

Teaching Tips for Primary Grades

Positive Attitude

“Fake it until you make it.” *Act* positive and confident.

Build positive relationships. Some educators believe that 90% of discipline is relationship, and research has clearly shown that classrooms with a strong sense of community have the fewest behavior issues. Community building games and regularly communicating with your teaching team are both helpful when you only meet with the group once or twice a month.

Assume the best. Research also shows that teacher expectations affect the results they get.

Reframe the way you view behavior.

Obsessive – Tenacious

Talkative – Gregarious

Emotional – Influential, Charismatic

Impulsive – Inquisitive

Aggressive – Assertive achiever

Hyperactive – Energetic

Immature – Innocent

Disorganized – Creative

Compulsive - Thorough

Easily distracted – Easily fascinated

Controlling – Convincing

Obstinate – Determined, Persistent

Opinionated – Confident

Isolated – Selective

Dramatic – Powerfully vivid

Oppositional – Independent

Identify each child's “Islands of Competency” and find ways for children to use their gifts.

Accept children's feelings and help them find acceptable ways to express them.

Covenant

Creating a covenant helps create community and model UU values.

Agree on limits within the teaching team and with the children. Consider creating a teaching team covenant in addition to a classroom covenant.

Discuss how to be called back into covenant.

Prepare, Prepare, Prepare

Is it hands-on / movement-based / experiential?

Are there ways to involve more senses?

Limit time in each activity. A rule of thumb is one minute for each year of age.

Plan extra activities so you can keep children engaged.

Plan and practice routines and transitions. Children feel safer if they know what to expect and if there is a routine. If needed, provide supports, such as group or individual schedules.

Prepare, but also be flexible. Take advantage of teachable moments and change activities if they aren't working.

Talk so Children will Listen; Listen so Children will Talk

Speak more slowly with young children.

Use words the child knows or explain the words you are using.

Paint pictures with words, illustrate by modeling a behavior yourself, and/or use actual pictures.

Use positive statements instead of negatives. Young children may not understand negatives. Also, you get more of what you focus on, so explain behavior you want, rather than what you don't want.

Describe the problem and offer choices instead of making demands.

Describe how you feel, using "I-messages," rather than blaming.

Involve children in problem solving individually and as a group.

Additional Techniques and Tips

Look.

Position.

Lower voice or wait silently.

Point out positive behavior. "I like how Justin is sitting." Or "Sally, you sat down so everyone could see the pictures. That was kind."

"Clap once if you hear me now. Clap twice if you hear me now."

Fidget objects can help focus attention.

Ask for help with tasks such as passing out supplies or moving chairs.

There are many more possibilities. Ask parents what works for their children at school and at home. Ask others on your teaching team, the director, or experienced teachers for suggestions.

Address significant issues with your director quickly so they do not grow into large problems.

Stages of Development

From *Nurturing Children and Youth: A Developmental Guidebook* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2005), Tracey L. Hurd, Ph.D.

Each Tapestry of Faith program for children and youth includes an overview of the relevant stage of development and suggestions for working with that age group.

5 and 6 Year-Olds (K-1st Grade)

See <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/home>

7-9 Year-Olds (2nd and 3rd Grade)

See <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/tales>

9-11 Year-Olds (4th and 5th Grade)

See <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/toolbox>

Multiple Intelligences

People Smart

Self Smart

Logic/Math Smart

Word Smart

Picture Smart

Music Smart

Body Smart

Nature Smart

More on Special Needs

See *Welcoming Children with Special Needs: A Guidebook for Faith Communities* (Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association, 2004), Sally Patton.