

MOTIVATING STUDENTS

Another key to successful classroom management is motivating students to stay on task, participate in class activities, complete their work, and behave properly in the classroom. Often the best way to motivate students is to “catch them being good.” Look for occasions to thank them for their participation in class, compliment their written work, or just give them a smile.

Physical rewards can also be motivating, as this scenario demonstrates:

The Real World

Ms. Levi, a fourth-grade teacher, knows it is important to review new material at the end of each class session, but her students are too distracted by the expectation of the bell to participate in a question-and-answer session. She has asked her *madrach*, Zach, to lead a blackboard baseball review game during the last ten minutes of class. The first week the students are too busy watching the clock to participate fully. Ms. Levi encourages Zach to try again with a different tactic: awarding stickers for correct answers. After a few weeks, the students excitedly await the game instead of the bell. Ms. Levi and Zach have motivated the students to participate in the review by offering a small reward.

The sticker reward system that Zach used motivates students to cooperate and contribute to class activities. Teachers may also encourage good behavior by rewarding the class with a pizza party. Some teachers award small prizes for books read or homework assignments completed. Some award “shekels” that can be cashed in once a month for prizes.

You can also reward students’ cooperation—and initiative—by giving students a greater say in running the class. For example, you might let students choose the game they will play near the end of the class period, allow them to choose between two exercises in their textbook, or allocate time for them to teach a topic of their choice.

Sometimes a reward is built into an activity. For example, the enjoyment of playing a game is a reward in itself. Puzzles, art projects, and field trips have intrinsic rewards too. Your students' motivation to learn and succeed is also very important. Such motivation is highly personal, with students working to satisfy their need for success. By establishing clear milestones of success—for example, reading a Hebrew prayer with fewer than three mistakes—you can encourage students to pursue personal goals.

Rewards are not the only way to motivate students. Students will often comply with your requests in order to avoid negative consequences, such as missing recess or your calling their parents. Often a stern look from you is enough to stop students from talking out of turn or misbehaving. If that doesn't work, a discussion with the principal or a verbal or written warning may motivate a change in behavior. You can also use these techniques:

- ▶ *Give non-verbal cues* such as making eye contact, moving into the student's space, or flicking the lights on and off.
- ▶ *Take away a privilege* such as free time or a choice of seats.
- ▶ *Call the student's parent* if the behavior continues. Describe anecdotally the behavior you've observed and ask for the parent's help in controlling it.

To maintain the culture of respect, it is essential that you use the mildest punishment that will be effective and that you always avoid humiliating students.

You will sometimes have to motivate students to do things they do not want to do or are afraid to do. You may need to motivate a shy student to participate in an activity, quiet a talkative student during an assembly, or encourage a dispirited student to try again.

How might you respond to these challenges?

- ▶ Motivate a shy student to participate in a group role-playing activity:

- ▶ Quiet a talkative student during an assembly:

- ▶ Encourage a dispirited student to try reading a Hebrew selection again:

Effective Teaching as a Strategy for Managing the Classroom

The best way to keep students on task is to practice effective teaching techniques. Researchers, including Edmund Emmer and Carolyn Evertson, authors of several books on classroom management, have found that effective teachers use the following strategies:

- ▶ **List on the board the tasks that students need to complete when they arrive in class.** For example: (1) Check off your name on the attendance poster; (2) put money in the tzedakah jar; (3) take an index card and on it write one thing from the previous week's lesson; (4) take a worksheet from the teacher's desk and complete the activity. Each week, some activities may be the same (the attendance and tzedakah procedures, for example), but others will vary.
- ▶ **Run the classroom efficiently, and manage behavior problems swiftly.** The most effective teachers handle discipline problems while allowing the rest of the class to continue working on the lesson. For example, if two students are chatting when they should be participating in a whole-class discussion, give them a warning look or approach their desks while continuing to lead the rest of the class in the discussion. Limit behaviors that interrupt the flow of activities and slow the momentum of a lesson.
- ▶ **Make sure students know what is expected of them, and monitor their progress.** Use assessments such as writing assignments, oral questions, quizzes, and presentations. Holding students accountable for their work helps keep them on task.

- ▶ **Give clear instructions and explanations in a variety of forms**—written, spoken, and demonstrated—so that students are able to participate fully without becoming confused or falling behind. When students feel inept or frustrated, they often misbehave. Plan lessons carefully. Vary teaching methods to appeal to students with different learning styles. For example, a lesson on King David might include studying a map, a small-group discussion, an activity in the textbook, and an art project or dramatic role-playing.

Based on your teaching situation (for example, grade level and curriculum), describe one way in which you can incorporate each of the strategies above into your teaching.

1. List procedures for start of class: _____

2. Run the classroom efficiently: _____

3. Provide clear objectives: _____

4. Give clear instructions and explanations: _____

MANAGING MISBEHAVIOR

Keeping students actively engaged in learning will help prevent most disruptive behavior. However, some students may misbehave in class—for example, by talking out of turn or distracting others—because they are bored, tired, falling behind, or distracted by personal problems. Knowing the cause of a student’s misbehavior can help you decide which intervention strategy to use.

Regardless of the cause of a student’s misbehavior, spotting it quickly and issuing a clear, firm directive to stop the behavior are the best first steps in dealing with a problem. From your own school days, you may remember teachers who seemed to have “eyes in the back of their head.” Such teachers spot behavior problems quickly and move to control them before they escalate.

You can use a variety of interventions to deal with misbehavior. Among them are:

Nonverbal means of intervention: A variety of nonverbal strategies can help students regain their focus on classroom activities. Some educators use rhythm clapping: Clap out a short rhythm, and have students respond by repeating it. Other nonverbal techniques for refocusing the class's attention include flicking the classroom lights on and off, ringing a bell, and holding two fingers in the air. You can also use nonverbal techniques to manage an individual student's disruptive behavior—for example, move close to the student and make eye contact. This tactic allows you to maintain the momentum of the lesson while dealing with a student's misbehavior.

Rule-focused means of intervention: Rule-focused intervention focuses on stopping behaviors quickly and making sure students know what they did wrong. To use this strategy, quietly ask the student to stop the inappropriate behavior; then, maintain eye contact with the student until he or she corrects the behavior. Remind the student of the correct rule or procedure by referring to your classroom rules or list of Jewish values. You might say, for example, “Sarah, you are not showing *derech eretz*,” or “Ethan, I like the way you demonstrated *kavod* when you helped Sarah play the flash-card game.” This strategy is most effective in dealing with disruptions during group work or individual seat work, when you can talk to a student without interrupting the entire class. If you find that several students are off task, consider changing the activity to one that captures everyone's attention—for example, a challenging discussion or a content-rich game.

HINT: Try not to sweat the small stuff. If you understand normative behavior for the age group you teach and you don't overreact to it, you'll find that your class will run smoothly and pleasantly. But by all means take corrective action in response to behavior that disrupts the goals of your class.



Creating a Values-Based Classroom

It is especially appropriate in the religious school setting to promote student self-management by stressing socially just values. By making Jewish values a core part of your curriculum, you can steer your students toward making responsible choices about their behavior. As you learned in Workshop 1, incorporating *midot* (Jewish values) such as *derech erez* and *tzedakah* into your regular classroom routine contributes to the creation of a caring community.

Read this list of Jewish values, and circle six that you will promote in your classroom.

- ***derech erez***
(appropriate behavior)
- ***kavod***
(honor; respect)
- ***tzedek***
(justice)
- ***gemilut hasadim***
(acts of lovingkindness)
- ***tikkun olam***
(repair of the world)
- ***hesed***
(righteousness)
- ***lo levayesh***
(not embarrassing others)
- ***klal Yisra'el***
(Jewish unity)
- ***talmud Torah*** (study)
- ***emet*** (truth)
- ***sh'lom bayit/sh'lom kitah***
(peace in the home/peace in the classroom)
- ***l'shon harah***
(avoiding gossip)

Once you have identified the six Jewish values that you will focus on, read stories illustrating those values (ask your principal for suggestions), and have students role-play scenarios in which they must make decisions based on the values. Have students make a poster illustrating the six values, or have them make one poster for each value. Consistently reinforcing the importance of these *midot* will help your students make better choices about their behavior in your classroom. In addition to teaching *about* these values, teach *with* them.

Focus on Text

אֲנֹכִי יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ.

"I am Adonai your God..."

—Exodus 20: 2

Unlike the commandments that require specific actions such as keeping Shabbat and honoring one's parents, and prohibit murder and adultery, the first of the Ten Commandments states no rule governing behavior. It simply establishes God's authority ("I am Adonai your God").

1. In your opinion, why does the first commandment establish God's authority?

2. Similarly, you should establish authority in your classroom. Why is this important?

3. How will you go about establishing this authority? Which of the strategies and ideas that you have learned in this workshop will help you establish yourself as an authority figure?
