



## Why Rules And Consequences Aren't Enough

Lately, I've been receiving emails from teachers wondering why they have so many students in time-out every day, so I think it's a good time to revisit a few core principles of Smart Classroom Management.

When you implement [a classroom management plan](#) for the first time – or strictly follow one for the first time – one of two things is likely to happen: Either behavior is going to get a lot better or it's going to get worse.

If it gets worse, and you find yourself sending multiple students to time-out, the problem isn't your plan. And it isn't who is on your roster or what neighborhood you teach in. The problem is that your students don't care enough about being in your classroom to make your plan effective.

In other words, you don't have any leverage.

If sitting in time-out doesn't remove your students from something they want to be part of, then it *isn't* a consequence. They must genuinely like and enjoy being a member of your classroom or your consequences will prove ineffective.

The responsibility to make this happen, of course, is with you. Any expectation of simply showing up and having a ready-made, self-motivated class isn't realistic. Nor is believing that rules and consequences alone are enough to curb misbehavior.

Certainly, there are students who enjoy school no matter who the teacher is, but this is a small percentage.

Typically, greater than half of most classrooms, and sometimes every student, need something more. They need a reason to listen and learn and care about sitting in your classroom.

Most of the strategies on this website either detail simple ways to provide that something more or show you how to respond to misbehavior in a way that preserves and enhances that something more.

Generally – but not always – they fall into one of three broad categories:

### **1. Relationships**

The relationship you have with your students is the most important factor in gaining the leverage you need to create the well-behaved class you want. If they like you, trust you, and respect you, then your rules and consequences will have *power*, and you'll have strong and sure influence over their behavior choices.

### **2. Routines**

Routines are about students knowing what you expect of them throughout every minute of the school day. They not only make your job a lot easier and maximize learning time, but they move each day along swiftly and purposefully for students, keeping them sharp, engaged, and focused on learning and enjoying school.

### **3. Lessons**

You must be able to present your curriculum in a way that causes students to *want* to listen and learn, so that misbehavior is the last thing on their mind. This runs the gamut from how to speak to students to how to make the material more compelling. Much of your day is spent in this mode, and thus if your students are bored and uninterested, then misbehavior will be a constant presence.

### **Anyone Can Do This**

Searching out rules and consequences and then abruptly applying them to an already unruly classroom will cause behavior to get worse – because unhappy, unmotivated students will resent and rebel against your efforts to control their only source of stimulation.

To make rules and consequences effective, to give them the muscle they need to dissuade misbehavior, your students must look forward to coming to your classroom every day.

There must be a distinct and ever-widening gulf between the special feeling they have being a valued member of your class, and the remorse they feel sitting alone and apart in time-out.

The wider the gulf, the fewer behavior problems you'll have.

The big-picture idea is to so overwhelm your students with that “something more” contained in the three categories above that your rules and consequences recede into the distant background – rarely needed or even referred to.

Creating a well-behaved, motivated classroom in this manner is doable for *anyone* – no matter who you are or where you teach – and it works 100% of the time. In fact, it is the only surefire path to becoming the calm, confident, and inspirational teacher you always wanted to be.

If you haven't done so already, please join us. It's free! [Click here](#) and begin receiving classroom management articles like this one in your email box every week.