



## Coach Students Instead of Complaining About Their Behavior

By Educator Barnes – November 29, 2021

Several news outlets and teachers on social media have noted the increase in misbehavior this school year. The pandemic has been labeled the culprit. Although schools are mostly seen as a place for students to learn academic content, any good teacher will tell you that you cannot teach content with a room full of students who are misbehaving. In addition to the learning gaps students have that teachers are trying to close, they also have the task of managing behaviors that are, in many cases, worse than before.

In "Teaching with Poverty in Mind," author Eric Jensen states:

*To shift your responses to inappropriate behaviors, reframe your thinking: expect students to be impulsive, to blurt inappropriate language, and to act "disrespectful" until you teach them stronger social and emotional skills and until the social conditions at your school make it attractive not to do those things.*

Schools are structured places. There is a schedule that is followed religiously. Teachers have a style that they use to teach content. There are routines for passing out papers, going to the cafeteria, getting out supplies, etc. Even if students' parents have routines and a schedule, they tend to not be as rigid as school. When students spent time at home earlier during the pandemic, they had looser routines, and in some cases autonomy over what they did and when they did it. We know this from the fact that some students used that autonomy to not attend school. The reality is there were few consequences for students not attending school or partly attending school.

Now the script has changed, and students don't have the autonomy to what they want and when they want. They are bucking back. Honestly, adults should not have been surprised. Some adults bucked at having to go back to work in person and have their 9 to 5 schedule controlled versus the flexibility they had while working from home.

Lower elementary school students have not had a full normal year of school, so teachers should definitely expect misbehavior or confusion about school routines and procedures. It is time to stop complaining about it and instead work on solutions. Truth is that it is about to be December and some students are still running the classroom while the teacher is left struggling to get through the lesson each day.

Teachers with strong classroom management should take a teacher who struggling under their wings. It is either that or the teacher quits and that means more work for the teachers who stay.

Additionally, some teachers need to do a class reset. They need to identify routines and procedures to reteach and make students do them correctly. Most students will see that the teacher means business. Those who don't need a higher level of engagement. The teacher should call home and follow the progressive discipline procedures of the school. The teacher should also share alternatives for the students. It is okay for students to get angry, but it is not okay for a student to throw a book to express anger. Teaching students alternatives is important.

“It’s a pandemic; I don’t want to call home with bad news.” That mindset really means, “I enjoy the chaos in my room and not being able to teach.”

Last, and honestly most importantly, praise the hell out of the students who are doing the right thing because trust and believe these students can be swayed to the other side if they see there are no consequences for misbehaving students, or they believe you don’t care that they are doing what they are supposed to do.

Instead of getting on social media and calling students “wild animals,” teachers need to go back to teaching 101 and coach students to help them with their behavior.