
CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT: CORRECTIVE STRATEGIES

By Patricia Kyle, PhD, University of Idaho; &
Larry Rogien, PhD, Boise State University



Classroom management requires an orchestration of effective teaching, proactive preventive strategies, practical corrective strategies, and positive supportive techniques. This approach helps teachers motivate students through active involvement in their own learning *and* discipline processes with the goals of acquiring learning, self-management, and a repertoire of responsible behaviors. When these components are integrated in your classroom, effective teaching, management, and discipline complement each other to facilitate learning. This handout deals with *corrective strategies* in comprehensive classroom management.

Corrective Strategies

Excellent teaching and proactive prevention keep a lot of classroom problems from developing, but reality indicates that these two approaches will not eliminate all problems. Being prepared with practical strategies to deal with the moment of misbehavior is also vital to a comprehensive approach. Recognizing the type of misbehavior that the student is choosing is necessary so that a corrective intervention strategy that fits the situation can be utilized. Attention, power, revenge, avoidance, impulsive, and unmotivated behaviors all need different strategies to effectively deal with the misbehavior.

There are two *keys of effective delivery* of corrective intervention strategies that are essential at the moment of misbehavior in order to model self-management: Use as few words as possible and control your reaction. We present the following options for dealing with different levels of misbehaviors: “A” options for distracting behaviors, “B” options for controlling behaviors, and “C” options for angry/violent behaviors.

“A” Options for Distracting Behaviors

Distracting misbehaviors are ones that sidetrack the teacher from the lesson and/or divert the attention of the students from the learning. These misbehaviors interrupt the lesson, stop the momentum, and get the focus away from important matters and annoy the teachers all at the same time.

Active Body Language

These strategies include:

- The “look”
- Proximity
- Body carriage
- Appropriate touch
- Signals and gestures
- Teaching pause

Attention-Focusing Strategies

- *Signals*: Auditory (including using the student’s name and changing the tone or volume of your voice) and visual cues.
- *Refocus notes*: A non-verbal option to deal with distracting behaviors. Instead of interrupting your teaching, you write what you want the student to stop doing on a note or Post-it and quietly put it in front of the student who is distracting.

- *Target-stop-do*: The *target* is the student who is enacting distracting behaviors. The *stop* is the distracting behavior that needs to be stopped. The *do* is the responsible behavior that needs to replace the misbehavior. For example, “Juanita, please stop tapping your pencil and get busy on your math problems.”
- *Grandma’s rule*: A verbal attention-focusing option that you use when utilizing incentives. They are delivered as “When ... then ...” statements.
- *Distract the distractor*: An attention-focusing option where you divert the student by asking a question without embarrassing the student or you ask the student to perform a task for you.
- *Coupon approach*: An attention-focusing option used to reduce a particular behavior but not eliminate it altogether. When a student asks an inordinate number of questions as an attention-getting device, you do not want to stop that student from asking questions completely but you do want that student to learn how to manage the multitude of questions and to develop the skill to think before asking the question or to seek the answer on his or her own. You meet with the student to determine the number of question coupons.
- *“I” statements*: An effective way to communicate about negative behavior. It includes the following three parts: “I feel _____ (feeling word) when you _____ (specific behavior) because _____ (the effect of the behavior).” A fourth optional part adds, “I would prefer that you _____ (specific responsible behavior)” or “I would appreciate if you would _____ (specific responsible behavior).”

“B” Options for Controlling Behaviors

Students who choose controlling misbehaviors are quite adept at pushing the teacher’s buttons. They seem to know instinctively what will get a rise out of us. Being prepared both mentally and with strategies to deal with their button pushing is the first step to being successful with students who engage in controlling behaviors. The button-pusher escape strategies are designed to help you deal with the initial situation when students are pushing your buttons to provoke a power struggle. Brief choices and business-like consequences are other useful options for dealing with controlling behaviors.

Button-Pusher Escapes

- *Acknowledge the student’s power*: This can be used when you are working with students who choose controlling behaviors that indicate, “You can’t make me.” This strategy is designed to sidestep a power

struggle about whether or not you can make the student do something. You agree that you can’t make them do it, but then focus on what their choices are if they do not. “You are right, I can’t make you. But remember what your choices are.”

- *Table the matter*: This can be used with students choosing controlling behaviors that indicate the need to close things down for now. You leave the door open to discuss the problem at a later time, but you indicate that now during the lesson is not the appropriate time. “We need to discuss this later, not during our math lesson.”
- *Let’s chat*: This helps you to change the dynamics from having a heated discussion while class is going on. You acknowledge the student’s frustration and offer him or her a definite later meeting time. “You sound frustrated. We can meet at 10 o’clock or at 11 o’clock to discuss the problem.”
- *“To you to me” statements*: This is when you recognize the student’s perspective in the problem situation, but then offer your perspective. This gives you an opportunity to deal in the moment with the student’s challenging remark without taking it personally or fighting with the student. “To you this is a boring lesson. To me it’s an important part of the learning process.”
- *Other options*: These include humor, redirection, and asking responsible-thinking questions.

Brief Choices

Brief choice language is an option where brief interaction is combined with choices, and this gives students a sense of control over their lives. First you explicitly state the appropriate responsible behavior. Then you use the word “or” and follow that by what the consequence will be if the student continues to choose an inappropriate behavior. “I need you to work on these math problems *or* you’ll be working on them later during choice time.”

Business-Like Consequences

This is a corrective strategy used with controlling and angry/violent behaviors. It holds students responsible for poor behavior choices by having a consequence for their actions. The five consequences are: related, reasonable, respectful, reliably enforced, and real participation.

“C” Options for Anger/Violent Behaviors

Angry/violent behaviors are the highest level of seriousness of misbehavior. These are the behaviors that trigger the strongest reaction in teachers. These are the behaviors that sometimes provoke a reaction at the

sizzling level. Our natural impulse is to strike back, to retaliate, or to escape. Responding to angry/violent behaviors tends to kick in our flight-or-fight reaction. The challenge to *control your reaction* is at an all time high. Strategies include behavioral contracts, chill-out time, consequences, chat time, and curbing violence.

Chill-Out Time

This is a corrective strategy for dealing with the initial situation with a volatile student. Dealing with their angry feelings is their main need, so chill-out time helps the student recognize anger and calm down when it is starting to build up. You have a definite place and process pre-arranged with your students for them to calm down when they are losing control and to process their misbehaviors.

Consequences (Restitution)

Restitution is an option used when students are choosing angry/violent behaviors and is focused on repairing the damage that was done. Students should make reparations for hurtful, destructive behaviors. If a student messes something up, the student cleans up the mess. If a student breaks something, then the student fixes or replaces the broken item.

Chat Time With Students

This is one of the options for working on long-term solutions with angry/violent students. This strategy involves getting together with the student and having a conversation about the problem to actively involve the student in the discipline process. Chat time can be simply pulling a student to the side or scheduling a time to have a more in-depth chat.

Curbing Violence

These are options for dealing with angry/violent students during a volatile episode: control your reaction; use button-pusher escapes; send for help, back up, and support; use slow, deliberate, authoritative language (“Stop now!”); schedule follow-up chat time to develop a contract; and choose supportive strategies (see “Resources” below).

Resources

- Kyle, P., & Rogien, L. (2004). Classroom management: Supportive strategies. In A. Canter, L. Paige, M. Roth, I. Romero, & S. Carroll (Eds.), *Helping children at home and school II: Handouts for families and educators*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists. ISBN: 0-932-955-82-7.
- Kyle, P., & Rogien, L. (2004). *Opportunities and options in classroom management*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon. ISBN: 0205324134.

Websites

- Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation Research Project—
www.coe.ufl.edu/CRPM/CRPMhome.html
- Safe and Responsive Schools Project—
www.indiana.edu/~safeschl
- TeachNet—www.teachnet.com (see Discipline Strategies)

Material in this handout is adapted from Kyle, P., & Rogien, L. (2004). Opportunities and options in classroom management. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, and included with permission of the publisher.

Patricia Kyle, PhD, is on the faculty of the University of Idaho at Boise. Larry Rogien, PhD, is on the faculty of Boise State University in Boise, ID.

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