

**Exceptional Classroom Management—Llama Training**

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Available on [www.noexcusesu.com](http://www.noexcusesu.com): [How to Train a Llama—Exceptional Classroom Management](#)

**“Kids will do anything you expect them to do if you love them and treat them with dignity and respect. But you must have courage and confidence.”**

**Doug Curry** has 37 years in education, with the majority of those years being in schools with high numbers of students living in poverty. His experience ranges from teaching 4<sup>th</sup> grade, working with curriculum, and serving in principal roles in elementary, middle school, and alternative schools. Doug now serves as the Coordinator for No Excuses schools in Amarillo, Texas. Amarillo is known as the “epicenter” of the No Excuses movement as there are currently 22 Amarillo NEU schools, including Amarillo College, the first NEU college, the first NEU church, and the first NEU preschool. San Jacinto Elementary School, where Doug served as principal for 6 years, was the first NEU in Texas. The NEU movement in Amarillo has grown to the point where there now exists “No Excuses Neighborhoods”, where entire families are persuaded to further their educations and ultimately achieve living-wage careers. Over 100 adults in these neighborhoods have earned a GED by working inside of Amarillo NEU schools. The No Limits/No Excuses movement in Amarillo is comprised of 41 community partners representing businesses, local colleges, community agencies, and individuals. While working with Amarillo schools and the No Limits, No Excuses program, Doug also presents locally, statewide, and nationally, particularly in the area of transforming school cultures. He also presents full day staff development sessions in Successful Classroom Management, Parent Involvement and Creating No Excuses Neighborhoods, and Teaching Math with Meaning. His first book, [How to Train a Llama—Exceptional Classroom Management](#), is now available at [www.noexcusesu.com](http://www.noexcusesu.com). Check out Doug at [www.fastllama.com](http://www.fastllama.com) !

Llama Training-Exceptional Classroom Management

Teachers are like a herd of llamas, running through the grass. Kids can be vicious tigers, looking for a victim. Are you the slowest llama? Don't be the slowest anymore! Come learn how to successfully manage your students, whether you are elementary, middle, or high school. The techniques you will learn are meant to empower you to be able to manage your class in a confident and happy manner and to create the best possible environment for learning. These are proven techniques that are being successfully used in schools across the U.S. This will help you claim the power that you own to be able to make your learning environment exactly what you want it to be. Run fast, little llama!

The Goal

The goal is for you to be able to manage your classroom by being exactly who you are and by being continually nice and kind to your students. Believe it or not, this is entirely possible, whether you

are teaching 1<sup>st</sup> graders or 12<sup>th</sup> graders! The problem is that too often we are not taught the skills needed to accomplish this. If we do not learn effective skills and techniques, we are in danger of resorting to harsh and reactionary techniques that not only will not work, but will also cause us to lose our joy in the classroom.

Successful classroom management has nothing to do with your size or gender, how loud you can yell, or how mean you can look. Successful classroom management is both an art and a skill that you can acquire.

### Facts about Discipline and Classroom Management

- Discipline is a real concern. We have to talk about it.
- Discipline is a normal part of learning, as much as learning to read and write.
- Students must be taught the proper way to behave.
- Students crave structure and discipline, even if they are not capable of verbalizing that. It is the only way that many of them will feel safe. It is the only way that some will be able to settle down.
- It is not a crisis when students make bad choices and receive consequences. It is their way of testing limits and boundaries, and it is healthy.
- Students must be taught the ways of success.
- It is not personal when students choose to act up. This has been going on since the dawn of mankind.
- It is the responsibility of the teacher to set the environment, the rules, and the consequences of the room and to enforce them. Kids are kids. They need the teacher to set the boundaries.

### Things You Won't Read in a Book (Unless you read mine)

Successful classroom management is about how you view yourself. Are you confident in yourself? Are you comfortable with yourself? Are you able to acknowledge your weaknesses and faults? Are you comfortable when you realize that others know all too well your imperfections? How do you view other people, adults as well as children? Do you hold grudges? Do you think that the world "should" be a certain way? Do you look at tough students and see the good that they could be, or do you view them as potential losers? Believe it or not, these questions often affect the management of your classroom.

### The Five Essentials of Successful Classroom Management

#### 1. **Structure and Systems**

Nothing is left to chance. You must have a consistent and well-thought out plan for every single action that takes place in a classroom. This starts from the moment students arrive at your door, from the time they enter, how they move around the classroom, how they sharpen pencils, how they pass out papers, how they get a drink, how they turn in papers, how they leave your class, etc., etc., etc. Failure to plan, create, establish, and maintain these types of systems shows a laziness that you simply cannot afford.

#### "Fast Llama" Expectations

"Students will do whatever we want them to do if we treat them with dignity and respect. We must have courage and confidence."

Don't forget: Your classroom will be the way YOU want it to be. Students are just students. They respond to the way you want it to be. As hard as this is to accept, it is your responsibility as to how they act in your room. You set the expectations. You set the tone. You show them what is

acceptable and what is not acceptable. You either will bring out the best in them or the worst in them.

### School or Grade Level Discipline Systems

I am very much a believer in the effectiveness of a school-wide discipline management system that is used by all in a school. Doing so offers many advantages:

- Consistency of language
- Consistency of practice
- Consistency of expectations
- Proactive plans rather than reactive decisions
- Easily communicated to students, parents, and staff members

A school-wide plan also “trains” the adults in the school as well as the students. It gives the adults not only a common method for dealing with discipline, but it also serves to empower all of the adults in the school to be able to maintain the desired environment for learning. The adults are the people in the school who set the environment and create exceptional systems that will insure that students are prepared for college. Being empowered means that all of the adults can rely on proven and effective techniques in discipline and not feel the need to resort to negative and ineffective language and methods.

This school-wide plan should be created collaboratively by the entire school so that the school “owns” it.

#### **2. Consistency and Predictability**

Every day in your class, if I throw something at the trash can, every day you do the same thing in response (card, clip, etc.). It does not matter whether you are having a good day or bad day, whether it is the day before a holiday, the first day, the last day, whenever. The point is that you are predictable! This helps students know what to expect in your room and gives the feeling of safety that they need in order to succeed.

In a basketball game, all referees are a little different in their interpretations of the rules. Players know this, but they just want the referees to be consistent and predictable. If something was foul in the first quarter, then it should be a foul in the fourth quarter.

Lack of consistency and predictability is a sure way for many students to fail! Students with attention deficit disorders and other students with special needs desperately require a safe and predictable environment in order to succeed.

#### **3. Relationships**

There is not enough space here to properly emphasize the importance of establishing relationships with every one of your students! However, so much of it is related to who you are!

#### **4. That Magical Quality-The Superstar Factor**

Many refer to this as the “it” factor. Why is it that some people can just walk into any classroom and immediately be in command?

All of us possess this magical quality within us. We must discover the superstar within! And once we do, we can't afford to lose it!

We are all complex creatures with strengths, weaknesses, areas of confidence, areas of embarrassment and shame, areas of courage, and areas of fear. Teachers with the Superstar quality come in all shapes and sizes. They come from diverse backgrounds and with a wealth of different experiences, both good and bad.

Superstar teachers have learned to overcome fears, challenges, and lack of confidence to the point that they are able to forget themselves and focus every day, from the beginning bell to the last bell, on the needs of their students. No one does this with any degree of perfection. No one reaches the goal of complete competence. Instead, Superstar teachers just strive everyday to utilize the special gifts and talents that they possess, and they have committed to using these unique qualities to benefit their students.

## 5. Unrelenting Hope

The key to the No Excuses University lies in this statement:

We **commit** to using the **language of hope**. We treat *students* with **courtesy and respect**; we acknowledge challenges that exist, but we **refuse to accept defeat**.

If you are truly going to be a person who “waters seeds”, then there can never be a time when your words, actions, or expressions convey anything but hope for a child, no matter how difficult the situation currently is.

## Your Superstar Quality

Rate yourself from 1 to 4 on how effective your systems are in each of the following areas.

1	2	3	4
Not Evident	Some Evidence of Development	Evident	Strongly Evident

Make notes on areas in which you need to improve.

- \_\_\_ In your own way, with your own personality, you are fun.
- \_\_\_ You have a real passion for helping others succeed.
- \_\_\_ You have your own form of intensity.
- \_\_\_ You appear to “see and notice everything.”
- \_\_\_ You have a “with-it-ness”—you can just sense what is going on in your classroom.
- \_\_\_ You are a bit scary and intimidating in a nice sort of way.
- \_\_\_ There is an “air of mystery” about you.
- \_\_\_ You are joyful.
- \_\_\_ You appear to enjoy your job and to enjoy life.
- \_\_\_ You can appear to occasionally be just a bit strange and a little crazy.
- \_\_\_ You are unafraid to be who you are.
- \_\_\_ You are comfortable with yourself, warts and all.
- \_\_\_ You can easily poke fun at yourself.
- \_\_\_ You can easily apologize for your mistakes.

- \_\_\_ You have learned to take your perceived weaknesses and turn them into strengths. This enables your students to learn to do the same.
- \_\_\_ You have the *courage and confidence* to do what is right at all times.
- \_\_\_ You have the *courage and confidence* to hold students accountable, yet you never hold a grudge.
- \_\_\_ You are very forgiving.
- \_\_\_ You help others save face in potentially embarrassing situations.
- \_\_\_ You believe the best about others.
- \_\_\_ You are quick to stand up for your students if others seek to disparage them.
- \_\_\_ You see your students for what they potentially will be in the future, even given the awkwardness and struggles that come with youth.
- \_\_\_ While always being vigilant, you are quick to look for good in others, and you are quick to point it out.
- \_\_\_ You look for those quiet and reclusive students, and you are quick with a smile, a wink, or other type of daily acknowledgement.
- \_\_\_ You are able to correct a student in a way that corrects the behavior while maintaining the student's dignity.
- \_\_\_ You mean what you say and say what you mean.
- \_\_\_ You are unrelenting in expecting your students to meet expectations and standards.
- \_\_\_ You are unapologetic for expecting students to meet the expectations that lead to success.
- \_\_\_ You recognize and convey that you are part of a larger group of individuals and institutions who are dedicated to seeing that your students become successful members of society.
- \_\_\_ While fun, you have an intensity and purpose about you. People know what you stand for.
- \_\_\_ You don't give up.

## Structure and Systems

### Classroom Systems

Rate yourself from 1 to 4 on how effective your systems are in each of the following areas.

1	2	3	4
Not Evident	Some Evidence of Development	Evident	Strongly Evident

Be sure and make notes on areas in which you need to improve your systems.

\_\_\_ Entering your Classroom: There is a clear system for how students enter your room. In middle or high school (or elementary departmentalized grades), do they come in ahead of you? Should they wait in the hall for you? Do you want them to stand against the wall? What are your expectations for them as they wait? Talking quietly? Hands to oneself?

\_\_\_ Greeting Students: I am at my door as each student enters. I can see both the hallway and my classroom. I greet every student (hand shake, fist bump, whatever) as students enter.

\_\_\_ Hall Expectations: Students in my hallway are staying to the right, continuing to move, and keeping hands and feet to themselves.

\_\_\_ Do Now or Bell Work: Students have an assignment immediately upon entering the class. Students know and quietly follow the exact procedure for entering the class, getting materials, and beginning bell work.

\_\_\_ Classroom Procedures: Students know and follow the procedure for when attendance is taken. Students know and follow the procedure for what to do when the bell work is completed.

Students read a book or sit quietly. Students are never allowed to sit idle or do activities that are nonproductive.

\_\_\_\_\_ Bell Work Procedure: Students know and follow the procedure for how to turn in bell work.

\_\_\_\_\_ Call to Attention: I have a specific “call to attention” that I consistently use.

\_\_\_\_\_ Student Participation: There is an effective procedure for how students are to speak in class. If a choral response is wanted, there is a system for this. If hands are required, this system is enforced. Students are not allowed to just speak out at random and create a chaotic environment.

\_\_\_\_\_ Passing Out Papers: There is an effective procedure in place for distributing papers.

\_\_\_\_\_ Passing In Papers: There is an effective procedure for passing in papers.

\_\_\_\_\_ Leaving the Seat: There are effective systems in place for when students can leave their seats, when they can sharpen pencils, as well as bathroom or water procedures.

\_\_\_\_\_ Guided Practice: There are clear expectations in place for when we do guided practice. Every student is expected to follow along and write what the teacher writes. The teacher has a deliberate and intentional system of checking to see that students are following along.

\_\_\_\_\_ Independent Practice: There are clear expectations in place for when students do independent practice. Can they talk? Can they get help from each other? If so, how? How do they get help from the teacher?

\_\_\_\_\_ Dismissal: There is a clear and effective system for how we dismiss. The teacher determines this system. In other words, just because the bell rings does not mean that students are dismissed. The teacher is in control.

\_\_\_\_\_ Walking in Line Part One: There are clear expectations for how the students are expected to walk in the hall when in line.

\_\_\_\_\_ Walking in Line Part Two: When students are walking in line in the hall, the teacher is able to view all students to enforce expectations.

\_\_\_\_\_ Walking in Line Part Three: When you pick your students up from some area in the school (lunch, PE, playground, etc.), you have systems for how you get their attention and get them in line to be ready to return to the classroom.

\_\_\_\_\_ Materials: There are clear expectations for how we get materials, how we handle materials, what we can do with materials, and how we return materials.

\_\_\_\_\_ Personal Areas: There are clear expectations for how we police our desk and the area around us before we leave.

These only represent the **major** areas in which systems must be in place. Each individual activity must have its own list of systems.

Here is a checklist for any activity or class project that you do. This also helps in setting up your classroom.

\_\_\_\_\_ What materials will I need?

\_\_\_\_\_ Where will I store the materials for easy access?

\_\_\_\_\_ How will I label the materials?

\_\_\_\_\_ How will I ensure that the materials are maintained and ready for use each time?

\_\_\_\_\_ How will the materials be distributed? Will I choose one student? One student from each table or row? How do I choose these? Ahead of time? Randomly? By merit?

\_\_\_\_\_ What are my expectations for how the materials are distributed? What will I do if one of my helpers does not meet these expectations?

\_\_\_\_\_ What are my expectations for the students when they have received the materials?

\_\_\_\_\_ How will I deal with their very natural inclination to want to “play” with the materials? Will I give them a set time in which they can explore? If so, what is my signal to them that this exploration time is over?

\_\_\_\_\_ What are my exact rules for using the materials? How will I convey these rules?

\_\_\_\_\_ I must be sure that I have reviewed these rules with each student to the point that all students can repeat the rules back to me.

\_\_\_\_\_ What are things that absolutely are unacceptable in using the materials? How do I convey these in a manner that will be effective?

\_\_\_\_\_ If movement is required in the activity, for instance, from one station to the next, what are my expectations for this? How will kids know when to move? Are there times when movement is not acceptable? How will we practice this movement?

\_\_\_\_\_ When I need to speak to the class during this activity, how will I gain the attention of the entire class, especially if the noise level goes up? I will need to practice this with the students ahead of time.

\_\_\_\_\_ If one student or group of students finishes the activity ahead of time, how will I handle this? What do I expect these students to do?

\_\_\_\_\_ What is my signal to the class that time for the activity is over?

\_\_\_\_\_ What are my expectations for each student and each group when I give the signal that time is up? What are the steps that each student should take to ensure proper cleanup? How will we practice this?

\_\_\_\_\_ How will the materials be returned to the proper storage facilities? Will I use the same students who passed them out? Different students?

\_\_\_\_\_ What are my expectations for how all students will return to their table or desk? What exactly do I want them to do upon their return? How will we practice this?

## School-Wide Systems

Rate your school-wide systems from 1 to 4 on how effective your systems are in each of the following areas.

1	2	3	4
Not Evident	Some Evidence of Development	Evident	Strongly Evident

### Crucial School-Wide Systems

\_\_\_\_\_ There is a specific “call to attention” that is used in all large group situations in order to gain the attention of the students. Students know what this is and respect its use. It has been thoroughly taught and used by all. Examples: You say, “Travis Texans”—Students say, “College Bound.” At that point all students are expected to comply and be ready to listen.

\_\_\_\_\_ There is a specific and effective procedure in place for students who arrive to school early. They know where they are supposed to be, and an adult is there to supervise. Expectations for behavior in this setting are established, taught, and maintained.

\_\_\_\_\_ When students enter the building in the mornings, there are specific and effective guidelines in place for where they go, how they walk and comport themselves, and there are adults in place to supervise that this happens. Expectations for behavior in this setting are established, taught, and maintained.

\_\_\_\_\_ There are effective guidelines and systems for how students walk in the hall, whether it is in formal lines or in informal passing periods. Do the students walk on the right? How is this enforced and encouraged? How is it monitored? Are there physical items in place that help encourage this (obstacles placed in middle, tape on floor, etc.)? In elementary school, there are specific guidelines for how students walk in line. There are expectations in place for teachers as to how our lines will look. Expectations for behavior in these settings are established, taught, and maintained.

\_\_\_\_\_ There are established procedures in place for how our students respond to adults when corrected or called upon. These are practiced and reinforced. Expectations for behavior in these settings are established, taught, and maintained.

\_\_\_\_\_ There is an established procedure for how our students enter the classroom. Every teacher is expected to stand at the door so as to be able to see both the hallways and students in the classroom. The teacher greets each student as the student enters the room. Expectations for behavior in this setting are established, taught, and maintained.

\_\_\_\_\_ In middle schools, high schools, and departmentalized grades, there should be a school-wide system for students being in the halls during actual class times—do they have badges? Individual planners signed or initialed by teachers? Passes? How do we know they are legitimately allowed to be in the hall during this time? The same can be true for elementary schools.

\_\_\_\_\_ There are established procedures in place for how the adults of the school will kindly, lovingly, and insistently confront students in violation of school rules, including dress code, behavior, etc. Expectations for behavior in this setting are established, taught, and maintained.

\_\_\_\_\_ There are established procedures for how our students treat guests in our building, including substitutes. These procedures are practiced regularly. Expectations for behavior in this setting are established, taught, and maintained.

\_\_\_\_\_ There are established procedures for how our students behave in the cafeteria, in assemblies, at games and other events, on bus rides, and at other locations. Expectations for behavior in these settings are established, taught, and maintained.

\_\_\_\_\_ There are procedures in place for how our students exit the building at the end of the day. Expectations for behavior in these settings are established, taught, and maintained.

\_\_\_\_\_ There are procedures in place for our students once school is out. There are adults in place to supervise students after school.

\_\_\_\_\_ There are established management systems in place that all adults use when managing student behavior. These systems are in place for substitutes, guest teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, cafeteria workers, etc. All adults are thoroughly trained. Students know these systems as well.

\_\_\_\_\_ There are established systems in place to teach our new students (6<sup>th</sup> graders, 9<sup>th</sup> graders, new students) all about our systems. For our incoming classes of kids new to our school, we have planned activities before school begins during which we teach the systems of our school.

\_\_\_\_\_ Some schools decide to adopt a consistent school-wide management plan for use throughout the school and in the classrooms.

\_\_\_\_\_ There are procedures in place for how our students line up to return from breakfast, lunch, and other events.

\_\_\_\_\_ There are procedures in place for what we have students do while waiting to see the principal or assistant principal. Students should have access to books, newspapers, or magazines to read rather than just sitting with nothing to do. If needed, have packets of math problems to work. Do not allow them to be idle.

\_\_\_\_\_ There are agreements and procedures in place for “trivial” things: Do we allow hats in the building? Chewing gum? Etc.

Don't be the slow llama!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Doug". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent loop on the 'D' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'g'.



**Your Playbook**  
**Don't be the slow llama!**



They will do whatever you expect them to do if you love them and treat them with dignity and respect.

You must be NICE.  
NICE changes lives.  
NICE is not soft.  
NICE makes you strong.

It is your responsibility to create structure in your classroom.

**Call to Attention**

“NEU, Eyes on You”

“I need to see your PLAN” (This goes well with our language of post-secondary success: What is your plan?)

**PLAN**

**P-Posture**

You should be sitting up.  
Your body should be turned so that you are facing the speaker.

**L-Look and Listen**

You should be looking at the speaker.  
You should be listening to the speaker.

**A-All things are put away.**

All unnecessary things are out of your hands.  
All distractions are put aside.

**N-No Talking-No Excuses**

**100%**

It is your responsibility to ensure that 100% of the students comply with any direct command that you give.

**What if they don't?**

- Assume the best.
- Face the student.
- Only tell the student what you need for the student to do.
- Say, “Thank you.”

**The Superstar Factor**  
**How do you acquire it?**

- By having a system for everything and maintaining the systems throughout the year
- By being lovingly and kindly insistent
- By being consistent and predictable
- By believing in yourself and your cause-courage and confidence

**How Do You Lose the Superstar Factor?**

- When you discipline with emotion
- When you yell (What are you going to do tomorrow-yell louder? Also, remember to yell the truth.)
- When you are angry and show it
- When you use sarcasm that hurts (Don't let anyone change who you are. You can remain kind, sweet, and decent, yet still control your class.)
- When you give up your happiness (You are powerful when you are able to stay happy no matter what!)

- When you talk so much you sound like Barney Fife (Be Clint Eastwood, albeit a less violent version.)
- When you argue with students and pick up the rope

#### **Never Punish the Group**

Use the wiggle  
"Come over here"

#### **Automatic Removals for:**

- Fighting
- Saying something obviously inappropriate (slur, harassment, etc.)
- Overt threat
- Throwing something with intent

#### **Using your Classroom Discipline System**

- Remember: Fast llamas rarely have to use cards, clips, or clothespins because they have great systems, are kindly and lovingly insistent, and see everything. They also have cool and fun rewards in place for doing the right things, and they are just generally really cool folks!
- If you need to give a card, simply tell the student what you need him/her to do. No other words. Walk away.
- When using your classroom discipline system, before you can remove a student, you must use the begging steps.
- Whenever you discipline a student, remember that you must be intentional

about mending the relationship you have with that student.

#### **Begging Steps: Your Script**

(Before a Removal)

- "Billy, Billy, Billy, I love having you in my class. We just have 20 minutes left. I don't want to send you out. I will. But there is no need to. I just need you to sit here and be cool. Can I get you do that?"

#### **Steps to Excellent Management**

- Structure and Consistent Systems (You need a plan and procedure for EVERYTHING! It's your room. You have a plan and an expectation for how students enter the room, how they sit, how they talk, how they sharpen their pencils, EVERYTHING! Teach them exactly what you want, and expect it! Haphazard llamas are dead llamas.)
- Predictability-100% (Say what you mean and mean what you say!)
- Relationships!!!!!!!
- The "It" Factor
- The Constant and Unrelenting Language of Hope

#### **No Arguing: Your Script**

Stand sideways and look away.

"Sh.....Sh.....Sh.....My principal does not let me argue with students."



# Llama Training Worksheet

Call to Attention

What Call to Attention will you use?

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What are your exact expectations for students when you use your Call to Attention?

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