Session #2: Practice

How do we do children’s ministry?

At Colonial, we strive to have a children ministry that engages in evangelism and discipleship, partners with parents, realizes the power of example that every leader and helper has, is a lot of fun, all while training children to love Jesus’ Word and His church so that they put their hope in God. This section will go over some of the more practical issues that come up in children’s ministry to help us achieve such lofty goals.

**Attendance**

Remember that by accepting you as a volunteer, Colonial Hills is counting on you to serve in your designated role or to line up a replacement as soon as possible. If you are not able to line up a replacement, letting the appropriate people know as soon as you are aware of your absence will go a long way in making sure that we are covered.

Showing up at least ten minutes early to your assigned class/station is also very important as we seek to build rapport with parents, especially new parents. For a first-time visitor to show up at the start of an scheduled activity (such as Sunday School or Kids 4 Truth) and not see any adult present would rightly cause concern. Make sure that if you are running behind because of unexpected circumstances you communicate as soon as possible.

**Communication**

Please make sure that you are communicating early and consistently if you have issues that need to be addressed regarding your attendance, switching roles, or other things that are happening in your area of service. A simple email letting those in leadership know about subs, new volunteers, etc. is helpful in making sure that leadership knows what is going on.

Please also know that if you have questions, frustrations, or concerns, the leadership of our children’s ministry wants to hear that those concerns. Such feedback is invaluable for those who are seeking to guide this ministry in a way pleasing to the Lord. If you don’t know who else to reach out to, feel free to email Pastor Ben at [bhicks@colonialindy.org](mailto:bhicks@colonialindy.org).

**Discipline**

Children are going to misbehave. They will question rules and push boundaries. Loving, fair, firm, consistent correction is necessary to keep the student from distracting others and to help the child realize their behavior is inappropriate. Effective discipline is a key component of any children’s ministry.

***General Principles for Discipline***

* **Discipline needs to be kind.**

When correcting a child, remember to keep control of your spirit. **Never raise your voice to a child unless you are warning them of immediate danger.** Beware of frustration and anger that can easily creep into your demeanor and speech. James 1:20 reminds us that man’s anger doesn’t produce God’s righteousness. Losing your temper with a student could greatly hurt any ministry we have with that child and their family. **Never put your hand on a child to correct them unless their behavior is a danger to themselves or others around them.** If it becomes necessary to restrain a child, use the minimum amount of force necessary and seek to deescalate the situation as quickly as possible.

* **Discipline needs to be firm.**

Being kind and gracious does not mean that you should be a pushover. When correction is given, there should be an expectation that the student will listen, and if the student does not listen then appropriate corrections should be taken. If students are given a line and then are able to repeatedly cross that line, then they learn that rules are more like guidelines. This is especially dangerous as they may start to think that God’s rules are more like guidelines.

* **Discipline needs to be consistent.**

Make sure that the same offenses receive roughly the same consequences for all students. Don’t allow a student to get away with negative behavior one day and then hold them accountable for such behavior the next week. This can cause confusion and frustration. Children need to be clear on what the boundaries are and what happens when those boundaries are crossed.

**Beware favoritism!** Don’t correct bus kids more harshly than you would correct the child of a regular attender. If the rule is “no talking,” watch out for the well behaved girls in the front whispering back and forth, not just the boys you find yourself correcting week after week.

***Procedure for Discipline***

To help with consistency, we will have three rules for all children’s ministries – Sunday morning and Wednesday evening. If those rules are broken, there will be three consequences with escalating results.

Three Rules

* **No talking** – while the teacher is talking or during the singing portion, no one should be talking unless it is to answer a question.
* **No touching** – students are not allowed to touch other students. During lesson time students should not touch another student, and when moving about students should not push, shove, or get into fights.
* **No twitching** – no unnecessary and distracting body movements (sliding off a chair, tapping a seat, tipping a chair, etc.)

Three Consequences

* **A reminder** – if a student’s behavior is unruly or if they have not been listening, they will be given a verbal warning. Let the student know, use the exact words “verbal warning.” You would typically not want to use a verbal warning for a first offense, but do not be afraid to use them if they are needed.
* **A relocation (Sunday) or discussion (Wednesday)** – this means that at some point you pull the student aside, inform them that their behavior is unacceptable, explain to them again why it is they must change their behavior. This conversation should result in the student being moved (e.g. Sunday School or Children’s Church) or the loss of some kind of privilege (e.g. Kids 4 Truth).
* **A conversation with a director or parent – if** the student persists in their behavior, then parents will be brought into the picture. During Kids 4 Truth, the student will be brought to the director who will have another conversation with the student and then explain the situation with the parent. For Sunday morning ministries, the teacher or leader will have a direct conversation with the parent.

**Initiative**

“What am I supposed to do?” is a question children’s workers sometimes ask. Because a careful children’s ministry should have numerous helpers there to supervise, it might feel like all there is to do is stand around. If you find yourself wondering what to do, look to see if there are ways you can help. Befriend a student and find out what they are interested in. Look for ways to contribute by noticing a need and seeking to meet that need. Being proactive and looking for ways to help can do a lot to build relationships with the children and keep the ministry moving forward.

If you have a regular ministry where you are teaching and leading, feel free to look for ways to improve the curriculum and/or service. Add a fun game. Start a sword drill competition. Teach the children a song. Be careful not to get so creative that the lesson time is overlooked, but see how you can make your time with the children as exciting and engaging as possible.