



Are You Afraid To Hold Students Accountable?

By Michael Linsin

Here at Smart Classroom Management we talk a lot about the importance of [building rapport](#).

It's your relationship with students, after all, that in large part determines your effectiveness in curbing misbehavior. It's your likability, good humor, and pleasant demeanor that causes them to want to please you and behave for you.

Building rapport is one of the secrets to reaching, influencing, and then transforming the most difficult students and classrooms.

But it can also be a source of confusion.

Many teachers become so committed to this one important strategy that they lose perspective. They go too far. They venture beyond effective means of building rapport and into unhealthy deference.

Before long they're kowtowing to students – bargaining, giving in, walking on eggshells, and looking the other way in the face of misbehavior.

They fear that if they truly hold them accountable, the relationship will suffer. Their students won't like them anymore, and they'll lose the precious influence they've worked so hard to achieve.

But it isn't true.

In fact, when you let misbehavior go without a consequence, when you let poorly followed routines slide and difficult students off the hook, you *lose* influence. You never gain it.

Without [fixed and faithfully defended boundary lines of behavior](#), without sky-high expectations for courteousness and respect, without detailed, here's-how-we-do-it instruction backed by fair accountability, your students will disregard you.

It doesn't matter how kind and understanding you are. It doesn't matter how sympathetic or friendly or funny. It doesn't matter if you shower them with the love of ten people.

If you fear accountability, your students will walk all over you. They'll become flippant and blasé, brazen and disrespectful. They'll become too cool for school and absolutely, positively too cool for you.

They'll view you not as a leader worth looking up to, but as a weak-kneed peer they can manipulate and dismiss with a wave of the hand. Of course, not all students will behave this way, but the tone and tenor of your classroom will surely reflect this inescapable truth.

One of the most overlooked aspects of building a strong relationship with students is your ability to protect them from disruption, disorder, chaos, and the like. It's your ability to engender confidence that when they come to school, you've got their back.

Although important, building rapport isn't all about likability. It's also about strength and leadership. It's about doing what you say you will and safeguarding every student's right to learn and enjoy school.

It's about doing what is best for them and their learning – which may entail [redoing routines and procedures](#). It may entail being late for recess to reteach how to work in groups. It may entail sending a student to time-out during the coolest lesson of the week.

Yes, they may grumble and complain under their breath. They may sigh and look to the heavens. They may practice walking in line for the second time in a row like they're heading for the gallows.

But they know deep down that coming from you it's justified.

It's right and true and one of the reasons why your classroom is the best and happiest they've ever been part of. It also reflects a world that makes sense, that resonates with the innate truth of right and wrong etched upon every heart.

In the hands of a fair and consistent teacher, accountability works. It works in the suburbs and in the inner city. It works in the backwoods, the small town, and the largest metropolis.

It prepares students for what is required for success in school and beyond. It teaches, it protects, it humbles in the healthiest, most wonderful way.

So take heart! Dust that classroom management plan off and mount it high on the wall for the world to see. Teach it to your students. Model it

explicitly. Rededicate yourself to protecting your students' education and your peace of mind.

Then build rapport that is real and lasting and unforgettable.