

A Learning Approach to School Discipline: Problem Solving Instead of Punishing

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C O N N E X I O N S

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Preface¹

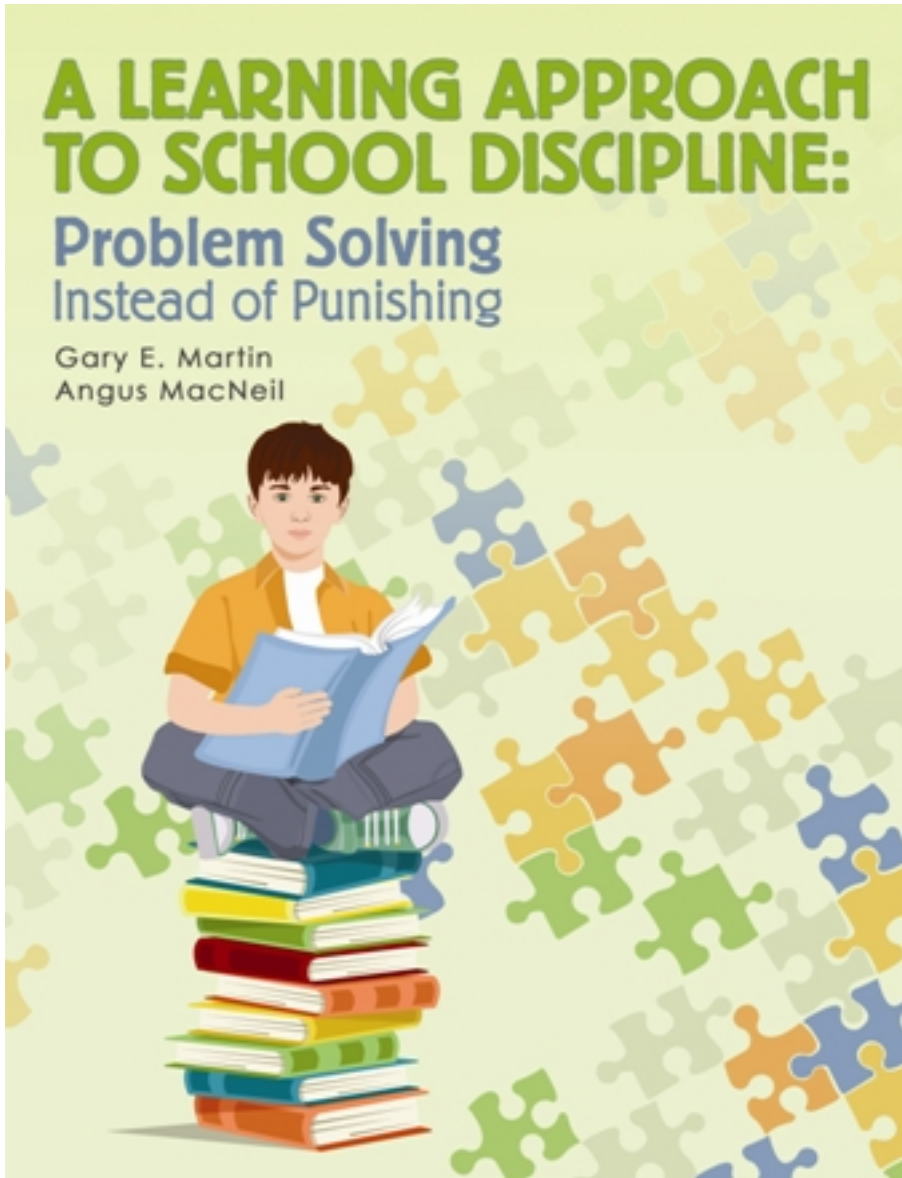
This is a book about school discipline. Add more.

Thanks paragraph from Gary Martin.

Thanks paragraph from Angus MacNeil.

This book will be available through NCPEA Press print-on-demand. Add more. Here is the cover.

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14813/1.3/>>.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1: Creating a Safe Environment

1.1 Discipline as a problem in schools¹

School **discipline** has been, continues to be, and hopefully will not continue to be the number one problem and duty of the school principal and his or her teaching faculty. Providing a “safe and secure” learning environment has always been the hallmark of a successful school principal and a successful school.

The importance of school **discipline** is emphasized repeatedly in surveys, polls, and literature about education and student achievement. The Phi Delta Kappan/Gallup public opinion poll has consistently rated **discipline** as the number one or two problem in response to the question what is the biggest problem facing public schools. Bennett (1999) states that most surveys show that Americans complain that too many schools are disorderly, undisciplined places. He blames schools for not holding students accountable for their actions, and follows that up with an indictment of parents who criticize or sue when the schools do try to instill accountability.

One of the more disturbing revelations about the conduct of students in our schools is “bullying”. Several recent books and articles in scholarly journals have been written on the subject (Smith; Pepler and Rigby, 2004; Espelage, 2003; Marr and Field, 2001; Batsche and Knoff, 1994). Many of these authors and researchers suggest that the reason for bullying in our schools is that it is modeled by school faculties and school leaders. If we define “bullying” as Webster does: the act of intimidating a weaker person to make them do something, then Marr and Field’s (2001) statement maybe much of the cause of the problem in our schools. They clearly state that if bullying is rife in the playground then it’s likely to be rife in the staffroom, and vice-versa. Many of the **discipline** problems dealt with by school principals are generated by teachers. It is not uncommon to hear principals complain that the **discipline** problems in the school are caused more by the teachers than the student.

Educators have always been aware of the difficulties that discipline causes in our schools. Student **discipline** patterns are predictors of future failure in high school, delinquency, special education referral, alternative school placements, and incidents of school violence (Skiba, 2000). While public education was founded with the goal that all children should have access to an education, merely offering the opportunity to learn is no longer enough. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) mandates that schools take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that learning actually takes place for all children. Educational literature repeatedly emphasizes that good school **discipline** is a prerequisite for learning to take place. At the same time that more is expected from schools in terms of academic outcomes, many students come into the schoolhouse without having acquired the social and behavioral skills they need to succeed. Urban students in particular may have learned the skills they need for survival in the community, but those skills are frequently at odds with the expectations for acceptable behavior in the school. Teachers under pressure to show improvement in their students’ performance on state-mandated assessments tend to have little tolerance for classroom behavior problems. Clearly, improving student **discipline** is not only a safety issue, but also an academic

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14625/1.4/>>.

and social imperative.

Sergiovanni (2005) make it clear that little learning is going to take place in a school where there is poor student **discipline** or as he refers to it as a “wild culture”. The first and most important job of the principal is to provide a “safe and secure” environment for the students. To be successful as an instructional leader the school principal must first create an environment that is conducive to student learning and this requires getting the relationships right. This requires each principal to understand the uniqueness of the problems of their school and thorough understanding of the resources available to them to help solve the problem. Each situation will be unique and different and leaders must apply strategies that work for that particular school community

1.2 Why many discipline methods don’t work²

There are many **discipline strategies** that are available to principals and teachers.

Many **school cultures** reflect that student discipline is demonstrated by the lists of “mindboggling rules” with behavior codes and discipline plans that are **punitive** and/or threatening (Barth 1990). The attitude in these schools is that of learn or else receive some kind of punishment, and the discipline plan consists of an “arsenal of sanctions” (Barth, 2004, p. 15). In many cases, this type of stringent discipline policy is adopted not because it is effective, but for its symbolic value – it meets the demands of parents, teachers, and the community to enact tough sanctions (Skiba, 2000; Kohn, 1996). This type of **punitive** approach, however, has not been shown to improve student behavior or overall school safety. In fact, it has been linked to increased acts of aggression and bullying – the very behavior that schools seek to curtail in the first place.

In the early 1990’s, several so-called new disciplinary approaches (Cooperative Discipline, Assertive Discipline, and Discipline with Dignity) became popular in schools across the country. Although they were a step in the right direction in treating students more kindly, they were still largely based on methods of coercion, punishment, and **rewards** . . . in other words, a “subtler, somewhat nicer way by which we can continue to do things to children” (Kohn, 1996, p. 38) to get them to behave in the desired manner. The problem with these types of systems is that they tend to view children as inherently bad or as a problem to be fixed. In order to be made to behave, adults must use power (coercion), discomfort (punishment), or some type of enticement (**rewards**). Over the long term, if the adult is not present, the child has no internalized desire or **incentive** to behave appropriately.

Obviously, educators can’t afford to just step aside and hope that students will automatically grow into responsible adults. Increasingly, the importance of the school’s climate and the relationships within the school are being linked to achieving a disciplined environment (Barth, 2004; Holliday, 2005; Faircloth, 2005). If a strict and **inflexible** code of **punishments** for various disciplinary infractions does not serve to promote school safety and discipline, then what kind of school climate does contribute to good behavior? Some research indicates that “what needs to be improved about schools is their culture, their quality of interpersonal relationships, and the nature and quality of learning experiences” (Barth, 1990, p. 45). The school’s culture is reflected in how faculty, parents, and students treat one another. In particular, the principal has a vital role in shaping **school culture**, with the moral climate of the school reflecting the principal’s **modeling** of **ethical values**, along with the faculty’s character and commitment (Heath, 1999). The relationship between the principal and the teacher becomes the model of what all other relationships in the school will be like (Barth, 2006). The relationship aspect of the school’s culture should be examined as part of any discipline-related initiative in the school. School administrators need to focus on “their **relationship-building** skills and concentrate on enhancing trust, providing support, and ensuring that everyone is working and learning in a safe environment” rather than simply trying to come up with an appropriate behavior/consequence model (Hensley, 2006, p. 26). The creation of a discipline policy must have as its central purpose student self-discipline. It must be flexible and most of all focused to correct the behavior of the student. Schools need to stop offering **rewards** and threatening students with **punishments**.

“If you punish a child for being naughty, and reward him for being good, he will do right merely for the

²This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14626/1.3/>>.

sake of the reward; and when he goes out into the world and finds that goodness is not always rewarded, nor wickedness always punished, he will grow into a man who only thinks about how he may get on in the world, and does right or wrong according as he finds advantage to himself”(Kant)

The “punishment cycle” teaches a disturbing lesson for children. If you don’t like the way someone is behaving, just make something bad happen to that person until they give in. Punishment actually impedes the process of ethical development, because it undermines good values by fostering a preoccupation with self-interest, students need to focus on how other are affected. The punishment cycle turns students into “Philadelphia lawyers”, searching for loopholes, and qualifications that direct the discussion toward technicalities rather than focusing on trying to solve the problem. Students need to be taught skills such as listening, calming themselves, imagining someone else’s point of view.

1.3 Cognitive versus behavioral psychology³

Cognitive versus **behavioral psychology**

“The answers never lie in more **rewards** or **punishments**”

1.3.1 Rationale

The use of **behavioral psychology** to explain how students learn is generally not accepted today. Schools, however, are often locked into the behavioral psychology tradition of requiring written behavioral objectives for academics and that any behavior concern can be remedied with either more **rewards** or more **punishments**. The task is to move your thinking from a **behavioral perspective** to a cognitive perspective.

With a **behavioral perspective** one believes that all learning can be broken down into steps. Once you have the steps, students are guided through the progressive steps until they reach the final objective. Problems arise, however, for the students who need extra steps or different steps. As a result, we have some students making A’s but most making B’s, C’s, D’s and F’s. It is really quite a shame that we use and accept this outdated psychology to guide much of what we do in our instruction.

One young teacher decided to not accept behavioral approaches and used what she learned from cognitive psychology in a summer graduate class. She had only one year of teaching and was about to begin in a new school with many students from the inner-city government housing. This area was largely one of poverty and crime. The other teachers warned her about one of the students who would be in her class. She was told that he would be repeating the second grade and was a miserable speller. The student made mostly twenties on spelling tests.

The young teacher decided to put the class in groups. The groups studied together and would guess what their group average grade would be for the upcoming spelling test. The group that had the closest to their guess won some type of reward. Some of the group guesses were barely over passing. The student who made mostly 20’s the previous year was required to study and review the spelling tests with his group. In this group, the other students explained and demonstrated how they learned to spell the new words. In a few months, the student who had failed every spelling test was now passing. By the end of the year, the student had a B average in spelling. The other students taught this student a better way to learn to spell.

Cognitive psychology believes that students process learning in a multitude of ways. Some students have very efficient thinking and learning strategies and processes, while other have very inefficient ones. With cognitive psychology, the teacher would try to discern the thought process used by the student and either use that to help guide the instruction or try to give the student a better, more efficient method for learning.

There are a couple of very important lessons in this for our purpose of using **problem-solving**. First is that it is impossible to mold and shape every student into our vision of a model student. That belief is a basic tenet of a **behavioral perspective**. “If I can just get him or her to do this or that, then he or she will be a model student.” Somehow, all their beliefs, experiences, and ways of thinking will all match this model student. At best, this is like pushing a rock up hill and at worst, completely naïve and impossible. Teaching students to problem-solve cannot be a one size fits all and hope that by putting them through a

³This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14650/1.4/>>.

series of lessons, they will learn and use a new behavior. You must discover why and how they came up with their decision to act in that particular way.

The second lesson is that all the **rewards** and all the **punishments** in the world are not going to get an inefficient way of learning or thinking to change. Students are making decisions every time they make an action. Their decisions are based on their experience, beliefs, wants, and needs. The answer to helping each student lies in the teacher's or principal's ability to better understand the students' past experiences, current beliefs, and what it is that they either want or need. Much of this information comes from your listening to the students in the first two steps of problem solving.

Practical Application

In the first step of defining the problem, it is vital that your goal be to understand the perspective – the thinking of the student. Odds are that the student was in fact, using logic but the logic was based on incorrect beliefs. This is not the time to correct the student but to listen and understand. In the second step the student explains what he/she chose to do and why. Additional crucial information from the student is forthcoming in this step if real listening occurred in the first step.

If the problem is between a student and the teacher, the teacher also has a golden opportunity to explain his or her beliefs to the student. If the teacher is unable to work things out with the student, the principal can serve a vital role as the neutral third party. Again, if you are going to build a **positive relationship** with the student, you must better understand each other. If you are going to help the student, you must understand the student. You do not have to go into a therapy session, just deal with school behavior and the thinking that accompanied the **inappropriate behavior**.

Much of this is common sense and combined with your experience of observing hundreds of other children, you are more than qualified to assist each student. You may, however, realize that the thought processes of a particular student are just too bizarre for you. In these cases, be sure to find a trained professional to help the student. As mentioned earlier, many cases need the principal to be involved. He or she can truly help any impasses between teachers and students and again, some problems either need a third party or **administrative action**. When the principal serves in this capacity of supporting and helping the teachers and students, he or she becomes the #1 Problem Solver.

As written earlier, decisions are easy if you have all the accurate information. Only with the view of learning from cognitive psychology will you ask the right questions. These typically are, “what were you picturing or thinking when you decided to act in that manner?” and “why do you think you saw it that way or believed that was true?” Most often you will get some background information that is needed to understand the student. At the very least, you will have additional information and better be able to explain why other **alternatives** might work better for the student. This can also be an excellent time to discuss how a new alternative might fit better with any of the aspects of character. You will use your own judgment and experience with the student for these decisions.

We apologize for this very narrow and oversimplified comparison of behavioral and cognitive psychology. But do not apologize for asking you to quit wasting time believing you can mold and shape students with **rewards** and **punishments**. Your time is better spent getting to know how each individual student is thinking and helping each **unique student** to learn to solve their problems.

1.3.2 Expected Outcomes

- Principals and teachers make better decisions and are more effective with students.
- Students learn more **efficient methods** for learning and both academic and **social learning** are increased.
- Students' success in problem solving is greatly increased.
- Principals and teachers and students understand each other better and form a more **positive relationship**.
- **Disruptive behavior** is greatly reduced.

Keywords: **behavioral psychology, problem-solving, behavioral perspective, punishments, inappropriate behavior, administrative action, alternatives, unique student, rewards, efficient**

methods, social learning, positive relationship, disruptive behavior

1.4 Empowering students versus controlling students⁴

“Don’t give up power – give out power”

1.4.1 Rationale

Although this is part of the title of the book, it is so important and vital that it must be considered one of the major tasks. The greatest lesson that can be learned by students is that they have the power to change things in their lives. It is surprising how few students realize this and how long it takes for some to finally know this to be true. We believe that the best way to show and convince students that this is true is to problem solve.

Problem solving forces students to look at their choice of actions and the results of those actions. They cannot deny the facts or shove the **blame** to anyone else. They know what they did and they know what happened as a result. Although these are usually the negative behaviors and **negative results**, they soon begin to see how new choices are producing positive results.

The realization of this **power** causes **increased self-esteem**. Who would have thought that numerous incidences of misbehavior would result in such an enlightening truth? This is simply because every incident requires **self-reflection** and learning. And those who once caused most of the classroom disruptions are now the ones learning, maturing, and finally feeling better about themselves.

In a large California elementary school that began using **problem-solving**, the young the vice-principal laminated the seven problem solving steps and taped it to her desk. Every student who came in had to go through the steps. She noticed that several things happened. First, she liked her job much more because she felt she was teaching, instead of investigating and punishing. She also said that many students would come and see her, even if they were not in trouble. They wanted her advice and to talk more about problem-solving. Her final remark was extremely satisfying when they finally realized they could solve their own problems, and she never saw them for discipline again.

1.4.2 Practical Application

Discuss, show, describe, and highlight the **power** each of your students has when problem solving. Problem solving itself does most of the work. The students soon learn the **power** they have to make things better or worse. Your job is to reinforce it and guide the students in using it in positive manners.

When principals use and support a **problem-solving** program, it greatly enhances the success of problem solving for the teachers. It also greatly assists the students in knowing that they truly must learn to solve their own problems, whether a teacher or an administrator requires it. Besides, principals need to be involved in some problems. One of the reasons why all office referrals are not stopped is because some problems require administrative action. Most administrators are pleased to go from the number one punisher to the number one problem-solver.

Teachers need the support of the principal Principals need the support of the teachers. They both have one other tremendous source of support – the students. Most students figure out your new system very quickly. They soon see that if you have a problem, it is your problem. Very often they help and assist each other. Often they also tease and say things like “Can’t you solve the problem you are having?” We have also heard students say things such as “Don’t **blame** the teacher; she is just trying to help you”. It will surprise you how much support you will receive from the students.

A remarkable side effect is that once the students know that each of them is **responsible** for solving his or her problems, it is not cool to disrupt in class. The other students begin to view this as an inability to solve a problem, not a brave student challenging the teacher’s authority and control. Not being highly

⁴This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14654/1.4/>>.

regarded by other students has a significant effect on most students and they soon learn other ways to act in school.

Empowering students results in greater **power** for the teacher and principal. Your students support what you are doing and in almost every case, parents support you. After you have proven yourself to the disruptive students, they decide not to act up around you. You have conquered; you have won; you have empowered many former dependent and powerless students – and all by teaching, not **disciplining**.

1.4.3 Expected Outcomes

- The principal and the teacher have greater **power**.
- The students have greater **power** and lose the feeling of **helplessness** and **dependency**.
- Students begin to change their world for the better.
- Student self-esteem is increased.
- A closer **relationship** between the students and the teacher and principal is formed.

1.5 School as community versus school as factory⁵

“The notion of community is about **relationships** that exist between and among people”.

Many leaders of schools use the classical **organizational theory** of management that proposes a **hierarchical top down management** approach to organizing and leading. This approach has its roots deeply imbedded in the mechanistic, bureaucratic organizational theories that were endorsed by organizational theorists such as Max Weber and Frederick Taylor. This theory of management helped to shape the concepts of **efficiency** and **effectiveness** needed to turn the cottage industry of the nineteenth century into the modern factory system of the twentieth century. The adoption of this bureaucratic theory using the Carnegie units of grades and specializations adopted by the modern school system has resulted in the modern factory schools where the product is the student prepared for the work force to fuel the economy. The problem with this **organizational theory** for schools is that students are not products and don't usually respond positively to a culture that adds to them as if they were a car on an assembly line. Many students fall by the wayside in this factory model as rejects or seconds off the assembly line. When the rejects or second reach a significant proportion of the population the system often switches from the factory model to the prison model and instead of preparing students for the economy we guard them from any influence on the society.

Another much older model for school is the concept of “**school as community**” a learning community. This concept of school was prevalent in the Greek academies and the Roman lyceums and the monastic schools of the Middle Ages. This alternative to the factory school is widely used in many of the countries' best private schools. The notion of school as a learning community is based on shared beliefs, values, and attitudes. Shared beliefs, values, and attitudes need to be developed using a normative approach. This approach means that **relationships** are based on belonging, identifying with place, providing members with **security**, sense and meaning. The ties that bind us come from sharing with others a common commitment to a set of ideas and ideals.

Building or creating community in school is not an easy process; it requires a great commitment, expertise and leadership that reflect a profound understanding of the educational process. The notion of **school as community** often eludes many of our schools. **School as community** requires a different focus than many of us are trained or have a disposition to develop. Modern organizations with relations that are formal and distant tend to focus on prescribed roles and expectations and evaluate by universal criteria as embodied in policies, rules and protocols. These organizations focus on rights where as organizations that build community focus on discretion, freedom and responsibility. Building community requires us to put **human needs** before organizational needs. The key to community-building is involving and showing support for all members of the school, but the role played by teachers, who have the most direct relationship with students, is especially important. Schools that have this type of leadership are caring and nurturing

⁵This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14666/1.3/>>.

place that create **collegial teaching environments** for teachers and successful learning environments for students.

The importance of informal interpersonal **relationships** is the most dynamic source of power in organizations today (Kanter, 1996). Schools need to use this power to develop commitment, equality and justice. Building Community through school culture requires leaders that have a strong sense of purpose and encourage **reflection** and **dialogue**.

1.6 Keywords for Chapter 1⁶

alternatives

Behavioral psychology

choice

dependency

empower

enhance

golden opportunity

increased self-esteem

learning strategies

model student

positive relationship

reinforce

⁶This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14680/1.5/>>.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2: An Alternative Approach to discipline

2.1 Proactive versus reactive¹

Several education experts agree that the ultimate goal of discipline is to teach children to behave well on their own – in other words, to impart self-discipline (Bennett, 1999; Kohn, 1999; Maeroff, 1998). Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (2001 edition) gives 11 definitions of discipline, 9 of which have to do with training to conform to a set of rules and only 2 of which have to do with **punishment**. However, society’s notion of school discipline tends to be that of **punishment** rather than teaching students to be **self-disciplined** (Cartledge, 2001; Kohn, 2004).

Relationships are also a key factor in achieving a safe, well-disciplined school. There will never be enough technological fixes like metal detectors and security cameras to make students feel safe (Kohn, 2004). Rather, safety comes from human relations – when students feel connected to each other and to the adults in the school, then they begin to feel safe. In this context, school connection is defined as the belief by students that the adults in the school genuinely care about their learning as well as their **personal well-being** (Faircloth, 2005). Where a school runs into trouble is when stated values are not in synch with what the students actually experience. This produces cynical students who don’t take seriously what the school says it values. All school faculty members have to be consistent in making sure their actions are in line with what they say. Having a school climate where students and teachers feel safe, supported, and respected provides the foundation for good discipline. As self-discipline and good behavior become the norm in the school, the climate will in turn continue to improve. Climate and discipline feed on each other, spiraling upward as improvement continues.

Many educational leaders have noted a link between a **disciplined environment** and **student achievement**, with time being one of the crucial factors in the learning process (Berliner, 1990; Schlechty, 2002; Kohn, 1996). In order for a student to master a skill or understand a topic, he must spend time working to acquire that skill or knowledge. Increasing the amount of time on task resulted in higher achievement (Berliner, 1990). The typical disciplinary system results in reduced time on task, whether by disrupting the in-class learning environment for all students, or by removing the offender from the class via **office referral**, **suspension**, or **expulsion**.

Obviously, it is not enough that students merely spend more time on task, but that the tasks they are asked to do be meaningful to the student (Schlechty, 2002). Students must be meaningfully engaged in order for useful learning to take place. Teaching practices that allow students to make decisions in the normal course of the curriculum (e.g. deciding what process to use in math, putting themselves in a character’s place in literature, etc.) support the development of self-discipline. Faircloth’s (2005) study of students in a North

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14662/1.3/>>.

Carolina alternative setting found that the more opportunities students had to make decisions and defend their choices, the stronger their mental structures became for making decisions in all facets of their lives (p. 29-30). The more attention is paid to student engagement in the learning process, the less time is needed for dealing with rule infractions and trying to determine appropriate consequences. Conversely, discipline problems tend to arise when students are not sufficiently engaged in the learning process (Schlechty, 2002; Kohn, 1996). They act out of simple boredom, frustration with the work they are being asked to do, or desperation to avoid ridicule.

All staff should be cognizant of their role in modeling good ethical behavior and values as they go about their daily activities. By involving everyone in these efforts, system-wide change is possible, with powerful and lasting effects for students. A school-wide focus on creating dynamic and engaging lessons that are meaningful to students would contribute to improved student classroom behavior along with any academic achievement gains that might be produced. Some possibilities in this area are building time for team planning and collaboration into teacher schedules, focusing staff development sessions on content-specific teaching strategies, and the sharing of lessons amongst teachers along with an opportunity to give feedback. In particular, new teachers need to not only understand the role they themselves play in influencing student behavior, but need to receive specific training in how to go about setting up an **effective classroom**.

School leaders need to focus on relationships rather than rules in order to create a culture and climate that reduces serious acting out behaviors of students. One important way to do this is to have the student handbooks reflect the policies of the school in expectations, **routines** and procedures rather than rules. Schools need very few rules to function well but students teachers and other school personnel need clear guidelines about what is expected of them and how they can access the system by understanding the **routines** and procedures that allow the relationships to function without **negative confrontation** and **conflict**. Expectations, **routines** and procedures give teachers the opportunity to teach students rather than punish students for **breaking rules**. It allows for a culture of **proactive intervention** without running the relationship between the teacher and the student.

2.2 Support your teachers and students²

2.2.1 Always Remain on the Student's Side

“Get off their backs and get on their sides”

Everyone needs someone in their corner, someone they can depend upon, someone to be there when they makes **mistakes**. For some students, there is no one. The principal and/or the teacher can be the person they can depend upon, in their corner, and along their side. All it takes is to keep your **expectations** high, teach them to solve their problems, support and believe in them after **mistakes** or **failures**, and recognize them and their progress.

As a summary of using these methods versus discipline and punishments, we wanted to let you view this in a table (visual) format. We believe the following to be accurate and true.

2.2.2 A Teaching System Versus A Discipline System

Student is responsible	Teacher is responsible
Self-control	Controlled by adults
Respect limits	Obey rules
Assisting	Ordering
Caring	Impersonal
Natural	Unnatural
Working together	Working in opposition
Student makes a difference	Teacher makes a difference
Using freedoms	Denying freedoms

²This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14669/1.3/>>.

Personal growthPersonal failures
 Student is importantSystem is important
 Perceived as fairArbitrary / Punitive
 High **expectations**Strict
 Positive relationshipNegative relationship
 EnjoyableFrustrating
 Little stressHigh stress
 ConsequencesPunishments
 On the student's sideOn the student's back

2.3 Help students meet their potential and expectations³

“Everyone does their best to meet their needs”

2.3.1 Rationale

Clinical psychologists and psychiatrists do an excellent job in working with the extremely disturbed members of our population. They seldom believe in or support the various needs theories. Needs theories are seldom appropriate for use with serious mental disorders. Despite this fact, we believe that most people, including your students, are motivated to act in ways to meet their natural wants and needs. Whether supported by all (and no theories are) or not, we find significant improvements in students when teachers use the following basic wants or needs.

First is the want for **recognition**. This was presented previously and described as magical. It is important to understand that it is not awards, trophies, or gold stars, but a personal **recognition**. It is the **recognition** of one's natural gifts, talents, unique personality, or individual accomplishment. Most schools have numerous awards and methods of giving what they believe to be **recognition**. Quite often, 20% of the students receive 80% of these awards. Very few of our 20% of the students who are labeled disruptive receive any traditional school awards.

We are not recommending stopping traditional school awards, but adding to them. Add what means much more to students – **personalized recognition**. An example it to tell a lady she has a beautiful dress. She probably says thank you and quickly forgets. But, if the lady were told how beautiful she looked in that dress or how it brought out her eyes or skin color, she would most likely remember and it would mean much more. If the **recognition** program is **individualized** and **personalized**, not only is it more meaningful and memorable, but everyone is eligible for **recognition**. Every student is gifted in something!

We often tell faculties that no child wants attention. After looks of disbelief, we go on to say that attention is not their ultimate goal. Attention is only a means or opportunity to be recognized. Once the student receives the **recognition** (that you know their gifts and how special they are), the desire for attention. Most teachers begin with finding what to recognize in their disruptive students and often continue until they have recognized the whole class.

Elementary schools typically find numerous methods to recognize students. One teacher called each parent and asked for one word that would best describe how special their child was—but not to not tell the child yet. The teacher put each word given by the parents on a paper star and taped them on the wall. The activity was to see how many students could identify their classmates by the words on the wall. Most of the students were able to identify the correct students. Another teacher chose one student per week to stand in the middle of the room and the other students had to say one good thing about him or her. These and many other similar activities can have a lasting positive effect on each student.

The second is the need for **belonging**. All of your students are trying to find where they belong and with whom. The task is to find a way for all the students to feel that they belong. This can be accomplished in numerous ways. Principals and teachers can greet students as they enter the school or class, use our school

³This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14657/1.3/>>.

and our class instead of my school or my class, form learning teams or work groups, assign school and **class responsibilities** for a period of time, and an endless list of others. Finding what will work for every student sometimes takes some creative thought. The easiest way to find answers to what or how students want to belong is to ask the students.

The third need you should consider is the **need for touch**. We know that small newborn animals enter a starvation mode when the parents are gone to gather food. The starvation mode is essential for survival, but stops growth and development. When the parents return and touch the newborns, they spring back to their energetic and growing selves.

Some time ago, there was a documentary on television about a man who spent most of his life in prison. After release from prison he began to work with youth gang members and was very successful. He told the story about his **life changing** after he received a very caring hug from a female counselor. He knew then the power of touch and used it in helping young kids in gangs.

It is a shame that a few disturbed educators practicing inappropriate touch have caused most of us in education today to stop all touching. Regardless of these few, we should consider finding appropriate ways to touch our students in need. We realize there are many teachers who might not want to do this and many students who would rather not be touched, but the fact is – it is needed. Fortunately, elementary teachers have many more opportunities for appropriate touch and can reach most of our younger students. As the students mature, we have to be much more sensitive to how we use touch.

The fourth need is the need for hope. Without hope, students lose motivation for learning and performing in school. The best ways for meeting this need are to offer hope and stop practicing methods that take away hope. **Recognition** and teaching to solve one's problems give hope. Learning from your mistakes gives hope. Knowing you are making progress gives hope. Likewise, having your name on the board destroys hope. Getting a zero with no means to makeup the work destroys hope. Suspensions, detentions, being criticized instead of helped, destroys hope. Accepting failing grades instead of giving incompletes destroys hope. Being allowed to go through a school year and not belong to anyone or anything destroys hope. The easiest and most effective way to significantly increase the hope in your students is to simply stop the practices that destroy hope.

A final example to illustrate the effect of these needs is to look at gang membership. There are many students today who find no **recognition, belonging, touch, or hope** from school. We fervently believe that your students will seek to meet their needs in positive ways first; but will seek inappropriate ways only after giving up on the appropriate ones. The sad fact is that gangs provide for all of these needs. They give **recognition, belonging, touch, and hope**, along with many other needs. The task for principals and teachers is to make sure students can meet their needs in school before they give up and seek gang membership. They are all good - just trying to meet their needs!

2.3.2 Practical Application

Investigate and find what is so special about each of your students. You may begin with your disruptive ones first, if you want. In one way or another, let each one of these students know that you are aware of their unique talents or skills. Seek to find numerous ways for each of your students to feel that they belong to the school and class. Be careful not to assume that being assigned to a group will satisfy this need. To get a true sense of **belonging**, the student needs to feel personally accepted in the group. This is often accomplished by being invited into a group or taking an active part in a group.

Find and use appropriate touch with your students. This is most effective after you have formed a **positive relationship** and developed trust with them. At the very least, it is always appropriate to greet and congratulate with a handshake. You will have to exercise good judgment with touch and be sensitive to the fact that some may have had prior inappropriate or abusive experiences.

Use every opportunity to bring hope into your school and to each student. Learning from one's mistakes and realizing the progress they are making is extremely hopeful. Review all practices and procedures that you now use and view them in the light of giving or taking away hope. Stop all practices that destroy hope and find new ones that offer hope.

When problem-solving with your students, note any needs that the students mention when explaining the circumstances or their actions. If other needs or wants surface, try to find positive ways for the students to meet these needs.

Expected Outcomes

- Students learn to meet their needs in positive ways.
- Students have a greater sense of **satisfaction** and **fulfillment** in school.
- Disruptive behavior is greatly reduced and very often eliminated.
- The possibility of the principal or teacher being a special person in the life of the student is increased greatly.
- The possibility of the school being a special place for the student is increased greatly.
- Students grow, develop, and learn more in school.

2.4 Teach freedom and limits⁴

“We all want freedoms and we all need **limits**”

2.4.1 Rationale

With the exceptions of not having to line up and getting to move from class to class, seniors in high school have the same amount of freedom as first-graders. How can our students grow and develop if they have no room to do it? How can we get more from our students if we expect no more? The typical system we have in our schools today is reminiscent of one big group punishment. Because a few do not have adequate social skills to handle increased freedoms, no one gets the chance.

Very often if young children get into trouble at home, they are told to sit down, do not talk, and sit still. Then they go skipping off to school and are told to sit, do not talk, and be still. Some must believe they are already in trouble! They sit, stuck, wearing invisible leg irons, handcuffs, and neck braces (because you cannot be looking around). It is no wonder that they go crazy at lunch, recess, and between classes. This system makes it very difficult for the principal and teachers. They are asked to be educators, but expected to also be a jailor. Not exactly the reason why you wanted to be a principal or teacher!

Most teachers would like to have a more relaxed, yet active learning environment, but usually do not have students with the skill or experience to function in such a classroom. Even though we know that individual learning is the slowest form of learning and cooperative learning far exceeds it, many teachers gave up trying to use it. It is not because of learning, but because of the students' inability to behave appropriately. This is due to a lack of **social knowledge** and skill on the part of the students. If we are going to support the use of active instructional strategies, we must help the students learn their role in this type of environment.

To add to the significance of this example, one needs to consider what business has been asking of schools for many years. Business wants employees that can work together, seek help from others, and give help to others. For the most part, schools call this cheating. Our belief in teaching only for academics and punishments will do all the teaching necessary for social skill has caused great harm for students, teachers, and administrators. Punishments will never allow teachers to effectively use **cooperative group learning**; only teaching students the necessary social skill will.

In a suburban San Antonio intermediate school (4th and 5th grades), the faculty said that one of their biggest headaches was the morning time before classes began. They required all of the students to be in the gym and had many teachers on duty. Every morning there were numerous office referrals and it was not enjoyable for either students or staff. They asked what to do. The response was to ask the students what they wanted and what expectations they needed to place on themselves in order to get it.

The fifth-graders wanted to be allowed to use the schoolyard in the mornings where there was more room and away from the fourth-graders. They provided a list of things they would do to handle this new **freedom**.

⁴This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14671/1.3/>>.

The principal and the fifth-grade teachers agreed to let them try. In the following month, there were no office referrals from the fifth-graders and the fourth-graders (that remained in the gym) were doing much better. The new **freedom** for the fifth-graders resulted in higher freedom, expectations, and performance. Increased freedom and higher expectations for students as they mature is not only logical, but mandatory if we are going to get higher performance and **responsibility**.

The example of the fifth-graders gaining a new **freedom** is a good example of the ability of even younger students to accept and handle new and greater freedoms. Prior to allowing this freedom, the fifth-grade teachers met and devised a lesson on freedoms and **limits**. Students were very familiar with the term rules, but had not really thought about how everyone has to find a balance between freedoms and limits. An example of this is the freedom to drive but the restriction on speed. Another is freedom of speech but the limitation on threatening speech, lying in court, and yelling "fire" in a theater. Once the students understood the concept of freedoms and limits, they were able to come up with many excellent examples as well.

The main point is that teaching freedoms and **limits** is needed. This is a deeper concept than obeying rules. It is learning about life. It is about using freedoms within necessary **limits**. So, the intermediate students asked for the **freedom** and performed within the necessary and agreed upon limits. The students felt they won. They believed that it was worth living within the **limits** in order to have this new **freedom**. Gaining this new freedom resulted in a significant lesson in life. Earning this reward was more meaningful than receiving a typical school or class reward.

This example can be transferred to the previous thoughts on cooperative learning. In most cases, students want to work in groups. If teachers approach cooperative learning with the freedoms and **limits** perspective, they find that the students assist with its implementation. Students view cooperative learning as a **freedom**, not another class rule.

Using freedoms appropriately while respecting reasonable **limits** is the definition of **self-control**. Only when students gain new freedoms can we increase student expectations. Only with new freedoms comes the learning of new limits. The choice is to continue to force students into following the rules of **confinement** or become the emancipator. Will some abuse the new **freedom**? Yes. Will some simply not know how to handle it? Yes. But then we get to teach, **problem solve**, and build positive relationships and develop **self-control**.

2.4.2 Practical Application

Whether it is cooperative learning, the **freedom** to go to the library, open campus, or whatever, teaching students to find the balance between freedoms and **limits** will greatly assist you in having the type of school climate you desire. The first step is to define and agree (with the students and teachers) what that school culture and climate currently is. It will help if you literally list the freedoms and list the **limits** that you now have. You will probably see a much longer list of limits than freedoms. As you recall from the task on setting high expectations, rules and **limits** are usually very low expectations. So, if your list is mostly **limits**, you will need to raise the expectations and seek more of a balance between the two.

Your perspective and teaching that privileges and **positive student expectations** are freedoms help the students begin to view these as freedoms. With this view, the students are much more likely to respect any **limits** in order to gain or continue to have their freedoms. They will now know and remember that all freedoms come with **limits** and it is their **responsibility** to respect both.

Your students, your vision for the school you desire, mandatory rules and regulations, and many other factors will influence your decision whether significant changes are needed. Often, simply rewording student expectations from negative **limits** to positive freedoms can greatly assist in having more of a balance. Students accept expectations like "Students are expected to help others in their learning, but complete tests individually." They have little respect for "No Cheating."

So, whether you make major changes, e.g., an open campus at lunch, hall passes not required, students choosing their groups or assignments, or minor changes, the task is to know, understand, model, teach, and find the balance of freedoms and **limits**. Most successful principals and teachers with this task implement changes in small steps. As the students accept initial freedoms and behave appropriately, they are ready to accept greater freedoms. As the adults see improved responsible behavior from smaller freedoms, they will

likewise be more acceptable to allowing greater freedoms. This task often surprises principals and teachers at how much better their students behave with their new earned freedoms.

2.4.3 Expected Outcomes

- Students will learn a lifelong lesson about freedoms and **limits**.
- The school will have a more enjoyable climate.
- Students will learn greater **social knowledge** and skill.
- The principal and the teachers and students build more positive relationships.
- Students learn to accept more **responsibility**.
- Student expectations are increased.
- Disruptive behavior is greatly reduced.

2.5 Teach responsibilities along with rights⁵

“You cannot teach self-control if you are totally in **control**”

2.5.1 Rationale

At a private psychiatric residential treatment center in the Texas hill country, a new child-care worker experienced a valuable lesson. It was lunchtime and he was responsible for walking his group of adolescent boys from the bunkhouse to the dining room. All of the boys began walking except one that sat on the ground and refused to go. So, the child-care worker pulled, pushed, and carried him most of the way. When he arrived at the door of the dining room, the head psychiatrist stood a few feet away laughing.

He asked the child-care worker to come over and said he had two words for him: “Forget them”. He went on to explain that if we did everything for these kids, they would never learn to take any **responsibility**. If the boy missed lunch, he missed lunch. If he lost the afternoon privileges, he lost the privileges. He further asked “Are you going to carry him around for the rest of his life?” He told the worker to just tell him that you expected him to be at lunch and walk away; just forget him. Later that week, he tried it, and the boy followed with the group (although the last one to go) to the dining room.

In most countries in the world, if students **disrupt** in class or school, they embarrass themselves and their family. In the U.S., the principal and the teacher are embarrassed. This is because the principal and the teacher in the U.S. are held responsible for **student behavior**. In other countries, the student is held responsible. Why do we do this to ourselves?

Most students are led to believe that if they obey adults, things will go well for them. So, if things do not go well for them, the adults are at fault. They get angry with principals and teachers (and parents) because they do as they were told and their lives are far from wonderful. Why should principals and teachers, who give their lives for their students, receive **criticism** and **blame** for trying to teach and assist them? The rewards for being totally in **control** are not worth it.

The goal of student self-control and being responsible is an impossible dream if students have no **control** or **responsibility** to work with. Many educators believe that students who turn all their homework in, come to school regularly, and get to class on time are being responsible. In truth, they are only obeying. Unless a student takes an active part in developing the program, choosing assignments, or anything else, he/she has no **responsibility** for it. Giving students new or increased **control** or freedom requires that they accept new or increased **responsibility**. Likewise, asking students to accept new or increased **responsibility** demands giving them more freedom or **control**. It is crucial to give both some **control** and some **responsibility**. There is no other way.

Although this is a valuable thing to do for students, it is also valuable for principals and teachers. They do not deserve the weight of all the **responsibility** and the **criticism** and **blame** that accompanies it.

⁵This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14672/1.3/>>.

They deserve to have good days, despite some students having bad ones. Students have their youth and all the energy needed to work hard in school. The educators should not have to do all of the work. It is time to shift more of the work and responsibility to the students. It is time to enjoy the students and assist in their efforts at being responsible, solving problems, and making good decisions.

2.5.2 Practical Application

This task is more of a change of perspective than much work to do. It is also a guide or philosophy for future planning and use. It is part of the rationale for quitting disciplining and just teach. Be sure to review the role you defined for yourself and the students. Ensure that **responsibility** was given to the student for learning, learning from mistakes, and taking responsibility for their actions.

It is also recommended that you review all of the **procedures** and **expectations** that you currently have in light of who is responsible? Who is doing all of the pulling, pushing, and carrying? Ensure that student **responsibility** is at the challenge level, not at a primary level. You will be surprised at how quickly the 80% of the students accept and meet higher levels of **responsibility**. And, after the vast majority of students are demonstrating this **responsibility**, they have a tremendous positive impact on the other 20% of the students.

If you review what we have said so far, we have asked that students accept **responsibility** for their actions, solving their own problems, and meeting higher positive **expectations**. In return, we have given them input into the process, a greater degree of choice in their decisions, and the freedom to make mistakes. We are also ending all **punishments**. I would say they have gained a lot for the responsibility that we are now requiring them to take.

2.5.3 Expected Outcomes

- Principal and teacher stress is greatly reduced.
- **Responsibility** is placed where it is needed – on the student.
- Student self-esteem is increased.
- Students learn and mature at a faster rate.
- A healthier and more natural relationship between the teacher and the students is formed.
- Disruptive behavior is greatly reduced.

2.6 Key Words for Chapter 2⁶

attention
 disrupt
 environment
 expectations
 proactive
 recognition
 routines
 school climate
 self-control
 zero tolerance

⁶This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14676/1.3/>>.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3: Be a Problem Solver—not a problem controller

3.1 Require students to use the problem solving steps¹

3.1.1

3.1.2 Rationale

Classrooms and schoolyards are filled with students with varying degrees of **social knowledge** and skill. They behave in a manner consistent with their experience and resulting beliefs. Some behaviors are appropriate and result in positive outcomes, while others are inappropriate and result in negative outcomes. In order for students to learn from these experiences and produce more appropriate and positive outcomes, they need help and assistance. They need someone to teach them, not discipline them.

The greatest lesson we can teach our students is the knowledge and skill to solve problems. Although many educators believe we are accomplishing this in math, science, and other subject areas, the most relevant situations for using this skill are with real life problems. Most students have shown the ability to learn this skill and most have been able to transfer the skill to the academic side of school. Very few have been able to transfer academic problem solving to social situations.

The steps in problem solving are basically the identical steps used in **decision-making**. Thus, by teaching problem solving, we are in effect teaching **decision-making**. The traditional schools of the past have seldom included **decision-making** in the curriculum, believing that decisions for students came after graduation. Until that time, students' responsibilities were to simply obey the rules and meet the requirements set down by the board, administration, and classroom teachers.

In truth, students are making decisions constantly. In today's world, some of the decisions facing them are extremely important and some are potentially dangerous. Should I quit school, marry this person or that one, use drugs, drive while under the influence, prepare for college, play sports, or join a gang? Many of the decisions students make while in school have a lasting effect on their lives. Perhaps teaching how to make decisions is the most crucial skill in the entire curriculum.

The five problem solving steps presented in this book are a combination of the steps most often cited in scientific problem solving with a view espoused by William Glasser (1986). The final two steps were added following implementation and the realization that both were vital for success. The seven steps are:

Step One: What is YOUR problem? Define and Agree.

Step Two: What did YOU choose to do? And Why?

Step Three: What are the results of YOUR choice (decision)?

Step Four: What other choices could YOU make?

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14665/1.3/>>.

Step Five: What do YOU choose to do now and next time?

Step Six: Demonstrate that YOU can do it?

Step Seven: How can I help YOU?

These problem-solving steps are the core - the heart and soul of the book. They should appear very familiar and simple common sense. Most principals and teachers believe they are using problem solving with students, but in most cases it tends to be a lecture after punishments are doled out. Their results vary according to student and circumstance, but for the most part, are not effective in changing student behavior. This book will present a different slant to using problem solving and combined with the following nineteen tasks, will give you a strategy that truly works in changing students' experiences, beliefs, attitudes and behavior.

3.1.3 Practical Application

Require every student to go through the following problem solving steps with every problem that arises.

3.1.3.1 Step One: What is YOUR problem? Define and Agree

It is critical that students identify the problem as their problem. Many want to see the problem as someone else's and therefore try to exclude themselves from any responsibility. Even if another was aggressive or adding to the problem, they are still having a problem with it. Ownership of the problem is the first step.

It is also critical that the student and the other party agree on what the problem is. Often, different people see the problem quite differently. In requiring agreement of the definition of the problem, each perspective is included. Whether this is between two students, the teacher and the student, or the principal and the student, great learning can occur from consideration of differing perspectives. The students or the adult and student begin to learn about each other and from each other.

In many years of requiring students to define the problem we have learned many things. First, most problems usually are communication problems. This is either miscommunication or lack of communication. The student thought the other student did or said one thing, when in fact, they did or said another. The student thought the teacher meant this, when in fact, the teacher's intention was quite different. Conversely, the principal and/or teacher believe the student behaved in a certain manner due to some apparent reason, when in fact, it was because of another reason unknown to them.

Principals, teachers, and students report that they were surprised at the new things they learned about and from each other. From our experience and numerous principal and teacher reflections, we believe much of this is due to the new and different expectation and setting for the problem solving discussion. Each person involved in the problem is required to explain him/herself and his or her belief and perspective. The student experiences a more one-on-one encounter with the principal and/or teacher, as opposed to him or her lecturing behind the desk or at the front of the room. We often heard both student and adult comment on how they never realized the other was a real person or very different than expected. Most comments were very positive as each learned more about the other.

In one memorable case in a Texas school, a teacher and student entered the office. The teacher reported that the student was uncooperative and did not want to discuss the problem with her. The principal asked the student what he thought the problem was and he said that a couple of his friends would talk or make jokes and when the teacher saw that he was not paying attention, she would ask him for an answer to what she had just said. He went on to say that this was embarrassing and the teacher made him look stupid when she knew it was his not paying attention that was the problem. "Why doesn't she just tell the truth and tell me to pay attention, not give me a question to something I didn't hear?"

The teacher thought about this for a while and said the student was absolutely right. She told the student she didn't realize how this was embarrassing to him and said she would not do it again. They worked out an arrangement for not having the three boys talking while she was giving out information. The student said that this was the first time he had experienced a teacher admitting being wrong. He said, "I respect that." Several weeks later, the teacher reported that the student was doing fine in her class and that she

really liked him. Although students learn the most from problem solving, principals and teachers can learn much too.

Very often, rumor, statements out of context, falsehoods, and a host of other things cause one to be upset with another. Even if the problem appears to be one of miscommunication, the rest of the steps must be completed. The student must see how his/her choices (decisions) produce results, even if the behavior was based on false information. So, never stop at this point, even if the misunderstanding is cleared up and the incident seems resolved. The goal is to help the student from having this type of problem occur in the future, not simply to solve the present problem.

As the leader of the school or the leader in the classroom, principals and teachers must always remember how important defining the problem is. All steps that follow are based on the problem definition. If some aspects of the problem are not defined or not defined properly, the resulting actions will prove less than successful. The best course of action in this step is to ensure that both parties are satisfied with the definition. They may not be pleased with the other person's perspective of them or what happened, but they should agree that each perspective is truly a part of the problem.

It is crucial that this step be as non-judgmental as possible. This is the time to explain your view and experience, and to listen and understand the other person. Lecture and judgments at this point stifle meaningful dialogue. If the situation is a problem between a student and an adult, it is always best for the student to go first. This is important for several reasons. First, the adult has the opportunity to model good listening skills, such as asking questions for further clarification and keeping eye contact and focus on the student speaking. These and other effective listening skills should be used in order to elicit the most information from the student. Most importantly, listening to the student shows respect. Most, if not all, of the 10% - 20% of the students disrupting schools are in great need of increased self-respect.

Letting the student tell his/her perspective first serves other important parts of this process. By understanding the other person's side of the story, the principal or teacher is now in the position of knowing both sides. In essence, the adult is the expert at this point. If the adult begins first, then the student sits in the expert's chair until he tells his side. It is always best to listen first. As Covey (1989) found in the *Seven Habits of Highly Successful Leaders*, one should "seek to understand before you seek to be understood". Additionally, if the principal or teacher listens first, they often change what they were going to say, or the way they were going to say it. Additional information and understanding of the other side often tempers one's statements. This comes from the realization that the student is not bad but truly has a problem and in need of new learning. Finally, letting the student vent often aids in having a more productive conversation.

3.1.3.2 Step Two: What did YOU choose to do? And Why?

As you might guess, many students have difficulty accepting responsibility and just try to blame the other party. We see this in students from nursery school to seniors in high school. Do not be upset; this is a defense mechanism and often learned in schools where it is not okay to make mistakes. Once students see that you are there to help solve problems and mistakes are something that we learn from, they get better at accepting responsibility. This is especially true after several problem-solving sessions and the principal or teacher earned the student's respect and trust.

You will probably hear statements like "I didn't do anything" or "It wasn't my fault" or "He's the problem". You should just keep asking, "But, what did you choose to do?" Sooner or later they will admit to their actions. This is a crucial part of the process, since we are teaching students that everyone has choices and there are results from every action. Regardless whether another student started it or whatever, let the student know that we are concerned with him at this point and will work with the other student later.

Besides the belief that mistakes are bad, students also have experienced the interrogations that many principals currently use. Once the principal finds the guilty party, the punishment is given. Thus, the student's defense is to give as little information as possible to the enemy. No wonder students initially have a difficult time with this step! Obviously, this is not something that will immediately happen with many students. You must persist, however, and use whatever information they give you, even if they do not tell the whole story at first.

In another case in a California school, a gang leader passed by the principal and thanked him. The principal asked why and the student told him that another student said something about the girl he was dating. “I was just about to deck him when all I could think of was standing in your office and you asking me - what did you choose to do?” This moment of reflection prior to taking action is what we are hoping the students will learn.

The previous story about the student thanking his principal for teaching him a skill that kept him out of trouble is not an isolated story. Most teachers also experienced being thanked after helping a student solve a problem. They were never thanked after using punishments! We also observed teachers setting higher expectations (more strict) when their role changed from punisher to teacher. As a punisher they often overlooked things and did not want to fill out discipline forms, send to the office, or call parents. The so-called weak teacher became a strong teacher.

In a large Texas school district (50,000 students), one hundred students were transferred from regular schools for serious behavioral problems. After many students improved and returned to their schools, we noticed one thing that happened to each of them. In one form or another they would remark that they finally realized if things were going to get any better - they would have to do it themselves! For years they waited for their parents to change, teachers to change, or friends to change, and then, everything would be okay. It was this step of viewing one’s actions (choices) and seeing the results that taught this life-changing lesson.

3.1.3.3 Step Three: What are the results of YOUR choice (decision)?

Compared to Step Two, this step is quite easy, but just as important. Many students believe that their actions are unimportant and do not affect others. They believe that only adults can make decisions that mean anything or have any importance. This step becomes an eye-opening experience for most students. They literally have not put the two together – their actions produce results that affect them and others.

Students tend to view the world in the narrow scope of their own life. Although this is quite natural under ten years of age, it is a skill and understanding that is crucial for their development and self esteem. One Arizona principal noted how surprised she was with the students’ increase in confidence and positive feeling about themselves after she taught them how to problem-solve. She further added that some of her former trouble-makers began teaching problem solving to their younger brothers and sisters. Because students have little experience with noticing results from their actions, this step requires teaching. The principal or teacher can offer much insight into how the results affect the teacher, other students, the students themselves, and any others. This should not be to criticize, but to help the student learn. A negative action that produces a bad result for others also proves that a positive action can produce a good result for others.

It is best to not dwell on the negative side, but focus on the process and how much power one has to change the world around them – for the positive. Most students choose the positive first and only resort to negative actions after little or no success. This is usually due to lack of **social knowledge** and skill. Once social learning occurs and positive results are experienced, even long term behavior-problem students begin to change their attitudes and actions. Most of them care very much about their friends and delight in making a better world for them.

Step Four: What other choices could YOU make?

Although this seems quite straightforward and most students should be able to offer several choices of actions, the fact is that many students do not know what alternatives are available to them. Many can act in very mature ways in some circumstances, but act many years younger in others. Adults need to be very aware that students are often placed in situations where they have little or no experience. Some might be assaulted, robbed, or devastated that a boyfriend or girlfriend ended a relationship and they are totally at a loss of how to handle it.

In using problem solving, principals and teachers can provide the needed knowledge and skill to help these students learn to handle new and different situations. Other students can also provide a variety of alternatives that are acceptable to those of the particular age group. The key is to not only provide another alternative, but as many as possible. This proves to the student that his or her earlier choice was one of many – certainly not the only one.

In some cases students cite their parents or other influential persons who told them what they should do if a particular situation arose. “If someone hits you, hit them back” or “If someone is picking on you, tell the teacher” and a host of other orders given to students. These students feel they have done what they were told but now are in trouble at school. These situations need to be handled very professionally without demeaning parents or other significant persons in the student’s life. In many cases, principals simply state “That is fine and you should follow your parent’s advice when at home, but that alternative is not acceptable in school.” At the very least, “We want to teach you other alternatives.”

Step Five: What do YOU choose to do now and next time?

This step seemingly asks for two choices. This is because some actions require attention immediately. If a student breaks or steals something, things might need to be repaired or given back as soon as possible. Following this choice of action, discussion can begin on how to handle the situation differently in the future. Some actions will only require decisions of how to handle things differently in the future and only one choice is needed.

The difficulty of this step is finding the choice that is appropriate, the student has the ability to do, and the student feels is the way he wants to do it. Often students either choose what the teacher wants or choose a behavior that they do not have the skill to do. This becomes apparent in the next step of demonstration. There is nothing wrong with changing this choice at a later date. In fact, if it does not work or the negative behavior continues, then the choice of an alternative behavior must be changed. Common sense is needed here.

The principal or teacher should give as much freedom of choice to the student as possible. This is because it is the student that has to demonstrate a new habit or behavior. Although they may have displayed a very naïve, negative, or inappropriate action in the past, they will be more likely to learn a new behavior if they believe it was their decision.

Many principals and teachers require an apology as part of the choice. This works well with very young students, but often does not with middle and high school students. The forced apology is often meaningless and the student equates it with “I give” or “I lose”. This does not mean that teachers do not advise on the merits of apologizing, but does mean that it should be the student’s choice. Often, students apologize later, after the uproar of the current problem has subsided.

Step Six: Demonstrate that YOU can do it.

All of the previous steps will prove to be mostly futile talk unless this step is required. As with any new learning, demonstration of the new learning is essential both in assessing the new learning and for retention of the new learning. The student must show to the principal and/or teacher and to him/herself that they have the ability to demonstrate the new choice of action. As with any new skill, it requires practice. To become a habit or choice in the future, it must be accompanied with a new and positive result. This can only come from demonstration and experience with the new behavior.

Choosing when and how to demonstrate the new choice of behavior varies according to circumstances, severity of the problem, and the student’s ability. This step requires the expertise and experience of the principal and/or teacher knowledgeable of the student’s ability and situation. In cases of assault, for example, the principal would most likely choose a role-playing scenario where no one would be put in a harmful situation. In cases of not paying attention or not bringing needed materials to class, the principal and/or teacher would most likely want to see the new behavior demonstrated in the actual classroom over a certain period of time.

Although the ways for students to demonstrate new behaviors might be endless, the principal and/or teacher would be wise to allow the student to practice prior to demonstration in front of peers in the class. We educators can either set them up or set them up for success. Small successful steps are usually the best way. It is one thing to say you will behave differently in the future and another thing to actually do it. Many principals and teachers are surprised at the number of students that do not have the ability to demonstrate a new choice in behavior. Students see others able to do things and can describe the action, but that does not mean they possess the ability to do it. Like every step so far, teaching is needed.

In some cases, it is wise to let the student **observe others**. An example is to ask the student to look for other students talking, laughing, and having a good time just like they were trying to. After observing

that they were having a good time and did not get into trouble, the lesson is that most other students knew when to quit. This skill comes from observing the mood, tone, or habits of teachers or other students. Obviously, this is an essential social skill and one that requires teaching and learning. Following observation and discussion, the student can then role-play to see if they can judge when to quit. Typically, follow up with the student is needed to ensure they master this knowledge and skill in the classroom (and hopefully outside of the school).

In this step, the student does the majority of the work. The principal or teacher must be cognizant that this step is not easy for the student. Learning is not always easy or immediate. As mentioned earlier, this step was added to the basic **problem solving** steps because we found that many students did not possess the knowledge or skill to display new appropriate behaviors.

The demonstration of new learning is crucial to changing the beliefs and attitudes of students in need. It requires teaching, not the hope that a punishment is all that is needed. The time and effort shown in teaching a new social skill is why principals and teachers are thanked a week or so later for their part in helping the student.

Step Seven: How can I help YOU?

Students need the help of caring principals and teachers, but seldom ask. You must be patient for students to actually ask for help, especially older students. Regardless of this fact, the principal or teacher must always offer the assistance. This proves to be a valuable lesson for the student to begin viewing the principal or teacher as someone who truly wants to help. Time is needed to change some of the **negative beliefs** that many students have after years of being punished. In time, the students learn to trust the principal or teacher. After this happens, be prepared to help because they will ask for it. Keep in mind that they will forget most of what we say but will remember what we did. Offering and giving help are actions that will be remembered. In a rural school where the administrators and faculty received **problem solving training**, one instructional aide had cafeteria duty. Basically, she observed students in the cafeteria and tried to keep students under control by giving out detentions or loss of recess time for any who misbehaved. Obviously, the students did not like her. Following the **training**, she kept one-half sheets of paper with the seven problem solving steps written on them. Whenever misbehavior occurred, she required that they go through the steps with her. A month later she reported that the students now talked to her and seemed to like her. She went from a cafeteria punisher to the cafeteria teacher and the students saw how many students she helped everyday.

Expected Outcomes

- The principal and/or teacher better know and understand students and view them in a different, more positive perspective.
- The principal and/or teachers make **better decisions** due to increased knowledge and information about the students.
- The students better know and understand the principal and/or teachers and see them in a different, more positive perspective.
- The student takes responsibility for his / her actions.
- The student learns the connection between his/her action and the results.
- The student learns and uses a new appropriate behavior.
- The student experiences the principal and teachers taking the time and effort to help them.
- Students learn to solve problems and make **better decisions**.

3.2 Replace punishment with restitution and/or reparations²

“Teach responsibility of choices and **consequences**;
do not hope that learning will occur following punishments”

²This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14664/1.3/>>.

3.2.1 Rationale

Every principal and teacher can move from being seen as a punisher to being seen as a caring educator working to help students. Principals can change from the #1 Punisher to the #1 Problem Solver. To do this, however, you must quit using punishments and begin using **consequences** for actions. In this manner, the students begin to see how the **consequences** they face are due to their actions, not the actions of the principal or teacher. The blame begins to shift from that mean principal or that mean teacher to the student - where it rightfully belongs.

William Glasser (1986) saw the difference between punishments and **consequences** as where the **control** lies. A punishment leaves the student with no control, while a consequence leaves the student with some control. Thus, using punishments is a method for principals and teachers to keep control but leaves the students without the opportunity to learn and practice self-control.

A simple example of a punishment is to send the student home for three days or out of the room for 30 minutes. Either of these actions leaves the student with no **control** over getting back into school or the classroom. Conversely, a consequence would be to send the student home or out of the class until they are ready to come back and solve the problem. Either of these actions leaves the student with some **control** of getting back into school or the classroom.

The use of **consequences** instead of punishments has no effect on the level of expectations for students or degree of strictness of the principal or teachers. Teachers can be very strict and use consequences, while other teachers can be very lenient, yet use punishments. But as mentioned previously, some teachers become much stricter, or better stated, hold higher expectations with the use of consequences.

Several things happen following the change from punishments to **consequences**. First, as in the case above, students get back into school and the classroom faster and do not fall as far behind in their academic work. They are more likely to show the desired behavior because it is their choice to return, and they have made a commitment to solve the problem and behave appropriately. They also have a much more positive attitude about the principal or teacher after receiving an obvious natural consequence (you must act appropriately to remain in school and class) than the **anger** and **resentment** that follows a punishment.

We educators must realize that with the use of punishments, we are teaching. The fact of the matter is that students do learn from punishments but mostly not what we expect or want. They learn that punishments solve problems. They learn that it is okay to punish children. They learn that when people make mistakes, they deserve to be punished. They learn that schools are places to be punished. They learn that principals and teachers and students are in some kind of battle with each other. They learn that schools are about not getting caught instead of learning from mistakes.

Too many students live in fear in schools today. They do not want to raise their hands or go to the board in fear of making a mistake in front of the others. They live in fear of failing, fear of not being accepted, and fear of being in trouble and receiving punishments. Stopping the use of punishments is the critical step.

Schools should be about learning. Reasoning is what is needed to solve problems, not punishments. Using **consequences** and teaching are the reasonable things to do. Prisons are full of people who have been punished throughout their lives. Even following the punishment of prison, most return to prison after parole. Obviously, for those students who consistently misbehave, punishments do not work.

Many teachers assume that the punishments they now use work. This is because approximately 80% behave appropriately. The truth is that a teacher can use almost anything, including punishments, and this same 80% will behave appropriately. But, these students also receive little or no punishment. One could logically argue that the fewer the punishments, the better the behavior.

As we will discuss later in this book, the greatest harm with using punishments is the breaking down of positive relationship between adults and students. One does not have to receive many punishments before disliking the punisher. Following dislike for the principal or teacher, the student loses motivation to listen or learn from them. Often things begin to snowball with poor social behavior negatively affecting academic performance and decreased academic performance negatively affecting social behavior. The student gets worse in both.

Another obvious harm to students receiving punishments is the lack of opportunity to meet two of their greatest needs – recognition and belonging. Punishments are embarrassing and being kicked out of school

or kicked out of class make students feel like they do not belong to the school or classroom. Long after particular problems have occurred, these feelings of **low self-worth** and not belonging remain.

3.2.2 Practical Application

The task here is to review all the methods you now use and change any punishments to **consequences**. If they need to be removed from the group or class, remove them until they have problem-solved and commit to a new behavior. If they need to be placed in a detention-type setting, place them until they have problem-solved and committed to a new behavior. If they need to be removed from school (suspension), remove them until they are ready to return and problem-solve and commit to a new behavior. Some students will only need a brief time while others will need more time and assistance.

Again, using **consequences** instead of punishments will not result in lower student expectations. With **enforcing expectations** and teaching, a principal or teacher can actually raise expectations. They can also use problems to show the student that they expect much more from them (raising **self-esteem**), and that they want them back in school or class (increasing sense of belonging). The principal and teacher are now in the position of being the ones to help and assist in getting the student back into school and/or class - not the punisher who believes they should not be there.

In the **alternative school** where these methods were first implemented, the student handbook's first sentence was Our School Has No Punishments. It went on to explain that students would be removed from class or school if they presented harm to self or others or if they needed to solve an important problem prior to returning to school or class. The school taught the students the difference between punishments and **consequences**. Parents often asked about the first sentence in the handbook and the principal or teachers were able to teach many of them about the practice.

3.2.3 Expected Outcomes

- The principal and teacher never have to punish again.
- Students never have to fear or receive **punishment** in the class or school again.
- Students learn to accept the **consequences** of their actions and how to overcome them and gain back their rights and **freedoms**.
- Students learn self-control.
- Students have a higher **self-esteem**.
- Students have a greater sense of belonging.
- Students who need to vent their **frustration** or **anger** vent it at themselves, not the principal or teacher.
- Students are in class a greater amount of time and do not fall behind academically.
- Principals and teachers and students form more positive relationships.

3.3 Develop an equitable system³

“Fairness is equity, seldom equality”

3.3.1 Rationale

In the classrooms, most teachers use some type of system to let the students know how they will handle disruptive behavior or not following expectations (a better word than rules). The system helps many students better understand and provides a structure that many students need, especially those with some type of behavioral disorder. The task here is to develop a system that allows for differences in students and circumstances, not a one size fits all.

³This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14652/1.3/>>.

Most principals and teachers believe that the goal of a discipline system is to be fair. Fair is typically defined as treating all students equally. School rules state very clearly what the punishment is for fighting or cheating or whatever. School lawyers advise that equal treatment is needed in avoiding lawsuits that parents might bring. The system becomes one of us versus them. The key is to think about the harm a one size fits all system does to many students.

Some administrators and teachers fear that they might let a student get away with something that another student was punished for. If one student goes unpunished, the entire system will crumble and the students will win the fight for control. The system becomes more important than the individual student. This type of system is very damaging to personal relationships that might be developed between students and faculty.

On the other hand, teachers use equitable systems in academics all of the time. Some students need more or less help and **assistance** than others, so more or less **assistance** is provided. Students understand this and accept it. Courts also understand differential treatment, especially when it entails greater help for those with greater need. It is only punishments that are believed to need equality. With problem solving, teaching, and allowing for natural consequences, however, an equitable system can be utilized.

An example of an equal system used in many classrooms is - If rules are broken, students will receive the following actions:

1. A warning from the teacher
2. A time-out in the classroom
3. A referral to detention hall
4. A call to the parents
5. A referral to the office

In the example above the system seems equal to all. For the 80% of the kids who possess the skills to act appropriately, the system appears to work. For some students, only a warning is needed, while for those that do not know how to act appropriately in some situations, a warning is useless. Likewise, a time-out, detention hall, phone call to parents, or a referral to the office does not provide the needed instruction and guidance that many students need. Obviously, a better, equitable system is needed that allows greater **assistance** for those in greater need.

An example of an equitable system is – For students having a problem with meeting classroom expectations, the following actions will be taken to assist:

1. The student solves the problem him/herself - if not solved
2. The teacher gives a reminder of the expectation - if not solved
3. Time will be provided for the student to complete the problem solving steps – if not solved
4. The teacher will assist the student either before, after, or during class – if not solved
5. The Counselor will assist the student – if not solved
6. The Principal will assist the student – if not solved
7. The parents will be asked to come to the school (or by phone) to assist the student – if not solved
8. Referral for testing or alternative placement will be provided to assist the student

The above example is not perfect for every school or age level, but does provide an example of a system providing greater **assistance** as misbehaviors become more serious or increase in occurrence.

3.3.2 Practical Application

The task is to design a system that provides for greater help as the need for help increases. If you compare the two examples, the first example actually provides less help as the misbehavior becomes more frequent or more serious. The student goes from sitting in detention hall, to sitting at home with other punishments in between. No teaching has occurred and no meaningful learning. Again, these are the students who do not learn new skills from receiving punishments and need our help.

Whatever class system you design, you must ensure that greater help is given for those in greater need. The only one that is absolutely necessary is the first one where students are allowed to solve a problem

themselves. After all, this is the goal! Many students will never need the **assistance** from the counselor or principal, while others might see them often. One middle school principal who used the problem solving steps in her office reported that she saw one student twenty-six times in the first semester and only two times in the spring semester. This same student was not sent to the office at all the entire next year.

Another difference in the two examples is that of who is responsible for being sent to the counselor, principal, or having parents come to the school. In the first example, it is the teacher or principal and in the second, it is the student. The student could have solved the problem at any step, but since he or she did not, the next steps were needed. Principals and teachers are not blamed; the student sees how or why he or she was responsible for any additional actions taken to help.

In many elementary schools, it is required to call parents for certain problems.

This makes sense and parents of very young children certainly want to know what is going on with their children. In secondary schools, we find that most students would rather solve their problem before bringing parents to the school. We also find that most parents of secondary students would rather their children solve their own problems than have to come to the school. The administration, faculty, and parents should decide on when parent contact is needed.

Finally, be ready for students to solve problems themselves. Although this sounds like heaven, it requires a change of mindset. For example, two students shove each other while coming into class and a desk is turned over. They look up and see the teacher and tell her that they can solve this problem themselves. They pick up the desk and go quietly to their seats. Now if this never occurs again, we should believe that they did, in fact, solve the problem. If it does occur again, then we will know they were unable and probably not allow them to solve this type of problem themselves the next time.

Can we let two students shove and knock over a desk and not require some type of action? Can we really let students solve problems after making mistakes? Are we not in the habit of treating misbehavior with some type of consequence or punishment? This habit or mindset might be difficult to break for some principals and teachers. Over time, however, allowing students to solve problems themselves is of great benefit.

Most schools list certain behaviors that must be reported to the office. These typically include serious assault, weapons, drugs, arson, threats to faculty or staff, and incorrigibility (repeated misbehavior with little or no improvement despite **assistance**). Districts must also include some or all forms of sexual harassment. The administration, faculty, parents, and students should discuss, understand, and agree on which misbehaviors must be reported. In many schools, these actions are listed under crimes. In many ways, this is a good strategy to teach students about the seriousness of criminal behavior as opposed to breaking school rules.

An equitable system allows the principal and teachers to give less time for those who need little **assistance** and more time for those requiring more **assistance**. This is a better way to define fair. It also maximizes the effective use of time. As students begin to solve more of their problems and solve them faster, principals and teachers will have more time to help those with the greatest need.

3.3.3 Expected Outcomes

- Greater **assistance** is given for those in greater need (equity).
- Students learn that it is their responsibility to solve the problem if they can.
- Less time is spent with students able to demonstrate **appropriate behaviors**.
- Students experience principals, teachers, and counselors helping.
- Principals and teachers and students form more positive relationships.
- Disruptions in the school and classroom are greatly reduced.
- Students learn that fairness is equity in some matters and equality in others.

3.4 Make school a safe place for taking risks and making mistakes⁴

“Everyone makes mistakes every day”

3.4.1 Rationale

Sadly enough, many young students believe that they are not supposed to make **mistakes**. They believe when they make **mistakes** there is something wrong with them. They believe adults do not make mistakes and smart kids do not make mistakes. Every mistake becomes a lessening of their **self-worth** and they live with the fear of future mistakes and the **guilt** of past mistakes. This is a false and harmful concept to instill in our students.

The truth is that everyone makes **mistakes**; great learning can occur from **mistakes**; and **guilt** is needed only in those moments of **reflection** before an action. It should also be true that schools are about learning and learning from mistakes is a very natural way to learn. While it is natural and acceptable to make mistakes, it is neither natural nor acceptable to fail to learn from mistakes. This concept needs to be taught and modeled to students and become an accepted part of the school curriculum and culture.

The fear and **anxiety** over making **mistakes** are great stressors on underachieving and disruptive students. They quit trying to give the answer, participate in the activity, or have others see their efforts - for fear of making a mistake. They have enough problems to solve without having to be stressed over an expectation that is impossible to meet. It is better for students to know they can “pick themselves up after a fall” than to fear ever falling. Learning from mistakes and negative consequences is a life-long endeavor and should be nurtured in the school.

A computer technology teacher observed that if a student did something correctly the first time, he often forgot what he did. But, if he made a mistake and learned what he did wrong, he remembered the correct way. This is exactly why using problem solving is so important if we hope to teach students to learn from mistakes. It allows the student to see where (and perhaps why) the error occurred, and they will remember the correct way.

The mindset and practice of using mistakes for learning is not without exception or opposition. The exceptions include the breaking of laws or any actions that cause great harm to self or others. These types of mistakes are certainly not acceptable. An opposing argument is that schools should mirror life as much as possible and that life does not give second chances. The stand we need to take is to let law enforcement do what they believe is necessary, but the school should still try to teach the student to problem solve and learn. Secondly, life is tough, but school is an institution dedicated to learning. Every child should have at least one safe place to make mistakes, and school is the ideal place.

3.4.2 Practical Application

This task is to teach and model that we all make mistakes and our schools and classrooms are **safe places** to make mistakes. If we have a **zero tolerance policy**, it is zero tolerance for not learning from mistakes. Set the expectation that students will learn to problem solve and we are there to guide and assist. Recognize the progress of students who learned from their mistakes. In our interactions and conference with students, focus on the learning, not the mistake.

3.4.3 Expected Outcomes

- Students will lose the fear of making a mistake.
- Student stress will be greatly reduced.
- Students will learn more by analyzing where and why the mistakes were made.
- Students will have a greater **self-esteem**.
- Students will experience the principal and teacher helping them learn from their mistakes.
- Students will experience the principal and teacher who believe in them and that they can do better.

⁴This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14660/1.3/>>.

- Principals and teachers will form more positive relationships.
- Disruptive behavior will be greatly reduced.

3.5 Use Good Teaching⁵

“Some of the greatest learning occurs when learning from mistakes”

3.5.1 Rationale

Although this task is somewhat controversial, we believe it is worth your serious consideration. The problem-solving steps that you teach your students work just as well with academic problems as **social problems**. And using it for academics reinforces it with your use with social and **behavioral problems**.

Consider the following scenario of a seventh-grade student who answered a math problem incorrectly:

What is the problem?

- I came up with the wrong answer

What did you choose to do?

- I put these numbers here and divided here and then changed to a percentage

What were the results of your choice?

- The wrong answer

What other choices could you make?

- I don't know

- Here is another way to solve this problem

What are you going to do now and next time?

- I am going to redo this problem and next time remember to put in this step

Demonstrate your new behavior

- (The student reworks the problem)

How can I help you?

- When you go over the correct answers, be sure to show us the steps

The above is certainly a very simplistic example, but does show how the process works just as well with academic problems. We have never quite understood why schools accept failing grades, especially in elementary grades. In accepting and recording failing grades, we ensure gaps in the student's learning and have set extremely low expectations. Most of the seriously disruptive students we have worked with had gaps in their learning. This was due to too much time out of class, various other reasons, and the acceptance of failing work. Many of these students had higher than average IQ's but had difficulty in many academic areas.

Many teachers today do not accept failing grades and record I's (Incomplete) for anything under a 70 or 75. The students are responsible for finding their mistakes and re-working the assignment. The students can do this on their own, get help from others, or help from the teacher. Students need to know that mistakes are also acceptable in academics but they must learn from their mistakes.

Some teachers in primary grades require some work every week to be improved until an A can be recorded. This is because some students never see what an A paper looks like. How can students ever believe they can make A's if they never see an A on at least one of their papers? The practice of making students learn from their mistakes and holding A expectations can have a life-long effect on many students.

Experts say that an ideal grade is both an **accurate measurement** of performance and an accurate measurement of ability. If we allow students to solve their academic problems (learn from previous mistakes), then their performance and ability increase. This brings us to the issue of using **academic punishments**. As you recall, we defined a punishment as an action where the student had no control. In recording failing grades and not allowing for improvement, we have, in effect given a punishment. If the student only received

⁵This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14673/1.3/>>.

a 50 on the assignment and an Incomplete was recorded, the student is still in control of learning from the mistakes and receiving a passing grade.

We have seen the great harm done to many students with the use of punishments in regard to academics. Special education students were taken out of an elective class they enjoyed and were doing well in because of the inability to pass or act appropriately in another class. Students with great athletic ability were taken off sports teams because of the inability to pass all of their classes. Many students cannot even run for student council or hold an elective office if their grade-point average was not at a certain level. We realize that these practices began with good intentions, and if you continue to view success by only looking at the 80%, you might think that no pass, no play and other similar **policies** are working. These punishments, however, were very often the last straw for many of the 20% students. Why do we continue to believe that punishments will solve poor social or academic performance? These students need extra teaching and problem-solving, not punishments.

Other **academic punishments** can be the taking off of points for all kinds of things, e.g., neatness, lateness, not doing things in exactly the prescribed manner, and on and on. Even worse is giving zeroes. How can a zero be an **accurate measurement** of a student's ability? Obviously, it cannot. In all of these instances, incompletes can be given and work can be redone. It should be noted that some teachers allow for full credit of makeup work and others only give partial credit. We are in favor of full credit, but this is either the teacher's choice or an administrative policy. If the teacher receives a late paper, she records the grade but has the student problem-solve on the inability to get the work in on time. The teacher learns more about the student and the student learns how to solve the lateness problem.

This is the main aspect of the controversy where some believe students should only get one chance and life is hard. If we are going to model that schools are about learning and learning from mistakes is required, then we should model and practice this in academics as well. We must rescue some students before they give up on the possibility of passing and really become disruptive. We are not giving points, simply setting the expectation that passing work is required and students need to keep working until the expectation is met.

3.5.2 Practical Application

Everything written in this book is just as relevant in academics as it is in social concerns. This includes having a classroom where it is a safe place for making mistakes, **building relationships, using consequences** instead of punishments, **empowering students**, using an **individualized and nurturing system**, setting **high expectations** – all of it! In academics, quit punishing and just teach. Set the expectation that all students must learn including from mistakes. All students must perform to a **passing standard**. We recommend reviewing all of the tasks in this book with regard to practices and **policies** for academics.

3.5.3 Expected Outcomes

- Student learning is greatly increased.
- Gaps in learning are greatly reduced or eliminated.
- Student motivation is greatly increased and “giving up” is reduced or eliminated.
- The teachers and students form a more positive relationship.
- Students learn to problem-solve better.
- More students pass and make higher grades.
- Class is a much more enjoyable place to be.
- Teacher stress is greatly reduced.
- Students always remember the time the teacher spent in helping them.

3.6 Key Words for Chapter 3⁶

circumstances

consequences

defense mechanism

enforcing expectations

equitable systems

listening skills

non-judgemental

positive perspective

problem solving

social learning

⁶This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14677/1.3/>>.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4: Model Ethical Conduct

4.1 Teach and model Morals, Values and Character¹

“Students remember little of what we say, but most of what we do”

4.1.1 Rationale

In a Yuma, Arizona elementary school located in a very poor part of the city, the faculty decided to use problem solving instead of discipline. Following the training, the faculty worked together because they wanted to ensure there was a high degree of consistency in what they were teaching the children. Several of the teachers believed a **character education program** would be beneficial in helping students learn to **problem solve** and make **better decisions**. So, they went to the Internet and downloaded several state and national **character education programs**. They then met with students and parents and decided on nine aspects of character. One aspect was highlighted each month throughout the school. They used posters, class discussions, and even had a couple of films. The teachers felt that this part of their overall program was very beneficial in attaining the results that they did.

Our students today live in a world of TV, videos, and movies. The women are degraded, male heroes are shooting or assaulting others, and the winner is the one that ends up with the most money. Many years ago in a rural middle school, the principal overheard two middle school girls talking about the popular movie *Pretty Woman* with Richard Gere and Julia Roberts. The one girl remarked that it was a Cinderella story. The other girl said, “I guess today if you’re going to meet a prince, you have to be a prostitute first”. Although the movie industry claims to only be entertainment, the fact is that students learn from them.

Are we down to only one value – attaining wealth, no matter how? We certainly hope not, but we do have to take a stand against the competition from the entertainment industry. It is not only our responsibility but essential if we hope to teach children to **problem solve** and make honorable decisions. The task here is to devise a means of teaching accepted values, morals, and character.

In all honesty, it is almost impossible to compete with movies and TV. It is close to a perfect learning environment. It is auditory, visual, includes emotion and action, and has the complete focus and attention of the viewer. Once a visual medium like TV becomes fully interactive, it will be the perfect learning environment. Lecture and presentation will fall short of changing the attitudes and perspectives learned from the videos and movies. The only way to win is to teach and model character and strive to get a majority of students to learn the value of character. Students typically believe their friends instead of what is said in the media, regardless of how popular a celebrity might be. So, as each student learns character, morals, and accepted values, they influence and teach other students.

The good news is that it can work. The teachers at the Yuma elementary school proved it. They included their chosen aspects of character in their student expectations. They used the nine aspects while

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14670/1.3/>>.

working with the students going through the problem solving steps (This was mostly done at the **finding alternatives** and decision-making steps). Because of their efforts, in the first semester of the year before the training, 215 students were sent to the office for **misbehavior**. In the first semester of the following year, 14 students were referred to the office. The data also showed that **classroom disruptions** dropped by two-thirds.

4.1.2 Practical Application

Teach about morals and character when teaching students to solve their problems.

With students who have **healthy self-concepts**, you can discuss an aspect of character or moral value with defining the problem and what did you choose to do steps. But this has the potential of turning into a criticism – sort of kicking them when they are down. It is usually more positive and students are more willing to think about and discuss an aspect of character when discussing what they plan to do in the future.

Like most tasks principals and teachers have, devising something is only part of it. The next steps are to **implement, monitor, evaluate, and adjust** accordingly. If you choose to include character education, be sure it is something you believe in. Be sure it is something that the community can believe in. Make sure you are willing to teach it, model it, and use when interacting with the students. When the students learn and accept these beliefs, your job is much, much easier.

4.1.3 Expected Outcomes

- Students learn more about morals, values, and character.
- Students learn to consider character prior to making decisions and taking actions.
- Principals and teachers are reminded of character and morals and begin to use them more in their work with the students.
- Inappropriate behavior is greatly reduced or eliminated.

4.2 Set high expectation²

“We live up to the **expectations** placed upon us”

4.2.1 Rationale

To a certain extent, rules are negative and **expectations** are positive. Students hate rules. In courses for school crisis intervention, instructors recommend not saying the word rule because it will incite or escalate the situation. Rules restrict freedom. The word rule is generally associated with the word obey and no person is ever comfortable with obeying another person.

Since rules are negative and generally focus on what we do not want to see, most administrators and teachers try to limit the number of rules they have in school and class. Students are not told all of the things we would like to see them learn and do, but are only told a few things that they should not do. This sets very low **expectations**.

In the introduction, the very **positive results** of using problem solving in an alternative school were presented. Although problem solving was responsible for most of the success at this school, there was another major factor involved. This factor was changing student **expectations**. Initially, the school’s culture was more of a psychiatric treatment center than a regular school. The focus was on behavior, not academics. More time was spent on punishing than teaching. The choice was to expect treatment center behavior or regular school behavior. The school chose to focus on teaching and academics. The bar was raised to requiring a grade of 75 or higher in every class in order to be eligible to return to the regular campus.

²This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14667/1.3/>>.

Roles for the students were defined to be one of a successful learner, not a seriously emotionally disturbed adolescent. Although the change took time, it worked.

In another example at a state mental hospital, the Director of the school program described her school as having chaos instead of order. Their two classrooms were continuously disrupted by aggressive behaviors and the staff would subdue the students (patients) and take them back to their rooms. Like the alternative school, she decided to change the **expectations** for her program. She painted the entry wall to look like the front of a school building. She replaced the tables and beanbag chairs with desks. She made it look and feel like a real school. She reported that she now had student behavior in the classrooms even though they still had mental hospital behavior outside the classroom. What you expect from the students is what you will get!

If we focus on what we want the students to learn and do, we end up with a long list of learning outcomes (academic and social) that we want our students to master. We choose the positive side - goals and high **expectations**. This positive view has a profound effect on the school culture. The task becomes one of what **expectations** do we need to set for students to see a school expecting great things for each student versus obeying school rules.

4.2.2 Practical Application

- Change class and school rules to **expectations** (the positive view).
- Compare the **expectations** of lower and higher grade levels and ensure there is a **consistent** increase in **expectation** as the student matures.
- Consult faculty, parents, and students in setting **expectations**.
- Compare the level of freedoms with the level of **expectations**. Greater freedoms offer opportunities for higher **expectations**. In many schools today, sixth-graders have the same freedoms as first-graders. This makes little sense and sets a very low expectation for sixth-graders.
- Consider your feelings about the students. If you have to choose between sympathy and frustration, choose frustration. Showing students sympathy when they fail teaches them that you expect very little. Frustration, on the other hand, shows the students that you truly believe they can do better.
- A final consideration for setting high **expectations** is to be **consistent** with the school handbook. Perhaps a better way of stating this would be to make sure the student handbook is **consistent** with your school and classroom expectations. Student handbooks are horrible! They are, for the most part, a long list of infractions, punishments, and fines. They are the product of school lawyers, not caring educators.

Student handbooks are necessary for many reasons. It is essential to have rules and any fines or loss of **privileges** listed in case of litigation. But this does not have to be the entire handbook. Where is the welcoming, we care about you, the goals we have for you? If we can re-write our negative school and classroom rules into positive **expectations**, then we certainly can do the same in the handbook. Somewhere between the legal needs of the district and the principal's and teachers' aspirations for the students is the answer. After you have developed your positive student **expectations** and included them in the school handbook, be sure to consult with the central office to ensure consistency, while meeting necessary legal requirements.

In conclusion for this task, you need to be aware that your **expectations** are going to change. After teaching problem solving (also decision-making), you will want to increase your **expectations** as you see the students develop and improve. This is a sign of success. Be sure to include in your **expectations** that students will be able to solve problems and learn from their experiences. All the others are up to you and your vision for your students.

4.2.3 Expected Outcomes

- Class and school become more positive places to be.
- Students learn and mature at a faster rate.

- **Expectations** for students are increased and performance increases.
- Students' **self-esteem** is increased.
- A more positive relationship between the principal, teacher, and the students is built.
- Disruptive behaviors are greatly reduced.

4.3 Use student input³

“Students are experts in how they see their world”

4.3.1 Rationale

Moving from **disciplining** to teaching requires the **cooperation** of the students. It will be the students who are solving problems, accepting more responsibility, and working to learn and use more appropriate behaviors. Will the system you have designed meet the students' needs? Will the students be able to perform successfully with their new role? Will the methods that you use be effective? Observing and gathering feedback from the students is the only way to find the answers to these and other questions.

Many principals and teachers do not like using student evaluations or surveys. This is because the questions usually involve a rating system that turns the survey into a popularity contest. When using student input, ensure that you are asking for information about the students and that your questions require constructive feedback. Notice that the four questions below do not ask the students to rate the principal or teacher. They do ask what the principal or teacher did and its effect on them. They are not experts on educators, but do have meaningful knowledge of what works for them and what does not.

Making decisions is always easy if you have all the correct information. With using student input in the process, you will come much closer to having the information you need. The older the students get, the better the information, but even Pre-K students can surprise you with some profound recommendation or bits of information about themselves. Some experts say that leaders should include in the **decision-making process** everyone affected by the decision. Your use of problem solving, defining roles, **setting expectations**, etc. affect your students. They deserve to have input.

4.3.2 Practical Application

The questions for the students are:

1. What are the things that I do that help you learn?
2. What other things can I do, stop doing, or change that will help you learn more?
3. What are the things that I do that help you enjoy the class?
4. What other things can I do, stop doing, or change that will help you enjoy the class more?

Compile the answers from the students (omitting any that are very personal in nature) and share with other teachers of the same grade or subject area. Grade level or subject area teachers can then summarize and share the results with the entire faculty and administration.

The results from this activity are usually enlightening. First, there is a general feeling of satisfaction, even happiness from all the positive things that the students write. Next, there is intrigue at the many excellent recommendations that students give for improvement. And finally, there is a sense of enthusiasm after knowing what the students like and want changed. Often, student responses to changes in instructional methods and activities are better and more constructive than adult classroom observations. Principals and teachers need to know what the students desire to have in the classroom and from the office. Principals and teachers want and need to learn too.

It is difficult not to be successful if you work cooperatively with the students. For best results, students should have input from the beginning to the end. This includes discussions about problem solving, learning

³This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14675/1.3/>>.

from mistakes, using consequences instead of punishments, the role of the teacher and student, and so on. If this is done, it is very likely several students will comment on things that the principal or teacher had not thought of. They will bring up concerns that may only affect one or two students or events at a particular time of the year. In short, they will give you additional information that will improve your plans, methods, and decisions.

At some interval (often mid-semester), it is recommended that you get feedback on how it is working for them. This will give you additional information on what aspects are working well and what aspects need to be refined or need additional attention. The only caution here is to be patient. The previous example about the student who was referred to the office twenty-six times in the first semester and twice the second semester would have very different feedback in May than in October. A final caution is to overlook the exceptions. You will gather excellent information from most students, but there will always be one or two that might vent their frustrations or anger or just take it all as a joke. Do not let these exceptions deter you from using student input and working cooperatively.

Student input at the end of the year is usually the best. You will receive more thoughtful and expert assessments from the students. This is good for viewing your overall program, but the problem is that in the following year, you will have many new students. So, in some respect, you begin again. As you probably know, some years you get very meek and cooperative students and other years you get very bold and uncooperative students. Fortunately, new students quickly see what is expected and if most of the other students are solving their own problems, they will want to also.

4.3.3 Expected Outcomes

- Principals and teachers make better decisions.
- Principals and teachers learn more effective strategies to use with the students.
- Students take more ownership and responsibility for the school, class, and their learning.
- The principal and teachers are modeling respect for students by listening, considering, and often using their input.
- Student self-esteem is increased.
- A more positive relationship between the principal, teacher, and the students is formed.
- Disruptive behavior is greatly reduced.

4.4 Define roles and resolve role conflict⁴

“The best you can be is being yourself”

4.4.1 Rationale

Most **conflicts** among people in organizations are role **conflicts**. Examples are “He can’t do that” or “She is not supposed to be doing that” or other beliefs to that effect. In order to reduce conflict between principals, teachers, students, and parents (a role most often overlooked) accurate descriptions of **expectations** of each should be written. It is surprising that most students have no clue to the role of the principal, teacher, or even the student. Principals and teachers must inform students what their role is and what **responsibilities** and **expectations** they have. If all students understand their role and the role of the adults, much conflict is avoided.

Although accurately defining and **teaching** about the various **roles** are important and will reduce conflict, there is another very important part to this task. This goes beyond a detailed job description of the principal or teacher and looks at the role each wants to take. After all, each is a unique individual and most roles are stressful. What do you want your role to be? What role allows you the comfort of being yourself?

⁴This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14651/1.5/>>.

Most educators have at least four **roles**. These include administrator or teacher, spouse, parent, and friend. Each of these **roles** has **expectations** and **responsibilities**. Most are better at some **roles** than others. The one role, however, that most people are very good at is being a friend. This is the role that allows them to be themselves. Their best friends overlook imperfections and enjoy their best qualities - their uniqueness. In this role, there is very little stress or acting. Best friends get to see the best in each other.

Often, the happiest and most successful spouses and parents spend very little time playing a role with their significant other or children. They spend most of their time being themselves. Although each has **responsibilities**, judging a person on how good a husband, wife, or parent they are often causes much stress and conflict. The point is that **roles** force us to act in certain ways, and we all have differing skills at various roles. But, we are all exceptionally gifted at being ourselves. So, to be the best principal or teacher, you need to define your role as being yourself and just **leading** or **teaching**, as opposed to acting the role of a principal or a teacher. This is a role that has little stress, forces little acting, and one for which you are exceptionally gifted.

Just as important as finding the role you are most comfortable with and enjoy is considering the impact your role has on others. A role can be a mask that hides the real person. Most students experience interactions with several principals and many teachers in their school careers. For most students, principals are the same and the teachers are pretty much the same. They only get to see a bunch of adults performing as principals or teachers. They never get to see what the principals' and teachers' best friends see. They never get to know many unique and interesting people. What a great loss for the students!

Most importantly, it is difficult to form a relationship with someone playing a role because the role can never be genuine. Most people get very upset if they discover someone was pretending to be a friend or something else that they were not. It is easy, however, to know and like a genuine person. Students deserve to get to know all of the unique people who teach and help them. So, when defining your role, be sure to think about offering your students the joy your best friend gets from knowing you and rid yourself of the stress of acting out a role.

4.4.2 Practical Application

Define your role in a manner that allows you to be yourself. Define your role as one of **leading**, **teaching**, and **assisting** students to learn. Define the students' role in a manner that allows them to be their unique selves. Define the students' role as one of learning (and learning from mistakes) and demonstrating their learning. Discuss these with the students and allow input and additions that come from them. Teach and require that every student know his or her role and the role of the principal and the teacher.

4.4.3 Expected Outcomes

- Stress for the principal and the teacher will be greatly reduced.
- Conflict in the classroom will be greatly reduced.
- Classroom disruptions will be greatly reduced.
- Student learning about others and their beliefs, experiences, and **unique personalities** will be increased.
- More positive relationship between the principal, teachers, and the students will be formed.

4.5 Identify beliefs to guide and motivate you⁵

“Some things are - just because they are”

⁵This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14659/1.2/>>.

4.5.1 Rationale

Reading this book may be much like a first session of new training. The concepts presented may match many of your current beliefs or may not. The recommendation is to note the beliefs you agree with and the ones you do not. You will most likely find that you have some **conflicting beliefs**. For example, you believe students need hope, but you also believe in giving zeroes. You believe students should learn from their mistakes, but do not believe in makeup or extra-credit. You believe that some students need extra help, but believe discipline should be administered equally. You believe students should learn to problem-solve and make good decisions, but you also believe students must obey.

If you are going to be successful in **empowering students**, quitting disciplining, and only using teaching, you need to believe in it. If your beliefs are not a match or you have too many **conflicting beliefs**, perhaps you simply need to try it with an open mind. We write this because we have had many teachers tell us years later that they had doubts about it at first. Only after the experience of positive results did they **change** their beliefs and attitude.

We believe in these methods because we have seen them work with special education, gifted, regular, primary, intermediate, middle, high school, and many other descriptors of students. The task is for you to write and **reflect** on your beliefs, even if some conflict with the beliefs presented in this book.

Our list would look something like this:

We believe -

- All students can learn and unless brain diseased or damaged, can learn to read, write, and do mathematics at the 10th grade level.
- When students reach puberty, they have a natural need to make their own decisions, make their own mistakes, choose to decide what to believe, and need help as young adults, not child like treatment.
- Everyone needs help.
- All students have natural gifts, even if some are not related to school.
- All students are basically good, but must meet their natural needs.
- Whatever you give to others will be returned to you tenfold.
- Up to 10% of your students will be exceptions and each student will be an exception up to 10% of the time – no one is perfect all of the time.
- We retain more learning if it is learning from our mistakes.
- No one is comfortable with obeying another but always appreciative of another's help.
- Most do not respect others playing a role, but like those that they truly know.
- Fear of making mistakes, failing, or not being accepted is extremely detrimental to students.
- Students have a right to have input into their education.
- Students live up to the **expectations** we set.
- Principals and teachers deserve to be remembered and appreciated for the help they give, never the **punishments** they give.
- **Change** is good and stopping the discipline and just teaching may be the best **change** you will ever make.

4.5.1.1 Practical Application

Develop your list of beliefs about learning, students, and discipline. Be sure to consider the many beliefs presented in this book and whether you agree or disagree. Review your list and note any that conflict with each other. See if you can **reconcile** any of these **conflicts**. After your first year with stopping discipline and just teaching, go back and look at the list of beliefs you wrote. See if any have changed or any **conflicting beliefs** have been reconciled.

If you find yourself having beliefs that are mostly consistent with the beliefs presented in this book, keep your list where you will see it from time to time. Read it over, and use it to motivate and help guide you in your efforts to help your students.

4.5.1.2 Expected Outcomes

- The principal and teachers have greater motivation for working with their students.
- The principal, teachers, and students have greater joy and success.

4.6 Key Words for Chapter 4⁶

consistent

constructive feedback

cooperation

expectations

meaningful knowledge

Model

moral value

motivate

ownership

positive beliefs

⁶This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14678/1.3/>>.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5: It is about Relationships

5.1 Relationships are important¹

“Relish in knowing scores of unique persons,
not just another group of X-graders”

5.1.1 Rationale

It has been our experience that with every seriously disruptive student there is always one person or place for which that student acts appropriately. There is usually no system in place, threats, or punishments – the student just wants to be polite and behave appropriately. The place can be the grandparent’s house, church, ball field, mall, or wherever. The person can be their uncle, coach, neighbor, or friend. The goal is to make your school one of these places and you one of these persons.

The attainment of this goal involves all of the tasks in this book, but none are more crucial or have more of an effect on the student’s behavior than building a relationship with the student. Disciplining, punishing, suspending, complaining to parents, and many other practices destroy **relationships**. Conversely, helping, listening, expecting much, and getting to know each other as individuals build **relationships**.

In an elementary school on a Air Force base, the counselor remarked that their best teacher was having a terrible year. The teacher had received her teaching certificate in college, but decided to raise her children before beginning work. When her children were in middle school, she decided it was time to begin teaching. Being around the fourth graders was a delight for her. She woke up every morning and was excited about the day. In this particular year, however, the computer placed eight seriously disruptive students in her class.

The teacher said that she could not win. She would get one or two of them calmed down and the others would get them going again. It was February and the teacher had lost her enthusiasm for teaching. She said she was getting depressed on Sunday thinking about another week of battle with these students. We told her to do two things. First, investigate and find one thing about each of them that they were gifted in. We told her it was usually related to their special **interest** or something they were delighted in doing. The second part was to let the students each know what she found out about them.

In the last training session in May, she stood up and told the entire faculty that from the day she told the students what she found out, she did not have one problem with any of the eight students. She went on to add that this activity would be her first task for the upcoming school year.

This is the only activity that we describe as magical. Since then, we have had many teachers tell us similar stories and results. With this activity, we asked teachers to think of one significant adult they really liked being around when they were school-aged. After they each chose one, we would ask several to tell me who they were. They were uncles, aunts, coaches, etc., but seldom teachers or parents. Teachers and parents tend to see the miles they have to go to reach competent adulthood. The special persons in their

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14663/1.3/>>.

lives, however, saw what was great about them now. We asked the group if their special persons knew of their gifts, interests, or natural **talents**. The answer was always yes.

In many Japanese schools, they take the first few weeks and work solely on building a group. The students and the teachers learn about each other and each person's responsibility to the group. Similarly, an outstanding elementary special education teacher (in the U.S.) reported how she spent the first three weeks letting the students get to know each other and her. They practiced all of the student expectations – how to line up, act in the library and cafeteria, how they resolved problems, and on and on. Only after the students felt comfortable with all the procedures, the teacher, and other students, did they begin academic work. She discovered that they went further academically, even though they began later than other classes.

Building a positive relationship with your students affects more than their behavior. It affects their learning. You do not have to be embarrassed, punished, or sent away many times before you do not want to listen or be around the punisher. Conversely, if the principal and the teacher help a student learn a new social skill and form a better and closer relationship while doing it, the student wants to learn new things from that person. The kind of **relationships** we build with our students has a great effect on the students' willingness and **motivation** to learn.

5.1.2 Practical Application

So, how do you become one of these special persons that the students want to be around and want to act appropriately? The answer is to get to know them, find out what is so special about each of them, and let them know it. It also helps immensely to let the students know something special about you, i.e., your interests, unique **talents**, or experiences, etc. Build a positive relationship with them!

It is very important to use the time you spend in teaching them to solve their problem as time to better know them. If you can develop trust and listen well, they will tell you many things about their lives, beliefs, experiences, and their wants and needs. The better you know them, the better you will help and most often, like them. Conversely, the more they know about you, the more they will learn from you and most often, like you. When this happens, a new and more positive relationship will be formed. This may be the greatest preventative measure you will ever find.

5.1.3 Expected Outcomes

- The principal and/or teacher become a special person in the lives of some of their students, and they act appropriately around him/her.
- The school becomes one of the special places for the student, and they act appropriately while in the office, classroom, and other areas of the campus.
- Disruptive behavior from these students is often eliminated.
- The principal and the teachers know and truly like more students.
- The student knows and truly likes the principal and more teachers.
- The school and **classroom environment** becomes much more positive and enjoyable.

5.2 Use Time for Teaching, and Assessing²

“Teaching is enjoyable and a wise use of **time**;
punishing is not be wise, and is certainly not enjoyable”

5.2.1 Rationale

Our profession loses many very good teachers that pictured themselves teaching, students asking questions, and everyone enjoying it. They never expected to be spending so much **time** dealing with discipline. They

²This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14674/1.3/>>.

never expected being angry and not liking some students. They never expected some students being angry and not liking them. They hoped to just teach and enjoy their **time** with the students.

Whether at conferences or training school faculties, the first question usually asked is “Where are we supposed to find the **time** to problem-solve with students?” This certainly is a valid question and has several answers. Some of the answers we can give you while you will have to find others. Sorry, but this is not an easy task to do. The good news, however, is that principals and teachers using **problem-solving** report having more **time** overall and certainly having more enjoyable **time**.

One answer we can give is to view this over the course of the year. **Disciplining** certainly takes less **time** with each student, but you end up dealing with many more incidences. **Problem-solving** is more up front **time**, but many teachers report having zero or only rare discipline incidences in the entire spring semester. Recall the student sent to the office twenty-six times the first semester, but only two times the second semester. The principal actually gained several days in the second semester. Imagine how much less **time** her teachers spent with the class disruptions. As mentioned earlier, most teachers reported classroom disruptions decreased by two-thirds over the course of the year and office referrals decreased up to 92%. Also keep in mind that most of these students were not **disruptive** at all the following year.

Another answer lies in the previous story about the vice-principal that liked her job much more when she felt like she was teaching instead of **investigating** and punishing. We have found that both teachers and principals end up with more **time** using **problem-solving**. Even if it were the same, the **time** is much more enjoyable. Teaching students is a wise use of your **time**, and watching students improve and thank you is extremely enjoyable.

Another answer is that in **problem-solving**, the student has to do most of the work and spend the most **time**. Also, students begin to help each other. This does not happen with discipline. You will find students doing much of the work for you, freeing up a lot of your **time**.

5.2.2 Practical Application

Now for the answers you must find. The typical classroom has one teacher and approximately thirty students. The teacher is busy almost the entire **time**. He or she must keep watch (control) over all of the students all of the **time**. In this setting, the only **time** that seems available is before or after class or school. Although some do this, most feel like they are being punished. So, the task required some **creativity** and help.

Most teachers who use problem solving with students have found ways to meet and work cooperatively with individual students. They have accomplished this in a variety of ways. Some have students working in groups, giving the teacher more **time** to work with an individual student. Some have scheduled para-professionals to be on call for teachers needing additional supervision while they worked with an individual student. Some teachers team with the next-door teacher to assist in supervision while working with their student. Some elementary schools use parent volunteers to assist.

Finding **time** during class is not easy, unless you are not teaching most of the **time**. The teachers who have students doing projects, group work, extended reading, or completing written work in class seem to find the **time** more easily. We really believe that teachers teach too much and should be spending more **time** observing and assessing the learning. But, this may not be appropriate for all teachers and would require changing one’s teaching style. It certainly is a good answer, however.

Time in class can also appear to take away time for the student. The **time** they spend with the teacher discussing a social problem is lost academic **time**. Although this makes rational sense, it turns out to be false. It is much like the Japanese model or the master special education teacher’s example. If you can help solve the student’s problem, he ends up making more academic progress despite having less **time**. So, whether you decide to use class **time** or not, do not believe you are taking anything away from the student. The learning occurring with the teacher may be the most important learning of the day.

Some teachers do not want to use class time at all. These teachers have also used a variety of strategies. Some have scheduled time in the morning before classes begin or after school. Some have set aside one-half of their planning period. One teacher who eats in the cafeteria requires students needing help in **problem-solving** to sit and eat with her as she goes through the steps.

The answers to this question of finding the **time** will have to meet the teachers' wants and needs. Most teachers need some help. But, even the ones that do it completely by themselves report that it was worth the up front **time**. Several teachers have reported that they almost gave up and started to send students to the office but were very glad they made it through. They looked at the second semester and thought it to be a wise and enjoyable use of their **time**. These teachers were determined to make it through and commented that they wanted to be the ones with the positive relationships instead of the principal.

It would be nice if there was a simple answer to this, but life is not always simple. We believe that if you and the faculty put your heads together, you will find your answers. We also believe that when you see those **disruptive** students acting appropriately, no matter where you found the **time**, you will know it was worth the effort. Remember, now you are teaching and never having to use any of your **time** for **disciplining** and punishing. Now that's a wise and enjoyable use of your **time**!

5.2.3 Expected Outcomes

- Teachers have more **time** to teach and assess learning.
- Principals have more **time** to lead and **support** learning.
- Principals and teachers enjoy their **time** in school much more.
- Students that might have been discipline problems for years learn to behave appropriately.
- Students will always remember the **time** the principal or teacher spent in helping them.
- A caring and positive relationship between the principal and teacher and student is formed.
- **Disruptive** behaviors are greatly reduced.

5.3 Social learning is as important as academic learning³

"It's all about teaching and learning, discipline systems fail"

5.3.1 Rationale

The purpose of this task is to help construct a better understanding of the overall problem-solving process and assist with the many questions in your future use with it. The logic is quite simple. Learning is learning, whether it is social learning or academic learning. Why we use instruction for academic learning and discipline systems for social learning is a mystery, especially in the twenty-first century.

Not that long ago, educators in our early church schools actually believed disruptive students were possessed with an evil spirit. The use of paddling was to drive the evil spirit from the student's body. Teachers were responsible for the three R's and behavior was the responsibility of the family and church. As naïve as this may appear to be, there are still people today who believe this to be true.

If teachers and principals are going to be successful with helping students learn to solve problems and actually quit disciplining and just teach, they need to believe that **answers** to social learning are the same as for academic learning. Since principals and teachers are experienced with academic learning, finding **answers** for social learning comes quite easily.

Most discipline systems use **strategies** that seem absurd for teachers trained and experienced in academics. If a student has problems with reading or math, would the loss of privileges, assignment to detention hall, or suspension help them read or solve math problems better? Certainly not, yet many discipline systems have teachers writing names on the board, giving out tokens, sending them to in-school suspension, and a host of other reward and punishment methods. Few, if any, involve teaching, which is exactly what the student needs, if he or she is to improve in reading or math.

Teachers find that some students will learn to problem-solve very quickly, while others need to go through the process numerous times. They find that some students can perform a new behavior quite well, while others have very little competence. They also find that some students can define the problem and explain

³This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14668/1.3/>>.

the whys very well, while others simply have no clue. The teaching of social knowledge and skill has the same challenges as teaching academic knowledge and skill and students possess a wide range of current learning and performance ability.

5.3.2 Practical Application

You accept the fact that some students possess greater learning skill and knowledge in academics, so you must also accept this fact in social learning and knowledge. You accept the fact that some need additional help with academics, so you must accept that some need more help with behavior. There are few quick fixes in learning to read or do math; neither are there for social learning. The belief that one discussion in the principal's office or one conversation with a parent will fix the student's problem must change to **beliefs** consistent with what you know about academic learning.

It would be easier to change our perspective of social learning if we did not have to deal with the **beliefs** of the past. It would also be much easier if we ourselves had received help with solving problems, instead of receiving **punishments**. Despite these obstacles, it is imperative to let go of the traditional definitions and methods of discipline and focus on the concept of social learning.

The final point to this task is to have a knowledge base to answer questions that arise in dealing with many students and many situations. No book can give you all the **answers** and it is easy to fall back to thinking that some discipline measure is what is needed. You should always look for your **answers** in what you know about teaching and learning. What works with many principals and teachers, when frustrated with not seeing any progress is to say to oneself, "What would I do if this problem were a math or reading problem"? Viewing the problem in this light assists in finding the correct answers.

5.3.3 Expected Outcomes

- Principals and teachers find the right **answers** in social learning instead of hoping that some discipline measure will work.
- Principals and teachers get to teach and never have to punish again.
- Student learning increases.
- Disruptive behavior is greatly reduced

5.4 Empower students⁴

"Don't give up **power** – give out **power**"

5.4.1 Rationale

Although this is part of the title of the book, it is so important and vital that it must be considered one of the major tasks. The greatest lesson that can be learned by students is that they have the **power** to change things in their lives. It is surprising how few students realize this and how long it takes for some to finally know this to be true. We believe that the best way to show and convince students that this is true is to problem solve.

Problem solving forces students to look at their choice of actions and the results of those actions. They cannot deny the facts or shove the blame to anyone else. They know what they did and they know what happened as a result. Although these are usually the negative behaviors and negative results, they soon begin to see how new choices are producing positive results.

The realization of this **power** causes increased self-esteem. Who would have thought that numerous incidences of misbehavior would result in such an enlightening truth? This is simply because every incident

⁴This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14653/1.4/>>.

requires self-reflection and learning. And those who once caused most of the classroom disruptions are now the ones learning, maturing, and finally feeling better about themselves.

In a large California elementary school that began using **problem-solving**, the young the vice-principal laminated the seven problem solving steps and taped it to her desk. Every student who came in had to go through the steps. She noticed that several things happened. First, she liked her job much more because she felt she was teaching, instead of **investigating** and **punishing**. She also said that many students would come and see her, even if they were not in trouble. They wanted her advice and to talk more about **problem-solving**. Her final remark was extremely satisfying when they finally realized they could solve their own problems, and she never saw them for discipline again.

5.4.2 Practical Application

Discuss, show, describe, and highlight the **power** each of your students has when problem solving. Problem solving itself does most of the work. The students soon learn the **power** they have to make things better or worse. Your job is to reinforce it and guide the students in using it in positive manners.

When principals use and support a **problem-solving** program, it greatly enhances the success of **problem solving** for the teachers. It also greatly assists the students in knowing that they truly must learn to solve their own problems, whether a teacher or an administrator requires it. Besides, principals need to be involved in some problems. One of the reasons why all office referrals are not stopped is because some problems require administrative action. Most administrators are pleased to go from the number one punisher to the number one problem-solver.

Teachers need the support of the principal Principals need the support of the teachers. They both have one other tremendous source of support – the students. Most students figure out your new system very quickly. They soon see that if you have a problem, it is your problem. Very often they help and assist each other. Often they also tease and say things like “Can’t you solve the problem you are having?” We have also heard students say things such as “Don’t blame the teacher; she is just trying to help you”. It will surprise you how much support you will receive from the students.

A remarkable side effect is that once the students know that each of them is responsible for solving his or her problems, it is not cool to disrupt in class. The other students begin to view this as an inability to solve a problem, not a brave student **challenging** the teacher’s authority and control. Not being highly regarded by other students has a significant effect on most students and they soon learn other ways to act in school.

Empowering students results in greater **power** for the teacher and principal. Your students support what you are doing and in almost every case, parents support you. After you have proven yourself to the **disruptive** students, they decide not to act up around you. You have conquered; you have won; you have empowered many former **dependent** and powerless students – and all by teaching, not disciplining.

5.4.3 Expected Outcomes

- The principal and the teacher have greater **power**.
- The students have greater **power** and lose the feeling of helplessness and dependency.
- Students begin to change their world for the better.
- Student self-esteem is increased.
- A closer relationship between the students and the teacher and principal is formed.

5.5 Nurture positive attitudes⁵

“Only a change in experience will change an attitude”

⁵This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14661/1.3/>>.

5.5.1 Rationale

An elderly veteran teacher used to tell her students “Change your attitude and change your day.” We often hear other teachers talking about particular students needing an attitude adjustment. Educators yearn for a change of student attitude toward learning and school with the hope that everything will be better. The fact is that attitudes are very slow to change.

This task is needed to keep in mind and will help through the long haul. Teachers and principals need to be both understanding and patient with student attitudes. Unless you teach in a Pre-K program, you are inheriting the attitudes developed over years of schooling. If the attitudes are negative, this means that the student has been viewing the world through this attitude and has many examples to prove his or her attitude is correct. In one example, a second-grade girl believed teachers were mean. When she and her friend saw this mean teacher being nice to another student, the one girl remarked “The Principal was probably watching her”. People often change reality to fit their **beliefs**. Changing attitudes is not only slow, but requires a battle with the mind.

The understanding necessary before we can nurture **positive attitudes** is that attitudes are formed from our experience. Most likely, the second-grade girl experienced a teacher who must have done something she considered mean. This experience turned into a belief that created an attitude. From this point on, she overlooked nice things but noticed everything mean. Understanding this, one would be foolish to believe that one nice thing or one conversation will change this student’s attitude.

5.5.2 Practical Application

This task requires that educators begin with a change the student’s experience. Whatever the negative attitude, the student will have to experience something different, and possibly, many times. So if your students do not immediately trust that you are there to help them solve their problems, only numerous **experiences** with you will bring a new belief and attitude. If your students believe it is the principal and the teachers against the students, only experience with your working cooperatively with them will bring about a new belief and attitude. Obviously, **patience** is the order of the day.

The importance of this task lies in changing the way your students view school, learning, principals, teachers, others, and most importantly, themselves. Previously, we wrote about many students who were frequent visitors to the office having a noticeable increase in self-esteem following learning to problem-solve. These students also reported new attitudes about teachers and administrators and other students.

Keep in mind that most **disruptive** students feel there is something wrong with them if they make mistakes, receive **punishments**, or cannot get along with others (including teachers). Working with students in a caring manner to solve their problems is a very effective way for them to experience something new and positive. These new **experiences** are the only way for them to adopt a new belief and positive attitude.

Your students deserve to see school and their world through a positive attitude. You deserve to have a school full of **positive attitudes**. Only with your understanding, **patience**, and using all the tasks in this book, will you see a noticeable change of attitude. When that happens, be sure to pat yourself on the back, for you have also changed their world.

5.5.3 Expected Outcomes

- Students will form **positive attitudes** about school, administrators, teachers, and themselves.
- The **positive attitudes**, will positively affect their social and academic performance.
- The school will be a much more enjoyable place to be.
- The principal and teachers and students will form more positive relationships.

5.6 Key Words for Chapter 5⁶

5.6.1

attitude

classroom disruptions

competence

individualized

positive attitudes

preventive measure

problem-solving

punishments

relationships

social learning

⁶This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14679/1.3/>>.

Chapter 6

Frequently Asked Questions

6.1 Frequently Asked Questions¹

6.1.1

Q – The student was sent to the back of the room to fill out the problem solving steps, he did. He then returned to his seat and began to disrupt again. This doesn't work!

A – Of course not, you gave him a punishment and punishments do not work. Problem solving must be done cooperatively, even if you have him work on it and then meet with you.

Q – The student promised to use a new behavior, but did not. He was just telling me what I wanted to hear.

A – Either not requiring student to demonstrate new behavior, not enough practice of the new behavior, or the student chose a behavior they could not do. It is possible that the student was just telling you what you wanted to hear in the hope that you would give up. If this is the case, then they are testing the limits. Restate the expectation that he must do.

Q – I use this system and it works very well, but some of the teachers still use punishments. This causes some of my students to ask for the quick punishment instead of problem solving.

A – You can only exercise control over what you have control of. It would be easier on you if all others used the same methods, but if not, don't give in. This is your expectation and the building of your relationship – end of story.

Q – This works great with most of my students, even the disruptive ones. This one student, however, has been through this too many times. I do not think it works for him.

A – Every time you have the student go through the problem solving steps, he is coming a little closer to that 'Aha' moment that he does have choices and it is up to him. Remember, you have inherited a student with past experience with discipline techniques. He will improve and is learning from you each and every time. You should also consult with other teachers, the administrators, or parents, if you feel the student might need greater assistance.

Q – Some of my students do great for a little while, then repeat the negative behavior. I am not sure if this has a long-term effect.

A – It has an effect over a lifetime. You must always look for progress, not perfection. If the negative behavior is decreasing, you are succeeding. Remember, everyone makes mistakes up to 10% of the time. Reward the progress and use future mistakes for increased learning.

Q – I found out that Johnny was a very good flute player and told him in front of others.. The other students now tease him and call him the Pied Piper. Johnny is very upset with me. I thought you said this worked.

¹This content is available online at <<http://cnx.org/content/m14656/1.3/>>.

A – You are building a personal relationship. You are often finding out things that are personal. In most cases, let the student know in private. Johnny would not have been embarrassed if you thought this was something very good.

Q – Juanita gives answers and help to her cousin Maria. When we meet to discuss why she chooses to do this, she tells me her parents tell her that family comes first. We are at an impasse on finding an alternative.

A – Values are seldom based on logic or reasoning, so almost impossible to use reason to alter her family value. Allow Juanita to help Maria study and help her find her mistakes. Show Jaunita how this helps Maria much more. It is a wise practice to consult with the parents when values are an issue. You, Juanita, and the parents should find and agree on a solution that everyone can support.

Q – In one instance I found myself so angry with this student that I did not want to sit and discuss problem solving with her, or her with me. I am human. What should I do in this case?

A – Be you and think about what you would do if this were your best friend. You would probably tell her the truth. You were too upset to talk right now. Another method that is needed in times like this or others is to use a third party to go through the process with both of you. Find someone you both trust.

Q – I am very good with students now, but will I be any good at this and is it worth the change?

A – You might be able to trick some students some of the time, but you cannot fool them. They know if you care and they cannot help to see that you are taking the time for them. You will be teaching them some of life's most necessary skills, i.e. how to solve problems and make good decisions, how to meet their needs in positive fashions, how to live morally and with character, how to use freedoms wisely and respect limits, and how to accept and learn from one's mistakes. You will be removing fear in school. You will be helping them realize their true gifts, their true self-worth, positive attitudes about school and learning, and the power they possess to make positive changes in their lives. It IS worth the change.

After you see the new attitudes, new behaviors, and new self-confidence in the students and they turn around and thank you - you will KNOW you were successful.

Chapter 7

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²<http://courses.ed.asu.edu/berliner/reading/fuss.fuss.htm>

³[http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=si3_rdr_bb_author/103-0401411-4039847?index=books&field%2Dauthor%2Dexact=J%2E%20M%2E%20D%](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=si3_rdr_bb_author/103-0401411-4039847?index=books&field%2Dauthor%2Dexact=J%2E%20M%2E%20D%20)

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Index of Keywords and Terms

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