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file: Discipline

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

"How do some teachers make it look so easy?"

"Why is it that this class has that special atmosphere?"

The three statements in this article were 'solicited' from teachers whose classes had that 'special something'.

The statements are offered with the hypothesis in mind that "Though there may be a deal of truth in the saying that good teachers are born, there is also strong evidence to suggest that successful teachers learn much of their trade.

Statement 1. (Mrs. Kate Coughlan)

Overcoming Initial Problems - COPING

1. Be totally prepared - workwise, plan an oversupply of work and always have sheets or activities for those who finish early.
2. Set definite rules (with your class) and be consistent when dealing with those who don't comply
  - with regard to a) behaviour, courtesy
  - b) dress
  - c) work.
3. Familiarize yourself before school with work standard so that your expectations are not unrealistic.
4. Never be afraid to ask for help from a) another teacher b) administration.  
To do this does not mean you are a failure!!
5. Communicate problems and don't consider yourself a failure because things haven't worked out as you've planned.
6. Changes for the better are very gradual (almost impossible to notice).
7. Remember, it is difficult for another teacher visiting a class and perceiving a need and yet finding an acceptable way of offering advice and avoiding treading on toes.
8. Remember, no matter what happens, there are others around experiencing the same kinds of problems. TALK ABOUT IT! Get someone in to mind your class for 5 minutes, get out, have a cup of tea, a deep breath and then you'll be able to cope.
9. Whatever successes you achieve within your class, within the school; you achieve them on the backs of those who've gone before you. Strong buildings are not built on shaky foundations.
10. Show ACCEPTANCE of the children despite what they do.

ENCOURAGEMENT, PRAISE, RECOGNITION we all need these things - don't be afraid to offer it!

- A cceptance - whether they're good, bad or ugly.
- C are - important for the child to know you do.
- C ourage - not to back down on important issues but to admit mistakes.
- E xperience - draw from the experience of those around you.
- P articipate - in discussions, staff meetings, decision making.
- T each - according to needs and abilities of children.
- A ssist - those around you by thoughtful planning
- N urture - and foster ideas - don't crush the child.
- C reativity - just as important as the skills.
- E ncourage - children and peers for even minor achievements.

Statement 2. (Mr. David Ross)

Teaching the Low Achiever and Disruptive Student

One of the most difficult facts a teacher must face is that not all children are going to be academically successful, no matter how good the teacher is. The teacher is only one of many factors influencing a child during his formative years and unfortunately education is a low priority for many students.

I believe that discipline and general control is such a major concern of many teachers in today's schools that so much energy is channelled into this aspect that little is left for actual instruction. Observation shows that the teachers "succeeding" in the classroom don't appear to spend much time disciplining children. These teachers employ techniques that, over a period of time, (one week, one term, six months, whatever) get the children controlling their own destiny and the teacher concentrates less and less on discipline.

"Well, what do they do?" you ask.

Here are a few ideas that I have seen employed and perhaps they may help someone, somewhere enjoy the job a little more and perhaps put more meaning into what we are trying to do.

N.B. The following strategies will not work for every teacher and certainly won't produce masses of academically orientated students, but they can assist in breaking down barriers and enable teachers to relate to the children and subsequently help them improve.

1. Interest: is the keynote of success. Keep your lessons short and lively. Present the lessons in a variety of ways so children are looking forward to the next one in that subject area. Experiment freely with lessons and remember those that went well.
2. Expectations: You can't get blood from a stone so don't try. It is amazing how standards such as neatness, quantity of output, accuracy etc., improve when a child's confidence is increased and the fear of reprimand is removed. "Are you satisfied with this effort?" is more likely to find the work repeated correctly than, "Do this again at recess time". Accept the children's work and mark it according to your set down criteria.

Praise lavishly all those efforts that achieve this level. Commend improved work and merely sign the others as being seen. (Perhaps a comment of how to improve one aspect).

Set your standards high so children have a goal to strive for and recognize those that are heading in the right direction.

3. Class Tone: Children want to belong to a successful team and peer pressure can be utilised in developing the desired class traits (e.g. noise level, movement about the school, library behaviour etc).

Regularly set objectives for the class as a whole to achieve and work towards these. Discuss with the class problems as they occur and arrive at reasons for acting in a particular way.

\*Set a good example yourself, and refer to what "we" as a class expect.

4. Unacceptable behaviour: Children should be responsible for their own actions but minor infringements (e.g. attention seeking) should be ignored by teacher and, with training, by class members. Totally unacceptable behaviour must be handled by individual modifying schemes which shouldn't affect the rest of the class too much.

5. Remediation/Modified Courses: Children must feel there is an opportunity to improve and succeed. Provide work that is geared towards the children's ability and promote an atmosphere where children assist each other either directly (group work) or indirectly (working independently).
6. Involvement/Enthusiasm: often time spent outside the classroom with the children (e.g. during lunch breaks, after school etc.) can lead to more endeavour during lessons. Also if the teacher is enthusiastic about the material being presented the children generally follow suit.

There are many other points that could be made, but these will become obvious as one watches others and uses their own imagination and initiative more.

In conclusion, a teacher that keeps the children's interest foremost in his/her mind will usually gain their support and co-operation.

### Statement 3 (Miss Sharon Ensly and Miss Julie Lawson)

#### Classroom Tone

The following are suggestions as to how you can create a pleasant, working tone in your classroom. They are grouped under five headings:

#### 1. Overall Policy

The classroom is not the teacher's alone. A "homely" environment should be created. "Our" classroom - care for it, work together to help make it run smoothly. Work together to create a happy working environment.

#### 2. Environment

- i) Organization - teacher should be well organized, children will follow suit
- ii) Responsibilities - general order of personal and classroom equipment is responsibility of child then teacher.
- iii) Contribution to classroom - encourage child involvement e.g. bring newspapers, magazines etc.
- iv) Parents - use selected parent help
- v) Appearance/Display - children and teacher can make decisions as to arrangement of desks, artwork, games etc.

#### 3. Affection

- i) Interests - show interest in the child's home-life, hobbies, etc. Incidentally, or at set times, e.g. news, language experience.
- ii) Manners - teacher sets the example. Be courteous to each other.
- iii) Appearance - teacher complements/notes changes in dress, hairstyle.
- iv) Humour - share humorous situations, can be used to diffuse a difficult situation.

#### 4. Recognition

- i) Encourage more positive reinforcement rather than negative. Negative reinforcement should be used sparingly when other measures fail.
- ii) Incentive schemes - stamps, stickers, Grand Slam, Meritorious Awards.
- iii) Teacher Approval - through use of facial expressions, voice, contact.
- iv) Non-routine activities - excursions, sport, cooking, used as reward or to improve class spirit.

## 5. Security

- i) Based on RESPECT for each other i.e. respect each others thoughts, feelings and ideas.
- ii) Rules - children and teacher decide on rules at beginning of year.
- iii) Organization - children are taught where things are kept, when and how to use them.
- iv) Fairness - teacher makes fair decisions and judgements, encourage children to do the same.
- v) Routines - children are taught procedures such as lining up, walking, tray organization, washing hands, move upon request by teacher.
- vi) Timetable - is displayed, children are encouraged to learn and prepare pads etc. prior to lesson.

## 6. Success

- i) Points, tokens, graphs are used to indicate success academically.
- ii) Points are given for good behaviour, sharing, helping others, working quietly etc.
- iii) Standards - high standards of neatness, presentation and accuracy are worked towards.
- iv) Responsibility - children are responsible for their own equipment to enable classroom routines to flow smoothly.

## UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S NEEDS AS A BASIS TO SUCCESSFUL INSTRUCTION

It is now a well-established psychological fact that most children demonstrate the following needs:-

### 1. The Need for Affection

- \* Teacher should share his time amongst all class members.
- \* Rewards should not go to the pleasant children at the expense of the not so pleasant - remember many children who cause problems are children who have not received appropriate attention from their teachers.
- \* Children who feel the teacher likes them are rarely discipline problems ... however, if favouritism is shown then the teacher is inviting problems.
- \* Take time to ... talk to children,  
join in playground activities with them,  
share humorous situations,  
share problems - all of which will demonstrate,  
in a practical manner, your concern for the  
children you teach ... this is practical affection.

### 2. The Need for Approval

- \* Approval needs to come from:- authority (parents, teachers etc.)  
the peer group
- \* The child's confidence depends upon the approval he receives from the above agencies.
- \* Approval is the verification of thought and action.
- \* Withdraw approval and children will seek such recognition in anti-social ways.

3. The Need to Succeed

- \* Success motivates children to action.
- \* Motivation leads to sustained effort.
- \* Sustained effort produces learning.
- \* Graph children's results to show that progress is being made ... i.e. that success is occurring.

4. The Need to Gain Knowledge

- \* The acquisition of knowledge brings: - a sense of power
  - enjoyment
  - feeling of achievement
- \* Every child should have the above experiences regardless of his learning capacity.

5. The Need to be Ready to Learn

- \* Children cannot learn unless they are prepared to understand what is being presented.
- \* Many so-called learning-disabled children are those who were asked to perform school tasks before they were academically ready.

6. The Need to be Active in Learning

- \* Children love to move - it is part of their make-up as children ... school learning should make use of the natural tendency related to growth.
- \* Many learning problems are the result of an over-restrictive learning situation.

7. The Need to Overcome Obstacles

- \* All children derive satisfaction from the solution of real problems that tax their powers of imagination and intellect - provided they are able to reach a successful solution and that the problem presented is not too far beyond them.
- \* Problem-solving capacity helps a child feel ... complete
  - useful
  - important.

8. The Need to be Independent

- \* Give children the chance to 'go it alone' from time to time.
- \* Encourage/praise/reward acts of initiative - these acts promote the growth of independence.

9. The Need to be Socially Acceptable

- \* Children who are isolates/rejectees are lonely.
- \* Every child wants to be accepted by his peers and adult figures.
- \* Highlight the strengths of the children in your class so that others can see their qualities ... but don't over-emphasise these skills or the verdict of 'favouritism' might be used.

This statement was offered to an inservice group by Brian Preen, a successful classroom practitioner and an eminent C.A.E. lecturer.

It is interesting to note that the needs of children complement what teachers feel they should offer.