Discipline in the band class setting

Having multiple classes creates an interesting scenario of having to create different disciplines for each class. The band director here is in her first year here at this school. Before this job she was an elementary general music teacher, many of her same ideas seem to transfer over to the middle school age. Not all of them work so well, however. Even so, it is her first year so she is learning what works for these kids and what does not.

One of the things she is very adamant about is that when her band classes meet, she locks up one of the back practice rooms. Apparently the band members hung out back there the previous year and she wants them to actually rehearse. Also, from elementary she finds that it is important to always be able to see her students. It is definitely a different structure than a typical classroom, so this actually is important to think about. Most band rooms do have practice rooms that kids can go into. I think that it is important that kids are supervised periodically while they are in there because a lot of times there tends to be very expensive music or instruments also stored back there.

Another thing she is working on is keeping the kids on task during the rehearsal. The structure of the program the year before was apparently not well kept, so the kids think it is acceptable to goof off. The teacher is trying to make them behave without
being so harsh that she looses her band or orchestra. This is especially noticeable in the older grade levels, where they have had more than one director.

During a talk we had with the teacher, she explained that a lot of her discipline comes from experience. Trying something and finding out whether it works or not. She also felt that it depended on the class. One class may be able to be less strict than others. She also found that yelling does not work on many of these kids, so she stares at them until they start behaving and get on task. One advantage she has for her is that she can see what kind of bad habits the older kids learned from the old director and then make sure that she does not repeat that action. A positive side to her discipline is when she uses lots of encouragement and gives lots of compliments.

Overall, her discipline is good for her still getting a feel of a middle school setting. However, some of the ways she acts towards her older students seems a little childish. She mentioned that she felt that middle school children were just big little kids. I think it may be more of a mix of big little kids and little big kids. They unfortunately stuck in the middle, not wanting to be treated as little kids, but not ready to be dealt with as high school aged kids either. I hope that when I teach middle school I will be able to have a nice mix of the two ideas for discipline, give them a little more responsibility but still have structured discipline that will keep them on task.