

How do effective teachers engage in classroom management and discipline?  
Class Management & Discipline

**Outline**

**I. Context for Effective Practice . . . REALITY . . .** Many research studies have found that incompetence in handling student behavior problems is the **major cause of teacher failure, dismissal, or resignation.**

**We do know a number of important things from research on class management and student misbehavior**

- ✓ All student behavior, including misbehavior, is caused or purposive.
- ✓ Discipline problems may be either real or perceived – most problems tend to be perceived and they tend to be of a minor nature.
- ✓ Real discipline problems (major problems) are usually the cumulative experiences in the individual's background – both home and school.

**The ineffective teacher actually causes and/or feeds misbehavior**

- the despot – too harsh or authoritarian; students may indirectly or directly fight back
- the buddy too friendly; wants to be seen by the students as an ally and chooses not to challenge student behavior problems
- the nonentity – too distant; no rules, no guidance, no expectations)

**By reflecting on these points, it is clear that the teacher's behavior is key to the behavior of MOST students . . . this should be encouraging to you as you enter the classroom . . . you ARE in position to be the master of your own fate in terms of classroom discipline vis-à-vis MOST students.**

## II. Context for Effective Practice . . . **FLOW** . . . effective teachers know how manage classroom space and time to avoid predictable flare-ups

- ✓ Space Management ~ wall space, floor space, traffic patterns, teacher's desk, equipment storage
- ✓ Time Management ~ transitions, beginning class, lesson pacing, providing assistance, establishing routines and procedures

## III. Context for Effective Practice . . . **TEACHER POWER** . . . effective teachers know that teacher power clichés such as “show them who’s boss” or “don’t smile until Christmas” are often too simplistic – teacher power (also read this as teacher authority, teacher respect) is better seen as a combination of different power types . . . some students respond to one type but not to others

- Legitimate Power – one has power **because of one’s position**. Student Voice: “I behave because you are the teacher.” This unearned power is what most teachers expect from their students. Does not work if the student has weak history of respect of authority from the home (i.e., child’s parents don’t respect authority and/or the child doesn’t respect parents)
- Expert Power – one has power **based on knowledge or training**. Student Voice: “I behave for you because you know more than I.” Doesn’t work if students believe you do not know what you are talking about or that your area of knowledge is not seen to be significant to them.
- Referent Power – one has power **earned through actions that demonstrate trust, caring, and concern**; Student Voice: “I behave for you because you like me and I want to please you.”
- Reward Power – one has power **by providing rewards**. Student Voice: “I behave for you in order to get something from you.” . . . praise, grades, smiley face, food . . . this only works as long as the student values the reward being offered and the good behavior may disappear if the reward disappears.
- Coercive Power – one has power **by administering punishment**. Student Voice: “I behave for you in order to avoid being punished.” This usually leads to the suppression (not elimination) of misbehavior and the behavior may re-emerge in a different form or be transferred to another environment.

**Responding to Learner Misbehavior – Part I: Your Attitude. Some basic ideas on how to set rules and deal with rule violations:**

- ✓ Focus classroom rules on the major, not minor, behavior problems
- ✓ Clearly define what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior and why – learners see that the rules are not arbitrary; depending on age you may wish to practice the acceptable behavior (e.g., ring bell - attention)
- ✓ Clearly define the consequences for unacceptable behavior – learners should see that rule enforcement is not vindictive
- ✓ Avoid overreactions to behavior problems, maintain professional calmness – otherwise minor problems will escalate into major ones
- ✓ Address the causes, not just the behavior – otherwise minor problems will escalate into major ones
- ✓ Be consistent and fair in enforcement – otherwise minor problems will escalate into major ones
- ✓ Preserve learners' dignity – if you diminish a learners' self worth (students call this being “put-down”) you may actually create more discipline problems
- ✓ Choose private correction over public correction – this “saves face” and does not create an ugly, public confrontation

**Responding to Learner Misbehavior – Part II: A Sequence and a Range of Alternatives . . . have a class management plan organized across four categories of intervention approaches . . . begin with Category 1 ideas and move to and through “stronger” intervention Categories as needed**

Category 1: Responses Supporting Self-Control (unobtrusive approaches)

1. Reinforce productive behavior – catch the learners being good
2. Use nonverbal signals to indicate disapproval – eye movements, gestures, facial expressions
3. Use proximity control
4. Use a learner’s name in the context of a lesson – you see Mary drifting . . .”Let’s pretend a girl named Mary lived during this time . . .” Notice I am not calling on her, I am using her name.
5. Redirect learner’s attention – “let’s have all eyes up here; I see Mary is with me, great
6. Encourage the learner to take personal action: (count to yourself to 10; put your head on your desk for a few minutes; go to the time out location in the room).

Category 2: Providing Situational Assistance

1. Take time for a quiet word said only to the misbehaving student
2. Stop instruction, provide a rule reminder so all class can hear.
3. Reprimand (called a desist); firm tone, clear, “Jill, stop talking to Sally.”
4. Remove the learner from the situation (“Sam, go back to desk or time out area; we will talk about your behavior later”)
5. Arrange one-on-one conference with misbehaving learners; open non-threatening discussion; may end in a behavior contract

Category 3: Implementing Consequences (punishment)

1. Lose a privilege they the student values
2. Provide for in-class isolation (classroom time out – problem, when to come back)
3. Have learners make up wasted time (recess, after school – problem, what do they do during this make-up time, plus this punishment involves you taking extra time as well)
4. Remove the learner (take to office – don’t put in the hallway)
5. DO NOT USE SCHOOL WORK AS PUNISHMENT

Category 4: Involving Others

1. Phone call or letter to parents or guardians explaining that you are concerned about the behavior (not that their child is “bad”). Ask for their input and help. Suggest and implement follow-up phone calls as things progress (both positive and negative) – informal action plan
2. Schedule an “at school” meeting with parents or guardians (you go to the meeting with notes; not solutions and not with the principal); cooperative action plan
3. Arranging conferences with other professionals (Principal, counselors, social workers) – corrective action plan