



4 Easy Guidelines To Calling On Students While Eliminating Rudeness, Disruptions, And Calling Out

The way you call on your students when they raise their hand can have a strong impact on learning and behavior.

But the truth is, many teachers get it wrong.

They call on students in whatever way feels natural and end up causing resentment and a nagging perception of unfairness. They discourage rather than encourage participation and frustrate both those who raise their hand properly and those who impatiently wriggle and writhe for attention.

They bring stress and tension to an area that can and should be a source of healthy and polite give-and-take interaction.

Although teaching students how to raise their hand is important, and should be included in the classroom management-related lessons you cover **the first week of school**, it is your behavior in response to hand-raising that most determines its effectiveness and ease of use.

What follows are four easy guidelines that will eliminate disruptive, call-on-me-first behavior while ensuring that every student feels safe, valued, and encouraged to participate.

1. Wait first.

Your first step upon noticing hands in the air is to wait. Pause and allow every student an opportunity to think through the current topic. Many students need a moment to formulate their responses or rehearse how best to pose their questions and ideas.

Waiting also lowers the stress in the room. It does away with the notion that your students must compete to be heard. They have the luxury of time to think before raising their hand, removing the need to jump in and blurt out whatever comes to mind.

Furthermore, it breaks the habit many students develop of asking a question or sharing an answer the moment you look in their direction. *“But I did raise my hand!”* Finally, it gives you time to choose the right students to participate given the situation, the context, and your goals for the lesson.

2. Make eye contact.

Before deciding who to call on – which may or may not be a student with their hand up – take a moment to make the briefest eye contact with those who are raising their hand and volunteering to participate. If it’s the entire class, scanning will suffice.

They need to know that you see them and that you’re not making your decision based on who is closest, most aggressive, or within your immediate field of vision.

Even the youngest students readily accept not being selected first – or at all – as long as they know that you see them and know that they have an

answer or response. A pleasant smile and a thank you of acknowledgement when needed also helps in this regard.

3. Select only those following the routine.

One of the keys to creating an environment where all students feel safe to participate is to only call on students who are demonstrating proper hand-raising etiquette. So unless they're quiet and sitting down in their seats with their hand straight up in the air, you *will not* call upon them – ever, ever, ever.

Again, it's important that they notice you looking at them and then turning to choose only those students who are following the hand-raising routine you modeled in the beginning of the school year.

By following this simple guideline you'll do away with aggressive hand-waving, groaning, and straining behavior.

4. Enforce disruptions.

If a student rises up in their seat and waves their arms about, there is no reason to enforce a consequence. Following the steps above will eliminate such behavior. If, however, they call out or pound their hand on their desk to get your attention, then it becomes a **rule-breaking** disruption.

It's best, though, not to enforce a consequence right away. Call on someone else. Wait until you're ready to move on with a new question or topic before leaning in and saying, "You have a warning because you broke rule number two."

Waiting until the moment passes before enforcing a consequence protects the flow of discussion and enables you to handle the situation gracefully and without confrontation.

Calming, Settling, Freeing

If you're a regular reader and **subscriber** of Smart Classroom Management then you know that effective classroom management is about action.

What you do is infinitely more important than what you say. If your students are blurting out answers and interrupting your class, if they're lunging out of their seats to get noticed and crowding out quieter students, then instead of reminding, threatening, or testily asking them to stop, take a step back.

Breathe. Follow the simple guidelines above.

It is the *way* you call on your students, after all, that is the key to encouraging polite participation. It is the key to grooving the habit of patient listening, well-thought-out responses and opinions, and a pleasant stream of dialogue between you and your students.

It is the key that draws *all* students into your ring of safety – calming, settling, activating the hum and thrum of engaged minds.

Freeing every student to bloom and discover their unique voice.

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