

## 3 Tips for Talking Back

If you teach children at church, then you know that sometimes talking back can happen, but you may not always know how to handle it. Check out these three quick positive behavior support tips to help you manage behavior in the classroom.

### 1. Choose Not To Be Offended

Students behavior communicates more about them than you. Often a student may be having an internal conflict that he may not know how to handle or his impulse control skills are not mature yet. Either way, it helps to not take things personally and react in emotion. Instead, stay calm and respond in a respectful, direct, neutral manner. This will communicate that you are in control, and everyone should be respectful too.

### 2. Look Beyond The Behavior

Sometimes if you can determine why a student is behaving in an undesirable way, you can solve the root problem before it happens again. So, when a student talks back, stop and notice these things:

- What was happening right before the misbehavior?
- What was the behavior?
- What was the result of the behavior? (What pay off did the child get for the behavior?)

#### Example -

**Before:** A student is surrounded by his peers in large group.

**Behavior:** He keeps shouting out “smart” answers that make the kids laugh.

**Result** - He gets attention and approval from his peers.

If you determine that the child’s need is to have attention, then you may be able to find other more positive ways for him to receive that attention in the future. For instance, you could invite him to share something he does well with the class. This may meet his need in a way that adds value to everyone.

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### 3. Speak Now. Speak Later.

When a student talks back, you will need to decide if you want to ignore it, address it now in front of the class, address it with a personal conversation with the student later, or both. Every situation is different, so use your best judgement.

If you address it right away, stay calm and use a neutral tone of voice. Make your response short and direct. Respond with the same type of respect you would like to see from your students. You could say something like, "In this class we speak with respect and kindness."

If you choose to speak to the student later in a personal conversation, start by waiting for the right time. Make sure both you and the student are calm and ready to listen to each other. Then consider using warm, open body language and tone of voice to communicate that this is an open dialogue, not a lecture. Let the student know why their behavior is disrespectful, but also communicate that you care about their feelings too. Ask why he made the comment and how he is feeling. When he answers, listen to understand, not correct his feelings. Then acknowledge his feelings and remind him of the expectations of the classroom. Then invite him to come up with a better way to handle this in the future. Remember, that if he handles this conversation respectfully, then give him praise for that behavior.

### One More Thing...

Remember that when it comes to helping a student grow in his faith, it's about relationship, not just information. So, get to know your students, celebrate their strengths, and keep pouring in the love of Christ!