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ABSTRACT The 12 items listed in this annotated bibliography are entries in the ERIC system considered to be useful and significant publications on classroom discipline. The publications cited deal with discipline guidelines, assertive discipline programs, creative solutions to discipline problems, inservice programs, and discipline programs focusing on the causes of misbehavior. One research review and one study correlating teachers' pupil-control ideology and "classroom robustness" are cited. Other articles included focus on the disciplining of the handicapped, the importance of a common definition of discipline, the Glasser method of dealing with discipline problems, a parent-teacher open house concerning discipline, and on-campus suspension programs. (JM)

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Discipline is a problem in today's schools, says Canter, because "teachers simply were not trained to deal with the behavior problems today's students present." One solution is to provide teachers with a sound training program in student management, such as the "Assertive Discipline Program" that Canter's educational consulting firm has developed.

Often, teachers are ineffective classroom managers because they lack the confidence necessary to "lay down the law in their classrooms," particularly with problem students. A host of misconceptions allows teachers to believe that some students are unable to behave. Yet Canter states bluntly that "all students can behave appropriately at school," despite neglectful parents, a bad neighborhood, or an educational handicap.

The first step, then, toward assertive discipline is "for teachers to develop higher expectations of their own ability to deal with all students." This kind of confidence can be gained by implementing the several disciplining guidelines outlined in this article. First, the teacher must learn to clearly communicate his or her expectations to the students regarding exactly what is and what is not allowed.

Another important aspect of an assertive discipline program is its coordination with both the principal and the parents. Parents should be sent a copy of the discipline plan, and the principal and teacher should decide in advance what will be done with students sent to the principal's office.

Behavior modification techniques are difficult to apply to teenagers because most adolescents are unresponsive to such rewards as teacher praise or the promise of good grades. But researchers have found one powerful motivator for this age group: "the promise of free time or early release from school." In one experiment, for example, completion of classwork earned tokens that were redeemable for early release on Fridays. The class rapidly began to complete classwork and earn tokens, while misbehavior dropped by 75 percent. "Thus a drop in misbehavior and a rise in academic performance went hand in hand," states this report.

Critics of this approach, however, believe that behaviorism affects only the symptoms of an underlying social ill; the problem may in fact get worse "while the pain is temporarily alleviated." What of self-discipline, they ask, and what of the goal of creating "independent, self-managing adults?"

One alternative approach discussed in this report is to train teachers in basic counseling skills, particularly those of effective listening and nonverbal cues. In one experiment, teachers trained in such techniques increased their communication with problem students, and behavior improved significantly.

Another interesting study found that discipline problems were much less severe in "alternative" high schools. The researchers hypothesized that the factors responsible were "the small size of the school, treatment of students as young adults, realistic attitudes toward student behavior, and informality, responsiveness, and understanding from teachers."
But behaviorism has many faults, the authors emphasize, including the possibility that it may only be treating the symptoms and ignoring the causes of discipline problems.

A new approach to discipline, which has not yet been well developed, is the diagnostic model that the authors explain in this paper. Essentially, the diagnostic model views the teacher as a clinician who informally and objectively observes student behavior, makes a diagnosis as to why the student is misbehaving, and then provides the most appropriate treatment.

The emphasis in the model is on determining the underlying cause of the misbehavior, whether it is a reading deficiency, personal or interpersonal problems, or a family problem. Once the teacher has reasoned out the probable cause of the behavior, he or she can respond in an intelligent way, instead of blindly applying authoritarian or behavioral techniques.

One advantage of this model is that it allows teachers to take a broader view of discipline and to begin to be able to help children with their personal problems. It also gives teachers insight into their own mental processes, resulting in better disciplinary decisions.

Several creative solutions to discipline problems are outlined in this excellent, multi-authored article. Lee Canter, author of Assertive Discipline, discusses his approach to discipline and its one important commandment: "You shall not make a demand that you are not prepared to follow through upon.

Frederic H. Johnson also emphasizes assertiveness, in particular the importance of proper body language in being assertive. Confronting a misbehaving student is like playing poker, says Jones, with both the student and the instructor raising the ante until one folds. With proper tone of voice, body position, and use of Jones's famous "steely glare," the instructor can always win at this game. "When children learn you follow through consistently, that you can't be undone, or faked out, they will quit testing you."

Another section of this seven-part article discusses how to handle those students who are chronic-attention getters. The key is to allow such students to "show off" in a productive manner. For example, instead of constantly battling a student's attention-getting efforts, which only often adds fuel to the fire, the instructor might propose to the student to write a funny story to read to the class at some defined future time. For every two minutes of this kind of positive attention, the student will save fifteen minutes of discipline.

Several other contributors—primarily school administrators and instructors—discuss their schools' successful approaches to discipline.

"For decades," says Jones, "discipline has been a bad word in professional circles," largely because most people connotate only punishment. Even in her training programs at colleges and universities, classroom management techniques are rarely covered in any depth, the rationale being that teachers will "pick it up on the job." Thus, few teachers, even experienced ones, are properly trained in the management of discipline problems.

One solution to this problem is an in-service training program in classroom management, such as the "Classroom Management Training Program" (CMTP) that Jones directs. Rather than training all teachers directly, CMTP uses a pyramid technique that relies on developing expertise in a few teachers and administrators, who then pass on the knowledge to their colleagues.

The most common method of student management is limit setting, or "consistently disallowing infractions of basic classroom rules." First, the instructor sets down a few "reasonable, operational, practical, rules" (in Jones's format that he or she is willing to enforce and quickly enforce). If, for example, a child is talking, the instructor faces the child squarely, says his or her name, looks him or her in the eye. If the child does not respond, the instructor goes through a set procedure of calming the child and explaining the specific point apart. It is necessary, Jones's description of this, absolutely chilling.

Incentive systems can also be powerful disciplinary tools, particularly when they incorporate the element of peer pressure. In one such system, a "preferred activity" explained at the end of a period of work. When students misbehave during the work period, the instructor clicks a stopwatch, raises it above his or her head, and announces to the class that the time for their preferred activity is being reduced by the misbehaving student.


In 1977, a new federal law, the "Education of All Handicapped Children Act," became effective, making the states responsible for providing free, appropriate education for all handicapped individuals from ages three to twenty-one. The result of this law is that many autistic and severely handicapped children who were formerly housed in hospitals or kept at home are now attending public schools.

The main question now facing school administrators, says Johnson, is this: "What are the acceptable procedures teachers may use in controlling severe behavior problems within the confines of a class of severely handicapped children?" To answer this question, the Corona-Norco (California) Unified School District assembled a problem-solving group that included four teachers of handicapped children, a principal, one parent, and Johnson, then serving as the

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GUIDE TO SAVING DISCIPLINE "Instructor, 88, 4 (November, 1979), pp. 59-64. E1 190 970.

Another section of this seven-part article discusses how to handle those students who are chronic-attention getters. The key is to allow such students to "show off" in a productive manner. For example, instead of constantly battling a student's attention-getting efforts, which often only adds fuel to the fire, the instructor might propose to the student to write a funny story to read to the class at some defined future time. For every two minutes of this kind of positive attention, the student will save fifteen minutes of discipline.

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The approved procedures list is a great benefit for the teachers of the handicapped classes, reports Johnson, allowing them to easily explain the program to parents and get their written approval. At the same time, they know exactly what is and is not allowed, and they explain the program to parents and get their written approval. At the same time, they know exactly what is and is not allowed, and they are confident that the defined procedures are fully in line with both administrative policy and state and federal laws. Included is a lengthy discussion of the literature on the disciplining of handicapped children.


Since at least the beginning of this century, the controversy between traditional and humanistic approaches to discipline has raged, with each viewpoint then the other gaining dominance. In the early 1900s, states Kohut, the "Progressive Education Movement challenged the traditional view of discipline with a more permissive and humanistic "self-discipline approach." This viewpoint was in turn attacked by traditionalists, and a back-and-forth approach was eventually restored.

In the 1960s, a new wave of humanism struck, with a resulting deluge of educational reforms and new approaches to classroom communication. Now the tide seems to be turning again, as traditionalists blame declining SAT scores and increased turmoil in the schools on the permissiveness of the humanistic approach. Today's classroom teachers, many of whom were students in the 1960s, are understandably confused and frustrated in their search for effective discipline guidelines. As a first step toward alleviating this confusion, Kohut encourages school personnel to define their ideas about discipline and compare them with their colleagues' conceptions.

To some educators, discipline is synonymous with classroom management. But classroom management is too broad a term, says Kohut, referring to virtually every interaction and activity that takes place in the classroom. Conversely, discipline is not just punishment. Rather, discipline refers to a two-dimensional system of training that involves both imposition by educators and the development of character and self-control by the individual student. Once a school's personnel have agreed on what discipline in the classroom should be, concludes Kohut, they can design an effective and consistent schoolwide discipline program.


Discipline without punishment? That's what the proponents of William Glasser's ideas are saying. Not only is punishment not allowed, but any school that would judge a student's behavior is illegal. The key to the Glasser method, says Lipman, is involvement. "Students cause problems because they are not involved with school. Teachers have little control because they are not involved with students." So the first step is to increase involvement with students by being personal, listening to students, and befriending them.

The next principle of the Glasser method is to "deal with present behavior." When students misbehave, ask them what they did, not why they did it, and the latter inviting "a tangle of finger pointing and accusations." Also, don't dwell on past failures: "Reminding Tommy that this is the ninth time this month he has whacked someone with a ruler encourages a built-in fatalism, a sense that behavior cannot be changed."

After making the student aware of what he or she has done, get the student to make a value judgment about his or her behavior. "This may take some doing," Lipman admits, particularly getting some students to realize the wrongness of their actions. Once this is achieved, through, the teacher can help the student make a plan and a commitment to change that behavior. At all times, the adult and child work together instead of the adult handing down decisions. And even when the child fails, the teacher continues to express confidence that the child can do better next time.

Although proponents claim that punishment plays no part in the Glasser method, certain extreme actions have "natural consequences." The difference, according to Lipman, is that "punishment is often arbitrary and unexpected, but natural consequences come as no surprise."


How can a teacher short-circuit classroom misbehavior before it occurs? One promising approach, outlined in this article, is for the teacher to hold an open house for parents, centered on the theme of classroom discipline.

McLemore recommends that teachers first discuss open house plans with the principal and get his/ her approval. Next, the teacher should explain the open house to the students and their role in it. Invitations sent to parents by mail or carried by students should have a tear-off portion for the parents' responses, and parents who do not reply should be contacted by phone.

The open house itself might include name tags for parents, refreshments served by students, and a program of the hour's events. McLemore suggests that a guest speaker be invited—a teacher, principal, college professor, or school social worker—to give a short talk on the nature and importance of the school's discipline program. A question and answer period should follow.

The primary advantage of having such an open house is that "students will observe the teacher soliciting parental cooperation and support before a discipline problem occurs." Thus, the student will realize that if he or she should misbehave, there is a very good probability that the teacher will contact the parents.

After the open house, parent-teacher conferences should be held to further enhance communication between school and home. The teacher should listen attentively in these conferences, for in many cases the causes of a student's misbehavior will be revealed.
Teachers' pupil-control ideologies can range from the humanistic or permissive to the custodial or authoritarian at the other. Likewise, teachers' actual behaviors in the classroom can vary over the same continuum, but an individual teacher's ideology may or may not match his or her behavior.

The question addressed in this study was whether a teacher's behavior (as perceived by students) and ideology correlated with the drama or excitement that elementary students felt in the classroom. The drama of school life, or its "environmental robustness," as the authors call it, was measured with a questionnaire administered to the 800 fourth, fifth, and sixth graders studied. Teacher behavior on a humanistic-custodial scale was indicated by students on another questionnaire, while the pupil-control ideologies of the seventeen female and fifteen male teachers were measured with a similar rating form administered to the teachers.

The researchers found, contrary to their expectations, that there was a strong correlation between the humanism in a teacher's pupil-control behavior and the robustness that students felt toward their school life. The authors speculate that "the keyway that humanistic teachers give students often leads to disorder and a higher level of conflict than is found in a more custodial classroom," thus giving a higher level of "drama" in the classroom.

In contrast to teacher behavior, there was no significant correlation between teacher ideology and classroom robustness. But when the data for male and female teachers were separated, it was found that each group had a significant but opposite correlation for male teachers, the more custodial their ideology, the more robust teachers perceived their school life for the female teachers, the opposite held true: a humanistic ideology correlated with a robust classroom.

Another behaviorist approach is that of "educational self-management." Misbehaving children are asked to keep a record of their own behavior. If the child's record matches that of the teacher, the child is rewarded. The result of such self-assessment, says Usowa, is that children become much more aware of their own behavior and as a result usually show great improvement in their behavior.

On-Campus Suspension (OCS) is a program instituted at Hemet (California) Junior High School that keeps suspended students on campus rather than rewarding their misdeeds with a home suspension. An OCS program keeps students in a learning environment, states the authors, rather than at home watching television or causing trouble in the community. And in most districts, the money saved in average daily attendance money by keeping the students in school will pay for half or more of the suspension room teacher's salary for the year.

To set up an OCS program, a school needs only a classroom, some textbooks, "an innovative, sensitive teacher," and "a considerable amount of administrative support." Students referred to the program sign a contract stating the work they must complete before being allowed to return to their normal school routine. On the first day, students are given the Kudor Interest Inventory and tests of math, English, and reading comprehension abilities. The Kudor test allows the teacher to open various discussions with the student about likes and dislikes, which sometimes have resulted in needed changes in students' classes.

On the second day, students complete two hours of reading and math and one hour of "values clarification." Students are kept in the suspension room for up to five days, depending on their infractions and their behavior and performance while in the suspension room.

The most important factor in ensuring proper student behavior in the suspension room, state the authors, is isolation from the rest of the student body.

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