

Elementary Classroom Management Part 1

Hi, thanks again for being a Junior Achievement volunteer and welcome to Part 1 of Elementary Classroom Management. We know you probably have several questions about your upcoming experience so we hope to answer those questions in this short video. We'll talk about the various behaviors you may encounter in the classroom during your JA experience and then explore techniques and tips you can use with students in your JA classroom. We know that every class is different, but remember the teacher will be there to assist you. Let's get started!

Connecting with Students

It's important to make connections by introducing yourself and sharing applicable professional examples throughout the JA lesson. As you begin to make those connections, students will sometimes ask you questions or share stories that may seem too personal or that do not relate to the JA program content. Students may ask you if you're married or dating, if you have any children, and even how much money you make.

So how do you handle these types of questions?

Try to redirect the conversation back to the topic in the day's learning goals. If a student asks an off-topic question or begins to share a story during your introduction, allow the student to share for a few seconds, and thank him or her for sharing. Not all questions need an answer. So you should feel comfortable moving forward with your introduction.

In this example, right after introducing yourself and establishing the learning goals, a student asks you how much money you make? You may give a salary range for your job, or if you are uncomfortable with sharing that information, you can use this example as another way to respond:

"That's a great question! The amount of money you make can depend on your education and experience. If we have time, we can talk more about this at the end of the class. Let's see what else there is to learn about."

Overeager Students

When visiting a classroom, it's common to find that students are excited and eager to meet you and have you in their class, but this excitement can become an issue. Tell the students upfront that it is your goal to get as many of them involved in the discussion as possible. That means if they want to respond it's their job to raise their hands. And you will call on as many students as time allows. So what do you do if a student repeatedly raises his or her hand?

First, acknowledge and thank the student for their participation, but then suggest that perhaps another student should have the opportunity to answer, then call on another student directly.

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In this example, young Tommy has raised his hand for the last 3 questions and his hand shoots up again when you ask your latest question. Here's what you say:

"Thanks, Tommy. I'm glad to see you're so excited to answer and I appreciate all your help with the discussion. Maybe we should let someone else give it a try? Marcus, what do you think?"

If other students are not raising their hands try silently waiting for 5 to 8 seconds to allow for adequate "think time." Then you can try asking the question again or rephrasing the question for better understanding. Sometimes finding a way to relate the question to relevant, current events, or age appropriate references helps to spark student reaction. If you need to answer your own questions, consider asking the students to repeat the answer aloud as a class. We call this "choral answering" and it's another great way to get students to engage in the discussion and begin processing the new information.

Another technique might be to try paired sharing (or process partners). After posing a question, ask the students to turn and talk to a neighboring partner. Let them talk for about 10-15 seconds, then call the group back together. Select a student pair to tell the class what he or she talked about. It's best to discuss using this technique with the teacher first because it can be a wonderful way to engage all learners in thinking and talking about the topic at hand.

Expect Respect

If you're talking, and a student interrupts, talks, moves, or otherwise distracts you...smile and wait. Resist the temptation to talk over the student. This signals that you expect their respect.

If a student tests you, please don't take it personally. Some children like to push limits. It's your responsibility, as the adult, to stand firm. Point out how respecting their teachers and school will open doors to future opportunities. Let the learners know how your education helped you gain access to a successful career and that you hope the same for them.

In this example, you've passed out a worksheet and explained the directions, but even before you finish the explanation, one student starts sharing the answers with his neighbor.

You stop your explanation, smile at the student, and wait for him to stop talking. Once the student has stopped, you say, "There'll be an opportunity to share answers at the end of the activity, so let's put our pencils down and listen to the rest of the directions."

If the behavior continues, ask the teacher for assistance when necessary.

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