

Classroom management 2

These notes are part of the YWAM Educating for Life training, by Lisa Orvis

Influence & authority to grow towards maturity

Scripture describes the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives to bring us to maturity: ⁷For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. 2 Tim 1:7. As we work with students we want to work together with the Holy Spirit.

- God does not use fear to make us do what He wants of us. For this reason, we do not want to use fear as a means to motivate students to behave well.
- He is working to help us grow into choosing love, motivated to do our best. This describes a process of choosing, with His strength, to do what is right and fruitful.

This gives guidance on how to disciple students towards godly thinking, character and behavior.

Influence and authority are two important ideas to understand in the process of discipleship. These words and ideas may have very different meanings across cultures.

- Influence is the idea of creating an environment where there are many things around students to make it easy to choose well. The focus is on the student choosing well – in wisdom and love -- based on values and understanding. Learning to use influence is asking ourselves: how can we help students make good choices without rules or consequences?
- Authority will be used as the idea of the teacher using the power of their role to require obedience to external standards, such as rules with rewards and consequences.

In aiming for the goals of growth in self-control, love, and wisdom, we want to use the tools of influence as much possible so students are making their own choices based on values and understanding. The use of authority, or exerting control over their behavior through rules, punishment and reward, shifts the focus to external reasons for their choices. It can be appropriate to use authority, of course, but we want to use influence as much as possible to help students mature “from the inside out.”

How environment can influence students’ behavior

What elements do we have in the environment that can influence student’s behavior?

action	Positive effect	Negative effect
Tone of voice	When friendly, encouraged students	When angry, scared them, made them defiant
volume	When normal, students want to participate	When extra loud, students scared and passive
Visual effect	Visual attractiveness motivates students	Boring environment is unmotivating; messy environment promotes messiness
Classroom layout	Seating layout can facilitate group work; floor space for activities and story reading	Crowded furniture; no floor space; arrangements causing difficulty in seeing blackboard
Interesting work	When students love what they are doing they will respond	When students are bored they will look for distractions
Enough work	Students can be self-disciplined in turning to “extra” work when they have finished a task	Students left with nothing to do could turn to unacceptable behaviour

Relationship with the teacher	Good relationship: Students will love and respect the teacher and desire to please	Poor relationship: Students may not feel that the teacher cares and respond accordingly
Prayer over classroom	Put on the full armour of God every day; pray that students will feel God's love, joy and peace	Seven days without prayer makes one week.

- Tone and volume of voice (quiet, confident, friendly helps children stay relaxed, attentive)
- Careful movement; unhurried (calm teacher helps students stay relaxed)
- Visual effect –
 - 1- tidy, neat to communicate order and value of learning
 - 2- cool colors such as blue, green, brown to keep energy level relaxed; “hot” colors such as red, yellow to stimulate students as accents
 - 3- interesting decorations so visual students can learn while they’re looking around!
- Layout of classroom (position of desks, seating arrangements)
- Interesting work
- Enough work: Have activities for early finishers always available, e.g. writing a story that they are working on; illustrating a Big Book
- Good relationship with the teacher: students must feel loved and appreciated
- Prayer over classroom to invite the Spirit of God

The power of modeling

One of the most powerful ways we can help students to be involved in their learning and to grow in wisdom, love and self-control is by the example we set in the classroom. One example: students will speak to each other the way they hear teachers speak to other students. We have already looked at the need for teachers to live a godly life and to stay refreshed in God. We will look now at specific ways we act and speak in the classroom.

We must ask ourselves if we set an example of what we expecting from the students.

- In our relationships – the way we treat them - no partiality, affirmation
- In our personal disciplines for excellence – prepared for class, tidy in our own desk area

Teachers should be an example to their students.

- 2 Thess 3: 6-10 we were examples to you so you can follow the way we lived
- Phil 3: 17 follow my example, and anyone else who lives like I do
- Phil 4:9 follow my example and you will have peace from God
- 1 Cor 10: 31-33 I live to be of help to others
- 1 Cor 11:1 follow my example as I follow Christ's example
- 1 Thess 1: 6 you became imitators of us and of the Lord

Routines for focused behavior

Students will be more settled, confident and at peace when they are following a daily routine. Transition times (moving from one activity to the next) – are usually the hardest times. Teach students appropriate behavior for packing up, walking to another area, changing seats for group work, coming into the classroom quietly after recess or lunch.

Note that the students should not be in the classroom during breaks unless there is a teacher in the room. Students should not enter the classroom after breaks without the direction of the teacher. At the signal for end of break, students should line up at outside the door and wait for the teacher.

Ideas for Transition times:

To start school or when they return from recess and they are overly excited:

- *Start with prayer, slowly, quietly to calm them down.*
- *Have them start working on some routine work such as hand writing.*
- *Play guitar and sing for a bit.*
- *Play quiet music.*

If they are simply overly energetic:

- *Have them exercise for a few moments, either in the classroom or out in the yard.*
- *Have them go and help do something around the school.*

End of the day

- *Sing, play guitar, read a story; have them read stories – something they enjoy.*

Ideas for upper primary and teens: respect & responsibility is key

- *They will respect your expertise – if you are prepared they settle. If you are not, they act up.*
- *Invite them to identify what kind of classroom they want, what helps them learn, etc. The more they come up with the ideas the more they will “own” them – want to obey them and urge their classmates to follow them as well.*

General tips for a focused classroom:

- *Communicate without words when possible in order to have as few interruptions as possible:*
 - *Make posters of the routine so you can point to the next thing they’ll be doing and when it’s time to transition from one activity to another.*
 - *Make posters of expectations so you can point to them as a reminder when a student is behaving inappropriately.*
 - *Develop sign language for common requests like using the bathroom/toilet.*
- *Whisper instead of raising your voice; they will quiet down in order to hear what you are saying.*
- *Raise your hand and count down with your fingers without speaking. Explain ahead of time: I expect you to sit straight in your chairs and look at me without speaking by the count of 5.*
- *How many fingers? Put your hands behind your back and pull out one hand showing a number of fingers very quickly and then hide it behind your back. Ask quietly: how many fingers? The students will settle and focus in order to see your hand as you only show it for a split second.*
- *Develop a signal you use to gather their attention and have them be quiet: clap, raise your hand, etc. Stand quietly and wait. When they are quiet, then be firm: OK. No more conversation.*
- *Make a large picture of an ear; attach it to the end of a stick. Pull it out and simply hold it up in the air, waiting silently, until all the students are listening.*
- *Write the word R E C E S S across the top of the board. Every time the students become unfocused, loud, etc. instead of yelling, simply erase one of the letters in the word. Each letter means they stay inside sitting quietly as their desks for 2 minutes of recess.*
- *Turn the lights off.*
- *Have them put their heads down on their desks.*
- *Have them write down their questions instead of calling them out. At the end of your explanation, give them a moment to look at their list to see if there are any questions that haven’t been answered yet.*

- *Compliment students who are behaving appropriately – “I like how Mary is raising her hand, has her desk cleared off” etc. The students will scramble to do the same.*

Guiding a student in responding to their unacceptable behavior

Ask the students to

- Take responsibility for their actions (Ask if they were responsible)
- Ask them to admit what they did and apologize for it
- Ask them to talk about their feelings
- Ask questions to understand
- Take turns to listen
- Ask them to say sorry and if they are truly sorry, say “I forgive you”.

Ideas for equally serving:

- *Classroom or school chores are equally divided and rotate among all students.*
- *Each student is responsible for their own area.*
- *Assign responsibilities to all that would only be for men or women, for certain caste, etc. If parents fuss about “my son doesn’t do women’s work” explain: “If we are going to teach, then we are going to teach all the students, treat them all equally.”*

Introducing routines for relationships:

- *Ask students: “How do you like to be treated?” Ask, “How do you feel...”*
 - *when you want to say something and everyone else is speaking.*
 - *when others are using your things in class.*
 - *about how you look.*
 - *when you are interrupted, teased? No. That’s why we don’t do it in our class.*
- *Write out the positive values & routines on a big piece of paper – a mural or poster.*
- *Have students sign or put paint on their hands and they put hand prints on poster.*
- *Older students can make the poster or mural or can each take one routine or value and make a mini-poster of it to decorate the room.*

How to encourage others

What can we say?

Thank you, please, no thank you, could we do it later? could we do it this way? Good idea but I’d like to.... , let’s take turns, I’m sorry, please forgive me

- *Have a secret friend to bless for 1-3 days – small gifts, notes, acts of kindness all done secretly. Have a special time when the secret partners are revealed!*
- *Assign blessing and honor activities (where the class is split by gender, tribe, etc.): boys must serve the girls for the day or make a nice card for one of them (anonymously), or bring small gift.*
- *Students each have one day a month to get a special time with the teacher, e.g. lunch, story, etc.*
- *Affirmation day: each person has an instruction on their backs, (i.e. give me a hug, tell me I’m kind, tell me something you like about me, and everyone has to do it all day.*
- *“My day to be nice” – rotate a group of students each day. These students are responsible to be extra kind and helpful. You can assign a group to each day of the week or choose one day a week for the “be kind and helpful” day.*
- *Teach the boys to be “gentlemen” – open the door, carry bags; manners week.*

- *Affirmation day: write thank you notes – one each day or on a day of the week.*
- *Once a week everyone brings something and have a big snack together. Then clean the classroom together before heading home.*
- *Once a week have a play time – soccer game, etc. as a class (maybe Friday afternoons!)*

Routines for solving conflict

For student involved in conflict, ask them to:

- *Start your sentence with “I” to take responsibility for your feelings and asking for what you want. Don’t start sentences with “you!” as an accusation.*
- *Count to 50 before you say something when you’re mad.*
- *Explain how you feel about what the other person said or did. Ask what they meant by what they did or said.*
- *Take turns talking – you cannot interrupt when the other person is explaining. Have an object that the students hold when they are working out a problem – they have to be holding that object in order to speak, must hand it to the other person when they are done with a statement.*
- *Start by apologizing for what you did wrong, or ask if there’s something you did to upset the other.*
- *Try to work it out on your own before coming to get the teacher.*
- *Walk away from the group to work out your problem so it is a private matter between the two of you.*

Routines for Possessions

- *Some supplies belong to everyone; these stay in the classroom. You can provide them out of classroom funds. You can also ask students to bring 2 of each item at the beginning of the year, one for the class supplies and one for their own use. Another possibility is to do some kind of activity together to raise money to buy classroom supplies.*
- *Some supplies belong to each student. Students can decide to share these if they want to but don’t have to; others have to ask, wait for an answer before they use it.*
- *Don’t touch what belongs to someone unless you ask.*
- *You cannot give away your personal supplies to anyone unless parents send in a note.*

Routines for Personal Responsibility

Expectations on how we do our work

- *What’s expected? Neat, complete, on time!*
- *Don’t shame those who haven’t done it; give them a chance to do it and be affirmed for it. (Perhaps give them an extra day to hand it in; ask them to stay after school to complete it.)*
- *Name and date in the same place on each page, title for each page, no tears or stains on paper*

Personal responsibility

- *Put away items before next class, before leave classroom.*
- *Have materials you need, don’t take from others.*
- *Sign in/put a star on the chart when turn in homework.*
- *Play equipment at recess – students can sign-out for what they have borrowed and return it end of recess.*

Practical ways to help students grow in making good choices:

- *Explain clearly what you want, do not criticize the negative. Explain why this behavior is important and the effect it will have on reaching the goals of learning and maturity.*

- Focus on one thing at a time, do not try to change many things at once.
- Catch them being good – notice examples of what you want. Stop and publically commend the student for the specific behavior you want to see in the class.
- Make sure the expectations are reasonable. If necessary, make small steps towards the final goal so they can be successful along the way.
- The younger the students, the more short-term the goals should be.
- Give them time to practice so they are confident they understand what you expect.
- Consequences need to be **related, respectful** and **reasonable**.
- Consequences are **related** to the behavior that needs to be strengthened.
- Consequences are given in a way that is **respectful**, not using shame or fear.
- Consequences should be **reasonable**, matching the student’s age and abilities and the “size” of the problem behavior. Example: if a student is speaking unkindly to another, they are not expelled from school.

Individual and group motivation in changing behavior

When we grow together as a group, we develop in individual strength and maturity.

- We can encourage students to succeed together, not compete against one another, and give group rewards.
- Teacher must take into account the good effort of those who are struggling; do not allow shame and rejection from the group if one fails. Help them to help the ones who are struggling!
- We can reward the success of the group rather than bring a negative consequence to the group if one fails.
- Explain to students, “Make the goal to do YOUR best, not THE best. Everyone is successful and we can encourage others for what they do.”
- When there is personal accountability, like turning in homework or being on time, there are chances for everyone to be successful. There’s not “one winner” but everyone can be successful if they meet the criteria, (e.g. turn their homework in every day for a week, etc.)

Designing consequences to strengthen

Students being unkind to one another: be kind

- Whoever makes an unkind comment stand and publicly share three things they like about the student they were unkind to.
- Whoever is unkind will do the classroom chore for the one they were unkind to.

Students not being quiet when teacher calls to attention: self-controlled

- 1st ten students to be quiet immediately are dismissed early for recess
- Last 10 students to quiet will “practice” sitting quietly for the 1st 2 minutes of recess
- Class will go outside and run several laps around the playground to work off their extra energy

NOTE: do not take away recess time from students who have too much energy! It will only make the problem worse. Instead, give them something active to do to use up energy.

Students not turning in homework on time: manage time

- When class has free time or special activities, students who need “extra time” to get their homework done will not be able to participate in these activities until homework is completed.
- If possible, students can be asked to stay after class in the afternoon to finish whatever homework they have not turned in from the day before.

Issues that contribute to poor choices

Tools in the classroom

Whatever the root cause of the behavior problems, there are many different tools available to teachers to bring additional support and accountability to these struggling students.

Possible causes of student misbehavior

	Physical discomfort	Emotional pain	Learning difficulties
What they do	Act up	Cry, angry outbursts	Disruptive, silly
Why they do it	Headache – can't see board	Parents fighting Being bullied	Ashamed, don't understand
How to help in class	Move their seat	Extra public affirmation, special chores, ok for time out	Class helpers tutor Sit next to strong students for help Help after school
Partners outside class	Parents – dr. apt Community health clinic do eye exam	Speak with parents, involve in outside activities	Parents as tutors Find another adult in community

Physical problems

Behavior: sometimes students are physically uncomfortable; they may be hungry, tired, cold, can't see and have headaches. They may be restless and irritable, or become withdrawn and quiet.

- Move students around the classroom to find the best position for their vision problems.
- Try to provide some kind of snack for students, either from the school, community or parents.
- Parents – ask them to change the routine at home, e.g. to get the student to bed earlier; check for possible need of glasses.
- Community – ask for donations for glasses, food, warm clothing. Consider working together for a fundraiser for these kinds of supplies.

Learning problems:

As with all difficulties with student behavior, it's important to find out why the student is struggling. When it comes to learning difficulties, it is **very** important to truly understand why and how the student is struggling.

- Students may be very bright and are bored with the pace the rest of the class is learning.
- Students have may a lot of physical energy that is difficult for them to manage
- Students may have true learning difficulties and a limited mental capacity.

While these are very different problems, the behavior in the classroom may be very similar! Therefore, it's particularly important to understand why the student is restless and not paying attention. These students need very different kinds of help to become successful learners.

For students who are ahead of the class:

Behavior: can be restless, talking, teasing and poking other students, playing with things they have brought to school.

- Give them added things that can challenge them when they are finished their regular work.
- Have a plan for them to work on things on their own that doesn't distract others.
- Have them create puzzles, games, stories for other students.
- Have them help other students who are still working.

- Put class in pairs to correct homework; these students would love to have homework to correct

For students who have too much energy:

Some children simply have a high level of energy designed into them by God. This is often true of students with a kinesthetic learning style – they need to move and touch things to help their learning. Spending a lot of our energy on making these children sit still all the time detracts from our teaching and their learning. Finding ways to allow them to use their energy in a positive way while not distracting themselves or the class room learning can be very helpful to manage their behavior and help them to mature. They can often develop into leaders and innovators!

Behavior: physically move around a lot, some part of their body is often moving such as tapping their foot or pencil, can only work quietly for a short period of time.

- Don't punish them by taking away their activity – they need the energy release and often being physical is the only thing they are good at; give them good attention.
- Move them away from friends while they are working.
- Move them closer to you.
- Invite them to do their work on the board.
- Be careful to notice when they are making an effort to behave well.
- Give opportunities for them to be recognized and responsible.
- Give them added opportunities to move around – send them on errands to fetch things for you; give them permission to go run a lap around the play yard; assign them added activity during a play time as a means to settle down in class.
- Allow them to stand quietly in the back of the class when they feel they have to move.
- Allow them to hold an object in their hands – in their lap or under their desk so it does not distract others. Sometimes an object to squeeze or just touch can keep their physical body active enough for them to control their larger movements and concentrate on their learning.

For students who can't keep up

Behavior: depending on the student's personality, some may weep or give up. Other students may become irritable or try to get attention by other means to cover for their lack of success with their lessons.

- Pair them with another student who is learning well
- Spend time with them after school
- Make home visit to help parents understand and get involved
- Ask for an adult to come in and help them
- Find something they DO well and showcase that; let them learn that way, even more than with normal learning capacities; they can spend time in class on those types of projects when they cannot keep up and you don't have time to help them.

Emotional problems

Behavior: angry, often in fights, withdrawn, weepy or disliked. This may be rooted in problems at home, or social problems with other students.

- Help the student feel successful and secure at school.
- Help them build friendship with other students.
- Commend them in front of others.
- Give them special responsibility to help you – make them feel special; increase their understanding of what is bad behavior and how it affects the class.
- Keep them with you in class as much as possible.
- Work with them on talking about what they feel and asking for what they want.

Preventing misbehavior

There are often several students who regularly misbehave in class. The teacher will spend more time with these students than with others. If a teacher is paying close attention to the student, they can learn to recognize when the student is starting to have difficulties, and be prepared to help them before they make poor choices.

What can we do when a student begins to misbehave?

- Give them a responsibility.
- Distract them – give them a new focus.
- Ask them to step outside.
- Step in close physically, eye to eye.
- Give them an errand outside the classroom.

Possible sequence when you notice a student is not working well in class:

- Draw attention to the good choices they ARE making, or if they are not choosing well, affirm how a student near them is behaving. This gives the student a positive focus and a reminder of what is expected.
- Stand beside them to help them focus.
- Quietly ask them: is there something I can do to help you?
- Recognize and encourage the first sign that they are trying to change their actions.
- Privately repeat the instructions and remind them of the choices they are making.
- If they continue to misbehave, give them a 5minute timeout in another spot in the classroom.
- Allow them to return to their seat to try to behave appropriately again.
- Have them sit elsewhere in the class – slightly apart from the other students. They can either participate in class from there, or invite them to write/draw what's bothering them.

Attitudes to correct appropriately

One of the most important parts of seeing good fruit from correcting a student is to prepare our own heart. It is true for all people that when we are attacked, we either want to fight back or run away or pretend that nothing happened to protect ourselves. We want students to receive our counsel and correction, so we must come to them with a heart that reflects God's care and concern for them.

- Is 61:1 God's desire is for us to comfort and bring freedom (often students are misbehaving out of broken areas in their lives)
- Jer 31: 20 God has to correct us (Ephraim) but His heart is tender towards us
- Heb 12: 5-7; 12-13 God disciplines us because He loves us dearly and wants us to mature
- Heb 12: 12-13 correction is to straighten and strengthen

Practical steps to help students respond well to correction

Before you speak to them:

- Don't react, do respond. Take time to be sure you have dealt with any of your own emotions before you speak with the student.
- Do not touch the student (don't grab their arm or hit them).
- Don't raise your voice.
- Take a few moments before you begin; consider what you will say.
- Take them aside; do not correct them in front of others.
- Have them wait for you (inside or outside the class) until you can give them some time without leaving the class in disorder.
- Don't make empty threats. Be prepared to follow through with whatever you say.

When you speak to them:

- Pray with the student before you speak about their behavior. Let them hear you asking God for wisdom, thanking God for their lives.
- Affirm the student and your commitment to them.
- Ask questions to fully understand what happened. They had a reason for acting as they did. Don't accuse, or presume you know why they made those choices.
- Ask how you can help them with the problems behind why they misbehaved.
- Explain why the behavior is unacceptable and what you DO want – the positive behavior.
- Explain what the consequences will be and WHY – how the consequences will help build the positive behavior and restore the relationships.

Creating consequences

In helping the classroom of students to choose well, consequences are designed to strengthen students to choose well. This is also true when working with individual students. There is often an added issue: they may have caused damage to another student or to property. The goals of working with individual students must be to both strengthen the student to choose well and to restore whatever damage has been done by their poor choices.

- Have the student apologize and make it right, (e.g. fix something, write a note). A biblical principle for restoration is: you make things right in the same circle where you made wrong choices. If you hurt one person's feelings, you apologize to that person. If you hurt a person's feelings in front of the whole class then you apologize in front of the whole class. If you break equipment that means the whole class cannot use it, then you apologize to the whole class and work to rebuild or pay back for that equipment.
- If their poor choices do not offend or injure another, then consequences can focus more on what they will be most motivated to have restored quickly and what will help them grow in understanding, motivation and skill to change their actions.
- Don't punish them by denying recess – they need the exercise! You can hold them back a few minutes and talk to them personally. You can require them to run off some energy during recess and watch to be sure they do it.
- Don't punish them with added school work or Bible verses. (It's not helpful for students to see those as a negative!)
- Work with them in whatever they are required to do, e.g. clean or repair the school, stay after to finish homework.
- For chronic problems, ask for small steps towards bigger, long term changes. Watch for and celebrate those small victories.

Serious misbehavior

For constant, long term or serious misbehavior, it's wise to let the principal know and call the parents unless there's possible abuse in the family. It is VERY helpful to develop agreement with parents on how to deal with their student, and you may gain some understanding of why the student may be misbehaving. The stronger the communication with the family, the more consistent the follow through between behavior and home and in the classroom, the more likely the student will be able to change serious problems with behavior.

Physical punishment

Many cultures include physical punishment as a common means of correcting children, both in and out of school. The Bible gives parents the authority to use physical punishment, and there are instructions and models in the Word for parents in this area.

We do not endorse using physical punishment in response to student's misbehavior.

Whatever the laws are, it is wise for each teacher to have personal guidelines to avoid any appearance of evil to the student or others. Ideas for guidelines:

- Don't touch a student on their torso, only on arms and above. If a student insists on sitting in your lap during a public classroom time such as reading time, be sure to keep your hands in full view at all times. Do not allow a student to sit on your lap when you are in a private place.
- Don't take a student to the restroom alone – either go in pairs, or where you can keep the door open and another adult can be nearby. This is particularly important for men. When helping a student with toileting, encourage the students to wipe themselves, pull their pants up and down, etc. to minimize the physical contact you would have with a student's private parts.
- Don't be alone with a student. If you correct them, do so in an area that is just out of hearing of others, or out of sight from the class but in view of the school office or outdoors. If a student comes to visit you afterschool, be sure to leave the door open, step outside to talk with them, or invite another student to join you.
- Immediately discuss any questionable situations with your school leadership, e.g. you suspect a student may be abused or you have found yourself in a situation that may appear questionable to others.