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Stay Near, Dear

A Point to Ponder



It has been proven, time and again, that a **physical barrier creates a mental barrier**, every time. Let us explain. If you walk into a room to meet with someone and that person is seated behind a desk, it is more intimidating than if that person gets up from his desk and comes and sits next to you. Once the barrier (the desk) has been removed, the situation becomes less intimidating. If you listen to a speaker who stands behind a podium, it does not “feel” the same as if that speaker actually walks out into the audience and interacts with the participants. Sitting across the table from someone at a meal is not as intimate as sitting next to that person at the table. Get the idea? Then let’s bring that into the classroom.

Classroom Solution/Strategy



Far too often, and usually without realizing it, teachers separate themselves from their students with a physical barrier, be it a desk or a podium. Now, granted, the students are not consciously thinking that you have created a physical (and mental) barrier. Their behavior, however, says that they do recognize it at a subconscious level. **In classrooms where teachers separate themselves physically from their students, behavior suffers.**

Want a simple solution? Get out from behind your desk or podium and get right in the middle of your students and teach away! This simple act, on your part, will send a message that you are “right in there” with them. Also, the closer you are in proximity to a student, the less likely he is to misbehave. Try it. If a student is behaving inappropriately, simply walk over and pause next to him—without giving him “the eye,” of course. Simply continue teaching, without breaking stride, but do it standing closer to him. You

will almost always see improved behavior. That's because **students find it more difficult to misbehave when an adult is standing right next to them.**

Here's something else to consider: It has also been proven that **teachers get into their own "comfort zones" and tend to gravitate toward one spot in their classrooms.** This is never effective, because it has also been proven that most discipline problems occur farthest away from the teacher. The solution? Stay on the move! You don't need to run around your classroom constantly, but rather move purposefully around the room as you teach.

Here's a question to ask yourself: If someone walked into your room and asked your students, "Where does your teacher usually stand?," would the students be able to answer that question? The answer should be, "She's all over. She never stands in the same place for long." Regrettably, most teachers, if they are honest, will realize that they do tend to gravitate to one spot in the classroom. So get out of your "comfort zone," and make a concerted effort to get closer to your students and to move among them as you teach.

Bottom Line



The closer you are to your students, the more engaged they will be, the better their behavior will be, and the less tempted they will be to "scheme." It is true that "While the cat's away, the mice will play." Stay near, dear, and remove those physical barriers. Save sitting behind your desk for before and after school hours. The closer you get, the less you'll fret over behavior tribulations and, thus, frustrations.