

# Foreword

**S**tudent misbehavior presents one of the biggest barriers to academic achievement facing our schools today. In *Managing Noncompliance and Defiance in the Classroom*, Dr. Geoff Colvin addresses two of the most difficult and frustrating categories of misbehavior encountered by teachers (noncompliance and disruptive behavior) and provides a wealth of strategies for preventing and intervening with these problems.

Noncompliance from a student is the quickest way for an educator to feel totally helpless. When a teacher gives a direction and a student says, “You can’t make me,” the teacher immediately realizes, “Oh my, the student is right.” From this feeling of helplessness, many teachers may fall into a pattern of trying to MAKE the student follow the direction by issuing the demand more loudly or emotionally, or by threats that imply, “You do it or else . . .” Either of these approaches can result in a battle of wills between the student and the teacher wherein the teacher tries harder to MAKE the student comply, while the student tries harder and more publicly to demonstrate that, “YOU CAN’T MAKE ME!” To avoid such power struggles, some teachers may just let the student have his way—that is, the student is allowed to ignore the direction and thus learns he can choose to follow directions or not. Either of these approaches from the teacher (power struggles or just letting the student call the shots) serves to positively reinforce the student’s noncompliant behavior—which you will remember from Psych 101 only increases the future occurrence of the noncompliant behavior. In this book, Dr. Colvin provides practical suggestions for avoiding power struggles and actually gaining compliance from the student.

Disruptive behavior from students can be equally frustrating to the busy teacher who is now highly accountable for the academic achievement of *all* students. Imagine a 50-minute instructional period (in either elementary or secondary school) in which one student causes a major disruption five times. How many minutes of instruction have been lost? Minimally five minutes? Now let’s imagine there are two such disruptive students in the room. Ten minutes of lost instructional time each day means that 20% of instructional minutes have been wasted. If this pattern continues for the entire year, it would be the equivalent of knocking 36 days off of a 180-day teaching calendar. No classroom can afford that kind of instructional time loss. In this book, the reader will find a wealth of strategies for preventing and intervening with chronic and severely disruptive behavior.

For many years Dr. Colvin and I have shared the notion that good instruction and good behavior management are a “chicken/egg” issue. You cannot have one without the other, and one does not precede or

supersede the other. In many cases, practitioners and experts ignore this link and focus so much on improving student behavior that they ignore academic deficits. Dr. Colvin has always reminded the field that behavioral and academic issues are inseparable. There are many strategies mentioned in this book that focus on instruction and ensure that students are making academic progress while working to replace non-compliance and disruptive behavior with more socially and academically productive behavior.

I have known Dr. Colvin both personally and professionally for more than 30 years and can state with confidence that he is uniquely qualified to have developed this resource. As a teacher, building administrator, university professor, and staff developer, he focuses on what school personnel can do to help troubled children be educationally successful. Although his research and writing cover the breadth of behavior issues, from school-wide prevention to the needs of the most troubled students, he has always been one of the leading experts on dealing with noncompliance, emotional escalation, and severely disruptive behavior, and he is a master at synthesizing research into easy-to-implement practice. Just as an aside, he is also one of the most personable, friendly, and funny individuals one could ever be privileged to spend time with.

In this book, Dr. Colvin first helps the reader develop a deep understanding of the nature of noncompliant behavior and how to assess the nature of the problem. This is somewhat analogous to making sure that a mechanic has an understanding of how internal combustion engines work and how to run some basic diagnostic procedures before beginning to tinker with the mechanism. With basic knowledge and efficient diagnostic tools, the “tinkering” of the mechanic and the educator will be less likely to cause damage and more likely to create efficient and effective plans for solving the presenting problem.

In addition to this base-level information from Part I of the book, Dr. Colvin goes on in Part II to provide a variety of strategies for developing and implementing evidence-based interventions that have a demonstrable track record of success with noncompliant and disruptive behavior. These are not “theoretical” suggestions. They are practical procedures that can be implemented in either general or special education settings in both elementary- and secondary-level classrooms, reflecting one of his major strengths—translating research into “I can do that tomorrow” strategies for the busy educator.

This resource will be useful to individual classroom teachers who wish to upgrade their professional skill in dealing with challenging students. In addition, this book can be of great benefit to specialists and members of problem-solving teams who have responsibility for analyzing problems and designing intervention plans for a student who chronically exhibits noncompliance or severely disruptive behavior. In fact, the book will serve as a great book-study resource for an entire staff to work through collectively.

The practitioner, teacher, or specialist will find this book to be an accessible and user-friendly guide to understanding the function of misbehavior, for efficiently collecting essential information, for analyzing the nature of the problem, and (perhaps most importantly) for developing intervention plans that have a high probability of helping the student learn to function

cooperatively, respectfully, and responsibly. This of course has the benefit of making the teacher's life easier, but even more importantly, can create life-altering benefits for the student who exhibits chronically noncompliant or disruptive behavior. What greater gift can an educator give to a student?

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