

Period 1. – Discipline

Courtesy, Conduct, Ethically Sustainable Communication, Manners, Thoughtfulness, Politeness

For the first period, “Discipline”, the focus is on making powerful individuals into a well-functioning group of children. So for the first period the focus is on carefully organizing every moment of the day in the classroom. The discussion at this time is largely about safety. Can the teacher leave the group for one minute, two minutes or not at all? A lot of attention is paid to the strong presence of adults at every moment of the day, and the daily schedule is planned with this in mind. The teachers agree to be good role models for all.

Here are some good practices for behaviour and comments on why they are important.

- 1) It is crucial is to make the environment structured and organized. In a well-organized environment, it will be easier to follow rules and take good care of things.
 - By giving every little thing that the school has its own place and showing the children that this is where it belongs, everything we own becomes important to us. This could include putting a coloured tape on each pencil to make it visible that the children in the “green classroom“ are the owners of these pencils.
 - It’s important to know what we have – so instead of having many pencils, we only have twelve pencils or the same number of pencils as pupils, for instance. By doing things this way each pencil really matters, and this gives meaning to taking good care of things.
- 2) The first period includes structuring the daily schedule and training everybody to follow the same schedule day in, day out.
 - This creates a relaxed atmosphere where everyone knows what comes next,
 - Accurately following the routine during the first period is crucial. Later on, when everyone knows the daily routine, it is possible to make some changes, but only if there is a well-founded reason.
- 3) Clear messages are given to children about the behaviour expected from them. No long speeches, just clear and simple messages that are easy to understand and follow.
 - Staff members are considered “trainers”. If a child is misbehaving, what we tell the child is our chance to emphasise what we expect the child to do. This opportunity is wasted if s/he is told “what not to do”.
 - Long speeches often only convey the teacher’s disappointment and frustration and tell the children that they are failures. Every child has a “training licence”, which gives the child permission to fail every now and then. It is not the end of the world, just an opportunity to do better next time.
 - PCS structured pictures help in structuring the day
 - A “Black Card” and a “Star Card”: A child will receive encouragement for good behaviour with a “thumbs up” from the teacher. After three “thumbs” the child will be shown the “Star Card”. If the child does not stop negative behaviour after two warning signs, s/he will be shown a “Black Card”, which means the issue will be handled with the child’s parents. If the question is about physical violence, etc., the Black Card is shown immediately.
- 4) Solutions that are not easy to follow need to be changed and simplified.
 - Every rule should be easy to follow – if not, change the rule and look for simpler solutions.

- 5) Organize the role of each teacher in advance and create simple rules to be followed by every teacher.
 - Giving each teacher a role to follow throughout the day simplifies the job, and the teachers can give the pupils their full attention for the whole day, instead of asking the other teachers questions such as, “What are you...; Is it possible for me to...; Will you be...; Should we...; Can I...?”
 - By clarifying the role of each teacher throughout the day, as well as students, teachers know what is expected of them, creating in a secure and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.
- 6) Begin and end each group activity or project the same way every day. Begin each group session with the group gathering together – holding hands and saying “Welcome to the group session” and “Thank you for the group session” or one child shaking everyone’s hand and welcoming them to the group session.
 - This starting and ending routine of every group session makes it clear to both the children and teacher that the teacher is in control. This defines the projects that lie ahead in the children’s mind and sets the group’s dynamics.
 - It does not matter how the group session begins, as long as there is a starting ceremony that the group creates and provides a great opportunity for the children to be close to one another and practice good manners.
- 7) Sit in Lotus position
 - The Lotus position is a way of sitting that encourages relaxation and allows the blood to flow more easily through the body. For a child to sit in a Lotus position means that her/his body is relaxed, and it is likely to reduce tension and stress.
 - To begin each project with calmness helps the children focus and start working with an open mind.
 - The Lotus position also works as a sign for other children that the person wants to spend some time alone without any disturbance.
- 8) Singing
 - Singing awakens positive feelings, and our happy hormone endorphin. Most people find it very difficult to sing if they are in a bad mood, but once they start singing they often find the underlying annoyance or frustration begins to fade away.
 - Singing is an often-overlooked “natural resource” for inspiring joy.
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- 9) Respect rules
 - Walking in a line is the most visible way of showing that there is a good group dynamic. A group that is relaxed and behaves well in a queue is more likely also to show appropriate behaviour at other times.
 - Performing fun exercises when walking in a row makes this training much easier, e.g. walking in giant steps, dwarf steps, chicken walk, hopping, jogging, etc.
 - When teaching respect for rules, the most important step is to “show by doing”. The teacher is a role model who is expected to show respect for timetables and take good care of things that belong to the children and the school.
- 10) Being particular about keeping the classroom tidy.
 - Being particular about following the rules of keeping the classroom tidy and still showing a positive attitude, such as “practice makes perfect”, is keys to success in creating respect for rules. Positive feedback from teachers is an important way to help children build their self-discipline and a good school spirit.

- To answer a child who says “I am finished cleaning up” but has not done it all, it is good to take what the child tells you and “twist” it a little, using the truth as told by the child and adding to it. The teacher might say, “Yes, I can see you have done well, but there is still something to do”.

11) Children and teachers make the group’s rules.

- It’s important that the children participate in making the rules (and also that the rules are about what to do instead of what NOT to do) and a good way to increase the children’s understanding of why every rule matters.
- The question “what if” is useful for steering the discussion in the desired direction.

12) Practise the things that the children are good at, even if they are new to the teacher.

- Continuing to train the children in things at which they are already good enhances their self-esteem. If their self-esteem is low, then it can be good to start with very simple tasks, such as arranging their shoes. Positive feedback for even a small success is the starting point for increased self-esteem.
- It is also good to practice some things in which the children are interested, even when the teacher is not so good at doing them, such as learning a new poem, or learning to multiply by 12. Respect is not only about children having respect for others, but also about the teacher showing respect for the children. The teacher is an important role model and can demonstrate what it is like not to be perfect, but to make mistakes and learn from them instead.
- The children are encouraged to learn skills (such as following rules, respectful treatment of others, polite manners) not only through individual attention (positive feedback, structure cards etc.), but also through collective aims.
- For instance: There is a picture of a train and railway on the wall. The train moves one step forward each day when the group has made progress in learning the skill in question. At the end of the railway, there is a picture of the reward collectively selected by the children (such as playing computer games or going to the woods together).
- The train idea works most effectively when its movement can be evaluated. For example, in the morning session there are certain rules that should be followed. If the children were able to sit still, listen to others and wait for their own turns, the group gained one smiley. If three smileys were gained during the morning session, the train moved one step forward. The smileys were given in the middle of the morning session – at the time when the children acted according to the rules.
- The children choose individual goals with their teacher connected to the issue of “How to be a good friend”. Each child also has a “Cheer up notebook”, in which s/he collects stamps from the teacher on the task s/he has selected for practice. Some of them have, for example, chosen the task of also playing with children who are not her/his best friends. When ten stamps have been collected, the child will get a sticker from the teacher.

Period 1. – Compliments and encouragement

Using appropriate compliments that focus on what the child needs to practise is the most effective way to achieve success. Here are ideas for encouraging the children during the 1st period.

Respect – “I can see that you are concentrating.”

Behaviour – “You are doing well.”

Courtesy – “That is nice of you to say.”

Appearance – “You see, you were nice to her/him and then you got the same attitude back.”



Funded by the European Commission [Daphne III program](#).
European Commission is not responsible for the implementation and the content of the project.