

Discipline

Hi all,

These notes come from a session that Jack Koehn and I shared in Wichita, KS at the United School Administrators conference. It was a short presentation where we simply tried to introduce a few concepts related to discipline that we believe are important. Don't hesitate to contact me if a bit of clarification is in order!

Warning: these are simply quick notes. Prepare for informal writing and casual comments!

Questions?

Just send an email!

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PURPOSE: Jack Koehn and I agreed to provide a combination of quick activities that educators could replicate in their schools to promote meaningful discussions of discipline. We believe that it is helpful for a staff to clarify what discipline is and isn't. It helps to talk about what is and isn't effective (and why). If the staff looks at common school-wide approaches to discipline, they can determine if it fits with their picture of what IS effective discipline. Finally, we believe that all schools have great teachers who "do discipline" very well. All staff should have an opportunity to learn from their insight (these are probably the same teachers who would rather not do a "presentation" to the staff on their approach to discipline). Therefore, we hope these activities engage and inform staff - leading to a more cohesive and effective school-wide approach.

We started off with a couple of my songs just to help us bring real students and their behaviors into the conversation...:

It Wasn't My Fault

Peer Pressure You can use your imagination if you can't remember exactly how this sounds!

Then we looked at the definition:

dis·ci·pline *n.* [Middle English, from Old French *descepline*, from Latin *discipl*
INCLUDEPICTURE "<http://cache.lexico.com/dictionary/graphics/AHD4/GIF/imacr.gif>" * MERGEFORMATINET *na*, from *discipulus*, *pupil*. See **disciple**.]

- Training expected to produce a specific character or pattern of behavior, especially training that produces moral or mental improvement.
- Controlled behavior resulting from disciplinary training; self-control.
- A branch of knowledge or teaching.
- Synonyms include both “teach” and “punish”.

If you don't recall this from seeing the definition, one of our main messages is that discipline is more than punishment. Discipline is teaching, training, modeling, reminding, clarifying, defining, practicing, etc. The great teachers whose kids always get the “good” kids – the teachers that seem to just get lucky with having kids behave – are usually the teachers who teach constantly. Students have been taught (over and over) exactly what that teacher wants.

We suggestion using a T chart with your staff. On the left, allow them to brainstorm **what great classroom discipline looks/sounds like**. Use the right side to brainstorm what great classroom discipline **doesn't look like**. That will start the conversation.

Jack asked a great question: “is discipline something that gets in the way of teaching, or is it part of teaching?” How about this, “does discipline in the home get in the way of effective parenting?”

Jack asked for and discussed a number of discipline approaches or trends in education (we heard things like...Cantor, Point Systems, Alfie Kohn, Grid, Love and Logic, Positive Discipline), and then asked everyone to list **their school “discipline plan”** on a post-it note. He asked for each person to place the post-it note on a continuum that used these guiding terms on the two ends:

Student Centered
Part of Education
Relationship Driven
Teaching
Intrinsic
Proactive

Adult Centered
Academic Intrusion
Obedience
Policy
Punishment
Extrinsic



The terms to the left and right do not necessarily go together. The purpose, again, is to begin a “clarifying” discussion of what discipline is and isn’t in our schools.

At school, the next step is to ask the staff to place a post-it note with **their own classroom approach to discipline** on the continuum. Use a different colored post-it. More discussion....

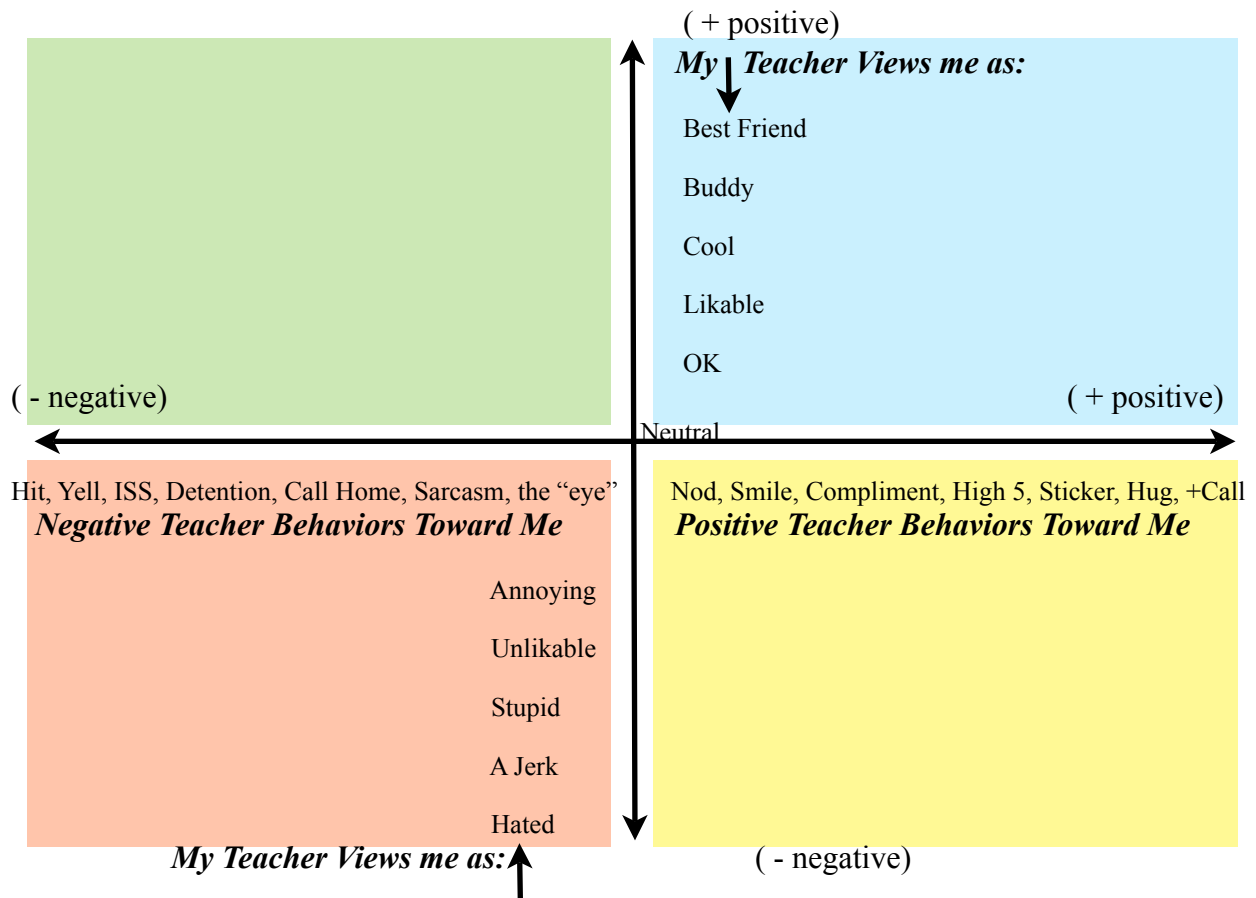
The question might be, “is what we are doing in our classrooms, and is our school policy lining up with what we believe discipline should be?”

“How is the ideal different from what really happens?”

We also ask participants to place some of the following “stars” on the continuum, based on our **perceptions**. Characters from the TV show M*A*S*H? General Patton? Bobby Knight? Dean Smith? Characters from The Andy Griffith Show? Dirty Harry? Walker Texas Ranger? “Grasshopper”/Kung Fu? Others????

A concept we asked everyone to consider was whether or not the perception of a current situation (whether there are few/minor behavior problems vs numerous/out-of-control problems) might influence the “ideal” location on the continuum above. We think the perception matters...

NEXT, we provided a format for considering student responses to discipline based on **our relationship** and **our behavior**. As you consider what is below, please keep in mind that the relationship is defined as *how the student perceives the adult views the relationship*. If the student thinks the teacher likes the student, it is positive. If the student perceives that the teacher dislikes the student (whether the teacher actually does or doesn't), it is considered a negative relationship.



I've had quite a few opportunities to work with groups of teachers and ask them to tell me (assuming I am the teacher) what students in each "quadrant" give me during class. General consensus is that students in the red quadrant (teacher has negative behaviors toward the student and the student perceives that the teacher doesn't like him/her) will respond with anger, blame, and probably not do quality work. Students in the yellow quadrant will likely be somewhat confused and possibly respond with sarcasm and comments behind the teachers back because they see the teacher as a fraud (the teacher pretends to act "nice" but doesn't like me). It's obvious that a students (blue quadrant) who think the teacher likes them AND receive positive behaviors will likely be pleasant and work hard. As principal, I found student in the green quadrant the most surprising. If they believed the I or a teacher genuinely liked them - even when we had to respond with negatively (i.e. detention) to their behaviors - they tended to remain mostly pleasant and were more likely to continue trying to produce good work.

The quadrants above can provide an important discussion point for staff.

QUESTIONS? Which quadrant of students is most likely to disengage from school? If they disengage, what can we expect from them? What school-wide and classroom discipline approaches encourage or discourage students from disconnecting?

Here are a few more notes from similar presentations. Jack and I did not have time to get into all of this at the USA conference, but you might find some of these thoughts useful.

If you need to find out which students in the school are NOT connected, try the DOTS activity.

DOTS. In a large font, list the name of every student in school. Give all staff members dots (those colored dot stickers often used for garage sale pricing). Allow them to put a dot next to all students they know – that they know well enough to tell a positive/success story. ...Not just a student they can call by name, but one they can describe to someone else. See what students have no dots, and start seeking them out. Then work on the students with only a few dots. Make it impossible for a student to be invisible.

Teach Responsibility. Don't assume that all students have the same image of what responsibility means to a specific teacher. If you ask a large group of educators what **observable behaviors** they would most like students to exhibit to demonstrate "responsibility", they will give a widely varied and non-compatible list of responses. Consider (as a staff) agreeing on three or four very specific behaviors, inform all students that these are the "responsible behaviors" you want to see demonstrated, and then confirm their success. Avoid vague ideas like "be polite", "be prepared", "exhibit effort" or "be enthusiastic". Specific, observable behaviors like "bring your pencil", "raise your hand", "say thank you" and "place your homework in the basket" are much easier to teach and encourage. Keep in mind that some students who are impressively responsible to mom or dad (take care of siblings, hold down a job, mow the yard, help run the farm) do not grow up with "classroom responsibility".

Ways to Manage behavior: (comments from teachers in conference break-out sessions)

1. Proximity control.

-Sometimes helpful to give a physical touch to redirect a student. Not to be used with an explosive, violent kid.

2. If proximity control & redirect doesn't work, the teacher can repeat the appropriate behavior they want from the student ("please open your book and start on the assignment"). Teachers may ask "do you know what the directions are?" to allow the student to "self" direct. Consider repeating the directions and follow with **"or I will need to get other people involved"**.

If student asks, “Who?” Teachers can say, “I will make that decision after class.” The statement “I’ll need to get others involved” means different things to different students. Some kids think the other person will be mom. Students who have been in serious trouble think it may be social services, a probation officer, the principal, etc.

-This gives a teacher time to think, rather than just react with a threat that they might not be possible to enforce. Avoids Lose/Lose situation.

3. Engage high-risk students with music.

-Have students create a song about the material just learned.

-Songs have patterns and emotion - very brain compatible.

4. **There is always a next time.** After a misbehavior – teach. Be specific about what you DO want. Give examples. Make a plan for reasonable consequences for the next time this misbehavior occurs. Then, you must follow through. Expect complaining the first few times. If you don’t follow through, they will always try to talk you out of it. Again, on a first misbehavior that you know you can’t “live with”- teach the student what you expect - and then plan for the next occurrence. REACT to problems by being PROACTIVE for next misbehavior. Also remember, if it is really no big deal, ignore it. Don’t create conflict over something that is not disrupting class or interfering with learning.

Students who decide, after years of experience, that they are not “good” at school, sometimes prefer to make “us” their adversary. That way they can claim we don’t like them, or that it is our fault, not theirs. When they disconnect (emotionally, socially, physically absent) from us, they lose many opportunities to learn. How do we “approve of” and “accept” a student who is poor at the task of “school”???

I recently listed to speaker/author Todd Whitaker, who authored the book called “What great teachers do differently.” One thing he points out is that with great teachers, students don’t know who is liked or disliked. We don’t have to like students. It is perhaps important that we ACT like we like all students. The goal here isn’t to be a “fake”. Rather, our actions tend to guide our attitudes. When we practice positive and affirming actions toward students, even on our most difficult teaching days, our actions are likely to follow.

When talking about students, consider the impact. A thought whispered in the lounge might just as well be written on the lockers. Students will know. I have a song called “Fly On The Wall” that speaks to this.

Use strategies like Think-Pair-Share in the classroom.

* Research says there is not a connection between the rate of response (how long it takes a student to answer) & the quality of response. Many students need more time to think without someone else talking.

*People who process & think deeply often don’t have the time to come up with the answer.

Think-Pair-Share is a good activity to give these types of students time needed to process. Ask students not to talk for two minutes while everyone writes their response to a question..

*Have students find things they have in **common** before they get into discussion. This way everyone has an opportunity to be involved (before the “talker” student takes over).

* Have groups report the “common” ideas to the whole group.

We are social creatures. Students will find a way to visit – with or without permission. Think-Pair-Share allows students to interact in ways that promote learning in the classroom. Plus, many students remember much better when they discuss a topic, rather than only listening or reading. All students can hear quality responses before they must report to the teacher. No one has to demonstrate how much they don't know.

SCHOOL-WIDE STRATEGIES:

The first 5 minutes of class is critical. New teachers often fail when they don't know how to get class started efficiently and effectively. Students who have time to be unfocused get in trouble or distract others. At a staff meeting, allow the staff to talk in groups of 3 or 4, and ask them to describe the “best 5 minutes possible” for starting a class. “How did you start class on the day you taught your best lesson ever?” What structures are in place? What are students doing? What does the teacher do? What activities can occur immediately – without teacher instruction? How can a teacher get the attention of the class and engage them without yelling or punishing?

CLASSROOM IDEAS AND VARIOUS STRATEGIES FROM TEACHERS

1. Yelling doesn't work. It just makes your throat hurt. Better to speak one notch quieter than students speak.
2. Treat students with respect. Take an interest in kids.
 - a.) shake hands with students.
 - b.) Follow up with what student has said the day before. Shows you were listening.
 - c.) Ask kids how they're doing. May diffuse a situation or bring a kid's attention back.
3. Ask the students what he/she wants.
-often students just want/need structure.
4. Use humor.
-Consider a joke a day. You select appropriate jokes & have students read them to class
5. Show models of good behavior. Share true stories of great character.
6. Notify parents of positive behaviors.

*Never make a claim/threat you can't back up. Teachers can't make a student do anything.

Use music to model issues of responsibility, respect:

Play a song & have students write a response in their journal. “What do you think the songwriter is trying to say in this song?” This is safer than “what do YOU think about this issue”. I have plenty of songs that speak to issues to open the conversation. Let me know if you need ideas.

I know I’m missing lots of great ideas of heard and witnessed. Send me a reminder of your best ideas and I’ll try to share those with more teachers as I make presentations.

Best wishes always,

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