

Boundaries and Discipline for a Small Group

Establish Boundaries the First Night:

It is always easier to give up control than it is to get it back. Establishing rules and following through with them the first few weeks will create a foundation for your small group for the year to come.

What are the group rules?

What is expected from each student?

What is the format of each meeting?

Tip: A very effective way these can be established is by allowing the group to make the rules on the first night. You may be surprised by what they come up with. In some cases they make them more strict than you would initially. Be sure to come to the first meeting with some guidelines in mind to help shape some outlandish rules made by the students.

Appropriate Discipline:

This is where teamwork with your co-leader is very important. If one leader is teaching, then the other should help by addressing behavior issues. Support one another and do not undermine each other's decisions. This will show the students that you are a team.

Step 1. Address the entire group. Remind them of the rules they created for the group.

Step 2. Address the individual student. Simply ask the student to stop. If the behavior continues ask them to move seats. If a student does not respond to this, the team teacher can take the student outside and address what is going on.

Step 3. Establish a plan of action with the student. This may look like an action step (such as an apology), clarifying expectations, or establishing limitations for this student's participation in the group or future activities (see step 4). For a middle schooler this may mean communication with a parent at time of pick up or a phone call home.

Step 4. Asking the student to take a break for a week or two. This is a last resort so please discuss with one of the small group directors, Brian, Sarah, Christina before doing this.

Tip: Follow through and follow up! Do not allow your discipline becomes idle threats. You will eventually not be taken seriously if you address a single student in the middle of a meeting, follow up by talking to the student afterwards.

Inappropriate Discipline:

- Yelling
- Put Downs or Embarrassment
- Physical or Corporal Discipline
- Silent Treatment

Remember, even when you discipline a student you are modeling to your students what is appropriate behavior.

Tip: Know your boundaries. Know the difference of what hinders the group and what gets on your nerves. If you feel like the situation is getting out of hand, find another adult to intervene.