Behavior and Classroom Management

Establish the Class Signal:
Explain that each day follows the same procedure: When the children arrive, the physical education class begins immediately after the teacher gives the signal and everyone is seated, listening attentively. For example, the teacher can say one-two-three, and students immediately sit down and respond by yelling Hoo! as loud as they can, which is then followed by complete silence. The loud signal (Hoo!) gets the attention of all the other students who may not be aware that the teacher is ready to begin class. Basically, all students should Stop! Drop! and Hold! The teacher gives the signal only

- at the beginning of class to get everyone ready to begin,
- during class when it is time to discuss a new activity or skill,
- to stop the class and reinforce particular rules, or
- to initiate the 10-second countdown.

10-Second Countdown:
At the end of class, give students a slow 10-second countdown. During this countdown, students must clean up their area and sit down on their designated line to await the arrival of their teacher. You can also use the 10-second countdown at the beginning of class to quickly group students and instruct them.

Problem-Solving Table/Area:
The problem-solving table is a successful behavior management strategy that places the responsibility of problem solving right in the students’ hands. Most of the inappropriate behavior that typically occurs in class is between two students and typically results in a class disruption and a need for intervention by the teacher. This disruption, better known as tattle telling, is a frustrating but common problem in many elementary schools. If children become dependent on someone else to solve their problems, then they may never develop responsibility to sort out problems for themselves. In order to reduce recurrences of this problem, try implementing the Problem-Solving Table.

Use a teacher led role-play to achieve understanding of the process and to reinforce the significance of being accountable and handling problems independently. It is best to discuss the problem-solving table during the first week of school. The premise is this. If someone has a problem, instead of telling the teacher, they immediately ask the person involved to go to the Problem-Solving Table. The student then should point to one of the many faces on a poster that best demonstrates how they feel at that moment. The poster depicts a variety of typical emotions that all people experience. Posters of faces can be found in health and wellness catalogs. Students typically point out faces that are sad, angry, frustrated, and hurt. Interestingly enough, many students will begin learning and realizing how their actions sometimes make others feel. Students proceed by discussing their problem and possible ways to solve it by following these steps to solving a problem. List these steps on a poster as a reminder for students.

1. What is the exact problem? Remember to listen. 3. Suggest possible solutions and come to an agreement.
2. Tell your side of the story; don’t play the blame game. 4. Carry out your agreement by keeping your word.

Teach students that they can’t leave the Problem-Solving Table until both parties have covered all four steps. In some cases both parties can’t agree on a solution or resolve their differences. If this occurs, allow students to come to the teacher, not to solve the problem, but to offer suggestions on how to solve it. This idea is an attempt to teach children about self-responsibility. Instruct students that if anyone verbally or physically abuses them, they must immediately inform the physical education teacher.

Over time, the Problem-Solving Table may reveal that the student who does not want to go to the Table is probably the one who caused the problem. If a student refuses to go to the Problem-solving Table, that student must
sit out for not attempting to solve the problem.

The Problem-Solving Table, when implemented and reinforced, will do wonders for any physical education program because it provides an opportunity for students to express how they feel while learning how to resolve differences without the mediation of a teacher.

**Helpers of the Month:**
Here is a fun incentive to use with third, fourth, and fifth graders who excel and demonstrate great attitudes in physical education. Helpers of the Month assist educators in promoting behavior expectations to other children. This incentive utilizes third, fourth, and fifth graders as physical education helpers in daily setup, cleanup, errands, and other classroom management needs.

At the beginning of each year, inform third, fourth, and fifth grade students about Helpers of the Month and the characteristics the physical education teachers look for when selecting these chosen few. These students are selected solely on how well they participate in class and demonstrate appropriate behavior in both physical education and in their classrooms.

At the beginning of each month, the physical education teachers meet and decide on 6 to 10 students (or however many are needed) who demonstrate the kinds of attitudes being promoted in school. For example, if you are picking from the fifth grade, choose one or two students from each class (try to choose new students each month). Once the Helpers of the Month are chosen, their names, teachers, and their times to report for their responsibilities are printed out on two sheets. Responsibilities usually occur before school and in the afternoon. The master copy is posted in the gym, and the other copy is given to the administrators to be announced over the intercom and printed in the upcoming school newsletter. The students selected really get excited about this!

The Helpers of the Month is a great idea because it works two-fold: One, it encourages others—especially those who display appropriate behavior all the time—that good attitudes and behavior do get noticed and pay off. Two, it also provides wonderful, willing helpers to assist in the daily chores that frequently take a great deal of time; thus, it frees up the educator’s schedule to prepare for the day’s lesson.

I strongly encourage that you implement this idea or something similar in your program. Helpers of the Month make a significant difference at elementary school level. It not only benefits you and your program, but the self-esteem of those involved.