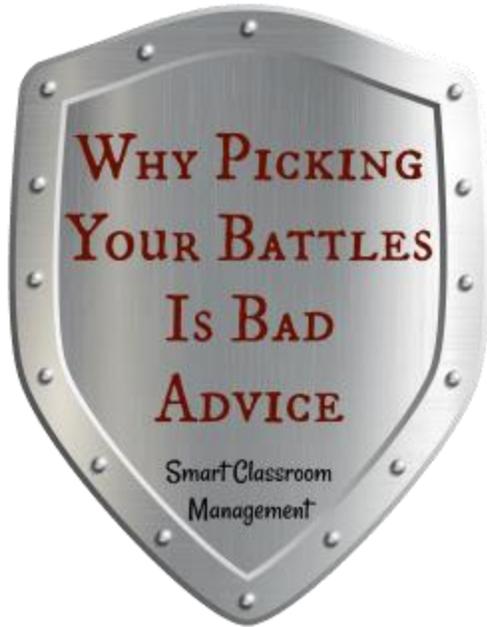


Why Picking Your Battles Is Bad Advice



When it comes to classroom management, you've got to pick your battles.

So the advice goes.

The idea behind the common saying that you can't have what you really want.

You can't have a consistently peaceful room environment. You can't have impeccable student behavior.

You can't have [politeness](#), cooperation, and silent independent work.

That would be asking too much, more than your students can give.

So you “fight” for only the big things. You take a stand against chaos and disrespect. You draw the line at bullying and roughhousing.

And you let slide the side-whispering, the sloppy routines, and the minor disruptions.

This is a big mistake.

Picking your battles is terrible advice. It amounts to a bottoming of standards, a surrendering of your beliefs and values, and a giving in and giving up on students.

But it's even worse than that.

Besides being the very definition of inconsistency – which is unfair to students, causes resentment, and leads to more and more misbehavior – it's also the opposite of what really does work.

You see, it's the small, seemingly inconsequential details that protect you from the big things – the major disruptions, the dramatic incidents, the endless stress.

It's being a stickler for how students hang up their backpacks, for example, or gather into groups. It's establishing a high-bar level of civility through your classroom management plan. It's nipping the bud of misbehavior before it gains a toehold.

A talkative lesson or a lazy routine isn't a sign that your students can't do any better.

It's not telling you that you're asking too much or that you need to ease up on your expectations. Rather, it's a sign that you should [ask even more of your students](#), not less.

It's a sign you need to teach – or reteach – model, and practice in greater detail and explicitness.

Taking a stand on the little things is the secret to impeccable behavior. It's in holding students accountable for how they enter your classroom or take out their laptops or work independently that keeps disrespect and unruliness from ever entering the picture.

It's [the broken windows theory](#) at work.

This doesn't mean that you have to fight every battle. It means that you don't fight any battle at all. Instead, you simply follow through on [your promises](#). You do what you say you're going to do.

You set and maintain the standards, tone, and environment that you want and know is best for your students.

And that's just the way it is.

Being insistent about procedures, orderliness, politeness, and every other detail that affects your classroom's 'pleasantness' effectively wards off big and stressful misbehavior.

It brings surefire peace to the kingdom.

It creates a learning experience your students will take pride in being part of.