



SMART CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

How To Be Consistent With Classroom Management

Ask a hundred teachers if it's important to be consistent with classroom management and every last one of them will tell you that it is.

But knowing that it's important is one thing. Actually being consistent is another.

Most teachers only kinda-sorta follow their **classroom management plan** — deciding whether to enforce a consequence not based on what their plan actually says, but on the nuances of the situation, how they feel in the moment, or who is doing the rule breaking.

But this becomes the slickest of slippery slopes. And before long they're routinely ignoring their classroom management plan.

It's only much later, upon experiencing the extreme stress and upside-down chaos of letting things go, that they kick themselves under their desk and resolve not to let it happen again.

But then doubt slowly slithers its way back in, and the cycle repeats.

The solution to classroom management inconsistency isn't intense psychotherapy. It's not Skinnerian conditioning. It isn't even a renewed determination to do better.

It's much simpler than that.

The solution is confidence, confidence in knowing that it is indeed best to follow through with your classroom management plan every single time.

What follows is a list of reasons why you *must, must, must* be consistent with classroom management. Review it often. Memorize the key points. Internalize its importance. Relax in its reassurance.

And your doubts will be put to rest.

It's unfair not to.

To enforce your agreed-upon consequences sometimes and not others is grossly unfair to your students. *"Why does she get away with calling out in class and I don't?"* Why indeed? And regardless of your reasoning, regardless of the sensitive nature of the circumstances, or the unique personality of the misbehaving student, the rest of your class doesn't know any better, and thus will be sure to enter it in their unfairness file.

It causes resentment.

If you don't follow your classroom management plan as it's written, the same for every regular ed. student in your classroom, your students will naturally conclude that you're **playing favorites** – and fiercely resent you because of it. This can be particularly galling when those few who are given more latitude than others are the same ones who continually disrupt the class and ruin the fun of learning.

You'll lose respect.

Whenever you say you're going to do something and don't do it, you lose a layer of respect from your students. The central message they get from you is that you can't be counted on. **You can't be looked up to or admired.** And you're not the leader they can place their trust in. To them, you're just another wishy-washy adult who makes promise after promise but doesn't come through.

You'll be tested.

When your most challenging students learn that you're not so committed to enforcing consequences, that your classroom management plan is written in pencil, they'll smell blood in the water. And, although they'll pick their spots, they'll test you and challenge you every chance they get. They'll continually skirt the edges of your rules, probing for weakness. They'll push the boundaries. They'll hold learning hostage. And they'll drive you crazy.

Behavior will worsen.

Wherever there is weak accountability or semi accountability, behavior, respect, and kindness take a nosedive. That's just the way it is and the way it will always be. Try as we might to bury our heads in the sand and deny it, it's a fact of teaching. We can't get around it. It's the human condition. Of course, the inverse is also true: Where there is accountability, polite behavior, respect, and kindness are sure to follow.

Learning will suffer.

You simply cannot protect the rights of your students to learn and enjoy school if you don't follow through with your classroom management plan. Calling out in class, getting up without permission, interruptions, side-talking, name-calling, drama, misbehavior, silliness . . . your students have a right to come to school and learn without interference and disruption. And unless you rely on a plan for holding misbehaving students accountable, learning will suffer.

You'll be forever frustrated.

Without 100% reliance on your classroom management plan to curb misbehavior, you'll naturally fall into potentially harmful methods like yelling, scolding, sarcasm, arguing, and the like. You'll struggle with anger and emotional control. You'll also find yourself hoping your students will behave, pleading with them to behave, and trying to convince them to behave. This is a remarkably frustrating and ineffective combination that will cause you to question your choice of career.

One Plan

There are those who would have you believe that you *should* have different standards of behavior depending on the student, that you should consider each student and every situation differently and individually and adjust your consequences, or lack thereof, accordingly.

And this may sound good in theory. It may very well play out proudly in academia to enthusiastic applause. But in a real world classroom it is a disaster.

A teacher who **dishes out consequences** based upon her (or his) own, personal subjective view of her students, the behavior in question, or the particular situation will lose control of her classroom and the respect of her students.

A well-written classroom management plan, on the other hand, followed as taught, modeled, and practiced, is fair to all students and never creates resentment, friction, and hard feelings between the teacher and her students.

Unless you have a student in need of specific behavioral accommodations detailed in an IEP, it's best for your students, their learning, and your peace of mind that they all fall under the same clearly defined, objective classroom management plan.