

5 Reasons Even “Nice” Students Misbehave for Substitute Teachers

It might seem that misbehavior for substitute teachers is different than “regular teacher” misbehavior. But according to functional behavior theory, **there are only five reasons for ANY behavior**, good or bad.



1. To receive wanted attention (or escape unwanted attention.)
2. To get to do a desired activity.
3. To escape or postpone an unpleasant activity.
4. For material gain (objects or money.)
5. The behavior feels good physically.

The good news is that a skilled substitute teacher can use the **5 Whys** to encourage students to **engage in positive behavior** instead of misbehavior. For example, one substitute teacher brought in magic tricks. If students worked hard and finished the activity, they got to see a magic trick (participation.) If they earned points, they were entered into a drawing to win one of the magic kits (material gain.) Another strategy is to recognize verbally anything positive that is going on. That way, students get attention for positive behavior, instead of negative behavior.

Once you understand the psychology of all behavior, you will be able to inspire most students to positive behavior.