

RESOURCES FOR MANAGING STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Compiled by the Office of Student Conduct

Student Rights and Responsibilities at Western Michigan University recognizes that classroom behavior management can be stressful, time consuming, and difficult. In the event that a student's behavior is of concern, the OSC has worked with instructors to provide this resource in order to assist in behavior management.

ADDRESSING STUDENT BEHAVIOR

An important question that instructors are encouraged to ask before responding to a situation:

Does this student's behavior materially disrupt the class work of others, involve substantial disorder, invade the rights of others, or otherwise disrupt the regular and essential operation of the University?

If so, it is likely behavior that should be addressed.

When working with students' behavior in the classroom:

Do:

- ...set up the classroom behavioral expectations on the first day and in the syllabus. See below for suggestions on common classroom concerns that you may want to address.
- ...role model appropriate behavior in the classroom.
- ...take a developmental approach. What is common sense to some is not always known to others.
- ...directly and privately address a student's behavior when you believe it isn't appropriate for your classroom. Make sure this is done outside of the classroom setting and in a timely manner.
- ...listen to the student and provide the student the appropriate possibility to respond during this meeting.
- ...acknowledge the student's feelings. This can be done without accepting the behavior. (ex. "I can see that you're very frustrated, and I understand how that could be the case.")
- ...consult with the Office of Student Conduct if you are not sure how to appropriately address a student.

Don't:

- ...take it personally. Students act inappropriately in class for any number of reasons.
- ...raise your voice. Keep an even tone and calmly address the behavior.
- ...argue with the student.
- ...challenge or threaten the student (ex. "Are you sure you want to go there with me?")
- ...get too close to or put your hands on the student.
- ...let the situation publicly devolve in front of other students in the class.
- ...humiliate the student (ex. "no wonder you're failing this class").
- ...have rules or expectations that aren't enforceable
- ...have consequences that you won't use (ex. if you say that arriving 5+ minutes late will result in a 5 point deduction of the student's engagement points, be sure to make the reduction).
- ...use clinical terms when reporting behavior. Instead, simply describe what was observed.
- ...take a wait-and-see approach. Disruptive behavior does not stop without intervention.

Consider putting the following information in your syllabus to assist with setting up behavioral expectations:

- Arrival and Attendance
 - Will your class begin at precisely the time listed for the course, or are there a few minutes of leniency available?
 - What happens if a student is late?
 - What happens if a student misses class?
 - Consider using “engagement points” as part of your grade system instead of “participation points” if it is your expectation that students actively engage in your course and coursework
- Use of technology
 - Are cell phones permitted? If not, what happens if a cell phone is visible or being used?
 - May a student text if the phone is in silent mode?
 - Are laptops permitted?
- Rights and Responsibilities from the Undergraduate and/or Graduate Catalog (<https://catalog.wmich.edu/>).
- Language in the classroom
 - What types of communication are appropriate? (ex. are slang words allowed?)
 - Is there a way that students should be recognized or is open discussion encouraged? (ex. Should students raise their hands?)
 - How should the students address you (Professor, Dr., first name, etc.) and each other?

Further Guidance

- If you have attempted to address a student’s behavior and the disruption continues, you may ask the student to leave for the remainder of the class period. ***If you dismiss a student from a class period, you must immediately contact Student Rights and Responsibilities with the following:***
 - Name and WIN of student
 - Details including
 - Date/Time/Location
 - As much information about the interactions as you remember
 - A description of your attempts to address the behavior
 - Identify the behavior using directly what was observed (ex. “John Doe began jumping up and down and waving his arms”) instead of clinical or pejorative terms (ex. “John Doe started acting like a lunatic”).
 - Student Rights and Responsibilities will follow up with the student regarding the student’s behavior in your classroom and will work with the student to determine a long term solution for the remainder of the course.
- Call WMU Police (911, let them know you are at WMU and need a WMU officer) if you are concerned about the immediate safety of yourself or others in the classroom.

If you are concerned about a student’s welfare or if the student has had uncharacteristic behavioral changes, feel encouraged to submit the [Student Concern Form](#)

Frequent Concerns of Faculty about Confronting or Reporting Behavior:

Concern: I am afraid of physical retaliation when addressing the behavior.

Fact: If you are legitimately afraid of physical violence because the student is showing signs of outward aggression, you should call 911.

Concern: I believe I will get in trouble with my department for reporting inappropriate behavior.

Fact: All individuals at WMU are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and civil manner in the University setting as well as in the community. Responsibility for fulfilling these obligations is shared by the students, faculty, and every other member of the University community.

Concern: I submitted something to Student Rights and Responsibilities and/or submitted a Student Concern Form, but nothing was done.

Fact: Student Rights and Responsibilities follows up on all information received from faculty or staff. At times, the details about the follow up conversations with the students cannot be shared. If you have questions about a situation, please feel free to contact the office directly, and someone will give you the information that can be shared on a case by case basis.

Concern: If I address a student's behavior in class, I will receive lower reviews when it comes time for Instructor and Course Evaluation at the end of each term.

Fact: Students have reported that they have more respect for an instructor when he or she appropriately addresses the behavior of students in the classroom.

Information from National Associate for Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment. Specifically:

- Lewis, W. S. (2013). *Classroom Management: Preventing and Responding to Disruptive Students* [workshop].
- Sokolow, B. A., Lewis, W. S., Schuster, S. K., Swinton, D. C., & Van Brunt, B. J. (2014). *The NaBITA 2014 Whitepaper: Threat Assessment in the Campus Setting*.
- Van Brunt, B., & Lewis, W. S. (2013). *A faculty guide to addressing disruptive and dangerous behavior*. Routledge