



How To Avoid Arguing With Students

By Michael Linsin

It's easy to get pulled into an argument.

Example:

You notice a student pushing a classmate during a transition. It's a clear violation of [your classroom management plan](#), so you move in and enforce a consequence. Upon hearing the news, however, the student's eyes go wide, their jaw drops, and they begin to protest.

"No way! I didn't touch him. He cut in front of me."

As soon as you answer back, as soon as you respond and try to justify the consequence, you're in a full-fledged argument. Just like that, you're in deep and can't get out until you convince them to accept the error of their ways.

In the meantime, you've brought tension into your classroom. You've interrupted learning. You've increased the chances that the student will dig in their heels, battle tooth and nail, and blame you for the consequence.

It's a tangled, stress-filled mess.

If, however, we rewind the tape to the moment you first informed the student of the consequence, you can avoid the argument altogether.

You see, the mistake the teacher in the above scenario made was waiting for a response. Many, if not most, teachers do this. They give a consequence and then await the reaction. It's almost as if they anticipate an argument. They steel themselves for it and even rehearse what to say next.

But what this does is invite students to do just that. Before you know it, every time you give a consequence, there is an argument. There is a complaint, a challenge, a tantrum, a protest, a roll of the eyes, or a display of disrespect.

The good news is that with a simple strategy you can eliminate such reactions entirely. The key is not giving them the chance.

When you give a consequence, approach the student and pause until they turn and face you. Let the moment, the truth of what just occurred, hang in the air a moment. Calmly, almost robotically, deliver your consequence and *then immediately turn back to what you were doing before*.

You know they broke a rule, so there is no reason for you to argue. They know they broke a rule, so there is no (honest) reason for them to argue. Thus, no other communication needs to be exchanged.

It's important to note that how you give a consequence must be thoroughly taught and modeled as part of the series of classroom management-related lessons you'll teach during the first few weeks of each school year.

If you establish it from the beginning, arguing won't even occur to them.

Now, if in the rare case a student follows you and attempts to argue, it's okay to repeat yourself one time. If the student continues, or has a tantrum and stomps off or [refuses to go to time-out](#), then wait until they cool off before following up with a stronger consequence.

We receive a lot of emails from teachers wrung out from arguing and perplexed as to why their students so aggressively resist and fight back, seemingly over every consequence. But in most cases arguing is brought on by the teacher, not the student.

If you leave a void by waiting for a response, your students are going to fill it. One of our mottos here at SCM is that students respond predictably to certain teacher behaviors. In the case of arguing, this couldn't be more true.

Arguing is a byproduct of your behavior. It's encouraged through your desire to see the student's reaction to the consequence, to look into their eyes for evidence that they're taking responsibility.

But if you want to eliminate arguing, complaining, and the like from your classroom, you mustn't wait for a reaction.

Instead, trust your classroom management plan and deliver your consequence with confidence. *"You have a warning because you broke rule number three and didn't keep your hands to yourself."*

Then walk away.

Note: The release date for Classroom Management for Art, Music, and PE Teachers was set, then moved back, then moved up again, then delayed . . .

and now, after all of that, it will be available this Tuesday, May 6th
(Amazon.com).