

Dignity Over Discipline: Ending Classroom Power Struggles

Power struggles occur when a student feels embarrassed or powerless, causing their brain to shift into a defensive 'threat mode.' By replacing public shaming with calm, private correction, teachers can maintain authority while preserving the student-teacher relationship.

The Problem:

The Escalation Cycle

Shame creates compliance, not growth.



Shaming tactics like sarcasm or public call-outs cause withdrawal, defiance, and long-term disengagement.

Power struggles are predictable.



Conflict usually triggers when students feel misunderstood, embarrassed, or publicly corrected under high stress.

Two nervous systems colliding.



When teachers respond to student defiance with their own stress, it causes escalation rather than management.

ESCALATION

DEFENSE MODE

Reactive Control (Shame)

- Public disciplinary actions
- "Winning" the argument
- Escalation and defiance



The Solution:

Strategies for Calm Authority

Correct privately to protect dignity.



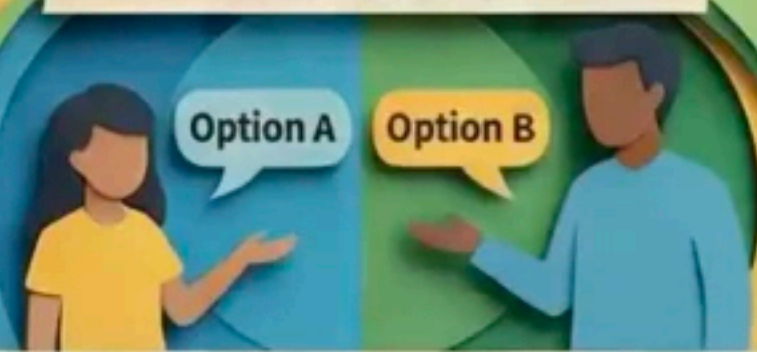
Side-of-the-desk conversations reduce defensiveness by removing the 'audience' of peers.

Use neutral language.



Describe the specific behavior ('I need you seated') instead of labeling the student's identity.

Offer choices within boundaries.



Give students agency by providing two acceptable options for completing a task.

REGULATION

CONNECTION & COOPERATION

Calm Authority (Connection)

- Discreet redirection
- Winning the relationship
- Regulation and cooperation

