Schools Do Make a Difference: Discipline with Dignity

Discipline problems have existed for as long as schools. Any time a group of 25 to 30 people are in close proximity to each other for six hours every day, 10 months of the year, a variety of interpersonal conflicts occur. Discipline with Dignity offers a three pronged approach to taking charge of such conflict.

- **Prevention**-what can be done to prevent problems from occurring?
- **Action**-what can be done when misbehavior occurs to solve the problem without making it worse?
- **Resolution**-what can be done for students who are chronically challenging?

Foundation of the Program

If we allow ourselves to become helpless in the face of the many causes of misbehavior, it becomes very difficult to teach. Discipline with Dignity is designed to help the teacher work effectively with children despite these numerous problems. The 12-step plan that follows is a guide for teachers. Each step represents specific things educators can do to ensure the success of their students, help prevent discipline problems, and intervene when disruption does occur.

1. **Let students know what you need, and ask them what they need from you.** Most teachers only do the first part. It is easy for us to tell them what we need. However, the best teachers also ask students what they need.

2. **Differentiate instruction based on each student's strengths.** If a student is acting out, assume that this is his defense against feeling like a failure because he cannot, or believes he cannot, handle the material. If you are unable or unwilling to adapt your teaching style to lower or higher academic levels based on the student's needs, then you should not be surprised when that student is disruptive.

Just as expectations that are too high lead to frustration, those that are too low lead to boredom and the feeling that success is cheap and not worthy of effort. When we make learning too easy, students find little value in it and little pride in their achievements. It is important to increase the challenge without increasing the tedium.

3. **Listen to what students are thinking and feeling.** There is probably no skill more important than active listening to defuse potentially troublesome situations. For example, Denise says, "Mrs. Lewis, this lesson is soooo boring. I hate it." A "button-pushed" response would be "Well, maybe if you paid more attention and did some work once in a while, you'd feel differently." A better response that defuses might be "I hear you, and I'm sorry you feel that way. Why not give me a suggestion or two that will help make it better? Please see me right after class.

4. **Use humor.** We are not paid to be comedians, nor should we be expected to come to class prepared with an arsenal of jokes. But many frustrating situations can be lightened by learning how to poke fun at ourselves and by avoiding defensiveness.

Make sure students are not the butt of your jokes. Bill, a 7th grade student obviously intent on hooking Ms. Johnson into a power struggle, announced one day in class as he looked squarely at his teacher, "You are a mother fu**er! Ms. Johnson responded by looking at the student and saying, "Wow, at least you got it half right!" The class laughed, and a tense moment had abated. It is important to note that it is almost always better to give a consequence or otherwise more fully explore what to do about highly inappropriate behavior at a time that does not take away further from classroom instruction.

5. Vary your style of presentation. Older children have a maximum attention span of 15 minutes and younger children 10 minutes for any one style of presentation. If we lecture for 15 minutes, it helps to have a discussion for the next interval. If we have a large-group discussion, switch to small groups. Continually using the same approach will create inattentiveness and restlessness, which may lead to disruption.

6. **Offer choices.** Teachers and administrators need to constantly be looking for places during the school day to allow children to make decisions. For example: "You can do your assignment now or during recess." "You can borrow a pencil or buy one from me." "When people call you names you can tell them you don't like it, walk away, or ask me for a suggestion." Allowing students to make decisions and then live with the outcome of the decision goes a long way in teaching responsibility.

7. **Refuse to accept excuses and stop making them yourself.** When students are allowed to explain away their misbehavior, you place yourself in the uncomfortable position of being judge and jury. Students with good excuses learn that a good excuse will avoid trouble. Students with bad excuses learn that they need some practice in improving their excuse making. Either way, accepting excuses teaches students how to be irresponsible. If you consider certain excuses legitimate, try to include them as part of the rules so they are clearly stated before an incident occurs. It can be helpful to provide

students with an explanation as to why certain excuses are considered legitimate while others are not.

Teachers should hold themselves accountable, too. For example, if the rule is that all students will turn in their homework within 24 hours, promise your students feedback within 24 hours or an automatic "A" if you are late. Holding ourselves accountable keeps us from making the same kinds of excuses we hate hearing from our students.

8. **Legitimize misbehavior that you cannot stop.** If you have done everything possible to stop a certain behavior and it continues, think of creative ways to legitimize it. If there are daily paper airplane flights buzzing past your ear, consider spending five minutes a day having paper airplane contests. If abusive language persists, ask the student to publicly define the offensive words to ensure understanding. If your students like to complain about one thing or another, have a gripe session or a suggestion box in which students are encouraged to deposit their complaints. If your school has chronic disruptions in study hall, then offer a game-filled, nonacademic study hall in addition to one that is quiet for those who really want to study. When misbehavior is legitimized within boundaries, the fun of acting out often fizzles.

9. **Use a variety of ways to communicate with children.** In addition to the spoken word, caring gestures and nonverbal messages can be effective. Some students do better when they get feedback on a sticky note, in an e-mailed note, or on a cell phone message. Since the original publication of this book, there have been numerous reports of inappropriate relationships between teachers and students. Although touch can be a very effective way to communicate caring, we understand that many educators have become wary. Certainly, we need to be respectful of physical boundaries, and we must never touch a student when seduction or abuse is even a remote possibility. Although there is no substitute for good judgment, a pat on the back, touch on the shoulder, handshake, or high five can help form bonds with many tough-to-reach children.

10. **Be responsible for yourself, and allow children to take responsibility for themselves.** Teachers are responsible for coming to class on time, presenting their subject in as interesting a fashion as they can, returning papers with meaningful comments in a reasonable period of time, providing help for students having difficulty, and ending class on time. Students are responsible for bringing their books, pencils, and completed homework.

11. **Realize that you will not reach every child, but act as if you can.** Some students, after all is said and done, must be allowed to choose failure. However, there is a difference between reality (we won't reach everyone) and belief (we work each day as if today will be the breakthrough). It is important that we access and sustain optimism so that we can continually persist in making it difficult for our students to fail our class or themselves.

12. **Start fresh every day.** What happened yesterday is finished. Today is a new day. Act accordingly. Stop listening to negativity from other faculty members. Instead, make a point to have a positive attitude every time you step foot in the school building.

The Discipline Basics

Every discipline program has in one form or another the following elements: rules, values or principles (the word *principles is* considered synonymous with *values),* enforcement or intervention procedures, and an implicit or explicit evaluation process. Each process also provides students with incidental or secondary learning about nurturing self-worth, handling responsibility, solving problems, controlling their lives, and affecting the consequences of their behavior. Figure 2.1 is a generic model of discipline that illustrates how most behavior management models function.

Figure 2.1
Generic Model of Discipline

Principles: What general attitude and behavioral guidelines teachers model and students are encouraged to learn in class

Rules: What is enforced every time it is broken

Enforcement or intervention: What happens when a rule is broken

Student (incidental) Learning: What the student learns as a result of the enforcement/intervention

Evaluation: How well the discipline program is working

Rules

Rules are what we are willing to enforce. They are central to all discipline programs, but they are often overemphasized. Consequences and values are more influential for achieving long-term behavior change. Rules maintain order for the present. Rules work best when they are behavioral and written in black-and white terms. Students and teachers should easily see whether a specific behavior violates a rule. Airlines demonstrate the perfect balance between rules and values. Before every flight, the attendant typically says something like, "The number one value of this airline is safety." Then the rules are stated in exact behavioral terms, all related to safety.

- Fasten your seatbelts.
- Make sure your tray table and seatback are in the upright and locked position.
- All electronic devices must be turned off.

Notice the rules are behavioral; there is no discussion, negotiation, or cries of "We're close enough"; "Just wait, I'm right in the middle of a song"; "My father says I do not have to"; "I do not feel like it."
Here are some examples of classroom rules:

- Before speaking, raise your hand.
- Bring your books and materials to class.
- Be in your seat when the bell rings.
- Touch other students' belongings only with their permission.

When rules are vague or replaced by values (e.g., be respectful; be courteous; be kind), students have difficulty making the connection between their behavior and the consequences. *Rules* need to define *what to do and how to do it. Values* define *why we do it this way.* For example, safety and respect are values that mean many things. It is important that students know "Hands and feet must be kept to ourselves. . ." (rule), ". . . because we must respect the safety of others" (value). Rules guided by values are necessary for effective discipline.

Values or Principles

Because values cannot be enforced, they are often overlooked or ignored by packaged discipline programs. If the teacher attempts to enforce values or principles, students often blame the teacher or focus on the part of the gray area that proves them right. Can you imagine a law that demanded "Be respectful of other drivers to think clearly and critically, and a feeling of helplessness that is manifested by withdrawal, aggressiveness, or power struggles? Obedience without responsibility, even when it "works," is not philosophically, psychologically, or sociologically defensible. However, obedience is necessary when safety is involved. Figure 2.2 shows that the obedience model uses punishment as its main type of intervention. William Chandler Bagley knew in 1907 that punishments were to be reserved for those cases when nothing else seemed to work.

> It must be remembered that not every individual needs to be subjected to a penalty in order to ensure the inhibition of his social impulses. The infliction of a penalty is always the last resort, reserved for those cases in which all other means fail. The individual must, if necessary, be sacrificed to the mass; but the sacrifice must not be made unless the necessity is clear, nor in any greater degree than necessity demands. (p. 105)

Our view is that the highest virtue of education is to teach students to be self-responsible and fully functional. In all but extreme cases, obedience contradicts these goals. This does not mean we do not believe in consequences. We do. And children need them. But there is a huge difference between punishments and consequences. Both will be specifically addressed in Chapter 5. Another problem common to many obedience models is the limited opportunity for teacher discretion. Some programs offer only one alternative intervention for teachers when a rule is violated. Others have a lock-step progression approach that requires a specific intervention for violation 1, another for violation 2, and so forth. Either system removes teacher judgment from the process. This cripples the teacher's ability to examine rule violations in their broader context and demeans the teacher's capacity to be a decision maker. Faced with what may be an untenable either/or choice or no choice at all, teachers often look the other way. This response is the only way they can factor

in special circumstances that do not fit "the program." Over time, this approach creates numerous inconsistencies that ultimately doom the program. With such "teacher proof" programs, faculty members either subvert or redesign the system-and almost always resent using it.

THE RESPONSIBILITY MODEL

Responsibility models foster critical thinking and shared decision making. Children feel affirmed even though they do not always get their way. They understand that they have some control of the events that happen to them, and they get a chance to learn that teachers also have rights, power, knowledge, and leadership.

Teachers who subscribe to the responsibility model follow the adage "If you want true power, you must give some of it away." Students cannot learn responsibility without choices and without an opportunity to make mistakes and learn from them.

The responsibility model (Figure 2.3) is far more consistent with the current classroom emphasis on critical thinking and decision making. Consider what must students learn when the curriculum says, "Make decisions based on critical thinking skills," while they are simultaneously told, "Do what I say, or else your color card is red!"

Evaluation of a Discipline Plan

Determining the effectiveness of a discipline plan is not simple. Counting the number of referrals or the frequency of misbehavior can be helpful, but such procedures often give a one-dimensional snapshot of a three-dimensional problem. A discipline plan that reduces incidents of misbehavior can be a disaster if it also reduces student motivation and learning. When evaluating the effectiveness of any discipline plan, teachers and administrators must

include the following questions with any numerical data relating to incidents of misbehavior:

Figure 2.3

Responsibility Model of Discipline

Main goal: To teach students to make responsible choices.

Principle: To learn from the outcomes of decisions.

Consequences:

Internal locus

Done by the student

Logical or natural

Examples

• Developing a plan describing how you will behave without breaking the rule when you are in a similar situation

• Practicing appropriate behavior in a private meeting with the teacher

Student learns . . .

• I cause my own outcomes.

• I have more than one alternative behavior in any situation.

• I have the power to choose the best alternative.

1. What happens to the student 10 minutes after an intervention? Is she angry? Is she back to the lesson? Do you see signs of passive-aggressive behavior? Is she fully participating?

2. What happens to the student the next day?

3. What happens to the student a week later?

4. What happens to student motivation? Does energy for learning increase or decrease? (Good discipline plans enhance student motivation; they do not erode it.)

5. What happens to the student's dignity? Is it attacked? Is it maintained? Is it enhanced?

6. How is the student's locus of control affected? An internal orientation, when appropriate, leads to responsibility (e.g., "What I did wasn't right, and I feel bad about it"). An external

orientation leads to blame and helplessness (e.g., "It wasn't me. Everyone does it, but you always pick on me. She did it first").

7. What happens to the teacher-student relationship? Is communication improved? Is it weakened? Did the teacher win the battle (get the student to do what the teacher wanted) but lose the war (destroy their delicate relationship)?

8. Does the student learn about his behavior in a way that provides increased choices, or does the student learn that he has no choice at all? Choices lead to responsibility.

In Conclusion

Effective discipline does not come from the quick mastery of techniques or the implementation of a packaged method. Effective discipline comes from the heart and soul of the teacher. It comes from the belief that teaching students to take responsibility for their behavior is as much the "job" of the teacher as teaching history or math and more important than simply enforcing rules. It comes from the belief that most students do the best they can, many in what they feel is an adverse environment. It comes from the belief that all students need hope. It comes from the positive energy of the teacher. Only within the framework of the teacher's internal strength and the development of a hopeful and caring classroom environment can a discipline plan be effective. Good discipline requires proper attitudes that guide effective strategies.

Prevention, Action and Resolution

Discipline with Dignity focuses on three key dimensions of classroom management that integrate many theoretical approaches developed by educators and psychologists who value maintaining student dignity and teaching responsible behavior.

• **Prevention:** what the teacher can do to actively prevent discipline problems and to deal with the stress associated with classroom disruptions.

• **Action:** what actions the teacher can take when, in spite of all the steps taken to prevent discipline problems, they still occur. The focus is on stopping misbehavior quickly in a dignified way while keeping the misbehaving student in class so that the teacher can get back to teaching. The goal is to keep minor problems from escalating into major ones. By stopping a problem in a dignified way, the teacher is also helping ensure that it is less likely to recur.

• **Resolution:** what the teacher can do to resolve issues with the chronic rule breaker and the more extreme, "out-of-control" student or at least to diminish the intense negative impact such students have on the teaching-learning process.

The Prevention Dimension

The first goal of the three-dimensional approach (Figure 3.2) is to set up an environment in which discipline problems are prevented. Teachers have two different mind-sets when it comes to discipline: intervention and prevention. Intervention, the most common, assumes students are going to misbehave and thinks about what to do after it happens. Here is an example of an intervention mind-set: A teacher writes a number on the board that indicates the amount of play minutes the students get at the end of the day. Every time a student does something disruptive or inappropriate, a minute is removed. This mind-set basically says, "I'm just waiting for you to screw up. And when you do, I will be ready to catch you." This type of teacher creates fear inside the classroom. Students become afraid to make mistakes and walk around on pins and needles all day. Other students satiate on minutes taken away and tell you they don't care. Some students even bet on who can lose the most minutes.

Figure 3.2

The Three Dimensions of Discipline Overview

Prevention Dimension

What Can Be Done to Prevent Discipline Problems:

1. Know and express yourself clearly.
2. Know your students.
3. Make your classroom a motivating place.
4. Teach responsibility and caring.
5. Establish effective rules and consequences.
6. Keep yourself current.
7. Deal with stressful conflict.

Action Dimension

What to Do When Discipline Problems Occur:

1. Stop the misbehavior quickly.
2. Get back to teaching.
3. Keep students in class.
4. Implement consequence.
5. Collect data.

Resolution Dimension

1. Find what is needed to prevent another problem.
2. Develop mutually agreeable plan.
3. Implement plan.
4. Monitor plan/revise if necessary.
5. Use creative/unconventional approaches when necessary.

Figure 3.3

About My Practices Survey

Read the following statements and decide which you think you do the right amount of and which you think it might be good to do more of to prevent discipline problems.

I usually correct behavior in a dignified way.

I encourage students to work independently in self-directed activities.

I find ways to like my students who try to make themselves unlikable.

I allow my students to make some decisions about classroom management.

I allow my students to openly disagree with me.

I greet students regularly.

I laugh a lot in class.

I regularly connect with my difficult students around something that interests them.

I allow students to redo, retake, and revise their work to improve their grades.

When I have a problem with a student, I take some responsibility for contributing to it.

I call parents at least twice to share something positive before I seek help with a problem.

I have a suggestion box in my class and ask students to contribute ideas that they think will make the class an even better place.

I take time to tell my students what they do that I like, and to ask them to tell me what they like about others and myself.

I give my students some say in curriculum content.

My students are involved in developing rules and consequences.

Now take one statement you want to do more of and list three specific steps you can take to do more of it.

1. Think of a student who seems to disrupt class to gain the attention of others or who always seems to be doing something to draw attention. What kinds of things can you see yourself doing in the classroom that might help this student get noticed by others before he acts out?

2. Think of a student who seems to misbehave more when you put her in an academically demanding situation. Can you think of some ways you might present the material to encourage success? What might happen if you had her do fewer problems? Are there things you might regularly say to encourage success? Can you think of some situations where she might actually be able to tutor a younger or disabled student? Might it be possible for you to tell the student in advance which question you will be calling on her to answer, and then give her the answer so she is sure to get it right?

3. Do you have students in your class who always feel the need to be in charge? It may seem as if they are constantly trying to usurp your authority. What things might you do to make them see themselves as leaders or decision makers in your class? Something as simple as regularly asking for their opinion can help. We met one teacher who put her most talkative and disruptive 4th grader on "noise patrol." His job every day was getting the class to be quiet after lunch.

Figure 3.5

Procedures Checklist

Before teaching a lesson, it is important to consider what procedures students will need to know. Proper behavior usually requires that you teach and regularly review details regarding each of the following. Make this a checklist of reminders for yourself:

1. How to enter the class appropriately
2. Where to put completed assignments
3. What to do when they enter the classroom
4. Where to find the daily assignment
5. How to get permission to leave the room
6. How to quickly join their work group
7. How to get your attention when they need it and you are working with somebody else
8. What to do when someone says or does something mean to them
9. How to express themselves when they disagree with you
10. How to acceptably leave at the end of class
11. What to do when they are stuck and need help
12. What to do after they have completed a class assignment but before others have finished

What other procedures or expectations of small details do your students need to know that are important to the success of your lesson(s)?

The Action Dimension

Despite all your efforts at prevention, conflicts inevitably occur in any setting where several people are together over an extended period of time. The purpose of the action dimension is to stop misbehavior quickly so that teaching can resume with a minimal loss of instruction. In short, we want to quickly get back to teaching without requiring the student to leave unless his presence continues to interrupt the learning process. Finally, the action needs to preserve both the teacher's and student's dignity, and it must be something that does not diminish the teacher's classroom authority.

In addition to stopping the misbehavior, implementation of a consequence is often required and is therefore part of the action dimension. Most often, a simple reminder is all that is needed. For example, "Nancy, thanks for discarding the gum right now and remembering to follow this rule

in the future." There are four types of consequences (see Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion of each):

• **Natural and logical**: those that are directly related to the behavior (e.g., you make a mess, you clean it up)

• **Conventional**: improving those that already exist (e.g., making detention more meaningful)

• **Generic**: those that apply to every rule

• **Educational**: those that teach new behaviors

The method of implementation is at least as important as the consequence itself. Tone of voice, degree of physical distance from the student, body posture, eye contact, and other nonverbal gestures determine the effectiveness of a consequence as much or more than the actual content of the consequence itself. Sensitivity to personal, cultural, and emotional issues is necessary when successfully stopping misbehavior. Merely implementing a consequence in a rote, unfeeling way can become mechanical and dehumanize the whole Discipline with Dignity approach. Similarly, too much emotion or lecturing can undermine the effectiveness of a consequence. Stay away from a scolding expository such as "Nancy, there is no gum chewing in this class. You know the rules. The first violation is a reminder. This is your reminder, young lady!"

The prevention and action dimensions take care of most classroom discipline problems. Only the more troublesome and chronic problems will persist once the first two dimensions are implemented.

The Resolution Dimension

The resolution dimension is comprised of activities designed to reach the most difficult and challenging students. Most of these students have already lost hope and have been overexposed and desensitized to many school and classroom discipline interventions. If you threaten them with detention, many will say, "So what? I already have a ton of detentions to serve. All my friends will be there." If you warn them that they will fail the test if they do not study, many shrug, having failed most of the tests they have ever taken. They expect to routinely get kicked out of class, sent to the principal's office, or suspended. Calling home is rarely effective because many either are raising their parents or have convinced parents that school people are jerks.

Reaching these students requires a great deal of effort with **little** assurance that there will ever be a payoff. Some teachers wonder if it is even worth the effort to try, given the disproportionate time that they consume. Obviously, every educator must decide how much energy to invest in chronically disruptive students. We know that those we do not reach are at a much higher **risk of** committing crimes or otherwise being drains on society. So although they take more time and creativity, reaching and influencing them is immensely important.

We offer many alternatives that have the potential for reaching chronically challenging students in Chapters 8 and 10. Most of these strategies are considered "unconventional" because they are not normally included in school policies or recommended practices.

One payoff for the teacher who is willing to try creative approaches is the opportunity to experiment with techniques **that are** generally considered too radical for the mainstream. Eventually, many of these techniques expand the teacher's awareness of possibilities to teach all children and generate new **energy** because of the challenge of experimenting with the unexpected. Those who have developed their ability to reach particu**larly difficult** students often become master teachers.

Suggested Procedure for Developing a Social Contract

There is no one correct way to create a social contract. Teachers are encouraged to make the social contract fit their own styles and situations. The following features are most often represented:

- Classroom values or principles
- Specific rules that are based on the values/principles
- A range of consequences for each rule
- Student input developing rules and consequences
- A test for student comprehension
- A time investment
- Communication with parents
- Use of administrators

Sound Principles and Values

As previously mentioned, values or principles (the terms are used interchangeably here) place rules in a larger context that helps students understand why each rule is selected and needed. Principles are not designed to be enforced because they are too general. They provide the reason(s) for rules and provide answers to questions about why we have them. Examples of principles previously mentioned are *Respect yourself; Respect each other;* and *Respect this place.* Here are some other examples:

- Be courteous.
- Be prepared.

• Treat others as they wish to be treated.
• Try your best at all times.

Effective Rules

Rules are behavioral expressions of the principles. They define clearly *what is* acceptable in the classroom and what is not. They also define *how* we are expected to behave. Rules work best when they describe specific behavior. The more specific your rules, the more you have, so we advise limiting the number of rules by starting only with the ones needed most. When possible, try expressing rules in a positive tone-for example, "Be on time" instead of "Do not be late." Some rules are hard to define in positive terms only. For example, the positive version of "Do not put down other students"-"Say only nice things about each other"-does not offer a means to express dissatisfaction. The social contract is neither the Magna Carta nor a legal brief. Get rid of words that are unnecessary or confusing. Avoid the word *try*.

The importance of specific and predictable rules is directly related to developing responsibility. The more understandable the expectations, the better the students' chances of meeting them. It is impossible to make a good choice if the system is unclear.

It is possible to overdo the specificity of a rule. Having too many rules is often felt as oppressive by "good" students and can give ideas to "bad" students they hadn't previously thought of. It is not necessary to list every objectionable swear word or put-down. When hearing inappropriate language that may not directly have a rule, the teacher is well advised to see this as an opportunity to share how an important value has been offended. Here are examples of rules that are too vague or too specific, as well as revisions that are "just right":

Too vague: "Each student must not interfere with another student's learning." (This makes a fine *principle,* but not a *rule.)*

Too specific: "Do not poke your fingers in another student's eye." Just right: "People are not for hitting. Keep your hands and feet to yourself." Too vague: "Do not stop others from learning." Too specific: "Never talk when others are talking." Just right: "Raise your hand in class discussions before making your contribution."

Figure 4.1 contains a nice balance of values and rules.

Figure 4.1

Mrs. Connor's Class Values and Rules

Value: I have a right to be happy, and to be treated with kindness in this room. **Rule:** This means that no one will laugh at me, ignore me, or hurt my feelings.

Value: I have a right to be myself in this room.
Rule: This means that no one will treat me unfairly because I am fat or thin, fast or slow, boy or girl.

Value: I have a right to feel safe in this room. **Rule:** This means that no one will hit me, kick me, push me, or pinch me.

Value: I have a right to hear and be heard in this room.
Rule: This means that no one will yell, scream, or shout and that my opinions and desires will be considered in any plans we make.

Value: I have a right to learn about myself in this room.
Rule: This means that I will be free to express my feelings and opinions at an appropriate time without being interrupted or punished

Consequences

Consequences, an essential part of the social contract, can be the most difficult to develop because they may be easily confused with threats, punishments, or rewards. Sometimes the only difference is whether there is an element of choice. For example, "Bob, people are not for hitting. This is your second offense, which means two days of detention." There is no choice here. The control is completely with the teacher and the system without regard to whether the consequence will actually be effective. By contrast, a consequence could be framed as follows: "Bob, people are not for hitting. I am thinking a couple of days of detention might help you remember there are better ways to express your anger. Let me know by the end of class if you can think of an even better solution." Sometimes it is hard to see the difference between threat and choice. Notice the following examples:

"If you do not do your work now, you will miss lunch and do it then. The choice is yours!"

"Some students prefer doing their work during lunch. Would you rather do yours now or at that time?"

Notice the difference is in control. Two guidelines may help you understand the difference:

• Are the choices designed to teach better behavior, or do they rely primarily on making the student's life miserable?

• Are you making it sound like there is a choice even though you know beforehand exactly what you want the student to choose?

The following criteria for good consequences are brief because the next chapter is devoted entirely to consequences. Good consequences

• Are clear and specific,
• Have a range of alternatives,
• Are designed to teach improved behavioral choices rather than inflict misery.
• Are natural and logical when possible, and
• Are related to the rule.

Consequences also

• Preserve the student's dignity,
• Increase the internal locus of control when appropriate, and
• Increase student motivation.

Student Input

The more that students are involved in the process of developing rules and consequences, the more they feel that the plan is a part of them. Ultimately, they are more likely to follow the plan if they had a say in its development. Here are four ways to involve students.

• **Students help develop classroom values.** You can begin by asking students what kind of classroom they want to share. Here are some examples:

- We want to be heard.
- We want a chance to explain our side of the story.
- We want to be respected.

• **Students develop rules for the teacher.** Do not accept a rule or consequence for yourself that you can't live with. Most teachers can find one **or** two student-created rules that they can follow. Typical examples include these:

- **Homework is handed back** within three days of students **turning it in.**
- Water is the only beverage allowed in class for students and the teacher.
- Fruit and vegetables are the only foods allowed to be eaten in class. (This can lead to a lesson on what is a fruit and what is a vegetable.)
- The teacher must be on time and ready to begin teaching when the bell rings.

Using this method gives the teacher an opportunity to model the way students should respond when they are caught breaking a rule.

• **Students develop rules for themselves based on values.**

The students can develop some or most of the rules that are not directly related to instruction. For example, the teacher might give students an assignment to propose three rules that are examples of "We expect a safe learning environment." Examples might include the following:

- Do not take my stuff without asking.
- When you see someone doing something that could be dangerous, tell an adult.
- When angry, we can share our feelings, walk away, or ask an adult for advice.

• **Students vote on negotiable rules.** This is a nice option for younger children. Think of some (not all) rules you can let students choose by vote. For example, "You can choose where to sit one day each week." Then take a vote to determine which day each week they want it to be. Another example might have to do with choosing when students will do story time and when they will have snack time.

For young children and others with limited language skills, more structure is often useful. You might say to students:

I want to give you a chance to have some rules and consequences for me and for each other. Now, that might sound silly to some of you because usually children aren't allowed to tell grown-ups how to act. But I remember that when I was in 1st grade, I wished my teacher would say hello to me in the morning, not yell at me when I made a mistake; let me choose which of my papers to hang in the room; and, even though I was scared, call my parents when I hit someone or call someone else's parents when they hit me. How many of you would like these rules in our class?

Test for Student Comprehension

To prevent students from claiming ignorance about rules and consequences, test them on the social contract. Passing should be a perfect score. Students are permitted to take the test as many times as necessary. This is beyond their control, and how to deal with what they cannot change without feeling helpless.

• **Increase student motivation.** Punishments decrease motivation because they create strong negative feelings that make learning difficult

or impossible. They may change behavior for the short term. But we are interested in keeping students motivated to learn over the long haul. When an intervention for misbehavior leaves the child with a negative attitude for a long time, that student's desire to learn diminishes. Some students become so angered by an embarrassing or threatening teacher that they give up on that class for the entire school year. When a student is caught breaking a rule, we do not expect him to immediately return to his schoolwork full of enthusiasm and joy. We do, however, expect him to focus on how he can improve the situation and not hold resentment to the point of danger.

Four Types of Consequences

We have divided consequences into four types:

- Generic-they can be connected to any rule.
- Conventional-conventional punishments can be changed into effective consequences.
- Educational - they are specifically designed to teach new behaviors.
- Natural/logical - they are the result of students' choices.

Generic Consequences

There are four types of generic consequences that can be tied to any rule.

REMINDER OR WARNING OF RULE

For example, "Sholanda, we raise our hands before speaking. This is your reminder. I trust you will not need to be reminded again. Thanks for following the rule." When stated more firm, this statement becomes a warning.

AN ACTION PLAN FOR IMPROVING BEHAVIOR

For example, "Caleb, being out of your seat bothering Ava is not OK. I want you to come up with a plan for how you are going to stop bothering her. If you can't come up with a plan on your own, I will help you. But I trust you can. I look forward to seeing it soon."

Stay away from simply having students fill out an action plan form like this:

Answer the three following questions:

1. What did I do?
2. What should I do?
3. What will I do?

Most will fill it out with no real commitment to change.

1. What did I do? FIGHT
2. What should I do? NOT FIGHT
3. What will I do? I WON'T FIGHT

Here is an example of working with a student to help build responsibility by developing a plan:

Teacher: Will you have your homework tomorrow?
Student: Yeah, I think so.
Teacher: (feeling skeptical): When will you start?
Student: After dinner. Teacher: What time?
Student: At 7 p.m.
Teacher: How long will you spend?
Student: Whenever.
Teacher: Can you guess a number?
Student: Twenty minutes.
Teacher: Where will you do it?
Student: In my room.
Teacher: With or without TV?
Student: Without.
Teacher: And if someone calls?
Student: I'll call back later.
Teacher: So you'll have your homework tomorrow?
Student: Yeah.
Teacher: That's great, but in case you do not, what do you think are fair consequences?

In script, this dialogue sounds like an interrogation; but in conversation, it is less stringent, and it works. The contingency questions lead to commitment. Now the teacher and student can write it down to have a record, but the plan is not the paper. The plan is the steps the student has agreed to take. Once the interaction is complete, a good, strong handshake seals the deal. Without some kind of commitment, there is little chance of the plan working.

HELPING OTHERS

Perhaps the best consequence we know is community service by helping another student. Typically the student being helped is younger or has a disability. Here are some helping opportunities-

- Tutoring
- Being a field trip partner
- Developing an action plan to solve a problem with the target student
- Being a bodyguard to student who is being bullied or teased
- Monitoring the playground or cafeteria
- Reading stories to younger children

The academic skill of the helper is unimportant. The goal is to let the student give back to the community because she took something by behaving inappropriately. We love this consequence because along with restitution, it is also a powerful healing process for children who have been hurt by factors in their life they can't control. Here are three powerful life examples of how helping others can play a significant role in healing:

- Soldiers returning from war with lost limbs helping other returning soldiers with a similar condition learn to walk
- Hurricane victims who have lost everything helping others rebuild their homes
- Cancer survivors helping new cancer patients deal with the emotional stress of discovering they have cancer

HUMOROUS CONSEQUENCES

Humor can often be utilized to make a point. We know a teacher who makes up lyrics to the song "Since You've Been Gone" and sings this as students arrive late or after an unexcused absence. For example (in song), "Sally, nice to see you. (Singing) Since you've been gone, we have covered the battle of Gettysburg." The teacher who does this shared that rarely do students come late because they do not want to be serenaded.

Conventional Consequences

Conventional consequences include detention, phone calls home, and referrals to another staff person's office.

DETENTION

A wise woman once said, "Never send your children to bed when they are bad; send them to bed when they are good." Her point was that if bed is a punishment, then children won't want to go. Never make something you want students to like a punishment. The same is true for detention (or staying after school). What message do we send about school if we make them stay longer when misbehaving? Instead, make time after school relevant to improving the behavior that convinced you to detain them.

Here are three principles for detaining children:

- The teacher who assigns the detention stays with the student and deals with why the student is there.
- The time is used to discuss, practice, or teach new skills.
- No set time (e.g., three hours). When the goal is met, the detention is over.

PHONE CALLS HOME

Calls home work best when the call is to ask for a suggestion about how the parent might help solve a problem. Dumping a problem on a parent rarely results in a positive outcome. Try something like this:

Teacher: Hello, Mrs. Green. This is Mrs. Singe. Ahmad got in a fight today, and I thought if we work together, we can help teach him a better way to solve his problems. I'd really like to hear what you think and how I can help.

REFERRALS TO OFFICE

Referrals work best when they are reserved for serious problems that require an administrator. Our guideline is "Does the rule violation break the law?" Is it an assault, harassment, drug sale, or sexual misbehavior? The problem with referrals is that the one who solves the problem is the one who earns the student's respect. Teachers who refer on a regular basis lose the confidence and respect of all students, not only those referred. Referrals often lead to a worsening of behavior.
Here's how to make referrals effective as consequences:

- For times when you need a break from a student-and these do happen-send the student to another teacher, social worker, or counselor.

- Let the student choose when to come back. For example, "Kelly, we are headed for a major disagreement. Please take a break in Mrs. Prague's class and come back when you are ready to learn. Please do not be too long. This lesson is too important for you to miss."

• With the free time the administrator gains with fewer referrals, she can become more visible in the school by greeting students at the front door in the morning, in the cafeteria, or other places in the building. She can devote more of her time to dealing with the more serious offenses.

Educational Consequences

When students break a rule, do not assume they know better. Just as good academic instruction includes explanation, demonstration, practice, repetition, and evaluation, so, too, should these components be highlighted when teaching better behavior. Whether in class, the hallway, or anywhere else in the building, it is our responsibility to correct inappropriate behavior and then teach a better way. We have found the following instruction to be highly effective with most students:

1. Identify the problem behavior with the student and ask the student whether he thinks it would be OK to keep doing the same thing?
2. If the student does not understand that his behavior was **wrong,** explain why it was.
3. Following your explanation, ask the student to explain what was wrong in his own words.
4. Re-create the situation that led to trouble as near as pos**sible** and demonstrate through role play at least one appropriate way of handling the situation. It is usually best to have the student provoke you in the same way that he was provoked that led to his problem behavior. Then demonstrate a better response.
5. Ask the student to practice the response you used or another that might be equally effective without leading to trouble.
6. Switch roles and tell the student that you are going to try to provoke him in the same way that led to trouble and you want him to practice using what was just rehearsed.
7. Repeat a few times to polish.
8. Evaluate and adjust as needed. If you notice the student using the strategy effectively, point it out. Sometimes, the strategy will need to be practiced more or modified so that the student can use it naturally.

Natural/Logical Consequences

Natural or logical consequences (Driekers, 1964) are the direct result of our choices. If we don't wear a coat on a cold day, the consequence is that we feel cold. Here are a few examples of natural/logical consequences in school:

• If a student messes up a bathroom, a logical consequence is for that student to clean it up.

• If a student hurts another student, a logical consequence is for the offending student to do something nice for the hurt student or to do something constructive for the school.

• If a student comes to class late, she stays late.