



Responding to Disruptive Behaviour

by Glenn Werkmeister and Scott Jennens

Introduction

Working with young people in a classroom situation can be both rewarding and challenging. Our classrooms are filled with students of varying backgrounds, interests, attitudes, values and abilities.

We need to be role models for our students. Often students who exhibit challenging behaviours do not have positive role models at home and it is therefore up to us to model the behaviour we expect. Young people treated with respect are more likely to show respect to others.

Although nothing excuses poor behaviour, understanding that there may be reasons for that behaviour may assist you to deal with behaviours without taking things personally.

Talk about the behaviours that you find unacceptable and the consequences for those behaviours. Try to think of your discipline plan as a process for behaviour modification not punishment and avoid personal attacks. Always treat students with respect and deal with their behaviours in a firm, fair and friendly manner.

Responding to Disruptive Behaviour

Passive Response

In the eyes of the student, a teacher who responds passively to disruptive behaviour appears not to know what to do in the situation. Examples of a passive response include ignoring the behaviour and not following through with consequences.

Hostile Response

Provoking and confronting students in an aggressive and hostile manner often leads to a power struggle between the teacher and the student, resulting in a win/lose situation. The class often becomes the audience and it is equally important to both the teacher and the student to win.

Responding Effectively

Teachers need to model the type of behaviour they require from their students. Teachers who respond in a firm, fair and consistent manner to disruptive behaviour, and administer consequences in a friendly way, are much more likely to succeed in dealing with students with displaying disruptive and challenging behaviours.

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- **Remain calm**
Do not become emotionally involved and you are much more likely to deal with things in a firm, fair and logical way. Remember to deal with the behaviours and not the personalities.
- **Give clear directions**
Make sure that students know what is expected of them, both work and behaviour expectations.
- **Use of a clear calm voice**
A clear calm voice will give the impression to others that you are calm and in charge.
- **Speak to students in close proximity**
Wherever possible speak to students out of the hearing of other students. This ensures that that you are not inviting the rest of the class to join in. Without the audience, there is less chance of setting up a power play and therefore a greater chance of achieving a win/win situation.
- **Don't invade a student's personal space**
As with all people students feel threatened if you invade their personal space, particularly if you stand over them, making them feel that there is no escape. Bring yourself down to their level, physically, when you are speaking to them.
- **Present the student with a choice**
Giving students a choice makes them feel that they are not being backed into a corner. They are therefore less likely to act in an aggressive manner. The choices are often as

simple as “You can do this work now or you can do it at recess time”.

- **Back up choices with consequences, if behaviour continues**
Make sure student knows what will happen if disruptive behaviour continues. Such as “If you continue to talk, you will have to move over here to work by yourself”.

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Glenn Werkmeister has dedicated his working life to teaching vulnerable young people. He has been a principal in mainstream schools and a leading teacher in a range of specialist behavioural settings.

Scott Jennens is currently the Partnerships Manager for Resilient Youth Australia. Previously he taught for over 30 years and was the Leading Teacher at Leap & Bounds – a setting for students with challenging behaviours.