

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND DISCIPLINE

Preventing Classroom Discipline Problems

In 1970 J. S. Kounin wrote and published a now-famous book titled *Discipline and Group Management in Classrooms*. Results of studies from the kindergarten to university levels were presented, with Kounin focusing particularly on findings from an observational study of 80 elementary classrooms. Undertaken to identify strategies and processes used in effectively and ineffectively managed classrooms, this study produced findings which have consistently received validation from later researchers.

Defining effective managers as those teachers whose classrooms were orderly, had a minimum of student misbehavior, and had high levels of time-on-task, and ineffective managers as those whose classrooms lacked these qualities, Kounin found that effective and ineffective managers did not differ greatly in their methods for dealing with disruption. Instead, effective managers were found to be much more skilled at preventing disruptions from occurring in the first place. Kounin went on to identify the specific behaviors these effective managers engaged in to keep students focused on learning and to reduce the likelihood of classroom disruption. These included:

- "Withitness"--the teacher communicating to the children by his/her behavior that he/she knows what the students are doing and what is going on in the classroom
- Overlapping--attending to different events simultaneously, without being totally diverted by a disruption or other activity
- Smoothness and momentum in lessons--conducting smooth and brisk pacing and providing continuous activity signals or cues (such as standing near inattentive students or directing questions to potentially disruptive students)
- Group alerting--attempting to involve nonreciting children in recitation tasks and keeping all students "alerted" to the task at hand
- Stimulating seatwork--providing students seatwork activities that have variety and offer challenge.

Research conducted during the past twenty years has underscored Kounin's findings and elaborated them into a more detailed list of behaviors comprising effective classroom management. The following validated practices are identified in the work of Bowman (1983); Brophy (1983, 1986); CEDaR/PDK (1985); Cotton and Savard (1982); Docking (1982); Doyle (1989); Emmer (1982); Emmer and Evertson (1981); Emmer, et al. (1983); Evertson (1985, 1989); Evertson, et al. (1983); Gettinger (1988); Gottfredson, Karweit, and Gottfredson (1989); Luke (1989); Moskowitz and Hayman (1976); Ornstein and Levine (1981); Sanford and Evertson (1981); Strother (1985); and Weber (1983):

- Holding and communicating high expectations for student learning and behavior. Through the personal warmth and encouragement they express to students and the classroom requirements they establish, effective manager/teachers make sure that students know they are expected to learn well and behave appropriately.

- Establishing and clearly teaching classroom rules and procedures. Effective managers teach behavioral rules and classroom routines in much the same way as they teach instructional content, and they review these frequently at the beginning of the school year and periodically thereafter. Classroom rules are posted in elementary classrooms.
- Specifying consequences and their relation to student behavior. Effective managers are careful to explain the connection between students' misbehavior and teacher-imposed sanctions. This connection, too, is taught and reviewed as needed.
- Enforcing classroom rules promptly, consistently, and equitably. Effective managers respond quickly to misbehavior, respond in the same way at different times, and impose consistent sanctions regardless of the gender, race, or other personal characteristics of misbehaving students.
- Sharing with students the responsibility for classroom management. Effective managers work to inculcate in students a sense of belonging and selfdiscipline, rather than viewing discipline as something imposed from the outside.
- Maintaining a brisk pace for instruction and making smooth transitions between activities. Effective managers keep things moving in their classrooms, which increases learning as well as reducing the likelihood of misbehavior.
- Monitoring classroom activities and providing feedback and reinforcement. Effective managers observe and comment on student behavior, and they reinforce appropriate behavior through the provision of verbal, symbolic, and tangible rewards.

In addition to this general, strongly supported list of practices associated with well-disciplined classrooms, researchers have identified other approaches which are effective in establishing and maintaining positive, orderly classroom environments.

For example, engaging in misbehavior is sometimes a response to academic failure, and some researchers and reviewers (e.g., Allen 1981; Cotton and Savard 1982; Gettinger 1988; and Lasley and Wayson 1982) have noted improvements in classroom order when marginal students are provided opportunities to experience academic and social success.

Anderson and Prawat (1983) and others have noted that many students simply do not perceive a connection between their level of effort and the academic or behavioral outcomes they experience. These students have what psychologists call an "external locus of control," and do not believe in their own ability to influence events. Nor, oftentimes, do they have the skills to identify inappropriate behavior and move from inappropriate to appropriate behavior. Researchers have observed behavioral improvements in settings where students are taught to attribute their success or failure to their personal effort, and in which they (1) learn to check their own behavior and judge its appropriateness; (2) talk themselves through a task, using detailed, step-by-step instructions; and (3) learn and apply problem-solving steps when confronting classroom issues.

Brophy (1983), Gottfredson (1986, 1988), and others have also noted that the use of cooperative learning structures can increase student task engagement, acquaint students

with the benefits of working together, and ease the tensions that sometimes arise among racial/ethnic groups--all of which are related to reductions in the incidence of misbehavior.

The work of other researchers (e.g., Ornstein and Levine 1981) has also revealed that it is beneficial for teachers to use humor to hold student interest and reduce classroom tensions and to remove distracting materials, such as athletic equipment or art materials, that encourage inattention or disruption.

Research focused on the beginning-of-the-year behavior of elementary and secondary teachers has shown that the above-mentioned effective management practices produce much more positive outcomes when they are enacted from the very first day of school. Research shows that teachers who are ineffective managers at the beginning of the year find it very difficult to establish and maintain control in their classrooms later on (Emmer 1982; Emmer and Evertson 1980; Evertson, et al. 1983).

Remediating Classroom Discipline Problems

These same researchers, together with Pestello (1989), also found that effective managers intervened more quickly when disruptions occurred than did ineffective managers, and their interventions got results more quickly.

What kinds of interventions for dealing with classroom misconduct are supported by research? Those whose work was consulted in preparation for this report have identified an array of effective approaches, some of which are similar to techniques used to prevent misconduct and, not surprisingly, are also similar to effective discipline practices identified at the schoolwide level:

- Behavior modification approaches. Many researchers (Brophy 1983, 1986; Cobb and Richards 1983; Cotton 1988; Crouch, Gresham, and Wright 1985; Docking 1982; McNamara, Harrop, and Owen 1987; and Moskowitz and Hayman 1976) have identified reinforcement (verbal, symbolic, or tangible) as effective in improving the classroom conduct of misbehaving students. Researchers have found that the provision of reinforcement does not undermine students' intrinsic motivation, provided the reinforcement is contingent on performance and given sparingly.

Another behavior modification technique supported by research is teaching self-control skills (modeling plus teaching self-instruction, self-monitoring, and self-reinforcement) to improve the conduct of misbehaving students. Brophy (1986) writes:

Contemporary behavior modification approaches involve students more actively in planning and shaping their own behavior through participation in the negotiation of contracts with their teachers and through exposure to training designed to help them to monitor and evaluate their behavior more actively, to learn techniques of self-control and

problem solving, and to set goals and reinforce themselves for meeting these goals. (p. 191)

- Group contingencies. The use of structures in which rewards and punishments are meted out to groups based on the behavior of individuals within those groups have been found effective in remediating misbehavior (Brophy 1983, 1986; Luke 1989).
- Prosocial skills training. Training in selfawareness, values clarification, cooperation, and the development of helping skills has been successfully used to improve the behavior of misbehaving students.
- Peer tutoring. Greenwood, Carta, and Hall (1988) and other researchers have found that peer tutoring structures lower the incidence of misbehavior in classrooms. Depending on the situation, students with behavior problems may serve as either tutors or tutees.

TEACHER TRAINING IN CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Having determined that the use of certain classroom management techniques makes for well-disciplined classroom environments, some researchers have turned their attention to the question of whether significant improvements in classroom discipline could be achieved through the provision of teacher training in these validated techniques. Research on the effects of teacher training includes work by Emmer, et al. (1983); Evertson (1985, 1989); Evertson, et al. (1983); Fitzpatrick and McGreal (1983); Mandlbaum, et al. (1983); and Stallings and Mohlman (1981).

Typically, training programs include learning activities and practice in the areas of:

- Organizing the room and materials
- Developing a workable set of rules and procedures
- Assuring student accountability
- Formulating and explaining consequences
- Planning activities for the first week
- Maintaining the management system
- Increasing instructional clarity
- Organizing instruction
- Adjusting instruction for special groups.

Such training programs have proven very successful in bringing about reductions of discipline problems in the classrooms of participating teachers.

DISCIPLINING DIFFERENT KINDS OF STUDENTS

As previously noted, students need to be taught what constitutes appropriate behavior, what the school and classroom rules are, and how to follow them. Obviously, this will be approached differently, depending upon the age/grade level of the students. Children

below the fourth grade require a great deal of instruction and practice in classroom rules and procedures. Brophy (1976) notes:

...effective management, especially in the early grades, is more an instructional than a disciplinary enterprise. Effective managers socialize their students to the student role through instruction and modeling. It is important that these teachers be consistent in articulating demands and monitoring compliance, but the most important thing is to make sure that students know what to do in the first place. (p. 185)

With older students, researchers (e.g., Brophy 1983, 1986; Doyle 1989) have noted that the best results are obtained through vigilantly reminding students about the rules and procedures of the school and classroom and monitoring their compliance with them.

Researchers have also found that, whereas the developmental level of small children is such that they tend to regard all punishment as unfair and undeserved, older students generally do regard punishment for misbehavior as fair and acceptable, provided that the punishment "fits the crime."

Finally, some researchers have observed that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds sometimes need more detailed instruction regarding classroom rules and procedures than other students, in order to insure understanding and compliance. Sanford and Evertson (1981) conclude:

...more and longer attention to orienting students to classroom procedures may be more beneficial in low SES junior highs than in most junior high schools. (p. 38)

SPECIFIC DISCIPLINE PROGRAMS

Many educational program developers have responded to the prevalence of school discipline problems by preparing and marketing packaged programs which purport to bring about reductions in misconduct and consequent increases in school order. Research on the effectiveness of these programs is not plentiful, much of it is technically flawed, and, unfortunately, findings are generally inconclusive. The following overview of programs and research findings should, therefore, be taken as tentative:

- Reality Therapy (RT). William Glasser's Reality Therapy involves teachers helping students make positive choices by making clear the connection between student behavior and consequences. Class meetings, clearly communicated rules, and the use of plans and contracts are featured. Researchers (Emmer and Aussiker 1989; Gottfredson 1989; Hyman and Lally 1982) have noted modest improvements as the result of this approach.
- A Positive Approach to Discipline (PAD). PAD is based on Glasser's Reality Therapy and is grounded in teachers' respect for students and instilling in them a sense of responsibility. Program components include developing and sharing clear rules, providing daily opportunities for success, and in-school suspension for

- noncompliant students. Research (e.g., Allen, 1981) is generally supportive of the PAD program.
- Teacher Effectiveness Training (TET). The TET philosophy differentiates between teacher-owned and student-owned problems and proposes different strategies for dealing with them. Students are taught problem-solving and negotiation techniques. Researchers (e.g., Emmer and Aussiker 1989) find that teachers like the program and that their behavior is influenced by it, but effects on student behavior are unclear.
 - Transactional Analysis (TA). Within the context of counseling programs, students with behavior problems use terminology and exercises from Transactional Analysis to identify issues and make changes. The notion that each person's psyche includes child, adult, and parent components is basic to the TA philosophy. Such research as has been conducted (e.g., Cobb and Richards 1983) has found the TA counseling approach beneficial.
 - Assertive Discipline (AD). First publicized and marketed in 1976 by developer Lee Canter, Assertive Discipline is a well-respected and widely used program. According to Render, Padilla, and Krank, over half a million teachers have received AD training (1989, p. 607). AD focuses on the right of the teacher to define and enforce standards for student behavior. Clear expectations, rules, and a penalty system with increasingly serious sanctions are major features. Some research (e.g., Mandlebaum, et al. 1983; McCormack 1987) is supportive, but most is inconclusive about the effectiveness of the AD approach (Emmer and Aussiker 1989; Gottfredson 1989; and Render, Padilla, and Krank 1989).
 - Adlerian approaches. Named for psychiatrist Alfred Adler, "Adlerian approaches" is an umbrella term for a variety of methods which emphasize understanding the individual's reasons for maladaptive behavior and helping misbehaving students to alter their behavior, while at the same time finding ways to get their needs met. These approaches have shown some positive effects on self-concept, attitudes, and locus of control, but effects on behavior are inconclusive (Emmer and Aussiker 1989).
 - Student Team Learning (STL). Student Team Learning is a cooperative learning structure and, as such, is an instructional rather than a disciplinary strategy. Its use, however, appears to have a positive effect upon the incidence of classroom misbehavior (Gottfredson 1989).

While no one program appears to be the answer to school discipline issues, all of those in the above listing include components which have been validated as effective. As Wayson, et al. (1982) point out in their summary of the discipline practices of effective schools, these schools generally did not use packaged programs; instead, they either developed their own programs or modified commercially available programs to meet the needs of their particular situation.

INEFFECTIVE DISCIPLINARY PRACTICES

Research investigations which have yielded information on effective disciplinary practices have also produced findings about ineffective practices. It is important for

educators to be aware of the strategies research has shown to be ineffective, in part because this knowledge can assist them in planning local programs, and in part because, unfortunately, some of these practices continue to be widely used. Ineffective practices include:

- Vague or unenforceable rules. The importance of clear rules becomes obvious when observing, as researchers have, the ineffectiveness of "rules" such as, "be in the right place at the right time" (Doyle 1989; Gottfredson and Gottfredson 1985).
- Teachers ignoring misconduct. Both student behavior and attitudes are adversely affected when teachers ignore violations of school or classroom rules (Emmer 1982; Emmer and Everston 1981; Emmer, et al. 1983; Evertson 1985; Evertson, et al. 1983; Lovegrove, et al. 1983; O'Hagan and Edmunds 1982).
- Ambiguous or inconsistent teacher responses to misbehavior. When teachers are inconsistent in their enforcement of rules, or when they react in inappropriate ways (such as lowering students' grades in response to misbehavior), classroom discipline is generally poor (Gottfredson 1989; Gottfredson and Gottfredson 1985).
- Punishment which is excessive or which is delivered without support or encouragement for improving behavior (Cotton and Savard 1982; Lovegrove, et al. 1983). Among the kinds of punishment that produce particularly negative student attitudes are public punishment (Elliot 1986) and corporal punishment (see below).
- Corporal punishment. Most of the literature on corporal punishment is unrelated to research on effectiveness. As Doyle (1989) points out, most writers either ignore or assume the efficacy of this highly controversial practice, and go on to discuss it from a moral perspective. Writers (e.g., Doyle 1989; Docking 1982) point out, for example, that racial and ethnic minority students receive more corporal punishment in school settings than other students.

Recently, however, more researchers have studied the effectiveness of corporal punishment in reducing misbehavior and have found that, in addition to the moral and psychological arguments against its use, it is indefensible on grounds of efficacy. Researchers (e.g., Docking 1982; Doyle 1989; Maurer and Wallerstein 1984) have found that:

- The results of corporal punishment are unpredictable.
- Even when it is successful at inhibiting inappropriate behavior, corporal punishment still doesn't foster appropriate behavior.
- Corporal punishment is sometimes unintentionally reinforcing, since it brings attention from adults and peers.
- Corporal punishment often creates resentment and hostility, making good working relationships harder to create in the future.
- Corporal punishment is related to undesirable outcomes, such as increased vandalism and dropping out.
 - Out-of-school suspension. Once again, minority students are overrepresented in out-of-school suspension rates (Doyle 1989; Slee

1986). Moreover, research does not support the use of out-of-school suspension. As Slee points out, suspension doesn't help the suspended student, nor does it help the other students, because school staff simply get rid of troublesome students rather than changing the school environment in such a way as to prevent/reduce discipline problems.

Finally, as researcher William Wayson underscored during a telephone conversation with the present author, over 90 percent of suspensions occur over behaviors which are more irritating and annoying than truly serious. Wayson noted that discipline policies should be written and enforced in such a way that suspension, if it is used at all, is not used for these less-serious infractions.

SUMMARY: THE RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE ON IMPROVING SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE

School personnel seeking to improve the quality of discipline in their schools and classrooms are encouraged to follow the guidelines implicit in the discipline research. These include:

AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL:

1. Engage school- and community-wide commitment to establishing and maintaining appropriate student behavior in school and at school-sponsored events.
2. Establish and communicate high expectations for student behavior.
3. With input from students, develop clear behavioral rules and procedures and make these known to all stakeholders in the school, including parents and community.
4. Work on getting to know students as individuals; take an interest in their plans and activities.
5. Work to improve communication with and involvement of parents and community members in instruction, extracurricular activities, and governance.
6. If commercial, packaged discipline programs are used, modify their components to meet your unique school situation and delete those components which are not congruent with research.
7. For the principal:
8. Increase your visibility and informal involvement in the everyday life of the school; increase personal interactions with students.
9. Encourage teachers to handle all classroom discipline problems that they reasonably can; support their decisions.
10. Enhance teachers' skills as classroom managers and disciplinarians by arranging for appropriate staff development activities.

AT THE CLASSROOM LEVEL:

8. Hold and communicate high behavioral expectations.
9. Establish clear rules and procedures and instruct students in how to follow them; give primary-level children and low-SES children, in particular, a great deal of instruction, practice, and reminding.
10. Make clear to students the consequences of misbehavior.
11. Enforce classroom rules promptly, consistently, and equitably from the very first day of school.
12. Work to instill a sense of self-discipline in students; devote time to teaching self-monitoring skills.
13. Maintain a brisk instructional pace and make smooth transitions between activities.
14. Monitor classroom activities and give students feedback and reinforcement regarding their behavior.
15. Create opportunities for students (particularly those with behavioral problems) to experience success in their learning and social behavior.
16. Identify those students who seem to lack a sense of personal efficacy and work to help them achieve an internal locus of control.
17. Make use of cooperative learning groups, as appropriate.
18. Make use of humor, when suitable, to stimulate student interest or reduce classroom tensions.
19. Remove distracting materials (athletic equipment, art materials, etc.) from view when instruction is in progress.

WHEN DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS ARISE:

20. Intervene quickly; do not allow behavior that violates school or classroom rules to go unchecked.
21. As appropriate, develop reinforcement schedules and use these with misbehaving students.
22. Instruct students with behavior problems in selfcontrol skills; teach them how to observe their own behavior, talk themselves through appropriate behavior patterns, and reinforce themselves for succeeding.

23. Teach misbehaving students general prosocial skills--self-awareness, cooperation, and helping.
24. Place misbehaving students in peer tutoring arrangements; have them serve either as tutors or tutees, as appropriate.
25. Make use of punishments which are reasonable for the infraction committed; provide support to help students improve their behavior.
26. Make use of counseling services for students with behavior problems; counseling should seek the cause of the misconduct and assist students in developing needed skills to behave appropriately.
27. Make use of in-school suspension programs, which include guidance, support, planning for change, and skill building.
28. Collaborate with misbehaving students on developing and signing contingency contracts to help stimulate behavioral change; follow through on terms of contracts.
29. Make use of home-based reinforcement to increase the effectiveness of school-based agreements and directives.
30. In schools which are troubled with severe discipline problems and negative climates, a broadbased organizational development approach may be needed to bring about meaningful change; community involvement and support is critical to the success of such efforts.

INEFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE PRACTICES:

31. Avoid the use of vague or unenforceable rules.
32. Do not ignore student behavior which violates school or classroom rules; it will not go away.
33. Avoid ambiguous or inconsistent treatment of misbehavior.
34. Avoid draconian punishments and punishments delivered without accompanying support.
35. Avoid corporal punishment.
36. Avoid out-of-school suspension whenever possible. Reserve the use of suspension for serious misconduct only.

The strength of the research base supporting these guidelines suggests that putting them into practice can help administrators and teachers to achieve the ultimate goal of school

discipline, which, as stated by Wayson and Lasley (1984, p. 419), is "to teach student to behave properly without direct supervision."