



SMART CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

How To Give A Reminder That Improves Behavior

Last week we showed how giving [reminders after misbehavior](#) is a mistake.

Holding your students accountable is a much better option, resulting in improved listening, better behavior, and greater urgency in following your directions.

But here's the thing. If you aren't clear about what you want from your students, if they're even slightly unsure of what is expected of them, then you'll have half your class in time-out before lunch.

This is why *showing* your students what you want through detailed modeling and then having them practice is so important.

Your students must prove to you they're able to perform routines and procedures without your guidance *before* putting them into day-to-day practice. To do otherwise would be unfair to your students.

One other thing you can do to ensure they know precisely what you want is to offer a reminder – of sorts. But this reminder is entirely different from the post-misbehavior variety we learned about last week.

This reminder comes before releasing your students to perform whatever task, routine, or procedure you want them to carry out.

And thus before misbehavior has a chance to take place.

Here's how it works:

Step 1: Signal for their attention.

Stand in one place and signal for your students' attention – then wait a beat or two to ensure that every eye is on you and every ear is tuned to your same frequency.

Step 2: Use the words, “in a moment.”

Freeze your students with the words, “in a moment.” As in, “In a moment we're going to circle into reading groups.” What this does is stop them from moving on mentally – or physically – because they think they know what you want from them.

Step 3: Use visualization.

Your reminder won't be a typical reminder. Instead of saying, “remember to do this or do that,” what you're going to do is preview for your students, in the form of a visualization, or movie in their mind, exactly what you expect from them.

Step 4: Use 'you' language.

The key to creating a visualization is to tell your students what they're *going to do* using 'you' language (see step 5). This is a powerful technique that will cause your students to see with their mind's eye what you expect them to do.

And because they're visualizing something they've already proven they can do well, they can draw on previous successful experience.

Step 5: Use your 'go' signal.

The phrase, "when I say go" is another effective technique that helps students relax and focus on listening. When they know they can't begin until given the 'go' signal, there is less energy, nervousness, or inclination to move before you're finished speaking.

Step 6: Give your reminder, breaking it into simple steps.

Say, for example, "When I say go you're going to stand up, push in your chair, and walk to your reading group. There, you're going to greet each member of your group by name, and then you're going to sit down and begin your discussion."

Step 7: Challenge them.

Before giving your 'go' signal, pause a moment to let their mental movie play out. Then challenge your class. "Is there anyone who doesn't know exactly what to do when I say go?" Then pause yet again.

This final questioning technique adds a final shovelful of responsibility. And because you left nothing to chance, you can give your 'go' signal knowing your students will do exactly what you want.

Let Them Shine

After giving your 'go' signal, stand in place and watch.

Just watch.

Don't encourage. Don't guide. Don't further remind. Don't gesture or wring your hands. Don't say a word.

Just enjoy the fruits of good teaching.

You've done your job. Now let them do theirs. Let your students step into the scene you created for them. Let them perform with confidence, like a great stage actor, fully prepared and secure in their knowledge that they know exactly what they need to do.

Let them *experience* success, every routine, every task, every lesson. And they'll repeat it over and over again.

Let them finally and blissfully rely upon themselves – free from the handholding, [micromanaging](#), and over-guidance so common in most classrooms.

Provide them the tools they need to succeed . . .

And then fade into the background and let them shine.

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