

Classroom Management: Avoiding Sarcasm

One of the fundamental principles of human behavior is that people ultimately respond better to positive consequences than to negative consequences. **Sarcasm** is considered a negative consequence.

It should be the goal of every teacher to interact in a positive way with students and foster mutual respect. Nothing lowers a student's respect for a teacher more quickly than does the use of sarcasm. Whether you speak sarcastically about an individual or the class as a whole, destroys a positive classroom environment and may prompt students to lash out with inappropriate comments of their own. The use of sarcasm suggests that you, as the teacher, do not know any better way of interacting and sets the stage for similar negative interactions between students themselves.

Students do not usually misbehave because they purposely want to upset the teacher. Misbehavior generally happens because of an unmet need such as attention; avoiding a task that is too difficult or too easy, needing power and control, feeling insecure or the need to feel like a person who belongs. Sometimes a student may simply not know what needs to be done at that moment. Give the student the benefit of the doubt, redirect or give instructions again, and keep your initial interactions light.

Students have other issues going on in their lives, and school should be a safe place where they can count on adults to work with them without playing mind games or instilling guilt feelings. Remembering that most situations are not "the end of the world" fosters positive student teacher relations.

Though on the surface sarcasm may seem witty and even humorous, in reality is its usually cruel and demeaning. Sarcasm has no place in the classroom. Strive instead for positive interactions with students. Reinforce what students are doing "right" whenever possible and communicate expectations in a straightforward matter-of-fact manner.

Resources:

www.stedi.org

Chapter 1-Classroom Management, *Substitute Teacher Handbook*

Why Johnny Doesn't Behave, Twenty Tips and Measurable BIPS, Barbara D. Bateman, Annemieke Golly, IEP Resources