

Creating and Implementing Effective Rules and Consequences

Chapter Two

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Introduction

Classrooms are unpredictable places. On the first day of school, students do not know when they can go to the bathroom, if they will be punished for leaving their seats, or how the person at the front of the room will treat them all year. At any moment, the fire alarm could ring, the intercom could blare with announcements, someone could start a fight, the overhead lamp could blow, a child could have a seizure, an administrator could ask you to step out into the hall during your lesson. These – and a host of other distractions and dangers – create a lot of potential areas for confusion and rather unsafe feelings for children.

Of course, older children have had to process more cumulative expectations than kindergartners who are entirely new to the culture of school, but the fundamental issue remains: if there is a doubt about expectations for behavior in the classroom, students may develop their own patterns for behaving. As a wise teacher once said, if you don't have a plan for your students, they will have a plan for you.

Determining rules and consequences, teaching them to students and outlining the benefits of working within them, is a critical up-front investment of a new teacher's time and energy. These pieces of your classroom management plan help promote appropriate student behavior, prevent student misbehavior and create a sense of order and predictability in your classroom. Rules, and your explanation of them, tell students how you expect them to behave. Consequences outline what would happen if students chose to break the rules. Strategies for reinforcing good behavior, both intangible and tangible, bolster a student's desire to make the right behavioral choices and follow your rules.

This chapter will address the components of proactive behavior management. First, we will discuss the characteristics of effective rules and consequences. We will also explore factors to keep in mind when determining the rules and consequences for your particular classroom. Then, we will examine how to best teach those rules and consequences to your students. Finally, we will consider the importance of reinforcing good behavior through intangible, and sometimes tangible, rewards.

These three steps, together with the implementation of classroom "procedures" discussed in chapter three (for example, the specific process you teach your students for how to enter the classroom or how to move from one station to the next) are prerequisites to creating a predictable, secure classroom that meets students' basic needs for safety and routine and gets you one step closer to creating a culture of achievement. Always remember that good behavior is a means to an end, not an end itself. Your expectations for student behavior must support your broader vision for student achievement, your ultimate "end." To see how some teachers present their rules, consequences, and procedures to students as means to a culture of achievement, look at "Class Expectations" in the **Classroom Management & Culture Toolkit** (pp. 1-5); this Toolkit can be found online at the Resource Exchange on TFANet. ✕

Effective Rules and Consequences

I. Determining Rules

Establishing explicit behavioral expectations entails outlining rules and consequences so that students understand exactly what behaviors are allowed and what behaviors are prohibited. This first step toward helping your students meet their behavioral potential is worth a considerable investment of energy early on; setting rules and consequences minimizes the need for other types of more corrective discipline (i.e., actually implementing the consequences).

Determining Appropriate Rules

Rules are general standards of conduct and should apply to student behavior in *all* classroom situations, regardless of the activity. In that way, rules are distinct from procedures, which outline specific behaviors during a particular type of activity. Consider the reflection of a former '00 corps member from the Rio Grande Valley:

My worst rule was a requirement that students always raise their hands before speaking. I quickly realized it wasn't important or appropriate for students to always raise their hands, for example during cooperative groups or whole-class brainstorm discussions. Students were unclear about what I expected, and this lack of consistency undermined my whole system. I took it off the list of rules for non-negotiable behavior, and instead created a set of procedures to teach students what I expected during different, specific activities.

When crafting classroom rules, keep in mind three general guidelines:

- Phrase your rules in the form of a positive statement.
- State your rules clearly.
- Minimize your list of rules (most teachers have 3-5 rules).

The following table gives examples of rules that do and do not meet these guidelines:

Characteristics	Rationale	Examples to Follow	Examples to Avoid
1. Rules should be in the form of a positive statement. Avoid rules framed as negative statements.	Positive rules explain what students should be doing. Negatively stated rules simply tell students what to avoid and challenge students to find inappropriate behaviors that fall outside the scope of the rule.	<i>Respect your classmates in your words and actions.</i> <i>Listen when someone else is talking.</i> <i>Class time is for class activities.</i>	<i>No disrespectful comments.</i> <i>No talking out of turn.</i> <i>No toys or games in class.</i>
2. Rules need to be stated clearly. (Avoid rules that are vague unless you intend to discuss the rule extensively with students).	Students should be able to understand the behavioral expectation.	<i>Come to class prepared with all required materials.</i> <i>Follow the teacher's directions.</i>	<i>Every student will demonstrate habits of a responsible learner.</i> <i>Always use appropriate conduct.</i>

Rules, Consequences, and Procedures

Because rules and consequences need to be established before procedures, and procedures are often built from and aligned with the classroom rules, we chose to address rules and consequences before procedures in this text. As mentioned in the introduction, procedures are another essential element of any classroom management plan. The next chapter will take an in-depth look at how to establish and teach procedures.

<p>3. Rules should be few.</p>	<p>Each rule appears more important when there are fewer of them. Fewer rules are also easier for students to remember and for teachers to enforce. Finally, having just a few rules avoids the sense that you are trying to control a student's every movement.</p>	<p>Rules such as <i>Class time is for class activities</i> or <i>Follow the teacher's directions</i> address many behaviors in one rule.</p>	<p><i>No gum, food, or drink in class. Bring your homework, book, notebook, and pen to class everyday. Be on time. No profanity. No leaving the room without permission.</i></p>
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There is a certain tension between keeping your list of rules short and making sure those few rules are clear to students. In order to establish a manageable list of rules, teachers often have to make each rule broad enough to cover more than one specific behavioral expectation, yet often those broad rules are no longer explicit. We'll talk about this more in the section below on teaching rules, but all rules – especially those that are broad – should be discussed extensively with students. Students need to know exactly what “Class time is for class activities” does and does not mean.

Other Considerations When Determining Rules

When considering what rules to establish, you must determine the kind of environment you would like to maintain. As the leader of your classroom, what kind of classroom atmosphere will you use your authority to establish? You should also consider the age and maturity of your students in order to be realistic and fair in your expectations. For example, it is particularly important for young students that rules are short and easy to remember. Also, do not expect very young children (ages 2-7) to find it easy to see the world from someone else's perspective, since they are likely to be very egocentric at this point in their cognitive development. For example, with very young students, *Keep your hands to yourself* is easier to understand and follow than *Respect others*. The *Learning Theory* text discusses how the developmental levels of your students may impact your classroom management strategies.



Effective Rules and Consequences

II. Determining Consequences

While consequences are often framed as something used only after a rule has failed, they are more accurately viewed as part of the structure that makes rules work. A student needs to know, *up front*, what would happen if she were to break a rule. She can then choose to follow the rule or break the rule and incur the negative consequence. Helping students realize this cause and effect relationship, and that they have the power to choose the resulting “effect,” is one of the many ways teachers can empower their students and help them develop self-discipline. Self-discipline “involves the capacities to regulate oneself, to anticipate consequences, and to give up an immediate gratification to receive a long term goal”⁶ and is one of the most important behavioral skills we can teach our students.

Consequences: Positive, Negative, or Both?

Some classroom management experts limit their definition of consequences to the negative results of a student not meeting behavioral expectations. Others assert that consequences can be either positive or negative; they teach students that any action, whether it is following a rule or breaking a rule, will have a consequence. With this definition, following a rule has a positive consequence (praise, self-respect, tangible rewards) while breaking a rule has a negative consequence (warning, time after class, notification of parents). In this text, for clarity, consequences are defined as the negative result of not meeting behavioral expectations. Positive reinforcement is discussed at length in this chapter’s section on reinforcing expectations.

Cecily Feltham (Los Angeles ’99) wants her third graders to develop self-discipline and begins to discuss the concept of “cause and effect” with her students on the first day of school. She asks the students, “What happens when you drop a bowling ball on your foot? Talk in pairs for ten seconds, and then I may ask you to explain your partner’s answer.” Students are quick to point out that dropping a bowling ball on your foot has the negative effects of inflicting pain and perhaps breaking toes. In the ensuing discussion, Cecily leads her young students to understand that not paying attention, not thinking actively, and not putting energy into their work has negative effects as well – namely that one doesn’t get smarter, people don’t respect you more, and you don’t gain more social and economic capital. On the other hand, if students do meet behavioral expectations and work hard by exercising self-discipline, those benefits (i.e., “effects”) probably will be realized.

I really have tried to empower my students to see their behavior as their choices. In this way, they view themselves as responsible for their own decisions. It becomes much less of me punishing and more of me reminding students of what kind of person they’ve already said they’re trying to be.

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Making sure you and your students clearly understand what actions and statements are appropriate and inappropriate in your classroom, and that everyone knows what you will do immediately if a student does or says something unacceptable, is the first step towards helping your students make the right behavioral choices. If a student chooses to follow the rules, then that student avoids the consequences and receives the benefits that come from meeting your behavioral expectations. If a student chooses to break a rule, then that student chooses the consequence. And you can tell them this, in a conversational, matter-of-fact tone. We’ll discuss the actual implementation of consequences in Chapter Four: Responding to Misbehavior.

⁶ Gimbert, Belinda. *The Responsive Classroom: A Practical Approach for Teaching Children to Care*. <http://teachers.net/gazette/OCT02/gimbert.html>, accessed 7/1/2010.

Characteristics of Effective Consequences

In establishing consequences, you will want to take into account what characteristics make some consequences more effective than others. First, the degree of consequences should increase gradually, so as to give students adequate warning before imposing a more severe penalty. Effective consequences flow logically and naturally from the student's behavior. Finally, effective consequences keep the student's dignity intact.

The following table highlights the characteristics of effective consequences.

Characteristics	Rationale	Examples to Follow	Examples to Avoid
Consequences should be gradual , progressing from less severe to more severe as misbehavior is repeated.*	This sends the message that students have the potential to behave and simply need to understand and choose to follow the expectation. When they repeat the misbehavior, they choose the more severe consequences.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Warning 2. Short detention after class or school 3. Written plan for improvement 4. Guardian contact 5. Severe clause: Sent to principal 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Warning 2. Sent to office <p>or</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Phone call home 2. Parent conference 3. In school detention
Consequences should be natural and/or logical .	<p>Natural consequences follow from the event or situation, as students are allowed to experience the outcome of their poor choices or behavior, highlighting the rationale of the rule.</p> <p>Logical consequences are structured learning opportunities arranged to teach appropriate behavior.</p>	<p>If a student runs to be the first in line, he receives a warning and is asked to walk instead at the end of the line. (natural)</p> <p>When a student misbehaves during rehearsal for a play, she receives a warning and is told that if the poor behavior continues, she will have to sit out of the rehearsal until the next day. (logical)</p>	When a student is disrespectful to a group member during group work, they are allowed to remain in the group but are held in from recess. (neither logical nor natural)
Consequences should maintain the dignity of the student.	Consequences should be consistent from student to student, and delivery of consequences should always address the particular behavior in question, not the student and his or her behavioral history.	If three students interrupt the teacher during a class period, they all receive a warning.	If three students interrupt the teacher during a class period, the first gets ignored, the second gets a harsh warning, and the third student, who has a history of not raising his hand, gets detention after school because the teacher is so "fed up" by that time.

* In the case of severe behavior that stops the entire class from functioning (e.g., fighting between students) students forfeit the right to move through the hierarchy of consequences. Such behavior calls for immediate removal from the classroom. However, save administrative intervention for extremely serious offenses such as fighting. Involving administration takes the situation out of your control and students may no longer see you as the ultimate authority.

Effective Rules and Consequences

So, what consequences do teachers actually find effective? Obviously, there are a variety of consequences that successful teachers employ to maintain their clear behavioral expectations. Remember to exercise consequences that are congruent with your own style, as you need to be able to implement them with confidence and comfort if and when a student chooses to misbehave. For example, if you do not want students to equate punishment with writing, you may not want to have students write “I will behave” 100 times. Of course, consequences also need to be hooked to your rules so that they flow logically and naturally from the student’s misbehavior. The following table sets out a few appropriate consequences teachers might use.

Potential Consequences

Consequence	Description
Call or write home	You might have a student fill out a form that encourages him to reflect on his behavior. A family member should be required to read over and sign the reflection form before the student returns it to you the next day. If you have access to a phone and a free period you might have the student call home with you during a break in the day. Or, you could call a family member in the evening or send a note home with the student. When communicating with the family member about the misbehavior, always begin with a sincere positive comment about the student, explain the specific misbehavior that occurred that day, and state your confidence that the student will make positive choices in the future.
Send student to another room	Many teachers have arrangements with a nearby colleague where they can bring a student to the other teacher’s classroom to work independently on an assignment. This strategy serves to provide the student with a chance to calm down and regroup. Be sure to avoid communicating an attitude of “good riddance” and do not use this strategy regularly. Leaving your room with no further consequence might be exactly what your student wants.
Revoke privileges	At the elementary level, chronic misbehavior results in a loss of recess time, classroom jobs, computer privileges, or other pre-determined “valuable” activities. At the secondary level, where you have most students for only one period each day, revoking privileges is a less common consequence. However, some secondary corps members report success with revoking the privilege of hallway time between classes. Asking a student to remain in your classroom for 3 of the 5 minutes between periods (obviously, you can’t make them late to their next class), while their friends are able to chat and laugh in the hallway, can be a strong deterrent to misbehavior.
Move student to another seat	When a student is distracting – or seems distracted by – a nearby student, you should move him or her to another seat. Doing this in the middle of class is often quite effective with younger students (K-6). This immediate seat move can also be effective with older students. Some teachers suggest going a step further and creating a new, well-considered seating chart to implement the very next day if you discover there are several pairs or groups of students that need to be separated.
Time-out chair	Most appropriate in younger grades, the time-out chair is a physical space where students can go to cool off and think about their behavior. You might also have a student write a note of apology or a reflection on how to make better choices in the future. A sample reflection journal is in the Classroom Management & Culture Toolkit (p. 6); this Toolkit can be found online at the Resource Exchange on TFANet. ✖
Conference with the coach	Secondary teachers should make an effort to develop strong relationships with the athletic staff of their school. Coaches often have great influence on students, especially if children are jeopardizing their athletic eligibility by potentially failing your class. Having a conference with the coach is a consequence that applies to individual students and probably wouldn’t be part of your overall consequence system.

Detention	Though you should check with your administration on the exact policies involved, you may have the authority to assign lunch or after-school detention to disobedient students. During detention, a student might have to clean all the desks in your classroom after defacing his, or complete a form that explains what he did wrong, why he made a poor choice, and what he plans to do when faced with a similar choice in the future.
“Hands & Words Are Not for Hurting”	If students use their hands to hurt others, you might consider requiring them to use their hands to <i>help</i> others instead. The Hands & Words Are Not for Hurting Project is a non-profit organization that has developed a program of non-violence and conflict resolution. ⁷ To read how you might introduce this program to your students, see “Hands & Words Are Not for Hurting” in the Classroom Management & Culture Toolkit (p. 7) found online on the Resource Exchange on TFA.Net. ✖
“On the Porch”	When students misbehave at the KIPP academies, they are relegated to “the porch,” which comes from the expression, “If you can’t run with the big dogs, stay on the porch.” When a student is on the porch, she is not allowed to sit or eat with the rest of her class and she must write a letter of apology explaining what she did and why she is sorry. (The Knowledge is Power Program was started by Teach For America alumni and KIPP schools are widely regarded for the powerful cultures they have built.)

Systems for Tracking Consequences

It is important for the teacher and the student to know, throughout the day or class period, exactly where the student is on the hierarchy of consequences. Students are more motivated to behave when they know what is expected of them and when they can track their progress towards the ultimate goal of exemplary behavior. Below are some example systems for tracking student behavior.

Traffic Lights

A popular system at the early elementary level, the green, yellow, and red regions of a traffic light represent different levels of behavior. Student names are put on a clothespin and the teacher moves the pins up and down depending on student behavior (green = excellent behavior, yellow = warning, and red = consequence, such as time out or missed recess. Some teachers add another color, such as blue, which indicates that a phone call will be made to parents.) After students have completed the consequence, the teacher should move the student’s clothespin back to yellow, and then to green with continued appropriate behavior. Students should be granted a fresh start each new day by beginning again on green.

Documenting Consequences

One cardinal rule for yourself regarding student consequences: document, document, document. Many teachers keep folders for each child, with contact information, diagnostic results, examples of student work, a record of contact with parents and any documentation of student misbehavior, with dates. You will need these citations for parent conferences, for proof during a disciplinary hearing, and for your own reflection on your interaction with students. It may be wise to have your students sign a form every time they stay after class or reach a certain level of the consequences ladder, adding a sense of official weight to their poor choices. You can always refer back to your records – and point back to the appropriate entry – if a student says this is her first offense.

The principles of this consequence system can be applied in many different ways. For example, if you do a new thematic unit every 6 or 9 weeks, you might substitute a space ship for the traffic light during a unit on outer space or a sunflower during a unit on plants. When you begin the new unit, you have a great opportunity to review your rules and consequences when presenting the new system (which is the same except now students should be aiming to keep their clothespin at the top of the space ship or on the head of the flower).

⁷ <http://www.handsproject.org>, accessed 7/1/2010.

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Card Charts

Many teachers, especially those who teach elementary students and have the same group of students all day, set up a class “card chart.” In this system, each student has a library card pocket with his or her name on it and five cards of different colors. Rachel Schankula (Delta '99) had her fifth graders begin the day on black, representing excellent behavior.

If a student chose to break a class rule, she was directed to move the black card to the back of the pocket and ensure that the yellow card, which represented a formal warning, was in the front. If the student chose to break a rule again, they put the red card in the front. This meant that the student had to sit by herself in the cafeteria OR write a behavior essay AND that I would call her parents that night regarding the observed behavior. If the student chose to break a rule yet again, she reached the blue card, which resulted in a 15-minute after-school detention on Friday afternoon (I would send a notice home to parents to let them know that we would need to make arrangements for their child to stay for detention). In extreme situations, a student reached her white card, which meant that the student had to leave the classroom immediately and go to the principal’s office. I kept a record of where students’ cards were at the end of the day in an Excel file. I referred back to this file when determining conduct grades and when having parent/student conferences. Every Monday morning, each student would start over again on the black card. (Examples of behavior essays are in the **Classroom Management & Culture Toolkit** (p. 8) found online at the Resource Exchange on TFANet. ✖

Check Sheets

At the secondary level (because traffic lights are too childish and a card chart for each section of students might take up too much space) some teachers post a piece of paper that represents each class of students. When a student first breaks a rule, the teacher gives a verbal warning and puts the student’s initials on his or her class’s sheet. For any rules broken by the student after the warning, the teacher puts a check by the initials (one check = stay after class, two checks = fill out a behavior reflection form after school, three checks = parents contacted). These sheets are taken down every Friday and put into a binder for future reference, and new, blank sheets go up for Monday morning.

A variation on this system is to have a region of your chalkboard where you note students’ initials and checks. However, you may not want to take up space on your board for that, and chalk can be accidentally erased.

Clipboards

While the check sheet system allows students (and their peers) to see the consequence level for any misbehaving student on the wall, some secondary teachers set up a more private system in which students sign a class clipboard and write a quick explanation of what they did wrong each time they break a rule. For example, after a verbal warning for the first offense, Melissa is required to stay after class for a quick conference with the teacher. There, she signs her name and explains her poor behavioral choice on the appropriate clipboard. The next time Melissa breaks a rule, she must stay after school for a longer conference and again sign the clipboard. At the third offense, Melissa’s parents are called; at the fourth, her parents are cordially invited to come to school and sit in the classroom with her. A student must also sign the clipboard when late to class or if he doesn’t bring in his homework (if he later brings in the assignment the teacher highlights the student’s name on the clipboard signifying she received it).

Corps members who use this system find that having students sign their name formalizes their poor choice and serves as a record for parent conferences. The clipboard-based system of Timothy Hearn, a teacher at Frederick Douglass Academy in Harlem, was described in the January 2004 issue of *Teacher Magazine*. He tracks his students' behavior and participation in class using a chart and symbols he created. Samples of Mr. Hearn's "Weekly Behavior Record Sheet" and his corresponding key are included in the **Classroom Management & Culture Toolkit** (pp. 9-10) found online at the Resource Exchange on TFA.Net. ✖

Aligning Your Expectations with Those of the School

As you develop and set your behavioral expectations, you should take into account the broader school context. The culture of your school, for better or for worse, has a significant impact on the way discipline and routine practices will play out within your classroom and the school at large. If your school has a strong, positive culture of behavior, you should align your classroom expectations and rules with those used by your colleagues to every extent possible so that your classroom environment is consistent with the school environment in which your students are used to operating. In some cases, especially at the middle school level, you may be on a team of teachers who work with the same group of students. This is a wonderful opportunity to collaboratively create a rules and consequences system that every student will be expected to follow in every classroom.

Some corps members are in schools with school-wide point systems for misbehavior (students get five points for chewing gum, ten points for horseplay in the hallways, 25 points for defying a teacher, etc.). When a student reaches a certain level of points, there are set consequences administered by the principal or behavior management officer. Teachers in schools with these types of structures need to determine how to integrate their own classroom discipline system with the school's system. Often, a combination of the two systems is best, as one corps member reports:

I found that a balance between using my own series of consequences and giving students school points at the last stage of the consequence hierarchy (or when there was an egregious offense) was most effective. Students saw me as the authority figure and the behavior management officer appreciated the fact that I handled my own discipline problems and only involved him in the most extreme situations.

In some cases, you may feel personally uncomfortable with certain behavioral policies of your school or believe a more effective approach exists. When a policy does not conflict with your personal values, but you feel it will be ineffective in your classroom, carefully consider the possible ramifications of circumventing or objecting to the policy. In some cases, the ramifications may outweigh the benefits. In other cases, it may be appropriate to ask your principal or other supervisor whether you can depart from the policies to accommodate the particular needs of your class or an individual student in your class.

More difficult are situations in which you believe that a school policy conflicts with your own personal values or sense of what is an appropriate punishment for children. When faced with this challenge, you should follow your personal comfort level after weighing the options, keeping in mind that any departure

I had a clipboard with a behavior tracking sheet for each day of the week for each class. For each student, I would circle "W" for a warning, "2" for the second time I had to speak to him or her about something, "3" if he or she earned a detention. If the student got to three, the student had to take home a slip with checked boxes explaining why the student had earned the detention and get it signed by a parent. The next day, students would start over. This chart allowed me to see at a glance how each student behaved for the week, and it gave me evidence when I called parents. And the best thing was that rather than getting involved in arguments, I could calmly mark my chart and move on with class.

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from the standard procedure could be perceived as disrespectful to the school or community. When determining what you are personally comfortable with, it is often helpful to try to understand the policy from the school or community's point of view before making a judgment. This may in fact alter your own beliefs of what is appropriate. Also, keep in mind that it may be difficult to teach your students and uphold a behavioral system that is unfamiliar to them. Ultimately, you must determine how to effectively balance the culture in which you are operating with your own personal philosophy. Often a compromise is possible, in which you begin with the expected approach and gradually modify the system to fit your personal style.

A Brief Note on Corporal Punishment

Perhaps the most marked example of the kind of dilemma described above is corporal punishment, which could include spanking or striking a child with a paddle, having a student stand for extended periods of time, or requiring a student to hold a book in each hand with arms extended to the side. Many schools in which corps members teach include corporal punishment as one of the consequences of misbehavior. (Note: corporal punishment policies must comply with strict legal regulations, including the prior consent of parents or guardians and the presence of a witness.) Every teacher in such a school must make a personal decision as to whether to implement this consequence, and that decision should reflect both the teacher's own value system and a clear understanding of community expectations.

III. Teaching Expectations

Determining appropriate rules and consequences is only the first step in helping your students meet your high behavioral expectations. Now, you must *teach* those expectations – as you would any academic objective – and reinforce them over time.

Teaching Rules and Consequences

Some teachers establish their rules and consequences before students arrive and without student input, while others develop them collaboratively with students. Student participation in setting the expectations can increase their investment in them. However, since new teachers must focus on establishing their authority in the classroom, new teachers often find it most effective to develop the rules and consequences themselves in order to communicate to their students firm guidelines for behavior from the beginning. Otherwise, students may perceive that the new teacher in front of them wants to be their friend – or does not know how to take leadership of the classroom. It would be a precarious start to the year to say, “so, guys, what should the rules be?” and get “no homework!” as an answer.

Teachers who are successful in their attempts to involve students in the rule-making process not only have already established their authority, but have also come into that conversation with a clear idea of how they will ensure the effective creation of rules. Dawn Gunderson (Baltimore '01) starts her year by asking her high school students to explain the differences between a productive and unproductive classroom, using her students' answers as a way of framing the rules she has already drafted. She also shares her expectations for herself – such as returning papers on time, working her hardest for the class's benefit and coming to class prepared – to show that she holds herself to high standards as well.

Assume nothing – if you simply talk about your rules, there is no reason to conclude that your students will follow suit. When you teach, model, and continuously practice classroom rules, you give your students real examples of what you expect of them.

**Seth Cohen, Rio Grande Valley '00
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the Public Interest**

Irrespective of the approach you choose, once you have generated a short list of clear, positive rules and gradual, logical, meaningful consequences that fit the criteria detailed in the first two sections of this

chapter, you will need to explicitly teach them. Some teachers assume that rules and consequences are discussed once, put on poster board, and left alone. On the contrary, you must *teach* these expectations as you would any other academic objective. This does not mean simply reading them from a handout, but rather providing rationales, soliciting input, having students identify examples and non-examples, and using other instructional methods to convey and practice this new information. You should teach expectations for behavior immediately at the beginning of the year and review them throughout the year. You'll want to be sure to do the following when teaching expectations:

Discuss and solicit from students the need for the rules. You should use two related strategies on this front. First, discuss the rationale for rules with your students, both at the beginning of the year and periodically throughout the year. Educational researcher Robert Marzano recommends beginning this process by exploring real-life situations that require rules:

For example, most students have a sense that there are certain expectations for behavior during dinner when guests are at the house that are different from the rules and procedures that apply when only family members are having dinner together. Similarly, most students are aware of the fact that there are rules and procedures governing behavior in church that do not apply to the behavior in one's own living room. A discussion regarding the importance of rules and procedures in situations outside of school provides a nice set-up for the discussion of classroom rules and procedures.⁸

If students recognize the rationale and positive side of rules, they are more likely to become invested in them. Then, be sure they understand the direct correlation between each of your rules with their ambitious learning goals. For example, you might explain to students that your rule about "listening when someone else is talking" is designed to let all students learn as much as possible from one another so that together the class can reach its goals.

Identify specific expectations relevant to each rule. Provide examples of what following each rule looks like (and doesn't look like) in action. This is especially true if your rules encompass several behaviors, such as *Respect your classmates* or *Class time is for class activities*. Many corps members state that they take time with their students at the beginning of the year to brainstorm what rules such as these mean in practice. While you should have several manifestations of the rule *Respect your classmates* in mind prior to this group discussion, you will probably be surprised at how right on and insightful students can be. (It's true – they know what it means to respect their classmates. They just need you to enforce it.) Once students have thoroughly explored the specific expectations of each rule, you might type up a "class contract" that lists each rule and the explicit behaviors that fall under each rule. Then, give students their own copies and ask them to sign them. Keep these for future reference or have students keep them in a binder that remains in class.

Explain and demonstrate the consequences of breaking the rules. Students need to actually see what will happen if they break a rule. Many corps members role play with "disruptive" students. They ask for volunteers to read short scripts in which students break a rule and the teacher administers the consequence. Not only do students enjoy this modeling, they also get to *see* exactly what will happen if a student chooses to break a rule.

⁸ Marzano, Robert. *Classroom Instruction that Works*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2001.

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Invest your students in meeting your behavioral goals. Tell your students the benefits of following the rules. Just as you do with academic goals, you will need to motivate your students to meet your behavioral goals for the class. Perhaps you decide to graph the numbers of “morning meetings” where everyone remembers to raise their hand before sharing, with the goal of working together to have 10 straight days with no student interruptions. Perhaps you decide to keep track of the number of days that

Classroom rules and procedures are taught, at first, like a military drill. They are timed and a little bit silly, but after solving a few math problems with the class on how far behind we could fall if we took too much time completing simple tasks, they get the idea. For example, if it takes the class three and a half minutes to find their reading journals and a pencil instead of one minute, by the end of the year, we will have lost a day and a half looking for pencils.

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your students all come to class fully prepared, with their book, notebook, homework, and something to write with. We'll talk about general principles to keep in mind when reinforcing positive behavior in the next section.

Check for understanding. As you will become accustomed to doing in every lesson, you should follow up with your students to be sure that they have internalized the rules. Many teachers test students on the rules of the classroom with a cause-effect quiz. Some have students draw cartoons of appropriate and inappropriate student behavior, akin to the “Goofus and Gallant” duo. But do not assume that because you read the list of rules and discussed them that students have internalized them.

The **Classroom Management & Culture Toolkit** contains lesson plans for the first week of school (pp. 11-15) and a sample timeline for teaching rules and procedures (p. 16), which maps out how you might teach and review a classroom management plan throughout the year; this Toolkit can be found online at the Resource Exchange on TFSNet. ✖

IV. Reinforcing Good Behavior

Just as with academic learning, behavioral learning is predicated on feedback; following instructions properly should be reinforced through frequent affirmation. Students need to know when they are demonstrating the desired expectations, especially when the expectations are new (generally early in the year) or when the circumstances under which the students demonstrated them are particularly challenging.

When reflecting on your approach to positive reinforcement, you'll need to consider when and how frequently to give positive reinforcement, regardless of whether that reinforcement comes in the form of tangible or intangible rewards. On the one hand, positive reinforcement can be a way of ensuring that students don't misbehave in order to gain attention. School can be a dreary place when teachers are only stressing negative behaviors. On the other hand, you don't want to get into a habit of praising or rewarding students constantly for meeting a low bar. This can inadvertently send the signal that you have low expectations for their behavior and can also make students dependent on your positive reaction to meet even the most basic of expectations. Alfie Kohn, author of *Punished by*

The highest expectation that we can hold for our students is for them to behave in appropriate ways because they see the importance of it and because they want to. They have to be intrinsically motivated to behave and learn. If a child sits quietly in class because he is either afraid of what will happen to him if he talks or because he will get to choose out of the prize box if he doesn't, we are lowering our expectations for student behavior and reducing students to subjects to be trained.

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Rewards,⁹ asserts that, “Rather than bolstering a child’s self-esteem, praise may increase kids’ dependence on us. The more we say, ‘I like the way you....’ or ‘Good _____ing,’ the more kids come to rely on *our* evaluations, *our* decisions about what’s good and bad, rather than learning to form their own judgments.” Kohn holds that a “simple, evaluation-free statement (‘You put your shoes on by yourself’ or even just ‘You did it’) tells your child that you noticed. It also lets her take pride in what she did...If a child does something caring or generous, you might gently draw his attention to the effect of his action *on the other person*: ‘Look at Abigail’s face! She seems pretty happy now that you gave her some of your snack.’ This is completely different from praise, where the emphasis is on how *you* feel about her sharing.”¹⁰

Experts such as Jere Brophy offer a few additional recommendations when it comes to giving praise.¹¹

- **Be specific.** One of the most effective ways to get students to follow directions is simply to narrate that someone else has already done what you’ve asked. “Richard is sitting in his seat quietly, ready to go outside for recess.”
- **Highlight improvement.** In order to foster the idea that students can *learn* to behave, point out when students are making strides in this direction—and how they did so. “Class, I am proud of you for remembering to walk quietly in the halls this time. I think Natasha’s suggestion about putting our fingers on our lips really helped us remember.”
- **Indicate how following expectations yields benefits.** “Our homework assignment is challenging tonight. But because everyone is in their learning position and ready to participate in the lesson, I know you will be able to learn a lot and then do a great job with that homework.”

Each time we changed seating charts we’d have a new theme for our groups - continents, animals, literature characters or things that related to our current study. Teams would research information about their group name, present to the class, and create signs to proudly hang above their desks. I used the groups to reinforce praise - “The Africa group is working so effectively, The Salamanders got their books out nicely, etc...” As I observed this good behavior I used tick marks to tally points on the board. Teams that had the most points received non-material perks throughout the day - like getting dismissed first or being first in the lunch line.

Marion Hodges Biglan, South Louisiana ‘93
Managing Director, Regional Operations Business
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Keeping in mind that you don’t want to praise students for simple tasks or make them dependent on your positive reinforcement, remember that students should reap the benefits of meeting your high behavioral standards. After all, students choose to follow the rules not only to avoid negative consequences but also to receive positive outcomes. Those positive outcomes are not only – in fact they should rarely be – shiny pencils, candy bars, or pizza parties. With such tangible prizes, students engage in learning activities in order to receive rewards that are artificially linked to behavior. As we mentioned when discussing self-discipline, you must help students realize that the greatest benefits of following the rules include recognition, self-respect, peer-respect, a classroom where they and their classmates can make academic gains,

and increased life options. Your ultimate goal should be to foster intrinsic motivation, whereby students are motivated to behave and to learn because of the positive results that stem naturally from that choice. For example, a student truly invested in his own academic success will likely abide by the rule “Come to Class

⁹ Kohn, Alfie. *Punished by Rewards*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993.

¹⁰ Kohn, Alfie. “Five Reasons to Stop Saying ‘Good Job!’” <http://www.alfiekohn.org/parenting/gj.htm>, accessed 7/1/2010.

¹¹ Brophy, Jere. “Teacher praise: a functional analysis.” *Review of Educational Research*, 51(1), 5-32.

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Prepared,” because he is intrinsically motivated to succeed, and he knows he cannot succeed without the materials that are necessary to learn.

However, there are strong arguments for extrinsic motivators in some contexts. Learning is too critical to wait for a student to develop the maturity or self-discipline necessary to work entirely from intrinsic motivation. Moreover, students motivated extrinsically often begin to recognize the intrinsic value of their work and behavior. Many teachers feel that extrinsic motivators – especially in the form of intangible “perks” – remain preferable to using only negative consequences to keep students in line. If you do decide to use tangible rewards in your classroom, know that a variable schedule of providing the reward works better than a fixed schedule; that is, if you were to provide a reward every third time a student completed a task, the reward would soon lose its value. As any slot machine player could tell you, when the reward is less certain, persistence in the task improves.

Let’s Not Make a Deal

If you decide to give tangible rewards in your classroom, psychologists encourage teachers to remember Premack’s principle. Rather than allowing students to dictate the conditions under which they will be willing to behave (“Let me sit here now and I promise I’ll be good”), tell students that they can enjoy rewards after they fulfill your expectations (“You may move back to your seat when I’ve seen you behave the way I know you can”). You may recognize this as your grandmother’s rule: no <insert delectable treat> until you finish your <insert loathsome vegetable>.

Relatedly, a McREL study has indicated that rewarding students for simply performing a task may eventually decrease motivation (e.g. if the class earns “team points” when everyone is on time). However, when the teacher provides rewards for the successful attainment of a certain performance standard (e.g., making improvement on a set of math problems), students’ intrinsic motivation may increase.¹²

As you think about the kind of positive reinforcement you will use in your classroom, beware of subconscious bias, which may subtly reinforce limited roles for gender groups. Studies by Sadker and Sadker show that boys receive praise for content and innovation (e.g. “Your ideas show a lot of imagination”) while girls are recognized for neatness and following directions (e.g. “You have such nice handwriting”). Monitor your own patterns of interaction with students by audio- or videotaping your interactions with your students. You may even find that the tone of your voice or the phraseology changes depending on who the student is. You may find yourself offering an enthusiastic “good job, buddy” to male students who answer questions correctly – and a curt “that’s right” to female students in a similar situation.

Now that you have explored the importance of positive reinforcement, and the arguments for and against reinforcing student behavior with extrinsic rewards, you will need to develop your own approach to positive reinforcement. Your system can be informal or formal (where specific positive responses stem from following rules, just as consequences stem from breaking rules), and can be based on the performance of the whole class, small groups, or individuals. Specific strategies for motivating students to meet your behavioral and academic goals will be discussed in Chapter Six: Valuing Hard Work, Team Effort, and Academic Success.

First, though, we must discuss the other piece of creating a classroom environment that supports students in meeting your high expectations for behavior: the creation and implementation of classroom procedures and routines. That is the subject of the next chapter.

¹² Marzano, Robert. *Classroom Instruction that Works*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2001, 56-57.

Building a Culture of Achievement

Extrinsic Motivation, as a Start

Doannie Tran (Bay Area '03) had a rough start to the year. His sixth graders entered the room haphazardly and did not pay much attention when he gave instructions. Some sat on their desks. Some shouted to their friends across the room. Doannie was frustrated.

By late November, however, Doannie had started over with his students. He took the time to set very clear expectations for how to enter the classroom. He developed a clear rules, consequences and rewards system, stamping his students' completed "Warm Up" assignments and distributing tickets that well-behaved students can redeem for bathroom passes, pencils or other school supplies. He calls parents regularly, and often for good reasons. His students now know what's expected of them, and they follow the routine. It's a big improvement, but Doannie says this is just the beginning:

I want them to care more about learning. Right now, all of the motivations are very extrinsic. All of the admonitions are very extrinsic. I'm saying, "Don't do that...or here's a ticket, good job." I want to get to the point where they want to listen. Now, they'll listen and they'll be quiet. That doesn't mean they care. I want them to actually be like, "Shhh! Mr. Tran is talking, and I want to hear what he has to say because I find this engaging and I care." That's my next goal.

Conclusion and Key Concepts

- You set high expectations for your students' behavior by developing **appropriate rules and consequences**. Rules should be few and should be clearly and positively stated. Logical and graduated consequences should be explicitly tied to each rule so there is no doubt about the response if a student chooses to break a rule.
- You **must teach your rules and consequences** like any other curriculum content.
- **Positive reinforcement**, especially in the form of intangible rewards, is critical to managing your classroom. Guard against praising and rewarding students for meeting too low a bar for behavior and utilizing only extrinsic, materialistic rewards.

