

A DIFFERENT LOOK AT DISCIPLINE

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SC 43-279 does not seem to be meeting the needs of students, parents, teachers, administrators or school board members. The following are suggested alternatives.

Carol Hillman 2/2020

Disruptive behavior in students is most often caused by a physical or mental disorder or modeling of disruptive behaviors at home, by peers or in the classroom. <https://education.seattlepi.com/typical-causes-poor-behavior-classroom-4001.html>

Punitive efforts to correct such behavior may only reinforce that behavior. <http://web.sbu.edu/psychology/lavin/negative%20punishment.htm>

If SC educators are not familiar with the use of positive reinforcement as a classroom management skill, they should be provided with any necessary training. <https://www.positivediscipline.com/teachers>

<https://www.teachhub.com/classroom-management-try-positive-discipline>

SC colleges and universities should be able to provide guidance and training.

Students don't care what you say until they know that you care.

- At the beginning of the school term every teacher in every classroom should make clear his/her classroom rules. These rules should be simple, stated in the positive and inclusive, i.e. "We must all behave in a way that helps everyone learn." There should be classroom discussion about what the rule means, and examples given.
- A teacher might even have the class decide with her what silent sign she might offer a student if that student is doing something that is not helpful i.e. a frown directed at the student or placing her figure over her lips in a "shhh" sign. It is best if teacher signals are non-verbal as that does not interrupt the class lesson.
- It is also wise for a teacher to discuss with students the one word he will say to get everyone's attention i.e. "Waterfall!" and all students must answer, "Shh"- which is the sound of a waterfall.

- The first line of defense in classroom management is positive reinforcement. i.e. Students are looking at the teacher when she is speaking. The teacher might pause the lesson and say, “When you look at me when I am speaking, I know you are paying attention and that helps everyone learn.”
- At every level of schooling teachers must show respect for students, provide opportunities for discussion, interactive learning and a safe place for students to be. Students learn in different ways and lessons should vary to include lecture, discussion, writing and teamwork,
- The younger the child, the more important and the easier it is for positive behavior to be rewarded. Stickers, putting a student’s name on the board, big smiles, compliments, positive notes home are all ways to reinforce good behavior.
- A whole class should never be punished for the misbehavior of one student.
- A teacher must never threaten to do something unless he/she intends to follow through.

Mildly Disruptive Behavior:

- The first time a student is mildly disruptive or is breaking a school rule, the teacher should try ignoring that behavior, as acknowledging it in a public way reinforces that poor behavior. Instead, the teacher can continue the lesson while slowly moving around the classroom to stand near enough to the student, so the student realizes the teacher is watching.
- Teachers must always be on the lookout for ways to acknowledge appropriate behavior. Sometimes a teacher must work hard to “catch” a student behaving properly and quickly reward that behavior.

<https://teachbeyond.org/news/2015/01/proactive-classroom-management>

Behavior that is so disruptive that it interferes with a lesson:

- A teacher must always behave in such a way as to ensure a student values his/her approval. Then, losing the teacher’s approval will be a powerful form of censure.
- A teacher might say to the student, “Please go into the hallway until you can control yourself, then you may come back and join us.”

- When the rest of the class is busy, a teacher might take a student into the hallway- leaving the door open- and ask, “Are you feeling alright or are you having a problem? I know you didn’t mean to hurt someone’s feelings, or take something that doesn’t belong to you or interrupt our learning, etc. What could you have done instead of what you did?” and then, “That was a good answer. Here is a sticker for being so smart.”

- If the behavior continues, the teacher might contact the parent and ask if anything unusual is going on at home that might cause the student to be disruptive. One technique is to write notes home to the parent pointing out what the student has done well that day or even that hour. Parents should be asked to read the note with the student, sign it and have the student return it to class.

- If the disruptive behavior continues, the teacher should refer the student to the guidance counselor or even for testing by the school psychologist. The student might need an IEP. In addition, these two experts might observe the student in class or make suggestions that will help the teacher help the student behave in a more constructive way.

- If none of these strategies work, the psychologist might recommend the child be moved to an alternative school until such time as the alternative school staff believes the student can return to the regular classroom.

<https://www.aft.org/periodical/american-educator/winter-2003-2004/how-disruptive-students-escalate-hostility>

<https://dsl.uw.edu/faculty/disruptive-behavior-in-the-classroom/best-practices/>

An Alternative School:

- An alternative school is an educational setting designed to address the educational, behavioral, and/or medical needs of students of all ages that cannot be adequately addressed in a regular classroom setting. It can be established in a building that is separate from the traditional school building or can be a classroom in the same building.

- Classes are small, with 10 to 12 students in an elementary program or 20 students in a middle for high school program. Students are evaluated for academic, social and physical needs. The curriculum is highly structured, and the behavioral guidelines are also structured. Consequences for disruptive behavior and positive reinforcement for positive behavior are discussed with new

students and parents ahead of time and addressed immediately. Consequences are immediate.

- “Forty-three states and the District of Columbia have formal definitions of alternative education. The literature suggests that the definition of alternative education should include the target population, setting” ...”services,” ... “and structure.” ...“Alternative education serves primarily students with behavioral problems (35 states). The most common alternative education services are regular academic instruction (21 states), counseling (14 states), social/life skills (13 states), job readiness (12 states), and behavioral services (anger management, conflict resolution (11 states).”

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED546775.pdf>

<https://cehdvision2020.umn.edu/blog/aggressive-behavior-in-students/>

Behavior that is physically threatening:

Dealing with “Behaviorally Dangerous Students

Protect yourself before an incident occurs.

1. Know your school policy and procedures.
2. Know or develop a school-wide CRISIS plan.
3. Prepare yourself for crisis events. (KEEP COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS.) A. Have a working system of communications, using tools such as the intercom, or code word with another teacher or school employee who works near you. Develop your own safety net that works for you. B. Regularly review and update your plan to meet the needs of the current population.
4. Classroom teachers should develop, post, and disseminate to parents and students a well defined discipline policy for their classrooms. Suggestion: Send the policy home for signature by a parent or guardian. When a student’s behavior becomes threatening, school employees are advised to: 1. Notify another adult for help, i.e., call on the intercom, send another student for help. 2. Isolate the student, BUT KEEP HIM OR HER UNDER VISUAL CONTACT. This may mean you have to remove all other students from the area. 3. DO NOT TOUCH THE STUDENT UNLESS THE STUDENT IS A DANGER TO SELF, OTHERS, OR PROPERTY. 4. Have an administrator or designee remove the student to a secure area. It is the responsibility of the administrator or designee to notify parents or guardians and appropriate authorities regarding the incident and district policy and to arrange a meeting to coordinate a plan for the reintegration of the student into school and/or the classroom.
5. If you receive an injury, seek medical help and file for Workers’ Compensation or Episode of Violence compensation immediately.
6. Review your district discipline policy.

7. Document the incident and the sequence of events. KEEP COPIES OF ALL DOCUMENTS. A. Identify all witnesses. B. Identify the number of students present. C. Identify the student sent to get the administrator/designee. D. Document all action taken by you, the person providing assistance and the administrator involved.”

<http://www.ncae.org/wp-content/uploads/Dealing-with-Dangerous-Students.pdf>

- Schools with students who may be physically violent should have a resource officer on the premises. That officer should be on call at all times while students are in the building and should immediately report to the classroom when a teacher alerts the principal.

<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/mar/29/percentage-public-schools-resource-officers-rise-r/>