
Preface

A Focus on Prevention

Many teaching problems will be solved in the next few decades. There will be new learning environments and new means of instruction. One function, however, will always remain with the teacher: to create the emotional climate for learning. No machine, sophisticated as it may be, can do this job.

—Haim Ginott, 1942
Teacher and Child

Good teachers can prevent discipline problems by developing effective classroom management skills. In fact, the best teachers spend very little time dealing with student misbehavior. It's not that they ignore it, but they have established strategies for preventing problems in the first place. With a focus on prevention, these teachers organize and maintain an environment in which students feel secure, happy, and challenged . . . kid-successful classrooms.

Over the years I have benefited from observing many highly effective teachers in their classrooms, not only in California where I teach, but in other states as well as in Europe. From these exemplary teachers I have gathered many time-tested ideas, techniques, and strategies to include in the pages of this book.

Perhaps you too have had the good fortune to watch expert teachers in action. If so, you have undoubtedly taken note of the class climate, the

AUTHOR'S NOTE: For the purpose of fluency, the masculine form of the pronoun will be used throughout this book in the traditional way.

x ● Teach More and Discipline Less

“feeling in the air” within successful classrooms. It is a feeling of warmth and caring beneath the expectations, of calmness underlying the enthusiasm. In these classrooms children know it is safe to risk, safe to make mistakes, safe even to fail. In these classrooms children can most effectively learn.

But such a beneficial atmosphere doesn’t just fall into place. It must be created, consciously and deliberately, by a teacher possessing (1) essential skills and (2) attributes of acceptance and caring. Such a teacher cares enough to delve beneath telltale misbehavior and reach a child who is failing. Such a teacher realizes the vital importance of an effective learning climate and is skillful enough to become a master of classroom management.

Classroom management, a main focus of this book, refers to all things that teachers do to organize their time, their students, their curriculum, and their materials. It is, to most knowledgeable educators, a prerequisite; it is “what has to come first” in the classroom so that learning can take place and discipline problems can be averted.

The nation’s teachers possess a wide diversity of management skills. These skills directly contribute to an equally wide diversity of successful and unsuccessful schools. And schools have a tough enough time these days. Challenges faced by educators include the growing prevalence of rudeness, negative attitudes, lack of parental support, and even violence. Many of today’s students enter our classrooms lacking values of respect and responsibility; many struggle with success-hindering low self-esteem. All such issues make it difficult for teachers to remain positive and effective.

However, this book proclaims an unfailing faith in the everyday hard-working classroom teacher, earnestly open to new ideas and insights. Every teacher can become a better classroom manager. You may be searching for a few workable ideas to sharpen your teaching skills. Or you may be one of many who admit that discipline is a priority that permeates the very air of your classroom with its constant challenges. Perhaps you find yourself asking, “What can I do so I can teach more and discipline less?” You’re in the boat with lots of company, all searching for methods by which we can avoid the role of disciplinarian. We all need the specific skills to deal effectively and humanely with the small irritations, the daily conflicts, and the sudden crises.

Supporting its focus on discipline prevention by setting up the environment, this book will help you

- Recognize causes of misbehavior
- Tender clear limits and logical consequences
- Build rapport and cooperation
- Raise the level of student responsibility
- Find alternatives for rewards and punishment

Good teachers can remember the day they stepped into their very first classrooms. Since that day they have developed, tested, and refined their craft until it worked for them. These teachers will tell you they never stop learning. All teachers can learn basic techniques of understanding misbehavior and improving classroom management. All teachers can meet today's challenges one child at a time!