

How To Improve Behavior By Doing This One Thing

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It's a common frustration.

You know you're a good teacher. You're calm and friendly toward your students.

You prepare interesting lessons and never threaten or yell.

And yet, you're still struggling.

Your students aren't terrible, but they're often rambunctious. They seem immature for their age and are much too dependent on you.

Furthermore, you sense a level of friction between you.

It's subtle, but it's there. You can feel it, especially when they complain or seem reluctant to look you in the eye.

Again, this is very common. There are scores of teachers who for years have felt as if they're doing everything right.

They work hard, set high expectations, and care about their students. They have good days and good moments, mind you, and still enjoy being a teacher.

But it's never really great. There's something missing. They just can't put their finger on what it is.

Today, I'm going to share with you what for many is that missing piece. In my role coaching teachers, this *one thing* crops up again and again, week after week.

So what is it?

It's communication.

You see, few teachers provide the information students most need in order to relax and focus on learning. They assume that they don't need to know – or care to know – certain details.

But they do. In fact, they crave them. So I've broken down what students need to feel safe and ready to learn into three simple questions.

1. What's next?
2. How long will it take?
3. Why are we doing it?

Whenever students are unsure or in the dark about any one or more of these, they begin to feel disconnected, as if education is being done to them rather than being an active participant.

This in turn causes frustration, [excitability](#), and inattentiveness. It weakens their motivation and pushes them away from learning and toward, ahem, other pursuits.

But when you continually answer these questions for them, when you provide this essential information, you eliminate the most common antecedents to misbehavior.

The good news is that it's easy to do.

You'll find that giving [a preview](#) of what, how long, and why during each transition, whereby breaking the day up into chunks or slices of learning for students, works best.

It makes them feel that they're important, respected, and tethered to the classroom. It communicates that you know what it's like being in their shoes and how frustrating it can be floating in space without any control.

Knowing what's next also prompts a visualization in their mind's eye performing successfully. Knowing how long eliminates anxiousness so they can listen and concentrate. And [knowing why](#) causes them to agree with and go along with your plans.

What's next, how long, and why – we *all* desire these.

We seek them out virtually all day long. They make us feel more in control, content, and motivated to fulfill our responsibilities. It's human nature.

So when we provide these for our students, when we refuse to leave them in the dark, groping for something to hang on to, we draw them in. We capture their interest.

We free them to enjoy learning and being part of our classroom.