

Modelling appropriate social/emotional behaviour

It is important that you are aware at all times of the effect your behaviour might have upon the students. Following are some tips for supporting development in this area.

1. **Children do as you do.** Children watch you to get clues on how to behave in the world. You're their role model, so use your own behaviour to guide them. What you do is often much more important than what you say. If you want the child to say 'please', say it yourself. If you don't want the child to raise their voice, speak quietly and gently yourself.
2. **Show the child how you feel.** Tell them honestly how their behaviour affects you. This will help them see his/ her own feelings in yours, like a mirror. This is called empathy. By the age of three, children can show real empathy. So you might say, 'I'm getting upset because there is so much noise I can't talk on the phone'. When you start the sentence with 'I', it gives the child the chance to see things from your perspective.
3. **Catch them being 'good'.** This simply means that when your child is behaving in a way you like, you can give them some positive feedback. For example, 'Wow, you are all working so nicely. I really like the way you are all the copying the work off the board'. This works better than waiting for someone to start talking before you take notice and bark, 'Hey, stop that'. This positive feedback is sometimes called 'descriptive praise'. **Try to say six positive comments (praise and encouragement) for every negative comment (criticisms and reprimands).** The 6-1 ratio keeps things in balance. Remember that if children have a choice only between no attention or negative attention, they will seek out negative attention.
4. **Get down to your student's level.** Kneeling or squatting down next to children is a very powerful tool for communicating positively with them. Getting close allows you to tune in to what they might be feeling or thinking. It also helps them focus on what you are saying or asking for. If you are close to the child and have their attention, there is no need to make them look at you. You can touch a child's work as an extension of the child themselves. Point to something they have done and give a positive comment.
5. **'I hear you.'** Active listening is another tool for helping children cope with their emotions. They tend to get frustrated a lot, especially if they can't express themselves well enough verbally. When you **repeat back to them what you think they might be feeling**, it helps to relieve some of their tension. It also makes them feel respected and comforted. It can diffuse many potential personal problems.
6. **Keep promises.** Stick to agreements. When you follow through on your promises, good or bad, the child learns to trust and respect you. So when you promise to help the student choose a suitable book – make time to do so. No need to make a fuss about it – the more matter of fact, the better. This helps the child feel more secure, because it creates a consistent and predictable environment.
7. **Choose your battles.** Before you get involved in anything the student is doing – especially to say 'no' or 'stop' – ask yourself if it really matters. By keeping instructions, requests and negative feedback to a minimum, you create less opportunity for conflict and bad feelings. Rules are important, but use them only when it's really important.
8. **Whining: be strong.** Kids don't want to be annoying. By giving in when they're whining for something, we train them to do it more – even if we don't mean to. 'No' means 'no', not maybe, so don't say it unless you mean it. If you say 'no' and then give in, students will whine even more the next time, hoping to get lucky again.

9. **Keep it simple and positive.** If you can give clear instructions in simple terms, the student will know what is expected of them. Stating things in a positive way gets their heads thinking in the right direction. For example, 'Please shut the gate' is better than 'Don't leave the gate open'.
 10. **Responsibility and consequences.** As children get older, you can give them more responsibility for their own behaviour. You can also give them the chance to experience the natural consequences of that behaviour. You don't have to be the bad guy all the time. Sometimes, with the best intentions, we do so much for our students that we don't allow them to learn for themselves. At other times you need to provide consequences for unacceptable or dangerous behaviour. For these times, it is best to ensure that you have explained the consequences and that your students have agreed to them in advance. Often the class / school will have a set of rules to follow. Make sure you are aware of these.
 11. **Say it once and move on.** It is surprising how much the student is listening even though they might not have the social maturity to tell you. Nagging and criticising is boring for you and doesn't work. The student will just end up tuning you out and wonder why you get more upset. If you want to give them one last chance to cooperate, remind them of the consequences for not cooperating.
1. **Make your child feel important.** Children love it when they can contribute to the class. This makes them feel important and they will take pride in helping out. If you can give the student lots of practice doing a task, they will get better at it and will keep trying harder. Doing task for the class help children feel responsible, build their self-esteem and help out you and the teacher.
 1. **Prepare for challenging situations.** There are times when looking after the student and doing things you need to do will be tricky. If you think about these challenging situations in advance, you can plan around the student's needs. Give them a five-minute warning before you need them to change activities. Talk to them about why you need their cooperation. Then they are prepared for what you expect.
 2. **Maintain a sense of humour.** Another way of diffusing tension and possible conflict is to use humour and fun. You can relate a funny anecdote. But humour at the student's expense won't help. Young children are easily hurt by any 'teasing'. Humour that has you both laughing is great.