

Education

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We invite teachers, administrators and educators to submit cases, techniques, procedures, approaches, research and articles for this regular opportunity to share effective approaches and to help further the application of democratic and Adlerian principles in school settings. Please send to: Edna Nash, 302-2020 Bellevue Ave., West Vancouver, B.C. Canada V7V 1B8.

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Responsibility: The Key to Self-Discipline

"We can teach responsibility only by giving pupils opportunities to accept responsibilities themselves."

A responsible classroom is one that provides opportunities for all students to develop characteristics that will promote self-disciplined behaviors. Elementary classrooms today are beset by programs which seem to have teachers torn in many directions. In many schools teachers rarely see their entire class together as children are leaving the classroom at various times for such things as special help in reading or math, enrichment programs, adaptive physical education, speech therapy, guidance counseling and music lessons. In addition, some schools have children change classes for different subjects. These and other daily interruptions make it difficult for the elementary teacher to build a community feeling as the students' group is rarely together. Also, there is the "back to basics" movement which has led some schools to over-emphasize the academics and leave little time for the development of social skills.

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These factors make it necessary for teachers to have techniques that are profitable for all students and that require a minimum of time to implement. Three such techniques are classroom goal setting and evaluation, a cooperative discipline system of consequences, and a conflict resolution system.

“Freedom without responsibility is chaos.”

Classroom goal setting takes the place of the traditional “rules systems” frequently used in elementary schools. Philosophically, the difference between the two is simple; rules are something to be obeyed or broken whereas goals are something one works toward. Classroom goals are usually written by the teacher and presented to the students during a discussion for further clarity and, if necessary, revision. They are used in the earliest primary grades and on into the secondary level. The only difference being the number of goals presented and the wording used. In the younger grades goals should be limited to three and can gradually be increased to about ten for the upper grades. When written they can be constructed in either statement or question form and should encompass all the academic and social skills the classroom teacher feels are essential.

When written effectively, goals will convey the same message as a rule, but in a more positive way. For example:

Goals*	Rules
1. Can we disagree and still be friends?	1. No fighting.
2. Can we listen to each other?	2. Do not talk when someone else is speaking.
3. Do you think about your mistakes and do things to correct them?	3. Do your best at all times.
4. Do you have a real interest in learning?	4. Complete all assignments on time.
5. Do you work toward solving problems?	5. Settle your own arguments
6. Do you invent new and interesting things for our class to do together?	6. Use “free time” wisely.
7. Are you able to say “I don’t know” and still do something about it?	7. Correct your mistakes.

**The goals used in this article were written by Louis Tenaglia and his third grade class at Doyle School, Doylestown, Pennsylvania.*

- c. I invent new things from scraps of paper and junk. 2-3
- d. I sign up to read stories to the class. 1-4

The teacher should then return the evaluation sheet to the student. If the rating scale evaluations are significantly different either the student or the teacher may have a conference to discuss why their opinions differ. If the classroom teacher desires, evaluation sheets may be sent home to parents and a space may be provided for signatures and comments.

Signed:

Student: _____

Teacher: _____

Parent: _____

Comments: _____

“We spend more time with an untrained child than we do in training the child.”

A cooperative discipline system of consequences is one that is set up by the teachers and students. The classroom teacher can hold a class discussion and tell the children that the topic for the day is going to be behavior. Have the class discuss what behavior is and write a definition that everyone agrees upon. Once the class has a common understanding of the word behavior, ask them to observe the class until the next meeting, watching for behaviors that help the class to function and for behaviors that stop the class from functioning.

At the next class discussion make a list of positive (helping) behaviors and negative (hindering) behaviors. Discuss ways the entire class profits from positive behavior. Then discuss what happens when negative behavior takes place in a classroom. It is important that the students recognize that everyone profits when positive behavior takes place in the classroom and everyone loses when negative behavior takes place, even if only a few are misbehaving. Next, ask the class what they think could take place in their classroom for it to be a place where nobody loses because of negative behavior. This question should lead to a discussion of consequences.

Students will most likely be unfamiliar with consequences and will then begin to suggest punishments for classmates who misbehave. At this time the teacher can lead the discussion into how punishments make persons feel. It is

helpful to write the students' ideas on large paper under the title, punishment. When the list is complete, tell the class that at the next meeting you are going to show them another way that class members can help each other when negative behavior takes place.

At the next meeting explain that consequences are a way in which everyone can work together to help children who misbehave. Explain that each student has the choice of helping the class function smoothly or of accepting the consequences for the misbehavior. Tell them that all consequences must be related to the misbehavior and handled within the classroom situation. This rule eliminates the possibility of children deciding to send other children to the principal or to contact parents.

Next, set up the consequences. Give the children an example to follow, such as:

Suppose a child interrupts the class by calling out. What is the action that stops the class from functioning? Wait for the class to answer. What is a consequence that is handled within the classroom and relates to the misbehavior? Wait for the class to give some answers. Explain to the children that calling out is talking out of turn so a consequence might be that the offending child would not be allowed to participate in the class for the rest of the period.

Once the children understand the procedure, together go over the list of negative behaviors made up by the class and determine consequences for each. When the list is completed, set a class discussion two weeks hence to evaluate the effectiveness of the consequence system. At that meeting, continue to re-negotiate the consequences to make the system more effective.

"Discipline is the seed from which freedom grows."

It is also important to have a conflict resolution system for those students who have difficulty dealing with each other. This is written by the teacher and discussed with the class.

A conflict resolution system should contain the following four points: mutual respect, pinpointing the issue, communication and cooperation, and decision making. It can be used in any elementary or secondary classroom as long as the wording is appropriate for the age level. Two examples of conflict resolution systems* which have been used in classrooms are as follows:

Primary Conflict Resolution System

1. We all get mad sometimes. It does not help to fight or argue.
2. We find out why we are angry by talking and listening to each other.
3. We must live together. How will we make that possible again?
4. The people who are angry decide how they can live together again.

Intermediate Conflict Resolution System

1. We cannot solve a problem by either fighting or giving in. Classroom conflicts have to be worked out by respecting the rights of others.
2. Working out a conflict requires being honest and understanding the problem. We must find out the real cause of the problem.
3. We need to discuss the problem together if we are to solve it. We do not blame.
4. Whatever action we take to clear up the conflict has to allow everyone involved to take part in the decision. This provides for fairness and justice.

**The primary conflict resolution system was written by Alma Griffith and used with her second grade class and the intermediate conflict resolution system was written by Ken Dugan and used with his fifth grade class at Doyle School, Doylestown, Pennsylvania.*