

## “The Middle School Classroom Situation”

Numerous adults possess vivid memories of their middle school days, while others have blocked them out with no desire to reminisce. Pre-teens and those who recently crossed the threshold into being teenagers are a breed unto their own. This rite of passage is one that promotes change in many facets of life, especially behavior in school.

One of the toughest aspects of entering the teen years is the middle school experience. Sixth, seventh and eighth grades present challenges both in and outside the classroom. Within the rows of desks and u-shaped circles, conversation in written, electronic and traditional oral form transpires between friends and enemies.

Popular topics include who likes and hates whom, commentary on fashion choices, and inquiries regarding the comprehension of the subject taught. Other matters discussed consist of negative remarks about peers, teachers, parents, and school in general. When lengths of these interactions grow to inappropriate proportions, teachers intervene.

There are several reasons why middle schoolers often talk incessantly. A tremendous amount of energy within their bodies needs a release. Sometimes this emission is uncontrollable, or so they think, therefore leading to their decision to chat during class. Middle schoolers believe that non-verbal language will go unnoticed if executed properly. They forget that their teachers were once middle school students and know the tricks of the trade.

Teachers set up behavioral and academic expectations for students during the first days of school. Students need to work towards these guidelines and accept responsibility for their actions. Disciplining consumes time that is better spent on learning new concepts and participating in fun classroom activities. Contrary to popular belief, teachers do not enjoy disciplining their students. However, they need to in order to establish appropriate codes of obedience.

Common methods of maintaining proper classroom behavior are utilization of the three-strike rule. Similar to baseball, once a student earns three strikes for unacceptable conduct, they lose their privilege to remain in the classroom, just as a baseball player loses their opportunity to run toward first base. This system works well, except when students continue to receive strikes on a regular basis. Then, administrators in the form of deans, vice-principals, and principals make executive decisions, also known as “calling the shots”.

Avoiding interventions of these adults is possible, and not that difficult. Middle schoolers are capable of controlling their behavior. Although this task is tougher for some students, it is not impossible. For whatever reason, perhaps to impress others, certain students make conscious decisions to act out in class. They seek attention and find disobedience a way to get what they want. Good behavior is a better choice for gaining recognition amongst a classroom of other students trying to learn.

Middle school requires effort, motivation, and obedience. Being a pre-teen and teen is far from easy. Reputations, hormones, and the need to feel accepted are at stake. As teachers, parents, and concerned adults, we can help middle schoolers during these difficult times. Sure, they drive us crazy to the point where our patience wear thin, but providing support and some alliance can truly make a positive difference. Talking to them and letting them know they are not alone, in addition to creating structure, guidelines and boundaries, makes the journey of adolescence a little less painful.