

Classroom Diffusers

— The Power of the Professional Pause

Remain calm. Respond right.
Regain control.

The **1-second strategy**
that stops drama and
restores order.



CREATED BY

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500,000+
EDUCATORS TRUST RICK

01 SECTION ONE Responding to Misbehavior

“The best offense is a good defense.”

Effective classroom management starts with prevention, but even the best-run classrooms will experience occasional misbehavior. Teachers must develop and use professional, respectful, and effective strategies that maintain accountability and minimize disruptions.

PROACTIVE PERSPECTIVE

You can't always avoid disagreement, but you can always choose how you respond. Teachers can eliminate up to 90% of minor issues through early intervention. When misbehavior occurs, assess its impact and respond appropriately.

“You can't always control behavior. But you can always control the moment.”

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SECTION TWO

Challenging Misbehavior

Maintain Self-Control

“Losing self-control means losing classroom control.”

WHY IT MATTERS

- Anger diminishes respect and authority.
- Calmness maintains credibility and leadership.

HOW TO DEVELOP IT

- Build a habit of thoughtful responses that maintain composure.
- View student challenges as growth opportunities.

1 Remain Calm

- Take a deep breath.
- Stay silent momentarily.
- Avoid reacting emotionally.

“Calm is contagious. Silence is powerful.”

2 Wait & Model Cognition

- Assume a non-confrontational stance.
- Appear thoughtful (e.g., hand on chin).
- Give the student 5–9 seconds to self-regulate.

“Your silence speaks strength.”

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SECTION THREE

Avoiding Power Struggles

COMMON TRIGGERS

Past History

"Mr. Smith never made us do it that way."

Defending Credibility

"Why do we have to do this?"

Button Pushing

"Teaching is easy!"

Threats

"Make me!"

THE STRATEGY

- Do not engage.
- Settle the disruption and redirect calmly.

"Conflict is inevitable. Combat is optional."

Diffusers: Try These!

Deliver one- or two-word responses matter-of-factly, without interrupting instruction. Return to the student later if needed. Choose one of the calm phrases on the next page, say it neutrally, and move on.

The Diffuser Wall

"I feel you"	"I understand your point"	"I understand where you're coming from"
"I hear you"	"I empathize"	"Sorry you feel that way"
"Thanks for sharing"	"Thanks for letting me know"	"I appreciate your point of view"
"See your point"	"That's right"	"Love your thought process"
"Bummer"	"I see that"	"Good point"
"Perhaps"	"Regardless"	"Thank you for your observation"
"Noted"	"That's interesting"	"Interesting"
"Yea"	"Oh"	"Fantastic"
"We certainly did"	"I'll keep that in mind"	"Really"
"Maybe so"	"Oh snap"	"Um okay"
"So it is"	"I guess so"	"Okay"
"Alright"	"Fine"	"Acknowledged"
"Got it"	"Duly noted"	"That's another way to look at it"
"Good to know"	"Roger"	"Aha"
"Think about it"	"That's possible"	"Right!"
"You'll find out shortly"	"Wait it gets better"	"We'll check later"
"Hold that thought"	"I can smell what you're cooking"	"Still"
"Just the same"	"In the meantime"	"Moving on"
"We can talk at recess"	"We'll talk later"	"Let the record show"

Use these to de-escalate quickly and keep your classroom flowing — one calm word, then back to teaching.

04 SECTION FOUR The Art of Diffusing

Great teachers calm the moment without disrupting instruction. Redirecting focus helps students abandon defiance without losing face — mastering the *timing* is the whole art.

**Disrupt the
disrupter.**

05 SECTION FIVE Real-World Classroom Scenarios

Seven moments straight from the classroom — and the calm, one-line response that defuses each one.

1 “Mr. Smith Never Made Us Do It That Way”

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Frustrated that Señora Magaña has assigned in-class work, Carlos challenges her: “Mr. Smith never made us do it that way.”

TEACHER RESPONSE

“Probably so”

Señora Magaña says it calmly, then continues the lesson.

WHY IT WORKS She acknowledges the comment without validating or challenging it — “I hear you, but I’m moving forward.” She avoids the debate trap, keeping authority intact and instruction uninterrupted.

2 “This Is So Boring!”

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Nakisha mutters loudly, “This is so boring!” during independent reading.

TEACHER RESPONSE

“Duly noted”

Mr. Lewis says it calmly and resumes walking around the room.

WHY IT WORKS He responds without judgment or engagement. Nakisha’s comment is left to fade, allowing the rest of the class to stay focused and on task.

3 “You’re Not Even a Real Teacher!”

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Jordan challenges a substitute: “You’re not even a real teacher!”

TEACHER RESPONSE

“That’s possible”

Ms. Patel responds evenly and continues with the assignment.

WHY IT WORKS The teacher neutralizes the showdown. Jordan’s attempt to derail class is dismissed with poise and professionalism.

4 “Make Me!”

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

A defiant Henry refuses to move seats, saying, “Make me!”

TEACHER RESPONSE

“We’ll check later”

Mr. Nguyen waits a few seconds, then says it and continues instructing.

WHY IT WORKS The teacher defuses the challenge before it escalates. Henry receives no spotlight, and learning continues smoothly.

5 “You’re Always Picking On Me!”

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Clyde yells out, “You’re always picking on me!” when redirected.

TEACHER RESPONSE

“I hear you”

Ms. O’Neil replies softly, then turns back to the board.

WHY IT WORKS She shows empathy without getting pulled into emotional drama. Clyde’s energy fizzles without confrontation.

6 “This Assignment Is Stupid!”

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Sam declares, “This assignment is stupid!” at the start of an activity.

TEACHER RESPONSE

“Interesting”

Mr. Torres says it and continues handing out papers.

WHY IT WORKS The moment is passed over without pause. Sam receives no reinforcement for the disruption, and the class stays on track.

7 “You’re Not the Boss of Me!”

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Mei stands up and says, “You’re not the boss of me!” in front of the class.

TEACHER RESPONSE

“Nevertheless”

Señora Magaña responds, then resumes writing on the board.

WHY IT WORKS Calm, concise, and commanding. Mei’s power move is met with composure — not conflict.

06 SECTION SIX

When Diffusers Are Used Incorrectly

A diffuser should always be delivered calmly and without sarcasm. Tone, body language, and intent matter as much as the words. Here is what *not* to do — and why.

✘ MISUSE 1 “Probably so”

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Carlos challenges Señora Magaña: “Mr. Smith never made us do it that way.”

INCORRECT RESPONSE

With a smirk and a sarcastic tone, she responds, “Prrrobably sooo...” and rolls her eyes.

WHY IT BACKFIRES · The sarcastic delivery invites confrontation. Instead of diffusing the moment, the tone escalates it by belittling the student in front of the class.

x MISUSE 2 “That’s interesting”

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Nakisha groans during instruction, “This is so dumb.”

INCORRECT RESPONSE

Standing directly over her desk, Mr. Lewis replies loudly, “Oh wow, that’s interesting,” with a mocking tone.

WHY IT BACKFIRES · The diffuser becomes a tool for sarcasm. His tone makes Nakisha feel targeted, and students sense rising tension. Rather than modeling control, he is perceived as condescending.

x MISUSE 3 “Fine”

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Henry resists moving seats: “I’m not going over there.”

INCORRECT RESPONSE

Mr. Nguyen sighs heavily and says, “Fiiine!” while throwing up his hands.

WHY IT BACKFIRES · His frustrated tone communicates surrender or passive-aggressiveness. Henry may interpret it as a win, and the rest of the class sees a breakdown in authority.

07 SECTION SEVEN Final Thoughts

Diffusers are more than just phrases — they are tools of professional composure. Used calmly, confidently, and without sarcasm, they communicate leadership and redirect attention without conflict. Used incorrectly, they can escalate the very behaviors they’re meant to neutralize.

Thank you for reading this guide. The power of a well-timed, well-delivered diffuser lies not just in the words themselves, but in the tone, the posture, and the purpose behind them.

Here’s to classrooms that are calm, consistent, and full of growth.

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WORK WITH RICK

Bring Rick to Your District

Rick works with schools in four ways — anchored by his flagship classroom-management training and delivered through his companies, the **Center for Teacher Effectiveness** and **Time To Teach®**.

FLAGSHIP CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Science-backed. Strategy-driven. Classroom management, redefined.

Rick's one-, two-, or three-day PD reforms classroom culture, slashes discipline problems, and creates happier teachers and more engaged students — starting day one.

787 → 180

discipline referrals in three years —
Kastner Intermediate

141 → 36

suspensions in the same three years

300+ → 2

referrals in six weeks — Clark Street
Elementary

WHAT TEACHERS BUILD

- Defuse disruptive behavior in seconds
- Classroom management without confrontation
- Preventive strategies that stop problems early
- Calm, confident teacher presence

WHAT SCHOOLS SEE

- Higher teacher job satisfaction
- Students happier with school
- Office referrals drop sharply
- Rising GPAs and 4.0 growth

BONUS · Attendees can earn up to **4 graduate-level credits** through UMass Global.

DOCUMENTED SCHOOL RESULTS · TIME TO TEACH®

This isn't theory. It's what schools recorded.

Real numbers from schools after implementing Rick's Time To Teach® system — the kind of change you can take straight to your board.

Clark Street Elementary

300+ referrals & 150 suspensions → just **2 referrals in six weeks.**

Crescent Academy

Bullying incidents **down 96%** · major offenses 142 → 14 · suspensions down 62%.

Lawton Public Schools

29 of 35 schools trained · 11,000+ students · suspensions down 16% · **test scores up 9%.**

Kastner Intermediate

Referrals **787 → 180** · suspensions 141 → 36 · D/F grades 735 → 440.

Garfield Elementary

Students reading at or above grade level rose **34% → 98%** in three years.

Parlier Unified

District suspensions down 33% · major referrals down 27% · **zero expulsions.**

When the classroom calms, everything else — grades, attendance, culture — follows.

TRAIN-THE-TRAINER

Build Your Own In-House Experts

The difference: instead of bringing Rick back year after year, we certify a select group of your own staff to deliver the Time To Teach® system themselves — so the training lives inside your district and keeps paying off long after Rick leaves. A far better dollar spent: no repeat booking fees, no fading momentum.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Three days of immersive, skill-building instruction
- Complete curriculum: manual, 100 behavior lesson plans, culture guides
- Ongoing support — coaching calls and expert guidance
- Two-year certification to deliver internal PD
- Full digital portal — videos, handouts, decks, forms, scripts
- Bonus: 2+1 Leadership Implementation Training at no cost

WHY IT WORKS · Your trainers don't just watch a presentation — they learn it, rehearse it, teach it, and are coached to mastery. The result: internal expertise that stays, a shared language across schools, and momentum that doesn't fade.

THE BUSINESS CASE Replacing one teacher costs **\$11,860–\$24,930**. Calm classrooms keep teachers — retaining just six more can save a district roughly **\$98,700 a year**.

KEYNOTES

Not your typical feel-good keynote.

Most keynotes leave people nodding — “that was nice” — and little else. Rick’s are built differently. Yes, your staff will laugh. Yes, they’ll leave recharged. But they’ll also walk out with strategies they can use the very next morning. Rick doesn’t just inspire — **he equips.**

YOUR STAFF WALKS AWAY WITH

- A renewed sense of purpose and clarity
- Proven strategies to defuse power struggles
- Tools to calm disruptive classrooms
- Research-based techniques they can use immediately

Purpose-driven keynotes — designed not just to uplift, but to elevate.

“The only keynote I’ve seen where people didn’t look at their phones. Every second mattered.”

— District Conference Attendee

FORMATS 60–90-minute keynote · 3–4-hour half-day · or keynote + full training.

COACHING Built for real classrooms.

Buy blocks of coaching days and Rick works hand-in-hand with your teachers — job-embedded, non-evaluative support through modeling, co-reflection, and timely feedback that makes the training stick.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rick Dahlgren



Rick Dahlgren delivering a live keynote — equal parts strategy, story, and standing-room energy.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

K-18 Educator · Author of 10 Books & Book Chapters · Psychologist · Behavior Expert · Climate & Culture Change Agent

A distinguished national and international leader in education, Rick is recognized for his dynamic expertise as a keynote speaker, psychologist, behaviorist, educator, and author. With a 30-year career, he specializes in managing challenging and disruptive behaviors across all grade levels — his proven methods have shaped the teaching practices of over half a million teachers worldwide.

What sets Rick apart is his captivating training style — an inspiring mix of substance, entertainment, and real-world applicability. When preventive strategies fall short and disruptive behaviors arise, his expertise truly shines, equipping educators with immediate, high-impact interventions before issues spiral out of control.

Bring Rick to your school, district, or conference.

Contact Aaron Dahlgren to start the conversation.

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