

S.T.E.T.

Introduction

Systematic Training for Effective Teaching — STET — offers participants

- a practical theory of human behavior and misbehavior
- procedures for basing education on systematic encouragement
- skills for listening, responding, exploring alternatives, and resolving conflicts
- a workable system of discipline based on prevention and on natural and logical consequences
- an understanding of group dynamics, group leadership, and group procedures
- helpful approaches to students with special needs
- methods of involving parents in their children's education.

STET is designed primarily for inservice training groups. It can also be used in colleges of education. The program addresses teachers, teachers-to-be, aides, and anyone else interested in motivating and communicating with today's students.

STET provides an opportunity for teacher education and inservice training to proceed in a systematic and practical way within a school building. The sessions help improve communication among teachers and encourage teachers to become resources for each other. The STET group itself becomes a laboratory for the development of cohesiveness, cooperation, and conflict resolution.

What Is an Effective Teacher?

Today's teachers live and teach in an era of social equality. Their classrooms are filled with students for whom traditional ways of motivating and disciplining no longer work. Today's students are increasingly unwilling to cooperate with authoritarian teachers. Nor do students learn successfully in a permissive environment.

Many teachers were not trained to cope with the disciplinary and motivational problems they're confronting. Experienced or just beginning, teachers are searching for ways to promote learning. They want workable methods of communicating with students.

The *democratic* classroom is neither permissive nor autocratic. It emphasizes mutual respect and equality among all class members — including teachers. Students and teachers differ greatly in knowledge and experience, but they are equal in human worth and dignity. They both have responsibilities for creating an encouraging, stimulating classroom atmosphere.

In the democratic classroom, people make choices and accept the logical consequences of those choices. Cooperation replaces competition. Students and teachers work together to establish mutual goals based on individual and group needs. Self-discipline removes much of the necessity for external control.

The effective teacher in such a classroom works with students as they learn, rather than using power, rewards, and punishments to *make* students learn. The effective teacher becomes aware of personal beliefs

that can affect relationships with students and has the skills to communicate both with individuals and with groups.

Psychological Foundations of STET*

Discipline is most effective when it is central to learning, part of the educational process. Discipline in a democratic classroom needs to reflect the assumptions and guidelines of that classroom.

Effective discipline begins by recognizing the purposeful nature of misbehavior. As described by Dr. Rudolf Dreikurs (1968), students' misbehavior reflects one of four goals: attention, power, revenge, or display of inadequacy. The teacher who can identify the specific purpose of misbehavior can channel the student's goal toward more constructive behavior. Teachers no longer need to feel surrounded by meaningless behavior. They can use specific corrective measures for specific, goal-directed misbehavior.

Teachers can come to understand their own behavior also. Certain beliefs they hold may be hindering their relationships with students, beliefs such as "I must be in control," "I must be perfect," "Mistakes are dangerous." These beliefs can change as teachers come to realize what an effective teacher is and does.

Encouragement is the key to a successful classroom environment. When teachers consciously strive to find something to value and encourage in each student, relationships begin to improve. Students who feel accepted and valued as people, even if their behavior is occasionally unacceptable, are more inclined to cooperate than to misbehave.

Poor communication provokes many discipline problems. Some students believe they will only be noticed when they cause problems. Their misbehavior is best understood as a request or demand: "Pay attention to me" or "Try and make me!" Teachers who practice specific reflective listening skills can convince students their feelings are heard. Once heard, students may be more inclined to explore alternatives and resolve conflicts cooperatively. When teachers and students converse together instead of talking at each other, discipline problems can be solved.

Sometimes teachers must use specific corrective measures when students misbehave. Searching for stricter punishments and more attractive rewards seems fruitless; this autocratic approach to discipline, based on teachers' power and students' inferiority, is rarely successful. Instead, teachers can apply natural and logical consequences (Dreikurs, 1968), permitting students to experience the results of their misbehavior. Such consequences, devised by teachers and students together, encourage self-discipline and social interest.

The most important long-term human goal is belonging. All behavior has social meaning. Teachers who understand group dynamics and group leadership can work with instead of against their students. The group can play an important role in preventing and dealing with misbehavior.

The special communication and motivation skills presented in STET can be applied to students with special needs and to relationships with parents. Since the skills focus on observable human behavior, they can improve relationships with all the people — students with varying needs, other teachers, administrators, parents, community members — who populate a teacher's world.

*All the ideas described in this section receive detailed explanations in the teacher's handbook.