



# First-Year Teachers Don't Have to Struggle

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Classroom management is the biggest challenge that new teachers face. Yet principals know that effective strategies exist for stopping—or, better yet, preventing—behavior that derails classes and demoralizes new teachers. The [National Council on Teacher Quality](#) (NCTQ) has identified these best-practice strategies in what it calls the “Big Five” tenets of classroom management.

1. **Rules:** Set clear expectations for student behavior.
2. **Routines:** Establish systems to keep the class running smoothly.
3. **Praise:** Recognize and reinforce appropriate behavior.
4. **Misbehavior:** Employ a hierarchy of strategies in response to students' misbehavior.
5. **Engagement:** Keep students interested and involved throughout the lesson.

Unfortunately, some teachers are never told about these strategies in their preparation programs and don't get opportunities to practice them while in training. NCTQ [reviewed coursework](#) from a sample of teacher prep programs and found that only one in five teaches all of these well-researched strategies. For example, three out of four programs do not teach the use of praise as a management method—even though this strategy is more rewarding than handing out detentions.

## What Can Administrators Do?

Principals can start by helping new teachers before they even walk into their classrooms. Induction is an ideal time to discuss plans for implementing the Big Five during the school year.

- ✓ **Rules:** Have teachers draft the rules they will use in their classrooms and give one another feedback. Rules should be stated positively (“Be polite” rather than “Don't be rude”) and few in number (roughly three to five).
- ✓ **Routines:** Have teachers brainstorm routines (e.g., How should students hand in papers? What do students do when they need to use the restroom?), practice presenting them to fellow teachers, and then revise the routines as necessary.
- ✓ **Praise:** Discuss with teachers how to “catch kids being good.” This positive reinforcement can include specific verbal praise (“Good job for remembering to raise your hand”); group reward systems such as the Good Behavior Game, stickers, or other treats; and positive phone calls home.
- ✓ **Misbehavior:** Help teachers plan a ladder of consequences that can be implemented consistently. This ladder may include warnings, loss of privileges, detention, and behavior-related phone calls home.
- ✓ **Engagement:** Discuss with teachers how to keep all students involved during a lesson. Potential strategies include cold-calling, keeping transitions short, using exciting lesson openers, and carefully planning not just for what the teacher will do at each point in the lesson but also for what students will do.

As you're reviewing these areas, invite veteran teachers to share their experiences. Even better, have them demonstrate difficult classroom scenarios, showing how they'd respond and explaining why. You can also present new teachers with case studies and ask them what management tactics might be most effective. Consider a few common scenarios, such as when two students are talking during a lesson, a student is playing on a cell phone, or a student talks back to a teacher. How should the teacher respond?

Of course, new teachers also need ongoing support. Principals should visit new teachers' classrooms often to look for effective use of various classroom management strategies and suggest their own ideas. Even a 10-minute walk-through with a quick follow-up e-mail can be incredibly revealing. Administrators can also ask a veteran teacher to sit in on a class and help a new teacher hone her skills.

Finally, consider reaching out to local teacher preparation programs. NCTQ is working with school districts to help them develop strategic partnerships with higher education institutions. By establishing criteria for the student teachers they will accept and may ultimately hire (such as requiring knowledge of the Big Five), districts can create a pipeline of well-prepared teachers.

Although new teachers may never fully master managing a class on day one, taking these steps can shorten their learning curve.



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