



Implement a Positive Approach to Managing your Classroom by **Esther Wright, M.A.**

Being proactive requires thinking ahead and attempting to predict what systems and structures your students will need in order to be successful. These systems and structures can prevent problems before they begin. How we arrange desks, where we seat certain students, how we manage the distribution and collection of materials, how we transition activities, and how we provide support to students who require individual attention, are issues we must consider before school begins and then manage as the school year progresses.

When a disruption occurs, there are many positive strategies that work. Some teachers ignore minor misbehaviors and find that they disappear without any intervention. Other teachers walk over and stand near disruptive students, sometimes looking at them or gently touching their shoulder to get their attention. Some teachers use 3x5 cards that say, "Please get back on task" or "Are you being a responsible learner?" Often these actions work as well as calling out a student's name or implementing a punishment.

In some cases you must add or modify a system or structure that will prevent the behavior from recurring (e.g., changing seating, setting up a game or contract, engaging the student in an enjoyable activity.)

If you find yourself constantly criticizing students, or if you find the same behaviors occurring day after day, you can be sure something needs to be changed or added. Determine whether changes are needed in the physical arrangement, the discipline system, or the instructional program.

Stop, look and listen to what systems or structures your students seem to need. If your predictions turn out to be inaccurate, don't get discouraged. Experiment with new systems and structures until you discover the one that works best for your group of students.

