

Why Persuasion Is A Poor Classroom Management Strategy

Trying to persuade students to behave is one of the most prevalent methods of classroom management.

This is why it's so common to see teachers huddled privately with students – trying to push the right buttons, searching for the right words to say, attempting to *convince* students to behave.

They try out various approaches – the if-I-were-you, the do-as-I-say, the do-this-and-get-that, the how-would-you-feel-if.

They appeal to their students' sense of right and wrong. They reason with them. They corner them with logic. They appease and pressure and coax and berate. They threaten and scold. They flatter and intimidate.

Hands out, head canted, eyes pleading, they all but beg their students to see things from their perspective.

But the truth is, trying to persuade students to behave is an exercise in futility that causes behavior to get worse, not better.

Here's why:

It's time-consuming.

Pulling students aside for private talks takes you away from what you *should* be doing, that is teaching, observing, and managing your class. And so every time you do, every time you call one of your students over to try and convince them to behave, concentration wanes, learning is put on hold, and another block of teaching time is lost forever.

It's stressful.

Nothing is more stressful than trying to persuade students to behave. Not only will your clever – or clumsy – words fall on deaf ears and rolling eyes, but doing so will cause you to resent your students – and they to resent you – more every day. You'll feel the pressure the moment they walk into your classroom, and carry it with you long after they leave.

It often turns ugly.

When you make the decision to conference with individual students, it's typically with only a vague sense of wanting to improve their behavior. But too often emotion takes over and your talk turns into a reprimand. Threats, warnings, and ultimatums are given, students become angry and argumentative, and the **student-teacher relationship** is damaged.

It pushes students away.

Meeting with individual students about their behavior will weaken your influence with them. It causes them to instinctively put up their guard, pull back from you and into a protective shell, and see you in a unfavorable light. It builds walls more than tears them down, and dampens their desire to please you and prove to you they can improve.

It let's them off the hook.

Trying to persuade students to behave absolves them of responsibility. They know that if they endure your talking-to, they're free to go without further consequence. In other words, your pulling them aside is an act of discipline, and telling you what you want to hear, or merely listening to you, becomes the accountability – which is no **real accountability** at all.

The Power Of Influence

Influence comes from students being drawn *to* you. It's not something that can be extracted *from* them.

So when you pressure your students, when you pull them aside to try to persuade them into doing what you want, and being who you want them to be, they'll reject it.

They'll distance themselves from you. They'll begin to see your relationship as a tug-o-war, one side against the other.

You'll make them your adversary.

And when this happens, when there is friction and antagonism, opposition and distrust, all hope is lost. Classroom management becomes a battle of wills, pitting you against your students for control.

The good news is that you have the power to build the kind of influence that *changes* behavior, that makes classroom management easier, and that frees you from the burden and frustration of having to convince students to behave.

But you must give up the private powwows and contentious confabs, and instead focus your energy on creating a classroom your students look forward to coming to every day.

Tap into your likability, your humor, and your rapport with your students.
Become a leader they respect and look up to.

And leave the persuading to your classroom management plan.