ATTRIBUTE: Communicating, reinforcing and maintaining appropriate standards of behavior

The Research on Appropriate Standards of Behavior

Student success in academically rigorous lessons is built on the foundation of solid behavioral expectations. The creation of rigorous and reflective environments does not happen on its own, but rather is the hallmark of a teacher dedicated to setting appropriate standards of behavior and consistently reinforcing them. Order in the classroom is necessary to allow academic rigor to thrive (Lemov, 2015). Teachers must take into account the age and developmental capabilities of their students, while remembering to treat them as individuals. The NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) reminds us that “it means ensuring that goals and experiences are suited to their learning and development, yet challenging enough to promote their progress and interest” (NAEYC, 2015). A lack of attention to this point can clearly impact how a student interprets and demonstrates what is appropriate—perhaps also resulting in unattainable behavioral standards for some. For teachers, it means discovering and meeting children where they are by getting to know them well, and by supporting them to reach challenging, yet achievable goals.

When negative or aggressive behavior occurs in the classroom environment, the academic effects are significant. Research shows that teachers feel aggressive students undermine the learning happening in the classroom for others (Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2000). Once teachers take the time to formally teach their own clearly defined parameters of acceptable behavior from students and execute consistent aligned consequences, these types of misbehavior will decrease. It is important that you not operate under the assumption that by only telling students the rules, or even asking them to help create them, will solve the issues of misbehavior; rather students need to learn the rules and what is deemed “appropriate” in society for how humans interact and in your community classroom in the same way they learn math or science (Boynton & Boynton, 2005). Explicitly modeling and consistently implementing appropriate standards of behavior over a long period of time will ingrain in students those expectations. Wong reminds us, “You don’t discipline a store; you manage it. The same is true of a classroom” (First Days of School, 2009).

Students desire the structure needed in order for good instruction to be provided and they won’t necessarily resent the time dedicated to the process of learning the appropriate standards of behavior (Boynton & Boynton, 2005). One of the most critical aspects of standards of behavior places responsibility on the students—in teaching them how to control their own actions, recognizing what is appropriate and what is not.