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Number 341



Using Constructive Criticism to Help Children Learn at School

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As teachers, we have an obligation to teach our students to conduct themselves properly, treat others as they would like to be treated, be respectful, always do their best work, and hopefully, learn from their mistakes. This requires us to offer our students constructive criticism in order to help them accomplish these goals. When students make mistakes or do something wrong, we must take advantage of teachable moments and provide meaningful suggestions to correct or redirect them without deflating their self-esteem. Guiding and teaching students to do tasks or behave appropriately by setting examples or providing “tips” or clever information constructively sends the message that we care and want to help them succeed.



Tips for Providing Constructive Criticism at School

Teachers have as many or more opportunities to use constructive criticism as do parents. When offering constructive criticism, teachers should be encouraging, helpful, and timely – not negative. When offering students constructive criticism about their work, behaviors, or attempts at doing things on their own, think about the following...

1. Give students meaningful feedback about their work. This says to them that you care about them and their learning experience. In conversation, compliment students on what they have done well and present suggestions and ideas to help them learn what they have not yet mastered.
2. Use body language, facial expressions, and a tone of voice that shows your concern for your students as you share strategies, tips, or suggestions that will help them improve their work.
3. Give encouraging feedback carefully tailored to the needs of individual students. Student egos are fragile, so feedback should be given one-on-one – not in front of peers. Avoid overwhelming students by addressing specifics rather than using a blanket statement. For example—don't say, “This paragraph doesn't make any sense. Write it again!” Instead, ask a

question—"I didn't understand this sentence. Did you mean to say...?" Give the student a chance to express him/herself, and then offer your suggestions. If you take students' ideas seriously, they will work harder to express them more clearly.

4. Explain the concept of constructive criticism to students. Help them understand that constructive criticism is a means for teaching that offers suggestions to help them succeed in their next attempts to do something they want to do well.



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[Item #GB-241](#)

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[Item #FD-130](#)

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[Item #BK-312](#)

What Would You Do At School If... Fun Deck®
[Item #FD-131](#)

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