



# SMART CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

## How To End Each Day On The Right Classroom Management Foot

It's easy to get careless with classroom management during the last ten or fifteen minutes of the school day.

This is why it's so common to see misbehavior at dismissal – swinging backpacks, chasing, shouting, pushing, roughhousing...students wound up and tuned out, oblivious to your warnings and exhortations.

The problem with this, beyond the immediate chaos and misbehavior, is that students strongly associate the last few minutes of the day with the culture of your classroom.

Thus, by not leading your students through this critical time period calmly and purposefully, you're making a mistake that has ramifications far beyond those few minutes.

This is why it's critical to end each school day – or class period for middle school teachers – with the same detailed routine, winding down to a peaceful, happy dismissal.

Here are a few steps to making your final routine a positive association for your students and a stress-free, misbehavior-free one for you:

### **Pause**

Before beginning your end-of-day routine, it's important to mentally clear the previous activity for your students. After asking them to put away their books, materials, and distractions, signal for their attention.

As soon as they're attentive, pause for 30 seconds. Let them take a quiet moment to gather themselves and breathe off any residual energy. This pause will mark for your students the beginning of the day's final routine.

### **Cleanup**

The responsibility for straightening and tidying up the classroom should fall on your students. Contributing to the common good helps them build a sense of pride in their classroom – while at the same time encouraging individual humility.

It also sends the message that yours is a classroom of doers, that the world wasn't created to wait on them. It only takes a minute or two for your students to pick up the floor around them, align desks, and make sure books and materials are stored neatly.

### **Homework**

**Homework** should be assigned, explained, and checked for understanding earlier in the day and immediately following your lesson (on the homework topic). It should never, ever be shoehorned in at the end of the day.

You should, however, as part of your routine, make sure your students have everything they need to successfully complete it. Have them prove

their readiness by stacking their homework materials neatly on their desk, with their assignment notebook open on top.

### **Handouts**

If you want to make sure handouts get home, pass them out yourself – while your students remain quiet. Place them on top of their homework stack while you make a quick visual check and confirm their readiness.

Using mailboxes or cubbies or assigning jobs to students for passing out flyers and handouts often causes more problems than it solves. Plus, you'll find this visual check an important key to getting homework back the next day.

### **Backpacks**

After another lengthy pause, call on one row or table group to retrieve their backpacks and place their homework materials and handouts inside. Give them no more than 30 seconds.

When they finish have them sit back down and put their backpacks on the floor at their side. Then call your next group. In time your class will become fast and efficient, finishing in just a couple minutes.

### **Silence**

After every student has finished and is quiet, ask for **one minute of silence**. This is a wonderful way to reflect on the mistakes and successes of the day and shake out the excitement of the impending dismissal.

It's best to simply sit or stand in front of them. Refrain from doing any busywork. You need a moment too. If you like, you can put some **classical music** on in the background or lead them in a few deep, relaxing breaths.

### **Line Up**

Ask your students to stand up, put on their backpack, and stand quietly behind their chair. Use the **power of one** and ask a single student to line up first. Then call one table group or row at a time.

Once in line, walk them out to the same predetermined dismissal spot every day. Regardless of whether it's school procedure to do so, do it anyway. When you reach your spot, send them on their way.

### **Teach & Practice**

Keep your routine simple and specific and do it the same way every day. Before long it will run like a well-oiled machine; not robotic mind you, not militaristic, but a relaxed, efficient, peaceful way to end the day.

Before putting your routine into practice, however, it's important to teach it thoroughly using **detailed modeling** and **repetition**. Once your students prove they can do it correctly, you're ready to roll.

### **A Happy Bid Goodbye**

By making the last 10-15 minutes of each day a choreographed routine, you'll have zero behavior problems, your students will be much better prepared to complete their homework, and you'll guarantee yourself a pleasant ending to every school day.

When you arrive with your class at your predetermined goodbye spot, make it a point to bump fists or shake hands with each student, in modest celebration of another great day.

Big smiles, happy students, a final reminder that your classroom is a special place.

A place both they, and you, love being a part of.