

## The Well-Tempered Classroom

**S**uccess in the classroom absolutely depends upon the care with which the teacher has set up the class. Disorganization and confusion breed disruptive and unfocused behavior. On the other hand, structure, clarity, purposefulness and exciting material invite students to join in the culture of learning, act appropriately and succeed.

**Behavior and Consequences** Most importantly, students need to know what is expected of them and what will be the result of their choices. I make clear to each of my classes the behavior I expect from them in four simple statements (see “Class Expectations”). From these general principles we discuss more specific applications such as when it is appropriate to talk, what kind of questions are appropriate during group rehearsal time, and how to signal to the teacher when one needs to use the restroom. Students are also informed of both the positive and negative consequences of their behavior in class such as grades, parent contacts, special opportunities in class, and the expansion or removal of privileges.

### Class Expectations

1. Be Professional and Appropriate.
2. Be Respectful.
3. Be Involved.
4. Do Your Best.

**Compelling Content** There is no substitute for good teaching. Students unfailingly notice the difference and respond accordingly. Most often, discipline issues then take care of themselves. I take great care to treat my students with respect by getting to know their backgrounds and abilities. Based on these factors, I present them with challenging and yet achievable goals that demand them to grow and achieve in ways that make them proud of their accomplishments.

**Student Participation** One of the best ways to elicit participation and self-discipline is to involve students in leadership aspects of the class. Fortunately, choir offers many leadership opportunities for more-advanced students, giving them the opportunity for additional prestige and challenge while also affording less-advanced students more individual assistance. This involvement gives students additional “ownership” of the class, ensuring their interest and efforts.

**Classroom Environment** Students are heavily influenced by their physical environment. For this reason, I insist that my classrooms be clean and free from clutter to maintain student focus and engagement. Students learn to honor their classroom space by keeping it clean, putting things in their proper places and refraining from language and behavior that is not appropriate. A few well-chosen and -placed instructional/motivational posters can also go a long way in making the classroom a positive environment for all students.