

Helping Students Become Successful

Tony Reeves, Principal, Parkview Adventist Academy, Lacombe, AB

As I was talking to a member of my staff, the other day, we began discussing discipline issues and why do kids find themselves in situations that result in discipline. I firmly believe that if we thought through our actions and the consequences that may occur we might stay out of trouble. Many students want to be seen and heard or want to boost their self-esteem as well as that of their peers, and they think that by participating in risky behaviour they will be more popular and thus happier. There are better ways to be successful than acting out and being the class clown is not one of them. Most people need boundaries and there are certain rules that all classrooms must have in order to maintain a learning atmosphere where students can be successful.

I came across a fantastic book that determines that there are 55 things that students must do in order to be successful. If they follow these guidelines they will not have discipline problems at school or at home. The book is called "*The Essential 55*" by Ron Clark and can be obtained at most bookstores. The very first rule that he gives is that when students are responding to an adult they must answer by saying "Yes ma'am" or "No sir." Rule number 2 is to make eye contact with those whom you are communicating. Rule number 3 is if someone in the class wins a game or does well, they congratulate that person. Rule number 4 is during discussions; respect other students' comments, opinions, and ideas. When possible, make statements like, "I agree with John, and I also feel that..." or "I disagree with Sara. She made a good point but I feel that..." or "I think Victor made an excellent observation, and it made me realize..." Rule number 5 is if the students win or do well at something, not to brag. If a student loses, he should not show anger. Rule number 6 if a student is asked a question in conversation, he should ask a question in return. (It is only polite to show others that you are just as interested in them as they are in you.) Taken from pages 1 - 14 "*The Essential 55*". These six rules give you a glimpse of what you will find in the pages of this outstanding book.

When you look at the rules they contain common sense and many of them may already occur in your classes, but there are those that I am sure you have not yet used and you could try them to see the difference it would make. You can modify the rules to fit your teaching situation, and then you and your students will make the program your own.

Tamara, a grade six student in Harlem, NY said, "Mr. Clark gave me the strength to hold on and be somebody, He is the one who believed in me... He told me not to give up. He told me to try and no other teacher did that." Quameisha, another sixth grader in Harlem said "As long as you have the ability to learn, he (Mr. Clark) can do anything with you-he can make you a star." (Both student quotations are taken from the flyleaf of the book "*The Essential 55*"). "*The Essential 55*" is a collection of the amazingly effective rules that Ron Clark used to become an extraordinary teacher. Through trial and error, this teacher has distilled fifty-five ideas that have helped him take apathetic students in some of the country's most challenging areas and transformed them into award-winning scholars. (Taken from the flyleaf of the book "*The Essential 55*"). Why not purchase the book and try some of the ideas given to see if it makes a difference in your students!

Resources:

- Clark, Ron, *The Essential 55*, 2003, by Hyperion, New York USA