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## The essential 55

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Here are some ideas that Ron Clark says are essential for children to learn: Make eye contactRespect others; ideas and opinionsNeg save the siteSave thanks within three seconds after something receivingWhen you win, do not brag; when you lose, do not show angerVary homework every night without failDo not talk in the cinemaBig man you can beAlto be honestEar you are asked a question in conversation, ask the question oppositeSud accidentally acts of kindnessRelet all the teachers' names at school and greet them If someone bumps on you , even if it is not your fault, say sorryExit about what you believe to tell you the truth, I had felt fed up with the student's general lack of manners for quite awhile. For some reason, it hadn't happened to me to teach in a good way clearly. I realized it was something that parents could teach their children at home. Also, there's such a great push to standards and test scores in my district that I didn't see how I could get away with learning manners and common courtesy. But by hearing Ron's passion and his students' gratitude for what he had taught them, I knew I had to give the concept a try. With Mr. Clark's book in hand and determination to see a steady improvement in how my students could treat me and their classmates in the next school year, I set out to implement the program in my own way. First, feel free to customize the 55 rules for your needs, preferences and personality. I've adapted it to be Mrs. Lewis Essential 50. I got rid of some rules that didn't apply to my circumstances and added some to reflect what I really wanted to see in my class. After school started, I introduced the concept of my Essential 50 to my students. With each provision, we would have a few moments to discuss why it matters and how it looks when we act in a certain way. Role-playing and open, interactive discussion seems to be best for me and my students. Immediately, I saw the difference my students' behavior that lasted for months. I taught them how to praise for the things they like, so now they clap when someone enters the classroom. It makes the visitor feel so welcome and it always makes me smile because it's so cute! Also, they have really taken to answer me formally by saying: Yes, Mrs. Lewis or No, Mrs. Lewis. Sometimes it's hard to install a non-academic topic like Essential 55 on your busy day. I also struggled with it. But it is definitely worth it when you see such a visible and lasting improvement in your students' behavior and manners. If you haven't checked out Ron Clark's Essential 55 for yourself, pick up a copy as soon as possible. Even though it's mid-year, it's never too late to teach your students valuable lessons that they'll probably remember in years to come. No lesson, says Ron Clark, will place pride in the hearts and minds of students. However, you can teach skills. Skills will create confidence, and confidence will lead to pride and self-esteem. Clark believes that his Essential 55 rules will build children's self-esteem by giving them skills that they can use throughout their lives. Ron Clark, author of Essential 55: Award-winning Educator Rules For Discovering a Successful Student in Every Child, is a native of North Carolina. He began his teaching career in 1995 at Snowden Elementary School in rural North Carolina, later moving to an inner-city school in Harlem new york. Clark's work with disadvantaged students and his determination to make a difference in these students' lives have garnered him the world's attention; The President and Mrs. Clinton acknowledged their work with three invitations to the White House; he was named Disney's American Teacher of the Year 2000, and he was named Oprah Winfrey's First Phenomenal Man. Ron Clark Clark is featured on the Rosie O'Donnell Show, The Today Show, and The Oprah Winfrey Show among others. TNT (Turner Network Television) made a TV movie about his life under the name Ron Clark Story. Clark's dream is to start his own school for disadvantaged children. He has traveled around the country, talking to teachers, parents, students, and business and civic leaders who promote his rules, his dream, and his message that nothing should be allowed to stand in the way of achieving his goals and dreams. Clark took the time out of his schedule to share with the Education World his thoughts on the importance of rules for students throughout their lives. Education World: Your book, Essential 55, offers 55 rules that you say are all explained, practiced, and executed from day one in class. How do you have time to do something else? Ron Clark: Introducing rules and enforcing them really doesn't take that much time at all. The first day of the lesson is dedicated to discussing what students will learn throughout the year and go over the rules. explain each of them, and then we practice and role play so that students know exactly what is expected of them. Of course, it takes a lot of time before all students follow the rules as I would like them to. I tell them that the first week is just a practice and that I will remind them of all the rules they break. I tell them that after this trial period, every time the rule is breached, there will be consequences, and we will also go over these consequences. By November, the class is organized, focused, and running smoothly. The class that was previously considered the worst class in school is well behaved, polite, and doing very well. One main thing I point out to students is that I don't have 55 rules because I want to have a sense. I tell them that many rules to help them become better students so that when they leave my class they will have skills that will help them for the rest of their lives. EW: Which of the 55 rules do you think is the most important? RC: I think the last five rules are the most important. They deal with general topics like living life to the fullest, taking risks, and handling mistakes. Throughout the year, I bring up these points in novels, lessons, and classroom discussions. I use any opportunity available to inspire students and motivate them to truly live life to the fullest. EW: Aren't there 55 rules too much for kids to remember and follow? RC: You should see my students on the first day of school! These are similar, 55 RULES?? At first they don't understand, but after about a month they say: We love having 55 rules because we know exactly what we can and can't do, and we know what the consequences are if we don't follow the rules. I think parents and teachers sometimes expect too many students. Children are told to behave, and when they don't, everyone is shocked. What I have found is that if you take the time to show children exactly what you expect, they are much more likely to do as you ask. Just waiting for students to know how to act and hold themselves in all situations is not realistic if they have never been subjected to proper behavior. EW: Today, most education experts recommend that children participate in the drafting of their classroom rules. Your students, of course, do not write their own rules. Why not? RC: I think the reason why most experts say that children should participate in the drafting of the rules is that they will have ownership of the rules and therefore understand the rationale for them. I think this is very important and that's why I spend so much time discussing the rules with the kids. The program I have, however, really works and I'm happy with how it is. EW: Many – probably the most – of your rules are less concerned with class behavior than with social and moral behavior. What is the behaviour of restaurants, for example, in relation to school? RC: The rule was actually one of my first rules. I noticed that the kids were so disrespectful and sloppy in the dining room. The staff were very friendly and real. Other teachers would fuss at them to clean it up, but I wanted to take the time to discuss the label with them and show them how to behave while eating. Most of the rules, as you said, deal with social behavior. When I thought about the rules, I knew I wanted to do something to teach my students pride. The problem is that there is no lesson you can teach that will place pride in the hearts and minds of students. However, you can teach skills. Skills will create trust, and trust will lead to pride and self-esteem. This is why many rules deal with issues from the classroom. I wanted to give children skills that they could use all their lives and therefore build their self-esteem. For example, when my students eat at an official wedding reception or away, I don't want them to have to look at others to see which accessories to use. I want them to automatically know and have the confidence to eat comfortably. EW: How do you think growing up in the South affected your rules? RC: I was raised to have respect for myself and everyone around me. It was just normal, and everyone else in my little southern town was raised like that. I was taught how to appreciate life and help around me at an early age, and as a teacher I wanted to pass those ideals along with my students. EW: are the same rules applicable to children living in the rural south, the north-east of the city and the west coast of the suburbs; primary and secondary school students; students of all cultures and economic environments? RC: These rules are for everyone! They are not just for students; they are also adults – anyone who is interested in living life to the fullest, respecting others, and making a difference in the lives of others. EW: Which rule does your students have the most trouble following? RC: At the beginning of the year, they are all hard to follow. It just takes practice and reinforcement. One of my rules concerns memorizing the names of all teachers at school, as well as cafeteria workers, guardians and all other staff. I want the schools I work in to feel like home, and I want my students to feel comfortable in this environment. Every year, I give my students a booklet I do that is a picture of each employee. Children have to memorize their names and then talk to adults who work at school with respect, and say things like.. Good morning, Mr. Johnson, good luck with your classes today or in the cafeteria... Hello, Mrs Peterson, may I please enjoy pizza and french fries and, by the way, how does your daughter do? I know she's in State College. Children usually find it difficult to learn names, so I increase the staff pictures on the Xerox machine and after school we use them as masks. We then practice introducing ourselves to each other, working on a firm handshake, making eye contacts and memorizing words. Just that little bit of effort goes a long way, and children will soon interact with teachers throughout the school. It even gets to the point where cafeteria workers and other staff get involved in the educational process. They constantly remind students to study exams or try their best. Cafeteria staff ask for lists of spelling words, and when kids go over the line they say things like, If you want some pizza, you better explain that word! EW: What advice do you have for other teachers when they draw up their class rules? RC: Don't think you have to use these 55 rules. Use rules that work for you. Feel free to use some of the mines, but also be sure to build your list and use the system you feel comfortable with. EW: You have written a large number of rules for children to follow. What rules or rules do teachers follow when working with their students? RC: My number one rule for teachers is to have a balance in your classroom. You can't be too strict because if you are, students hate you, and then they won't respect you or want to be in your class. I hate when people tell teachers not to smile until November. Who would want to be in a classroom where the teacher never smiled? Of course not me. On the other side of the coin, you can't try too hard to get kids like you. If you are too lenient, and if you avoid punishments because you fear the kids won't be like you, then they are not going to learn anything. They go all over you, and eventually they will not respect you at all. There must be a balance. Teachers must have strict and fair and consistent rules. Teachers must stick to their weapons and not let their desire to have students like them influence how they discipline students. At the same time, teachers need to make education fun, and they have to do things to make their class exciting and the place where the kids will want to be. We, as teachers, must do things to get children like us and enjoy us as teachers, but we can't let that interfere with our discipline plans and how we continue to order in class. Article by Linda Starr Education World® Copyright © 2007 Education World Updated 08/13/2009 08/13/2009

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