

HELPING TEACHERS LEARN THE SECRETS OF SUCCESSFUL CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Principals and other administrators play an important role in establishing effective discipline throughout the school. They lead in creating a vision for the organization, develop a philosophy of positive discipline, and establish an overall orderly environment through reasoned rules and policies. It's up to the leaders of the school to support teachers and model respectful human interaction. They provide positive reinforcement, as well as punishment, and intervene in a supportive and corrective manner when needed.

Nevertheless, positive discipline isn't made in the principal's office. Good teachers make it happen in the classroom, in the hallways, on the playground, and in every other corner of the school every day of the year.

A principal doesn't have to be the best disciplinarian in the school, but does need to know what good discipline looks like and what it takes to achieve it. The most powerful and enduring thing you can do to foster positive discipline in your school is to coach teachers in effective classroom management.

Where teachers are strong, effective principals support them and help them get even better. Where teachers are weak, principals have to teach them the secrets of successful classroom management and overall discipline.

It begins by helping all teachers, beginners and veterans alike, to understand the real-world dynamics of today's classroom. Controlling classroom behavior isn't the same as it was a few years ago.

IT'S A DIFFERENT CLASSROOM TODAY

Everyone who works in or around schools knows that it's a dramatically different classroom today. Kids are different. The problems are different. What teachers can and can't do are different. What works and doesn't work are different. Classroom management is a tougher job than it used to be. (It's not impossible, however, because good teachers are doing it every day with the support of savvy leaders who know how to help.)

Taking charge of an elementary or secondary classroom today means understanding the many differences that have occurred in the last ten years:

- Class sizes are generally larger and classrooms more crowded.
- More handicapped students (some with near life-threatening impairments) are now mainstreamed into the regular classroom.
- Classroom populations are more diverse and racially mixed.
- Noncompliance is common. (Discipline guru Lee Cantor reports that, "Tough kids comply to 40% or less of teacher requests.")
- There is much more verbal abuse and use of profanity and obscenities by students at all ages (even kindergarten).
- Kids have more problems at home.
- Students are more streetwise.
- Younger students are involved in drugs, sex, and gangs.
- More kids are quick to resort to violence to make a point or settle an argument.
- Students and parents are more ready to resist and challenge authority (including all school personnel).
- Weapons are much more likely to be present in the classroom.

- More and more students are unafraid and unmoved by reprimands and other traditional discipline techniques.
- Parental support and involvement have diminished in many areas.
- There are more limits (rules, regulations, case law) on teacher behavior and authority.
- There are a greater number of lawsuits directed at teachers and school administrators.
- There are more mandates and expectations imposed on the classroom. A society under siege wants schools to fix our kids and make everything OX again."

Although many of these changes may influence classroom behavior negatively, the basic elements of a good classroom haven't changed:

1. All students can still learn.
2. Most children need and want some limits and structure.
3. Students respond to honesty and respect.
4. All children thrive on success and recognition.
5. Kids still want a teacher, not another "pal."

Once teachers understand the new nature of the classroom, they can adjust their professional strategies accordingly. Obviously, some of the old techniques, such as writing "I won't" 100 times, standing in the hall, rapping knuckles or corporal punishment, don't usually work very well today. Even out-of-school suspension is now suspect because many students enjoy the time off too much.

Classroom control can't be established solely through punishment anymore – if it ever could be. Today's teachers have to adopt some fresh approaches to classroom management.

DEFINING A NEW ROLE FOR TEACHERS IN DISCIPLINE

Principals must help all teachers realize that: (1) there's no automatic respect any more; (2) classrooms can't be run by teacher edict alone; and (3) adults "can't take scalps" in the classroom without serious repercussions.

Successful teachers earn their wings every day by demonstrating confidence, competence, and caring. The tools of effective classroom management in the nineties include:

- Empowering;
- Coaxing;
- Influencing;
- Modeling;
- Facilitating;
- Mentoring;
- Resourcing;
- Negotiating.

More than being an enforcer or punisher, teachers today get better results by serving as coach, cheerleader, and champion of excellence. A major portion of maintaining discipline has become boosting student self-esteem.

The two most significant changes in the role of teacher as disciplinarian in recent years have been the following:

1. Teachers are now sometimes the first and/or only authority figure in a child's life who espouses

values of civility, mutual respect, and cooperation. (You can't count on parents teaching manners or social skills at home anymore.)

2. Teachers must be part of a schoolwide discipline team and help out with discipline outside their own classrooms. Effective school staffs operate as a unit, not as a "star system" with each individual striving to have the best classroom and not worrying about anything else. It takes the entire staff working together to create a totally effective learning environment.

To make it in the classroom today, teachers must be risk-takers and moldbreakers. It's not enough to merely enforce the old rules. Good teachers must be willing to bend the rules when necessary, and even throw out the old rules if that's what it takes to save a child from the abyss of the streets. Principals need to teach teachers that rules are tools, not scriptures.

MODERNIZING YOUR CLASSROOM RULES

Every group needs some written or unwritten rules in order to function and achieve desirable goals. Classrooms are no different, but some teachers lose themselves and their students in a labyrinth of rules for all occasions.

As principal, you have a responsibility to help teachers develop meaningful and manageable rules to ensure successful learning.

Classroom rules don't have to be identical for all teachers. Students can readily adapt to various sets of rules if each makes sense for the situation involved. Effective rules should be built around the types of activities that will take place in the class and around the teacher's unique style of instruction (for instance, some teachers thrive on ambiguity and some do not).

Obviously, rules have to be in tune with the times. Look at some of the dress codes of the 50s to see how ridiculously outdated rules can become. When kids are killing each other in the streets, rules against gum-chewing seem, somehow, less compelling and important.

The best classrooms and schools often have the fewest rules. Too many rules can be perceived as overkill by students and can become a source of conflict, rather than guidelines for good behavior. If the Christian religion can survive on ten commandments and one golden rule, it shouldn't take much more to run a classroom.

As a case in point, staff members of the Cedar Manor Intermediate Center in St. Louis Park, MN, recently reduced a list of over 40 rules and specific behaviors to three basic expectations for all students. The staff now uses the acronym T.U.F. ("Be TUF") to remind students and parents of the three essential school rules:

1. Treat each other with respect;
2. Use school supplies and equipment appropriately;
3. Follow adult directions.

The purpose of all school rules is simply to define the borderline between what's OK and what's not in the classroom. To be effective, rules for students should be simple, specific, worded clearly and stated in positive terms whenever possible. Avoid too many "don'ts." Other characteristics of successful classroom rules include:

- Rules should be brief.
- Rules should be stated in behavioral terms.
- Rules should deal with observable behavior.
- Rules should be measurable.
- Rules must be enforceable.

The difference between workable rules and waste-of-time rules are illustrated below:

Examples

| Effective Rules | Ineffective Rules |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Give each assignment your best effort. | 1. Be good. |
| 2. Work quietly when directed. | 2. Don't bother others. |
| 3. Take care of shared equipment. | 3. Practice good citizenship. |
| 4. No hitting. | 4. Behave appropriately at all times. |

Whatever the rules are, they work best if students have a voice in forming them, if all students are fully informed of the rules, and teachers have good reasons for implementing them. Teachers need to present classroom rules with conviction. If there's any hint of questioning, pleading, or room for negotiating, the rules won't be taken seriously.

Of course, the best rules in the world won't work if class sessions are boring and lessons irrelevant.

WHAT TEACHING STRATEGIES WORK BEST WITH TODAY'S STUDENTS

The key to successful classroom management is good teaching, not rules.

Boredom, failure, and frustration teach kids to be troublemakers. In a classroom where learning is fast-paced, relevant, success-oriented, and makes sense to each student, behavior management becomes a secondary concern. When the classroom is a place of learning-excitement, students don't have time to get everything done that they want to do, including getting into trouble.

Obviously, changing times and changing learners call for different teaching techniques and strategies. Teaching can't be a static profession. Teachers who plan to teach tomorrow the way they teach today should have quit teaching yesterday.

It's part of your job as school leader to help teachers stay up-to-date in the classroom, to learn how the best teachers are teaching today, and to understand what works and what doesn't with contemporary students.

Effective teaching today has to be rooted in a curriculum where all students succeed. The best curriculum in the world however, won't come alive for learners if teachers don't practice effective instructional strategies.

Certain once-popular techniques (for example, large group lectures, rote memorization exercises and fill-in-the-blank worksheets) are now viewed as turn-offs for kids. Conversely, most classroom experts agree that the following strategies and lesson designs work best with today's students:

- Hands-on learning activities;
- Lessons that accommodate a variety of learning styles (audio learners, visual learners, kinesthetic learners, and so forth);
- Cooperative learning projects;
- Open-ended assignments;
- Seminar situations (where students can give their own answers, instead of just the teacher's answer);
- Lessons tied to student causes (for instance, save the environment);

- Assignments requiring the use of computers and other technologies;
- Activity-oriented lessons;
- Self-paced, continuous progress lessons;
- Self-directed study;
- Interdisciplinary lessons;
- Individualized/personalized lessons;
- Assignments broken down into manageable pieces;
- Lessons involving student choices;
- Learning experiences organized around student learning centers;
- Pupil-centered lessons derived from student questions and built on student interests;
- Alternating active and passive activities;
- Field experiences involving out-of-classroom activities;
- Learning experiences provided by real-world role models;
- Extensions of the curriculum through minicourses;
- Spur-of-the-moment lessons (for instance, nature walks) that capitalize on unanticipated "teachable moments;"
- Opportunities to learn by teaching;
- Lessons that are unpredictable;
- Independent study projects;
- Lessons that help others (for example, projects for nursing homes);
- Real world assignments dealing with everyday student problems (family relationships, neighborhood violence, and so on);

Some teachers become so preoccupied with classroom management that they have little time left for teaching. They have it backwards. Good teaching comes first. Good behavior follows. The better the curriculum and instruction, the better the discipline. If you help your teachers expand and modernize their repertoire of teaching techniques", you help them improve classroom control at the same -time.

Of course, it takes more than up-to-date curriculum, lesson designs, and teaching techniques to solve all discipline problems. There are lots of other classroom management methods your teachers need to know about.

75 DISCIPLINE TIPS FOR TODAY'S TEACHERS

Part of leadership is helping colleagues and co-workers learn how to do their jobs better and easier. This is the principal's role in classroom discipline.

The teacher is the school's first line of defense against behavior problems. If discipline is to succeed, it will succeed because of what teachers are and what they do in and out of the classroom. The principal serves as coach, trainer, and backup.

There is no point to public education unless teachers can handle discipline and create an orderly learning environment. The problem is that what works in teaching and classroom management looks easy, but is deceptively difficult.

The elements of good classroom control appear obvious, but the energy and expertise required to make them reality extract the utmost from any professional. Teaching is a tough, draining business. The goal is to achieve and maintain control without realizing exhaustion. The principal has to help.

The following are 75 specific class room-tested suggestions which can assist your teachers in mastering effective classroom management:

1. Structure classroom space so you can move around and get close to every student. (Some teachers like a U-shape arrangement.) Be everywhere in the classroom.
2. When a problem occurs, have students call their parents in your presence to report the trouble, rather than you doing all the calling.
3. Always have a plan!
4. Provide alternative or limited recesses for students with chronic behavior problems.
5. Encourage students to ask directly for extra attention when they need it, rather than seeking attention through misbehavior.
6. Minimize "downtime" in the classroom. Have something worthwhile going on all the time.
7. Cultivate (and practice) an appropriate teacher "look" (glare or stare) to communicate nonverbally with unruly students in the classroom.
8. Provide acting-up and acting-out students with a "time out" period in another teacher's classroom (with prior arrangement, of course).
9. Don't employ consequences that are unduly inconvenient or punish the teacher as much or more than the student.
10. Meet students at the door every time the group enters the classroom.
11. Don't overlabel or overpunish kids.
12. Reduce or modify assignments when necessary so that all kids can succeed.
13. Tape or videotape student misbehavior to share with parents and/or administrators.
14. Remember that students frequently choose misbehavior to achieve one or more of four basic goals:
 - a.) attention-getting;
 - b.) power;
 - c.) revenge;
 - d.) avoidance of failure.
15. Don't nag. After two requests, take action.
16. Recognize/acknowledge your own biases and prejudices. Be honest with kids.
17. Have a one-on-one meeting with difficult students before the school year starts.
18. Give students a choice of punishments/consequences.
19. Make the classroom look like a learning place.
20. Don't take obscenities too personally.
21. Set routines. They work wonders.
22. Offer rewards as inducements for good behavior. At South Mountain Middle School (Allentown, PA), staff members give students tickets for a monthly "Mountaineer Lottery" prize drawing as rewards for displaying good citizenship, doing a good job, and so forth.
23. Try not to "lose it," no matter how annoying a student becomes. Rage and reason aren't compatible. Whenever students anger you, they beat you at the discipline game.
24. Make secondary classrooms as large and lively as elementary rooms. There's no reason for classrooms to get smaller and more boring as students get older.
25. Use a Behavior Improvement Form to get student's attention and to record incidents (see example).

(Example)
Behavior Improvement Form

Date: _____ Time: _____

Student's Name: _____

Teacher's Name: _____ Room #: _____

Staff description of problem/situation:

Student description of what happened:

What could you (the student) have done differently?

I understand that if the problem happens again, my parents may have to attend a school meeting.

(Student signature-Date)

(Staff signature-Date)

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26. Let students know that you won't go away and you won't give up on them or yourself.
 27. When an issue is closed, move on. Don't hold grudges.
 28. Be on time every time.
 29. Remember that short, direct instructions or commands work best.
 30. Don't believe everything kids tell you about what other teachers do or allow in the classroom. Don't get conned.
 31. Get new students off to a positive start by providing a New Kid Kit (see example).
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New Kid Kit Items

Welcome banner
Class picture
Class roster
Class rules
Daily schedule

School map
Points of school interest.
School pencil
Free lunch coupon

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32. Know when to back off.
 33. If students talk excessively, detain them after the period long enough to interfere with their socializing time between classes. Most students will soon get the message.
 34. Use school service projects (cleaning up, painting defaced areas, and so forth) as punishments sometimes.
 35. Design a group lesson (discussion) around an individual problem (for instance, Why do some people argue all the time?).
 36. Set aside an Energy Outlet Space in the classroom where "pumped up" students can scribble, use a punching bag, and so on to release anger and emotion.

37. Establish authority and credibility by always keeping your promises and doing what you say you will do.
38. Stop, unexpectedly, by a troublesome student's home.
39. Have your class pick a secret code word (something only the class knows) to signal for cooperation.
40. Make use of eye contact, voice control, body language, and distance management to maintain classroom control.
41. Make criticism of students specific, direct, polite, clear, and immediate.
42. Match consequences to offenses by using progressive discipline as follows:

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|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| a. reprimand; | d. detention; |
| b. parent contact; | e. referral to principal; |
| c. revoke privileges; | f. suspension/expulsion. |
43. Don't tempt students (for example, leave the room during a test).
44. Get everyone's attention before starting any lesson. (It's worth the wait.)
45. Show that you like your job and your students.
46. Don't be too hard on parents. They send you the best they have and most try to do the best they can in raising- their children.
47. Remind yourself that the most unpleasant student you have may be the one who needs you most.
48. Allow some constructive noise in the classroom. It can actually help settle down some restless students.
 "Good noise means learning. Bad noise means the children are out of control. No noise means adults don't understand the nature of children." -Dr. Harlen Hansen, University of Minnesota
49. Give fidgety kids hands-on activities.
50. Understand the cliques in your classroom and how they work for and against different students.
51. Use a chart to help log and analyze patterns of classroom behavior (see example).
52. Don't be afraid to hug or touch a student who needs it Oust 4 careful how and where you touch students).
53. Establish a student grievance procedure in your classroom.
54. Hold periodic "Sound Off" sessions so students can vent frustration and identify problems.
55. Anticipate that students will search out and try to exploit your weaknesses.
56. Use a variety of positive reinforcers such as:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| a. being first in line; | c. free computer time; |
| b. being class captain for the day; | d. time to sit with a friend. |
57. Don't be a historian. Don't prejudge students on the basis of family history or past problems with older siblings.
58. Retain positive expectations for all students. School success is built on a self-fulfilling process.
59. Subgroup in such a way that all pupils can grow in self-esteem. Don't promote or perpetuate stigmas.
60. Use the power of goal setting (individual and class goals) to promote positive discipline.
61. Reduce the number of excuses by limiting occasions when pupils may leave the classroom. This promotes consistency and eliminates arguments over rule-interpretation.
62. Learn as much as you can about your students' background and lives out side of school. The more you know the more you may be able to help.

63. Teach students to use visualizing/imaging techniques (for example, picture yourself behaving well and succeeding in the classroom).
64. Keep track of your interventions in behalf of difficult students:
 - a. Record your intervention strategies;
 - b. Document referrals;
 - c. Keep a copy of all communications with parents.
65. Don't exhaust your energies fighting "ghosts" ("What ifs").
66. In case of a student tantrum, splash a little cold water in the student's face to get his/her attention.
67. Reserve a "limbo seat" in the classroom for any student who can't function or focus in his/her regular seat for the day.
68. Where necessary, reintroduce a mark or grade for behavior or effort on the student report card (see example). Parents and students must know that accountability counts.
69. If a lesson isn't working, do something else quickly. (Always have a backup lesson plan in reserve.)
70. Remember that one-on-one encounters are always better than group lectures or punishments.
71. If you make a mistake (for instance, accuse the wrong student), promptly admit it and apologize.
72. Use E-mail or other computerized networks to exchange discipline ideas and techniques with other teachers throughout your district and across the country.
73. Never be afraid to call for help when you need it.
74. Don't give up and refuse to become cynical.
75. Lighten up! Keep your sense of humor.

If every teacher would follow every one of the tips above every day, any school could become it model of positive discipline in a remarkably short period of time.

Like all leaders, school administrators must work through other people. This is especially true in maintaining classroom control. Without effective teachers, there is no effective discipline in any school.

No teacher wants to have poor discipline; but many sincere teachers, struggle with classroom management because they don't know how or what to do to control today's students. Whatever you can do to bring your teachers up-to-date regarding the characteristics of students, effective classroom rules, workable teaching strategies, and modern classroom management techniques advances positive discipline throughout the entire school.

In addition to working with individual teachers, many successful school leaders use a variety of group approaches to upgrading their staff's discipline skills such as:

- Organizing small group discussion and study groups;
- Developing building level staff development programs (see Chapter 12);
- Encouraging peer teacher observation, exchange, and visitation programs;
- Enrolling a number of teachers in a Lee Cantor discipline course;
- Use role playing to simulate common discipline situations;
- Forming a staff committee to develop a new job description for the modern teacher.

One teacher whose class is out of control can infect an entire school. Good principals exercise every means possible to help teachers learn the secrets of successful classroom management. When all such efforts fail, there should be a subtle revolving door to remove misfits or incompetents from the profession. Student learning and discipline are more important than teacher job security

