

Episode 342—What To Do When Your Class Won't Stay In Their Seats

00:00 Introduction to Classroom Management Challenges

Linda Kardamis (00:00)

When students are just getting out of their seats and wandering around the room, it can add so much chaos to the classroom. So let's talk about what to do and how to get those kids to, for the most part, stay in their seats. Well, welcome back to the Teach 4 the Heart podcast, where we tackle teaching challenges from a biblical perspective. Why are we here? Because we don't believe that our spiritual walk and teaching profession should exist in two separate domains. Rather, the hope we have in Christ should change how we approach everything, not just at home, but at school as well.

So join us as we explore both the spiritual and practical sides of key teaching challenges, integrating them together so we can succeed at teaching, glorify God, and make a lasting difference in our students' hearts and lives. This episode has been brought to you in partnership with the Herzog Foundation. So we get a lot of questions here at Teach 4 the Heart, and one of the questions that we've been asked is, what do I do about students who are getting out of their seats and wandering about the classroom? So I'm excited to tackle this with you today.

00:58 Establishing Clear Expectations

One of my first thoughts when I was thinking about this and what I was going to say was that this is gonna be very different in elementary versus high school. But as I thought about it more, I realized it's actually not that different. There are some core principles that apply no matter the age. So let's start out there. So number one, if you're having trouble with kids getting up, getting out of their seats, and that's adding to chaos, number one, we need to first of all,

get clear expectations. So it starts with clear expectations. In other words, we as teachers need to determine in my class, and if you have multiple classes in high school and you think in each class, when should students get out of their seats and when should they not? If we are not clear on that in our own minds, how could we ever have clear expectations for our students? But a lot of times we don't. We haven't actually thought through, is it okay if they get up for a tissue?

What about if they, are they allowed to get up to throw things away? Are they allowed to get up to get a hall pass? Are they allowed to get up to get a pencil? So we might not have clarity in our minds of when students actually are allowed to get up and when they're not. So that's where it starts. You should sit down and just make a list. When are the times students are allowed to get out of their seat without permission? And when are the times, and you know.

Otherwise, what do they need to ask for permission for? So get really clear on that. It's also possible that it depends on the time. Maybe it's during teaching time, you can only get up for this reason. But if it's a work

time, you're allowed to get up for these three or four reasons. So just get really clear on your mind on what that should look like, what you would like it to look like. So number one, it starts with clear expectations. Number two, we have to be confident in that requirement.

So I think a lot of times when students are getting up and getting out of their seats, either number one, we actually weren't clear for ourselves and for our students on when they were allowed to get up and out of their seats. So that number one will help to solve the problem. Because like I said, if we don't clearly communicate that to them and they're just getting up and we're like, I guess it's fine, I don't know, that definitely can create a big problem. But this is the second thing. Sometimes we're not confident.

in our requirements. In other words, if we are thinking, hmm, I don't know if I can make my students stay in their seats or I don't know if I should make them stay in their seats, that is definitely going to lead to them getting up and moving around. It's gonna make the problem way worse. So we as teachers need to make sure that we have this basic expectation that the students will stay in their seats when instructed to do so, okay? So we have to be confident in our authority and our expectations.

03:41 Be Confident in Your Authority

And I just want to kind of drive this point home a little bit because this may seem either unimportant or like, you know, does this really help? Yes. This is maybe the most important aspect because when we as teachers are confident in our authority and expectations, that naturally reduces and diminishes problems, whereby when we are not confident, students sense that and the problems grow. It also vastly affects how we deal with it.

When we...

are confident, yes, students are going to stay in their seats, that's how this is going to work, then when they're not, we deal with it differently than if we're feeling like, I don't know if I can get the students to stay in their seats. One, we're gonna approach it with confidence and authority, the other we're gonna approach it with ooh, and you can see even just thinking through this and watching how I'm acting on this video, that students are going to interpret that very differently. I don't care if they're in kindergarten or in 12th grade. One says, one is very clear in the expectation and authority and the confidence.

One is kind of leaving it up too well. I hope you do what I want, but you don't really have to. And those are two completely different things. So once again, this is very important and this might solve 90 % of your problem right away if you can do this. Number one, make sure you have clear expectations. Number two, be confident in your requirement and authority. And that might take a big change of mindset. It might have you really have to say, I kind of felt like I didn't have control over this, but I'm going to.

I, you know, it is reasonable to expect that my students stay in their seat. So spend some time thinking about that, talking about that with other people as you need to to get to that point.

05:07 Plan Your Response

Number three, once you're confident in this, this is a reasonable requirement and I can't expect it. Number three, you need to have a plan for what to do when students are not in their seats. And this actually really helps with the confidence. Sometimes we're not confident because we go, well, what if they don't? Then what? Then what do I do? So we need to have a plan. Okay, when students aren't in their seats,

This is how I'm going to handle it. Now this aspect does vary based on student's age, based on your school situation, based on your personality, but a few ideas of what you might do. You might just use a quick correction. George, remember, you need to ask for a raise your hand before getting up to get a tissue. Okay, you can simply ask them to return to their seats. This is great, especially as like a first step. In elementary, a hand signal can be really effective. You might, you know, it might be.

this or you might have just like some type of hand signal like pointing down or whatever where you teach students, hey, when I do that, it means you need to get back to your seat. Once again, it can be a simple please sit down or reminder of the expectation. You can get up to throw something away when we, know, whatever the expectation is. Okay, so that's really great way to just kind of start with it initially. If it's a persistent issue with a particular student or group of students, I recommend considering the why. Why is this happening?

Is the student simply disregarding your instruction? they simply not care? Well, then this might need to be a behavior issue. You might need to have a talk with them. There might need to be consequences prepared if they're not making improvements in this area. On the other hand, sometimes there are students that really struggle with self-control, perhaps due to an underlying issue. And you're going want to handle that a little bit differently. There's all kinds of things you can do, but one suggestion is consider a positive improvement strategy.

So for example, if you notice, man, this student is normally out of their seat like 10 times a day. It might not be realistic to expect them to go from 10 to zero like that. So you might say, okay, you normally get out of your seat without permission 10 times a day. If we can cut it to six times a day, you're gonna earn this thing. And then once you get to six, okay, let's cut it down to three. Let's cut it down to one. Let's cut it down to zero. So the goal is still to get to zero, but that might be a more realistic path for a student that you know is struggling with self-control.

It's not like a, it's a self-control issue more than just like choosing to disregard your instructions. If you need some ideas for consequences, head to [teach4theheart.com / consequences](http://teach4theheart.com/consequences). You can download our consequence idea list that has ideas that kind of different ideas that can work in different grade levels, different school situations. And that might be a really big help if you're not sure what you could do.

Linda Kardamis (07:39)

This episode is brought to you in partnership with the Herzog Foundation. The Herzog Foundation is hosting a Teacher Apologetics Training Retreat in July and August of this year. This retreat will show teachers how to equip students to stand firm in their faith. So whether you teach elementary or secondary, this training will help navigate today's toughest cultural questions with confidence. Get more details at [teach4theheart.com / Herzog Retreats](http://teach4theheart.com/HerzogRetreats). Now, back to our program.

Alright, so let's review. Number one, you need a clear expectation. Number two, be confident that your requirement is reasonable and that you can enforce it. Number three, have a plan for when students are not in their seats.

08:20 Use A Classroom Shake-Up

Number four, use a classroom shakeup. Okay, it is so much easier if you start off the year with these expectations. So I will say next fall, when you start out the year, start out with the clear expectation that students are gonna stay in their seat except for these times.

Start out with the confidence that yes, they're gonna stay in their seats and you're gonna notice a huge difference. But right now, when you're listening to this, in April, if you're listening to this when it comes out, it's Q4, you have a lot of students habitually getting out of their seats. What can really help with this is a classroom shakeup. What a classroom shakeup does is it kind of creates a little bit of a reset and helps you kind of create a little bit of a fresh start so that students can change a habit.

mid-year. I don't have time to completely explain that strategy here, so I'm going to encourage you to go way back to episode three of the podcast. Yes, three. Way back in the beginning. Or you can simply go to [teach4theheart.com / podcast 3](https://teach4theheart.com/podcast/3) Teach4theheart.com / podcast 3 In that episode, I explain what a shakeup is and how it works, and you can get all the details for that. So number four, use a shakeup mid-year to kind of create a reset.

09:30 Incorporate Movement

Number five, okay, these rest of these ideas, so that's kind of like how you enforce expectations for sitting in seat. My last two suggestions have to do with students that are struggling to sit still. And honestly, this is very, very true in elementary, but can be really helpful all the way up through 12th grade as well. And that's number five, don't ask kids or teens to sit for too long. It's really good to get kids up and moving.

And I feel like a popular thing in this is brain breaks. I'm not opposed to brain breaks. Brain breaks can help. But what's even better is when you can incorporate movement into your class. In other words, if students are learning the material and moving at the same time, we are not wasting time. Win-win. Okay, so an episode I have kind of more ideas on this is episode 110. Or you can go to [teach4theheart.com / worksheets](https://teach4theheart.com/worksheets).

to see some different ideas, a lot of them include movement. There ways to take a worksheet and turn it into an engaging activity, in a lot of cases having students up and moving. My favorite one is quiz quiz trade. So go to episode 110 or [teach4theheart.com / worksheets](https://teach4theheart.com/worksheets), check out those ideas, particularly try quiz quiz trade to get your students up and moving while you're reviewing or practicing or learning. All right, so number five.

Try not to ask the kids to sit still for too long. That helps with that self-control aspect.

10:51 Add Extra Movement for Struggling Students

And then number six, help students who still struggle with sitting still. So you might still have a few students, you guys can all picture them in your mind, especially in maybe those lower to middle grades that are still struggling to sit still. So a few ideas, just extra ideas for those students.

Number one, consider having fidget toys for them. So you can purchase or ask your school to purchase. So just little fidget toys, sometimes just having something to do in their hands can be really helpful to help them be able to sit and listen. So definitely recommend trying that out with them and seeing if it helps.

Another thing you might do when you notice them being particularly antsy is ask them to help you perform a job that allows them to move. So maybe it's like, okay, we're in a time where I'm teaching. I might ask them to get to be the one to help me do something. So another idea, check their IEP if they have one, see what recommendations and accommodations are in there. Talk with their parents, talk with other teachers who have had them for additional insights. Another, ask them, hey,

What have you noticed works at home? What have you noticed works in your class? You might be able to pick up some tips on what's working for other teachers, either teachers that have had them in the past, or even if you're an elementary teacher and you're with them all day, ask their special teachers, hey, have you noticed anything that works well? And kind of just pull your knowledge together.

12:11 Recap + Resources

So those are my six suggestions for dealing with students that are getting out of their seats. Number one, start with clear expectations. Number two, be confident that this is a reasonable requirement.

Number three, have a plan for when students are not in their seats when they should be. Number four, use a classroom shakeup to create a reset mid-year. Number five, don't ask kids to sit still for too long. Incorporate movement into your learning. And number six, help students who still struggle with sitting still with things like fidget toys, asking them to help, or any other ideas that you can come up with. As we wrap up today, I wanna just encourage you, know, students getting out of their seats, yes, it's annoying. It might seem like though, okay, it's not a huge deal.

But it really, I just want to encourage you that everything you do as a teacher to make your classroom a calmer place where students can focus and learn is important. You are doing a lot of things. You are building respect. You're growing your credibility with your students. This not only helps them academically, but it also can lead to opportunities for deeper conversations, conversations that can impact their lives and make a real difference. And don't forget that God has placed you

right where you are and scripture calls us to do our very best. So even something as simple as reminding students to stay in our seats when we're pursuing excellence, pursuing order, pursuing helping our students with even these small things. When we're doing that to the Lord, we are serving him and it matters. So I wanna encourage you in that regard. We've mentioned quite a few different resources today, but if you feel like you could use some additional help.

with some of your trainings and you could use some additional classroom management help, I want to recommend a couple things to you. First of all, we have a free training called How to Reduce Disruption so you can actually teach. You can get that at teach4theheart.com / free. And we also have our full Classroom Management 101 program where we walk you through step by step.

how to put together a plan, not just for getting out of seats, but for every area like this in your classroom so that you know what to do, you're confident and ready to go. That's something that you could start right away and then finish it up in the summer. Summer's a great time to go through that course, so you are ready to go at the start of the school year. You can find out more about classroom Management 101 at teach4theheart.com / CM101.

Well, thank you guys so much for being with us. Once again, all the notes and links and all the things that I referenced, you can check them all out in one place at teach4theheart.com / three That's teach4theheart.com / three If you've enjoyed this episode, please do share it with a friend. You can also like, subscribe, share a review of this podcast. All those things help more people to be able to find this podcast.

This episode has been brought to you in partnership with the Herzog Foundation. All views and opinions are our own and don't necessarily reflect those of the Herzog Foundation. Well, thank you so much for being with us. I look forward to speaking with you again soon. In the meantime, teacher, remember God is at work in you and through you, and he's using you to make a difference. Keep your eyes on him and teach for the heart.