

## How to Avoid an Increase in Misbehavior as the School Year Winds Down

It's common for behavior to worsen during the final few weeks of the school year.

Sensing summer break approaching, students begin to feel their age outpacing their grade level. They grow restless and excitable. They become bolder, testing the boundaries to see if they're as firm as they once were.

Understandably, this unwanted change rubs teachers the wrong way. For misbehavior during the home stretch has a whiff of betrayal. At a time when you should be most enjoying your students, when rapport is at its apex, it becomes one battle after another.

And unless you're careful, it's easy to lose your cool. It's easy to take misbehavior personally and fall into harmful methods that cause resentment and threaten to sully a joyous, memorable end to the school year.

Combined with an emboldened group of students more determined than ever to dig in their heels, the last few weeks can deteriorate into a grinding, scraping claw to the finish line.

But it's all avoidable.

Here's how:

### **Preempt the trend.**

Knowing that a downward trending of behavior is a possibility, it's smart to reaffirm your classroom management

plan before the dip occurs. Set aside 30 minutes or more and reteach your plan from front to back. Send the message that your boundary lines will indeed remain as firm as ever, all the way up to the final bell.

### **Make it a refresher.**

It's best to reteach your plan as a refresher rather than an angry response. In other words, many teachers will stop what they're doing to lecture their class or stomp their way through a testy review of behavior expectations, creating a them-versus-you mentality and setting the stage for a contentious finish to the school year.

### **Reassure your students.**

A thorough but pleasant walkthrough of your plan is a reassurance to students that business is usual. It's comforting to know that, despite the looming final day of school, nothing and no one is going to threaten the sanctity of peace in your classroom. Presented from this point of view, as a benefit to them, they'll breathe easier and nod their heads in agreement.

### **Don't make assumptions.**

It's a mistake to gloss over the nitty-gritty of your plan, to merely review the main points, assuming that because your students already know it, it isn't worth the time. But to be most effective, to send the proper message, it's best to be highly specific, modeling the ins and outs realistically and from their perspective. In other words, as if it's the first week of school.

### **Pick up the pace.**

With testing in the review mirror, many students will conclude that the school year is essentially over, which is a surefire predictor of misbehavior. To avoid this, continue to increase the challenge, rigor, and pace of your classroom. If you let up, if you ease off the academic gas, you'll set a blasé

tone and attitude that will grow exponentially up until the final minute of school.

### **A Smooth Finish**

Like much of classroom management, ensuring a smooth ride to the finish takes a proactive approach.

You must beat misbehavior to the punch, shrewdly preempting your students' first move downward and away from the behavior standards you first set with a highly detailed but inspired refresher of those same standards.

Make the final weeks of school a new and bigger challenge. Prepare them for the road ahead by pushing the limits of your grade level. Resolve to keep them busy and focused and striving to the end.

Reach the finish line, not with the exhausted, salt-encrusted visage of a marathon runner, but with a sprinter's bounce in your step, triumphant and contented in knowing that another year of good work is behind you.

