

E-4 Respond immediately to misbehavior and be consistent in your response

What does it mean to respond consistently and immediately?

- Always doing what you said you would – living up to asserting and reinforcing the behavior expectations you established in class
- Always responding *in the moment* – not ignoring behavior, letting things slide, or consistently responding well after the fact

Why is this important?

It is not always easy, or fun, to consistently respond to every breach of expectations every time, especially for beginning teachers who may be developing their confidence as an instructor.

But vigilant consistency is crucial for establishing and maintaining high expectations for behavior. When students fail to meet the bar for behavior, it is often because the teacher has not followed through in enforcing expectations. Not responding consistently can make consequences appear random, causing students to feel powerless and doubt their ability to influence their own outcomes.

I learned very quickly that if I was not consistent in reinforcing rules and consequences, the students would sense a weakness and would exploit it. I always attempt to make sure that whether it is the most difficult child or the most angelic, the consequence remained the same. It protects you and your authority in the long run.

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How do I respond consistently and immediately?

- **Constantly monitor students throughout the lesson.**

Just as you should regularly gauge student understanding and engagement while you present academic material (E-1), it's important to know exactly what students are doing at all times in order to quickly respond to misbehavior. Be sure to:

- Always face the class
 - Position yourself so that the rest of the classroom remains in your field of vision when addressing an individual student
 - Move around your classroom throughout your lesson
 - Constantly check for eye contact from students
- **React to each breach of expectations as soon as you notice it, while maintaining the same level of assertiveness in each response.**
 - **Strike an appropriate balance between the need to respond consistently and other values**

- Sometimes it might be strategic to **not** respond immediately, depending on the personality of a student. If you know a student does not respond well to being called out in front of others, for instance, you may consider talking to him/her in private. Carefully reflect on the causes of misbehavior to determine solutions for individual students
- There is a tension between waiting for every single student to meet expectations and the need to follow the appropriate pacing established in your lesson plan. To strike the right balance and determine your response, reflect on questions such as the following:
 - Are student(s) displaying minor or major misbehavior? Are they fidgeting or are they kicking their neighbors?
 - How many students are not meeting expectations? Is it one, or five, or twenty?
 - What is the likely cause of the misbehavior? Are students bored or are they actively challenging your authority?