

MANAGING STUDENT BEHAVIOR: WHEN INSTRUCTIONS IS IGNORED

by:

Decelyn G. Vea

Master Teacher II, New San Jose Elementary School

Have you implemented clear, concise, and consistent instructions in your lessons, yet still struggle to get some students to follow them? If so, remember that everything begins with your attitude. Your attitude shapes your approach to managing challenging behavior, and it's what students respond to most. A calm, confident, and respectful demeanor can foster positive behavior in the classroom.

While some educators may appear to have control through bullying, punitive actions, or aggressive tones, that control is often only surface level. Beneath reluctant compliance may lie embarrassment, fear, hostility, or a desire to retaliate or disengage. This kind of control does not build a healthy or productive learning environment.

Yelling or issuing harsh commands sets a negative tone. It's one of the fastest ways to lose a student's cooperation—especially with those already prone to challenging authority. Add an audience of 30 peers, and the situation can quickly escalate, as some students may provoke conflict for entertainment. That's why maintaining your composure is key. Staying calm shows strength, not weakness.

A more effective approach is to offer fair, clear warnings. Calmly explain what the student is doing wrong and what they should be doing instead. This eliminates ambiguity and makes it harder for students to argue or justify their actions. When students see you as fair and consistent, they're less likely to push back—and their peers are less likely to support defiance.

Consistency is crucial. When you apply the same expectations and consequences to every student, you remove any perception of favoritism. This creates firm boundaries and reinforces that your rules are not up for negotiation. Students may test those boundaries, but when they see that your expectations are steady and your responses are predictable, they are more likely to comply.

Finally, remember that many disruptive behaviors are attempts to gain attention. By staying calm and not reacting emotionally, you avoid giving students the spotlight they may be seeking. In doing so, you reinforce your authority and model the self-control you want your students to develop.

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