

Article Review: “How Best to Inform Students of a Consequence”

Source: <https://www.smartclassroommanagement.com/2012/03/17/how-best-to-inform-students-of-a-consequence/>, accessed 24 Jan 2018.

Review

Article outline:

1. Giving a consequence requires
 - a. correct words and tone
 - b. correct emotional reaction
 - c. correct body language
2. It is important to
 - a. put the responsibility on the student
 - b. allow the student to feel the burden of behaving poorly
 - c. give the student the opportunity to feel
 - i. a sense of regret
 - ii. a greater desire to follow the rules
3. Steps for Informing of Consequence
 - a. Tell the student clearly and concisely what rule was broken
 - b. Keep your thoughts, comments, and opinions to yourself
 - i. Or it causes resentment
 - ii. And sabotages accountability
 - c. Do not escort for time-out
 - i. They must walk out on their own
 - ii. Allows student to feel the responsibility
 - iii. Has them acknowledge their error
 - d. Behave matter-of-factly and control your body language
 - i. Avoid causing friction
 - ii. Avoid student humiliation
 - e. Be more like a referee, less like judge.
 - i. Enforce rules, not mediate disagreements
 - ii. Consequences are not personal
 - iii. Rules are for safety and no interference to learning
 - f. Safeguard your influence
 - i. Influence gives leverage for changing student behavior
 - ii. “Tell it like it is” without sarcasm, scolding, etc.
 - iii. Let accountability do the rest.
 - g. Move on
 - i. Deliver consequence
 - ii. Turn back to what you were doing
4. Why this is important
 - a. Informing students of consequences requires an excellent acting job, no matter how angry you feel

- b. You want the students to see the problem with their misbehavior
- c. You do not want them to blame or get angry at you
- d. All this makes the consequence effective
- e. The students choose when the rules need to be enforced, not you

I see the value of this advice. When I have delivered consequences, I have always just watched and waited after I stopped talking. Now I see this gives the student an opportunity to show me defiance, to argue, to put on some performance for his/her classmates. Turning away from the situation and resuming teaching or writing on the board will break eye contact. The student has nothing to work off of from me and, if I am doing it right, the other students will be focused on me. The student's chance of showing off has been nullified.

I wonder about what to do if, after I deliver the consequence and turn away, the student does not respond correctly. What if the student continues to argue? What if the student doesn't leave when he/she is supposed to?

I suppose my response would be to turn back and repeat the consequence with a statement that if he/she doesn't comply, the consequence will escalate. Then turn away again. If the student does not respond, then I can call for assistance in escorting the student out of the room.

It will be a challenge for me to not include reasoning as to why the rules are what they are. My tendency is to try to help the students understand the reasoning and to encourage them to act maturely. But now I see this actually undermines the rule enforcement process. The "why" can come later, when the situation is over and everyone is calm and thinking rationally.

Article Text in Full

How Best To Inform Students Of A Consequence

by Michael Linsin on March 17, 2012

How you give a consequence matters.

How you speak to your students, what you say to them, and how you react emotionally and with your body language after they break a classroom rule goes a long way toward curbing misbehavior.

Whether you're giving a warning, a time-out, or a letter to take home, the key is to inform them in a way that takes the focus off you—the mere deliverer of the news—and places the responsibility solely with them.

Your students must feel the burden of behaving poorly.

Because if they don't, if they don't feel a sense of regret and a greater desire to follow your classroom rules, then your consequences will be ineffective.

What follows are a few guidelines to help you inform your students of a consequence in a way that tugs on their conscience, causes them to reflect on their mistakes, and lets accountability do its good work.

Tell them why.

When a student breaks a classroom rule, tell him (or her) clearly and concisely why he's been given a consequence. Say, "Danny, you have a warning because you broke rule number two and didn't raise your hand before speaking." Telling them why leaves no room for debate, disagreement, misunderstanding, or anyone to blame but themselves.

Keep your thoughts, opinions, and comments to yourself.

Let your agreed-upon consequence be the only consequence. Refrain from adding a talking-to, a scolding, or your two-cents worth. By causing resentment, these methods sabotage accountability. So instead of taking a reflective look at themselves and their misbehavior, your students will grumble under their breath and seethe in anger toward you.

Do not escort to time-out.

If the consequence calls for time-out, don't escort them there. Getting up and walking to time-out is an important part of the accountability process. It acts as a statement, or an acknowledgement of sorts, that they indeed broke a classroom rule and are ready to take responsibility for it. Also, escorting them can make them *less* motivated to go.

Behave matter-of-factly.

A matter-of-fact tone and body language enables you to hold students accountable without causing friction. Most teachers make a fuss out of misbehavior—reacting angrily, showing disappointment, sighing, rolling eyes. But this can be humiliating for students in front of their classmates, causing them to dislike you and undermining the critical rapport-building relationship.

Be more like a referee, less like judge.

A referee's job is to enforce rules, not mediate disagreements—which makes being fair, consistent, and composed a lot easier. Thinking like a referee, rather than a judge, also helps students see that your consequences aren't personal, but something you must do to protect their right to learn and enjoy school without interference.

Safeguard your influence.

An influential relationship with students gives you the leverage you need to change behavior. And so anything you do that threatens that relationship—yelling, scolding, lecturing, using sarcasm, etc—should be avoided. Simply tell your students like it is, follow your classroom management plan, and let accountability do the rest.

Move on.

As soon as you've informed the misbehaving student what rule was broken and the consequence, turn your attention back to what you were doing without skipping a beat. The burden of responsibility then shifts in total from you, the deliverer of the consequence, to the student. The interaction should take no longer than 10-15 seconds.

Note: Your students must know exactly what their responsibilities are upon receiving a consequence. Thus, it's critical to teach, model, and practice your classroom management plan thoroughly before putting it into practice.

Your Students Decide, Not You

Small, seemingly insignificant details—often glossed over, ignored, or deemed too nit-picky to care about—can make a *big* difference.

How you inform your students of a consequence is a small part of classroom management, to be sure, a bit player in the theater of your classroom.

But it's an important part, requiring Oscar-level performance.

Despite how much an act of misbehavior may get under your skin, or how much you'd like to express your frustrations, you have to stay in character.

Because if after receiving a consequence your students blame you, or become angry with you, then the consequence will be ineffective. They must see that they alone bear the responsibility for their misbehavior.

After all, *you* don't decide when or if to enforce a consequence.

Your students do.