

Case Studies

HELP FILE

Noisy Class (primary school)

"I have been using some of the strategies you presented with my grade 1-2 classes and have been finding them very effective...thank you! I have made particular use of strategies such as 'I' statements when dealing with children individually.

I was wondering if you could provide me with an effective strategy for dealing with a whole class situation in which MANY children are off task and working noisily at their tables - what would be an effective thing to say to have them settle to work quietly?"

Jenny Replied

In response to your question ... your need is to get them re-focused and back on task and my first thought is for you to observe at what stage during the progress of the class the disruptions begin. If the class normally starts quietly and later gets noisy, which is what usually happens, then choosing when to intervene becomes the critical move. Intervene when you notice they are just beginning to get fidgety.

At that time maybe need a quick relax exercise - I am sure you can think of many things and have far more ideas than I do, but just a couple to set you thinking - use exercises ... get them to follow you....hands on heads, then in the air, on the table and repeat this quietly until everyone is doing it then stop, drop shoulders , close eyes, drop head and then finally relax for count of 5 ... they'll be following you ... change exercises from time to time to keep them on their toes but this will almost always end up quietening them down then they can go quietly back to work.

Simon Says is another. Or singing quietly something you have taught them or humming ... anything to change the pace and then bring them back on task. If it is at a stage in the morning or afternoon where they need to vent ... something a bit more vigorous ... I often stop and tell them they can all have one minute to talk ... everyone must talk - even if they just talk aloud to themselves ... etc. ... they think this is funny ... but gets rid of the restlessness and then I ask for gentle hush. Nothing quite like giving permission ... to take the need away!

Another hint is to use "inside talk" ... talk in your head. If they've had enough ... running around - exercises - singing - lying down and closing eyes - any of these for a short period can be helpful - they learn after a while, and nice if they ask for one of the exercises themselves occasionally - showing they are tuning in to managing themselves etc. Often when they come in from break they need to quieten - even a circle of sharing, e.g. feelings (remember mad, bad, sad, glad game - quiet exercise or a brief story to focus, but also need to enthuse for the task ahead.

Hope these are helpful, - let me know how you go.

Jenny Mackay