



Freya Fan

Classroom Management **for** Elementary Teachers

• 15 Strategies •

To manage challenging behaviors and
create a responsive classroom

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT FOR ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

15 STRATEGIES TO MANAGE CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS
AND CREATE A RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM

FREYA FAN

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INTRODUCTION

“In learning you will teach, and in teaching you will learn.”

— PHIL COLLINS

Magic teachers ...

It sounds like a fanciful concept, doesn't it? But these beings are indeed real.

When these teachers walk into a classroom, the energy instantly shifts to one of excitement and anticipation. These teachers do not have to shout or fuss to be heard by the student group. Instead, they are able to have just as forceful (maybe even more so) of an impact with a soft voice, a warm smile, and their enthusiasm for teaching. These teachers can connect with the most “impossible” children and help set these misunderstood kids on the right path.

Without realizing it, you might have come into contact with a few magic teachers. They are the ones who greet students every day and check in on how each one in the classroom is doing, even outside that environment. They get kids animated about their interests, like sports, arts, music, even video games, activities that do not involve just academics. They hold class circles so that the students not only build a bond with them but also with their peers. They build trust with their students by correcting them in private and highlighting a better way forward rather than humiliating them in front of the rest of the student body.

These teachers are indeed a magical influence in their student's lives. But, what is perceived as magic comes from a place that is just as powerful but

easier to understand. It comes from a place of love.

Once you love your students and love the art of teaching, you, too, can be a magic teacher.

You are reading this book because you want to have that magical touch with your students. Perhaps you even recognize some of the qualities of a magic teacher in yourself but need help in cultivating it to its fullest potential. Perhaps there is a disconnect between you and the students in your classroom, and you want to bridge that gap. Perhaps, you are a new teacher who wants to start this career off on the best foot. Or, perhaps you are a seasoned professional who wants to reignite that spark. No matter what stage you are in your career, it is possible to develop yourself into a magic teacher.

It can seem impossible when feelings of frustration and helplessness outweigh the joy of being surrounded by the endless bundles of energy and inquisitiveness that you teach. Many elementary school teachers experience this rollercoaster of emotion. And if you have ever ...

- Worried about how you would handle an entire class of third-graders,
- Worried that you are not equipped to handle problems if they arise in your elementary level classroom,
- Felt like you need a new perspective on how to handle problems,
- Had difficulty carrying out lessons because of students with behavioral issues,
- Or felt like you need more elementary-approved methods of managing kids and their behaviors

... then I am sure that you can relate to these feelings.

The good news is that you do not have to remain stuck in this cycle of yo-yoing feelings. If you have ever struggled with managing your classroom, don't fret, as you are not alone. Every teacher (and yes, even magic teachers) experiences difficulty in managing their class at some point or the other. It's perfectly normal to find it challenging. You are, after all, dealing with small humans with their own thoughts, feelings, and challenges of their own.

But it's also entirely possible to manage your class and create a positive learning environment for your students, even when facing these challenges. This book was written to give you all the tools you need to develop a learning environment that is comfortable for both you and your students.

Imagine it ... a classroom that is safe and positive for all. A classroom where each one of your students is learning and happy to learn. Imagine yourself among them, the one who facilitates this happy learning environment. The one who addresses problems head-on with authority and patience. The one who is able to resolve conflict with as little fuss as possible. The teacher who is able to pinpoint difficult students and cater to their needs efficiently, so to get them back on track for their benefits and yours. Envision yourself as the teacher who is able to deal with the highs and lows that come with being an educator so that you can find enjoyment and fulfillment from this much-needed, if not undervalued, career. You are shaping the minds of future doctors, scientists, lawyers, and all other fields. You should be celebrated, appreciated, and comfortable while doing that, not stressed out and ready to pull your hair out at the roots.

This vision does not have to remain in your head. You can turn it into reality. In this guide, you will be given strategies for navigating difficult classrooms to find a healthy balance. The classroom management tips in the pages to come are helpful for both teachers new to the classroom, as well as seasoned educators.

Some of the key parts of classroom management will be tackled, such as managing your expectations and preparing for the school year, lesson planning mastery, and conflict resolution. In addition to this, the topics of how to foster a positive, communicative, and responsible classroom culture will be delved into.

I have worked closely with kids for a long time. I am also a proud momma. I have made it my mission to understand children and to speak a language that gets through to them. Just as they can be a ray of sunshine on an otherwise gloomy day, they can also be a handful, sometimes deliberately so.

I know that it can feel impossible to get your classroom in order sometimes. And because I understand those frustrations, I can also confidently tell you that there is hope for making your classroom a better learning space, a more constructive and upbeat one.

Because I know what it is like to feel helpless when working with kids, I have become passionate about helping other educators find peace and joy in their careers. I have worked with both kids and educators to develop methods for managing a classroom, without assuming a strictly disciplinarian personality. I have refined my classroom management style over the years to know what most often works and what doesn't. I do not want fellow educators to struggle unnecessarily, and so, among other pursuits, I have written this book to help other teachers find what works for them, and their students.

That said, the next step is gaining the necessary skills to create a winning classroom for you and your charges. The pages to come will equip you with these skills. Turn the page to learn how to manage any situation that can arise in your elementary class!

SETTING EXPECTATIONS FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR

A magic teacher is one who is friendly with his or her students yet firm in his or her command and authority of that environment. That delicate balance can only come from having expectations of the procedures and behaviors that are expected in the classroom. Without these expectations, everything will fall into chaos.

Your students will attempt to take control of this environment with negative behaviors that are not conducive to a good learning environment. Remember the age group of your students—five to ten years old. They are not adults. Nowhere near it. Therefore, there will be limitations to their self-control, how well they listen, and their attention span. All of this affects their capability of facilitating their learning experience. But that is where you step in as a magic teacher. You are the one who will guide things forward in a positive and effective way. You are the one who will run a tight ship that ensures the curriculum is followed and completed by the end of the year. And you will do all of this with a gentle smile and encouraging, uplifting words.

Before the school year begins and before you ever set foot in the physical location of your classroom, you need to set positive expectations of not only yourself but also of your students. These expectations are your compass, guiding the way to a great mental, emotional, and physical learning space for both teacher and student.

Think of your classroom as a jungle that you have dropped into unceremoniously. Without a map, you will feel lost and hopeless. You will not know which way to turn, and so you have no sense of direction on the way forward. You will be unable to steer clear of even obvious dangers

until you are right upon them. All around, this is a scenario that will not be enjoyable for you.

However, if you have a map, you can make the journey through the jungle an enjoyable one, even if it is uncertain. This map can guide you straight to the places that are helpful to you. That is the power of setting positive expectations from the jump. Even under the most uncertain circumstances, you will have a sense of direction that will guide your next step.

This chapter is dedicated to helping start on the right footing for creating magic in your classroom from day one of the school year. By the end of the chapter, you will learn:

- Why it is important to know what you expect from your students right from the start,
- How to create a plan to achieve these expectations,
- How you can work together with your students to create a positive classroom environment that emanates those expectations.

Positive expectations are what set the foundation for good magic to bloom in your classroom.

Let's jump right into how you can create the winning potion that sets the tone for the rest of the year.

WHAT ARE POSITIVE EXPECTATIONS?

Can you imagine if a teacher walked into the classroom every day with a somber expression and an attitude that did not encourage kids to do their best? Of course, that negative energy and attitude will transfer to the students in the classroom. No one would expect a good class year from that teacher, or his or her students.

The power of positive expectations is that they set the tone in your mind as the educator. Therefore, you are able to easily walk into a classroom with a smile and greet every student by name with encouraging words following. You are happy to come to class, because you have already mentally envisioned what that day, and year, will be like for you and your students.

That positive energy is sure to transfer to your students. They will smile and be happy to absorb the information that you will be imparting to them. That positivity will only become compounded when you verbally, and by other means, (which we will discuss in the coming pages) express those positive expectations to your students.

But we are getting a little bit ahead of ourselves ...

What exactly are positive expectations? Let's define that term now.

Positive expectations is a state of mental well-being where you house optimistic beliefs that you will truly connect with your students so that both you and your students can have a successful teaching experience. With such a mindset setting the tone for your teaching approach, no student is left behind, not even those who have been deemed the most difficult to handle or to impart knowledge by others. This mindset allows you to truly believe that every student will grow and benefit from your particular brand of

teaching. You design a mental space for success that is an eventuality, not something that you hope for.

Positive expectations are not things that reside only in your head, though. Belief is only the first step. You need to turn that belief into action so that it becomes a reality.

One of the best ways to manifest belief into reality is to write your positive expectations down. There is something truly magical about the written word, about seeing it with your own two eyes, feeling the way your pen moves against the paper, hearing the scratch of the pen against that writing template. You may even be able to smell the ink. All your senses become engaged when you write. So, it is like burning a promise onto the script of your mind. Seeing your beliefs written means that you are more likely to do what is necessary to ensure that the desired outcome comes to fruition. It sets the tone for you creating a plan that creates that reality.

I have been asked this question before: How will I, as an educator, know when my positive expectations have manifested into reality?

You might be wondering the same thing. The great news is that you do not have to guess. There are sure signs that your positive expectations have come to fruition. One of the first signs that you will notice is that the time and energy that you have put into teaching creates a positive environment. A positive environment is one where there are frequent smiles and where the participants engage with each other without hesitation or fear of judgment. Another sign is that your students are becoming more confident in the work that they present to you and how they express themselves to you. When people know what is expected of them, they have a surer footing of how they can proceed, and this incites a sense of security and confidence.

Other signs that you are manifesting positive expectations into real life include:

- There is a marked decrease in tension and stress in that environment.
- There is an increase in time spent on academics and a decrease in time spent on behavioral corrections.
- Students take more responsibility for their learning and behavior.
- Students are better able to monitor themselves.

But before you can notice the signs of positive expectation manifesting, you need to set the stage for that to be your reality. The following sections highlight strategies on how you can do so.

TIPS FOR SETTING EXPECTATIONS FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR TO CREATE A POSITIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING ENVIRONMENT

As an educator, you already know that most things do not happen by chance. There is a rhyme and reason behind most things. There is a process that moves a mental image into a plan, and thus, into reality. The same goes for the positive expectations that you are having of your students. Here are a few tips for creating a great plan for developing your positive expectations from mere beliefs into a powerful reality.

Tip #1: Invite Students to Participate in Their Learning Experience

One of the biggest roadblocks that students have in learning is that they do not feel a connection with the material. This is not just true for kids of elementary-school age. Even as adults we find it difficult to learn new material if it does not relate to us in a personal way.

For your positive expectations to be transformed into a magical classroom where both teacher and students are comfortable, you must remove that roadblock. You need to find creative ways of making your students feel personally connected with the material that is being taught to them.

Here are a few tactics for you to do just that:

1. Associate what you teach to ideologies that your students understand.

Ensure that the material you are teaching to these young minds is speaking to them. You always need to account for the age group that you are teaching. Break it down into a language that the particular age group understands, even if the subject matter is complex.

One of the best ways that you can do this is to think back on what you thought and did when you were that age. Times may be changing, but the way that kids of that age mentally process things and react has not changed that much. Use your own experiences as a child to make your class a more enriching experience for your students. Share pictures of yourself and share personal stories. Allow these kids to realize that you can relate to them, to the problems that they face, and the joys that they experience.

You can also invite other adults to guest speak to your students, to share their own experiences. This is especially useful if that guest speaker has some quality that the students will aspire to obtain for themselves. For example, having a fireman speak to your classroom shows them what hard work and dedication can lead to.

More ways that you can breakdown the curriculum into a way that your students easily mentally digest include:

- Incorporate dress-up and role-playing into your lessons.
- Bring real items into the classroom so that the children can use all of their senses to make positive associations between the things that you teach and real-life items and situations.
- Make use of case studies to show children how time-lapse can affect items and situations.

2. Use interests and what fascinates your elementary students.

You and your peers might not be interested in the latest video game, but your students might be. You and your friends might be baffled by the current dance moves trending, but your students might be highly invested. Of course, there will be a disparity between the age groups involved, but you need to keep abreast of what fascinates your student so that you can place it in your arsenal to first catch their attention then motivate them. This is a sure way to increase student engagement in the classroom and, therefore, a sure way to make your students meet your positive expectations.

The above point approaches meeting positive expectations on a classroom level, but you also need to drill down on these positive expectations on an individual, student level. While there might be general interests that pertain to most of the students in your class, each student is a unique person with different interests. For example, what might interest the introvert might be off-putting to the extrovert in your classroom. Make it a point to learn your students on an individual basis. Find out the intense interest of each to the best of your ability and use those fascinations to motivate and inspire.

3. Ensure that students feel like they have a choice in the learning experience.

Even adults hate having their choices restricted. We often struggle with this in the workplace and, therefore, it affects our productivity. We like to feel in control, and this also applies to the mindset of elementary students. Allow your students to feel like their voice matters in how you run the classroom.

Of course, you cannot always keep on consulting each individual student on how this is done, as this will be highly ineffective in time management. However, there are ways that you can make each child feel heard without the loss of time. Such a way includes creating student groups. This allows them to have discussions within themselves so that they can develop a cohesive contribution toward class discussions and areas where problem-solving is required. You get to decide how large these student groups are. Your class can be divided into half, into smaller teams, or even into pairs.

You can also use polls to get the students' opinions about how they prefer to work and activities that they prefer to take part in.

A final note on allowing students to contribute to class happenings is to ensure that the choices are restricted so that the desired outcome is always reached. You need to retain control of that classroom no matter what, even if your students feel a sense of empowerment by you allowing that freedom of choice.

4. Ensure that transitions between lessons and activities are interesting and fun for students.

Shifting focus in a class can really disrupt students' interest and attention. However, you can use that time to your advantage and infuse your lessons with more anticipation and fun by getting your students energized to learn more.

With kids, there are a few sure ways of taking the excitement up a notch so that your positive expectations become reality. These ways include doing an activity that gets them moving and grooving. A dance party, allowing them to challenge themselves with flexible activities, such as a crab walk and whole-body stretches, hosting an organized walk around the class, allowing the students to act out the parts of an energetic song ...

I could go on and on about the ways that you can get your children moving in a way that excites them and pulls their attention to you and your lesson. Just ensure that the time for this transition is not too long. You do not want this activity to have the opposite effect and overexcite your wards. Most times, all you need is just a few seconds of that fun engagement to have the desired effect. Use the energy developed in that transition to power the way through the next lesson or activity.

You can also use the power of music to make your transitions interesting to your classroom. There is no disputing the fact that music can motivate and empower us, even under the most stressful times. Use that to your advantage in your transitions.

I have mentioned using a song with actions in the tip above, but you can also make use of musical instruments to have the same effect. Banging on a tambourine or shaking maracas have a wonderfully invigorating effect. The kids can become musical instruments themselves by clapping or tapping their thighs.

Tip #2: Established a Positive Culture and Environment that Encourages Learning without Judgment

Learning under duress is not a situation where positivity and upliftment are encouraged. Far too many students feel threatened to perform well academically, even at such young ages. Therefore, this has the opposite

effect more often than not. These children become closed off, unreceptive to the learning experience, and do not absorb the material well.

For your positive expectations to be met, you need to go the opposite route and establish a culture that is judgment-free but still encouraging of good performance. This establishment is known as a “positive classroom culture.”

Positive classroom culture is one where students feel that they are able to contribute to learning freely. They are able to speak and offer their own opinions and ideas on the concepts being discussed. Students do not feel threatened and feel that the classroom is a space where correction is positive and constructive. This type of environment can only be established if there is no fear that the student will be mocked or publicly humiliated among their peers.

That is not to say that teachers do not enforce the rules or provide corrections. There will always be a need for correction. Otherwise, the students would not need your guidance in academics or behavior. Rather, in establishing this sort of environment, teachers focus on cultivating the students’ critical thinking skills, as well as their capabilities of self-discipline.

When students’ critical thinking skills are better developed, they work their way around problems and are better able to reach the correct conclusion on their own. Even when correction is provided, these students are better able to see where they went wrong and how they can reach the right conclusion better in the future.

Self-discipline is also necessary for cultivating the mindset needed to achieve academic success. Students need to realize that they are responsible and accountable for turning in their work, as well as doing that work based on the guidelines and rules set by you, the teacher.

To cultivate that sense of responsibility and accountability toward creating a classroom culture where all feel safe, happy, and productive, your students need to know exactly how they should behave. You need to make that clear for them. There should be no room for guessing.

One of the first things you can do to ensure this outcome is to have the classroom rules clearly displayed. You can go the simple route by writing this down on the blackboard. Sometimes simple works best. On the other hand, you can get more creative by creating charts that can be stuck on the wall or in any other place where students can view them and constantly be reminded of those rules.

It is also a great idea to let students know why these rules are necessary for developing a positive classroom environment for both you and them. Get their minds working and show them the rationale behind following these rules. Remember that you are cultivating a sense of independence and accountability in these young minds. Letting them know the whys and hows of these rules goes a long way in enforcing them, because it allows them to feel like it is their choice to obey the rules rather than something that is done simply because of your expectation.

Also, to ensure that the positive culture is created and remains, you need to be consistent about enforcing these rules. There should be a clear consequence for breaking these rules. These consequences need to be proportional to the rule broken. For example, giving three verbal warnings before sending the child to the “calming” corner, if the child speaks out of turn, is a great consequence that warrants the weight of the rule broken. That is followed up by taking some time away from designated class time, such as recess time, to listen unimpeded to what this child had to say but to also enforce that this child needs to obey the rule during class in a gentle way.

Most kids just want to be heard. Therefore, while it is a great idea to encourage raising their hands and waiting until they are called upon by the teacher, it is important that you look for the underlying issue that causes the undesired behavior.

If the consequence is too dire in relation to the rule broken, then you will instill a sense of fear in your students. This does not bode well in cultivating a culture of positivity. On the other hand, if the consequence is too light in relation to the rule broken, then students are unlikely to take you, or these rules, seriously.

Let the students know about these consequences in addition to the rules. Associate the rules with the consequences for disobedience immediately. When (and it is an eventuality) the rule is broken, be consistent in dishing out the consequence. Otherwise, you will find the incidents of breaking the rules increasing. Give them an inch, and they will take a mile. Also, inconsistency might cultivate the class mindset that you are showing favoritism toward certain students, which is never a good idea when you want to promote positivity in your classroom.

In addition to having clear consequences for breaking rules, you need to show your class that there are clear rewards for obeying them. Activate the reward center of the brain to motivate them to follow the rules and their peers will do the same. Also, you need to ensure that the reward is appropriately matched to the rule followed so that it carries the right amount of weight. For example, just as with the example of the consequence to the rule broken above, you can reward kids for waiting their turn to speak. This can be as simple as giving that child verbal praise at the moment.

Another key point in creating a positive classroom culture is to ensure that all your students feel like they have an important voice. In all environments,

there tend to be people who dominate conversations and interactions in a group setting. This is true for even elementary classrooms. Some of your students will be more outspoken and prone to raising their hands to offer answers. There are students who are not more forthcoming in speaking out and providing answers. Still, the voices of such students should not be stifled. Encourage outspokenness so that even your most quiet students feel empowered, like their voice, even as soft and as small as it is, matters.

This does not mean forcing your students to speak, however. Remember that you want to keep your classroom culture as non-threatening as possible. Forcing students to participate, especially shy and introverted students, can lead to the development of social anxiety. Verbally speaking to a class is not the only way that students can voice their opinion and thoughts. Be creative in enforcing a culture where every voice matters. For example, if you are dealing with a child who suffers from social anxiety, forcing that student to stand in front of the class and present to the others might not be the best idea. However, giving that student a voice through another means just might be the way forward. To illustrate, a student may be able to participate in the class by writing down his or her thoughts on a piece of paper or have a special notepad where he or she placed hard-to-express thoughts. Also, having alone time with you as the teacher, where he or she expresses his or her thoughts is an option. These solutions get the student comfortable making a contribution without putting that student too far out of their comfort zone.

If there is a situation where the kids must speak up in class (for example, for a class presentation), then allow the child time to prepare and practice what he or she has to say. This will allow shy or introverted students to process their thoughts at a pace that is more comfortable for them before they are expressed in a group setting.

Tip #3: Create a Positive Environment with Open Communication, Accountability, and Responsibility

I have mentioned the words responsibility and accountability in the previous section, but it really is necessary that you impress upon yourself that you cannot create this positive learning environment by yourself. If that were possible, then teachers all around the world would have a positive learning environment.

Students also play a big part in developing that positive learning environment. You need their help in ensuring that your positive expectations become a reality. Therefore, the onus is on you to make it as easy as possible for them to be responsible and accountable for developing that positive culture.

There are four main ways in which you can foster an environment that encourages accountability, responsibility, and open communication between you and your students. They are:

1. Create an environment where students feel that is safe to open up to you.
2. Encourage your students to voice concerns, ideas, and thoughts freely.
3. Actively listen to your students.
4. Provide positive feedback frequently.

Let's take a look at how you can leave each of these aspects in your classroom.

How to create a safe supportive environment where students feel encouraged to communicate with you.

Children are sensitive to the energy that other people project, even if they are not aware that they are projecting such energy. If you are sad, mad, happy, optimistic—any, all, and even more of—these emotions are projected in the way we communicate both verbally and nonverbally.

Without a word, you can turn a child off from ever speaking a word to you. On the other hand, without a word, you can also encourage the child to feel safe in your presence and to openly speak with you when they feel that the time is appropriate to do so. Obviously, you want to encourage the latter state of things. Luckily, this is something that you have quite a bit of control over.

The first thing you need to do is be aware of your emotional state before you step into your class. You cultivate a positive atmosphere in that space by being positive within yourself. Believe with every fiber of your being that you are going to make a positive difference in these kids' lives, every single day, and that is exactly what you will do.

I will be the best teacher that I can be today.

I am making a difference in these kids' lives.

I am becoming a better teacher every single day.

I am a competent teacher who treats my students with the respect and kindness that they deserve.

These are a few simple affirmations that you can repeat to yourself before you step into your classroom to cultivate positivity within your own mind. Achieving that positive mindset reflects in your behavior, the way that you speak and act toward your students. Only after you have been able to achieve a positive internal environment will you be able to extend that positive energy to the physical environment where you house your students. Only then will your students feel safe and supported by you. And it is

through those feelings that they will feel comfortable to open up and express themselves to you.

The more your students feel safe in your presence and supported by your professional advice, the more they will come to you when they struggle with their academics. Students will not always get it right, even those known as the brainier of the bunch. That is why your job as a teacher is so vital—to pave the way to academic success as the foundation to bigger, better things in life. And, of course, the more help they receive, the more likely they are to excel academically.

How to encourage your students to voice concerns, ideas, and thoughts freely.

When we feel like we have a say in something, we feel more invested to make that thing work. Think about it ... We vote because we think that our voice makes a difference in how our country is run. We do surveys and answer questionnaires because we believe that our opinion is useful in paving a way forward in making something better. There are endless scenarios where we participate because we believe that what we think makes a difference in the greater good.

This is not only true for adults. Children are more likely to want to participate in something when they feel that their voice and input have value. Fostering an environment where your students feel like they can come to you and openly communicate means that you need to encourage them to voice their ideas, concerns, and opinions. That can only happen if they believe that those ideas, concerns, and opinions are valued by you.

One way that you can encourage children to communicate with you is by not standing in front of the class while you teach. Move around the class and join students at their desks to discuss ideas and to ask opinions. Instead of making it a large group where children can feel that their voices are lost

in the majority, you can create that closeness between you and each of your students even while you teach the entire group.

Another way to encourage open communication between you and your students is to frequently ask questions. Do not just talk at your students but talk with them. Engage them when they are talking. Comment on their answer and invite further elaboration. The more the students answer questions, the more comfortable they become speaking with you. When they are comfortable, they are unlikely to notice that they are communicating with you freely. It becomes a seamless process.

Lastly, talk to the students about things that do not concern their academic performance. Build a repertoire where you get in the know about your students' lives outside of the classroom. When they see your interest in them as individuals, they are more likely to come to you as students.

Truly listening to what your students say makes a difference.

Do not let what your students say to you simply fly over your head when they do, indeed, feel comfortable enough to approach me with that open communication. Remember that what they say has value, and you should treat it as such. Far too many people listen to other people with an air to respond and give an answer rather than to truly understand what the other person is saying. This is even more true when adults are communicating with children. They far too often discredit what these children have to say without actually listening to the words and trying to comprehend what is being said. Giving them your undivided attention and listening ear really makes the difference in promoting an environment where positive learning is the norm and not the exception.

Active listening is also necessary for helping children perform well academically. For you to help them in the areas that they are weak, you need to understand what they truly do not understand. By actively listening,

you can better assist your students in getting the best educational experience that they can from you.

Ways that you can show your students that you are actively listening to them include:

- Not having side conversations while you are speaking with the student.
- Looking directly at the student while he or she speaks.
- Nodding occasionally to show that you are listening.
- Smiling and using other positive body languages to encourage expansion of what the student is saying.
- Keeping your posture open and inviting.
- Using small verbal cues, such as “yes, I understand” and “uh-huh” to encourage the student to continue talking.
- Paraphrasing what the student has said so far to show that you are following along.
- Asking the student to expand on certain points by asking questions, such as “What do you mean by ...?”
- Allowing the student to finish the point entirely before asking questions or providing feedback.

What it means to give positive feedback and how you can incorporate it into the daily activities in your classroom.

By nature, human beings are pessimistic creatures, and we tend to dwell on the negative rather than the positive. This is also true for when we provide feedback. It is rare to hear someone tell another person that they have done a good job, but we often hear criticisms when we feel that someone falls short of a task.

Do not let your students be a victim of this, because negative feedback can truly affect a person's self-esteem and sense of worth in a poor way, and you do not want to handicap your students in that way. Negative feedback in an academic environment can also have a detrimental effect on how your student performs. Such feedback often demoralizes students and, without the proper help, they will never get back on track with their academics.

Make it a point to specifically mention when your students perform well instead of focusing on negative academic performance or bad behaviors. Catch your students being good and point it out. Focusing on the positive encourages them to repeat that behavior.

Positive feedback has a far greater impact on students compared to negative feedback. Students who receive praise and acknowledgment of their good performance are more likely to be successful in the future completion of tasks and assignments. This praise also encourages open communication between students and between students and teachers. As a by-product, it allows students to become more confident in their abilities and more self-assured in their role in that environment.

Positive feedback is not a one-way street. It should be given both ways, and you should encourage your students to give you positive feedback, as well. In the same way that it can boost their confidence and morale, hearing that you are doing a good job from your students also serves to boost your confidence and allows you to know that what you are doing makes a positive difference and impact.

There is also another benefit to hearing positive feedback from your students. Asking their opinion on how your approach to teaching affects them allows you to finetune your teaching style to better get through to them.

Asking for their opinion in this capacity also aids in allowing them to feel that their voices are being heard, and it allows them to feel like they are contributing toward elevating the learning experience.

WHEN IT GOES WELL (OR NOT-SO-GREAT)

You want to be your students' confidant. You want to be your students' motivator. You want to be your students' inspiration. There are lots of roles that you must fulfill to be an effective elementary school teacher. That long list is a requirement for being a "magic teacher." Therefore, one of those roles must be that of the disciplinarian.

Rules are made to be obeyed, but you will find that they are often broken. To retain control of your classroom and to ensure that your positive expectations are met by the end of the school year, you need to make the how of not only creating class rules a priority but also how you will enforce those policies when inappropriate behavior eventually arises. And yes, it will arise, as there is no perfect child or perfect classroom. No matter how many tears are shed or how many tantrums are thrown, you must be able to stand firm in your resolve for enforcing those rules.

This chapter is about showing you how to hold on to the reins in a caring, gentle way that does not make your students feel controlled or abused ... all without losing your sanity in the process.

WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO BE A DISCIPLINARIAN AS A TEACHER

Disciplining kids ... This is a topic around which much controversy resides. Many people instinctively believe that discipline means using physical objects, and other extreme means, to assert dominance and control. Of course, the consequences of such means are always disastrous. However, that is far from the truth of what true discipline is all about. The described situation is not discipline. It is not abuse. Effective discipline does not equate to physical abuse. The two terms are not synonymous. Discipline does not equate to corporal punishment.

Now that we have addressed what discipline is not. Let's define what it truly is.

Formally defined, the word discipline means to train someone to follow a code of conduct by using corrective measures as a way to prevent disobedience to following the rules for that code of conduct. Breaking it down into an even simpler definition, discipline means to teach a particular skill or impart knowledge onto someone else with the use of limits for diverging from that skill or knowledge as a way of reinforcement. Discipline does not mean punishment or control. It is not about forcing a certain behavior or forcing children to obey rules. Rather, it is about positive and effective guidance and teaching of appropriate and acceptable behaviors so that these children can grow up to be emotionally mature, disciplined, and intelligent adults. When effectively used, discipline teaches children:

- To have respect for other people.

- To delay instant gratification for the greater good and greater rewards.
- To stay away from danger.
- To have greater control over one's self and learn self-discipline.
- To be more responsible.
- To develop a healthier conscience.

Discipline helps instill greater morals and values in children. Force does not need to be used for this to occur. Rather, the corrective measures used to prevent disobedient behaviors and to reinforce good behaviors are gentle, promoting good self-esteem, and helpful to children in elementary school.

While, of course, more extreme measures of reinforcing good behavior while preventing disobedience rules, like insults, raised voices, and verbal put-downs, can promote a certain type of behavior, they are also damaging to a person's psyche, self-confidence, and self-esteem. This makes these measures ineffective, and so they should not be used. This is because this is a form of punishment rather than a form of discipline. It is not your job, as an elementary school teacher, to punish students. Instead, it is your job to cultivate good mental and physical health while teaching. Discipline is part of that nurturing.

In fact, the criteria for discipline to be effective when used with children include:

1. Must be imparted by an adult with a positive bond to the child.

It would be frightening for a child to be disciplined by someone who does not have a positive bond with the child. Any form of discipline would be perceived as a threat or punishment. The child is likely to comply with the instructions of that discipline out of fear or blatantly disregard these instructions out of rebellion. Neither outcome is desirable. Therefore, it is

important that you only implement disciplinary measures after you have formed a positive bond with the children in your classroom.

2. Must be considered fair by the child.

It is important that you discuss the disciplinary measures that will be implemented with the students. Remember that you want your students to retain their voice, even when they need to be corrected for undesired behaviors. Therefore, it is important that the students not only understand the disciplinary measures that you will take in your classroom but also feel that they are fair when used in appropriate situations.

3. Must be appropriate for the developmental level of the child.

As it is important that students understand disciplinary measures and perceive them as fair, they must align with the developmental level of these children. It will only confuse elementary students if you use disciplinary measures that are appropriate for the high school level. In the same way, it would be ineffective if you use disciplinary measures that are effective at the toddler level. Ensure that your disciplinary measures are appropriate for the developmental level of the students in your class.

4. Must be consistent, realistic, and related to the behavior that needs to change or be encouraged.

In keeping with not confusing your students, you must align disciplinary measures with that behavior trying to be reinforced. You need to make it easy for the dots to connect in your students' heads. Disciplinary measures and behavior must align at all times.

In keeping with that theme, your disciplinary measures needed to be reasonable and have limits. For example, sending a child to the calming corner for repeatedly speaking out of turn for a few minutes is a reasonable measure with a limit. On the other hand, sending a child to the calming

corner for an entire school day, or even half the day, is unrealistic and unreasonable.

Also, you need to avoid making threats and not actually acting on the disciplinary measures that you have promoted in your classroom. This will promote a culture where your disciplinary measures are not respected. Therefore, rules will continuously be broken.

5. Must be self-enhancing and ultimately lead to the child self-disciplining his or herself.

The desired behavior that you are promoting with discipline should not be something that continuously needs to be reinforced. It would be quite a headache for you to be running after students to perform the same behavior for an entire school year. Continuous reinforcement is ineffective for both students and teachers. Therefore, the ultimate goal of any form of discipline that you implement is so that the child will eventually pick up the behavior and correct his or herself without your intervention. As a result, the discipline used must make it easy for the child to do so.

TYPES OF EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE

As mentioned earlier, there is the negative and false connotation that discipline only involves corrective measures after an undesirable behavior has been performed by a student. Actually, there are several types of discipline that you can and must implement. Before I supply you with tips as to how you can apply effective discipline to meet the positive expectations that you have set, let's take a look at these different types of discipline.

Discipline Type #1 - Preventative Discipline

This type of disciplinary action involves establishing what the rules are. It is unreasonable to expect your students to follow a directive that they do not even know. Imagine this ... You have recently moved into a new part of town and want to enjoy getting to know the area better, so you go for a walk. Shortly after you start what you anticipated to be a relaxing activity, you are approached by a police officer and told that walking in that particular area is against the law. Even though there are no signs to support this law, you are forced to bear the consequences of breaking that rule. This consequence is the payment of a fine. Understandably, you feel slighted and think that this is highly unfair. Many other people would feel the same.

Of course, this is an extreme example. This is why we have so many signs posted on streets and in areas allotted for public usage—to prevent this. The same analogy applies to your classroom—the rules must be effectively displayed and communicated with your students for them to understand the desired behavior and, therefore, not diverge from that desired behavior. That is the power of using preventative discipline.

Applying effective preventative discipline does not only apply to a student and teacher level. It also needs to be applied on an administrative and parent level so that all parties involved align their actions to the same directive so that students do not get confused. Once all of these parties are aware and agree on the discipline to be enforced, then students can be reminded often in a positive way. Ideally, this will lead to the students self-correcting themselves after a certain point.

Qualities of preventative discipline include:

- The classroom rules must be displayed so that students can refer to them often. This display is also a way of subconsciously reminding the students of the desired behavior. Having the class rules posted on a chart, on the blackboard, or on a wall is an example of this. It is also a great idea to have these rules posted in multiple ways and in different areas of a classroom.
- The consequences of breaking the classroom rules should also be plainly displayed.
- Rewards for following these rules and displaying good behavior must also be clearly displayed. Having consequences helps students to steer clear of performing the undesired behavior. That does not necessarily mean that they will perform the desired behavior. However, having rewards helps steer them to performing that good behavior.
- The rules must also be verbally communicated to the students, and the teacher must take time to ensure that each student clearly understands what is expected of him or her.

Discipline Type #2 - Supportive Discipline

This type of disciplinary action is taken when classroom rules have been broken by students. It is about the enforcement of the consequences of rule-breaking or the reward of performing the desired behavior. The first step of this discipline implementation is the teacher's immediate reaction to either disruptive behavior or to good behavior in the students.

If their behavior is disruptive, then supportive discipline is about steering the students away from either committing the undesired behavior or repeating that behavior in the future. As a result, supportive discipline in this regard involves:

- Verbal warnings to address the fact that the behavior is being performed and is undesired.
- Nonverbal warnings to support the verbal warnings. Both types of warnings also remind students of the rules and the consequences of breaking the rules. Using silence and not proceeding with the class until the student stops the undesired behavior is an example of a nonverbal warning.
- Redirecting the student away from disruptive behavior and bringing his or her attention back toward the educational task at hand.

Applying supportive behavior when the desired behavior is achieved involves immediately bringing the fact that this behavior is being performed to the attention of the student and, if the setting is applicable, to the attention of the other students. Highlighting the fact that the student has to perform the desired behavior to the students reinforces that this is the behavior that aligns with the classroom rules. When behavior is pointed out to other students, you give these other students an example to follow, as well as something to aspire to in achieving the same reward that is being given to that student.

Discipline Type #3 - Corrective Discipline

This type of discipline, is used when supporting disciplinary action does not help.

The steps involved when applying corrective discipline include first having verbal communication with the student. The student needs to understand that this behavior is undesirable and, as a result of not following the rules and not heeding warnings, more disciplinary action needs to be performed. This aids in allowing the student to not only understand the rules broken but to see the fairness in the actions that will follow.

It is best to have this verbal communication session away from the rest of the classroom, as to not embarrass the student. If the verbal communication is not getting through to the student at that particular moment, then other corrective behaviors that can be used include placing the student in timeout and making use of the calming corner, depending on the severity of the undesired behavior. If the student continues to be disruptive to the class, then removing the student from the classroom for a short period needs to be considered, as well.

A great example of effective corrective discipline that is gentle to a child's psyche is keeping the child in at recess time. This not only shows the child that the undesirable behavior led to a consequence that he or she does not desire, but it also gives you an opportunity to have one-on-one time with the child, to get to the root of the problem that led to that disrupted behavior. It also helps fortify the bond that you are building with this child so that he or she is able to see the fairness of the corrective behavior being implemented at that time. Applying disciplinary action should never come at the cost of the bond that you are building with your students.

Because administrators and parents are also involved in the disciplinary process, when it reaches a point where a corrective discipline needs to be

used, administration, the principal, and the parents of the students need to be informed of this bad behavior and perhaps a meeting needs to be scheduled to discuss further disciplinary action that will get the student back on the right course.

TIPS FOR APPLYING EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE IN YOUR ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

Luckily, you do not have to go in blind when applying these types of discipline in your classroom. The section of this chapter is dedicated to giving you tips as to how you can ensure that preventive discipline, supportive discipline, and corrective discipline are a normal par de course of your classroom. Of course, I will highlight how best to ensure that discipline does not need to reach a point where corrective discipline is the normal application. The aim is to ensure that preventative discipline is the predominant form of discipline in your class. The following tips are aidful in keeping that balance in your elementary classroom

Tip #4 - Introduce the Class Rules Early.

Waiting for the middle of the class year is a terrible time to introduce classroom rules. Even waiting for a week is a terrible way of implementing them. You need to establish the behavior that is expected from your students from the get-go. Therefore, the first day of school is a great time to let your students know what is expected of them. Establish good behaviors early on so that you are not unnecessarily spending time correcting bad behavior.

When introducing your classroom rules to your students, the first thing you need to do is ensure that this list is kept simply presented and explained. Use language that is appropriate for the age level in your class. Whenever things can be said in multiple ways, always choose the easiest way with words that are most simply understood. Ensure that your students understand what is expected of them with as little fuss as possible. If there is even the smallest amount of confusion as to how a behavior should be acted out, then students will have trouble practicing that desired behavior, and understandably so.

For example, instead of using refrain from the use of obscene language as a rule in your classroom at a six-year-old reading level, a simpler, more easily understood rule would be use nice words when talking to your teacher, classmates, and yourself.

You also do not want to overwhelm your students with the things that they should not do. Firstly, if they feel overwhelmed by rules, they will feel like they are walking on eggshells. That is not conducive to building a positive bond with your students. It does not make them feel safe or receptive to learning. Secondly, they will have issues remembering a plethora of rules.

Make it easy for students to remember what behavior is expected of them by keeping the number of rules in your class to a minimum. A good rule of thumb is that the number of rules should not be more than half the age of the students. Therefore, if you are teaching eight-year-olds, then you should try to keep four rules or less.

Also, never assume that your students should know certain rules. They come from diverse backgrounds and were raised in different types of households. As a result, what may come obvious to you and some other students might not be so obvious to others. Never leave it up to chance that your students know what you expect of them. Never hold your students to a standard in which you have not already communicated to them. Always make every expectation that you have in your classroom clear to your students from day one.

Finally, when introducing classroom rules, always, always, always use positive language. Do not tell your students what they should not do. That introduces a negative cloud over your classroom. Instead of raining on the parade of everyone involved, use positive language when discussing what behaviors are expected rather than what they are not expected to perform. The above rule about using nice words is an example of this. Another

example includes, instead of introducing the rule do not fight, the positive adaptation would be use healthy and safe touches toward each other.

To summarize the points in this tip, introducing rules to elementary classrooms entails:

- Keep it simple.
- Make the rules memorable for your students.
- Never assume your students know what is expected of them and state even the obvious rules.
- Use positive language.

Tip #5 - Create and Implement a Disciplinary Plan

As stated earlier, ensure that the introduction of class rules is done early on in the school year. If it cannot be done on the first day of school, ensure that it is done within the first few days of the first teaching week. The introduction of your classrooms cannot be done if you don't have a disciplinary plan in place. Prioritize this. If you do not, you will find that chaos is the rule of thumb in your class.

A good disciplinary plan has the following characteristics:

- Set up a system so that the students feel involved in the rule-making in the classroom. Get them involved in setting up posters. Get their feedback on how they feel about the rules you present to them. As much as possible, make it so they feel that they are the ones coming up with the rules rather than you. It makes them feel like their voices are being heard, and it also sets up the platform for them to agree to the desired behavior. The use of a behavior contract is a classic way of setting up rules, whereby each student agrees to align their behavior to those rules. The use of this behavior contract is a preventative disciplinary measure.
- Have a system for explicitly reinforcing the classroom rules. You cannot rely on stating the classroom rules to your students on the first day of class then leave it at that. Developing good behavior takes time and conditioning, and so you need to continuously teach your classroom rules to your students. That does not mean shoving these rules down their throat all the time. It means finding ways to gently communicate the rules and working them into your classroom sessions. A great way of doing this is developing a song about the current rules that you have in play. Role-playing to show

the desired behaviors in action is also a great way of teaching the good behaviors being taught to them.

- Again, have visual representations of the classroom rules by posting them in several areas in your classroom. This will help keep the rules fresh in the students' minds even when you are not discussing those rules with them. Also, it allows your students easy reference for any time that they are confused or need a gentle reminder. You can even consider printing copies so that the students can carry their own and be reminded of the rules even when out of the classroom setting.
- Encourage the talk of the rules so that it becomes as mundane as possible. Rules are not a taboo subject, and they should not be treated as such. Therefore, talk about the rules as often as possible while keeping it natural and get conversations going about how the children are adapting to these regulations. Get their thoughts, opinions, and feelings as to how they believe they are affected by these rules. You can do this one-on-one, with a group, or even with the whole class.

Also, kids need a reset sometimes. Even we, as adults, need a reset. Think of the times when you felt burnt out or when you felt a little lost as to how you were accomplishing your goals, and you will know the feeling. During these times of reset, we need to be reminded of the direction that we are going. The same applies to the rules in elementary classrooms. Keep in mind that your kids need frequent resets, as no one is perfect, and they are constantly being bombarded with new information to learn and process, as their brains are still developing. Having frequent discussions about the rules is one such way that they are reminders during that reset process.

Finally, I want you to take away from this that the disciplinary plan is not set in stone. This plan does not have to be figured out entirely when you

start the new year. It can evolve and be added to as time goes by and your students become familiar with those that you have already presented to them.

As you become more familiar with the temperament of your classroom, and as you become more in tune with the needs of your students, you are likely to realize that there are rules missing. Keep your class running smoothly by adding, teaching, and posting more rules as the students become adaptive to those already in existence.

Tip #6 - Have a Plan for Dealing with Difficult Behaviors

No matter how solidly founded your preventive and supportive discipline is there will always be a time when you need to implement corrective discipline in the face of dealing with an extreme divergence of the rules by some students. You need to prepare for this. Trying to hide from it will not help you or the students.

While it can be extremely disheartening to deal with extreme behavior that does not align with the class rules, you need to always remain in control. That control is what will allow you to tackle these big problems with small steps. That control will allow you to keep your emotions in check so that the focus is helping the students rather than diffusing how you feel. That control is what will allow you the best possible chance of defusing the situation before it gets out of hand.

There is a common misconception that kids behave badly just because they are bad. As you are an elementary school teacher, you know differently. There is no such thing as a bad kid, and this applies even when they are behaving badly. There is always a reason why children persistently act out bad behaviors, even though they have been taught what good behavior looks like.

Think of yourself as the calm in a storm, and that storm is your classroom and the students in it. Your emotions need to remain calm so that you are the ground in force in that environment. Bad behaviors will only escalate in severity if you feel out of control, because if you feel out of control, then you are likely to act out of control. If you feel yourself losing your calm in that moment, use visualization techniques to picture yourself in a calm, soothing environment, such as at a still lake or on a tropical beach so that you maintain that outward appearance of calm that your students, including the disruptive part, can look to, to achieve the same state.

Once you feel yourself settle emotionally, then you can use your words and body language to infuse even more calming energy into the disruptive situation. Keep your voice gentle yet authoritative and matter-of-fact when you speak to the disruptive party. Use diffusing statements like “I hear you” and “thank you for sharing” if this child is verbally expressing himself or herself at that moment.

If your words are not getting through to that student, then silence is a great defusing tool. If the child is actively challenging you, use a ten-second count of silence to combat the situation. If the child continues to go on and on, then with this child out with your silence. Eventually, he or she will run out of steam, and then you can assert your authority and deal with the situation with the corrective disciplinary measures that you have outlined in your disciplinary plan.

This is another reason why it is so important to have a disciplinary plan—so that you know exactly how to react when situations like this arise, And have no doubt that they will arise.

One problem that many educators have is not striving to have a disciplinary plan. They are not consistent with sticking to the parameters that this plan sets for preventive, supportive, and corrective discipline. You need to be a

step ahead of your students at all times. You need to anticipate what they will think and do so that your disciplinary plan has an approach for all scenarios. Does this seem impossible? Maybe. But you are becoming a magic teacher—anything is possible with such a distinction.

Therefore, if there is a disruptive student whose behavior continues to escalate, you should already have a step-by-step plan on how you will approach this situation before it even arises. Students will always test the boundaries that you have set for them. This is not unique to your teaching environment. They will do this in any environment where the opportunity presents itself. That is simply part of the process of learning appropriate behaviors for that age group. Do not let this disrupt your internal calm. Look at it as part and parcel of your career, because it will be a reality no matter how many years that you teach for.

Every single year, without fail, you will get students who seem to take glee in pushing your buttons and testing to see what will happen if they break the rules. Even the child who is considered the best-behaved student will likely participate in this at least once. Look at this like an adventure, where there will be hills and valleys, ups and downs. Also, look at the bright side. Just as you will have to stick to implementing the consequences of rule-breaking, you will get the pleasure of dishing out rewards for when the rules are followed. Just as there will be disruptive behaviors, you will see good behaviors that align with the positive expectations that you have set for the school year. Either way, the key is to stick with your disciplinary plan. That means making students aware of its existence, your expectations of them in relation to that plan, and the consequences and rewards associated with the discipline. I cannot reiterate this enough.

Your disciplinary plan should also cater to the fact that you may need to consult with a special education teacher, if an emotional or behavioral disability is discovered as the cause of your student's undesirable behavior.

You are not a sole captain adrift on the ocean. At every opportunity, you should reach out to your colleagues for support when dealing with behavioral issues. Do not be afraid to seek out advice. No matter how seasoned you become as a teacher, new situations will always arise. You will not be able to deal with them on your own, no matter how well prepared you are. There is nothing wrong with looking for support. In fact, as a rule of thumb, you should at least speak with your colleagues regularly so you can learn from their experiences.

There may be times when undesired behavior becomes a physical threat to not only your body but the person or other students. As much as you love every single one of your students, that should never be tolerated. When such extreme behavior occurs, reach out to the school administration to get guidance. The priority then becomes keeping everyone safe and physically healthy.

Along those lines, you need to document everything that happens in terms of disciplining your students. Note the behaviors that have occurred and the measures of discipline that you have implemented in each case. This is especially pertinent in cases where corrective discipline needs to be used to intervene with undesirable behavior. This documentation is useful for administration to refer to when they are contacted in extreme cases. It also helps prove that you have used ethical measures to discipline your students. It is important that you protect your professional integrity at all times.

Documenting these items also helps you establish patterns of behaviors when trying to get to the root cause of the issue. How we behave communicates a lot to other people. Therefore, a child behaving badly is a form of communication that you need to pay heed to. There is something causing this to happen. There always is.

When the issue is out in the open, you can be proactive in designing a disciplinary plan that is suited to catering to the particular learning needs of that student. When the cause of bad behavior is not known, implementing corrective discipline may inadvertently lead to a worsening of this behavior.

Tip #7 - Avoid Punishing the Entire Class for the Behavior of One Student

“Peter pays for Paul” is a saying that you might have come across, but it is certainly not one that you want to apply in your classroom, as you would like your students to continue to safely and healthily form emotional bonds with you for the best learning experience. When applying corrective discipline, it is important that you apply the discipline only to the offending parties.

There are many stories of teachers who choose to apply corrective discipline to an entire class in relation to one or a few of the students acting out in a way that does not align with the rules of the classroom. Particular examples of this punishment include keeping the entire class in during recess or even deducting grades from every student. Perhaps this is done because the teacher cannot ascertain which students exactly committed the undesirable behavior. No matter the reasoning behind this, it is a terrible idea to punish an entire class for individual offences. It jeopardizes the teacher’s efforts to effectively manage that classroom and also sends a confusing message to students who are actively trying to follow the rules of the classroom and engage in desirable behavior. In addition, such a discipline technique encourages bullying, as students not guilty of the undesirable act can get angry at the offending parties and lash out in a hurtful manner. You do not want to create an atmosphere where students feel negative emotions toward one another and lash out at each other.

As all teachers know it is not all sunshine and rainbows, even when dealing with such sweet little angels. There will be times when kids will be screaming, work will not be done in a timely or orderly manner, and many other offences. It can seem like an easier task to simply punish the entire class, but I urge you to refrain from doing this. Collective punishment is not the way to go.

Rather, it is more beneficial to your class as an entirety, and even to the student engaging in the undesirable behavior, to isolate the particular offending student or students. Maintain your composure and do so in the same amicable manner that you teach your class with. Also, remember to use positive language throughout. For example, if this student is disrupting the class by talking out of turn, instead of using negative language like, “Stop talking and disrupting other students!” you can instead use a positive language such as, “I noticed that you are talking out of turn. Do you have a question?” Another example would be to say, “Do you need help focusing?” instead of “Pay attention and stop fooling around while I am talking!”

This is a basic approach that allows you to immediately acknowledge the undesirable behavior while also applying discipline with a friendly disposition that does not damage your bond with either the offending student or the rest of the classroom.

The final key step to this is to ensure that you do not give the undesirable behavior too much attention so that it becomes the focus of the class. Address it, apply discipline, and move on as quickly as possible. If it is feasible, allow this to only last for a few seconds then continue with your teaching duties.

EMPATHY AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN CLASS

A classroom setting is one of the primary environments where children learn to socialize with other human beings. Of course, there are heartwarming times where they get along great. They share their toys and lunch with each other. They help each other get up when they fall and have an accident. They provides assistance to each other academically when one is not quite getting concepts. There really are lots of aw ... moments to take note of, if you take the time to look.

Unfortunately, there is also the flip side of the coin where they do not get along well. They do not share and instead claim ownership over things that are not their own. They do not help each other if they fall and, in fact, they may be the cause of one another taking that tumble. They may shout at each other and say naughty words in the process. They may be deliberately hurtful to one another. There are all sorts of similar situations that definitely straddle the other side of the fence of an aw ... moment. A cringe moment may be a more apt description.

Despite the look of it, these moments of conflict are not disheartening situations, however. Instead, they are moments of opportunity.

All of the examples listed above are that of conflicts. Conflict is a normal part of human interactions. Therefore, having conflict in a classroom setting is a perfect time to teach students conflict resolution skills.

We see conflict in almost everything in our daily lives. It is there in the interactions between colleagues, friends, family members, and even strangers on the streets. We see more extreme examples of it in global wars and misunderstandings. On a more individual level, it even exists within ourselves.

Conflict is not the problem, however. It is the way that we handle conflict that often leads to misunderstandings and strife. People are unable to handle the emotions that conflict can generate. Therefore, they tend to strike out against other human beings in a way that does not effectively handle that conflict.

However, if we were to teach our children better ways to handle their emotions in the face of conflict, the problems that we face as adults would not exist. We would hurt each other a lot less, and peaceful existence between people would be more normalized rather than the exception to the rule.

As we can see, your job as a magic teacher far exceeds just your classroom. Your students need you for more than just one year where they will sit at their desks in front of you. You are setting up the foundation of emotionally stable future adults. As a result, good conflict management skills are those that you need to instill in them from that young age.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION AT AN ELEMENTARY LEVEL

Your students are people, as well, and so they will have different backgrounds, opinions, feelings, thoughts, and the like ... just like adults do. Rather than trying to avoid conflict (a task that can be likened to trying to tame the wind), you need to be instrumental in helping your students learn to manage conflict.

Conflict management, also known as conflict resolution, is the skill of addressing disagreements between people in a peaceful, understanding way that diffuses the situations rather than allowing the escalation of emotions that can lead to further disagreement. This skill allows for solving interpersonal problems in a healthy way, and it is necessary for your students to learn, as it affects their academic, social, and home life.

One of the first steps necessary for developing good conflict management skills is teaching your students what conflict is. There are a variety of ways you can do this. You can incorporate storytelling so that they learn to recognize it in the interactions between themselves, the other students, and you as their teacher. Also, Role-playing is another option that allows you to give them this display.

From these depictions, students will develop an understanding of how conflict can negatively affect the relationship between them and their peers, as well as between them and adults in their lives. From this understanding, the students can grow to appreciate how other people feel when faced with conflict. They learn to not only approach conflict resolution from the standpoint of how they feel, but they also learn to put themselves in other people's shoes.

HOW EMPATHY RELATES TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The ability to put yourself in another person's shoes and understand their emotions is known as empathy, which is important in conflict resolution. Empathy does not mean changing your own thoughts, opinions, feelings, or values to accommodate another person. It simply highlights that the disagreement affects more than one party, and therefore, a peaceful resolution that allows compromise for both of these parties is necessary.

Empathy is not something that we naturally accumulate with age. It is a learned skill, and so you should not be discouraged if you notice that several of your students do not show high levels of empathy. Most people do not develop deep empathy until approximately ten years of age. Part of your job, as an educator, is to help your students reach that higher level of empathy.

The first step in teaching a child to be more empathetic to his or her peers is nurturing the understanding that this child is a separate individual with his or her own thoughts, feelings, and opinions. The child needs to understand that it is perfectly fine for him or her to have heightened emotions when involved in a disagreement with another person. It is only then that this child can learn to control his or her emotions so that he or she does not just lash out in the face of conflict. It is only through getting in touch with his or her feelings that the child can relate to the person that he or she is disagreeing, that they have their own thoughts, feelings, and opinions. This awareness will allow the child to appreciate that there are common feelings that he or she shares with the other students in the classroom.

Allow the students to become familiar with common emotions, like disappointment, anger, surprise, happiness, and all the emotions on the spectrum. Point out these emotions in other people. Read stories to your

students that highlight how other people feel. Play movies or sing songs that highlight heightened emotions.

Always label emotions so that students are aptly able to identify them. As a reinforcement of this, allow your students to see how someone else shows empathy to the emotions that you are pointing out. You can use yourself as the perfect example of showing empathy. For example, if one of your students is angry or upset that another has taken an object from him or her, this is a perfect time to help the child identify the emotions that he or she is feeling then empathize with them. To highlight that you are showing empathy, use empathetic phrases such as:

- I understand how you feel.
- That does sound terrible.
- It sounds like you feel ...
- I think I get how you are feeling.
- So, you are feeling ...?
- That would make me upset, too.

The list can go on and on.

This is an opportunity for you to be creative. Remember that communication is more than just the verbal aspect. Ensure that your body language is providing nonverbal cues of empathy, as well. A perfect nonverbal way to show that you are trying to place yourself in the child's shoes is by sitting next to him or her while he or she is telling the story rather than at your desk. This will allow the child to feel a sense of camaraderie and that you really do understand. Other ways of expressing empathy without saying a word include:

- Keep your posture open and inviting by looking directly at the child, keeping your palms open, and not crossing your arms.
- Use your eyebrows. Shifting your eyebrows up while allowing your forehead to crease slightly shows that you are concerned and that you care.
- Mirror this child's body language as a way of showing that you understand how he or she feels.
- Nod periodically while the child is talking.
- Give the child your full attention while he or she is speaking.

From the awareness of both personal feelings and the emotions of others, you can then introduce the idea to this child that he or she has a responsibility to aid in managing a conflict between him or her and other people.

Conflict involves more than one person, and so all parties involved need to play a part in resolving it. You need to teach your students that this is true whether or not they were the instigator. If the child was indeed the reason the problem arose, then this is an opportunity to develop this child's communication skills by admitting that he or she was wrong and apologizing in an effort to fix the mess. In this instance, students need to learn to use their words in a positive way to peacefully squash the conflict between them.

With the development of empathy in your students, you can then show that conflict can be managed in several ways. Apart from apologizing, such ways include:

- Ask for help from an adult, such as yourself.
- Do another activity apart from the one that is causing tension between the conflicting parties.

- Walk away from the conflicting situation.
- Compromise with the person with whom the conflict has arisen.
- Talk things out so that all parties understand the other's emotions.
- Say "no" and "stop" to stop the other party from proceeding further with the activity that is causing tension.

The development of empathy is one of the biggest benefits that can arise from having conflicts in the classroom. There are plenty of activities that you can partake in with your students to make them more empathetic with their classmates. Creative writing is one such way. You can ask your students to write down a story that highlights a conflicting situation and how the parties involved reach an amicable solution. For younger students, you can ask them to draw pictures that highlight the progress from the problem to the solution. Do encourage the students to share their stories by reading to them out loud or by passing them to other students so that they can learn from each other and see how other students may have approached the same problem in a different manner. This activity really allows the students to mentally marinate on how both parties might feel in whatever situation that they develop. Such an activity also allows you to hit two birds with one stone, as it develops high levels of empathy and conflict management skills in your students.

Another example of an activity that encourages the development of both empathy and conflict management skills is the creation of a problem-solving jar. There are some conflicts that will be a commonality in your classroom. Allow the students to brainstorm such potential conflicts that can arise in the classroom. Write these problems down on small pieces of paper and place them in the jar. Every so often, you can then make it a game to have students pick out a piece of paper, read the conflict out loud to the rest of the students, or to you, and then provide possible solutions to manage that particular situation.

TIPS FOR ENCOURAGING EMPATHY AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Unresolved conflict can cause the development of stress. When students are stressed, they become worried and uncomfortable about certain situations. The emotional and mental effects of stress are widely known and can lead to feelings of anger, frustration, and fear. There are also physical indicators of stress that include tummy aches and headaches. It can lead to the development of nervous habits, such as thumb-sucking, nose-picking, and fingernail-biting, as well. In more extreme cases, it can also lead to children becoming bullies and defying authoritative figures, such as teachers.

Dealing with such effects can affect a student's ability to learn, adapt, memorize, and behave in an appropriate manner. Not only that, but stress can lead to the development of mental health issues, such as anxiety disorders and depression.

Give your students the best possible chances of combat in the development of stress by implementing the following tips for encouraging empathy and conflict management.

Tip #8 - Become More Mindful to Become for Enhanced Empathy

Many adults have discovered the benefits of mindfulness and implement the practice in their life daily. Your students can benefit from the practice, as well, and it is especially useful in developing empathy and conflict resolution skills.

So, what is mindfulness exactly? Mindfulness is about slowing down and giving your attention to the present moment fully. This can seem like a fanciful notion, especially when we are based in a global society where we are continually rushing or juggling multiple tasks at one time. We are taught

to focus on multiple things at one time, and that is not a conducive mindset for actually appreciating what is going on in the present moment. Of course, multitasking may help in increasing your level of productivity, but sometimes this can be hazardous to your mental and emotional health, as it promotes stress and anxiety.

The same is true for elementary school students. They, too, can find it useful to slow down and appreciate the present moment.

The benefits of being mindful include:

- Increased attention span and better control of staying focused on a task for longer. Tackling tasks one at a time may actually help increase your powers of productivity, as it means you actually complete a task rather than jumping from one incomplete task to another.
- Being less distractible. An increased attention span means that a person's focus is less likely to wander from the task in front of him or her.
- Having increased control over one's emotions. Emotions typically come in a rush, especially when they are heightened. This makes them less likely to be controlled. But, when you are mindful, you can gain a more objective view of your emotions and are therefore more likely to control them rather than have them control you.
- Staying calm under stress. With better control over your emotions comes better control over handling stressful situations. This also means that you are better able to avoid the stress.
- Better active listening and communication skills. Slowing down and appreciating the moment also comes with an appreciation for people and a value of interpersonal interactions. Mindfulness increases your powers of observation and, therefore, you are better

able to note the nuances of communicating with other people both verbally and nonverbally. Overall, this means that you are able to get along with other people better.

- Feeling happier and better able to enjoy activities and movements. Rushing through life means that you are typically unable to take the time to appreciate and be happy in a moment. But, when you slow down to smell the roses, you are able to find happiness and joy in even the smallest things, such as the wind brushing against your cheek.

All of these benefits mean better overall performance in life for both adults and children. Increased powers of concentration and being less distractible is great for academic performance. This will certainly make your life as an educator a lot simpler.

As great as mindfulness sounds, I bet that you are wondering one thing at this point—how can mindfulness help with conflict resolution? I will get to that now.

Conflict often arises because of our own self-interest when a problem arises. We are focused on protecting our stance in whatever issue it is. Mindfulness helps take away that self-centered focus so that we observe our surroundings, and that includes other people near us with whom we might be in conflict.

For example, if two children are having a conflict on the playground because of whose turn it is to use the swing, the self-interest of both parties will keep them at a standstill, and no one will have a turn. However, if those children are more mindful, they are able to remove that level of self-interest and graciously take up a turn system that is fair to both parties. In this case, they have shown emotional maturity that is above being self-centered and looking out only for one's own interest.

Mindfulness also helps stop automatic behaviors that can arise in the face of the emotions caused by conflict. Conflict naturally causes feelings of anger, resentment, and other negative emotions that can cause us to lash out in a negative way. A child hitting another because of not having a turn on the swing is an example of this automatic behavior.

But, when we are more mindful and able to take a step back from our emotions, we are not left at the mercy of what our emotions push us to do. A more mindful child would not hit another because of being deprived a turn on the swing. This child will instead attempt to implement one of the conflict resolution techniques taught in class, such as seeking the help of an adult or walking away from the situation.

Mindfulness also promotes greater powers of empathy, as this child is more understanding of others, thus forming a greater connection with their peers. This allows more flexible thinking that allows for innovative problem-solving. Compromise is easier to achieve so that everyone feels like they are being heard in the face of solving conflict.

Because of all the many benefits that can come from being more mindful, many people have sought to increase their powers of the skill. There are, of course, advanced techniques, such as mindful meditation, that can be practiced. However, most often, mindfulness is not something that you have to force.

Let's use a situation that you, as a teacher, will encounter often that can promote mindfulness. Let's say that you are writing on the chalkboard to impart a lesson to your students. Slow down your mind and note the feel of the chalk between your fingers, the way the chalk moves against the board, the sound of that movement as you write, how your arm feels moving up and down as you write ... All of these, and more, are things that you can

note and appreciate at that moment, even though it was only a few seconds, or a few minutes.

You can promote a similar form of appreciation in your students as they write notes. Ask them to note the sound of turning pages in their notebooks, how the pages smell, how a pencil feels between their fingers, and how the movement of the pencil on paper makes them feel.

These are just two examples of how you can be more mindful in small moments in everyday life. They are nothing special, and they do not take up anything in your day, but they can have a huge impact on forming greater powers of mindfulness in not only yourself but also in your students.

Even though the practice can happen naturally sometimes, you can perform small exercises that condition you to participate in mindfulness automatically more frequently. You can pass such exercises on to your students so that they, too, can pick up the practice of being more mindful without conscious effort.

There is a simple exercise that you can perform with your students to encourage greater powers of mindfulness. In fact, I call it the “brain break”. You are welcome to introduce it to your students as such. Here is how you can get your students to participate in this game:

- Ask your students to sit in a comfortable, relaxed position. You can do this as a circle exercise where everyone sits on the floor on a comfortable rug or mat. However, it is also fine if the students remain in their seats at their desks.
- Direct your students to focus on something. I find that this is a great time to promote positive thinking. So, you can write something like I am a respectful, intelligent student on the board,

or on a card, and have them look at this while they listen to your instructions.

- Instruct your students to breathe in deeply through their nostrils then out slowly through slightly pursed lips. Instruct them to notice how it feels to have their breath pass against their nostrils and against their lips with each breath.
- Ask the kids to try not to think about anything at this time. If they do notice that they are thinking about anything other than the activity, simply stop and empty their minds of thought. Of course, you can break this down into language that your class level best understands.
- That's it!

This is a great activity to transition between classes as you can customize it to fit any amount of time that serves you and your class best. For example, you can do this for only one minute or for five minutes. The brain break needs to happen often so that not only do your students develop better mindful practices but so that they decompress from previous lessons and can adjust better to absorb new material.

You can also bring in outside instructors to help with promoting mindfulness. However, long-term mindfulness programs can be difficult to maintain in a classroom. This is why it is important that you have your own methods of promoting mindfulness in your classroom. With more mindfulness, you can increase your students' empathetic ability; therefore, their powers of problem-solving when it comes to conflict management.

Being empathetic is the ability to understand other people's emotions, and thus, relate to those emotions. It is through the ability to be empathetic that we can socialize with other human beings in a peaceful, amicable manner. If not, there would be endless conflicts that are left unresolved, and the

world would be a far less peaceful place, which is a truly scary thought, given the high level of conflict that we already observe in today's society.

There are two ways that you can help your students be more empathetic. The first approach is known as a shared emotional response. Also called affective empathy, shared emotional response occurs when one person shares another person's emotional state. For example, your student may notice that another student feels sad, and thus, feelings of sadness will also develop in that student. This is a shared experience where the first student relates to the second by first noticing that the second student feels then shares the experience by developing similar emotions. This is not a perfectly balanced experience where both students will share exactly the same type of emotion or the same intensity of emotions. Rather, it is a way of relating to each other.

A shared emotional response occurs in three phases:

- First, the observer feels the same emotions as another person.
- Second, the observer feels pain in response to the other person's distress.
- Lastly, because of this shared emotion, the observer feels compassion toward the other party.

Because of the progression through these three phases, the observer finds it easier to help the person experiencing distressing emotions. This is a vital process in conflict resolution as it removes that high level of self-centeredness that often pushes conflict to a higher than necessary level.

Also known as cognitive empathy, the second approach to developing greater levels of empathy is called perspective taking. Unlike the first approach to develop empathy, perspective talking relies on imagining how another person feels rather than a shared emotional experience. It relies on a

person mentally putting themselves in the situation that another person is experiencing, to think what it might feel like to be in that experience. This is the type of empathy that most people are referring to when they say put yourself in someone else's shoes. This approach allows us to understand why a person might be feeling how they are feeling rather than being immersed in that emotional experience ourselves.

It is rather effective to use yourself as a role model for demonstrating this type of empathy to your students. Show that you can relate to their emotions when there is conflict no matter how many sides there are in a conflict. This leads to showing that you care about your students and that you have their best interests at heart. It fortifies the bonds that you are forming with your students.

Once you are able to achieve this, you can then model what it is like to feel more positive emotions that do not center around conflict. You can show your students what it is like to be optimistic about learning and to be confident in their ability to catch on to the material. This will reflect in your body language, such as smiling when describing something new or keeping your posture open when you are walking into your class. Your students look to you for an example, and they will start to mirror your body language without even realizing it.

Tip #9 - Respond Calmly and Rationally When Conflict Does Eventually Arise

No matter how much you develop your students' empathetic and mindful abilities, conflicts will arise. While being empathetic and mindful are indeed useful tools for handling conflict in a more effective way, elementary students are still a long way from emotionally mature creatures, so there will be occasions when their emotions get the best of them. This will lead to lashing out, tantrums, waterworks, and other dramatic displays.

As a result, you need to be able to mediate the conflicts that arise when your students cannot handle disagreements on their own. Remember that one of the conflict resolution techniques that must be instilled in your students is that they can go to a responsible adult in times that they cannot find an amicable solution to dealing with conflict themselves. When that does happen, as it eventually will, here are a few strategies that you can employ to bring a peaceful end to this squabble that will still leave a positive cloud over the environment of your classroom:

Strategy #1 - Keep Maslow's Hierarchy of needs in mind.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a five-tier pyramid model that depicts human needs in a hierarchy based on five basic categories which, top of the pyramid to the bottom of the pyramid, are:

- Self-actualization needs, which are about doing activities that help achieve a person's full potential.
- Self-esteem needs, which express the need of a person to feel accomplished.
- Love and belongingness needs, which express the urge to form interpersonal relationships that fulfill our desire for human socialization.
- Safety and security needs, which is the basic right to feel safe and secure in an environment.
- Physiological needs, which express the right of a person to receive basic necessities, such as food, water, and shelter.

This hierarchy is, of course, a theory, and we know that human needs do not always follow hierarchy, but it is good guidance on allowing you to approach handling conflict.

Conflict often arises because one or more person feels like one or more of the items on the hierarchy is being threatened by at least one other person. We all want to feel like we are safe, secure, belonging, acknowledged, and accomplished. This is especially true in the case of pre-teens and young children, who are dependent on other people to have these needs fulfilled. They often do not see a way forward in dealing with conflict when any of these needs are threatened, and this is why they have such heightened responses in the face of such threats. It is your job to be the protector of your students' needs, and the students need to view you as such. While you speak to students, ensure that you are addressing those needs.

Using this hierarchy also allows you to motivate your students when developing empathy and mindfulness. Again, this comes down to good communication as you show your students how another person might feel if having these needs are threatened. For example, one student may have lashed out at another because she felt that she was being physically threatened. Even if this was not actually the intention of the other student, you can show this other student how the perception of that threat led to her reaction.

Strategy #2 - Speak to the conflicting students separately

One of the best things that you can do to quickly defuse the situation when one or more students are having a disagreement is to separate them. Even adults can understand that having to see the source of negative emotions will likely only stir them up more. Allow your students to simmer down by removing the trigger. Without the trigger, they are better able to process their emotions and think their way to an amicable solution.

Separating conflicting students serves more than one purpose in the conflict resolution process. It allows you to exert your calming influence as you go on a fact-finding mission to get a clearer picture of what led to the students having that conflict. You need this picture for you to effectively mediate the situation so that both parties feel that their needs are being met. It is also necessary so that you can impact discipline in the most effective manner that allows for fairness, and for the conflicting parties to feel they are being heard while not damaging the bond that you are developing with these children.

When speaking with the students, be transparent in the fact that you are seeking information on what led to the conflict and that you have had, or will be having, a similar conversation with the other student or students involved in the conflict. If the students feel that you are going behind their backs, they may gain the false misconception that you are favoring the side of the other student. You want to avoid the situation, because you do not want further tension and conflict between yourself and your students. Remember that you always want them to have the perception that you are their protector, no matter the situation.

Reassure students that you are not being biased and that you are trying to be fair to everyone involved. Also, reassure them that the goal of squashing the conflict between them is to ensure that the students reconnect in an

amicable manner. By doing this, you set up the playing field for these students to be mindful of how each other may feel, and thus be empathetic toward each other.

After you have had this conversation with each of the students involved in the conflict then you can set up a meeting between the students. This needs to be done so they can put everything out in the open and discuss their feelings and opinions about the conflict. You need to discuss the emotions of the students prior to this meeting so that they have the words to eloquently express these emotions to their fellow students. Being unable to adequately express one's self can lead to frustration. This negative emotion can have a bad influence on this meeting. You want this meeting to go as smoothly as possible so that the conflict is resolved and the students can reconnect in a peaceful way.

When this meeting has been set up, you will, of course, need the course of the discussion. You are the gentle, calming force directing the events of this meeting. Ensure that the environment for doing so does not have any triggers that will lead to either party feeling as if the other's opinions and expression have more weight than another's. Ensure that the students are facing each other but still are an adequate distance apart so that no one feels physically threatened. Sit between the students so that both have you in their visual line. This works in your favor, as you can exert your calming influence through that sense. It also best ensures that both students can hear you as you direct the meeting.

After the meeting has commenced, ensure that you give each student an adequate amount of time to express themselves without being interrupted by the other students. You need to express that the rule is that when one party is talking, the other is not allowed to interject or interrupt during that time. Reassure the students that everyone will have a turn to share what they are feeling and thinking

Allowing each student that uninterrupted time to get it all off their chest is an emotionally freeing experience. It literally feels as if a weight has been lifted off the student. This places the student in a headspace that is more conducive to openly thinking about what the other student might be thinking and feeling. This headspace is necessary for the conflicting parties to feel that the resolution has been settled in a way that all their needs are no longer being threatened. Being in that headspace lowers their defenses and allows them to be receptive to both your intervention and the communication from the other students.

Allowing each party to express their point of view allows the listening student to be empathetic in a perspective-taking way. It also allows them to see how the other student feels in relation to their own feelings.

During this time, you are allowing students to develop the skills necessary for being emotionally intelligent beings who control their emotions rather than being controlled emotions.

Do you see how magical of a moment this is? From a negative situation, you can cultivate something good that elevates the thinking and mentality of your students. Your students can look back as emotionally mature, independent thinkers and say that you were pivotal in transforming them into such a person. Embrace that feeling if that makes you feel warm and fuzzy inside.

Strategy #3 - Let your student know that they are not alone.

Conflict, even when it is not our own, can make us feel isolated and alone. Even those who are just observing the conflict between classmates can feel the ill effects of that discord. This is especially true for students who are naturally empathetic or those who are more emotionally sensitive than others. They are more prone to having shared emotional responses, and so

they may take on the negative emotions of conflict that they are not involved in. Such children need help in unpacking that emotional baggage.

As a result, it is important that you frequently let your student body as a whole know that you are there for them. They need to know that they can come to you, no matter the conflict situation, if they cannot come up with a solution for dealing with the disagreement themselves. While you do need to instill in them that independence in problem-solving, they also need to be reminded that you are the protector of their needs. They need to be reminded that conflict is a natural part of life and not something that they need to be scared of. Yes, we want to minimize the incidences of conflict in daily life, but the aim is not to stifle or belittle the needs of each other to accomplish that. That, in fact, would not squash conflict. It would simply lead to a more massive explosion down the line. Dealing with smaller conflicts and preventing them from festering into bigger quarrels is a more effective way of handling disagreements.

Reminding your students frequently puts in their minds that they can come to you to be the calming figurehead in the conflicts. It allows them to know that they are entitled to their emotions, even when it does not align with that of their peers. It allows them to see that there is a rainbow on the other side of this dark period and they can get past this with your help and the skills that you are teaching them.

Be relatable to your students in the times that you give these reminders. Highlight the fact that you have gone through similar scenarios in your own childhood. Also, highlight that you still go through conflicts as an adult, but that you manage these conflicts with the same tools that you are passing onto them. Reinforce that the conflict management skills that you are teaching them are not just for this setting, but instead that these skills will serve them for life.

Do be careful with this dependence on you for helping your students through conflicting situations, though. As much as you want your students to know that they can rely on you in the face of conflict, you want to instill in them a mindset that causes them to question, What can I do to solve this? initially. Your students should understand that they should come to you only when an amicable solution cannot be reached after their efforts.

Conflict is a learning opportunity that teaches social and interpersonal skills. Constantly intervening on your students' behalf will deprive them of that learning opportunity. Therefore, you need to find a healthy balance between allowing them that independence for solving conflicts on their own and mediating when your assistance is required.

CHALLENGING CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

Magic teachers are not born. They cannot be cultured in a lab. They cannot be cloned or copied. Rather, magic teachers are made, and this manufacture does not come from sugar and spice and everything nice. A magic teacher is made from being the strong, defining force that stands tall even when facing the strongest winds and the toughest storms. A magic teacher is the embodiment of this quote:

“Teachers who put relationships first don’t just have students for one year; they have students who view them as ‘their’ teacher for life.”

— JUSTINE TARTE

Your students will not remember you as *their* teacher, because you were the one who enticed the most laughter from the class, or because you were the one who had the most fun but impactful lessons planned, even though those things are so important. Rather, they will remember you for being the one to guide them through their most challenging moments, where supportive discipline and corrective discipline were necessary when conflict rose. You will be instilled in their minds as *their* teacher, because you showed them the light at the end of the tunnel. As a result, they will laugh louder when you tell a joke or a funny story. They will be more attentive when you teach. They will grow into more well-rounded adults who will look back on their childhood and identify you as one of the people who they attribute to their healthy development.

Dealing with challenging behaviors in your classroom will undoubtedly be tough, but I have faith that you have the mantle to not only handle these

situations but to nurture your students through them. Luckily, you are not alone in handling these situations. Here are a few tips for doing just that:

Tip #10 - Be Proactive in Developing Emotional Bonds Between You and Your Students

We, as human beings, are receptive to the advice of people who we trust, no matter our age group. The less we trust someone, the more resistance there will be in taking the advice or teachings of this person. This resistance will lead to the breeding of negativity even when we see value in what the person has to teach. You certainly do not want such an atmosphere in your classroom.

The more we trust a person, the more readily we absorb the wisdom that this person bestows upon us. This is the type of relationship that you want with your students, one where there is a foundation of trust. Having these fundamental pillars will pave the way toward a smoother teaching experience for both you and your students, as they will not have that instinctive resistance to what you have to say.

As a result, the first order of business when breeding positivity in your class is building an emotional student-teacher bond where trust is integral. This means sticking to your word at all times.

One of the best ways to do this is to be consistent with how you impact discipline. Being wishy-washy by going hard on enforcing rules one time then being slack on another basis is not conducive for ensuring that your students trust you. They need to know that your word is the law, even when that means a consequence for them. They will highly anticipate when they know that your word can lead to a reward for them.

Another way for breeding that positive bond between you and your students is to be your students' cheerleader. This does not mean that you have to go

out and buy pom-poms and a flared skirt, even though that can be an option to infuse your class with a little added flavor on occasion, or to have that dramatic effect for a particular lesson. It means, however, that you need to be there to provide encouraging, motivational, and inspirational words whenever your students need to hear them. Your words need to be backed by your actions. You cannot say uplifting words with a frown on your face. Your body language needs to be on par with what you say, as well.

There are several types of encouraging words that you can use with your students to promote positivity in your classroom. These types include:

- ***Greetings.*** What is said or not said and how it is said upon entering and leaving a room sets a precedent as to how the interactions play out. If you come into your class without greeting your students or if your greeting is lackluster, then this sets the tone for your lessons that day. Set a positive tone by infusing your voice with upbeat energy so that your students absorb this energy and run with it for the rest of your class.
- ***Words of gratitude.*** Thank your students when they cooperate with you. Let them know that you appreciate their efforts. Let them know that you see what they are doing and that they are on the right path to meeting the positive expectations of your classroom. Express this appreciation, especially in times when they take the initiative and do the good behaviors without your prompting. This will increase the chances of good behaviors being repeated in the future.
- ***Compliments.*** Boost your students' confidence and morale by giving them compliments on their academic performance, on their appearance, on helping another student, for sharing with another student, and any other occasion where it is warranted. Surprise

them with the words and watch their small faces light up with the positive energy that these words will infuse them with.

- ***Words of praise.*** We often highlight negative behaviors without putting the spotlight on positive behaviors. Instead of placing emphasis on catching your students being bad, place the emphasis on catching them being good and let them know that they are doing a good job on that occasion. This reinforces the positive expectations that you have of your students and increases the chances that these good behaviors will be repeated.

The types of encouraging words stated above are common, but we often disregard the significant effect that they can have on a person's mood and energy.

Just as you can use encouraging words when you see the desired behavior in your students, you can also use these types of words when the desired behaviors are not happening. Let your students know that you believe they can achieve the good behavior that is encouraged. This comes part and parcel with being your classroom's cheerleader.

As mentioned before, infusing your classroom with positive energy does not sit solely on your shoulders. Your students also need to play a part in generating that positive energy. Therefore, it is imperative that you encourage a climate where students help each other and cheer each other on so that the good behaviors that you desire are performed more frequently.

The positivity that you generate becomes compounded with their help and where you might have had a hard time getting through a student. Having this positivity come from another student might make all the difference. A great classroom activity that helps boost morale and encourages positivity is to have your students finish positive statements about themselves. These

statements will highlight their strengths and good behaviors that they are already exhibiting. Examples of such positive statements include:

- One thing that I am good at in school and can help others with is ____.
- Something that I am really good at that most people do not know about is ____.
- My friends can ask me for help to ____.
- I can use my talent of ____ to help my classmates.

All the students need to do is fill in the blank of such statements. Not only does this help the students note their own strengths, but this is also a great way of gaining insight on items that you can use to motivate your individual students.

Tip #11 - Give Students the Chance to be Positive Even When Challenges Arise

It can be hard to see the light in times of darkness. When students are acting up and there is the need for corrective discipline, you might feel like you are at your wit's end. So, how do you maintain that air of positivity in those times? Do not be alarmed if you are wondering this, because the answer is not as straightforward as it might seem. When students are exhibiting challenging behaviors, the best way to maintain that lightness and positivity is to become the light.

Of course, you are human and have feelings of your own. Of course, there will be times when you are frustrated and disappointed. Of course, there are times when all you will want to do is throw your hand in the air. The thing to realize is these moments are also teachable moments. You do not have to hide the fact that you are a human being with thoughts and emotions of your own from your students.

What you need to do is show them that you do, indeed, feel many of the same things that they do but show them that you can control your emotions, regardless. Teach them that negative emotions do not have to get the best of them, no matter the circumstances, and use yourself as the example of that. Teach them that, even in moments where we feel negative emotions, we can be the ones to generate positivity light, like a lighthouse providing that beacon in a storm.

Express your negative emotions to your classroom in a way that is appropriate for that grade level. For example, if a student is continually disrupting a lesson, even after repeated warnings from you, you do not have to put up a façade and smile through it. Communicate the fact that you are frustrated with your classroom. Allow them to know how the continued interruptions have made you feel. Then also show them that you are not being controlled by what you are feeling. Show them the coping techniques that you are teaching them in action. Show them that you stop and take deep breaths to control your emotions. Show them that you stop and think before you react. Even if your emotions are so heightened that you need to take a few moments to compose yourself, show them that there is nothing wrong with stepping back from the situation to gain control of themselves.

The key to being a magic teacher is not to be the perfect human being in the eyes of your student. Rather, it is about showing your students a human being who is thriving for the better. Show them that you, too, are an imperfect person, like they are, but in the imperfect is the opportunity to learn and be better.

If you do indeed need to take that time to compose yourself, do not just walk out. Keep that stage for communication open. Show your kids the right way, but acknowledge that you need time to think and time to respond to whatever has disturbed you.

You need to be careful with this, as you do not want to leave your student teeter-tottering on an emotional edge while you take these few minutes to ground your emotions. Always keep the presence of mind to reassure your students that you will be back shortly and that you still love and respect them as a group. Saying something akin to the following line will allow you that graceful temporary retreat without damaging the bond between you and your students: “This situation has upset me greatly. It might have upset you, too, and that is understandable. I need a few minutes to think before we talk about it. You should also take this time to think about it, as well, so we can have a proper discussion when I return.”

You do not have to go far to take this time to compose yourself. In fact, I recommend that you do not go far. Stay close to your classroom so that you can at least hear what is going on. If possible, allow yourself to stay within the sight of your students so that they can observe you pulling yourself together and learn what that means.

When you return, calmly and rationally explain what you were feeling, why these feelings arose, what you feel now, and how you plan to proceed in the future so that this situation does not arise again. Ask your student to let you speak uninterrupted during this time, because you will allow them time to express themselves, as well.

Through it all, be sure to make one thing clear to your students—that they understand that it was the undesired behavior that you disliked, not the student body or the particular student or students that performed this behavior.

When addressing the undesired behavior on a private student to teacher level, also reassure the student of the same thing—that you do not harbor any ill feelings, but the behavior is unacceptable. Keep your demeanor cool,

calm, and collected in both situations. Keep your words positive and do not talk down to the student group or the particular offending student.

Allow the students to respond after you have expressed yourself, whether it be on a class level or on an individual student level. Encourage the students to respond positively by explaining not only what went wrong, but also what can be done to correct the behavior and prevent it from happening again in the future.

Once the discussion is done, ensure that you keep your facial expression and body language open to your students. You have told them that you are not holding any negative feelings toward them. Show them this, as well. Compliment them on how well they handled the situation and thank them for allowing you that time to compose yourself. Ensure that no one else is holding on to any negativity so that light shines on the proceedings of your lessons.

Tip #12 - Personalize Your Teaching Style to Cater to Your Students

You are a unique person. You have quirks and things that make you special. Trying to conform to fit into a box in any place in society will not benefit you or anyone else. The things that make you special need to shine through and that includes in your teaching style. You are different from every other teacher on this planet, and the things that make you different can be of benefit to imparting knowledge to your students. Of course, you need to tailor these things so that they remain age- and grade-appropriate, but your students need *you* rather than a carbon copy of every other teacher out there. The more you are true to yourself while teaching, the more fun you will have. Therefore, the more positivity you will integrate into your lessons. Your students will feed off the authenticity when you speak to them and communicate even when this communication happens nonverbally.

Personalizing your teaching approach does not just mean infusing your style with your personality. It also means learning the nuances that make up your student class body and specifically catering your style and approach to best benefit that particular group.

As a result, your teaching style will continually evolve because, every year, you gain a new bunch of students with new idiosyncrasies and things that make them different from your last group of students. Even on a student-to-teacher basis, you need to continually evolve to best get through to individual students. How you teach one student might not work for another.

For example, while one student might learn best through reading and writing, another student might be more visually inclined. There needs to be evolution, as a student's learning style can change over the course of the year that he or she is with you.

A lot of how you evolve as a teacher to cater your teaching style to your students is a personalized thing that can only relate to you and the students

that you have. However, there are a few general strategies that you can employ to use a teaching approach that promotes a positive environment. These strategies include:

Strategy #1 - Take sufficient time to describe what undesirable behavior looks like so that students understand what behavior that they should diverge from.

In addition, place emphasis on helping students understand the consequences of engaging in undesirable behavior so that students feel it is fair when it is time for you to implement corrective discipline. No matter your teaching style or the nuances you receive with a batch of students, that needs to be consistent.

Strategy #2 - Be aware of the cultural differences in your classroom.

We live in a highly globalized society, and your students are likely not only to come from different parts of the area where the school is but also from different parts of the world. This not only allows you to adapt your teaching style so that you can be heard by students raised in different cultures but also allows you to see when students are being respectful and defiant in behaviors you might not have expected. For example, having a student staring at the floor while you speak to him or her is a sign of respect in some cultures, while it is viewed as defiance in other cultures. Because of this, you need to educate yourself on the general cultural practices of your students. This is a tall order, but you can do it as a magic teacher.

Strategy #3 - Discourage the formation of cliques in your classroom.

While it is all good and well that some students naturally gravitate toward each other and form genuine friendships, you do not want to have a situation where a group of students ostracizes other students. This is anti-social behavior that deprives your students of learning from each other to the fullest potential. The best approach is to use cooperative activities that allow your class to identify as a group rather than specific groups within that classroom. Examples of cooperative activities include classroom discussions and a write around.

A write around is an activity where the teacher gives a topic and each student, or smaller groups of students, contribute a point to developing that topic.

Ideally, cooperative activities need to follow these criteria:

- Be comprised of social learning and academic experiences.
- Be aligned with allowing students to collectively achieve a goal.
- Promote positive interactions between students.

- Enhance the social skills of students.
- Allows for creative problem-solving.
- Allows all students to feel that they are winners.
- Does not involve confrontation or conflict.
- Increases the communication skills of students.

Strategy #4 - Positively label students even when they regularly display challenging behaviors.

Avoid giving your students labels such as “good” or “bad.” Otherwise, you will be inadvertently setting up a negative connotation in the classroom. Also, you are inadvertently forming cliques with “good” students and “bad” students.

Instead, describe their behavior (not the student) as “positive,” “acceptable,” “disruptive,” or “unacceptable.” Address the behavior rather than the student’s character. Protect your students’ psyche in that way.

Strategy #5 - Focus on recognizing and rewarding acceptable behavior more than highlighting undesirable behavior.

There is a tendency to focus on undesirable behavior when it comes to discipline. We see this all the time in adult society. While positive actions hardly ever receive attention, negative actions often make headline news. Of course correcting undesirable behavior is a priority, but if this is the focus, then there will be more negativity bred than positivity.

Bring positivity into the focus by catching your students engaged in desirable behaviors often and rewarding them, even if this reward simply comes from an encouraging word or a compliment. Make positivity and good behavior the norm rather than focusing on undesirable behaviors. By highlighting the positive behaviors, you make them more likely to reoccur. Not giving undesirable behaviors make them less likely to occur.

Strategy #6 - Do not allow minor problems to disrupt your class.

As part of focusing on the positive rather than the negative, if a problem is minor, choose to ignore it, or minimize its effect on your class. For example, if a student is disrupting your lesson by tapping a pencil on the desk rather than making this the focus of your classroom, something simple, such as a glance or your proximity, can stop this undesirable behavior. You can then follow this up by having a private discussion with the students so that this does not happen again in the future.

Strategy #7 - When you need to verbally reprimand a student, make this quick and effective without disrupting your class or while minimally disrupting your class.

Again, you can follow this up by having a private conversation with this student so that you do not embarrass them. This private communication is especially necessary for students who feel that they must put on a show for their classmates. The student labeled as the “class clown” is a typical example of this. Reprimanding such a student for a prolonged period in front of the classroom body can lead to exaggerated versions of the undesirable behavior, as the student is trying to save face in front of the rest of the students.

Tip #13 - Be a Positive Force

You are a ray of sunshine to your students. It is heartbreaking to contemplate, but you may be the only bright spot in the lives of some of your students. Despite the lightest of being that beacon of positivity, it can be a heavy task to be held on that pedestal by your student. But take heart! You are, after all, a magic teacher or you aspire to be.

It can be hard to remain neutral in the face of conflict, a strict disciplinarian yet a ready confidant and a positive force, but you can do it, especially with

the following strategies in your pocket:

Strategy #1 - Find ways of letting go of any negative emotions that you harbor.

Being a positive force does not mean that you never have any negative feelings yourself. Being positive 24/7 would be an entirely unreasonable expectation of you. You are, after all, a human being and subject to the spectrum of emotions that all human beings feel, be they positive or negative.

Your job as an educator to such young individuals is a challenging one, and of course there are times when negative emotions, such as frustration and disappointment will build up. Do not beat yourself up for this. In fact, I think that this is a cause for celebration, as it shows that you are actually heavily invested in nurturing your students to their full potential.

The key to keeping a positive attitude is to unload these negative emotions in a healthy manner. It is actually imperative that you find such coping mechanisms, as holding on to negative emotions will build up over time and develop into a dark cloud that follows you around and impacts your teaching ability. It prevents you from enjoying the teaching experience. As a result, feelings of resentment will build and likely reflect in your attitude and approach to imparting knowledge and wisdom to your students. This will certainly short change your students on the educational experience that they deserve and need. As a magic teacher, you cannot allow that to happen, because your students deserve the best from you always.

There are a number of techniques that you can employ to deal with the negative emotions that you face so that your positive emotions can be the highlight of your teaching experience. Such techniques include accepting that negative emotions come part and parcel of the teaching experience, even as a magic teacher. You will meet lots of resistance and, therefore,

have a harder time dealing with negative emotions if you do not accept that negative emotions come with every experience. No career is exempt from negative emotions, even when you are highly passionate about your job. So, the quicker you learn that such emotions will arise, the quicker you will find the techniques that you need to deal with them in the eventuality.

Unpacking your thoughts is another great coping technique. The longer you hold on to the burden of your negative emotions, the heavier the burden will become. Learn to express these negative thoughts and emotions in a healthy manner so that you can recycle that energy in a positive way. Journaling your thoughts or talking to a trusted friend or advisor are great ways of unburdening yourself from this negativity. Not only does expressing these thoughts and emotions liberate you from the emotions, but they also allow you to examine them in an impartial way so that you let go of any resentment or hostility that you currently hold because of situations that occurred in your classroom. This examination allows you to approach things in a different manner than you did in the past so that these negative feelings do not have a lesser likelihood of building up again in the future.

Strategy #2 - Use positivity to attract positivity.

Being positive is a cycle. It starts with you inputting that positive energy into your classroom then receiving it back from your students so that you can give more positive energy to them. A huge part of being a positive influence in your students' lives is about how you interact with them.

To have a positive classroom, first, you need to be that beacon of warmth and caring. Your students will absorb that warmth and caring and churn out more positivity. Positive students will have a much easier time interacting with you and other classmates. Seeing the results of your positivity will allow you to reinforce the behaviors and attitudes that have worked and, therefore, allow for more positivity to shine dominant in that setting. Hence, you will have an overall positive classroom experience.

Since the buck starts with you, you need to work on how you infuse your classroom with positivity. This needs to be done on an overall level and on an individual level between you and students. We have already spoken on many techniques that you can use to infuse positivity on a classroom level, such as relating your positive expectations, impacting healthy discipline measures, and managing conflict that everyone feels that the atmosphere of fairness is promoted in the classroom.

On a more individual student to teacher basis, you can promote positivity by:

- Ensure that you always use positive yet precise language when describing your expectations and your instructions to students. Using positive language allows your students to adopt the same manner of approaching discussions with you and other students and, thus, produce higher levels of positivity.

- Praise your students frequently and sincerely when they do a good job at exhibiting the behaviors and academic performance that you expect of them.
- Be consistent when disciplining your students in accordance with the classroom rules.
- When you do express displeasure about a student's behavior, do so without criticizing the student so that the student does not feel attacked or that their needs are being threatened. Always be mindful that your students view you as their protector. You do not want to do anything to tarnish that image, as it will be quite the task to undo this. This approach will go a long way in maintaining the emotional bond that you are forming with that student.
- Sit students who are having a hard time with challenging behavior or with academics near you or near a student who is generally positive and helpful.
- Give students choices to promote higher levels of self-worth and feelings of control. The higher the esteem of your students in your classroom setting, the more positive they will radiate.

CELEBRATE TEAMWORK AND SUCCESS

No man (or woman) is an island. No matter how magical of a teacher that you are, or that you are becoming, you cannot create a positive, disciplined classroom without the help of other people. You need the help of your friends and family to keep your mind free and happy, because you are not just a teacher and you need interest outside of the classroom so that you are more focused when you are actually in that environment. You need the help of your colleagues for consulting, to share ideas with, and to seek advice in troubling times. Most importantly, you need the help of your students to create the kind of classroom where the magic happens.

Let's be clear; a teacher is not just a teacher. Your role is multifaceted. You are a peacemaker, an organizer, a planner, a data collector, a visionary, a motivator, a facilitator, and so much more in addition to your primary functions as an educator.

You have no classroom without your students. There will be no one to teach, discipline, care for, or nurture if they are not present. While it all starts with you, they are the force that keeps your classroom grounded, and so you need their help to make your classroom into the one where your positive expectations are met.

For overall successful classroom management, you need to ensure that you and your students work as a team. Before we get to the how of accomplishing this, let's discuss what it really means to have a teamwork approach.

DEFINING TEAMWORK IN THE CLASSROOM

The words teamwork and group work often get confused when discussing them in relation to a classroom setting. To be clear, the two terms are not synonymous.

Group work is defined as the act of a smaller group within the classroom coming together to complete an activity or an assignment.

On the other hand, teamwork is the combined effort of an entire team working toward achieving a singular goal. In your classroom, the singular goal is to promote effective learning that enhances the well-being of each student in that classroom.

We see examples of teamwork in sports and even in corporate workplaces, but what does teamwork look like in a classroom? Let's discuss this ...

A classroom where teamwork is used to enhance the learning experience of students has the following characteristics:

Characteristic #1 - Students Exhibit More Critical Thinking Skills

When working with and in a team, we are required to consider the thoughts, feelings, and opinions of others in the group so that we can work toward achieving a common goal. That requires us to consider things outside of our mental focus. Because we are supplied with the thoughts, feelings, and opinions of other people, we are forced to look at things from different points of view.

This push is a good thing, as it develops critical thinking skills and allows us to see that most problems can be solved in more than one way. Your students will certainly benefit from this not only in your classroom but also as they develop into adults who are entering the workforce. They will take

up an automatic inclination to look at the problems that they face in their lives, whether these problems are academic, professional, or personal, from different points of view.

In your classroom, you will note this increased level of critical thinking by students asking different types of questions to arrive at a solution to solving a problem. You will notice that they will ask the opinion of not only themselves but also of their classmates. Promote problem-solving discussions with group activities and group work.

Characteristic #2 - Students More Readily Share Knowledge with Each Other

Just as you will note that students are more readily willing to ask questions as they engage in participating in team activities, you will also notice that students are more readily willing to share information with others, even when not asked to do so.

Most of us have an inclination to share information with others in interpersonal interactions, especially when there is a common problem to be solved. We see examples of this in everyday life where people give their opinions on social media or when asked to by news teams on the street. We love to share our thoughts, feelings, and opinions, especially when there is a platform to do so.

The more you develop that student-to-student relationship, the more you will see students more readily willing to help each other. This is because you are giving them that platform to do so.

Characteristic #3 - Students are More Motivated to Learn

Contributing to team activities by asking questions and volunteering information toward problem-solving, children get a boost in morale when those problems are eventually solved with their help. When that problem is

solved, these kids are provided with a new nugget of information, whether or not they realize it.

The brain loves being fed new information and, therefore, it is prompted to want to learn more the more you engage in team exercises. You will notice more eagerness and an improved attitude toward learning in your students.

Characteristic #4 - Students Exhibit Higher Levels of Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is the regard that a person has for themselves when it comes to their worth or in relation to how effective they are in displaying their abilities. Persons with low self-confidence doubt their abilities and do not trust their control in running their lives. On the other hand, people with higher self-confidence do not doubt themselves as often, and they feel a sense of control in steering their lives in the direction of their choosing.

Signs that a person has low self-esteem include:

- Not accepting compliments easily.
- Showing signs of mental illnesses, such as anxiety and depression.
- Often focusing on the negative while ignoring the positive.
- Often focusing on failures while ignoring accomplishments.
- Often speaking in the negative or using negative words.
- Being highly critical of oneself and others.

These signs are exhibited in children, as well as adults. Therefore, you need to be on guard for any signs your students are displaying of low self-confidence.

Low self-confidence affects your students' ability to learn, as well as their ability to effectively communicate and interact with you and other students.

Working within a team is one way of helping your students develop higher levels of self-esteem, as it allows them to see that their contribution toward the team goal is valuable. They are allowed to see that there is high worth in their contribution, even when they have provided an answer that is not entirely correct. You will note the positive signs that your students are developing higher levels of self-confidence

There is a sharp shift between someone who has low self-confidence and someone who has high self-confidence. Signs that your students are becoming more self-confident include:

- Being more assertive when expressing thoughts, feelings, and opinions.
- Sticking to their guns when they believe that the answer that they have provided is correct, even when contradicted by other classmates.
- Maintaining a positive attitude, even when corrected.
- Having more assurance in their ability to make decisions on their own and in a group setting.
- Showing signs of enjoying group activities, as the child is more assured in their individual role in reaching the common goal.
- Making lesser comparisons between his or herself and other students.
- Displaying more signs of happiness and fulfillment in the classroom.

Characteristic #5 - Students Adopt More Essential Social Skills

Almost everyone has heard of the saying “There is no I in team.” The essence of the saying is that no one person carries a team toward achieving the final goal of the collaborative effort. Everyone on the team needs to

contribute equally to accomplish the final goal. As a result, everyone on the team needs to interact with each other and exhibit effective communication skills, such as eloquent speaking and active listening.

Not only will your students have to listen to and understand the instructions that you have given so that they can perform the individual roles in a team, but they also have to listen to and communicate with the other students to work as a cohesive unit. They have to learn to be respectful of the thoughts, feelings, and opinions of each other, as well as have confidence in sharing their opinions, thoughts, and feelings. The more this is practiced in your class, the more the students learn that communication does not just mean that they are talking, but it also means that they need to adequately express themselves to others and take the time to understand what others are saying to them.

As a result of this collaborative effort, students learn to interact with different personality types. This is a skill necessary for life, as adults need to learn to communicate efficiently with others, no matter what personality types they encounter in their professional, academic, and personal lives.

You will note the improved quality of interactions between your students through problem-solving that is done amicably with less overall conflict.

Characteristic #6 - There are Reduced Incidences of Bullying

Bullying often arises out of students feeling as if they are not part of a unit or because they are doubtful of their own contribution in a calm, nurturing setting, such as the one that you are cultivating in your classroom. As a result, such students will resort to using hurtful comments or acts to place a guard up between themselves and the rest of that unit.

Ensuring that your classroom participates in frequent collaborative activities and assignments allows the students to feel as if they are part of a

team. A team spirit will dramatically reduce the incidences of bullying in your classroom. This is because team-building exercises allow each student to see that they are a member of a strong, loving support system, even when they are not collaborating in activities and assignments. Not only do these students know that they can rely on you as support through trying and challenging times, but they learn they are also supported by their classmates. Students become less emotionally guarded and, therefore, are less likely to lash out with hurtful comments or acts.

Also because of the increased levels of self-confidence that team-building exercises promote in students, the kids are better able to stand up to bullies and not allow themselves to be victims of such hurtful comments and acts.

TEAMWORK BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Teamwork does not just allow your classroom running to go smoother. They also set your students up for lifelong success. When students work together with you and other students, it helps them relate to other human beings so that interpersonal skills translate into activities outside the classroom and when these students become adults.

Let's face it, few careers allow persons to operate in isolation, even in this day and age when technology allows fewer people to have to visit a physical workplace to do their jobs. In almost every industry, people are required to work with others, even if it is via virtual workspaces. Your students will have a much easier time as adults if they learn the ability to be a part of a team in childhood. You do the students a favor when you teach them to work as a team through collaborating with you and other students. The shared gratification of accomplishing the goals allows them to be more productive and to find more joy in working with others. This satisfaction will certainly aid their career advancements in the future.

WHO NEEDS TO BE ON THE TEAM FOR SUCCESSFUL CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

“It takes a village to raise a child.” This is also a saying that you need to keep in mind as you develop techniques for encouraging a team mindset in your classroom.

The more you try to shoulder the burden of creating reality from your positive expectations on your own, the harder this will be for you to accomplish. In fact, it is an impossible task. As a magic teacher, you want the best for your students and having a community working toward ensuring that they get the best educational experience is the best approach. Apart from you and your students, there are other persons who also need to be on your team in order to make that positive learning experience a reality. Other people who you need to consult with and collaborate with to ensure this reality include:

- ***Teaching assistants and student teachers.*** Such people will support your efforts in the classroom, as well as take away some of the load when it comes to ensuring that you provide the best educational experience that you can for your students. It is essential that you and this person have good communication and teamwork between yourselves so that students feel that they receive adequate amounts of attention, instructions, and time from both of you. Getting on the same page will allow both of you to understand which tasks either of you is responsible for so that they are completed in a timely manner so that your students are not the victims of conflict between you and this person.
- ***Other teachers.*** Teachers in different departments should ensure a continued good learning experience for students. Where you might

focus on academics, the gym teacher might focus on students' physical health and education. There needs to be a collaboration between different types of teachers so that students receive a crossover educational experience that enhances the instructions that they received from either teacher. For example, while you might be teaching your students about the parts of the body, the gym teacher can do his or her part to ensure that the students become familiar with body parts in a setting where they actually use these body parts to perform sporting activities.

- ***The principal and school administration.*** These are the people that help develop school policies that protect both you and your students. You need to be involved in not only coming up with these policies but also enforcing them. You need to ensure that your students are aware of these policies so that they, too, can do their part in ensuring that they are in compliance with them.
- ***Parents and parent volunteers.*** Learning does not start when your student comes to your classroom, nor does it end when your student leaves your classroom at the end of the day. It would be difficult for your positive expectations to be met if that were the case. As a result, parents are a vital part of the educational process during the informative years of elementary students. Parents can help reinforce the academic and behavioral skills you are teaching in your classroom. When teachers and parents team up and communicate with each other, it makes your job of developing a personalized approach that helps each individual student learn their best so much easier.

HOW TO ENCOURAGE TEAMWORK IN YOUR CLASSROOM

As it relates to you and your students developing a teamwork mindset, here are a few tips that you can employ so that this happens easily:

Tip #14 - Celebrate Success at Every Opportunity

As mentioned earlier, working with a team can increase your students' self-esteem and fulfillment in their academic and behavioral performance. There is a science behind this.

With all the benefits gained from working cohesively in a group, children tend to feel happier because of the fact that accomplishing a common goal and feeling successful causes the production of hormones in the brain that make them feel good. These hormones are called endorphins. They reduce the effects of negative feelings while boosting positive feelings. While endorphins can be released due to activities, like exercise, they can also be released due to accomplishing certain tasks then being privy to the reward of that accomplishment.

Strategies that you can utilize for giving your students that endorphin boost, as well as favor that teamwork mindset, include:

Strategy #1 - Utilize verbal praise.

Verbally letting your students know that they are doing a great job is one of the quickest yet most effective ways of not only enforcing their role on the team but also in celebrating success. Saying something as simple as, “Great job! I see that you have contributed quite a lot of ideas toward today steam activity,” or “Oh, wow! You are doing a wonderful job today, especially since we have learned that it is not easy to agree on everything with your teammates,” can bring a quick smile or a blush to your students’ faces. That smile or blush is your indication that your words are serving their intended purpose. Also, being specific with your praise allows students to understand exactly what behavior is being praised. This increases the likelihood that the behavior will be repeated.

Words of praise are not just reserved for when your students have successfully accomplished a task. Such words are great motivators when these students are struggling, as well. They can serve as the pick-me-up that the student needs to get past the mental fog isn’t allowing them to grasp a concept or complete an assignment.

Use words of praise for not just academic accomplishment, but use them when your students exhibit desirable behaviors, especially when these students are showing visible effort in diverting away from undesirable behaviors. The boost of endorphins helps steer them toward a path that allows for that desired behavior to become their normal pattern of activity. Try saying something like, “Wow! I can see that you are trying so hard not to speak out of turn. You are showing quite a bit of self-control there! You should be proud of yourself. I certainly am proud of you.” Be sure to use the child’s name so that it becomes solidified in his or her mind that you are quite specifically talking to and about him or her.

These words of praise do not only have to come from you. Encourage your students to praise each other to cultivate that teamwork mentality.

Strategy #2 - Utilize written praise.

Greeting card sales are high every year, and that is because the written word cannot be discredited when it comes to promoting feelings of positivity and wellness when given to someone else. Promote feelings of positivity and wellness in your students by not only giving them verbal praise but writing the praise down and giving it to them.

The thing with verbal praise is that it is flitting. Of course, it is highly effective at the moment, but the only way that students can feel the benefit from that praise after the moment has passed is through the memory of it. Memory is a tricky thing and can sometimes become distorted or faded over time. However, with written praise, there is no mistaking the meaning behind the words, even after time has passed.

You can handwrite notes to your students, expressing how proud you are of them or how grateful you feel to be their teacher. You can use greeting cards, as well. And do not discredit the impact of writing words of praise and encouragement in report cards. You can even write these notes targeted at specific groups in group activities so that the team feels a sense of accomplishment. Shared feelings of accomplishment go a long way in allowing students to form deeper emotional bonds with each other.

As greeting cards sales have shown, whether a person is six years old or sixty, written praise and encouragement is a sure way to warm a person's heart and encourage them to continue being successful at whatever endeavor they pursue.

Just like with verbal praise, encourage your students to uplift each other by having exercises where they write words of encouragement to each other.

Strategy #3 - Involve parents or guardians in class rewards and successes.

Allow your students to feel accomplished, even when they have left your classroom, by involving parents and guardians in praises and rewards. An easy way to do this is to send a written note home to parents, informing them of the child's accomplishment and your included words of praise.

Be sure to encourage parents and guardians to also shower the students with encouragement and praise that align with what you are doing in your classroom. Even without this encouragement, most parents would be excited to discuss the achievement that the child has gained in the classroom. This at-home discussion helps boost the child's morale, self-confidence, and eagerness to learn.

In this day and age, involving parents and guardians in class rewards and success is even easier. This can be done by sending text messages and/or emails rather than sending home written notes. The great thing about using technology in this manner is that students can be surprised by coming home to praise after you have secretly informed parents and guardians of the successes in that manner. That secret surprise can be a great treat at the end of the hardest school day.

Strategy #4 - Display completed assignments and work in the classroom.

Get your students used to having their work viewed and critiqued in a positive way by displaying this work so that not only can the students have other students note their work but also celebrate their efforts. Seeing the reactions of other students in response to their effort brings students a great sense of accomplishment and self-worth.

This is particularly useful in cultivating a go-getter attitude in students as they grow into adulthood where their work needs to be displayed or viewed so that they make headway in ticking off their professional goals.

Displaying your students' works for all to see is also a great way of encouraging other students to give constructive criticism and praise to one another in a positive way. This is also a tool for encouraging better critical thinking skills, as it allows students to review how the same assignment can be approached in different manners.

Strategy #5 - Host regular award ceremonies.

Graduation ceremonies are a thing of the norm, and many students of all education levels look forward to them because of the sense of achievement that reaching this level provides. Graduation ceremonies signify completion of a course or schooling level. They also provide that tangible item to show that completion. Give your students the same sense of accomplishment by holding regular award ceremonies, whether they be every semester or yearly.

Trophies, certificates, badges, and more can be handed to these students at these times. Make a production out of it and speak of it regularly beforehand so that students feel a sense of anticipation toward the ceremony.

Academic achievements are not the only thing that should be celebrated during that time. The awards that you hand out to your students should be carefully considered and granted based on personal growth and development, in addition to academic achievements. This is also a time when you can specifically target awarding students who have overcome challenging behaviors, as this allows them to see that their progress is being recognized. Also, please ensure that *all* your students are made to feel special at that time.

No one should be made to feel left out during this time. You can make up anything to suit the personality and progress of your individual students. For example, you may have noticed that a child, who was rather

melancholy at the beginning of the school year, has perked up and smiles more. You can give this child the award of having the “Best Smile.” Or perhaps, a child, who has kept more to himself or herself at the start of the year, came out of his or her shell through being of assistance to his or her classmates. This child can be given the “Best Helper” award.

To make it even more special for students, host the ceremony at a venue outside of your classroom, like the school auditorium; consider having special decorations; allow the students to dress up; and invite other supportive people, like school personnel and parents, to the event.

Strategy #6 - Utilize digital technology and social sharing to reward students and celebrate successes.

We live in a digital age, and most students have access to devices that allow them to interact with each other and other people virtually. Five-year-olds and younger are sending tweets, are able to access apps, are watching videos, and are absorbing all other sorts of digital media. Most elementary students are immediately captivated by the sight of a digital screen.

This captivation can be rather annoying during the teaching process, but rather than fight it, you can use this to your advantage, especially when it comes to rewarding your students for exemplary performance and behavior.

Make videos and post them so that they can see how they are doing during class happenings and how they are performing on projects. Take pictures and post them in a digital group that can be accessed by any of your students. There are a variety of ways in which you can use technology to allow your students to feel accomplished. Get creative with this. Just ensure that there is no direct interaction between you and the kids on social media, as this can lead to difficulties down the line.

There are several platforms where you can utilize the boost of social sharing without compromising your digital presence with your students. For example, many schools have developed a private hub that students and teachers can access exclusively. That can be of use to you in this regard.

Strategy #7 - Give certificates of achievement.

Rather than waiting until the end of a semester, or until the school year ends, you can give your students a tangible item to remind them of their good performance and success at any time by using certificates of achievements. Just like with award ceremonies, these certificates do not have to be targeted only at academics. Promote positive behaviors by handing out certificate achievements in personal development and growth as well.

The great thing about certificates is that they can be printed and easily filled in on the spot. Students get to hold on to their certificates and showcase them to other classmates, their friends, their family, and any other person who they feel is invested in their learning experience. The prospect of earning more certificates and the feeling induced by getting past certificates makes students more eager to learn and to perform in a way that aligns with the positive vision that you have for your classroom.

Certificates of achievement are also useful in promoting a teamwork mindset, as you can hand out certificates of achievement toward a group rather than individual students. Again, be reminded that a shared sense of achievement goes a great way of forming strong emotional bonds between your students.

Strategy #8 - Reward and celebrate yourself, as well.

As a final note before we end this section, I want you to understand that you, too, can benefit from that endorphin boost that comes from celebrating

your successes as a teacher. You need to give yourself a pat on the back for a job well done. This will motivate you to continue sprinkling in your unique brand of magic in your classroom.

Also, self-reward is also a great behavior for your students to model, as it shows them that they do not have to wait for other people to let them know that they are doing a good job. You can show your students that they can pat themselves on the back, as well, without the praise coming from any other source. This is useful for promoting self-motivation in their educational experience and makes your job easier.

Tip #15 - Create a Classroom Environment that Emanates “Teamwork Makes the Dream Work”

As mentioned before, the elementary school years are a great time for cultivating a teamwork mindset that will gear your students into lifelong success. Apart from celebrating achievements and success, there are everyday activities that you can do with your students to promote that mindset where they learn to contribute toward a team so that a common goal can be reached. You can get your students to become better team players by partaking in some of the following activities:

Activity #1 - Participating in group work and partner work.

Show students that they do not have to approach difficult tasks on their own. By providing support and being supported by other students in group and partner work, students are allowed to see that they can accomplish the same task in an easier manner with the help of others.

It is also important that you use positive language that allows your students to feel a collaborative effort. For example, the use of the word “team” rather than “group” is a great way to make the students feel like a team with a shared purpose and common goal. Using that specific word sets your

students up with the mindset of thinking of other students as their teammates.

When these students have been set up in groups, or with partners, allow them to discuss their own positive expectations of each other and of themselves in that setting. Even while activities have been assigned, provide breaks during the activity so that your students can reflect on the dynamics of the team and how they can improve on their communication and dealings with each other.

Activity #2 - Taking an active role in school and class assemblies.

Participating in class and school assemblies requires that students play an active role in developing and relaying the message that surrounds the theme of that assembly. It takes quite a bit of self-confidence to get on stage or in front of your classmates to be part of the production. Therefore, encouraging students to participate in assemblies is a great way of boosting their self-confidence while also enhancing their public speaking skills. It also ensures that they are part of a team, as no class or school assembly happens as a one-man show.

Participating in a school play or dance has a similar effect. Therefore, those are activities that you should encourage your students to get involved in, as well.

Activity #3 - Participating in circle time activities.

Circle time is a time when every student in the classroom gets an equal opportunity to contribute to the topic of discussion. It allows them to feel that their voice is being heard and is significant toward the course of that discussion.

Circle time is frequently used in promoting teamwork in younger elementary grades. However, circle time is not just limited to younger students. While you do not have to physically form a circle, you can allow your students to take turns by going around the class so that every student has a turn to speak up on whatever topic is being discussed.

Activity #4 - Participating in school forums.

The school forum provides students with the platform to air their views and opinions on how the school is being run and how they are educated. Students who are elected to be on the school forum are allowed to represent their classmates when meeting with staff members so that they can discuss issues related to that classroom.

Encouraging students to become part of the school forum is a great way of increasing students' self-confidence, as well as a way of giving them added responsibility that will aid them in the long run. This also encourages critical thinking skills so that problems within the school and class network can be solved with the help of students.

Other activities that you can encourage your students to engage in that boosts their team spirit include:

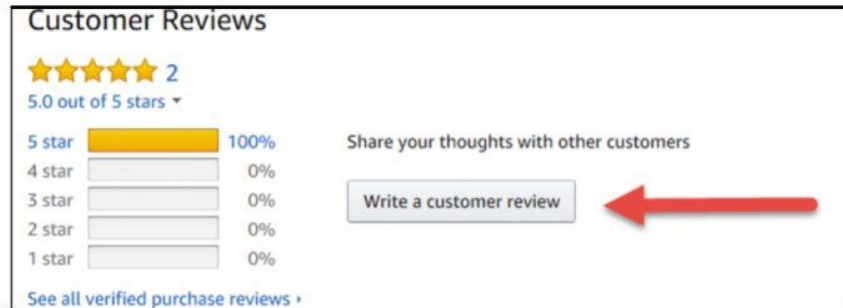
- ***Engaging in problem-solving tasks.*** Science and design technology tasks are great examples of activities that revolve around problem-solving and also allow the job to get done faster

with the help of more than one student at a time. For example, building the tallest possible structure using dry spaghetti as the walls and mini marshmallows as the glue will go a lot smoother with more than one pair of hands. Examples like this give students the mental challenge they need while also promoting that team spirit.

- ***Participating in group reading exercises.*** With this example, students take turns reading passages from a specific book or make contributions by reading passages from different books. This activity encourages better public speaking skills, more eloquent reading, and develops a more uplifting attitude, as students can congratulate each other on good reading or making progress on how they have done in the past.
- ***Playing musical instruments together.*** Music has a way of bringing us together, and this is true even in elementary classes. A great team-building exercise involves allowing pairs or groups of students to learn a piece of music or develop a piece of music using simple instruments like recorders and keyboards.
- ***Participating in group outdoor activities.*** Staring at the same four walls can be off-putting at times and interrupts the learning process for your kids. Take your class outside sometimes with outdoor activities that promote teamwork and learning. Locating plant life discussed in class or learning to build a shelter in a forest are great example of this.
- ***Participating in team sports.*** Co-teach your elementary students with the gym teacher so that they can be paired up or grouped to participate in team sports, like netballs, relay races, and rounders.
- ***Participating in debates.*** Working as a team to argue for or against certain issues will certainly allow your students to feel closer to

each other. This is because they have a common stance on a particular topic that allows them to see eye to eye.

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CONCLUSION

You do not need a book of spells or potions made of newts or frog legs to be a magic teacher. Rather effective classroom management is the thing that will catapult you from your average teacher to the one who students recognize and will forever remember as their teacher, even when they are old and gray.

After a bad year, or if managing a classroom for the first time, handling these small kids with big personalities can be intimidating. But the magic comes from being prepared. Never rely on luck to get you through the school year, as this will inevitably fail you. If you have a plan for getting students to work with you and together, if you have a plan for getting each student to realize academic success in their own way, and if you have a plan for handling the eventual rough patches, then successfully gaining a well-managed classroom environment will certainly look like magic to an outside observer.

This preparation needs to be done before the school year starts so that, from day one, you come in with the mindset that will allow the successful manifestation of your positive expectations.

You cannot rely on a hit or miss strategy for those positive expectations to become reality. You need to have a plan that creates the highest likelihood that every day will be a positive day for both you and your students. From conflict resolution strategies and effective methods of discipline to seating arrangements, achievement recognition and lesson mastery, you have to have it all in the bag from the get-go. Always keep the saying of “failing to plan is planning to fail” in mind.

Luckily, this guide can be your go-to tool for developing and implementing a plan that allows you to start the school year off on the right foot so that

you can keep your sanity and so that your students get the enriched learning experience that they deserve.

Whether you are an experienced teacher who needs a little help, introduced to a classroom mid-semester, or entirely new to the classroom, you no longer have to feel stressed or depressed about the prospect of handling the kids in your elementary classroom. You can feel assured of your ability to help develop well-rounded students. You can ditch the worry of whether or not you are a good teacher because now you can know that you are even better than a good teacher. You are a magic teacher!

By improving your classroom management style and creating a fun yet effective learning experience for your student, you cannot be anything less than that, and this guide has everything you need to create that positive learning and teaching environment.

The world needs more magic teachers for the benefit of us all. Help other elementary teachers connect with their students with that magic touch by recommending this book to others. All you have to do is leave a review on this book's product page to let other educators know how you (and, by extension, your students) have benefited from the knowledge found in these pages. Allow them to know how they, too, can be helped by this book.

Thanks in advance, and all the best to you and your students!

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