

## **Disruptive Behaviour**

### ***Gaining Control of Yourself Leads to Positive Outcomes***

On 28 November 2022 the Senate referred “The issue of increasing disruption in Australian school classrooms” to the Education and Employment Reference Committee for inquiry and report by the first sitting day in July 2023. On 22 March 2023, the Senate agreed to extend the committee’s reporting date to 16 November 2023.

On 30 November 2023, the Senate agreed to further extend the reporting date to **February 2024**.

The Interim Report was handed down on Friday.

- According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (Pisa) index, (it asks students how often noise and other disruptions occur in the classroom and grades countries around an average of zero), Australian classrooms rate at -0.2 while the OECD average is slightly positive (0.04).
- The 2018 TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey) Survey found 37% of Australian *lower-secondary school principals* reported that intimidation or bullying among students occurs at least weekly, the report said.
- TALIS reported ‘a smaller share of Australian teachers than their peers across the OECD reported feeling prepared for, or capable of, managing disruptive classroom behaviour’.
- Student truancy was also higher than the OECD average, with one in three 15-year-olds (33%) reporting to have skipped at least one day of school in the two weeks prior to the Pisa 2018 test, compared to one-in-five (21%) on average across the OECD.
- Australian teachers also reported feeling less prepared for, or capable of, managing disruptive classroom behaviour than their OECD peers.

#### **Why are students misbehaving?**

##### **1. Students may find the school work too difficult**

- Students with delayed academic skills are more likely to exhibit disruptive and challenging behaviour, and students who display disruptive behaviour may be more likely to fall behind academically.

- This connection has been shown to be strongest between a student’s reading skills and disruptive behaviour. This makes sense, because as students’ progress through primary school, they need to demonstrate increasingly advanced language and literacy skills to participate and succeed academically in all subjects.

##### **2. Students are trying to impress their peers**

- Students are more likely to display disruptive behaviour in schools and classrooms where this is accepted. Researchers talk about the “classroom climate”. These are the values, beliefs and norms that set the behaviour within a classroom setting.
- At school (particularly in high school), peer approval is one of the most important variables that can influence student behaviour. Students play out a variety of roles to obtain peer approval – class clown, jock, cool kids etc.
- Being disruptive may seem “cool” in some peer groups, and researchers have found that this can promote a culture of student disruption.

##### **3. Students are copying their parents**

- Students model and learn the behaviours they see. Telling students how to behave well won’t work when the adults in the room are overwhelmed, stressed, and not in control of their emotions.
- Recent research suggest teachers and school leaders are facing increasing threats and hostility from parents. Students may witness these parent-teacher conflicts and behave in similar ways when managing conflict at school.

##### **4. Teachers don’t know how to monitor or manage students’ disruptive behaviour.**

- Modern initial teacher prep. does not provide sufficient practice-based study of behaviour management approaches – Preventive, Supportive and Corrective.
- Teachers are overwhelmed by the volume of students requiring individual attention.
- Teachers may not be using teaching / learning approaches which support good behaviour choices. Need to remember ‘Grandma’s Rules’!
- No one teaches teachers about Krathwohl’s Taxonomy anymore!  
<http://mason.gmu.edu/~ndabbagh/cehdclass/Resources/IDKB/krathstax.htm>

#### **What can Teachers do?**

- Rearrange seating to make it easier for students to see the teacher and pay attention – Jones recommends 2 horseshoes.
- Put felt pads under furniture to reduce noise levels.

- Turn off phones or at the very least, turn off sounds on mobile devices to limit distractions. If the school does not prohibit phones, require they be turned face down on the top of the desk so you know they are not in use.
- Add environmental cues (such as written instructions and checklists on Charts) to remind students about what they should be doing.
- Teach them procedural practices – if you show them that you will always repeat what you’ve just said, you’re teaching them that there is no need to listen. Try the old ‘Hello Hello’ TV series line – ‘Listen very carefully, I will say this only once’.

### Teach Behavioural Skills

- Don’t assume students know how to behave well at school. School is a complex social environment and may have different expectations to home.
- Teach behavioural skills the same way they teach academic skills (and teach them early and often). This means giving students instruction, practice, feedback, and encouragement.
- Specific behavioural skills to teach might include:
  - responding to your name when called;
  - requesting help with difficult tasks – what does the student need to do or say;
  - entering the classroom quietly and beginning a “getting started” task; and
  - showing kindness and respect to peers and staff.
- Respond to disruptive behaviour or behavioural errors as if they were learning errors and provide an immediate correction. This includes giving the student a chance to practise (or show you) the appropriate behaviour and the providing positive feedback if warranted.
- Glasser calls this Approach
  - What are you doing? (Don’t accept ‘nothing’ – enquire further.)
  - What should you be doing?
  - Is this helping you or the rest of the class?

### Allowing time for lots of practice

- Researchers have found that for a child to learn something new, it needs to be repeated eight times on average.

- For a child to unlearn an old behaviour and replace it with a new behaviour, the new behaviour must be practised on average 28 times.

### Providing plenty of focussed encouragement

- Research shows encouraging students for positive behaviours has high-impact – see Dreikurs, Ginnott or Glasser.
- It is important to make the praise genuine and attached to a specific behaviour.
- **Focus on the deed not the doer** so they know specifically what they have done that is gaining positive attention.

### Getting students involved

- The classroom climate can be improved when students play an active role in setting classroom expectations and holding one another to high standards.
- This includes asking students what their classroom norms and expectations should be – rule setting together and also positive and negative consequences attached to those behaviours.
- It could also include:
  - encouraging students to acknowledge each other for doing the right thing – a practice known as “tootling”. Tootling is a classroom-based intervention used to increase peer prosocial behaviours, particularly offering and receiving help, while decreasing negative and disruptive peer interactions. Tootling is like tattling but refers to the reporting of only positive, rather than inappropriate, social behaviours.
  - You may have a ‘tootling’ board in the classroom – positive and anonymous comments to ‘catch ‘em being good’.
  - Make it safe for students to both make mistakes and succeed – create a risk free environment. Create a culture where students can openly discuss and learn from their mistakes, as well as share their successes.
  - Mistakes are proof that a student is trying – J.K. Rowling had to pitch her concept for Harry Potter 12 times before she was successful.
  - Model calm conflict resolution such as Gordon’s No Lose Conflict Resolution and support students to work through academic and social challenges.

Well behaved children are a ‘must’ for effective teaching and learning. They must learn to control themselves and this will lead to a world of positive choices and positive outcomes. opening to them.