



Do Reminders Work?

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They're sure used a lot.

Visit just about any classroom and within minutes you're likely to hear one.

"Remember to walk."

"Hey, keep your hands to yourself."

"No talking while I'm talking."

But are reminders effective? Do they actually improve behavior?

Well, like much of classroom management, it depends on how they're used. When given in a certain way and at certain times, they can indeed be effective.

Unfortunately, it's rare to hear them given in a way that improves behavior. Most often, reminders make things worse, not better.

The good news is that it's easy to know whether you're using them correctly. In fact, there is a rule of thumb that if followed will ensure your reminders hit their mark.

They'll also support – and even enhance – the strategies we recommend here at SCM.

So what is the rule of thumb?

Just this: Reminders given *before* misbehavior can occur are always good. Reminders given *after* misbehavior has already begun are always bad.

The reason is that if you give a reminder when you first witness misbehavior, you're doing so in lieu of [giving a consequence](#), which by definition means you're being inconsistent.

You're sending the message that you don't really mean what you say, and thus your students' trust in you, as well as your authority and leadership presence, will suffer.

Although post-misbehavior reminders can help curb misbehavior in the moment – which is why so many teachers rely on them – the cost of doing so is exorbitantly high.

In the long run, inconsistency and lack of [accountability](#) will lead to more frequent and more severe misbehavior.

If, however, you give your students a reminder about a previously taught rule, policy, or procedure before giving the signal to transition to a new activity – and therefore before misbehavior can happen – then it effectively alleviates their impulsivity.

It gives them pause. It prompts self-awareness and causes them to focus on following your direction or fulfilling your objective.

It also makes choosing to misbehave a much harder decision, especially when they know that you're watching and that you always do what you say.

It's important to note that pre-misbehavior reminders are best given to the entire class rather than to just one student. This way, you're not singling out particular students in front of everyone else.

You're not [humiliating](#) or labeling them.

Reminding everyone removes the excuses and helps ensure their performance remains sharp and purposeful.

To sum up, reminders given to the entire class before misbehavior has a chance to develop are a big green light, and can be used as often as needed.

Reminders given when you first notice misbehavior or thereafter, however, are a no-no.

In this case, your only effective option is a consequence.

Let's talk about responsive strategies to help our academic learning time.

1. Emotional Breather-Allowing students to decompress. When students are in need of a break, we need to be aware of those needs. Taking a few minutes away from academics to get a drink of water, to just sit and relax for a minute, or to do brain gym for an example is allowing our students to take a mental break. We need to be able to read the emotional state of our kids and when we notice they are struggling to be engaged, we must look for ways to give that mental break. We are much farther ahead to give a short break, then keep pushing them when they are not in a mental state to learn. Sometimes, it may be just a short break that is needed and then the students will be ready to get back to the task at hand.
2. Minute Recipes for building peace, from a company called, "Peace Builders."
 - a. Give a compliment
 - b. Smile; use eye contact
 - c. Use personal name and positive statement
 - d. Ask personal questions
 - e. Recognize changes and show interest in students
 - f. Shake hands, give high fives...
 - g. Ask about their day or weekend
 - h. Let them sit by someone new in class

There are many fantastic ideas from, "Peace Builders" if looking for ideas of building peace in the classroom.

3. Nonverbal Transition Cues-We can use subtle body movements (proximity) or hand signals to cue a student to use their self-regulation. Eye contact can be powerful and pausing before we continue teaching can be beneficial. What I like about nonverbal is that we are not calling attention to that one student, but once they make eye contact or we are standing close, they will often get our cues.
4. Private Notes-placing a handwritten note on a student's desk can be a powerful reinforcement to let that student know that they have been

doing a nice job. The note needs to be heartfelt as older kids can read right through something that is not meaningful.

5. Greeting students when they come in our rooms- any positive kind of gesture of greeting kids by name and/or making positive comments to them increases that relationship by showing we care. Students will work harder for teachers they care about.
6. Responding to behavior should be immediate, brief, and without drama.

I believe the key to responsive classrooms is to teach self-regulation, relationship management, and responsible decision making starting at the beginning of the school year, but I believe if we are looking for a solid foundation to our classroom management even now, it is never too late to begin working with our students to understand their needs as learners and how they can get themselves to be their own best learner and to know what to ask when they need help. Self-regulation comes with time, but we as teachers need to entrench them in a classroom that is continually modeling self-regulation strategies.

Stay warm friends,



Belinda and Linda

Rice Lake School District Mentoring Program