What Is Discipline?

When you think of the word "discipline" what words, feelings, and images come to mind? In the space below, list your ideas.

Age	Common Developmental Traits of Students Ages 4-14
	Not overly dependent on adults; can make choices based on their own interests
	Often see only one way to do things; rarely see things from another's viewpoint
	Sometimes "poor sports" or dishonest; may invent new rules so they can win
	Don't like taking risks or making mistakes; can get sick from worrying
	Adjust well to change; bounce back quickly from mistakes or disappointments
	Like to negotiate; this is the age of "Let's make a deal"
	Quick to anger and quick to forgive
	Like to challenge rules, argue, and test limits
	Increasingly able to plan, organize thoughts and work, and set short-term goals
	Moody and sensitive; may shut down and withdraw, or suddenly flare up in anger
	"Know-it-all" stage; especially dislike and respond poorly to adult lectures

Responsive Classroom Discipline Framework

The *Responsive Classroom* approach to discipline teaches students to choose socially and morally responsible behavior because it's the right thing to do. The use of positive discipline practices supports students in developing self-control and self-discipline. The emphasis on intrinsic motivation distinguishes the approach from those discipline approaches that rely on extrinsic motivators such as the promise of rewards or the threat of punishment.

Component	Goals	Practices	Notes
Creating a safe and predictable learning environment	To lay the foundation for a safe and positive learning community: • Teach routines and expectations • Establish a strong teacher presence • Create a physical classroom environment that helps learning thrive • Give students a vision of a positive learning community • Create conditions for students to learn and demonstrate self-control • Teach students what happens if they break the rules	• Procedures and routines • Envisioning language • Reinforcing, reminding, redirecting language • Facilitating structured reflection • Closing the day	From day one, the teacher uses practices that work together to promote positive relationships, a positive school climate, academic achievement, and feelings of self-worth and emotional well-being.
Preventing off-task behavior and misbehavior	To establish rules and hold students to those rules: • Name goals • Establish rules and connect them to the goals • Teach students how to translate the rules and expectations into positive behavior • Use a range of practices to hold students to such behavior in a proactive, firm, fair, and consistent manner • Foster a sense of belonging and significance	• Establishing rules and expectations • Hopes and dreams • Investing students in the rules • SMART goals • Interactive Modeling • Role-play • Structured reflection • Closing the day • Proximity • Visual cues • Envisioning language • Reinforcing, reminding, and redirecting language	Teacher-student and student-student relationships are of primary concern. High-quality relationships contribute to a classroom and school climate in which students choose appropriate behavior out of respect for the teacher and one another.

Component	Goals	Practices	Notes

Responding to off-task behavior and misbehavior	To handle off-task behavior and misbehavior respectfully and to help the student get back on track, repair any damage caused, and develop self-discipline so as to prevent similar problems in the future.	• Reinforcing, reminding and redirecting language
		• Logical consequences:
		  ➼ Loss of privilege
		  ➼ Break it, fix it
		  ➼ Time-out, Space and Time
			The teacher must communicate behavior expectations clearly and impose logical consequences with fairness and consistency. The teacher's demeanor, words, and tone must be firm but caring.

Solving a chronic behavior problem	To understand the student's particular behavior problem and address it with modified or individualized discipline practices that get the student back on track for developing self-regulation; to help the student learn which strategies for returning to positive behavior work for them.	• Problem-solving conference • Individual written agreement • Goal-setting • Interactive Modeling • Role-play • Reinforcing, reminding, and redirecting language • Structured reflection • Envisioning language	Many of the discipline practices used generally (such as modeling of expected behaviors and checking in on progress toward goals) also work with students with chronic behavior problems. But for these students, the practices need to be used more frequently and systematically, with the involvement of parents and often other adults, such as behavior interventionists and guidance counselors.

Managing outbursts	To de-escalate or interrupt behavioral or emotional outbursts and to draw upon community support to help a student regain self-control at the point of escalation.	1. Proactive steps to reduce outbursts
		  • Establish a relationship
		  • Set up routines
		  • Teach calming strategies
		  • Teach how to express emotions
		2. Interrupt the outburst
		  • Notice the trigger
		  • Use proximity
		  • Use goal-focused reminding language
		3. Distract the student
		  • Give them a responsibility
		  • Give them choice
		  • Offer self-selected time-out
		4. Respond to the outburst
		  • Use calming strategies for yourself
		  • Listen with empathy
		  • Use community support
		  • Avoid physical contact
			The proactive approach to interrupting patterns of outbursts starts with building a community of adults (such as buddy teachers, counselors, parents, teachers, school psychologists) who understand the student and their behavior. These adults work together to support the teacher and student in reducing and avoiding outbursts to help the student have success.

Teacher Language

Teacher language is the professional use of words, tone, and pace to enable students to engage in active and interactive learning; be contributing members of a positive learning community; and develop the academic, social, and emotional learning skills they need to improve their learning outcomes and be successful in and out of school.

Characteristics of Teacher Language

1. Be direct and genuine

2. Convey faith in students' abilities and intentions

3. Focus on action

4. Keep it brief

5. Know when to be silent

Responsive Classroom Approach to Discipline

Discipline as Learning

(Adapted excerpts from *Teaching Children to Care*, by Ruth Sidney Charney, 2002, Center for Responsive Schools)

The word *discipline* is derived from the Latin root *disciplina*, meaning "learning." It needs to be associated positively with acts and feats of learning rather than negatively with punishment. Teaching discipline requires two fundamental elements: empathy and structure. Empathy helps us to "know" children, to perceive their needs, to hear what they are trying to say. Structure allows us to set guidelines and provide necessary limits. Effective, caring discipline requires both empathy and structure.

Time is golden. How we use our precious classroom time defines our priorities. Our schedules often become a battleground for conflicting interests. We go into teaching prepared to teach subjects such as reading, math, music, or art. When I have to stop a lesson to remind Cindy not to interrupt, to address the sarcastic remarks David made to Patty (who gave a wrong answer), or to quiet the voices of students not part of my group, I clench my teeth and mutter about "wasting time." Incorrectly, I start to feel that discipline is a time-waster, a symptom of problem students and poor teaching. If only I had the good class!

I have grown to appreciate the task of helping children learn to take better care of themselves, of each other, and of their classrooms. It's not a waste. It's probably the most enduring thing that I teach. We need to remember that academics and social behavior are profoundly intertwined. The best methods, the most carefully planned programs, the most intriguing lessons, the most exciting and delicious materials are useless without discipline and classroom management.

We need to approach the issues of classroom management and discipline as much more than what to do when children break rules and misbehave. Rather than simply reacting to problems, we need to establish an ongoing curriculum in self-control, social participation, and human development. We need to accept the potential of children to learn these things and the potential of teachers to teach them.

This approach requires teaching proactively. Proactive teaching involves presenting and helping children practice appropriate attitudes and behaviors rather than constantly reacting to inappropriate ones. We need to focus systematic attention on our expectations of children and our methods of teaching those expectations.