/ can get away with some rule infraction, by publicly proving that some is outdated or logically inconsistent, by causing a teacher to lose ence, or by using up class time. Regardless of the outcome, such students mplish part of their goal simply by focusing attention on themselves.

Challenges and confrontations can be minimized if teachers follow a ine of beginning class promptly, explaining the objective, and moving tly into the lesson. This routine focuses the attention of the class on a ific objective. Once the lesson is underway, any issue raised that is not ant to the work at hand should be deferred. Students raising such issues ld be told that the work at hand must continue, but that the issue can iscussed immediately after class. By refusing to argue during class, the ier minimizes the peer reinforcement that the student might get. Fur- and equally important, deferment provides a cooling-off period. This ases the likelihood that the issue can be discussed objectively.

Teachers need to be careful not to use sarcasm, ridicule, or humiliation, ny reason. It is particularly important to guard against sarcasm. Teach- ave many opportunities to make remarks that seem clever, and perhaps funny, but that may offend some students. Think twice before speaking. arp tongue can inflict deep and lasting wounds, and it can surely by any rapport that might be developing.

Keeping grades confidential helps minimize student embarrassment umiliation, and it protects your own integrity. It is generally no secret s doing well in a class and who is not, but if you become the source of nation about who is and is not doing well, you are betraying a trust. er, many schools have strict rules prohibiting the sharing of confiden- formation such as grades.

Perhaps the best advice is the oldest. "Do not do unto others what you d not have them do unto you."

Actualization Needs

st need described by Maslow is the need for self-actualization, or the o develop as fully as possible.[8] This need is directly related to class- management. Students who believe that their time and efforts will hem make useful and relevant gains in abilities or will open up new of personal development, are likely to be more willing learners.

ne of the most crucial steps you can take to help students meet their or self-actualization is to ensure that the course objectives focus on the levels of the cognitive or psychomotor domains. Such objectives e the integration of skills and knowledge and usually reflect abilities nt to life outside of school. Discuss these abilities with students and, r, show how the content clearly relates to current events in business, ry, research, the arts, or some other human endeavor. These steps will help students see that they will be learning interesting and valuable information and that they are, in fact, enhancing their own abilities.

It is also important for students to use their newly acquired abilities. Individual or group projects can provide opportunities for students to utilize new skills and to see how their study has paid off. Further, to the extent that the projects involve people other than the teacher, students will be demonstrating their abilities to different adults, thus helping build their self-esteem.

In review, many classroom management problems can be avoided if teachers recognize that, in most cases, students' actions are motivated by basic human needs. By consciously helping students satisfy those needs, teachers will eliminate many of the causes of classroom management problems.

GUIDELINES FOR MINIMIZING DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS

Using the background information on human needs, along with other psychological principles and common sense, the following set of ten guidelines can be helpful in organizing to preclude discipline problems.

Minimize Physical Distractions.

Students who are concerned about their physical well-being are likely to pay less attention to the classwork at hand. Simple steps, such as assuring a continual flow of fresh air through the room, maintaining a comfortable temperature, eliminating glare on the chalkboard, and establishing a reasonable policy concerning leaving the room for drinks or trips to the restroom, can help eliminate the causes of many "discipline problems."

Treat Students with Respect.

Remember that students are fellow human beings and deserve to be treated with the same degree of respect and courtesy that adults extend to any of their peers. Students are likely to treat you the same way you treat them

Explain the Big Picture.

Taking the time to explain to students what the course is about, what skills and abilities students will gain, and how those skills and abilities can be of practical utility to them, helps give students the big picture. Letting students know what will be happening and when, treats them

like adults. They have a sense of direction and a timeline to use in assessing progress.

Maintain Reasonable Expectations.

Your expectations of students, and your confidence in your own ability to help them succeed, will have an effect on their performance. Many teachers, hoping to ensure student success, have expectations that are far too low. They have the effect of cheating students by depriving them of the opportunity to truly excel. At the same time, teachers should not set unreasonably high expectations. The solution is not complex. Set expectations that you believe are reasonable even if they are higher than most students originally think they can achieve. Present them with a mountain, not a mole hill. Further, do not feel guilty if it is necessary to expect more work from students than they think should be required. Make it clear that it requires hard work to achieve most worthwhile goals.

At first, this step will not make you popular, but you are not in a popularity contest. You are in business to help as many students as possible become as competent as possible. If you are willing to work with students individually, you will find their frustration at having to work hard seems to speed learning. The mildly uncomfortable feeling that students get when their initial efforts do not always lead to immediate success continues until they achieve the objective. The sooner the task is completed, the sooner the frustration ends. If you expect too little from students, this sense of frustration will be lacking, the work may be viewed as busywork, and the final sense of achievement students could otherwise have experienced will be minimized. At the same time, unattainable goals or artificial barriers to goal achievement must be eliminated or students will become overly frustrated, and this frustration may be manifested in the form of discipline problems.

When students successfully complete your course it seems more desirable for them to say, "I worked like a dog, but I really learned useful stuff," as opposed to "We had a lot of fun, but we didn't learn much." Your students may be young, but they are not stupid. They do not want to waste their time and effort. They may not love you for making them work hard, but they will take pride in their accomplishments, and they will respect you for doing what you were supposed to do.

5. *Use a Variety of Instructional Experiences.*

A frequently cited cause of discipline problems is student boredom. You can combat this by building into your lessons a variety of learning experiences. Not every student will be equally interested in each experience,

but by having a number of different experiences, you increase the probability of gaining and holding the interest of students more of the time. Interested students are less likely to cause discipline problems.

6. *Provide Prompt Feedback.*

Students are generally very interested in finding out how they did on any given task, and they are young and do not have a lot of patience. If feedback is not forthcoming fairly soon after the task is completed, students are apt to think that the teacher did not regard the task as very important. This feeling will continue to grow as such instances multiply, with the eventual result that students will feel that whatever they do in that particular class is of little value. Such an environment is open to the generation of discipline problems. As a general rule, a second assignment should not be given until the first is corrected and handed back. That is one reason why it is a good idea to have written assignments turned in on Fridays. You then have the weekend to correct the work.

7. *Provide Positive Reinforcement.*

When evaluating students' work, many teachers concentrate on the identification and correction of errors. This is useful in that if you do not point out mistakes, students will not know about, or be able to correct, them. However, if you do not also recognize those things students have done well, they may become discouraged and resentful. Their needs for esteem and self-actualization will go unsatisfied and they may seek other, undesirable sources of satisfaction. It is a good idea, therefore, to point out sections of students' work that are well done and to encourage students to use those sections as models for the less well-done portions. Sincere, positive reinforcement can go a long way toward making corrections more palatable and toward satisfying student needs.

8. *Be Consistent.*

If students perceive inconsistencies in a teacher's reactions to problems, or if they believe a teacher is being unfair, their respect for that teacher will decrease. Once a teacher loses the respect of his or her students, discipline problems will begin to increase.

9. *Foster Peer Approval.*

As was pointed out earlier, peer approval or disapproval is an important element in the life of most adolescents. At times this force may motivate students more than any other single element. If you are able to gain the

respect and approval of the majority of your students, potential troublemakers will recognize that they risk peer disapproval if they cause problems.

It must be pointed out that, although teachers can accept most forms of student support and can allow most forms of peer pressure to bear on students causing discipline problems, the tool cannot be used indiscriminately. Peer pressures such as physical reprisals, ridicule, sarcasm, and humiliation cannot be tolerated. If teachers condone the use of such measures, the very student respect that generated the support in the first place will be lost.

Avoid Punitive Action.

This principle is one of the most difficult for beginning teachers to follow. Many people have become accustomed to an eye-for-an-eye philosophy. When a student causes a problem for a teacher, that teacher's first inclination may be to cause at least as great a problem for the student. There is, however, little evidence to support the idea that punitive action will have any lasting effect on deviant student behavior. Nonetheless, what follows is an examination of common punitive actions.

A. *Detention.*

This option punishes teachers as much as students, since someone must supervise the detention. Often the student is bused to and from school or has an after-school job, and the hardship caused makes the punishment excessive. In other cases, students may be involved in sports or some after-school club and the detention may therefore deprive them of one of the few school experiences that is keeping them from dropping out.

B. *Extra schoolwork.*

There seems to be no evidence to support the idea that assigning extra schoolwork is helpful in eliminating discipline problems. In fact, it is likely that the assignment of such work will cause students to associate all schoolwork with unpleasant experiences and thus cause more harm than good.

C. *Repetitive sentences and the like.*

The use of repetitive sentences and similar busywork assignments has been widespread among teachers for years. There must be teachers somewhere who have found this device effective in maintaining good discipline, but locating such a teacher proves to be difficult. Such tasks are likely to cause students to equate schoolwork with busywork and to dislike both.

D. *Special seating assignments.*

Special seating assignments usually take one of two forms. In the first form, a seat is isolated from the rest of the class and students are assigned to it essentially as objects of ridicule. Ridicule is not acceptable as a discipline device.

Another form of special seating is to attempt to separate friends or arrange seats in a way that will minimize student interaction. This procedure is less satisfactory than using friendships in a positive way to foster intrinsic motivation. Further, if they want to, separated students will still find ways to communicate despite the teacher's efforts.

Physical labor or exercise.

The use of physical work or exercise is fraught with danger. A student who is asked by a teacher to do as little as move a desk, and who is hurt in the process, is in a position to sue the teacher. In some schools, asking or telling students to engage in physical labor is specifically forbidden.

Exercises, such as running the track, doing push-ups, and so on, are sometimes used in physical education classes as punishment. The same reservations apply here that applied in the assignment of schoolwork as punishment. How are students going to build an intrinsic desire for exercise if the teacher considers it distasteful enough to use as punishment?

F. *Lowering of grades.*

In some school districts there are policies that condone the lowering of an academic grade for disciplinary reasons. This practice is analogous to withholding a diploma as punitive action, when all necessary requirements have been met. In this case the courts have ruled that the diploma must be awarded.[9] In the case of grades, unless the grading criteria are clear and public, a teacher may be accused of lowering a grade because a student caused discipline problems. Lowering grades is difficult to defend logically because once a student has achieved an objective and demonstrated a competence, it is senseless to deny the accomplishment. Teachers who engage in this practice will be deemed unfair by their students and will quickly lose a large measure of student respect.

G. *Banishment from the classroom.*

Sending a disruptive student from the room may solve a problem for the moment, but it definitely causes another problem, and may cause still more. The immediate problem caused by sending a stu-

dent from the room is that it denies the student access to ongoing instruction. Forget, for the moment, that the student obviously did not want the ongoing instruction. If that student's academic achievement is considered important, the teacher will eventually need to spend extra time helping that student learn the missed material. Further, you are legally responsible for your students while class is in session. By sending a student from the room, you remove that student from your direct supervision and may, therefore, be held liable if the student is injured or gets into additional trouble.

BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION: OPERANT CONDITIONING

All learning is intended to modify behavior, but the term **behavior modification** is most commonly used in reference to classroom management. A more exact term would be **operant conditioning,** a term made popular by B. F. Skinner. Operant conditioning is a behavior modification approach that centers on the belief that behavior is modified more by its consequences than its causes. Therefore, if one wishes to increase a particular behavior or cause it to continue, one provides a **positive reinforcer,** some immediate reward. For example, suppose some students were not doing their homework well. If those students were given a piece of candy every time their homework was done well, and they began to do their homework well more often, then the candy would be functioning as a positive reinforcer.[10]

Negative reinforcement occurs when something a student does not want, such as nagging or the revocation of the right to park in the student parking lot, is withdrawn, and the desired behavior increases. If you continually ask certain students about their homework, or lack of it, and they start doing the homework simply to "get you off their backs," the principle of negative reinforcement is at work.

Punishment occurs when the presentation of a stimulus results in a decrease in the *undesired* behavior. If students are required to stay after school if they forget to do their homework, and they do their homework in order to avoid staying after school, then staying after school is a punishment.

Care must be taken not to make assumptions about reinforcers or punishments. For example, if some students were particularly conscious of their weight, candy would probably not function as a positive reinforcer. In fact, it might even be seen as a form of sarcasm or punishment. In the case of negative reinforcement, some students, those who receive little if any attention, might feel that the nagging was better than no attention at all. In the case of punishment, if the student was scheduled for some activity that was disliked even more than school, a detention might function as a positive reinforcer rather than as punishment. The point here is that the only way to determine whether an action is a positive reinforcer, a negative reinforcer, or a punishment, is to see its effect on the target behavior.

Use

One can use operant conditioning to initiate or continue desirable behaviors. All that is necessary is to find something that the individual(s) value, and make attainment of that thing contingent on achieving some desired behavior. Pizza Hut® conducts a nationwide program known as Book It.© This program is designed to encourage reading among elementary school students. Each teacher who chooses to participate sets reading goals for each student. Every month that the students reach their individual goals they are rewarded with a coupon for an individual pizza at a Pizza Hut® restaurant. If all the students in the class reach their goals, the class gets a pizza party from Pizza Hut.®

When used to end undesirable behaviors, operant conditioning usually involves the following steps:

The teacher identifies the behavior to be changed.

Care needs to be taken here. Behaviors, by themselves, are neutral. They become misbehaviors when someone, in this case you, decides that at the time and in the place the behavior was demonstrated, it was inappropriate. Since you decide what constitutes a misbehavior, you have the option of considering every glance out the window and every whisper to be worthy of immediate intervention on your part, or of choosing to overlook behaviors that are not truly disruptive.

2. ***Devise and try countermeasures.***

Countermeasures will depend on the misbehavior. For example, if a student, Tom, whispers only occasionally, ignoring it might be appropriate. However, while this option might work, it might also result in other students' misinterpreting your lack of action for approval.

A second option would be to move Tom to a different seat where neighbors would be unlikely to whisper back. This option might work, but it may be less desirable than other possibilities because it is unlikely to bring about a lasting modification in Tom's behavior.

A third option would be to try to determine why Tom was whispering. For example, it may be that he frequently fails to prepare adequately, and whispers prior to discussions in an attempt to acquire needed information. In this case, you could wait for a time when Tom *was* able to participate in a discussion of homework and then praise him for his good work and valuable contributions. If the praise or other pos-

itive reinforcement is forthcoming each time he contributes to discussions without whispering beforehand, the whispering might soon cease. This procedure, while effective, depends on waiting until the student is adequately prepared, so it could turn out to be a long-term approach.

A fourth option to speed up the reinforcement process could be initiated. The teacher could:

a. Make specific homework assignments for each student.
b. Privately encourage Tom to do the assignment.
c. Call on some students to discuss their homework, but call on Tom the first day only if he has done his homework, and ignore whispering if it occurs.
d. Again make specific assignments and privately encourage Tom to do his.
e. As soon as Tom has made an effort to do the assignment even if it came only as the result of heavy prompting, call on him during the discussion and praise his contribution. Again ignore his whispering if it occurs.
f. Repeat steps d and e each day, praising Tom's contributions and ignoring his whispering. The whispering should decrease and disappear within a few days. If it does not, the analysis must be reexamined for alternative explanations for the behavior.

The point of the operant conditioning process is to focus attention on desired behavior and to provide an incentive for students to engage in that behavior. The incentive may be praise, points, or any other reward valued by the student, and the expectation is that the desired behavior will soon become self-reinforcing and will replace the undesirable behavior, which is never reinforced.

Keep in mind that sometimes the removal or withholding of a stimulus (for example, the denying of an opportunity to receive attention and reinforcement from peers) is as effective as the presentation of a stimulus (for example, the giving of praise or rewards). Once the right stimulus is found for any individual, a procedure can be established to help bring about lasting behavioral changes via operant conditioning.

Reservations about Operant Conditioning

This emphasis on rewards rather than causes seems superficial to many educators, and has caused many to express reservations about using operant conditioning techniques. Among the arguments used by opponents of operant conditioning is that the process may cause as many problems as it solves. When teachers use operant conditioning, the basic process is to identify the specific behaviors they wish to increase, and reward the student when the desired behavior is demonstrated. It is usually not long until other students observe that one way to get extra attention or rewards from the teacher is to misbehave and then behave properly on cue. If this happens, operant conditioning techniques can be unfair to those students who behave properly.

Still another concern of many educators is that operant conditioning techniques imply that appropriate behavior should be demonstrated only because such behavior will generate an extrinsic reward such as praise, candy, money, or free time. They maintain that the use of rewards for appropriate behavior obscures the fact that such behavior has its own *intrinsic rewards*, such as the feeling of having done the right thing, and will not, in fact, bring extrinsic rewards in the "real" world. They claim, therefore, that operant conditioning techniques mislead students by giving them a false impression of reality.

There are other reservations concerning operant conditioning, including where to draw the line between creativity and exuberance, and the need for an environment conducive to learning. However, most of the attacks on operant conditioning have been prompted by aversion to its abuses by individual teachers who use it indiscriminately and without regard for its ramifications. When used properly, the rewards often pertain to student fulfillment of basic needs, such as the needs for esteem and self-actualization. Further, when teachers fully understand the ramifications of the technique, they are quick to point out to students the intrinsic rewards of the desired behavior and thus lead students away from continued dependence on extrinsic rewards.

BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION: REALITY THERAPY

Reality therapy is a behavior modification technique pioneered by Dr. William Glasser in his work as a psychiatrist.[11] It utilizes student needs, but its philosophical orientation is significantly different from that of operant conditioning. In operant conditioning, individuals undergoing the conditioning are often unaware that their behavior is being manipulated. No attempt is made to treat individuals as responsible people, to make them partners in a joint effort to modify behavior, or to help them see the cause–effect relationships between their behavior and its long-term consequences.

Reality therapy, on the other hand, makes individuals the prime movers in the modification of their own behavior. Reality therapy is predicated on the idea that people engage in those behaviors they believe will satisfy one or more perceived or unperceived needs, but that some individuals have either a distorted idea of what their goals are or a distorted idea of how to achieve them. Reality therapists see their role as a "perception sharpener"—one who attempts to help the individual perceive the reality of the situation. The assumption is made that the students know right from wrong.

Reality therapy begins with the current situation. Although reality therapists are well aware that many problems have roots in past events, they are not willing to allow those past events to become excuses for future actions. The individual's attention is focused on the behavior to be modified, not on the root causes of that behavior, and the individual is helped to see the consequences of continuing the undesirable behavior as well as the consequences of modified behavior. The basic reasoning is not to dwell on the past since the past cannot be changed. Instead, think about the future; you *can* shape that. The following step-by-step procedure is illustrative of how a teacher might use reality therapy to deal with Tom's whispering.

1. ***Help the Student Identify the Undesirable Behavior.***

   In this case, the teacher would arrange to see Tom privately. The teacher would first get Tom to identify the problem. It is important that Tom identify the problem, because then he is taking the first step toward its solution. If the teacher makes the identification, Tom is likely to look to the teacher for the solution rather than to seek that solution for himself.

   Care is exercised not to ask Tom why he is engaging in the undesired behavior (whispering). To do so would provide him with an opportunity to offer an excuse for his actions and to focus attention on the excuse rather than the action. The reality therapist does not deny that there may be legitimate reasons for inappropriate behavior—he or she simply insists on beginning with the inappropriate behavior rather than with a series of antecedent events. Nothing can be done about the past, but something can be done about the future.

2. ***Help the Student Identify the Consequences of Undesirable Behavior.***

   It is important that the consequences identified be real and logical. If the environment is manipulated so the consequences of a particular action are unreasonably harsh or virtually meaningless, the situation becomes contrived and irrelevant to the real world. In such a situation, no technique is likely to be effective. In this case, for example, telling Tom that he will be suspended from school if whispering continues is unreasonable. Similarly, it would be unreasonable to tell him that inappropriate behavior will have no consequences. It is appropriate, however, to point out that consequences are often cumulative and tend to get more and more severe.

Help the Student Make a Value Judgment about the Consequences.

The purpose of this step is to help the student see that the inappropriate behavior is contributing more to eventual unhappiness than to immediate or long-range happiness. The student is likely to have inaccurate perceptions about the effects of the behavior and may need help in making a value judgment about its desirability or undesirability. In this case, continued whispering will, because it interferes with the learning of others, cause Tom to be removed from the room, and possibly to miss so much work that he will fail the course. If Tom says that he understands all that and has no problem with it, the discussion is at an end. The student may have, in your opinion, made a terribly unwise choice, but you must respect his right to make the choice. Everyone has the right to live their life as they see fit, providing they do not interfere with the lives of others. Hopefully, however, Tom will decide that the consequences are undesirable.

Have the Student Formulate a Plan for Changing the Behavior.

Once Tom has concluded that the behavior is not, in fact, in his own best interests, the next step is for him to suggest alternatives to that behavior. If possible, he should be encouraged to propose an alternative behavior, for example, that he will:

a. Simply stop whispering.
b. Admit to not knowing an answer or not doing his homework, rather than trying to acquire last-minute information via whispering.
c. Tell the teacher before class when he is not prepared and then he will not be called on to answer questions.

Of these three alternatives, the last is the least acceptable, and the teacher should reject it if Tom does not see its inappropriateness, because it forces the teacher to share responsibility for his actions when, in fact, that responsibility belongs to him alone. It is important that Tom recognize that (1) the current situation is a result of his own behavior, and (2) he can extract himself from the situation by engaging in behaviors that are both socially acceptable and conducive to achievement of his own, and other people's, success and happiness.

5. ***Have the Student Select and Implement a Specific Plan.***

   After Tom (perhaps with the teacher's help) has generated alternatives, he should decide which one to implement. At this point, the teacher's role is to monitor Tom's behavior, to see how well he is following the plan, and to provide appropriate reinforcement.

The differences between the operant conditioning approach to behavior modification and the reality therapy approach are many and significant. It is unlikely that both approaches will appeal to all teachers, or that all teachers will be able to use both with equal effectiveness. It is suggested, therefore,

that before either approach is decided on, teachers assess their own philosophical position concerning classroom control and behavior modification. Haphazard or indiscriminate use of either or both of these procedures can not only be frustrating and futile, it can also harm a teacher's rapport with students. Used properly, however, these procedures may bring about lasting behavioral changes.

BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION: THE "LET'S KEEP IT SMALL" APPROACH

In the mind of every teacher is a conceptual model of an "ideal" teaching–learning environment. You may prefer a highly structured environment and someone else, a loosely structured environment, or just the opposite may be true. Similarly, you may be willing to tolerate a much broader range of deviant student behaviors than other teachers. Nonetheless, regardless of how carefully you plan and how skillfully you conduct your classes, there may still be minor disruptions that can develop into major classroom management problems. The best way to deal with such problems is to keep them small.

Jacob S. Kounin reports that teacher-initiated disciplinary acts (which he and his associates labeled "desists") can have significant effects on the other students in the class who are not the target of discipline. These effects have been called "ripple effects." In one study it was found that teachers who use angry or punitive desists often cause other students in the room to refocus their attention from the work at hand to the disturbance and the teacher's reaction to it. Simple reprimands, on the other hand, tend to have a smaller ripple effect.[12] Kounin also reported that interviews with high school students indicate that, for a teacher viewed as fair and generally liked by the students, desist actions are less likely to cause ripple effects destructive to the teaching–learning environment.[13]

One could conclude, therefore, that to deal successfully with most discipline problems, teachers should establish good rapport with their students and should use simple reprimands to deal with occasional deviant behavior. Mild desists can include actions such as moving toward disruptive students, standing by them, glancing at them, and directing questions at them, as well as direct reprimands. Further, reprimands should be in the form of direct statements rather than questions. "Would you please stop talking?" is less desirable than "Please stop talking," because it does not invite a verbal response from the student.

If mild desists are not effective, and the previously discussed preventive measures are being used, or if reality therapy or operant conditioning techniques have failed, the teacher needs a plan of action. In some schools, teachers are told exactly what disciplinary procedure to use. If such a policy exists, it should be followed precisely. If no policy exists, the teacher should develop one based on whatever policies do exist. The following procedure is based on the belief that most people already have more problems than they want and that they will not choose to complicate their own lives if they can avoid doing so. It is called the "Let's Keep It Small" approach because the idea is to solve the problem with the involvement of as few people as possible. Here are the steps.

1. If a student engages in behavior that interferes with the teaching–learning process, politely tell the student to stop.
2. If the deviant behavior persists, tell the student to remain in the room for a short meeting after the class is dismissed. Keep the meeting brief, businesslike, and to the point. Explain to the student that such behavior is unacceptable. At the very least, it was keeping other students from learning because it was taking your time and attention away from helping those students. Try to get a commitment from the student that such misbehavior will not reoccur. Most importantly, have a note card at hand, let the student see you noting the problem, who was involved, and the date, and ask the student to initial the entry. The purpose of the anecdotal record is to help convince the student that you are serious and intend to follow through. You want the student to realize that cooperation will be far less troublesome than non-cooperation.
3. If the offending student continues the disruptive behavior, schedule a mutually convenient time for a longer meeting with the student. The reason for ensuring that the time for the meeting is mutually agreeable is that students will find reasons why they cannot meet at teacher-decided times. You should be willing to meet before, after, or at an appropriate time during the school day. Make sure that the student understands the commitment to meet. If there is any doubt about the student's showing up, make two copies of the time and place and mutually initial each copy.

   It should be made clear to the student that such a meeting is not synonymous with detention. The purpose of the meeting is to review the student's offenses and to outline the consequences of future offenses. The teacher should explain why the offenses cannot be tolerated (because they disrupt the teaching–learning process and keep other students from learning). The focus of the meeting should be on identifying and eliminating the misbehavior, not on excuses, and not on the student personally. A record of the meeting, offense, date, and so forth should be added to the anecdotal record card and the student should be asked to initial the entry.

   At this point, even the slowest student should begin to feel that the procedure and meetings are a bother (or even a little embarrassing), and

will also realize that you mean what you say, you intend to see the problem ended. Notice that no punitive action has been taken. The emphasis is on changing the behavior of the students, not on punishing them. Students should be told that further problems will result in your contacting their parents; the choice of involving others is theirs.

4. If the problem persists, enlist the aid of the student's parents. This step may or may not help, but taking it is important in any case. At the next offense, as the student is leaving the room, note that you will be contacting the student's parents. Once this step is announced, it is important that the contact with the parents be made as soon as possible, preferably before the end of the school day. If this is not done, the student may arrive home before the teacher's call and set a stage that is difficult or impossible to cope with. Once the contact is made, go through the anecdotal record explaining the actions taken, enlist parental support, and explain that if the problem continues you will need to refer the student to the school administration. A record of the home contact should be made on the anecdotal record card.
5. If the problem persists, refer the student to the school disciplinarian but, before making the referral, contact the disciplinarian and discuss the anecdotal record with the list of offenses and corrective efforts. This is important because the disciplinarian must understand that you have tried to deal with the problem professionally. You had a minimum of two conferences with the student, you talked with the parents, and you are now hoping that the disciplinarian can help resolve the problem. Once the disciplinarian understands that the problem is not superficial, work with the student can be attempted by this new party. If the disciplinarian decides on some punitive action, the choice will not be yours.
6. In most cases, if you have made a professional, but unsuccessful, attempt to deal with a disruptive student, the administration will be willing to help. Administrators will be less willing to help if you charge into the principal's office screaming that student X is impossible, incorrigible, and ought to be thrown out of school immediately, preferably minus a head. Typically, the administrator will try essentially the same steps you tried. However, the administrator might also impose detentions, suspensions, and might even go so far as to recommend that the Board of Education expel the student.

One advantage of the "Let's Keep It Small" approach is that you are, at no point, threatening punitive action. You are simply trying to get students to control their own behavior so that teaching and learning can take place effectively in the room. Others may impose punishments, but you do not. In fact, you are doing all you can to keep the student from reaching the point at which punishment might be administered.

Another advantage is that you are acknowledging that only the student can solve the problem. You can steadily involve more people, which will probably make things increasingly unpleasant for the student, but only the student can choose to end the problem. This is the true state of affairs and you want the student to know that you know it.

POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS SITUATIONS

At some point, you may face a potentially dangerous situation. Some of the more obvious examples include students who are armed, verbally abusing you or other students, drunk, high on drugs, overtly defying authority, or maliciously destroying property. In such situations your first obligation is to do what you can to keep students from harming themselves or others. This does not mean that you are expected to throw yourself between a drunk student's gun and the class. It does mean that you will remain calm, that you will notify the administration of the problem either by intercom or by sending a student to the main office, and that you will try to contain the situation until help arrives. Keep in mind that you are responsible for all of the other students in the class. If you send them from the room or leave them alone, perhaps in order to escort the offending student to the main office, some provision must be made for their supervision.

SPECIAL CASES

Hyperactivity/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Sometimes when teachers see a student who is continually restless, given to sudden outbursts, or unable to concentrate on the work at hand, they attribute it to **hyperactivity** or, as it now called, **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder** (ADHD). Without hyperactivity, the problem is called **Attention Disorder Deficit** (ADD). Hyperactivity was, at one time, thought to be caused by the inability of an individual to assign priorities to the many sensory inputs constantly bombarding the brain. Then it was thought to be caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain. Today, doctors are still not sure just how to define or treat hyperactivity or attention deficit disorder, but experts believe that as many as three and a half million students under the age of 18 suffer from it.[14] However, one thing is certain. You, as a classroom teacher, are not qualified to diagnose such problems and attempting to do so may cause harm. What occasionally happens is that a teacher mistakes lapses of attention, restlessness, or even the normal exuberance of youth for hyperactivity or attention deficit disorder. Having "diagnosed" the problem, the uninformed teacher may call the student's parents (or have the school

nurse call them), and suggest that they take the student to a physician and "have the doctor give him something."

Unfortunately, some physicians will, after only a cursory examination, accept the teacher's "diagnosis" and prescribe a treatment on that basis. The typical treatment for hyperactivity is the prescription of amphetamines such as Ritalin and Dexedrine. Although these drugs act as stimulants for adults, they act as depressants for children. It is difficult to predict accurately the exact effect of any specific drug on any specific child, and many children are being adversely affected by such chemotherapy. Even worse, because of the increasing instances in which drugs are prescribed for students on the basis of inadequate diagnoses, many students are exposed to drugs who do not need to be.

If you suspect that a student may be hyperactive or suffering from attention deficit disorder, the initial step should be to double-check the basis for the suspicion. The procedure is to keep a written record of the frequency of each "hyperactive" act, check with other teachers to see if the student is demonstrating similar behavior in other classes, and engage in discussions with the school nurse and guidance personnel to see if they have been told of any specific problems the student may be having.

Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a medical problem that hinders one's ability to learn to read and it is estimated to affect between five and ten percent of the U.S. population.[15] In some cases, dyslexia causes people to see certain letters or words transposed. In 1994, it was discovered dyslexia is not so much a vision problem as it is a hearing problem. Dyslexics cannot process sounds properly. If students cannot hear what sounds certain letters make, they cannot sound out words. This, in turn, hinders their ability to learn to read.[16] As is sometimes the case with hyperactivity and attention deficit disorder, students with dyslexia may, mistakenly, be thought to be lazy, obstinate, or simply misbehaving.

If the suspected behaviors are persistent and not just isolated examples, the collected data should be discussed with the guidance department and nurse. If the results of this conference indicate that an examination by a physician is in order, then the parents should be involved in a separate conference in which such an examination is recommended. At this conference the parents should be provided with a copy of the list of incidents without any diagnosis of the source of the problem. The *doctor alone* should diagnose the problem and prescribe any treatment.

Assuming that the teacher is informed of treatment, it is then the teacher's responsibility to continue to monitor the student's behavior. In this way, the effectiveness of the treatment can be determined and its eventual elimination hastened.

It should be noted that differentiating between real and imagined problems is not easy. Sometimes students will, in fact, have medical or psychological problems that account for their problems at school. More often, however, students and parents will look for, and accept, any rationale to excuse disruptive behavior or poor performance. Citing a medical or psychological problem makes a particularly good excuse because it tends to generate sympathy, but claims that "the devil made me do it" have also been heard. In any case, it is best to avoid diagnosing a problem or labeling a student. Your diagnosis may be incorrect and a label does not help. It may, in fact, be used as an excuse.

LEGAL TERMS AND ISSUES

In most cases, teachers are able to resolve classroom management problems quickly and easily. Few problems require the involvement of parents and even fewer require the involvement of school administrators. Nonetheless, situations that have legal ramifications may arise, so it is useful to know some of the legal terms that might be encountered.

"In loco parentis" is Latin for "in place of the parent." Courts of law generally recognize that a teacher acts in place of a parent during school activities. If a question is raised about the propriety of a given action, such as breaking up a fight or detaining a student to prevent a harmful act, the question that is most likely to be asked is whether the teacher acted as a *reasonable and prudent* parent would have acted. A judge or jury would answer that question on a case-by-case basis (case law), because each situation is likely to be unique.

In loco parentis offers you some protection as you go about the task of helping students, but it does not offer immunity to bad judgment. For example, if a student mentions taking drugs, you are placed in an uncomfortable position. A reasonable and prudent person would be expected to try to get help for the student, perhaps by notifying parents, a counselor, or a school administrator. If you do not do this, and the student dies from a drug overdose, how would you feel? Your active intervention might have saved a life. If it is school policy to report such situations, and you do not do so, you might be charged with **negligence**: "the omission to do something which a reasonable man, guided by those ordinary considerations which ordinarily regulate human affairs, would do, or the doing of something which a reasonable and prudent man would not do."[17] On the other hand, if you do notify someone, students might perceive that action as a betrayal of trust, and that perception would seriously weaken your rapport with all students. The choices are not always easy.

Sometimes teachers witness illegal acts. For example, if a student is forced or frightened into giving lunch money to another student, that action

is not just "a shame," it is **extortion**: "the obtaining of property from another induced by wrongful use of actual or threatened force, violence, or fear, or under color of official right."[18] A student might also **menace** someone by showing a, "disposition to inflict an evil or injury on another."[19] Some teachers, if menaced, immediately report the situation and many administrators, choosing to be safe rather than sorry, immediately notify the police.

A more serious threat is an **assault**: "any willful attempt or threat to inflict injury on another, when coupled with an apparent present ability to do so (or) any intentional display of force such as would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm."[20] If the student actually carries out the threat and makes bodily contact, the offense of **battery** has been committed.

Teachers are sometimes the victims of slander. **Slander** is "the speaking of base and defamatory words tending to prejudice another in his reputation, office, trade, business, or means of livelihood."[21] Students sometimes say things about teachers that are not true. To the extent that such comments do not go beyond one or two students, they may be no cause for concern. However, if such comments or rumors become widespread they may result in a formal or informal inquiry about the teacher. Depending on how much trouble the comments or rumors cause, the teacher might consider filing charges of slander against the perpetrators. **Libel** is essentially slander in writing.

Sometimes, despite the best efforts of a teacher, it is necessary to remove a student from the classroom. A teacher usually has the right to remove a student for part or all of a class period by having the student go to some other supervised place in the school such as a detention room or the main office. A principal usually has the right to suspend a student from all activities for up to a week. The suspension may be an in-school suspension (the student comes to school, but spends the time in a detention area usually away from other students) or an out-of-school suspension (the student is not allowed into the school during the suspension period). In-school suspensions are most often used when there is doubt as to who would be supervising the out-of-school student.

Students who commit serious breaches of school rules are sometimes expelled. Expulsion is such a serious matter that most school boards take it on themselves to impose that penalty. When a school board expels a student, it generally bans the student from attending school or school functions for a specified period of time and establishes the conditions on which the student may return to school after the expulsion period.

LAWSUITS

Historically, laws have been passed to ensure the greatest happiness for the greatest number. The laws provide a structure and element of stability that

is analogous to a curriculum in schools. At the same time, laws must also be applied so as to ensure that everyone has equal rights and protection. Sometimes the two goals conflict as, when in a school, a teacher claims the right, as part of academic freedom, to deviate extensively from the established curriculum. It is from conflicts such as these that lawsuits arise.

Student Suspensions

In January of 1975, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled, in *Coss* v. *Lopez*, that if a student is to be suspended from school for more than a week (this varies from state to state), school administrators are obligated to (1) inform the student that a hearing will be conducted at a particular time and place, (2) explain what the charges will be, (3) show or explain the evidence used to justify the suspension, and (4) listen to the student's side of the story.

In February of 1975 the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Wood* v. *Strickland*, held that if students were to be expelled from school, they were entitled to face their accusers, cross-examine witnesses, introduce witnesses of their own, be represented by counsel, and to appeal. The court also ruled that individual teachers could be held personally liable in monetary damages if they knowingly, or reasonably should have known, that what they were doing would deprive an individual of a civil right.

Teacher Negligence

Cases involving allegations of teacher negligence are most often associated with situations in which students suffer actual, physical harm. In deciding such cases, the court generally uses a three-point test. The first point that the plaintiff (the person bringing the complaint) must demonstrate is that *the defendant* (in this case, the teacher), *had a legal obligation to perform a particular duty*, such as to provide adequate supervision. The second point that the plaintiff must demonstrate is that *the defendant willfully failed to carry out that obligation*. The third point is that *the defendant's failure to carry out this legal responsibility was the proximate cause of the student's injury.*

Suppose, for example, that a teacher spent four or five minutes writing something on the blackboard, and during this time John and Sam were silently sword-fighting with their pencils and John's pencil ended up in Sam's eye. It is quite possible that a court would rule that the teacher had a legal obligation to provide adequate supervision, that such supervision was not provided because the teacher's back was to the students for so long and that, therefore, the teacher's failure to provide adequate supervision was the proximate cause of the injury. If the teacher had been watching the students, the "sword-fight" would never have taken place. Is the use of overhead projectors beginning to sound better and better to you?

Generally, teachers have little to fear from the courts, but being the litigious society that we are, it pays to take precautions. Read your teacher's handbook carefully and follow its rules. Further, although you are unlikely to ever need it, consider the benefits of the malpractice insurance offered as part of membership in both the National Education Association (NEA), and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

SUMMARY

The goal of classroom management procedures should be to help students develop self-control. This development is facilitated by freeing students from as many restraints as possible and expecting them to think about, and control, their own behavior rather than mindlessly following rules. Some teachers find that they can extend student freedom to the point of needing only one classroom rule: You may do whatever you like as long as you do not disturb anyone else.

The key to helping students develop self-control is to help them be successful. The first step in this process is to recognize basic human needs and plan the instructional program so that students can satisfy as many of those basic needs as possible. Abraham Maslow identified the following basic human needs: physiological, safety, love, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Physiological needs refer to the maintenance of life and may be reflected in a classroom by a student's need for a drink, for sleep, or to visit a restroom. Physiological needs are powerful enough to override other needs and often must be met immediately. Students sometimes use these same needs as excuses to avoid work or to disrupt class. In these cases, the teacher may speak privately to the student, expressing concern over the student's repeated need for water or the bathroom, and offer to refer the student to the school nurse (or a similar staff member) for a checkup.

Safety needs refer to physical safety. Concern over physical safety may surface in a class where a student refuses to participate in a particular activity, or it may relate to a fear of physical abuse from peers. It is important to remember that regardless of whether a student's fear is real or imaginary, it is real to the student. Students are often embarrassed about being afraid. The teacher should minimize the potential for embarrassment by working privately with the student to help overcome the fear, step by step. If fear keeps a student from completing a required objective, however, the student cannot be given credit for achieving that objective. With respect to safety, students should know, by the words and actions of the teacher, that they are safe both physically and psychologically in the classroom. Teachers can help students meet safety needs by establishing a routine and treating students as people with feelings.

Love needs refer to the kind of love shared by parents and children and as such has little relevance to the classroom. There is, however, at least one point of relevance. With the increasing amount of violence, the high number of divorces, and the high mobility of the population, the classroom may be the only social unit in which the student can be safe from both physical and psychological abuse.

The need for self-esteem refers to the development of a positive self-concept, and teachers are in an ideal position to help students meet that need. Self-esteem is founded on a sense of satisfaction about oneself. Teachers can help students achieve this sense of satisfaction by conveying to students that the work they are doing is serious and worthwhile. This can be done by developing a course syllabus that contains relevant objectives; setting up a calendar showing when various topics will be covered, due dates for papers, and test dates; and selecting appropriate grading criteria. On the first day of class this syllabus should be distributed to students and discussed. This approach lets students know that the teacher has given serious thought to the course and has outlined a reasonable plan for helping them achieve the objectives.

A student's sense of achievement is fostered by internal and external recognition of achievement, premised on the student's attainment of some significant goal. The teacher, therefore, must be sure that the objectives of the course are set at a reasonably high level. If students feel they are improving their skills, abilities, or knowledge in ways that seem valuable to them, they receive the internal recognition of achievement necessary for meeting self-esteem needs. External recognition refers to having others (such as parents, peers, or authority figures) acknowledge a student's achievement. Favorable grades, phone calls to parents (giving good news), and the sharing of students' work are ways of attending to the need for external recognition.

The highest need, self-actualization, refers to lifelong continual growth and improvement. Once again, the course objectives play a central role. If those objectives were formulated with long-term utility in mind, they will be seen as contributing to the satisfaction of the need for self-actualization.

Regardless of how diligently a teacher tries to help students meet their needs, classroom disruptions may still occur. Operant conditioning is one way to deal with disruptive students, but it puts the teacher, not the student, in control of solving the problem. Another approach, reality therapy, puts the student in control, but works only if the student wants to change the behavior.

A third way to deal with such problems is to use the "Let's Keep It Small" approach. To use this approach, explain to students why disruptions will not be tolerated and explain the procedure that will be used to handle them. That procedure consists of first telling a student to stop the undesired behavior. If the behavior continues, the teacher begins an anecdotal record,

which will document the student's name, the date, the problem, and what was done. The student may be asked to initial the entry to show awareness of it. If the problem persists after two or three private meetings with the teacher (each with its own entry in the anecdotal record), the student's parents will be contacted. If the problem persists after that, the school administration will be brought in. This course of action demonstrates to the students that the teacher means business, it enables the teacher to follow a consistent, nonpunitive procedure, and it documents the history of the problem and the attempts made to solve it.

With respect to legal issues, teachers will find that if they fulfill the responsibilities assigned to them and act as reasonable and prudent parents would act, they have little to fear from the courts. For example, the usual test applied in negligence suits is whether the teacher had a clear responsibility to the student, whether the teacher willfully failed to fulfill that responsibility, and whether the student suffered actual harm as a consequence of the teacher's failure to fulfill the responsibility. Teachers should not utilize corporal punishment because it is educationally unsound even if it is legal in their school district.

If teachers are humane and recognize that students have basic human needs that must be at least partly fulfilled, and if they establish and maintain a classroom management program aimed at helping students learn to control their own behavior so they can function as effective citizens in a democratic society, they will have few, if any, classroom management problems.

SO HOW DOES THIS AFFECT MY TEACHING?

Each of us should have the right to live our lives as we see fit. However, since we are social animals and interact with others, we sometimes have to control our first impulses and desires in order for the larger group to function. Your job, with respect to classroom management, is to help students recognize these truths. Further, you will have all you can do to live your own life successfully; do not try to live your students' lives for them. Help them learn to take responsibility for their own actions. If they learn nothing else from you other than that, they will have learned something of incalculable value. Further, if they learn that, they are also likely to achieve the other course objectives and, for the last time, their success is your success.

KEY TERMS, PEOPLE, AND IDEAS

Self-Control
You may do whatever you like as long as you do not disturb anyone else.
Natural Consequences

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
- Physiological—air, food, water, using the bathroom, sleep, interest in the opposite sex
- Safety—other students, the curriculum, corporal punishment
- Love
- Self-Esteem—internal and external
- Self-Actualization

Behavior Modification
- Operant Conditioning—B.F. Skinner—Teacher is the primary mover
  - Positive and Negative reinforcement
  - Punishment
  - Intrinsic and Extrinsic Rewards
- Reality Therapy—William Glasser—Student is the primary mover

Let's Keep It Small
Hyperactivity, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Dyslexia
In loco parentis, In place of the parent
Negligence, Extortion, Menace, Assault, Battery, Slander, Libel

ENDNOTES

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