

# CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND DISCIPLINE WITHOUT DISTRESS

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# Definitions of Classroom Management and Discipline

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- Classroom management refers to teacher behaviors and actions which create a climate that engenders and facilitates optimal teaching and learning. It involves disciplinary actions, daily activities, seating arrangements, preparation and delivery of lessons.
- Classroom management is what the teacher does to create a structured learning environment.
- Discipline is the extent to which students behave in acceptable ways, as they become involved in the tasks of learning and instruction.
- Discipline also refers to methods used to prevent or reduce the occurrence of undesirable behaviors.
- Discipline addresses what the teacher does to help students regulate and monitor their actions.

**Why is there such a critical need for more effective classroom management and discipline strategies?**

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- Research has confirmed that teachers' classroom management styles/approaches have “twice the impact on student achievement as do school policies regarding curriculum, assessment, staff collegiality and community involvement.”
- Classroom management has been one the most difficult problems for teachers. Yet, “effective management is a prerequisite to achieving instructional objectives and to safeguarding the psychological and physical well-being of students.”
- A comprehensive literature review by Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1993), confirmed that from their investigation of 228 variables affecting student achievement, the classroom management variable had the largest effect on student achievement.
- In a 2006 survey of Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade teachers conducted by the American Psychological Association (APA), teachers identified management and instructional skills as their top need.
- The Gallup Poll, designed to assess perception of public education, has consistently cited classroom management/school discipline as a major issue.<sup>1</sup>

- Events which occur in classrooms are **multidimensional**. They are crowded with people, tasks, and time pressures, Many individuals----all with differing goals, preferences and abilities----must share resources, use and reuse materials without losing them, move in and out of the room etc.
- Classroom events may occur **simultaneously**, in that many things may be happening at the same time, and sometimes at a fast pace. Teachers may have hundreds of exchanges with students during the course of a single day.
- Classroom plans are at times **unpredictable**, even when these plans are carefully and wonderfully crafted.
- Many classroom activities require a teacher's **immediate** response in order for classroom activity to flow smoothly and purposefully.

- With effective discipline, children will achieve the objectives of self-government, self-reliance, and self-control, and they will also “improve their standing in society, elevate the character, ennoble the mind, and increase their happiness.
- The successful implementation of relevant and meaningful classroom management techniques is a strong indication that teacher instructional skills are effective. “Students who are participating in well-structured activities that engage their interests, who are highly motivated to learn and who are working on tasks that are challenging, yet within their capabilities, rarely pose any serious management problems.

# Academic, Professional, Personal, Spiritual, and Mental Preparation for Effective Classroom Management and Discipline

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**Guidelines for Teachers, Principals, and Parents.**

The following are some examples of teacher qualities and characteristics which will enhance their preparation for dealing with classroom management and discipline issues. Successful teachers:

- Exude a passion and enthusiasm for the teaching.
- Demonstrate genuine (unconditional) love for all children, regardless of their cultural, social, or religious backgrounds.
- Communicate and apply knowledge generated from their formal teacher education training and experiences, to the classroom.
- Are lifelong, infectious, and contagious learners.
- Are peacemakers.

- Are committed to ongoing professional development.
- Use instructional approaches and best practices, which are uniquely relevant to the individual learning styles, abilities, and socio-cultural experiences of learners.
- Espouse the belief that all students can and will succeed.
- Depend on God, the Master Teacher, for counsel and guidance in their work.
- Adopt best practices in teaching and learning.
- Maintain optimum physical, spiritual, psychological, and emotional health, in order to deal more effectively with the ongoing demands and challenges of the teaching and learning environment.

- Are called of God to the teaching ministry.
- Become strong advocates for students.
- Integrate their Christian faith with instruction and learning.
- Demonstrate patience, forbearance, courage, kindness, and fortitude.
- Demonstrate in word and deed, that the ultimate objective of true education is the redemption and salvation of all teachers and students.

The qualities/characteristics listed above for teachers, are also needed for success as principals, with the following additions and/or modifications. Successful principals:

- Demonstrate a passion and enthusiasm for teaching, and administration.
- Communicate and apply knowledge generated from their formal teacher education and administrative training and experiences.
- Are called by God to be principals/administrators.
- Integrate their Christian faith with teaching, learning, and administration.
- Espouse the values and attributes of servant leaders.
- Possess strong social, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.

- Empower teachers, and firmly support their roles and functions.
- Create and nurture a culture and climate of meaningful learning and instruction, in collaboration with teachers, and other stakeholders.
- Clearly articulate and implement their schools' educational philosophy, vision, mission, goals/objectives, and outcomes.
- Implement best practices in education, research, assessment, and service, in collaboration with teachers and other stakeholders.
- Forge meaningful partnerships with community personnel who support their educational philosophy, vision, mission, goals/objectives, and outcomes.

# Essential Qualities/Characteristics of Parents

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Parents play a pivotal role in working with teachers and administrators to create meaningful and productive learning environments for their children. Successful parents:

- Depend on God for guidance in the training and nurturing of their children.
- Love their children unconditionally.
- Reinforce strong moral, social, and ethical values in their children.
- Provide for their children's social, spiritual, physical, mental, moral and emotional needs.

- Maintain strong connections with teachers and administrators.
- Support their children's efforts in school.
- Reinforce the school's philosophy, mission, vision and its principles and guidelines for student conduct, at home.
- Nurture children's self-esteem and self-worth.
- Foster a sense of industry in their children.

# The Causes and Contexts of Classroom Behavior Problems

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There are numerous reasons why students misbehave in school environments. Some of these include:

- Authoritarian, neglectful, and/or laissez faire parenting.
- Inappropriate social and interpersonal skills.
- Pressure from peers to behave inappropriately.
- Physiological, neurological, psychological, and/or emotional problems/issues.

- Misunderstanding of the relationship between content area knowledge and their experiences and aspirations.
- Need for love and attention.
- Misunderstanding of teachers' communication patterns.
- Ineffective teacher instructional and management techniques/strategies.
- Becoming frustrated by repeated failure, because they are given tasks by teachers that are too difficult, or irrelevant.

# Tracking Down the Causes of Misbehavior (Teacher Self-Reflection)

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- Is what I am asking my students to do worth doing? Is the task meaningful?
- Is what I am asking my students to do presented in an interesting fashion, or does it seem like drudgery?
- Is what I am asking my students to do at the appropriate challenge level?
- Am I reading cultural differences and interpreting them as misbehavior?
- Am I keeping accurate anecdotal records? (**Who** are the players? Are other students involved? **What** is the child doing or not doing that constitutes a problem? **What** seems to trigger the behavior? **When** is the problem behavior exhibited? After lunch? Before or after recess? **Where** is the problem taking place? In the classroom? On the playground? **How** is the child behaving?)

# Tips on Developing an Exceptional Classroom Management Plan

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Successful teachers develop a workable classroom management plan which involves; (a) planning before the start of the academic year; (b) testing the plan during the first few weeks; (c) making changes where necessary; and (c) implementing the system for the year.

### Initial Planning

- **Arrange the physical environment.** Create an environment which can permit orderly movement, minimize distractions, and effectively utilize available space.
- **Document the behaviors that you expect from students.** Apply the knowledge that you gained during your student teaching activities, and your in-service workshops. Establish rules and guidelines for the various activities that take place, and for the behaviors that are expected.
- **Discuss with students the outcomes of compliance and noncompliance to rules and expectations for behavior.** Develop an effective system of reinforcement for compliance, and an effective punishment system for non-compliance. The primary goal of both systems is to increase desirable behavior.

- **Maintain and sustain the management throughout the year.** Student compliance with rules and procedures should be carefully monitored. The objective here is to identify inappropriate behaviors before they escalate, and to clarify misunderstandings that students may have about the system.
- **Reinforce student accountability.** The main objective of accountability is to convey to students that you are serious about your expectations for them, and that you intend to enforce the rules and guidelines for conduct.
- **Establish classroom routines.** For example, (a) determine procedures for student upkeep of desks, classroom equipment and other facilities; (b) decide how students will be expected to enter and leave the room; (c) establish signals for getting students' attention, and teach them to recognize and respond appropriately to those signals; (d) set routines for student participation in class; and (e) determine how you will communicate, collect, and return assignments.
- **Have regular class meetings.** Sitting in a circle facing each other, teacher and students share ideas, solve problems and plan together.

# Key Instructional Strategies for Maintaining Desirable Behaviors

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Successful classroom managers (teachers) sustain the management system by using appropriate instructional strategies, which motivate students to be meaningfully engaged in classroom activities. Strategies that can be utilized by teachers, include:

- **Withitness.** This means that teachers are communicating to students that they are cognizant of everything that is taking place in the classroom. Students are aware that they are always being monitored.
- **Overlapping.** This teacher behavior conveys to students that they have the skill to supervise multiple situations and activities at the same time.

- **Group Focus.** This refers to the teacher's ability to keep as many students as possible involved in activities during seatwork.
- **Maintaining Momentum.** This is possible if task engagement is high. Interruptions are minimized or do not occur, when students are involved in activities that are stimulating and interesting.
- **Movement Management.** Teachers keep lessons and the group moving at an appropriate pace with smooth transitions and variety.

# Effective Behavioral Interventions

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- Use signals.
- Place yourself close to the misbehaving student.
- Give special help to a student if he/she is losing interest or is becoming frustrated in his attempts to complete an assignment.
- Ask the student to leave the room if his behavior/attitude is impeding the desire and motivation of other students to learn.
- If you have to criticize a student, it should be done in private, if possible. If public criticism is the only possibility avoid ridiculing or humiliating the student.<sup>21</sup>

- Use contingency contracts/covenants. These are a written performance agreements between a student and teacher (or parents, or both teacher and parents) specifying roles, expectations, and consequences.
- Implement “Shaping” which is a process of building new responses by reinforcing successive approximations of the desired behavior.
- Use “time out” procedures, but you need to be aware that these procedures can be misunderstood or misused.
- Use “Response Cost” which is a penalty incurred for each instance of an inappropriate behavior.
- Develop behavior management training skills for parents.

- Develop effective social skills training programs.
- Apply principles of “Applied Behavior Analysis” which include (a) identifying target behaviors and reinforcers; (b) establishing baseline behaviors; (c) selecting reinforcers and criteria for reinforcement; (d) selecting punishers and criteria for punishment, if necessary; (e) observing behavior during program implementation, and comparing it to the baseline; and (f) reducing the frequency of reinforcement when the behavior management program is working.
- If punishment is necessary, use restitution, which combines punishment and reward. Avoid harsh punishment.

# **Culturally Responsive Approaches to Classroom Management and Discipline**

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One of the most challenging issues in multicultural education concerns classroom management. Techniques and approaches to classroom management which in the past have reflected the values, norms and beliefs of dominant cultures, must be modified to meet the academic, socio-cultural, developmental, moral and ethical needs of ever-increasingly ethnically diverse school populations. Teacher education programs need to place greater emphasis on embedding multicultural applications and implications in professional and practical courses and activities.

What can teachers do to be more culturally responsive to students from culturally diverse backgrounds?

- Explore your cultural and ethnic background. Do a cultural self-assessment. This exercise provides teachers with the opportunity to critically analyze and evaluate their prejudices concerning culture and diversity.
- Become familiar with the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students.
- Greet students at the door on the first day of class with a smile and a warm welcoming comment, and communicating with second language learners with a phrase from their native language.

- Use classroom displays that include a map of the world that identifies the countries from which the students or their parents emigrated, and also signs and banners welcoming students in their language.
- Display bulletin boards that highlight the social, technological, political, scientific, and educational contributions of culturally and ethnically diverse individuals.
- Infuse instructional approaches with culturally relevant materials.

# Perspectives on the Integration of Faith with Instruction, Learning, and Management

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- Because Christian schools are worldview driven with specific philosophical and theological claims undergirding such a worldview, Christian teachers will do well to justify their pedagogic and management styles against such claims. Not only will this approach facilitate faith/subject integration, it will also aid in helping students make the connection between their learning, behaviors, attitudes, and their faith.
- Cultural diversity presents both a challenge and an opportunity for Christian teachers. The challenge arises from the fact that attitudes and behaviors are culturally driven, and can trigger differences which may lead to conflict and misunderstanding in learning environments. With this challenge comes the opportunity for teachers to aid students in the cultivation of Christian virtues, which will be evident in behaviors and attitudes that reflect tolerance, acceptance, and respect for those who are culturally and ethnically different.

- Two constructs/concepts that may be associated with the Christian worldview are “Oneness”, which emerges from our human differences, and “Interdependence,” a requirement for “Oneness.” Teachers can point students to the biblical concept of “Oneness” as exemplified by the triune God (three separate, different individuals) constituting a single reality (unity, wholeness). The construct/concept of “Interdependence” as a requirement for “Oneness” can be linked to the biblical example of the Apostle Paul’s discussion in 1 Corinthians 12: 14-15, and 25-26, in which he makes a strong case for interdependence. It reads: “For the body is not one member but many. If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it” (KJV).
- Teachers can use group projects, and cooperative learning techniques which foster interdependence-----the pooling of diverse individual strengths to achieve a common goal.

- Christian teachers must continue to create and sustain learning environments in which all students meaningfully participate in setting and reinforcing standards and guidelines for learning and behavior (GBW) They have a sacred obligation to demonstrate to other teaching professionals, how to visualize students as unique individuals, created by God, who have “an object to achieve, a standard to attain that includes everything good, pure, and noble.”

# **CASES/SCENARIOS OF CLASSROOM PROBLEMS**

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# Case 1

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B.K. is a 6<sup>th</sup> grader who talks constantly with classmates who sit in close proximity to him, particularly during the time Mr. Grady, is teaching, and during seatwork. This behavior is consistent over the first three-weeks of class. Mr. Grady has tried different methods such as: time out, detention, sending him to the principal, having conferences with his parents, all to no avail. What strategies for curbing B.K's behavior can you recommend to Mr. Grady?

## Case 2

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Jim, a nine-year-old fourth grader is a “model student.” He is responsive to teacher demands, and is extremely meticulous in carrying out assignments. His perfectionist tendencies are readily evident. If he has a math assignment and correctly answers 18 of the 20 problems, he focuses on the two that he got wrong. If a theme does not turn out the way he wants it, he tears it up in disgust. In short he becomes very self-punitive when he feels that there are shortcomings in his performance. What are appropriate interventions that his teachers can use to help Jim?

## Case 3

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Dave was the strongest boy in his 7<sup>th</sup> grade class and enjoyed intimidating others with his physical superiority. In gym class, he would threaten to drown or dunk fellow students. On the playground, he would challenge others to fight. Because of his aggressive tactics, other students would sometimes cry hysterically, and refuse to go to the gym or out for recess. What techniques can you apply to curb Dave's aggressive tendencies?

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