

# Introduction

**B**y definition, classroom learning occurs in a learning environment. That environment can enhance or diminish the educational process. There are a myriad of managerial techniques for improving the classroom setting, but most important is the teacher's attitude. An audience, regardless of age, senses that attitude and responds accordingly. Did the teacher plan well, or is she winging it? Is the teacher enthusiastic, respectful, innovative, nurturing, spontaneous, and empathetic, or is the teacher robotic?

A teacher must remember that he or she is not a teacher of reading, or a teacher of science, or a teacher of history, but a teacher of children. Each child comes to class with a set of perceptions, experiences, and expectations. Each instance of misbehavior has a reason and the teacher has to be able to rely upon a collection of options that can be used to correct that behavior. A teacher has to know when to bend the rules for incidental misbehavior and know when to refer such misbehavior to a school counselor, psychologist, security guard, nurse, or administrator.

A teacher can write a great lesson plan, arrange the seating, adjust the window shades, have an appropriate assignment on the board, start the class on time, and teach to the bell, but that will not necessarily guarantee success.

An effective teacher must do more than enforce behavioral norms. The teacher must walk among the students and overwhelm them with encouragement and attention. The effective teacher must be nurturing and accessible. The effective teacher must extend an invitation to success.

It may sound obvious, but many students come to class with no clear guidelines for appropriate classroom behavior. I have found that to be true even among college students. What we may consider less than respectful behavior may seem entirely appropriate to many

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students. They need clearly articulated parameters of appropriate behavior in a classroom setting.

Teaching is a noble profession. Maintain positive expectations, and always extend an invitation to success. Always remember that students can read a dour face and behave accordingly. Be upbeat and enthusiastic. Smile! If you need encouragement in that department, read the cartoons in this book. There is a lighter side to classroom management.

—Aaron Bacall