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ABSTRACT

This publication is for assisting teachers in acquiring or renewing the skills involved in carrying out a proactive approach to productive discipline and classroom management. Each of the six professional development modules presented deals with a specific concept: (1) the meaning of discipline; (2) the meaning of classroom management; (3) a proactive approach to discipline; (4) a proactive approach to classroom management; (5) a proactive approach to teacher-student interaction; and (6) teacher behavior: a key to effective discipline. Each module, intended to help teachers clarify, explore, and refine their skills relating to each of the concepts, includes one or more definitions of the particular concept, a discussion of the context of the issues involved in implementing the concept, and a challenge or task for teachers to use in applying the concept to their teaching. (CB)

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A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO DISCIPLINE:

Six Professional Development Modules for Educators

ED267027

Kevin J. Swick

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Washington, D.C.

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Kevin J. Swick

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INTRODUCTION

A proactive approach is one that anticipates and prepares for a situation through a plan to achieve control of the situation. The use of such an approach to discipline and classroom management assists teachers and students in becoming self-disciplined, productive members of the classroom learning environment. Such an approach, under teacher leadership, requires the cooperation of teachers, parents, and students in designing and implementing strategies that support their mutual development as valued and capable members of the teaching–learning team.

The function of this publication is to assist teachers in acquiring or renewing the skills involved in carrying out a proactive approach to productive discipline and classroom management. Each of the six professional development modules presented deals with a specific concept: (1) The Meaning of Discipline; (2) The Meaning of Classroom Management; (3) A Proactive Approach to Discipline; (4) A Proactive Approach to Classroom Management; (5) A Proactive Approach to Teacher–Student Interaction; and (6) Teacher Behavior: A Key to Effective Discipline. Each module includes one or more *definitions* of the particular concept, a discussion of the *context* of the issues involved in implementing the concept, and a *challenge* or task for teachers to use in applying the concept to their teaching. The modules are intended to assist teachers in clarifying, exploring, and refining their skills related to the six concepts.

Although the modules are presented sequentially, they can be used singly or in any combination as individual or group needs dictate. Each module is designed to *involve* teachers in thinking about the content presented and to engage them in exploring their own ideas about these topics. Teachers who use the modules individually will also find it useful to share their ideas on the topics with colleagues and parents.

A listing of selected NEA Resources that are pertinent to each module appears at the end of this publication. There is also an appendix containing Teacher Guidelines for Discipline.

Module One

THE MEANING OF DISCIPLINE

DEFINITIONS: The term "discipline" conjures up many different notions, depending on the individual situation. For example:

The *theorist* may see discipline as a goal of student maturity toward self-directed management.

The *teacher* might agree, but view discipline as students learning to apply self-control to the practical job of functioning within classroom rules.

The *parent* may have another perspective, seeing discipline as the child staying out of trouble in the school or the community.

The *student* may perceive discipline as an adult system of keeping him or her from enjoying life.

The *school administrator* may view quiet classrooms as the key sign of a teacher who has discipline.

CONTEXT: We tend to define "discipline" in the way that best suits our needs. Such definitions have advantages and disadvantages—they might serve our immediate objectives but limit our long-range plans. Consider the following situations:

- Mrs. Williams has the children do extra work when they misbehave. She says this approach has not worked. Many students fail to do the assignments and continue misbehaving.

  Clearly, Mrs. Williams needs to examine the "context" of student behavior problems. Why are students misbehaving? What plans can she formulate to redirect student behavior toward more constructive ends?

- Mr. Ford, a first grade teacher for several years, tries to use a very positive approach to discipline. Recently, however, many parents have been pressuring him to be more aggressive in his approach. In talking with his colleagues, he found that each teacher had a somewhat unique idea about discipline. In his contacts with parents, he acquired additional views on the

topic. Mr. Ford found some common elements in these different views that might help him develop a basis for refining his perspective. He determined that his approach would remain positive, but he would work to acquire a broader view of discipline.

CHALLENGE: The key is to arrive at a concept of discipline that is constructive and workable within your teaching context.

Using your teaching situation and a positive view of student functioning, articulate a definition of discipline. In developing your position establish what your view of discipline is, how it relates to the views of others (parents, children, school administrators), and in what ways you can continually review and refine your perspective.

Module Two

THE MEANING OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

DEFINITIONS: Although there is general agreement that "classroom management" means the way the teacher handles the operations of the classroom, there are many views on how this should be done. For example:

- Mrs. Etna views classroom management as exercising maximum external control over student behavior.
- Mr. Brown focuses on maximizing student involvement in making decisions that will help students achieve self-management skills.

Definitions of "discipline" and "classroom management" usually correspond with each other. The teacher's view of discipline therefore influences his/her classroom management style.

Effective teachers continually refine their concept of classroom management. Ms. James says it very well:

> "Classroom management like any human social process is under constant scrutiny in order to continually improve it. When I first entered the classroom as a teacher I focused on 'managing' the environment in a way to control student behavior and thus avoid chaos. With experience and guidance from more skilled teachers, I grew to a point where my focus turned to creating an orderly but challenging arrangement for student learning. As my instructional planning skills and human relations skills have improved, my classroom management issues have shifted to a more productive tone, such as how we can accomplish all that we want to as opposed to 'controlling' student behavior."

CONTEXT: Teachers formulate their classroom management style from a context that includes their teaching philosophy, their definition of discipline, their study of the school-community situation, and their sense and use of the classroom facilities in which they teach. And as Ms. James pointed out, experience and knowledge of instructional issues influence the teacher's conception of managing the learning environment.

Consider the following two situations and analyze why the teachers involved may formulate different plans and strategies for classroom management.

- Ms. Phillips is approaching her first teaching assignment, a fifth grade classroom of 32 students. The principal told her she will have the low group of students academically. When she visited the classroom she inventoried the few learning materials available. Since that time she has been busy acquiring books and materials for the class, which will cover all the content areas except art, music, and health education.

- Mr. Thorn has been teaching fourth grade at Edwards Elementary School for eight years. Typically he has 20 children in the class. Most of the children are working at or above grade level in the subject areas and some of them qualify for the gifted program. A modern school equipped with the latest learning materials and a resource center, Edwards Elementary is located in a middle class environment and receives full parental support.

CHALLENGE: Arriving at a workable definition of classroom management is indeed a challenging task. For example, while it would appear that Mr. Thorn would have less difficulty in managing the classroom than Ms. Phillips, this may not be the case. Only the teacher who is in the situation can fully grasp the conditions essential for creating a positive management approach.

The following sequence of tasks will help you form a picture of your teaching situation as it relates to the issue of classroom management.

- Identify the major factors that influence your classroom management system (for example, classroom size, number of students, student behavior patterns).

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- Describe your current classroom management system (for example, classroom organization, student expectations, class rules).

- Assess your current classroom management system in terms of its influence on the development of student behavior.

- Based on your analysis, develop a definition of classroom management that reflects your way of functioning in the classroom.

Module Three

A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO DISCIPLINE

DEFINITION: "Proactive" means to act in advance of a situation, to design a plan of action that will give an individual maximum control over an anticipated situation. A proactive approach to discipline is a planning process that actively pursues productive student behavior through the design of the entire educational program. A positive view of student behavior serves as a reference point for designing discipline policies that support the development of self-directing learners. These policies cover such topics as school philosophy, objectives, curriculum, teaching strategies, assessment techniques, and school–community programs.

A good example of forming a proactive discipline approach is the school–community program used by Elm School District. The faculty and administration of the district were concerned about student behavior problems and about their own reactions to these problems. A committee representing all the district schools organized a process for studying the status of discipline and discipline approaches existing in the school and community. Using the "Disruptive Behavior Inventory" from *Maintaining Productive Student Behavior* (see the list of NEA Resources), the committee examined causes, effects, and possible solutions to student behavior problems. Through this process the committee identified three key factors for organizing a proactive discipline program: (1) provisions for more adequate pupil–teacher ratios, (2) development of a parent–community education program on positive discipline, and (3) expansion of in-service programs on discipline and classroom management for teachers and school administrators.

CONTEXT: Discipline approaches evolve from the total school setting. The development of proactive discipline strategies must be related to all the factors that influence the functioning of teachers, students, parents, and administrators in the classroom and the school. Issues such as those that follow provide a context for planning positive discipline arrangements in the home–school–community setting.

Behavior of School Personnel: The interactions of school personnel tell a great deal about their views of students. Are students treated with respect? Are they given opportunities to use their talents and skills? Answers to questions like these help us acquire a picture of how those who operate the school view students.

The School Environment: Is the physical arrangement of the school pleasant, usable, and a setting that teachers and students are proud to have as a place for learning? Are classrooms of adequate size and proper design for the specific functions they serve? An inadequate physical setting can be a factor in influencing negative discipline practices.

Existing Discipline Practices: An examination of the school's discipline practices is essential to provide a basis for refining and improving them. How are students disciplined? Is the emphasis on responding to negative student behaviors or are preventive measures taken that focus on developing positive student behaviors?

Curriculum Offerings: A static and irrelevant curriculum is a major influence on student behaviors. A study of curriculum practices can reveal areas of learning that need to be refined and improved. For example, does the curriculum as it is implemented promote student involvement in a variety of learning activities?

Parent Involvement: Parental support of positive discipline approaches is essential to a successful program. Understanding family situations and parent views on discipline is a beginning point for forming a productive family–school discipline effort.

Current Student Behavior Patterns: A knowledge of how students behave, what they do with their skills, and their views on behavior is helpful in laying the foundation for helping them improve their functioning. For example, involvement in school activities is one indication of student functioning. Other indicators include attendance record, academic performance, behavior record, and involvement in community activities.

CHALLENGE: Use the six components of the school ecology identified here to formulate your context for organizing a proactive discipline approach.

Based upon the context you developed for your classroom, create some specific strategies you can use to promote a proactive discipline policy.

Strategy 1:

Strategy 2:

Strategy 3:

Strategy 4:

Examine the strategies you developed and anticipate some of the major challenges you will face in carrying them out in the classroom. What are some preventive measures or possible resolutions you can rely on to deal with these anticipated problems?

Anticipated Problems:

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Potential Resolutions:

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Module Four

A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

DEFINITION: Experienced teachers report that planning for the group management process is one step toward creating a productive learning environment. "My first year of teaching," says Mr. Rowls, "was spent in reacting to group behavior. I never acted in advance to plan for various group behavior situations such as making the transition from one class to another or from large group instruction to small group project work. Consequently," Mr. Rowls explained, "individual behavior deteriorated because of many group behavior problems."

Proactive classroom management procedures require plans for group functioning and effective ways to carry out this process. Seating arrangement, student work areas, handling transitions, and group interaction guidelines are typical management issues that teachers need to work out in advance of their actual teaching.

Discipline and classroom management go together: individual and group behavior are complementary issues that need to be integrated into an overall classroom process. Thus a proactive classroom management process aims to develop self-disciplined students who can function effectively in both individual and group situations.

The following are some teacher perspectives on classroom management issues:

"Advance planning of a group management process is my key to success. Knowing my students well has helped me use their skills effectively in terms of classroom organization."

"Creating a balance of seatwork with involvement activities has improved my classroom management process more than anything."

"Using appropriate individual and group arrangements is one way of influencing the learning situation positively."

CONTEXT: Mrs. Williams, an experienced teacher, moved into a new teaching position. She was so elated that the principal could not help notice. When he asked her why she was so excited, Mrs. Williams replied that her new teaching situation was ideal: small class size, large teaching space, many learning resources, supportive parents, and helpful administrators and community. She was really saying that the *context* of her new teaching situation allowed for a great deal of productive planning in using the learning environment as a tool for promoting productive student behavior.

Group management of students depends on group size, room size, time spent in the learning environment, content being studied, available learning resources, teaching style, and student experiences in group functioning. Each of these factors must be considered when planning classroom management procedures. For example, group behavior in small classrooms with large numbers of students will in all likelihood be managed more closely than in more functional situations. A chemistry laboratory will have a very clear structure for group behavior in order to maintain safety; a social studies class may be organized more flexibly to promote group discussions. The main point is that the context of the classroom and the school will strongly influence the handling of group behavior.

Study the context of your classroom management system by delineating the status of the following items as they exist in your classroom:

Number of Students in the Class:

_____

Student Behavior Patterns:

_____

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Room Size:

_____

How Time Is Spent in the Classroom:

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Nature of Content Being Taught:

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Your Teaching Style:

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Student Experience in Group Functioning:

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Available Learning Materials and Resources:

CHALLENGE: Using the information you generated on your teaching context, formulate ideas for the following three tasks: (1) design some of the key components of your proactive classroom management approach, (2) formulate some techniques for communicating your plan to students and parents, and (3) develop some ideas for adjusting your plan to various types of classroom situations that may occur.

1. Key components of your proactive classroom management approach (for example, organization of classroom, handling group learning situations and individualized instruction):

2. Ideas for communicating your plan to parents and students (for example, parent orientation meeting and student discussion sessions):

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3. Ideas for adjusting your plan to various types of classroom situations that may occur (for example, dealing with changes in student behavior patterns and adjusting to new curriculum requirements):

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Module Five

A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO TEACHER–STUDENT INTERACTION

DEFINITION: The basis for positive teacher–student interaction is the mutual recognition of individual integrity by teacher and student. Negative interaction occurs when one or both parties fail to recognize the value of the other.

Teachers' recognition of their role in designing positive interactions with students is a starting point in articulating this process. The following are key points to keep in mind in developing teacher strategies:

- Develop a positive view of students, seeing their growth potential within a developmental framework.
- Treat each student as a unique person and help each one develop a sense of uniqueness.
- Learn the strengths and needs of each student and use this understanding to develop positive expectations for student involvement in the class.
- Provide each student with useful assistance; avoid patronizing students or praising them in a meaningless way.
- Challenge students to achieve at a level that reflects their maximum potential.
- Spend time with students on an individual basis, getting to know their personal interests, learning styles, and potential for contributing to the class.

CONTEXT: Teacher–student interactions emerge from a context that includes mutual perceptions and the ability to alter the conditions that influence these perceptions as the situation dictates. For example, negative interactions indicate that one or possibly both parties have reason to believe the relationship is nonproductive or possibly destructive. This type of situation occurs when either teacher or student misunderstands or misconstrues the other's situation. Positive interactions are the result of mutual efforts to know and use the resources each has for forming a productive relationship. In studying the context of teacher–student interactions, the following deserve special consideration:

- Know your personal strengths and needs in relation to your involvement with students.

- Know each student's interaction style as well as strengths and needs in interpersonal involvements.

Some strategies for examining the context of teacher interactions with students are as follows:

- Tape record various parts of the teaching day and study the tapes to get an idea of your verbal interaction patterns with students. Your findings will typically reveal strengths and needs in this area. Use the findings to plan for adjustments in these interactions.

- Videotape various teaching sessions of your classroom. Study the results both to pinpoint positive features of teacher–student interactions and to focus on areas that need attention. Proper use of the videotapes can help you identify both student and teacher needs in classroom interactions.

- Develop anecdotal records on student interaction patterns in the classroom. Over a period of time this information can be used to plan for improving group management and for helping individual students function in the classroom.

CHALLENGE: Teachers who use their interactions with students to promote development of students' social skills enjoy more productive learning situations. Examine your classroom interaction system to determine its effectiveness in promoting productive student behavior. Based upon your study, develop a plan for improving this facet of your program. Consider the following elements in both your study and your plan:

- Your personal attitudes toward the students you teach.
- Behavior patterns of students in your classroom in relation to their strengths and needs.
- Your interaction patterns with students in your classroom in relation to their strengths and needs.
- Specific information on the handling of group management and individual instruction in the classroom.

Module Six

TEACHER BEHAVIOR: A KEY TO EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE

DEFINITION: Productive teacher behavior is a major part of any successful discipline program. Productive teaching skills include (1) positive teacher attitudes, (2) appropriate instructional planning skills, (3) functional classroom management techniques, (4) productive teacher–student interaction patterns, (5) continuous communication with students and parents, and (6) planned professional renewal experience.

Teacher behaviors specific to effective discipline include (1) clear articulation of expected student behaviors, (2) parent and student involvement in refining or clarifying discipline guidelines, (3) use of group management strategies that support the development of self-disciplined students, (4) teacher modeling of desired student behaviors, (5) student involvement in resolving discipline issues through a problem-solving process, and (6) continuous revision of discipline policies as needed.

CONTEXT: The development and maintenance of productive teacher behavior depends upon the acquisition and continuous renewal of needed discipline skills. A supportive environment (one that promotes both productive teacher and student behavior) is essential to an effective discipline program.

Teachers can examine their "teaching tool kit" by reviewing the lists of skills identified in the "Definition" section of this module. For example, teacher attitudes toward students can undergo subtle changes over an extended time period and thus need continuous attention. It is helpful to identify your teaching strengths and needs related to your discipline process. Examining the "teaching" part of discipline can reveal areas of need and provide the basis for planned professional development activities.

In many cases the analysis of discipline issues reveals major flaws in the support system that teachers depend on to implement an effective discipline program. The following listing includes the major supports that combine to influence a productive discipline process:

- Involved parents and citizens who not only support positive discipline but provide students with behavior models to follow in their development.

- A strong commitment by school administrators to a positive discipline program as exemplified by their support of teachers in carrying out the process in the classroom.

- The existence of a school curriculum that supports the full development of student skills and interests.

- Provisions for adequate teacher–student interaction time and needed counseling resources to deal with various behavior issues.

- The availability of learning resources needed to carry out an effective instructional program.

- Student training in all parts of the environment related to productive involvement in the teaching–learning process.

CHALLENGE: Examine your "ecology of teaching" and your "ecology of discipline" in two ways: (1) the strengths and needs of your teaching behaviors related to the discipline program you use in the classroom, and (2) the strengths and needs existing in your "discipline support system."

Use the following inventory arrangement to conduct your self-assessment process:

Teacher Behaviors: Strength Areas

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Teacher Behaviors: Need Areas

Teacher Support System: Strength Areas

Teacher Support System: Need Areas

Using the information generated from your self-assessment, choose some key areas you want to develop for improving your discipline approach. Organize your ideas within the two areas of teaching used in the self-assessment process: teacher behaviors and teacher support system.

Plan for Improving Teacher Behaviors:

Plan for Improving Teacher Support System:

NEA RESOURCES

The following resources available through the National Education Association provide helpful background information for examining and implementing the modules presented in this book:

1. *Classroom Group Management* (filmstrip). Modules 2 and 4

2. *Cooperation in the Classroom: Students and Teachers Together* by James S. Cangelosi. Modules 3 and 4

3. *Developing Positive Student Self-Concept,* 2d ed., by David L. Silvernail. Modules 3 and 4

4. *Discipline Techniques* (filmstrip). Modules 1, 2, 3, and 4

5. *Disruptive Student Behavior in the Classroom,* rev. ed., by Kevin J. Swick. Modules 1 and 2

6. *Maintaining Productive Student Behavior,* rev. ed., by Kevin J. Swick. All modules

7. *Parents and Teachers as Discipline Shapers* by Kevin J. Swick. Modules 1, 2, 5, and 6

8. *Teacher Renewal: Revitalization of Classroom Teachers* by Kevin J. Swick and Patricia E. Hanley. Module 6

Appendix

TEACHER GUIDELINES FOR DISCIPLINE*

1. Work at being the kind of person children like and trust, and remember that everyone needs success—particularly those with a record of failure. Maintain the respect of the class without being condescending. (Gary, a large sixth grader who had been sent to the office for his "noncooperative" attitude, told the principal he wouldn't respond to his teacher's questions as long as he had to tell his answers to her clown hand puppet.)

2. Maintain a cheerful and attractive classroom rather than a disorderly one which might encourage unruly behavior. Also, remember that a pleasant voice, a neat appearance, and a positive attitude are contagious.

3. Get to know your students. Teachers who know their students soon develop almost a sixth sense for anticipating trouble before it begins. Good teachers report that students frequently believe them to have eyes in the back of their heads.

4. Be enthusiastic and courteous and keep your sense of humor. Teachers who really believe that children and learning are important tend to be enthusiastic, and that enthusiasm is contagious. Be as courteous to your class as you wish them to be with you. Also, don't "see" everything that happens; learn to ignore some things and laugh at others.

5. Make education interesting and relevant to children's lives. Teachers who believe they can get by without planning may get away with it temporarily, but before long lack of organization and imagination will produce dreary lessons, student restiveness, increasing discontent, and ultimate chaos. My guess is that the largest number of classroom offenses occur because the curriculum is dull and the teacher has planned poorly.

6. Don't use school work as punishment. (Linda told her mother that she hated both school and her fifth grade teacher. "Every time we forget to act like prisoners in a reform school," she said, "we have more written work.") Give reasonable assignments, and don't be vague and ambiguous when giving directions.

7. Never use threats in an effort to enforce discipline. What will you do if a child takes up the challenge—as someone ultimately will? A threat that is not carried out only makes the teacher look foolish. (For example, a teacher threatening to read aloud confiscated notes may end up in confrontation with a militant who refuses to part with a note, or a teacher looking silly after reading aloud a note that proves to be a deliberate plant.)

*Adapted from "Discipline Is Caring" by Alvin W. Howard. Copyright 1980 by the National Education Association of the United States.

8. Never humiliate a child. Publicly scolding or ridiculing students will make them bitter and will probably turn the rest of the class against the teacher. (A ninth-grade teacher sharpened the fine-honed edge of his tongue against a borderline dropout. When the boy did drop out of school, the class was extremely antagonistic to the teacher for the remainder of the year.)

9. Avoid arguing with your pupils. Discussions about classwork are invaluable, but arguments that become emotional encounters with pupil freedom fighters create ill will on both sides, sometimes with rather surprising side effects. (The group of seventh graders who requested that they be transferred to another class because all they ever did was argue with their teacher knew the difference between discussion and argument.)

10. Don't act as though you expect trouble or you will almost certainly encounter some. (Mr. Potter consistently reported Bennie as a troublemaker, although no other teacher did. Bennie reported, "No matter what I do for Mr. Potter, it's wrong." Mr. Potter explained, "I had Bennie's brother two years ago, and he was a trouble-maker. I told Bennie the first day of school that I wouldn't put up with any nonsense from him.")

11. Let students know you care. Caring means determining, preferably jointly with the class, what is acceptable and what is not, both in terms of behavior and achievement, continually keeping in mind that all children differ and that what is reasonable and acceptable with one group may not be with another.

    Caring means that you are interested in what your students have to say even though it may not pertain directly to the lesson and that you must forego doing all the talking.

12. Establish as few rules as possible and keep them as simple as possible. Examine them carefully from time to time and eliminate those that are unnecessary. (For years, one school enforced a rule that no club could meet on Thursday afternoons. When a new teacher asked why this was so, no one could give a reason. Eventually someone remembered that a long-extinct service organization had conducted activities for children in a nearby building on Thursday afternoons.)

13. Expect to handle the normal kinds of misbehavior yourself, but seek assistance for those problems that need the skills of a specialist.

Kevin J. Swick