

**WORKING  
WITH  
STUDENTS**

*Discipline Strategies  
for the Classroom*

Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D.

Working with Students: Discipline Strategies for the Classroom

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NOTE: Some of the questions used in this book also were used in a Kappa Delta Phi/**aha!** Process study on how expert teachers respond to classroom situations.

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# CHAPTER ONE ---

## SIX BASIC COMPONENTS OF CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE AND MANAGEMENT

### **1** CLASSROOMS ARE SYSTEMS

Classrooms are systems. If you want to have good discipline, then you must think of your classroom as a system, and you must manage it as a system.

Think of your classroom as a highway system with stoplights, intersecting roads, rules about turning, staying in the proper lane, etc. If we didn't have a system for highways and roads, driving would be impossible—or at least impossibly dangerous. Even when you know the system for driving and highways, you still have to watch each driver. But without a system, it would be total chaos. So your classroom must have a system.

Working with Students

Therefore, *within your classroom*, your system would do well to include the following:

	<b>ON THE HIGHWAY</b>	<b>IN YOUR CLASSROOM</b>
<b>PROCEDURES</b>	Which lane you are in, who goes first at a stop sign, etc.	How do students pass out papers? How do students put materials away?
<b>RULES</b>	When you stop and go, who has the right of way, etc.	What happens if a student cheats? If a cell phone rings during class? If a student curses? Etc.
<b>MOTIVATION (consequences and rewards)</b>	What motivates me to drive well? Example: Tickets, lower insurance rates for good driving, jail, etc.	What would motivate students to learn and behave?
<b>ORGANIZATION AND PLANNING</b>	Which is the best route to use? What do I need to take?	When are assignments due? How do students control impulsivity?
<b>SCHEDULES</b>	When do I need to leave to get there on time? Where do I need to go today?	What time does this subject or class start? What will happen next? When do students go to the next center or class?
<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	Other drivers: How do all the drivers travel safely in the same space?	Students: How does a group of students work together safely and productively?
<b>PERSON IN CHARGE</b>	My driving: Am I aggressive, engaged in road rage, distracted by my cell phone?	Teacher: What is my approach to students when I discipline them?

Many beginning teachers don't address the classroom as a system. That would be like driving without knowing most of the pieces listed above. Use the checklist as a tool to know *your own* system.

## 2 THE LARGER SYSTEM—YOUR CAMPUS

Once you know the system for your classroom, you have to figure out how it works within the larger system of your campus. To continue the highway analogy, what happens if people repeatedly speed when they drive? They are taken out of the highway system and addressed by the much larger law enforcement/legal/judicial system. Sometimes students need to be taken out of the classroom system and addressed by the administration. So what are the components of the larger system?

1. The principal and/or assistant principal
2. The support staff (counselors, social workers, nurses, et al.)
3. Backup system of consequences and rewards (detention, school-sponsored parties, etc.)
4. District support system (alternative schools, student advocates, etc.)
5. Policies about suspension, expulsion, etc.

If you are a beginning teacher, here are questions you need to get answered before school starts:

1. What is the principal's approach to discipline?
2. Who are the support staff persons available and what are their roles?
3. What larger backup systems are available to individual teachers?  
For example: school-sponsored detention, Saturday school, timeout room, etc.
4. Does the district have a backup system for removing students from the school?
5. For which behaviors are students suspended? Expelled?

# 3 INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS

Ninety percent of your discipline referrals will come from 10% of your students. Skilled teachers identify these students within the first week of school. Students take on roles that determine many interactions within the classroom. To be sure, students can and do change, but certain behavioral patterns tend to emerge nonetheless. (See following chart with roles in the classroom.) These roles give each class a “personality.” Some classes are much easier than others. Once skilled teachers identify the roles that students are playing in the classroom, they set up systems to help “manage” those roles. Sometimes a class will have a “critical mass” of difficult students. This will require an even more sophisticated and finely tuned systemic approach.

In the highway analogy, what happens when the individual driver repeatedly endangers others? When there’s a pattern of recklessness? When the individual drives drunk? How do you address individuals within the dynamics of the classroom?

## Student Roles in the Classroom

TYPE	WANTS	INTERVENTIONS
Perfectionist	To be perfect	Make sure they have all the details. Provide a rubric for evaluation.
Bully	To be in control	Identify the parameters of behaviors acceptable in your classroom. This student will not respect you unless you are personally strong.
Silent	To be invisible	Call on the student. Set up academic tasks so the student must interact with someone.

**Student Roles in the Classroom** *(continued)*

<b>TYPE</b>	<b>WANTS</b>	<b>INTERVENTIONS</b>
Entertainer	To ease discomfort, provide fun	Provide opportunities with academic tasks for humor. Show the student you have a sense of humor about yourself.
Social connector	To be friends	Provide opportunity for him/her to talk while doing academic work.
Social isolate	* Varies by individual	Assign paired activities, which necessitate a social interaction. Outline the parameters of the behaviors of the classroom.
Arguer	To be right	Let the student have the last word but not the last 10 sentences. Build an opportunity to argue into academic tasks.
Leader	To take charge	Build opportunities for leadership into the classroom.
Instigator	To be in control	Clearly outline what will and will not be acceptable in your classroom. Have clear consequences. Build a relationship of mutual respect with this student.
Distracter	To not be held accountable academically	Identify the source of the problem. Can he/she read?
Special needs	* Varies by individual; may have biochemical or neurological basis	Identify the need.

Source: Ruby K. Payne, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty Trainer Certification Manual*

# 4 INVOLVING PARENTS

Another part of discipline is the role of students' parents/guardians and your interactions with them. Should you involve them every time—or only some of the time? How do you determine when to involve them and to what extent? For what reasons?

To continue the highway analogy, what happens when the lawyers get involved and advocate for their client? Or what happens when the client does not have a lawyer? Who advocates for them? How does that change the dynamics? So it is with the classroom; the same questions apply to students and their parents. To state it even more simply: When and how do you involve parents?

Basically, parents tend to fall into one of five groups:

- Overprotective
- Hands-off approach
- Concerned and appropriate
- Unavailable
- Caring but unable to help

So the approach you use will depend at least in part on the parent.

Parents have varying degrees of skills and understandings about students, children, and child development. It's important to note that most teachers have much more exposure to children and adolescents than most parents do. So the understandings that teachers have about student behaviors are often better developed and more research-based than many parents have. But most parents have a very deep emotional bond to the student (their child!) that the teacher doesn't have. Even if they don't "parent" their child as you wish they would, they love their children and will defend them.

Six Basic Components of Classroom Discipline and Management

How you approach parents will make a big difference. (See the following planning worksheet.) If you are a beginning teacher, it helps to complete this worksheet. Know what you want to accomplish before you have the phone conference or visit in person.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCE FORM WITH STUDENT</b></p> <p>Student name _____ Date _____ Time _____</p> <p>Parent name _____ Teacher _____</p>
<p><b>PURPOSE OF CONFERENCE (CHECK AS MANY AS APPLY)</b></p> <p>_____ scheduled teacher/parent conference</p> <p>_____ student achievement issue</p> <p>_____ parent-initiated</p> <p>_____ discipline issue</p> <p>_____ social/emotional issue</p>
<p><b>WHAT IS THE DESIRED GOAL OF THE CONFERENCE?</b></p>  
<p><b>WHAT DATA WILL I OR THE STUDENT SHOW THE PARENT?</b></p> <p>Student work, discipline referrals, student planning documents?</p>  
<p><b>WHAT QUESTIONS NEED TO BE ASKED? WHAT ISSUES NEED TO BE DISCUSSED?</b></p>   
<p><b>WHAT FOLLOW-UP TOOLS AND STRATEGIES WILL BE IDENTIFIED?</b></p>   

Source: Ruby K. Payne, *No Child Left Behind Series: Parent and Community Involvement, Part IV*

# 5

## TEACHER'S APPROACH TO DISCIPLINE

Three basic beliefs about discipline tend to be used among teachers.

- Some believe that behavior is caused by the thinking and so use a more cognitive approach.
- Some believe behavior is developmental and so use a teaching/learning approach.
- Some believe behavior is strictly a learned response to prior stimuli.

Most teachers have a mix of beliefs and use a combined approach. In the research on styles of discipline, three are generally cited: authoritarian, permissive, and negotiated. Most skilled teachers use a combination—depending on the situation, the student, and the safety considerations.

The research on “voices” done by Eric Berne is particularly helpful. (See Appendix, page 138.) The voice the teacher starts out with usually determines the outcome of an incident. (Following is a worksheet on page 10 a teacher can use with students to stay in the adult voice.) The *child* voice tends to be when a person is whining. The *parent* voice is a “telling” or “ordering” voice. There is a positive version (calm but insistent—example: “You must be seated now”) and a negative version (when you have your index finger up and are giving a “should not” or “ought not to” lecture). The *adult* voice is when you’re asking questions for understanding. Research indicates that 80% of discipline referrals come from 11% of the teachers (which is the other side of the coin from the earlier-cited statistic that 90% of discipline referrals come from 10% of the students). One of the big reasons for the high number of referrals by a relatively small number of teachers is the tendency of many of those teachers to use the negative parent voice, which doesn’t really help in changing student behavior.

The best approach is usually one in which the teacher starts out in the adult voice and finishes in the positive parent voice with a consequence. Examples:

- Adult voice—“Help me understand where you were for 25 minutes ...”
- Positive parent voice—“I’m sorry you chose to be lost for 25 minutes. Because of that choice, you also have chosen two hours in detention.”

*Most importantly*, skilled teachers understand that when there is mutual respect in the classroom, discipline referrals drop. To quote Grant East, “Rules without relationships breed rebellion.” For the classroom to be successful, there must be an atmosphere of mutual respect. (See “Do You Do These Things?” on page 11 and “Rubric for Mutual Respect” on page 12.)

You, the teacher, have the final responsibility for what happens in your classroom. For classrooms to work there has to be a final authority. That is you, the teacher. If that role is abdicated, the classroom degenerates into chaos.

### **How do you build relationships of mutual respect?**

Students look for—and need—three things:

- Insistence
- Support
- High expectations (not unreasonable, but high)

***Worksheet for student to use to stay in adult voice:***

<p>NAME: _____</p> <p>1. What did you do? _____</p> <p>2. When you did that, what did you want? _____</p> <p>3. List four other things you could have done.</p> <p>    1) _____</p> <p>    2) _____</p> <p>    3) _____</p> <p>    4) _____</p> <p>4. What will you do next time? _____</p>
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Source: Ruby K. Payne, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*

Six Basic Components of Classroom Discipline and Management

***Do You Do These Things?***

Please rate on a scale of 1 to 4 (with 4 being the highest).

<b>Issue</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Teacher calls students by name.				
Teacher uses courtesies: “please,” “thank you,” etc.				
Students use courtesies with each other and with teacher.				
Teacher calls on all students.				
Teacher gets into proximity (within arm’s reach) of all students—daily if possible, but at least weekly.				
Teacher gives wait time for answers.				
Teacher smiles at students.				
Classroom has businesslike atmosphere.				
Student work/awards are displayed.				
Student bathrooms are clean.				
Grading/scoring is clear and easily understood.				
Students may ask for help from teacher.				
Teacher gives students specific reasons for praise.				

Adapted from TESA (Teacher Expectations & Student Achievement),  
Los Angeles Department of Education



## Rubric for Mutual Respect

Issue	Evidenced	Needed	Not Applicable
Teacher calls students by name.			
Teacher uses courtesies: "please," "thank you," etc.			
Students use courtesies with each other and with teacher.			
Teacher calls on all students.			
Teacher gets into proximity (within an arm's reach) of all students—daily if possible, but at least weekly.			
Teacher greets students at door.			
Teacher smiles at students.			
Classroom has businesslike atmosphere.			
Students are given tools to assess/evaluate own work.			
Student-generated questions are used as part of instruction.			
Grading/scoring is clear and easily understood.			
Students may ask for extra help from teacher.			

Source: Ruby K. Payne, "Rubric for Mutual Respect"

## **6 ADDRESSING PARTICULAR INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIORS**

Last, but not least, are the strategies for dealing with individual behaviors. Just as law enforcement has specific techniques for stopping a car, asking for a license, getting proof of insurance, etc., so you as the teacher need specific techniques for addressing particular behaviors.

Deciding if a particular behavior is actually a problem requires these questions:

1. Is this behavior endangering the student or other students?
2. Is this behavior interfering with teaching or learning?

If the answer to either of these questions is yes, then a discipline intervention needs to be identified and used.

### Procedures Checklist

The following checklist is adapted from Guidelines for the First Days of School, from the Research Development Center for Teacher Education, Research on Classrooms, University of Texas, Austin.

<b>STARTING CLASS</b>	<b>MY PROCEDURE</b>
Taking attendance	
Marking absences	
Tardy students	
Giving makeup work for absentees	
Enrolling new students	
Un-enrolling students	
Students who have to leave school early	
Warm-up activity (that students begin as soon as they walk into classroom)	

Six Basic Components of Classroom Discipline and Management

<b>INSTRUCTIONAL TIME</b>	<b>MY PROCEDURE</b>
Student movement within classroom	
Use of cell phones and headphones	
Student movement in and out of classroom	
Going to restroom	
Getting students' attention	
Students talking during class	
What students do when their work is completed	
Working together as group(s)	
Handing in papers/homework	
Appropriate headings for papers	

Working with Students

<b>INSTRUCTIONAL TIME</b>	<b>MY PROCEDURE</b>
Bringing/distributing/using textbooks	
Leaving room for special class	
Students who don't have paper and/or pencils	
Signal(s) for getting student attention	
Touching other students in classroom	
Eating food in classroom	
Laboratory procedures (materials and supplies, safety routines, cleaning up)	
Students who get sick during class	
Using pencil sharpener	
Listing assignments/homework/ due dates	
Systematically monitoring student learning during instruction	

Six Basic Components of Classroom Discipline and Management

<b>ENDING CLASS</b>	<b>MY PROCEDURE</b>
Putting things away	
Dismissing class	
Collecting papers and assignments	

<b>OTHER</b>	<b>MY PROCEDURE</b>
Lining up for lunch/recess/special events	
Walking to lunch/recess	
Putting away coats and backpacks	
Cleaning out locker	
Preparing for fire drills and/or bomb threats	
Going to gym for assemblies/pep rallies	
Respecting teacher's desk and storage areas	
Appropriately handling/using computers/equipment	

Working with Students

<b>STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY</b>	<b>MY PROCEDURE</b>
Late work	
Missing work	
Extra credit	
Redoing work and/or retaking tests	
Incomplete work	
Neatness	
Papers with no names	
Using pens, pencils, colored markers	
Using computer-generated products	
Internet access on computers	
Setting and assigning due dates	
Writing on back of paper	
Makeup work and amount of time for makeup work	

Six Basic Components of Classroom Discipline and Management

<b>STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY</b>	<b>MY PROCEDURE</b>
Letting students know assignments missed during absence	
Percentage of grade for major tests, homework, etc.	
Explaining your grading policy	
Letting new students know your procedures	
Having contact with all students at least once during week	
Exchanging papers	
Using Internet for posting assignments and sending them in	

Working with Students

HOW WILL YOU ...	MY PLAN
Determine grades on report cards (components and weights of those components)?	
Grade daily assignments?	
Record grades so that assignments and dates are included?	
Have students keep records of their own grades?	
Make sure your assignments and grading reflect progress against standards?	
Notify parents when students are not passing or having other academic problems?	
Contact parents if problem arises regarding student behavior?	
Contact parents with positive feedback about their child?	
Keep records and documentation of student behavior?	
Document adherence to IEP (individualized education plan)?	
Return graded papers in timely manner?	
Monitor students who have serious health issues (peanut allergies, diabetes, epilepsy, etc.)?	