



How To Handle Misbehavior With Your Substitute

By Michael Linsin

Getting a bad report from your substitute can be especially frustrating.

You weren't there. You didn't witness the misbehavior.

It shouldn't be your responsibility.

But you know you can't just let it slide. Otherwise, it will be worse the next time and may even carryover to *your* day.

The problem, however, is that it's hard to know what to do. It's hard to know how to respond to something that happened an entire day before.

Last week we uncovered [three hidden signs you've lost control of your class](#). And although a bad day with the sub doesn't quite rise to that level, it is an indication that things aren't going as well as they could be.

It's an indication that your influence doesn't quite extend beyond your immediate presence, which is the secret to ensuring good behavior while you're away from your class.

Now, if you're a regular reader of SCM, then you know that [building influential relationships](#) is one of the cornerstones of effective classroom management.

It's what provides the power and leverage you need to inspire even the most difficult students to *want* to behave.

And while nothing replaces the importance of improving this one critical area, there are two simple things you can do when you have a sub to help you maintain that influential connection to your students.

Even while you're home sick in bed.

1. Insist your substitute use your classroom management plan.

A common complaint from substitute teachers is that few classroom teachers leave plans for handling misbehavior, that they're often left to their own devices.

This is a huge mistake. [Your classroom management plan](#) should be at the very top of your sub plans.

It's also a good idea to speak to your substitute personally – at least for the first time they fill in for you. They should know exactly what to do if your students misbehave, including how to follow through with consequences as well as how to redo routines.

The reason this strategy is effective is because you're able to confidently tell your students that when you're away, *nothing* changes.

The same behavior expectations are in place whether you're there or not. This is the most important key to ensuring good behavior in your absence.

2. You handle the third consequence.

The second key is for you to handle the third consequence yourself.

For example, when a student breaks a rule for the third time, the sub would place the student in time-out – or back into time-out – but then leave it to you to [send a letter home to parents](#) the next day.

This sends the message that you're still running the show. Students are quick to misbehave with a visiting teacher when they believe there is no connection to you.

When they see a sub day as a break from their everyday responsibilities, things tend to go awry.

Again, this is something you would communicate to your class. They need to know that just because you're gone for the day doesn't mean your expectations of them change – not even a little.

Handling the third consequence effectively keeps your looming presence, expectations, and *influence* active within the hearts and minds of your students.

A Simple Hack

Getting a bad report from a substitute isn't about the makeup of your class or how many challenging students you have.

It isn't about the time of year, the weather, or the day of the week. It isn't even about the sub.

It's about you.

It's about the power of influence. It's about maintaining an eyeball-to-eyeball connection to your class even from afar.

The two keys above are a simple little hack, an ever-present whisper in the ear, a constant thrum-beat reminder to every student that even if you're a million miles away . . .

Nothing changes.