

IN THE  
CLASSROOM

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*"IT TOOK US YEARS OF TRIAL AND ERROR BEFORE COMING UP WITH CLEAR COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES TO FOLLOW FOR TALKING TO JUNIOR STUDENTS, THEIR PARENTS AND ADULT STUDENTS."*

# Checklists for Communicating with Parents and Students

**A**side from teaching great classes, communication with students and parents is a vital part of maintaining a great program. There are different strategies for talking to junior students, their parents and adult students, however. It took us years of trial and error before coming up with clear guidelines to follow. Here are three checklists to help.

## When Communicating with Junior Students

- Give sincere praise. Never give false praise. In the long run, the latter can be extremely detrimental.
- Spread the wealth – meaning, talk to everyone – as evenly as possible. If we aren't mindful about this, we will tend to only focus on certain students.
- Connect with each and every student during every class. Make sure they know that you know they are there. This is what's referred to as the "3x3 Rule." It means that you try to use a student's name, give him/her eye contact and make appropriate body contact three times in every class.
- Only use humor that builds the student up. If you are going to make fun of anyone, have it be yourself.
- If you're wondering if a certain comment is appropriate or not, don't say it. The act of wondering tells you so.
- Do your best to be as enthusiastic as possible, even – moreover, especially – when you don't feel it.
- Show no favorites. It's natural to have one or more favorites, but no one else should be able to tell who it is/they are.
- Never say anything to a child that you wouldn't say if their parents were listening.

## When Communicating with Parents

- Whenever possible, give positive feedback to parents regarding their child's progress. Nothing makes a parent happier than

hearing about how good his/her child is doing. This is especially important for parents of your more challenging students. If you see even slight progress, let them know their child is moving in the right direction.

- As above, likewise spread the wealth – meaning, talk to everyone – as evenly as possible. If we aren't mindful about this, we will tend to only focus on the same parents all the time.
- Never speak down to a parent. In many cases, he/she is older and has more life experience than you. They should always be treated with respect.
- Know the parents: what their interests are, what groups they belong to, etc.
- Ask leading questions, such as, "What benefits have you seen in your child?" Or, "How has martial arts helped your child?" These are great questions for instructors that are a bit intimidated by parents, because they usually open up easy and fun conversations.
- Use the Praise/Correct/Praise structure with parents when discussing areas of concern about their child.

## When Communicating with Adult Students

- Give frequent, sincere praise.
- As above, likewise spread the wealth – meaning, talk to everyone – as evenly as possible. If we aren't mindful about this, we will tend to only focus on certain students.
- Connect with each and every student during every class. Make sure they know that you know they are there. Once again, apply the 3x3 Rule: Use a student's name, give him/her eye contact and make appropriate body contact three times every class.
- Only use humor that builds the student up.
- If you're wondering if a certain comment is appropriate, don't say it.
- Do your best to be as enthusiastic as possible, even – moreover, especially – when you don't feel it.
- Show no favorites. It's natural to have one or more favorites, but no one else should be able to tell who it is/they are.
- Generally speaking, adults want specifics on how they can improve. Give it to them.
- Never speak down to them. In many cases, they are older and have more life experience than you. Always treat them with respect.
- Get to know them. What do they do? What are their interests? What groups do they belong to?

Apply these measures in your school, and you'll eliminate many potential problems while building a higher retention ratio. 