

invisible discipline

Discipline needn't be a power struggle. A soft word and patience can work wonders when you heed this classroom-tested advice from a veteran junior high youth leader.

◆ Rather than ask kids to be quiet for quiet's sake, put your request on a personal level. For example, when pencil-tapping, talking, or other behavior is driving you to distraction, say, "Please be quieter. I'm having trouble hearing Mike."

◆ Ensure attention when you need to talk by asking for kids' attention and then not speaking until everyone is listening.

◆ Use compliments to reinforce desirable actions, such as staying focused, helping clean up, and so on. This takes time, but the group's behavior will eventually evolve in a positive direction.

◆ Take kids aside individually and sincerely compliment their potential for leadership. For example, "You're good at keeping others' attention. I can use that kind of leadership skill in here. I know you'll be good at setting an example."

◆ In other words, avoid punishment-based discipline.