

# Classroom management in public schools

[Profession](#), [Teacher](#)



The classroom setting in Kelvin Shackelford's ninth grade World History class is loud and unruly. Shackelford stands aside and hands students the control of his classroom. Teachers and students are constantly engaged in a battle of tug-of-war for class control, and in more than many cases the students win the battle for that control. This illustrates that one of public schools problem is behavior management. Students taking control of the classrooms ultimately sets them up for failure in the education war, because without the teachers having control of the class students become unfocused and don't retain the information. Managed classroom behavior is highly important to success in public schools, this can be accomplished with changes in teaching practices. In the public school system teachers and administrators agree that the lack of discipline is the biggest problem facing them. It is the job of the teachers to bring order back to an unruly classroom (Martin). Obviously there are going to be distractions and interruptions in every class, however the problem arises when the teacher does not address these issues properly. For example, a student is speaking while the teacher is giving instruction. If the teacher does not acknowledge the disturbance at that time that student will continue to speak through the remainder of the lesson, often times leading to even more disturbance (Alan). Addressing something like speaking when they are not supposed to be can be quite simple, bring attention to the student's action by; non-verbal signs such as moving closer to the student, or eye contact, calling out a student by name, or by verbally redirecting the student's attention back to what it's meant to be on (Kizlik). When teachers do not bring order back to their classroom it brings the lesson to a screaming halt. If teaching stops, learning stops, thus making the purpose of schools

null and void. One way in dealing with disruptions early is by setting rules and defining consequences for breaking those rules on the first day of class. This provides set expectations for how students should act in the classroom, ideally minimizing the amount or magnitude of disruptions. Setting these rules however is not enough to maintain order. A teacher must be willing to enforce the rules they set, and communicate these expectations frequently throughout the school year (Kizlik). Without reiterating these rules periodically order tends to fade, leading to larger disruptions that can effect many attributes of a teacher's performance, student performance, and potentially the entire classroom environment (Alan). With the continuous reference to the rules allows for the teacher to maintain their authority, students will then more often recognize the rules and respect the teachers authority. Thus giving way to a more respectful and functioning classroom setting. Stating rules does nothing if teachers do not enforce them consistently and fairly (Martin). One must be willing to reinforce positive behavior and punish the negative behavior. J. E. Walker provided teachers with a set of basic principles on the subject in his book, ' Behavior Management: a Practical Approach for Educators.' 1. reinforcement or punishment always follows behavior, 2. reinforcement or punishment follows the target behavior as soon as possible, 3. reinforcement or punishment fits the target behavior and must be meaningful to the child, and 4. multiple reinforcers, or punishments are likely more effective than single reinforcers or punishments. (Walker) Keeping these principles in mind a teacher can be more equipped to handle behavior. For instance if a teacher keeps in mind the principle that punishment needs to fit the behavior, it will potentially

create a more fair environment for students, allowing them to see that the teacher is respecting of them, leading to a mutual respect between the two. On the other hand if the teacher does not utilize the fairness principle teachers are more prone to accusations of being unfair, “ nearly half of teachers surveyed reported that they have been accused of unfairly disciplining a student (Public Agenda). ” As well as students expressing their “ rights” or their parent’s ability to sue (Public Agenda). Something else for teachers to keep in mind is having “ withitness, is a term created by Kounin to describe the teacher’s awareness of what is going on in all parts of the classroom at all times” (Pressman). This allows teachers to react in good time to any situation that may arise during a class period, in adapting this ability it prevents, most often, any further disturbance related to or stemmed from the initial situation. Part of “ withitness” is one’s ability to discipline almost undetected or “ having eyes in the back of your head”. For example, a student has begun to pass notes with another student, turn around and write on the board and once the idea that you’re not “ seeing” what is going on in the class, then silently approach the students and ask for the note. This will create the illusion of having eyes in the back of your head, which gives students the understanding that you as the teacher are aware of what is and always is happening in the classroom. (Pressman) Discipline and regulations are not the only things a managed classroom must have, just as important is having a classroom that runs smoothly and keeps momentum up. Smoothness and momentum in lessons is vaguely defined as maintaining a brisk pace and giving continuous activity signals or cues; such as standing near inattentive students or directing questions to potentially disruptive

students (Dunbar). In order to have a smooth running class the lessons must be engaging enough to grab the attention of students as well as keep that attention. To do this a teacher has to keep in mind their class' group focus and group influence on the lesson. The other factor of a smooth running class is smooth transitions, moving from one activity to another, whether this being moving from class discussion to bookwork, or moving from group work back to individual study (Evertson). For a teacher to have smooth transitions it is wise to give a basic outline of what is going to take place during the class period and to present that outline to the class at the start of the period. During the class period when moving from one activity to another it is best to make certain that the next activity is defined clearly before allowing a transition to take place, too much discussion about the next activity prolongs the transition giving too much time for extra distractions. In order to develop the skills to manage a classroom well takes experience. There are articles and books available for new teachers to research and develop a sense of what it takes to have a well managed classroom, but even with proper guidance many new teachers find themselves anxious about doing it well (Mehta). " It is probably one of the things that's least understandable and most complex about teaching," said Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers. " This is the hardest skill to master" (Mehta). This is not saying that it cannot be done, nor that once a teacher is experienced that they can manage a classroom well. In order to master the skill one has to be open to new ideas, and willing to do what it takes to handle their class, without worrying about becoming the " mean" teacher. Being the mean teacher doesn't always get an educator disliked, Michael

Linsin said it quite bluntly in his article *How To Handle Talkative Students* “Your students will love you for it because it reassures them that they are equal members of your classroom, free to join in the learning process, ” (Linsin). With behavior being one of public school’s most prevalent problem changes have to be made when they are able to be made. In many ways educators have no way of making a child behave differently or to want to pay attention, however it is their job to try. Managed classroom behavior is highly important to success in public schools, this can be accomplished with changes in teaching practices. With understanding classroom management and applying it to a class the behavior problem can be reduced. Teachers around the globe should be open armed to such skills, for reasons of student success, or even reason of not wanting to drain energy by constantly being run over by a heard of students. Whatever the reason once classroom management is obtained and maintained people will find that students do honestly want to learn, they just need a narrow track to follow. Success for “bad kids” isn’t unobtainable, it just takes teachers able and willing to take control.