

K–3 Clip Chart Guidelines

At Great Hearts, we stand with the Classical tradition of Western Civilization when we assert that our vocation as educators is to cultivate those in our charge as whole persons. As such, we are engaged in the formation not only of our students' minds, but their hearts as well. Training in habits of virtuous action is an essential component of all humane education, and this is particularly true of very young children.

At Great Hearts Prairie View, a number of strategies and procedures are employed in service of this end. In Kindergarten through 3rd Grade, strategies include the use of the clip chart. All classroom teachers should make use of the clip chart as necessary, but it is crucial that expectations for student behavior remain consistent.

Leads and ATs will need to discuss appropriate use of the clip chart on an ongoing basis to ensure this. The clip chart is a tool for the classroom teachers; Specials teachers should not have reference to it.

Clip Chart Levels and Wording

The clip chart at Great Hearts Prairie View includes four levels—four being the highest, and one the lowest—labeled as follows:

4. I showed excellence in virtue today!
3. I followed all the classroom rules today.
2. I needed reminders to follow the classroom rules today.
1. I struggled to follow the classroom rules today.

The clip chart is designed to reinforce the connection between students' actions and the virtues we encourage them to develop. Each level is worded precisely and deliberately so as to value or admonish the student's actions rather than the student himself.

Objectives of the Clip Chart

The clip chart is designed to achieve the following:

1. Assist teachers in monitoring student behavior. Teachers should be aware of clips on “I needed reminders.” Leads and AT’s should touch base frequently to discuss how many reminders are too many.
2. Provide students with a concrete means of tracking their own actions throughout each day. Often a simple reminder to check the clip will help a student to re-group and follow directions.
3. Provide parents with a snapshot of their child’s behavior as well as a convenient means of communication with the teachers. Teachers should be prepared to review each child’s Conduct Calendar at the end of each day. Students who showed virtue should note the specific virtue on the calendar. Students who had trouble following the classroom rules should have a note on their calendars indicating what went wrong and, if possible, how they can do better. For example, “Timmy struggled to focus on the lesson today. Tomorrow, he should try to show responsibility by sitting in scholar position.”

Moving a Clip

All students begin each day at level 3. This is true irrespective of what may have happened the day before. *Dwelling on previous unfortunate choices shames the child and is unproductive.* All students deserve a fresh start, and teachers should demonstrate how pleased they are to have their students in class every morning by greeting them kindly and cheerfully. Students are expected to follow the classroom rules, and when students do so successfully they remain at level 3 throughout the day.

When a child performs a virtuous act, he is recognized for his action, and the action is associated with a specific virtue. For example, “Peter, I saw that you kept your eyes forward in

line even while your friend was trying to talk to you. You may move your clip up for showing the virtue of responsibility.” Alternatively, “Joseph, I heard you speak unkindly to Stephanie. Please move your clip down for not showing friendship.” When asking a student to move his clip down,

teachers should be sure to include a reminder on how to fix the behavior: “You should use kind words to show friendship this afternoon so your clip can go back to where it should be before the end of the day.” Typically, the child should move his own clip. This physical and visual reinforcement is especially beneficial for younger children.

As a rule of thumb, the conversations concerning clipping up or down should be relatively private. The teacher should hold eye contact with the student, and speak so that only the student and his nearest seat-partner can hear. Public conversations encourage the clip chart to become the focus of the system, rather than a support tool. Often it is advisable for teachers to pull a student aside or out into the hallway to discuss a clip-down.

These conversations should also be short and to the point. When moving a clip up, the teacher should name the action and the corresponding virtue. When moving a clip down, the teacher should name the action and the virtue that the action violates. Teachers should not engage in an argument or a discussion about the intentions behind the action. If an argument begins to arise, the student may be asked to wait quietly in a convenient location until he is ready to accept responsibility for his action humbly and respectfully, or he may be dismissed calmly and kindly to the Dean’s office. When the student is dismissed to the Dean’s office for arguing or refusing to clip down, the teacher should move the student’s clip down on his behalf before he returns.

Apologizing

Students should be held responsible for offering a sincere apology when appropriate.

The standards for an apology apply across the board, whether a student is apologizing to a fellow student or to a teacher, or if a teacher is apologizing to a student or to the class.

Apologies to the teacher are often called for when a student returns from the Dean's office for being defiant or disruptive and are an important element in reforging the relationship between teacher and student that was damaged by the student's misbehavior.

Students should be expected to offer only sincere apologies.

A sincere apology has four parts. The student should:

1. Maintain eye contact (as much as possible and given appropriate cultural norms)
2. Acknowledge the offense ("I am sorry for . . ."),
3. Admit fault ("I was wrong"), and
4. Extend an olive branch ("Will you please forgive me?")

Students will need to be explicitly trained in each part of a sincere apology. Instructions on how to apologize should be given calmly and kindly.

A sincere apology always deserves a response. The one accepting the apology should:

1. Maintain eye contact,
2. Say, "Thank you for your apology,"

After a sincere apology is given and accepted, students should shake hands cordially when it will not lead to potential harm or further upset.

Prudence

While expectations should be enforced consistently, *every student and every situation is unique*. Some students—particularly those who have considerable difficulty following classroom rules for whatever reason—may require a modified approach. If you find the clip chart is making matters worse rather than better with a particular student, it may be necessary to adjust how the clip chart is used with that student only. Leads and AT's should communicate frequently to ensure consistent encouragement for the child as he works to meet expectations. Often adjustments are as simple as allowing the student additional reminders before asking him to clip down or permitting him to complete his work at the AT's desk. More than anything else, use of the clip chart requires *prudence and judgment* on the part of the teacher.