

Random thoughts for teachers with difficult students

Teaching difficult students can take the wind from the sails of even the finest teacher. Classroom behavior problems not only affect the teacher, but they distract those students that truly want to learn. Disruptive students take time and energy away from the teacher and this leaves less time for teaching and learning.

An effective teacher will recognize and address disruptive students immediately. If the student has parents that are involved in their child's education, then a phone call home may be effective as an intervention. Some parents however, are less involved and will almost certainly do nothing to minimize their child's negative classroom behavior. In these instances, it is important to find a consequence that makes an impact.

For some students, the negative attention that they receive from the teacher is actually a motivator. Sometimes a subtle approach is more successful. A simple "meet me after class" will often do wonders, especially if said out loud in class. Also, children value their free time and taking it away can be very effective. Behavior assignments are also a great deterrent. Create a worksheet that asks general questions such as:

What rule did you break? Why?

What is your plan for behaving more appropriately next time?

How does your behavior affect others?

Write an apology to those that were affected by your behavior.

Why is it important to follow the rules?

- and so on.

Keep several photocopies of these "behavior assignments" around and hand them out as needed.

Develop and implement a classroom discipline plan. Such a plan is great for maintaining structure and consistency for the students - and with these elements in place, your students are likely to behave in a more positive manner.

Good Luck!