

Dear Parents,

This year, I will strive to create a safe, fun, learning environment for your child. I believe that dealing with classroom discipline issues is an extremely valuable opportunity for teaching and learning to occur. I also believe that focusing on the positive helps decrease desirable behaviors.

The foundations for relationships in our learning community are often referred to as the ABC's of Larned Elementary Schools. They are: Act responsibly, Be respectful, and Care for self and others.

When breakdowns in these core expectations occur, we will rely on a "Responsibility-Centered Discipline" approach to classroom management. A component of this approach is a five-step guided conversation called "Give 'em Five," which will be conducted privately between the student and teacher. The five steps to the conversation are as follows:

1. Support (something positive to start out)
2. Breakdown (to insure that the student knows what was not acceptable)
3. Expectation (to insure that the student knows what is expected)
4. Benefit (explains why it is important for the student to choose the more desirable behavior)
5. Closure (provides closure so that the teacher/student relationship is left intact)

Another component of the Responsibility-Centered Discipline approach is an area designated for "The Response-Ability Process." In our classroom, you will see a set of colored mats with faces on them. This will be our classroom Response-Ability Area. If a child is not ready to accept feedback, the child may need an opportunity to cool down or think. If the child is very upset or even angry, he/she may choose to sit on the red mat signaling, "I am not ready to talk!" As the child begins to "cool-off" he/she may choose to move to the yellow mat signaling, "I still need a little more time to think!" When the child is calm and ready, he/she moves to the blue mat signaling, "I'm calm and cool! I'm ready to talk!" When the child is on blue, we will then complete our "Give em Five" conversation.

If a child needs more support than an occasional Give 'em Five interaction to learn how to meet a particular classroom expectation, that child may be given the responsibility of creating a plan for how to meet the expectation. At times the student may simply be given some time to create this plan, and at other times the student may be asked to refrain from a certain activity until he or she has come up with such a plan. Though this plan is the student's responsibility, it should be noted that such a plan can include requests for help from parents, teacher, or fellow students.

Using this approach allows us to build relationships with students while we model respect and promote responsibility. It also allows us to teach and learn the real reasons we do things rather than rely on external motivators that may erode students' motivation to do things for the right reasons. If you have any questions about this approach I would gladly discuss it with you further. I look forward to a wonderful year building a strong, positive relationship with your child!

Sincerely,

Mr. Gingerich