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6 Tips for Classroom Management With Grace

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There are a million "red light/green light" charts on Pinterest, here are 6 tips to really tackle classroom management with love and grace.



Spring fever is in the air; the weather is warming up, and your students can sense summer lingering in the just-out-of-reach distance. Antsy students can sometimes lead to an uptick in behavioral issues in the classroom. It might be a good time to evaluate your current classroom management procedures to see what is working... and what is decidedly not. Nobody likes dealing with discipline, but I learned some tricks from some of the best teachers over the years to mitigate smaller issues—and deal with larger ones with grace.

1. Be clear and consistent.

This is incredibly important. Whatever your classroom rules and consequences are, be clear and stick to 'em. Your students will notice any inconsistencies, and they will call you out on it. Believe me, I know it hurts to issue a consequence to those students who rarely give you problems, but it's worth it in the grand scheme of things.

2. Fix it and forget it.

For minor infractions (like repeated talking), issue the consequence firmly... and then move on. Don't make a huge deal about it. Sometimes that can be really hard, especially on those days when your patience is hanging on by a thread. But fight the urge to lecture a student over something small. It helps you appear fair and objective at the moment, and it's good for a student (especially the younger ones) to know that you're not going to hold a grudge. They need to see that, and they'll appreciate your

even-keeled nature.



3. Isolate the issue from the classroom.

I quickly learned that addressing a major student problem in front of the class only makes things worse. It can quickly turn into a power struggle, which is a one-way ticket to Nowheresville.

If you feel your own blood pressure rising, send the student out into the hallway so you can work your class to a good stopping point. (They'll never be so attentive than in these few minutes!) This gives you a little time to cool down, and it also gives the student outside your door a few minutes to ponder his/her own actions.

In the hallway, explain how his/her behavior is affecting others and hindering learning. Give the student a chance to apologize – often this will happen before you say a single word. Close with a message akin to, "When you are ready to rejoin the class and behave as is expected, you are welcome to come back inside." Let them know you highly prefer that they choose to come back as an active participant in the classroom. If they choose not to come back, then a parent contact is a good next step.

4. Be generous with grace.

Your students will make mistakes; we all do. One of the best things I learned over the years was to be sure students knew their slate was clean with me each day. It can be done subtly, like engaging a student in a conversation before class begins that has nothing to do with his/her disciplinary issue the day before. Ask how his baseball game went. Or if she is excited about her upcoming band concert. Show them you care more about them as individuals than the misbehavior.



5. Call out the good.

People respond to positive reinforcement. When you see behavioral improvements in a single student or an overall difficult class, make a big deal out of it. "You guys rocked this activity today! I loved the questions you asked and the way you listened to each other respectfully." Similarly, if an individual child's behavior improves, send a note home to the parent or guardian.

6. Put it back on your students to manage themselves.

Sometimes it's appropriate to get students to issue their own consequences. For instance, if a class was particularly chatty, after appropriate verbal warnings, I would finally say, "Ok. Everyone who was just talking needs to sign the warning sheet [or your method of choice]." I found that they're usually pretty honest and will follow if one steps up. Thank them for their leadership and honesty, and move along.

Keep in mind that no matter what you do, there will always be students who choose to misbehave. There is a myriad of reasons why this could be happening, and often it's nothing personal against you. It's just a part of the profession. Likewise, there will also always be students you just don't mesh with and maybe never will. While it can be discouraging, just remember that these are little people with little growing hearts. Don't give up!



About the Author

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"When one teaches, two learn." - Robert Heinlein