while patterns may be best addressed without the child. If in doubt, speak to the parents privately and they can decide whether to discuss the matter further with the child present.

General Guidelines for Behavior Issues:

Children of Visitors

How Visitors Are Different

Visitors are not familiar with the class rules and may come from non-Christian families. So much of our training and turning is based on knowledge of our families, our rules and the relationship we have with the children. Since little if any of these elements are in place with visitors, they must be treated differently. On the other hand, we do not want to let visitor's bad behavior set the tone for our class, be left unaddressed, and certainly not allow harm to either children or teachers. Sometimes this makes for a tricky balance.

Special Principles for Behavior Issues of Visitors

- Forbear as long as possible with behavioral issues of visitors
- Use positive reinforcement as much and as long as possible
- Try to give cues to a visiting child through a whispered comment rather than removing them for a conversation
 - Contact the parents through the hall monitor if the situation escalates and/or becomes unmanageable

Common Scenarios with Visitors

Lack of Cooperation in the Group

Give them two or three choices of things they can do, such as: sitting quietly, helping you, or taking part in the activity. Your goal is to help the visitor be obedient in a comfortable way (given their new setting), while maintaining focus to stay on the group activity.

Disrespectful Behavior or Speech

Instead of taking the child aside, have a teacher come along side the child and whisper to them: "That sounded pretty unkind/disrespectful, etc. Please don't say that/do that, etc." If behavior persists, then give the child a warning that they will not be able to stay in the class if they keep on doing that. Call the parents via the hall monitor and page system, if situation escalates to an unmanageable distraction.

If they change behavior, praise them, especially in front of their parents at the end of the session.

In Praise Factory: Older and Younger Children from the Same Family Want to Stay Together in the Same Small Group

Let the children stay together! Put them, if possible, in the group of the younger child. If the children visit consistently for three or four weeks, consider transitioning them to their own small groups. You can do this best by speaking to the parents privately at the end of a session, asking them how their children are enjoying the program. If they are still feeling pretty new, leave them together. If they seem to be happy and settled, tell the parents that you would love the children to be with their own age group so that they can establish closer friends with the other children their age. If parents are happy for this to happen, ask them if they would speak to their children about this. If the children seem ready after this conversation with their parents, then go ahead and split them. If not, wait a few more weeks and reassess. It works best to put the older child in the younger child's group, since frequently the younger child's transition is more difficult and the older child will want to be with their age group sooner.

When to Call the Parents:

For Children of Members and Visitors:

Here are some examples of behavior meriting the calling of parents, if repeated after warning.

- Talking back to the teacher in a disrespectful manner
- Temper tantrums or loud outbursts of crying
- Repeated refusal to cooperate with group activities (or in acceptable alternative, such as sitting quietly and watching)
- Cussing
- Making fun of another child
- Hitting, biting, kicking, or other violent behavior

In some cases, you may want to call the parents without waiting to see them repeated after warning. These would be rare, extreme cases in which you feel you or others are in fear or in danger; or, the behavior is so flagrant, unmanageable or extreme (especially in the case of violent behavior) that the situation must be immediately addressed.