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## Dealing With Difficult Behavior

Even the most effective teachers in the most effective classrooms will encounter discipline issues. Some believe that there Pareto rule applies as well - 80% of your discipline problems are caused by 20% of your students - and this may very well be the case. If it is, then in a class of 25 students, there will be five who present some discipline issues and an even smaller number that exhibits egregious misbehavior. But even if it is just one student, how you respond to it and interact with it will impact the equilibrium of you classroom and disrupt learning.

How you respond to discipline problems is not something you should do or need to do on the spur of the moment. Before your first day and throughout the school year, reflect on how you respond to discipline issues in the classroom. Think about what works and what did not work. Reflection is a powerful tool to change our own behavior and practices when done with deliberation with an eye towards critical analysis. Equally important is to use common sense when addressing discipline problems.

As you think about yourself as a disciplinarian, consider the following traits and identify the ones that apply to you :

Positive Traits	Negative Traits
Non-combative	Unwillingness or inability to handle discipline problems
Consistent	Absence of creative problem-solving
Clear idea of what students stand for	Easily intimidated, feeling defensive
Expectations are clear	False claim to power, "You get out of this room or ..."
Fair	Fearful, scared of faculty, principal and parents
Authoritarian	Playing games with children's behavior
Patient and with good temperament	
Clearly articulated rules and goals	
Humanistic	
Creative	
Well-organized, has plans	
Tolerant of frustration	
Creatively interested, more positively oriented	

If any of the negative traits apply, think about what you need to do to change them. You may want to seek out mentor for guidance or rehearse how you respond to discipline issues (there is nothing wrong with practicing how you will handle difficult situations). Let's be frank, though, if you truly believe that it is okay to play games with your student's behavior or that you can threaten students into submission, then make a career change - the classroom is not the place for you.

Managing discipline issues when they happen is a learned process so if you are struggling with it, make it an element of your professional development.

### **Misbehaviors that Warrant Intervention**

Not all misbehavior warrants intervention. Some students engage in misbehavior that extinguishes itself in a short period of time and if that happens, then there may be no need for intervention. However, some misbehaviors warrant intervention because they tear at the very fabric of your learning community.

Behavior that Warrants Intervention	Suggested Solutions
<p><b>Chronic Avoidance of Work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incomplete Assignments</li> <li>• Unfinished Class Work</li> <li>• Inability to Get Started on Time</li> <li>• Failure to Focus</li> <li>• Engaging in Other Tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modify the task so the student can complete it successful (especially if the student is unable to do the work).</li> <li>• Break it into parts (especially if the student is overwhelmed by the amount of work)</li> <li>• Provide incentive for completing or doing the work, such as allowing time for the student to do something he or she wants to do.</li> <li>• Conference with the parent.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fighting</b> (remember, fighting typically involves two or more students)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact administration or appropriate school personnel.</li> <li>• Intervene with caution to minimize injury to your person.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other Aggressive Behavior</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name Calling</li> <li>• Bossiness</li> <li>• Rudeness Toward Other Students</li> <li>• Physical Aggression</li> <li>• “Playful” Pushing or Slapping of other students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer to which class rule is broken and give no more than one warning and assess the appropriate penalty.</li> <li>• Separate students who engage in these behaviors and seat them apart from the other students in the class. <b>DO NOT ISOLATE THEM.</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Defiance or Hostility Toward the Teacher</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defuse the event by keeping it private and handling it individually with the student.</li> <li>• Depersonalize the event by saying “This is taking time away from the lesson. I will talk about it with you later.”</li> <li>• Later, conference with the student and assess a penalty if warranted.</li> <li>• If the student is totally uncooperative, send for appropriate administrative support.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Rudeness Toward the Teacher</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sassy Back Talks</li> <li>• Argumentative</li> <li>• Crude Remarks or Gestures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not over-react or argue with the student.</li> <li>• Avoid a peer struggle - YOU WILL LOSE!</li> <li>• Respond appropriately.</li> <li>• Conference with the student later.</li> </ul>

**It is against the law to place a student in seclusion.**

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## **Chapter 37 Removal**

Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code gives teachers the discretionary authority to remove disruptive students from the classroom. Specifically, §37.002(b) allows a teacher to remove a student:

*(1) who has been documented by the teacher to repeatedly interfere with the teacher's ability to communicate effectively with the students in the class or with the ability of the student's classmates to learn; or*

*(2) whose behavior the teacher determines is so unruly, disruptive, or abusive that it seriously interferes with the teacher's ability to communicate effectively with the students in the class or with the ability of the student's classmates to learn.*

Some misbehaviors are so egregious they mandate immediate removal from the classroom and, possibly the school. For more information and resources on these types of behaviors and Chapter 37, please visit this link: [https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B4x\\_7ePH9GsoQUZuZ0JuRkhpX00&usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B4x_7ePH9GsoQUZuZ0JuRkhpX00&usp=sharing)

Not every student misbehavior warrants removal from the classroom; in fact, there is an increasing expectation that teachers resolve almost all of the discipline problems in their classrooms so students are not removed from the learning environment. The following suggestions provide some ideas of strategies you may want to utilize in the classroom so that you minimize difficult behavior and maintain the continuity of the lesson.

### **Strategies for Dealing With Difficult Behavior**

**Purposeful Ignoring.** If the teacher feels that certain misbehavior is not contagious and will stop soon of its own accord, the teacher may decide to simply ignore the behavior.

**Signal Interference.** The teacher signals a student through a gesture, a look, or a brief signal that he or she is displeased.

**Proximity and Touch Control.** The teacher comes closer to the noisy or restless student, or places his desk next to her. A gentle hand on the shoulder or a friendly pat may make a difference in helping the student control his behavior.

**Emotional Drain-Off.** The teacher provides a transition period of drawing, singing, etc., that releases tension after an exciting or tense experience.

**Counter Expectational Evidence.** Sometimes a student may do something impulsively and is not sure what the teacher will do as a consequence. If you react with humor and understanding, the student will be greatly relieved and assured of their being accepted.

**Hurdle Help.** Sometimes a student cannot proceed with a task in which he is experiencing difficulty. The teacher may provide an explanation or a "hint" that enables the student to go on.

**Diversion and Restructuring.** When one activity has gone on too long, students get bored and restless. An alert teacher anticipates trouble and changes her strategy even if it requires some flexibility in scheduling.

**Regrouping.** There are some students who stimulate each other to get into trouble. The teacher separates them immediately into other groups without comment.

**Direct Appeal to Reason, Rules, or Interpersonal Relations.** The teacher assumes that the student has a conscience and basically wants to do the right thing. The teacher reminds him of whatever standards are important to him without accusation or threat.

**Bouncing.** When a student is about to explode in anger, tears, or uncontrolled laughter, he may need

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to be removed from the situation so that he can gain control of himself. The teacher may use some pretext such as asking the student to run an errand, help with some task, or get a drink of water.

**Limitations or Props.** Some props or situations are patent invitations to a student to get into trouble. When attractive nuisances such as water pistols, yo-yos, or balls are confiscated, it is wise to tell the student that the situation is temporary and that the student can reclaim his possession later when it is not distracting to the class.

**Encouragement.** It is sometimes helpful for the teacher to remind the student to control his impulses when he may be tempted to misbehave. The teacher might say, "This has been such a good day, you read so well this morning... Come on, don't spoil it now."

**Criticism.** Constructive criticism should focus on what is required for improvement, the student's personality or character as a whole. The teacher might say, "This room is too noisy," instead of "You are an inconsiderate class!"

**Extra Permission with Clear-cut Ceiling.** Under certain circumstances, it is wise to extend the privileges. The teacher allows certain behavior that is normally forbidden, but at the same time makes it clear just how far he will allow it to go.

**No!** When teasing becomes more painful than playful, or a free-for-all develops, a clearcut "No!" may provide a welcome light to a student who is getting further into trouble than he means to. The teacher substitutes her authority for the student's self-control, which is temporarily out of commission. The effectiveness of this control increases if it is used only rarely.

**Promises and Reward.** Students work better if they anticipate some pleasurable activity or experiences as a reward; however, the promise should be an extra, rather than the only incentive to good behavior.

### Helpful Hints On Discipline

- Act appropriately and sincerely.
- Admit your mistakes; apologize if necessary.
- Avoid situations which force students to have to save face.
- Be active, alert, self-confident, and prepared.
- Be consistent, just and fair. Use a positive approach.
- Discuss problems to help students understand and solve them.
- Encourage good behavior; remain calm, and try to avoid becoming angry.
- Exhaust your own list of disciplinary measures before referring students.
- Have evaluation periods to see if rules are understood and obeyed.
- Have students help determine and enforce rules and standards.
- Help students develop pride in self, class, and room.
- Involve the students; they like to help.
- Keep your adult reserve and never try to be one of the students.
- Let each student start each day with a clean slate.
- Rearrange seating or schedule if a problem persists.
- Take away privileges, not educational experience, from students not following rules.
- Take free time from students to make up time wasted.
- Use your voice effectively to soothe, or create enthusiasm.