

## Effective Group Management

Effective group management is grounded in positive relationships of mutual respect between teachers and students and among students. Viewing young people in a positive light requires dispelling stereotypes that portray them as uncontrollable, disrespectful, and rude. When classes for students are well conceived, age appropriate, and directed by capable and caring adults, behavior problems are minimized. As relationships develop and the students experience positive activities, their enthusiasm will grow, as will their cooperation.

As with any group, two dynamics are at play, and sometimes are in tension: the *task* to accomplish (the lesson) and the *relationships* among the students (how they interact with one another). You will need to tend to both of these functions in order to manage the class. Two basic principles should guide you:

### Principle

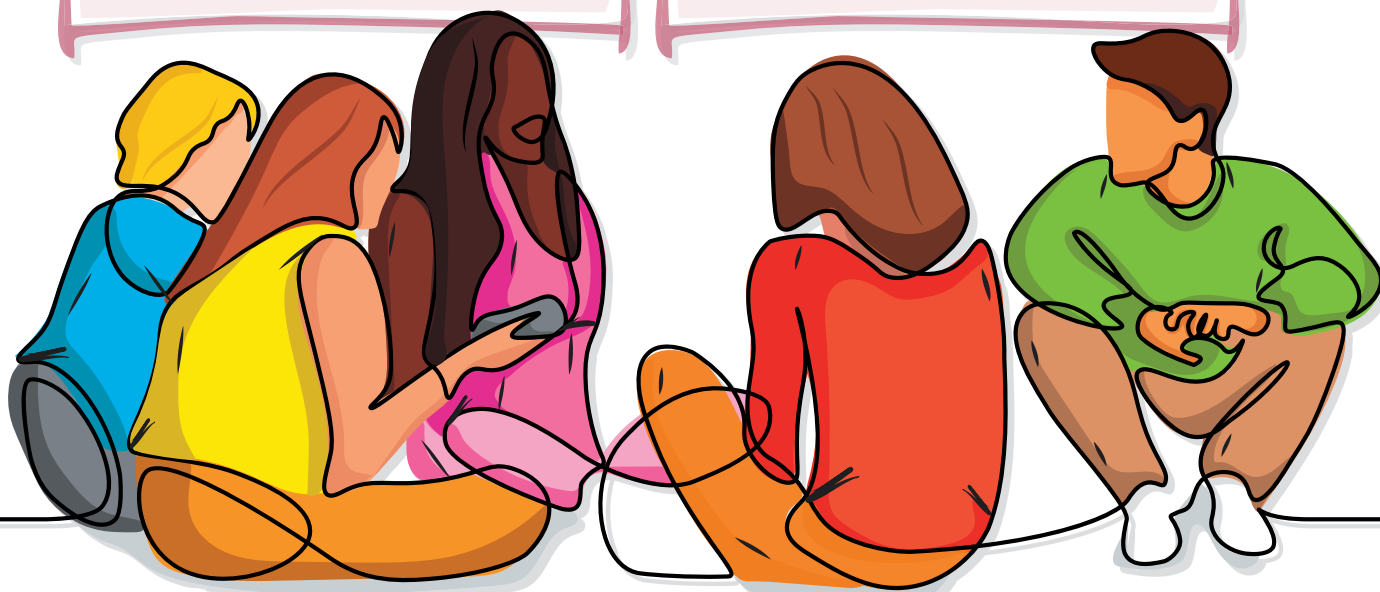
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Be well prepared to facilitate each lesson. If you are confident and comfortable with the lesson plan, you will be relaxed and more able to focus on the students.

### Principle

2

Focus on building positive relationships. Get to know the students, take an interest in their lives, be affirming, and let them know you care.



## Tips for Preventing Disruptive Behavior

The following tips will help you not only resolve but avoid altogether the majority of discipline issues:

- Maintain appropriate expectations. The students will live up—or down—to the expectations you set. Base expectations on the developmental characteristics of this age-group. In other words, expect the students to be precisely who they are—adolescents—and be ready to love and enjoy them as they are.
- Establish clear boundaries. Make them simple, reasonable, and to the point. The students need to know the limits. Explain exactly what the guidelines are and what they mean—describe what *respect* means, don't presume the young people know! Basic guidelines could include the following:

- ▶ Respect people and property.
- ▶ Be positive and participate fully.
- ▶ Only one person speaks at a time.
- ▶ No put-downs are allowed.
- ▶ Behave properly, particularly during prayer times.



- Explain clearly the consequences of broken rules. Impose them quickly and uniformly. If the students learn that established guidelines for behavior can be dismissed without consequence, improper behavior will escalate. Establish a protocol for discipline: first warning, second warning, and so on. If disruptive behavior persists, you may need to speak with a parent.
- Use appropriate techniques for keeping the students focused and for channeling their energy (see corresponding tip sheets).
- Encourage the students to assume positions of responsibility—as readers, prayer leaders, recorders, and so on. The more engaged they are, the more likely they are to behave appropriately.
- Positive begets positive. Recognize and affirm appropriate behavior. Young people seek recognition and truly want to do the right thing. Encourage them when they do.
- In extreme cases, seek help. Some students have emotional and behavioral issues that require special handling. When encountering such a situation, seek help from the principal immediately.