

CHAPTER ONE — THE CAUSES

*It's when things seem worst
that I dare not quit.*

What causes discipline problems? This chapter will take an indepth look at three areas of concern dealing with the cause of discipline problems in the classroom.

Before we, as teachers and administrators, try to solve the problem of discipline, we need to know the root of the problem.

Trying to narrow down the causes is an endless task. In the process of elimination, I have suggested three areas of concerns. These concerns are:

1. Curriculum deficiency.
2. Changes in the family.
3. Diet.

The first area of concern is:

CURRICULUM DEFICIENCIES

William Van Til believes that if schools have better curriculums, they will have better discipline. Van Til gives these reasons:

1. Curriculum does not make sense to the learner.
2. Content bears no relationship to the needs of the learner.
3. Curriculum is trivial.
4. Poor teacher planning.
5. Poor teacher motivation.
6. Poor teacher presentation of material.

(30:35)

He feels that better discipline will prevail when:

1. Learning experiences relate closely to the present interests and needs of children who see the use of what they are learning.
2. Learning is related to the social realities which surround the child.
3. We practice what we preach as to respect for personality.
4. We develop active student participation, creative contributions, social travel, and all else that fosters significant experiences. (30:35-36)

Another educator who feels that curriculum is to blame is William Glasser. He believes:

"That much of the disruptive behavior in today's schools result from the students' failure to learn to read properly. This failure is due to such factors as reading assignments that are meaningless, excessive exposure to television, and especially feeling of neglect and failure." (13:7)

All of this can be traced back to the curriculum developed in the classroom.

Speaking from experience, one can become very disinterested in a subject if the material is dull or teaching is less than adequate. Try sitting in a classroom for an hour if you are bored. It's not easy. Curriculum change could make a big difference.

The second category is:

CHANGES IN THE FAMILY

The many changes in the family lifestyle have caused problems for the student in school. What changes in the home has caused the child to become disruptive? A recent research report by a University of Michigan doctoral candidate has confirmed earlier research that says divorce affects students' behavior in school. Dr. Janice M. Hammond said:

"Teachers rated boys of divorced parents much higher in the school behavioral problems of "acting out" and "distractibility" than those of intact families. The boys of divorced households also rated themselves and their families as less happy than those in the non-divorced group and expressed more dissatisfaction with the time and attention they received from their parents. The girls in the study showed no significant differences on any of these measures." (14:3)

George B. McCellan, a former Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, also feels the problem starts in the home. I think he sums it up rather well when he refers to it as "parental delinquency" instead of juvenile delinquency. In his opinion, the product of irresponsible homes and irresponsible parents are the producers of disruptive youths. The parents plant the seed and what is harvested depends on how the child is cultivated.

McCellan has listed 10 effective methods to use so that a child will become an antisocial misfit. They are:

1. Do not have any rules for child behavior or obedience in the home. This will insure that the child has no clear concept of right or wrong.
2. If you have any rules, enforce them intermittently. Ignore them when you are in a good humor and knock the kid silly if he breaks the rules when you are tired and out of sorts. This will confuse him thoroughly. He won't know what is expected of him and will eventually resent all discipline.
3. Air your domestic disputes right out in front of the child, preferably with a little name-calling. This will insure that he has no respect for either of his parents.

4. Never give a child any chores or regular duties around the home. This will convince him that you and the world owe him a living, without effort on his part.
5. If he is disciplined at school, always go to the school and tear a strip off the teacher or principal in front of the child. This will create an excellent contempt for authority at any level.
6. Later, when he has trouble with the police, which is most likely, bawl out the officer, or, better still, the Chief, being always sure to refer to the 'dumb cop.' This procedure will earn the child a diploma in contempt for authority.
7. When you are out driving with the family, exceed the local speed limit, but slow down when you see a police car. Be sure to speed up as soon as the police car is out of sight. This will show the child that the law is to be observed only if there is any danger of being caught.
8. If you are stopped by the police for speeding, and you are speeding, always deny flatly that you were exceeding the speed limit. Make a big fuss over it. Your child will then know that cheating and lying are acceptable procedures.
9. If you have managed to chisel a few dollars on your income tax, be sure and tell the family at the dinner table that night how smart you are. This should convince the youngsters that stealing is all right if you can get away with it.
10. Never check up on where your youngsters are in the evening. Never mind what time they get home. Never, never, try to learn

CHAPTER TWO — THE DISRUPTIVE YOUTH

*Children are the greatest
resource for the future.*

The first chapter gave you an idea of the possible causes of discipline problems. Now let's look at the specific problem: the disruptive youth.

The disruptive youth exhibits many kinds of behavior. To list them all would really be of no use to educators, but specific acts of disruptive behavior can be of benefit to all. Here are the most common disruptions:

1. Exhibits physical and verbal aggression toward classmates (fighting, instigation of arguments).
2. Exhibits verbal aggression toward teachers and other authority figures (profanity, negative names).
3. Refuses to cooperate in the classroom group activities.
4. Intentionally damages classroom materials.
5. Uses classroom materials to create disruptive sounds and noises. (25:9)

Obviously, every child will engage at one time or another in behavior which may fit one or more of the above categories. The important factor is recognizing the child who consistently commits these disruptive behaviors.

To determine if a student is considered a disruptive student, an index of the behavior should be kept. This index should be based on a unit of one week.

Here is an example of an index that can be kept on each child:

INDEX REPORTING OF DISRUPTIONS

Category	DAY					Total
	M	T	W	T	F	
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
TOTAL:						

(25:8)

The critical factors in the evaluation of the consistency index are:

1. The number of acts in a given category.
2. The total number of disruptive acts across categories.
3. The day of the week when disruptive acts reach their highest frequency. (25:9)

Effective use of the consistency index depends on the nature and number of behavioral standards imposed by the teacher on the class as a whole, with consideration on the individual student. For the index to become meaningful, the teacher will need to decide what behaviors will be tolerated in the classroom.

Disruptive behavior can be caused by the following:

1. Psychiatric illness.

2. Low academic level.
3. The degree to which a child is accepted socially by his peers.
4. Serious physical problems.
5. Poor nutritional status.
6. Physical conditions in the classroom.
7. Modeling behaviors observed at home.
8. Failure to provide remedial programs.

(25:12)

As one can see, there are many factors that can cause a child to disrupt.

A problem? Yes we have one. Too much time can be spent on the causes of discipline and little time on the solutions. The next chapters will deal with ways of solving our discipline problems that confront us everyday.

Let's find that SOLUTION!