

## Consequence Strategies

Even when staff members use all of the prevention strategies, there will still be a need for consequences. In Chapter 4, we talked about some consequences that teachers can use independent of the buildingwide discipline plan. In Chapter 7, we developed buildingwide consequences that we believe should be in place to support and back up classroom discipline plans. In this chapter, we address specific strategies that we believe teachers should use when they deliver consequences to students. These strategies increase the effectiveness of the consequences and decrease the chance that small problems will become larger problems or that power struggles will occur between staff members and students.

### Tolerate No Exceptions

A teacher who gives instructions but then fails to require 100 percent compliance with those instructions is one who has a weak discipline system. After giving a directive, such as “Turn to page 14” or “Everyone, look this way,” you should always check for total student compliance. If a directive is important enough to give, it’s important enough to follow through on. When you let just one student fail to follow instructions, you are inadvertently telling all your students that your words are not important.

#### Tip Box

One of the best ways to increase the likelihood of student compliance is to show courtesy and respect.

Also, when one student fails to comply with a directive, it is almost inevitable that others will also fail to comply.

## Pay Attention Even to Little Problems

Most teachers do a good job of enforcing the “big” rules such as “no fighting” and “follow staff instructions.” The same is not always true for less significant rule infractions, such as littering or minor shoving in the hallway. Any time you fail to enforce a rule, no matter how small it might be, you are undermining the entire discipline system. McEwan and Damer (2000) state, “Tackling the small stuff while it is still manageable will foster a school environment in which the catastrophic problems are far less likely to occur” (p. 8).

There is a strong chance that when you fail to enforce “small” rule violations, more serious problems will occur in the future. Minor shoving in the hallway becomes hitting, one student talking out of turn becomes four students talking out of turn, and a little littering becomes serious graffiti.

Ideally, the entire staff should be committed to enforcing all building rules. While the severity of the consequence should be proportional to the rule violation (i.e., sometimes a verbal reminder is a sufficient response), the decision to intervene should not be related to the rule’s seriousness. The bottom line is that if it’s a rule, it needs to be enforced.

## Keep Your Physical Distance When Disciplining

Sometimes when teachers discipline students, the teachers can become very frustrated and emotional. These situations can cause them to overreact by grabbing a student or being physical in other ways. This should be avoided if at all possible.

The only time you are justified in physically intervening with students is when they pose a clear threat to another student, a staff member, or themselves. Even during these times, you should use the minimal amount of physical force needed to make certain everyone is safe. You should also consider your own safety before intervening.

Resorting to physical contact with students often creates an entirely new problem that goes beyond the original issue. In some cases, a teacher will be subsequently put on the defensive by angry parents who insist that

the teacher had no right to touch their child. Also, parents can claim that the physical intervention caused injuries to the child. In these cases, the teacher involved must prove that the physical intervention was justified and was not an overreaction. If a teacher does need to use force, he or she must immediately document exactly what happened and report it to an administrator in case it becomes a bigger issue.

## Refrain from Punishing the Whole Group

Teachers typically have the best of intentions when they discipline an entire class for the actions of one student. Requiring the entire class to put their heads down, giving them detention, or giving them extra work are examples of some of the ways this is done. This practice is usually a desperate attempt to entice the class to turn in the violator.

Despite these good intentions, however, group punishments are unfair to the innocent students. Also, group punishments often create parent and student animosity toward the teacher. If you believe group punishments are justified, ask yourself the question, “Would I like to be punished for something another staff member did?” The answer is undoubtedly “no.” This alone is reason enough not to take part in this type of discipline.

## Don't Let Students Become “Attorneys”

If given the opportunity, many students will argue a consequence to death. This wastes your time, interrupts instruction, and becomes a show for the other students. There is no law that says a student has the right to argue about a consequence. If a rule and its consequence have been clearly communicated, due process has been used, and the student has obviously broken the rule, the time for arguing is over.

Curwin and Mendler (1988) suggest that if students feel strongly that they have been unjustifiably punished, they can be given the opportunity to fill out an appeal form that you can review later. The Consequence Appeal form, an example of which appears in Figure 12.1, provides students with an opportunity to appeal without taking your time. The form can be kept in a corner of the room, and students should be informed that if they truly feel the need to appeal a consequence, they should fill out all the information on the form and then wait for your final decision.

FIGURE 12.1  
CONSEQUENCE APPEAL FORM

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

What rule did I violate?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What consequence did I receive?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Why should my consequence be changed, and what should it be changed to?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## Take Notice of Misbehavior

Some teachers believe that the best way to stop misbehavior is to ignore it. This philosophical approach is based on the mistaken belief that most students disrupt the class in an effort to get the teacher's attention. But students misbehave to get attention from their peers, not their teacher. Thus, misbehavior is self-rewarding and ignoring it has no impact. It is important to follow up on all misbehaviors in a fair and consistent manner.

## Assign Lunch Detention for Tardies

Students who are late to class by even a second should receive lunch detention. This process is quick, easy, and powerful. It communicates that learning time is important and will not be wasted. When this consequence is applied consistently throughout the building, the number of tardies throughout the school will decrease significantly.

## End of Section Reflection Questions

1. What steps can you take to communicate positive expectations to all your students, even those who are struggling?

2. What are some rules of conduct or discipline plan policies that need to be taught or retaught to your students at this time of year?
3. Which of the classroom monitoring strategies could you do a better job of implementing: proximity, silence, use of the eyes, or response opportunities?
4. After reviewing all the consequence strategies, which would you like to focus on and why?



