Classroom Discipline: The Power of Influence

Disciplining our children is not only our responsibility as leaders (Heb. 13:17, Prov. 23:13), but it is also an act of love as we strive to guide them in the light of God’s law (Ps. 119:105).

"If [we] interact with [our] young people, try to help them clarify their perceptions, their resources, the things they can contribute, then that will come through, and I will have enormous power in their lives." –Stephen Glenn

This aspect of education is likely to be one of the most dreaded among teachers because:

1. It can take an incredible amount of effort.
2. We fear being rejected by the students.
3. We are uncertain as to what the most effective methods would be in various situations.
4. When the outcome of an action is everything short of what we intended, we lack the self-confidence to pursue subsequent issues.

As members of God’s priesthood, we have each been called to invest the grace God as apportioned us in the lives of others. Though most situations may not give the results we had intended, we can trust God will use what we entrust to Him as we seek out His wisdom in all aspects of our lives (1 Timothy 1:12).

“How are the ways in which we interact with our students shaping their perspective of God and themselves?”

“How we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.” -Colossians 1:28-29
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Social Discipline

Rudolf Dreikurs’ theory behind social discipline is that human behaviors are motivated by the need to feel accepted by others. It is based on Sigmund Freud’s theory that the intrapsychic life of an individual has a strong effect on behavior.

The basis for this theory is supported in Scripture:

We were created in God’s image (Gen. 1:27) which means being in relationship with one another is a huge part of who we are (Gen. 2:18). Each one’s uniqueness represents both God’s creativity and our need for each other (1 Cor. 12:14-25). Through the love which is a part of this relationship and interdependence of community, God reveals Himself to us (1 John 4:12).

Stephen Glenn, in his article “Developing Capable Young People”, describes possible causes for the increase in the desperation seen in adolescents for acceptance into some – any! – community. After describing the implications of the “Baby Boom” on class sizes in general, he goes on to express another point of consideration:

“Beginning in 1946, a whole generation of young parents raised primarily in rural, agrarian small-town America returned from World War II not to the farm, but to a new urban industrial complex. In a rural area where babies were born because the family needed them, children played an active role in the economic life of their family, grew up in a stable culture with rituals and traditions to invite and affirm children, and had a network of extended family to raise them. In the new urban setting, children were left without a meaningful role to play in a culture undergoing constant change and upheaval without any extension of the parenting resources usually present in rural life.”

If students cannot see themselves as capable of having significance another’s life, they lose any intrinsic motivation to develop a genuine identity. Those which they develop are many and are fabricated by society.
Four common needs expressed in behavior:¹
1. Attention (the student feels neglected by others)
2. Power and control (the student feels inferior to others)
3. Revenge (the student feels put down by others)
4. Helplessness (student feels uncared for by others)

Consider a possible reasoning behind why an exceptionally bright student might show apathy toward classwork in light of these four categories.

Helping adolescents recognize the motives driving their own behavior is a very effective management method. One way of doing this is by asking them questions such as: “Could you be doing this because...³
1. ...you want special attention?”
2. ...you want things to be done your way?”
3. ...you want to hurt others because they have hurt you?”
4. ...you want to be left alone?”

How might the results from Dreikur’s suggested conversation above vary from those of the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How has your day been?</td>
<td>Fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You haven’t seemed too fine lately. Is there anything bothering you?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know there is something wrong because you are continually talking with your desk partner even when I ask you to stop. Do you know why I am asking you to be quiet?</td>
<td>Because it’s a rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know why it is a rule?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note the differences and propose some possible implications.
The latter method guides the conversation such that the student discovers he/she is the focus of the boundary, not the behavior. Presenting your side of the picture will encourage the student to be more open in giving answers other than “fine”, “no”, and “because it’s a rule.” (And why is it a rule, anyway?)

While the teacher may need to prompt students to recognize the underlying cause to their behavior, it is important to encourage personal recognition, verbalization, and reflection as you clarify your perceptions of such externalizations.⁴*

Both methods presented are helpful in the following ways:⁴
1. You help the student verbalize the conflict they have so far been expressing through externalization.
2. You demonstrate to the student the fact you take note and care about their behavior and what is going on in their life.
3. You are teaching them to reflect and direct their own behavior instead of relying on an authority to do it for them.
4. You help them recognize the person they are being identified as and whether or not that aligns with the person they want to be (real identity vs. ideal identity). And how might we guide their thinking as to what this ideal identity might look like?

Guidance Methods
1. Logical consequences vs. natural consequences²
   a. Natural consequences are those which occur as a result of the action without the need of teacher interference. For example, a sprained ankle would be a natural consequence to jumping off a desk or chair.
   b. Logical consequences are those seen as fit by the teacher to discourage certain behaviors. For example, staying after class to help clean up the lab would be a logical consequence for a lack of diligence and distracting other students during the lab activity.

Dreikurs claims that students experience enough punishment without our needing to inflict it upon them, but logical consequences may still be used if directly correlated with the behavior.²

Select the case which best utilizes the logical consequence:
You notice a girl in the hall whom you have told several times to take off the hoodie she has on because it is out of dress code, yet she continues to wear it.

Case 1: You give her a detention.
Case 2: You take her hoodie away until she demonstrates her ability to follow the dress code.
Case 1:
- Lacks connection to the misbehavior
- May send the message that the teacher simply enjoys utilizing power

Case 2:
- Puts responsibility on the student
- Gives them incentive to follow the policy
- Helps turn a “right” into a privilege; or perhaps a possession into an entrustment (see Luke 16:1-13)

2. Isolation must be used carefully and sparingly

Consider the following situation:

During lab, one of the boys in your class constantly moves around from group to group, looking over shoulders, talking, distracting others, etc. The classroom setting allows for more freedom as materials are scattered around and creativity is in abundance, making it more difficult to ensure that he stays with his group.

Having no success after explaining to him several times that he must remain with his group, you send him out into the hall because he is disrupting the other students. You tell him you will come get him in a few minutes.

What might you need to know about the student to determine whether or not this form of discipline would be helpful?

Even when we use isolation to discipline students who are developing a healthy emotional autonomy, there are certain elements deserving of our concern:
3. Praise vs. encouragement

a. Praise is based on the concept of success and tends to focus on the teacher’s pleasure over the child for what they did.

b. Encouragement focuses on the character of the student and their efforts toward improvement without an emphasis on perfection.

The following is an example of proper distinction between praise and encouragement from a social discipline perspective:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Praise</th>
<th>Encouragement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You deserve a (insert: reward) for doing that!</td>
<td>What a great effort; you should be proud of yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are so smart!</td>
<td>Look how far you have come!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone will be so happy to hear how well you did.</td>
<td>Just do your best; we love you for who you are and not what you do.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difference between praise and encouragement may be more influential to how students build their identity than we realize. From a Christian perspective, the following table might describe this distinction more accurately. The next day you spend with your adolescents, take a mental note of the amount of time you spend in each of these categories:
### Identity-builders #1 | Identity-builders #2
---|---
Appearance | Love
Academics | Joy
Theater | Peace
Athletics | Patience
Achievements | Kindness
Music | Goodness
| Faithfulness
| Gentleness
| Self-control

Hopefully you recognize the second group as the “fruits of the Spirit” as outlined for us in Galatians 5:22-23. If we want our adolescents to identify themselves as God’s children, we need to be adamant about helping them recognize the qualities which stem from such an identity. A possible visual:

As adolescents seek understanding of who they are, they begin to recognize various attributes which make up their person. By identifying these attributes as desirable and undesirable (where might they learn how to identify these correctly?) they determine the degree to which they should be accepted by others.

Additional points of consideration:
- Most of their life is spent hearing messages about their identity which oppose that which is from Christ.
- We must be cautious to not promote legalism. No one can live up to the standards God has given us; our worth must be based on Christ’s attributes only, which are constant and perfect.

While being able to distinguish the two is important, distributing praise is not necessarily inappropriate; it can be very meaningful when done such that they are the matter of importance and not the activity. You care about it simply because they do (see 1 Pet. 5:7).

Encouraging our students do their best while also expressing our love and care for who they are and not what they do communicates these messages:
4. **Allow democracy**
   a. Providing students with the ability to contribute to classroom structure gives them a sense of belonging to that community.¹
   b. This uses peer pressure in a positive way as the students hold one another accountable for adhering to the implemented structure.⁹

When the students have a direct role in decision-making and are given the opportunity to express and have their opinion embraced, they are taught to practice reflective judgment before unfortunate incidents occur. It must be noted that the age level of the students plays a role in how much democracy we implement. The ability to make reflective judgments only begins to develop in the preteen years,¹¹ and even then they must be guided carefully until they reach adulthood.⁴

Dreikurs uses “class discussion periods” to implement this method of democracy in the classroom. These are very similar to “classroom meetings” proposed in the “Positive Discipline in the Classroom” model under which section will be further explanation.
*Reflective judgment*: requires sufficient experiences as the person seeks to solve problems using their understanding of reality (what is true, not true, and subjective), a projected future reality (based on previous experiences), and their belief system. In terms of Piaget’s stages of development, this would fall into third order, or post-formal operational due to the various models of thinking involved."
Assertive Discipline

The following theory is based on the research of Lee and Marlene Canter. As a behavioral theory, it gives very structured ways of modifying observable behaviors specifically. Student and teacher needs are defined as extrinsic, opposed to the psychoeducational theories which define them as intrinsic.

“Erikson makes the point of the critical importance of identity formation during middle and late adolescence....Recently, a major study was conducted of college students in teacher training....Student teachers regularly report how demanding and how personally stretching such a role is....If Erikson's theory has validity, then college students might perform in such a demanding role in accordance with their stage of identity formation.”

The study tested a sample of student teachers and sorted them according to their identity status (achieved or diffused) then assessed their effectiveness as teachers. The results determined that those who were classified as identity achieved demonstrated highest levels of responsive teaching and classroom management (as determined by characteristics of “higher-order teaching”).

Please choose the option that would make this equation most true:

\[ ?? + \text{Identity-confused/diffused students} = \text{Students who are secure in their identity in Christ} \]
A. A teacher who is still questioning several belief systems in the search for answers to questions about God’s place and activity in earthly life. Being a person with whom students can relate in this way opens doors of communication and brings them to the faith (as long as they believe in God, that’s all that matters anyway, right?).

B. A teacher who is generally secure in their values and beliefs but prefers not to reveal too much to the students for fear a student might present a challenging perspective.

C. A teacher who is firm in their identity in Christ and trusts God will use what is invested in His work and thus are not afraid to suffer (2 Tim. 1:12). They seek to present themselves as wise, yet innocent (Matt. 10:16).

Canter does not include these biblical applications in his theory; but keep in mind that being assertive may at times be necessary in order to communicate the firmness of your belief system.

Canter claims teachers to have certain “rights” which consequently drive the ways in which they interact with their students:6

1. The right to develop an environment within the classroom which best fits your teaching style such that it allows for optimal learning among the students
2. The right to determine the most effective rules and discipline methods in knowing that the social and emotional development of the child depend strongly on these decisions
3. The right to request help from parents, fellow teachers, and administration when necessary

Canter defines these as “rights” in order to help the teacher recognize the confidence they must have when implementing disciplinary techniques and boundaries. Without such a perspective, the students receive the message that their teacher is not fully secure in the direction they give;5,6 and when considering the life of an adolescent who is unsure of who they are in the first place, such uncertainty could very likely hinder their identity development.

In Scripture, God seems to use this method when giving the Ten Commandments to the Israelites in Exodus 20:1-17. In Exodus 19:1-6 it is clear that these regulations not only made His people distinct from others, but they were a source of security in who He is and who they were as His children.

In Matthew 22:34-40, Jesus gives the underlying reason for the Ten Commandments found in the Old Testament: love. John 13:35 says: “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” So, if we asked our students what the underlying reason is for the boundaries we give them, what would they say? (See “Student Voices”)
Characteristics of an assertive teacher:

1. Create a classroom of mutual trust and respect through role-modeling.⁵

Students will not consider with any seriousness the advice, guidance, or boundaries given by a teacher unless the teacher him/herself follows them as well.

“[u]nity in one’s self experience is reflected in the attempt to bring together different elements of one’s personality and to find a principle...by which past and present events as well as future expectations are integrated into a coherent biography.” [Blasi and Glodis, 1995]¹³

Below is an example of how this applies to identity development:⁴

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity status</th>
<th>Perspective</th>
<th>Student Action</th>
<th>Teacher Action (model)</th>
<th>Student Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diffused/Confused</td>
<td>I am not interested in beliefs, future vocation, or self-reflection</td>
<td>Shows apathy in academics, religion, or seeking meaning in life. Emphasize self-gratification</td>
<td>Present them with an eternally-minded perspective (see “Praise vs. Encouragement”) Discourage any self-centered mindset without attacking it</td>
<td>My teacher is always telling me to “do my best” but shows more concern for my character than what I achieve. My attempts to please him/her don’t cut it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moratorium</td>
<td>I see various ways in which I can respond to this situation, but I do not know which to choose, so I will go back-and-forth between them while I think about it</td>
<td>Student investigates various roles without showing an enduring commitment. They may appear as insecure in their attempts to test various responses/consequences to their choices</td>
<td>Presents his/herself as completely certain of what they are telling me? What points are they making that I want to be identified with as well?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreclosure</td>
<td>I am firm in my beliefs because authority told me so and they deserve my respect</td>
<td>A “good student”; obey without questioning the system; maybe gullible</td>
<td>Presents controversial topics of interest without necessarily expressing a personal opinion, but rather guides students’ thought processes</td>
<td>Why do I believe what I believe? Why are there so many conflicts with my perspective and what makes them (not) appealing?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As our students observe our way of life, what will they latch onto which will conflict with their own identity? Is our perspective going to challenge them, bring them into conflict their present self, and help them redefine what they currently view as their “future expectations” (i.e., ideal identity)?

![Diagram](Teacher as role-model ➔ Student undergoes self-reflection ➔ Student recognizes conflict)

John 13:14-16 says: “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.”

Jesus gave us the perfect example; although we are not a perfect example for our students, have we studied Jesus’ example well enough to replicate it?

2. **Teach students how to behave; they cannot always be expected to know how to do so.**

   a. **Use rules which are observable so student knows what it looks like.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not observable</th>
<th>Observable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Show respect</td>
<td>Keep hands to yourself; do not interrupt; wait your turn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be safe</td>
<td>Listen to instruction; read the safety rules; think before you act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work hard</td>
<td>Turn in homework on time; communicate problems with the teacher; come to class on time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hopefully, you can decipher the pros and cons to both lists. If you had to choose one of them, which would you choose and why?

Canter suggests the observable list but clarifies that the number of rules should not exceed six (ideally, four). Obviously, this introduces at least some degree of ambiguity; but combining them all into one (the classic “be nice” rule) would hardly be beneficial.
The following actions may help to clarify intended behaviors:

- When introducing the rules, present the students with a situation and ask them what it would mean to follow a certain rule in that context and maybe in light of another rule.
  - Example: You are a coach, and one of your athletes is extremely talented. You present the “not observable” list to your team and ask them to think about how they can show respect and comradery to their teammates while at the same time work hard. Helping all of your athletes understand what this looks like before they go train and compete gives them a sense of security and understanding of one another and their needs.
- When a situation occurs in which one of the rules is broken, be sure the students understand why their actions crossed the boundary.

b. Positive repetition\(^3\)

This involves reinforcing a behavior by identifying it to the rest of the class when it is exhibited by a student.
- Example: “Billy, thank you for raising your hand and for being so patient while I finished talking.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gives students a real-life demonstration of desired behavior</td>
<td>This student may misinterpret your comment and see it as permission to instruct others regarding their behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praises the student doing the action</td>
<td>The student who does the action later on is not complimented and feels lesser than the other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates to the student the ability they have to positively influence the rest of the class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. Positive reinforcement\(^2\)

This is a classic characteristic of behavioral theories; it includes both giving of material items and verbal praise as rewards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It may provide concrete examples for younger adolescents to which you can relate ideas and concepts of eternal value as they grow and mature</td>
<td>Long term effects include rebellion and negative use of power(^7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is easy</td>
<td>Encourages extrinsic motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It works (on a temporary basis)</td>
<td>The class can become competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promotes an identity which “deserves” certain privileges. (How well does that line up with Luke 17:10?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As with other elements of behavioral theories, positive reinforcements may have their place in the classroom; but implementation must be well-thought-out.

d. When giving a command, present it as clear as possible while looking directly at the student.\(^3\)

3. Minor consequences are implemented.\(^6\)

Isolation, removal of privileges, detentions, visits to the office, and calling parents are common, but unless implemented in a careful and thoughtful way (in considering student background, situational context, and the message being communicated), no meaningful purpose will be served.

Keep in mind why you choose a certain disciplinary method...

Convenience?
Efficiency?
Effectiveness?

a. Focus on consistency, not severity for effectiveness.\(^5\)

Being adamant about consistently biting the behavior at the bud is more time consuming and emotionally demanding for the teacher than the short and intense punishments. We live in such an instantaneous society; yet do we really believe we can help cure poor habits in a few weeks that have been integrated into this adolescent’s world for 13 or 14 years?

b. Do not use physical or psychological punishment.\(^3\)

c. Students should know these like the back of their hand making it their choice to undergo the consequence.\(^6\)

d. The teacher must be able to follow through with the consequences they formulate.\(^6\)

During a summer teacher assistant position, my 16 little middle school children were instructed by the teacher to form a single-file line and not talk as we walked through a certain part of the building on our way to lunch every day. In order for the students to consider us serious regarding other boundaries, we had to follow through with this one. It was extremely difficult enforce such a rule. So which would be more appropriate, using this as an opportunity to let the students know that what you say is what goes, perhaps by re-walking the hallway until they do so in a respectful way? Or would it be wiser to tone down the strictness and
instruct them to simply move to one side of the hall and whisper?

There are several other variables to take into consideration when making such a decision; but the main point is to be sure to follow through with enforcing rules and giving out appropriate consequences. Without that consistency and trust in the teacher, the students will lack security in the system and will be more likely to cross other (and perhaps more important) boundaries.

a. **Send home lots of positive messages!**

Let’s not be like the newscasts bring to our attention so many negatives. If we are truly striving to grow in our students an identity reflecting that of Christ, would we not do everything in our power to draw the fruits of the Spirit out of them? Help them see that it matters...that people notice.

“*And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and the teachers (that’s us!) to equip the saints (that’s our students!) for the work of ministry, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*” – Eph. 4:11-16 (ESV)
Positive Discipline in the Classroom

Proposed by Jane Nelson, Lynn Lott, and H. Stephen Glenn

While discipline can be emotionally taxing and the deciding of a specific method can be dicey, seeing such instances as opportunities to encourage and grow our students provides us with a perspective of hope. This may not make the process any easier, but recognizing the implications of the resulting conversations is what motivates us to keep on.

Consider this continuum of growth stages. What is going on in our classrooms that either discourages or encourages movement from one stage to another?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependence</th>
<th>Independence</th>
<th>Interdependence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child relies on involvement of authority to complete tasks and decipher right from wrong</td>
<td>Adolescent explores new roles, traits, beliefs, and perspectives as they search for identity</td>
<td>Young adult is secure in the roles they have in their personal life and in the lives of others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please review the following management techniques and indicate which stage of development is promoted:

1. A “sticker system” is used to encourage good grades. For every “A” a student receives, they acquire a sticker and are given a special reward after ten stickers.
   a. Dependence
   b. Independence
   c. Interdependence
2. Before the team is sent out for their run, you assign each runner a certain responsibility so that they go the proper distance, rest time is appropriate, no one gets lost(!), a safe route is chosen, and pacing is appropriate.
   a. Dependence
   b. Independence
   c. Interdependence
3. You have each student choose a topic for their project and establish its due date as several weeks away. You encourage your students to work on it gradually as they learn the material.
   a. Dependence
   b. Independence
   c. Interdependence

Hopefully this helps clarify the importance of each stage at appropriate age levels. In working with adolescents, we want to focus on helping them move into independence as we present choices with structured freedom. In demonstrating both the importance of their role in the lives of others and others’ roles in their life helps them mature into the interdependence stage. (Perhaps 1 Corinthians 12 could be integrated into such a conversation?)

Stephen Glenn proposes three beliefs and four skills to indicate capability in young people: I am capable, I am significant, and I have the power to influence some circumstances in my life. These beliefs are followed by the four skills: self-discipline (intrapersonal skills), dialogue (interpersonal skills), responsibility, and judgmental skills. How do these beliefs and skills develop in a young person’s life? Consider the following diagram:

![Diagram showing the development of beliefs and skills]

- Strong systemic skills; recognizing:
  - your responsibilities
  - how your decisions affect others

- Strong inter-personal skills

- I have the power to influence certain aspects of my life

- I am significant

- I am capable

- Strong judgmental skills; knowing right from wrong in a given situation

- Strong intrapersonal skills
Perhaps adults tend to view adolescents as incapable because the adolescents are still trying to figure out who they are and sometimes come off as goofy and halfhearted in their commitments. If we, as ones who wish to move them into the stage of independence, are going to provide them with responsibilities to assist this process, how are we going to convince them of their significance and capability?

At what point along the continuum do adolescents begin to recognize their significance and capabilities? Where should they begin to recognize these?

dependence — independence — interdependence

Adolescents will not successfully get through the stage of independence without recognizing their capabilities, and implementation of this process is well-structured already: classes become harder, workloads greater, part-time jobs begin, etc., and we are there to support them. Yet what good are such capabilities if the student remains blind to their incredible significance?

“The truth is that when they are respectfully involved, they take ownership and responsibility for the solutions they help create.”?

While it may be true that feelings of significance precede the ability to recognize one’s influence over others, to communicate with others in a respectful way, and to make wise judgments, perhaps it is also true that our kids will not grow such self-esteem unless they are first given the opportunity to exercise these skills. Consider the following example:

Regardless of the group of kids one works with—whether it be a youth group, a class, or a sports team—each one has at least a few who enjoy acting out. One day at practice, my coach called out such a boy and asked if he would help drive to the competition that weekend [this is a collegiate setting]. Coach said, “I know you are responsible enough to handle this.” The boy looked somewhat surprised, but answered affirmatively and did a fine job with the responsibility.

How is this method of identity development a modification of the order of beliefs and skills proposed above?
“Empowerment is [the] best hope for producing the kind of children who can cope with the very hostile elements they are trying to protect them from.”
–Stephen Glenn

So, in a system that requires certain classes for graduation, service hours (perhaps), state standards to be learned, and policies galore, in what ways can we encourage young people to choose for themselves the very same boundaries which we provide? Glenn, Lott, and Nelsen propose the following:

1. **Avoid barriers; use builders**

   **Barrier #1: Assuming**
   “You are consistently frustrated with your partner, so I didn’t give you one this time.”

   **Builder #1: Checking**
   “I know you have struggled with partner projects; what can we do to eliminate your frustrations?”

   **Barrier #2: Rescuing/Explaining**
   “Put more clothes on! It’s cold outside!”
**Builder #2: Exploring the What? Why? and How?**
“We’re going to be outside for quite a while. What is going to happen if we do not dress properly?”

**Barrier #3: Directing**
“The test is on Tuesday so everyone had better turn in their review sheet on before the weekend so you can be ready.”

**Builder #3: Encouraging/Inviting**
“We have our test on Tuesday. I’m giving you a review sheet but it is up to you when you want to turn it in; I know the weekends are very busy so I’m going to let you decide how to manage your time.”

**Barrier #4: Expecting**
“The rubric says to construct your project in this way; what don’t you understand about that?”

**Builder #4: Celebrating**
“I was expecting something slightly different with this project; but yours is still very creative! Please explain your thought process.”

**Barrier #5: Adultisms**
“You need to because I said so.”

**Builder #5: Respect**
“Why do you think you should do this or that?”

2. **Help students identify the “Mistaken Goals of Behavior”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thinking/Deciding</th>
<th>Feeling</th>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Mistaken goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t get attention at home, and this is my only other option</td>
<td>Desperate, Worried, Insecure, Irritated</td>
<td>I will entertain the class so they will like me and the teacher will give me attention</td>
<td>Undue attention (I’m only important when I’m keeping you busy with me)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal tells me my shirt is against dress code</td>
<td>Angry, Mad, Challenged</td>
<td>I will take it off then put it back on later</td>
<td>Power (to be boss)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone slammed my locker shut and I dropped all my books</td>
<td>Hurt, Upset, Sad, Disappointed</td>
<td>I shoved them. I was so upset I was late to next class but didn’t care</td>
<td>Revenge (to get even)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My boy/girlfriend just dumped me…again</td>
<td>Hopeless, Helpless</td>
<td>No one understands me, not even my “friends”</td>
<td>Give up and be left alone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Not only is it important to realize the goals behind behavior ourselves, but helping the students reflect on their own behavior puts the responsibility in their hands to find a solution instead of constantly focusing on the problem.

This also helps students separate their feelings (which are normal) from their actions (are not necessarily appropriate).⁷

3. **Develop class meetings**⁷

Class meetings are periods of time within the class period during which the students discuss certain issues (the “agenda”) and brainstorm ideas to help each other work through such struggles.

Some view this as an inefficient method because of the time required to develop class meetings in a meaningful way; and surely it takes a teacher with the gift of group facilitation to implement them successfully. However, the reasoning behind these meetings may be helpful to your practice in a different way...

*Positive Discipline in the Classroom* by Nelsen, Lott, and Glenn provides a wealth load of advice on how to successfully run class meetings; but here is a snapshot:

1. Have class meetings every day
2. Form a circle
3. Focus on solutions instead of consequences
4. Take turns speaking by passing an item
5. Allow students to put items on the agenda for discussion
6. Allow time for training and instruction on the meeting process; it will take time for both you and your students to become accustomed to them

Class meetings teach students to:
1. Compliment and appreciate one another
2. Communicate effectively
3. Recognize separate realities
4. Recognize the underlying reasons to behavior
5. Role play and brainstorm
6. Focus on nonpunitive solutions

“Prayer will not affirm a person spiritually until they believe three things about God: that God listens to them, that He considers their thoughts and ideas, and that God sees their life as significant.”⁸
Positive Classroom Discipline

“For teaching to be enjoyable, you must be able to simply relax and teach. Classroom management must be built from the ground up so that most problems do not occur.” –Dr. Fred Jones


Claims of this model, proposed by Fred Jones:

1. The main focus of a disciplinary strategy should be preventing misbehavior before it happens.
2. Purpose of discipline is to help student learning be as positive and smooth as possible, to develop self-control, to teach responsibility for one’s actions, and help maintain a positive classroom atmosphere.

95% of all misbehavior consists of talking to neighbors, being out of one’s seat, daydreaming, and making noise

80% of teachers who quit after the first year do so because they are incapable of maintaining a disciplined classroom

50% of time wasted in the classroom is due to seemingly minor off-task behavior

Do these behaviors seem very “minor” anymore?

http://yaymicro.com/vector/daydreaming/1248236
http://www.pinterest.com/pin/95912667638187779/
Perhaps it is because they are not disruptive to the entire class or detrimental to the lesson that teachers let such behaviors slip by, and it is true that one must pick their battles carefully; yet in recognizing they still exist and being proactive in preventing them remains crucial to developing an effective classroom environment.

Jones’ theory on Positive Classroom Discipline provides the following insights:

1. **Limit Setting**

Create a classroom atmosphere in which students feel uncomfortable when they misbehave. This can be done by implementing appropriate body language and eye contact.

The standards of the classroom however are not what you give on the first day but rather what you teach each and every day through what you choose to discipline and what you choose to ignore.

Students quickly learn the boundaries, not by what you teach them (they already know that), but by what they can get away with. The teacher’s job then becomes not letting the students get away with anything, as if to reinforce the idea...what might be a possible outcome a few hours later when there is no longer authority present to enforce boundaries?

Encouraging students to reflect on the boundaries you implement with the intention of guiding students to recognize the straight and narrow even though they may stray from it.

The reason for implementing boundaries should not be to keep students “under control.” That is the side effect. As discussed in previous sections, boundaries should always be teaching students what their identity is in Christ.

Jones claims students must remain calm and focused while they are in the classroom. Imagine yourself as a student and indicate which of the following situations you would prefer:

| You are instructed to exercise for one hour per day in order to remain physically fit. Your parents decide you should join the competitive city soccer team because it would be the most structured and therefore would provide excellent exercise and bring your talent to its fullest potential. You had no say regarding your position | You are instructed to exercise for one hour per day in order to remain physically fit. You decide you would like to play soccer on a team organized and led by fellow classmates and other friends. Your parents frequently attended your games to keep tab on your dedication to exercise as well as the quality of the atmosphere. Both |
and the atmosphere was so serious you would leave practice thinking it was sinful to have fun on the field. You quickly learned to strongly dislike a sport you once loved.

your love for the sport and your relationships sprouted as you worked hard toward a goal with your teammates and learned how to solve discrepancies by viewing situations from the perspective of an opponent.

Take note of four important components in the two situations:

1. Authority vs. student choice
2. Order vs. disorder
3. Appropriate presence of authority figure
4. Accomplishment of objective (exercise)
5. Final student attitude toward activity

- Which situation probably would provide the most “calm[ness] and focus”?
- Which probably provided a greater degree of exercise?
- Which would involve the most practice and discipline?
- Which would you choose for a student?

The time an energy a teacher puts into a classroom drastically increases when objectives other than subject material is driving boundary implementation.

As noted above, there are certainly times in which strict boundaries must be in place that students may not understand or agree with, regardless of explanation. It is in these times that we pray the student will someday look back on such experiences and recognize it had a positive impact on their identity development.

**Responsibility Training**

Incentives in the form of preferred activity time (PAT) should be used to modify behaviors. Students are taught responsibility by earning classroom activity time as a reward for making best use of their time during the class period.³

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can build class comradery as each student contributes to PAT for the entire class</td>
<td>Possible message to the students: “I know you do not like being in this class, so I will reward you with fun activities by putting up with it.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
May help students recognize that even areas of life which are fun require some work.

The students enjoy the class rather than the subject because enjoyment is based on entertainment rather than relating and engaging the students in the material.

**Omission training**

Students can be taught to omit disruptive behaviors using preferred activity time in a more personalized way.\(^{15}\)

By giving the entire class \((x)\) minutes of PAT for every \((x)\) minutes a certain student spends on-task/not talking/in their seat/etc. they feel valued in their ability to contribute to the community.

If students are given the opportunity have a significant impact on the rest of the class, they will do so!\(^{15}\) (Look back at Glenn’s Significant Seven)

In consideration of the student’s identity, how well does this methodology speak the truth?

Perhaps while the student is still the “hero” of the class in their ability to provide the class with extra activity time, you could communicate their significance by:

- **Taking note of the student’s strengths** and pair him/her with a student who is struggling in that area.
  
  “You have the capability to interact with your classmates in a meaningful way.” (Interpersonal skills)

- **Give the student important tasks** which require trust (taking notes to the office, helping set up lab, performing TA-type duties like entering grades, etc.).
  
  “You recognize your responsibilities and their implications.” (Systemic skills)

- **Demonstrating your belief** in their potential by calling on them in class and challenging them while providing appropriate scaffolding.
  
  “You have the self-discipline needed to accomplish this.” (Intrapersonal skills)
CAUTION: be careful not to communicate that the student’s significance lies in their ability to gain the class preferred activity time.

**Back-up system**

While Jones lays out various disciplinary strategies often implemented in a school system (such as being sent to the office, time out, parent conferences, loss of privileges, detentions, etc.), he dismisses all of them save being sent to the office, arguing that it is sometimes necessary to seek help from higher authority. Yet even this should be done only with careful planning.³

Jones gives three levels of prevention (instead of intervention) strategies:¹⁵

**Classroom structure**

Jones argues that a certain degree of structure to the classroom enables the teacher to manage the class in a very discreet way. When the arrangement is such that the teacher can walk around the class while giving instruction and be in close proximity to as many students as possible, they know you are fully aware and taking note of what they are doing.³

Being in close contact with the students in this way also allows the teacher to quietly encourage on-task behavior via whispers or sticky notes. This mode communication can be very effective without being disruptive.
Jones’ methodology for a constructivist perspective

While the methods Jones presents may not generally be effective for high school students, they could be beneficial for middle/upper elementary school students who are still in Piaget’s concrete operational stage of development.14 Perhaps earning preferred activity time for the entire class would provide them with a more concrete representation of their significance and capabilities than would an activity like peer tutoring due to their inability to think abstractly and recognize future implications. When the activities are coupled, however, the student may be encouraged to connect the two and recognize that their identity consists of much more than that which is visible (see 2 Cor. 4:17-18).
God’s Discipline

The following text from Hebrews gives us a depiction of the way in which God disciplines us. Despite popular belief, hardships such as death, divorce, addictions, abuse, and the like are not inflicted upon us by God as discipline. Rather, He shows us opportunities to struggle against sin and doubt so God can grow the relationship. And in doing so, we can practice the attributes that will grow us to more closely resemble Him. Discipline, though often perceived as law, has been redefined as Gospel (while keeping in mind that without the law there would be no struggle).

Paul compares discipline to a runner:

Heb. 12:1-3, 5-7a, 11-13
“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. How he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne. Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won’t become weary and give up...And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children?

You are an athlete, training for a race...but not just any race...the championship race. You know those who have taken part in it before, ones who know how challenging it is and who have sacrificed the time and energy required to be fully prepared. Their stories have encouraged you, and you know they are cheering you on.

You consider the race day. What you will wear – you find lightweight clothing and shoes, even though they are expensive. What you will eat – you throw away all your chocolate, even though you have great attachment to it. How well you will sleep – you go to bed at 8 pm, even though your friends are playing Peanut together that night. This race is for fools.

You are nervous because you know you have not trained as well as you could have, so you talk to your Pacer. Only He and no other can run the qualifying time; He has trained perfectly. He gives you the standard – the pace – though there is no way you can run the qualifying time, regardless of your training.

His words are encouraging because He knows what it is like. He knows what it is like to give up enjoyable things, to hear people call you crazy because you go to bed at 8 pm, to run long and hard in wind and rain, and to feel left out because you do not attend Friday night games.
So you listen to His words, and you find great motivation.

He says to you, “Those times when you were given the choice to either honor the race or enjoy temporary personal comfort were from me. I gave them to you because I love you and I want to prepare you for this race. I know they are hard, but through them you become more like me.

“The degree to which you train is a display of how devoted you are to this race, and thus to me. Those who cannot train cannot race. I pushed and prodded you by showing you how to train because I love you and want you to be close to me in relationship. Do you trust that the training I give you will be in the best way beneficial to you and to the other runners? Do you trust it enough to undergo such training?”

“Even though you did not demonstrate complete devotion, you are still in the race because your qualification is dependent only on me, and I will run a perfect time.

“Keep the end in mind. There are others in this race, and you must be strong for them.”

We train out of love and adoration for our Pacer; we want to be like Him. Yet we also train so that our fellow runners might be pulled along, motivated by us to draw into a closer relationship with Him.

So we train that in the end, when all is said and done, the Father will say: “Well done, good and faithful servant!” (Matt. 25:21) To which we will then respond, “We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.” (Luke 17:10)
*Matt. 10:38-39 (ESV) “And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

**2 Tim. 1:11-13 (NLT) “And God chose me to be a preacher, and apostle, and a teacher of this Good News. That is why I am suffering here in prison. But I am not ashamed of it, for I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return.”

***Ps. 119:79 (ESV) “Let those who fear you turn to me, that they may know your testimonies.”

1 Cor. 1:11 (ESV) “Be imitators of me as I am of Christ.”

Gordon MacDonald defines discipline in this way in *Parents and Teenagers:* “[D]iscipline is the deliberate creation of stress in a relationship with your children in order to help them grow and learn. Discipline is setting them to a task to exercise, strengthen, and help them mature. Discipline is forcing them to face painful questions that need to be wrestled with.”¹⁰
Student Voices

How is the disciplinary system we are using in our schools affecting how our students perceive God?

Seven surveys were distributed to and collected from students who attend a Lutheran high school. These students are also members of the track and field team. The students were asked to define discipline, determine how they would discipline another if given the authority to do so, and how/if God disciplines us.

...from the Lutheran school

7/7 said that God does discipline
5/7 used the law to describe God’s method in disciplining us
3/7 mentioned grace and/or its power as an essential ingredient to God’s discipline
3/7 gave hint to our identity/distinction from others as coming from following rules/the law as we strive to be “better” people
1/7 mentioned love as the underlying reason for discipline

Certainly, the pool of students who took part was very small; however, this provides us with an interesting perspective about how our disciplinary system is shaping the spiritual reality of our students.

The fact that 100% recognized God as one who disciplines His children while only 14.3% saw it as an outpouring of His love may represent a need for better communication regarding the central focus of discipline as the student, not the behavior.

It is encouraging, however, that nearly half recognized that there is no way to live up to the image God intends for us, making His grace as an essential ingredient in the disciplinary process.

...from the public school

Five additional surveys were distributed to and collected from students who attend a public high school. Like the others, they were asked to define discipline and determine how they would use it. In place of a perspective on God’s discipline, they were asked what they believe discipline is meant to communicate.
4/5 used the word “punish” in either their definition or communication purpose
4/5 used grounding as an implementation of discipline
3/5 indicated the goal of discipline to be improving behavior
2/5 suggested one discipline another by taking away their possessions
2/5 recognized reconciliation with those offended as a part of discipline

While different perspectives are to be expected from students of a Lutheran school, one would hope that discipline in this setting would also revolve around love for the child and not disapproval for the behavior.

If asked, a teacher might indeed claim discipline to be “for their own good.” But is it really if the students cannot even see that? Are we going to explain it to them? Can we teach them in such a way that they would long for discipline?

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word...for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love....teach me your statutes! Oh how I love your law!”

-Ps. 119:9, 47, 64b, 97 (ESV)
Bibliography


[4] Notes from class


Sarah Kortze

Classroom Discipline Kit

Psy 421 Dr. Moulds

Due: 24 April 2014