Better classroom management

1. Classroom management of Indigenous students can be a challenge for some teachers. To avoid unnecessary disruption in class, the following issues should be addressed:
2. Base your teaching on a set of principles:
3. It is the right of every student in class to maximise their learning.
4. Students learn best when they are happy, secure and confident. These conditions are best met when students’ three basic needs are met:
   • to feel autonomous or self-determining;
   • to have a sense of oneself as competent and effective;
   • to be related to others and be part of a social world.
5. Establish good relationships with students. They should think you are fair, and considerate.
6. Spend time interacting with students: while they are working, discuss work with them; find out what they can and can’t do, etc. Build a relationship based on mutual respect and trust.
7. Make lessons interesting. Use collaborative approaches.
8. Inform students of the consequences of misbehaviour early on. Develop a set of class rules in collaboration with the students.
9. Follow the BMIS procedures for responding to escalating incidents. Remember, it is better to deal with behavioural issues at the lowest possible level.
10. Avoid scapegoating. Students are well aware of what is fair and just. If you target someone because they have misbehaved in the past, they are likely to react very negatively. Treat each situation individually and don’t dwell on past incidents.
11. Provide warnings to first offenders.
12. Speak pleasantly to students. Don’t use sarcasm or belittling approaches to the students. Don’t shout.
13. Apply the rule of reasonable action. (Would you treat this student in this way if you were cool, calm and not upset?). If you are hot and bothered over a student’s behaviour, you are not likely to make sound decisions.
14. If students persist with disruptive behaviour, isolate them until they calm down. This is called “Cool Off” time. Don’t try to deal with them in front of the rest of the class because they may play up for the audience. Allow the student and yourself the opportunity to negotiate once both parties are in a position to think in a rational manner. Try to create a situation where the issue can be resolved without loss of face to either party.

Characteristics of students
The following characteristics of Indigenous students were noted during a study of their behaviour during critical incidents in the classroom. Many of these characteristics will apply to all students:
1. Indigenous students are likely to view things from their own perspective. They may not see the broader picture and might not consider the effect of their actions on the rest of the class.
2. They are affected by events inside and outside the school and may come to class in a bad mood as a consequence of something that happened at home or in the playground. The teacher should find out what is bothering a student before implementing discipline procedures. An understanding teacher can gain an ally in a student who is listened to. AIEO’s can be very helpful in these situations.
3. They like to be treated decently and fairly and will respond better to teachers who are considerate.
4. They are continually making judgments about the teacher on matters such as interest, likeability, fairness, knowledge.
5. They respect teachers who are fair.
6. They don’t like teachers who shout, are sarcastic, or who are unfair. They will either respond in kind or they will take offence at these behaviours.
7. They like to be helped when they can’t do the work.
8. They respond better to behaviour management if they are warned before action is taken against them for misbehaviour. When dealing with a behavioural issue, focus on the behaviour, not the child.
9. They often utilise physical acts rather than verbal communication to express themselves. There may be a lot of bravado in students’ responses, so it is best to remove them from the influence of other students when they misbehave.
10. It is not necessary to adopt a different approach with non-Aboriginal students, as these strategies work with all students.