

Elementary Level (Grades K–5)

Responding to Inappropriate Classroom Behaviors

Student Behavior	Effective Teacher Response (Do This)	Why It Works	Avoid This
Calling out	Proximity + quiet reminder of expectation	Reduces attention-seeking, keeps lesson moving	Public reprimands, stopping instruction
Off-task / wandering	Nonverbal cue (tap desk, point to task)	Preserves dignity; redirects without power struggle	Repeating name loudly
Talking during instruction	Pause + wait + praise students who comply	Reinforces desired behavior	Yelling or lecturing
Refusal to work	Offer 2 clear choices (“Start now or with me in 2 minutes”)	Gives control within limits	Forcing compliance
Minor disruption	Planned ignoring + reinforce peers on-task	Behavior often extinguishes without attention	Immediate consequence
Emotional outburst	Calm voice, validate feeling, redirect when calm	Co-regulates emotions	Sending student out immediately
Repeated minor misbehavior	Pre-correction before transition	Prevents behavior before it occurs	Reacting only after behavior

Key Reminder for Elementary Teachers:

Most behaviors are skill deficits, not defiance. Teach the behavior you want to see.

Secondary Level (Grades 6–12)

Responding to Inappropriate Classroom Behaviors

Student Behavior	Effective Teacher Response (Do This)	Why It Works	Avoid This
Side conversations	Proximity + private cue	Maintains authority without embarrassment	Calling out student publicly
Phone use	Clear routine + calm reminder + consistent follow-through	Predictability reduces conflict	Arguing about policy
Disrespectful comment	Brief, calm correction + move on	De-escalates power struggles	Engaging emotionally
Work refusal	Private conference: “What’s getting in the way?”	Builds rapport; addresses root cause	Public confrontation
Disengagement	Offer relevance or choice in task	Increases buy-in	Assuming laziness
Chronic disruption	Behavior plan + consistent responses	Consistency builds trust	Changing consequences
Escalation	Pause, lower voice, give space	Models emotional regulation	Matching tone or volume

Key Reminder for Secondary Teachers:

Students escalate when they feel powerless. Calm authority beats control.

Universal Principles for Both Levels

- ✓ Respond **calmly, briefly, and consistently**
 - ✓ Correct behavior **privately whenever possible**
 - ✓ Focus on **teaching replacement behaviors**
 - ✓ Save consequences for **patterns**, not every moment
 - ✓ Your tone matters more than your words
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Elementary (K–5)

PBIS & Restorative Responses to Appropriate Behavior

Appropriate Behavior	PBIS Response	Restorative Move	Teacher Language
Following directions	Specific verbal praise	Reinforce norms	"You followed directions right away."
On-task behavior	Positive narration	Community modeling	"I see tables working."
Raising hand	Immediate acknowledgment	Fair participation	"Thank you for waiting."
Helping peers	Behavior-specific praise	Build community	"That helped everyone."
Transitioning smoothly	Group reinforcement	Shared success	"We moved quietly together."
Emotional regulation	Acknowledge effort	Validate growth	"You took a breath—nice work."
Repairing mistake	Reinforce accountability	Restore trust	"Thank you for fixing it."

PBIS: Reinforce what you want repeated

Restorative: Strengthen relationships

Secondary (6–12)

PBIS & Restorative Responses to Appropriate Behavior

Appropriate Behavior	PBIS Response	Restorative Move	Teacher Language
Prepared for class	Specific recognition	Responsibility	"You came ready."
Respectful dialogue	Public acknowledgment	Mutual respect	"That was respectful."
Staying engaged	Nonverbal praise	Maintain dignity	<i>Nod / thumbs up</i>

Appropriate Behavior	PBIS Response	Restorative Move	Teacher Language
Academic risk-taking	Effort-based praise	Encourage growth	"Thanks for trying."
Peer collaboration	Group reinforcement	Collective success	"Strong teamwork."
Self-regulation	Private acknowledgment	Emotional growth	"You handled that well."
Making amends	Reinforce repair	Restore community	"I appreciate you addressing it."
PBIS: Predictable reinforcement			
Restorative: Celebrate repair & growth			
