

"By using the Setting Limits program, our school
has become a place of harmony."
—BARBARA O'DONNELL, principal, St. Francis of Assisi Elementary School

SETTING LIMITS in the CLASSROOM

REVISED

How to Move
Beyond the Dance
of Discipline in
Today's Classrooms

ROBERT J.
MACKENZIE, ED.D.



Setting Limits in the Classroom: How to Move Beyond the Dance of Discipline in Today's Classrooms

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Disruptive behavior, power struggles, lack of motivation, attention deficit disorder—at times the list of obstacles to teaching seems endless. That's why thousands of teachers and child-care providers have turned to the solutions in *Setting Limits in the Classroom*. This fully updated and expanded third edition offers the most up-to-date alternatives to punishment and permissiveness—moving beyond traditional methods that wear you down and get you nowhere.

Topics include:

- Eliminating power struggles and handling disruptions quickly
- Establishing an effective environment for learning
- Using natural and logical consequences to support your rules
- Conducting proactive, focused parent conferences
- New research and techniques for supporting special-needs children

With its new focus on younger students and special tools for handling “strong-willed” children, this edition offers schoolteachers the tools they need to gain control of their classrooms—respectfully and effectively.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

Setting Limits in the Classroom: How to Move Beyond the Dance of Discipline in Today's Classrooms Details

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From Reader Review Setting Limits in the Classroom: How to Move Beyond the Dance of Discipline in Today's Classrooms for online ebook

Stephanie Crowther says

This was a great book with detailed examples of classroom management techniques that I can use in my future classroom.

Rose says

So some situations seemed a little dated and the last few chapters were more about schoolwide policy. However the majority of this had some solid, easy to use guidelines for about 90% of the issues in an average classroom. I teach middle school and although this seems to be written for preschool to 6th grade, the principles will still work in middle school with some minor tweaks.

Becky Shattuck says

This book seems especially helpful for new teachers and passive teachers. It lays out a step-by-step plan on how to handle different types of disruptions and urges teachers to be consistent and follow through, without being punitive.

I wasn't sold on the idea of NEVER engaging with students when they question policy, though. Some people just genuinely want to know the "why" behind something to get on board. The authors argue that students often try to engage in an argument to postpone work or distract from punishment. That makes sense, but there are also times when students ask genuine questions. I also thought some of their activities erred on the side of micro-managing student behavior (like the Preferred Activity Time), which left me feeling a bit put-off. I think that teachers should have boundaries and limits in the classroom but also be able to genuinely respond to students.

In all, I thought this book had sections and chapters that were helpful and practical, but I think some of the advice is too rigid and sometimes inconsistent.

Jade Liu says

This book uses concrete examples and simple everyday language to present a short list of classroom management tips and ways and situations in which they can be applied. I have not yet had the opportunity to use these tips in a classroom setting, so I cannot speak for their success or ease of implementation. However, I recognize the descriptions of the classroom "dance" and the limit testing as things I've struggled with. The author seems to have these dynamics down to a science and provides feasible problem-solving strategies specifically targeting these issues. I especially liked his suggestion for limited choice, his insistence on

follow-throughs, and his assurance that cutting off further discussion can be an appropriate reaction. His idea for asking students for understanding was also very enlightening. This book as a whole repeats many of the same concepts with different and sometimes similar examples. While some reviewers have mentioned this as a negative trait, I prefer to see this repetition in a positive light. If anything, it really instills the concepts into our memory and helps us address the multifaceted aspects of student behavior.

Cindy says

I actually just read the 3rd edition - excellent resource about discipline in the classroom. I personally found this past year challenging as I had some very strong-willed and SMART kids who really tested me, so I need some new tools. This book certainly gave that. This book provided countless teacher/student dialogues to demonstrate techniques. Some of the scenarios were a bit outrageous but got the point across.

This book made some great points about how a school should really have a school-wide discipline plan (which I have always thought makes sense) but to carry out the "plan" in this book, it is not necessary for all teachers to have the same system.

I highly recommend this book for new teachers and anyone who needs a "fresh wind" on discipline. I found it a quick read even though it's 300+ pages.

Leila Daniel says

Highly recommend for any teacher or administrator in elementary or middle school!

Amanda Kaye says

I read this book back in college before I could really apply any of the methods taught in this book. Time went on and then...poof...I'm in my 4th year of teaching! I re-read this book again before the school year and my conclusion is this: This book is great for NEW teachers fresh out of college or in the first couple of years teaching. Or maybe I already figured most of the stuff out in this book because of some of the tougher students I had my 2nd year that forced me to learn fast! I wish I had re-read this book then! Now, it's just a good reminder of what I'm doing is right. I enjoy the love and logic book series a bit better however.

Lin says

While repetitive at times (once, the author repeated the content of an entire paragraph, almost word-for-word, two pages later), the general gist is a good one. In order to be effective at classroom management, regardless of the age of the students, the number of kids in the room, and any other external factor you want to throw in there, consistency is key. Allowing children too much leeway with too little structure is asking for trouble. The anecdotes/classroom scenarios were somewhat staged and trite, but they got the point across. With an expected 35 kids in my room this year, I know I'm going to have to work on maintaining structure and balance. There are definitely lessons to learn from this book.

Sara says

This is the first book on classroom management that has legitimately helped me by providing me with the verbiage and manner in which to express classroom rules and consequences. MacKenzie stresses the importance of following through with your words with the appropriate consequence if words are not enough. But, as a new teacher, I was not sure what actions should be taken when. The examples in this book, though repetitive, were very concrete and helpful. While the examples in this book may seem fictionalized, a closer look reveals that many of the scenarios are from real-world observations. Today I started following the classroom management plan I created after reading this book and already I have noticed a much more respectful and manageable classroom--even in my most challenging class.

I absolutely recommend this if you have a theoretical management plan with theoretical procedures, but are having difficulty setting things into motion practically.

Stephanie Martin says

Although some of his advice seems impractical (send disruptive kids to another teacher's classroom?) this is by far the most helpful classroom management book I've found. He really gives you the specific language to use to deal with disruptions and, better yet, systems to put in place to prevent them from ever occurring. I read this the summer before my second year of teaching and have had peace ever since! It's wonderful to be able to focus all my energy on creating new curriculum and I truly enjoy teaching every day since putting this problem to bed!

Kitchengrrl says

I teach at a school with a lot of "aggressive learners" and a lack of meaningful, consistent consequences. This book has been a lifesaver for me. My classroom this year has been a haven of peace and decency (for the most part), and it is the place where my students and I can go to leave behind the negativity of the hallway. I can't say enough about how helpful this book has been not only in giving me truly positive and fair methods for managing my own classroom, it has also helped me have a more forgiving attitude towards the kids. Understanding that most of the kids are seeking their behavioral limits (since our school and their parents do not make them very clear) and not just being jerks for the heck of it has really helped me A LOT. I've recommended this book to all my coworkers and some have actually read it. Hopefully I will conduct an inservice with it soon.

Christine says

Some great ideas, good examples of everyday situations and how to deal with them, well-researched, and definitely some things I can use or modify... but some parts of the program seem like the type of thing that you'd have to have your entire school on board with to work really effectively. And depending on your teaching schedule and individual situation, some of them are impractical. For example, Recess Academy is a

wonderful idea if you teach in a self-contained classroom and have a prep or lunch the same time your students have recess (and if you are willing and able to give up that time.... contractually/legally in some districts, teachers are supposed to have these periods without any supervisory duties). But if you are a specialist teacher (music, art, P.E., etc.), it is much more difficult to coordinate keeping children in at recess when they are in another classroom most of the day and you have hundreds of students to keep track of, not just 20 or 25. And most likely you will be teaching other classes during a particular grade's recess period (for example, when my 1st and 2nd grades have recess, I am teaching 4th grade classes... or I might be teaching a recess-time activity period several days a week and don't have that period free to dedicate to working with individual students), so you do not have a free period every day where you can keep kids in from recess to give them your undivided attention to practice the rules they're having trouble with. And some states are beginning to make laws that forbid taking away students' recess time anyway (because of health and exercise goals), so in some cases it wouldn't even be legal to do this. School schedules are difficult as it is--my own school, for example, has a very tight schedule for covering all classes and duties, and there are just barely enough certified teachers that have an instruction-free block in their schedule to cover all the recess periods--so it would not be feasible to have additional staff needed to supervise other duties like a daily internal suspension room that is available all day long to send kids to w/o prior arrangement. And the idea of a buddy classroom may not work in all situations, for example with specialist teachers. If a child is misbehaving in my music classroom, is it fair to send him to the art room where he will probably continue the misbehavior and then my colleague has to deal with that on top of teaching her class? Or to the gym where he will be distracted by what's going on and cause more issues? You can't send them back to their classroom, because that is their teacher's planning time, or another classroom teacher's room because schedules are so complicated (the other teacher/class may be at recess, lunch, small group reading time in another classroom, or a special area class). And again, even with classroom teachers... Kids on the same grade level are friends with kids with others on their grade level, so that would still be an audience for misbehavior, and not all grade levels are on the same schedule where you could be guaranteed that another teacher would be in the other classroom to supervise at all times. I wish the book had included a few more suggestions for he to implement things like stage 2 time out when you don't have the same group of students most of the day.

Meghan says

Great Tool Even for Subs

I am a substitute teacher and someone recommended this book to me as useful so I thought I'd check it out. We subs are always looking for tools for discipline, especially when every classroom you enter is run a bit differently. Although meant for regular classroom teachers there are many ideas we subs can use daily, especially about clear statements and the ideas on "aggressive researchers." I have already implemented several of the ideas and have found myself better able to handle everyday discipline issues I encounter. Highly recommended!

K says

This was a very straight-forward behavior and classroom management book. The techniques could easily be used in preschool through twelfth grade classrooms. I liked that this book reframed how we look at students. They are no longer trouble makers, but researchers. Some are even advantageous researchers. This book showed that students need information to make decisions (right or wrong, expected or unexpected, easy or

difficult, etc.) and that teachers provide that information through their actions. I think this is a must-read for education students.

Miss Ruark says

this book changed my classroom management skills for the better. my relationships with my students improved and so did the behaviors. i now teach in a remote village in rural alaska where i am facing challenges that i would be completely lost in how to handle them if not for this book. i recommend this book for ALL teachers, new and experienced.

i am able to get the behaviors i expect without putting down, degrading, or shaming my students. most of the time, my students do not know they are even in "trouble". my students respect me and feel safe with me. i want to buy copies of this book for all of my coworkers!!

if you teach, READ THIS BOOK!!!!
