Part 2

Teaching Strategies to Promote Democracy and Multicultural Education

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Democracy and Classroom Management

Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled and fought for 5,000 years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental... The freedom to learn ... has been bought by bitter sacrifice. And whatever we may think of the curtailment of other civil rights, we should fight to the last ditch to keep open the right to learn, the right to have examined in our schools not only what we believe, but what we do not believe; not only what our leaders say, but what the leaders of other groups and nations, and the leaders of other centuries have said. We must insist upon this to give our children the fairness of a start which will equip them with such an array of facts and such an attitude toward truth that they can have a real chance to judge what the world is and what its greater minds have thought it might be.

Personal Safety

For many students, schools are not safe. Without a safe environment, it is difficult for teachers to teach and more difficult for students to learn. A report by the National Center for Education Statistics says, “In 1999, students ages 12 through 18 were victims of about 2.5 million total crimes at school. In the same year, these students were victims of about 186,000 serious violent crimes at school (that is rape, sexual assault, robbery and aggravated assault)” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). Such statistics illustrate in part a clear response to the loss of economic prosperity and political opportunity throughout U.S. society. Acts of violence and disruption have increased among working- and middle-class citizens. The economic stagnation and decline of the last 30 years for working people and the decline of effectiveness of schools in preparing cultural minority and working-class young people for economic success have substantially eroded teacher and school authority.

The United States has the highest homicide rate of any modern industrialized country. The number of youths placed in prisons has grown dramatically. Aspects of life in our society are teaching some young people and adults that violence and force are useful and practical instruments.

In the 1980s and 1990s, order declined in our society, particularly in urban areas. Middle school and high school students increasingly challenged the legitimacy of schools and the roles of teachers. Youth gangs became a major problem for schools, and gang members had more and more powerful weapons. Gangs are not only a problem for their members; as many as 28.6 percent of males and 6.0 percent of females report carrying weapons in the last month, usually, in their view, to protect themselves from the violence of others (Hechinger, 1992; NCES, 2001). Students were victims of 2.5 million crimes while they were at school, and these crimes were roughly evenly divided between males and females (NCES, 2001). An increasingly disorderly environment in many schools demoralized even the most dedicated students and teachers.

Increased racial and class divisions between teachers and the communities they serve isolate and divide teachers from effective family and neighborhood influence. Young people need schools and families working together to reduce violence. The increase in street crime parallels increased disruptions in school. Both are produced by the growth of poverty, marginal employment, and unemployment; and neither crime nor chaos in the schools can be cured by school practices alone (Jackson, 1993–1994; Miller, 1992).

During the 1990s some school districts and communities began to create programs to reverse the violence and to allow schools to return to their educational mission. An important part of regaining control is for schools to create caring and supportive relationships among students. A California report (Dear, 1995) states, “Severe acts of violence such as shootings, rape and assault are best handled by law enforcement and the criminal justice system. The school’s focus should be on basic academic development and, to a lesser extent, personal and social enhancement” (p. 2).
Although writing reports is valuable, actions speak louder than words. The city of Boston began to address the rise of youth violence in 1982 by forming collaboratives of neighborhood groups, social service organizations, police, and local agencies. By the 1990s, a network of organizations and social service groups working with the police were able to significantly reduce violence by 60 percent (Rivers, 1999). Violence can be reduced when people are willing to work at the problem.

**Developing Democracy in Schools**

James Banks, a leader in the field of multicultural education, argues (1997),

A fundamental premise of a democratic society is that citizens will participate in the governing of the nation and that the nation-state will reflect the hopes, dreams, and possibilities of its people. People are not born democrats. Consequently, an important goal of the schools in a democratic society is to help students acquire the knowledge, values, and skills needed to participate effectively in public communities. Educating students to be democrats is a challenge in any kind of society. It is a serious challenge in a society characterized by cultural, ethnic, racial, and language diversity, especially when these variables are used to privilege some individuals from some groups and to deny others equal opportunities to participate. (p. 1)

In Chapter 1 I argued that the promotion of democracy should be a central goal of schooling. Teachers should promote and cultivate democratic values. One way we promote democracy is to teach about civic responsibility, the electoral process, and the U.S. Constitution. A second way is to teach using social participation and service learning strategies: encouraging students to work with student government and local social service agencies, and on local issues and elections (see Chapter 7). A third way to promote democracy in the classroom is by developing in students a preference for fairness, justice, and mutual respect; these are issues of classroom management. A fourth way is to teach students to work together to resolve problems and to achieve goals (see Chapter 10). Such participatory teaching requires well-developed skills of management and coaching.

In Chapter 7 we defined empowerment as a goal for students and stressed the empowerment of students currently marginalized in our society. In this chapter I will argue that empowerment is often encouraged by creating a classroom environment of civility and is nurtured by the quality of relationships among students and teachers as well as by the themes, concepts, and strategies of the curriculum.

Democratic values are usually studied in the formal curriculum of history and the social studies. Our commitment to developing democracy derives from an ideology espoused by Thomas Jefferson, John Stuart Mill, John Dewey, and many others. We believe that democracy is good. Rule of law is superior to arbitrary power or rule by an elite. Teaching students to have a commitment to a common set of democratic values provides one of the main cohesive forces in our society. Developing democratic values and skills in young people is, along with teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic, a primary reason we build public schools.
Youth Culture

Schools need to respond to postmodern youth culture to help young people develop life-supporting community values. Documents such as the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development’s “Great Transitions: Preparing Adolescents for the 21st Century” (1995) offer a thoughtful perspective on contemporary youth culture.

Aspects of youth culture and popular culture in our society produce a crisis of meaning, purpose, and direction for many teens. The alienation of youth culture, and of marginalized cultural groups, is aggravated when students believe that the school and teachers do not care about them. (Valenzuela, p. 109)

The development of this youth culture has a significant impact on school attendance, classroom management, and discipline for younger students. Some young people see little reason to attend school. When at school, they often miss class or ignore instruction in the classes they do attend. Some students miss up to 20 classes per semester, making it difficult for their teachers to teach them and establish relationships with them.

Promoting Democratic Values

Teachers learn to promote democratic values, or promote obedience, or promote anarchy and destruction in their classrooms. Obedience is necessary; you cannot teach math or chemistry if you cannot get students to sit in their seats and to allow you to present information. But a reliance on force and obedience and compliance, particularly in urban schools, has led to a refusal to learn and disruption on the part of many students. Schools are microcommunities, where students learn how real-world communities both do work and should work. Think of the schools you have visited. Do they present positive, goal-oriented introductions to the emerging economy and society; or dreary, policed, control-oriented negative views of the students’ own future? Teachers need to develop strategies and use management techniques to teach democracy, tolerance, respect, and human dignity.

Students and teachers promote a democratic community when they develop an inclusive classroom and school environment, one where all students can participate with fairness and justice. We promote democracy when students learn to work together, to respect one another, and to resolve conflicts and achieve community goals. These vital lessons are taught in the day-to-day management of each classroom as well as on sports fields and in student government. Where these lessons are not learned, schools become dreary warehouses, and teachers spend most of their time managing and controlling young people, rather than teaching them.

Classroom management is necessary for schools to function. By redirecting management toward democracy and empowerment, strong-sense multicultural education promotes a very clear set of values, ones concerned with fairness and justice for all.

Instead of using force and threats of force, we need to develop school societies where democracy is nourished (O’Neil, 1997). Such positive school societies
nurture the democratic ethos of community-building. Students in safe schools learn to prefer democratic values of justice and fairness because they live with these values in school. For example, the curriculum in such schools offers students opportunities to reflect on their values and behavior, and teaches them to think critically (see Chapter 9).

To better serve alienated and marginalized students, schools must formally teach democracy and fairness as a part of the curriculum. Schools should be places where children experience safety, trust, and respect. When gangs operate as terrorists, and when the police serve as a virtual occupation force, young people seldom learn to respect the law or to respect each other. Life is teaching them violence and revenge, while schools are preaching about respect. In our current society, many schools must contend with the increased violence, alienation, and disruption of street culture.

Too often, schools in marginalized and oppressed areas have too many new teachers and too many teachers on “emergency” credentials who are just learning classroom management. New teachers tend to respond to discipline crises either by withdrawing or by resorting to force and control. More than 80 percent of new teachers are European Americans, and many, not having studied multicultural education, harbor unfortunate misunderstandings and stereotypes about student behavior. Some of these teachers even fear their own students.

The use of coercive power may serve to control a class for a few hours, but it will not teach democratic values. Coercive power will allow teachers to survive day to day but leads directly to overlarge numbers of new teachers quitting the profession within the first three years (Riley, 1998).

Some school districts assist new teachers by having mentor teachers and local school experts show them how to manage classrooms. But teachers need both to develop a management system and to promote students’ democratic empowerment, particularly for students of cultural and linguistic minority groups. They need to develop consistent, respectful relationships with students in order to help them learn.

Democratic values are not promoted by only presenting social studies lessons about democracy. We must also construct the school environment to teach the important values of mutual respect and tolerance for differences. It is difficult for a single teacher to create a democratic community in a school. Teachers must work together.

In this chapter, we will explore classroom management styles that permit schools to function and teachers to teach. Teachers, even new teachers, have the power of adult expertise and must learn to manage their classrooms so that students are safe, and are willing and able to learn.

A Safe and Orderly Environment

Children learn best in a safe and orderly environment. Research on “effective schools,” common sense, and teacher experience indicate the need for a reasonable and supportive classroom environment. Both teachers and students need order in the classroom (Goodlad, 1984). Teachers want order to encourage learning. Excessive disciplining and lack of classroom order cause extensive waste of teaching time
and learning time. Violence and intergroup conflict, combined with academic failure and the many problems of young people, deny many students a classroom environment that supports learning (National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1991).

When teachers are unable to create a positive atmosphere, when they fail in their attempts to productively manage their classroom, students lose instructional time. Most off-task student behavior is not dangerous, confrontational, or violent, but it is a frustrating waste of academic learning time. Students who are off-task tend to become disruptive. The disruptions are cumulative, in that talking and other inappropriate behavior spread from student to student. Students who are off-task learn less and fail more. In many neighborhood schools in poverty areas, a cycle develops of off-task behavior leading to failure, failure leading to discouragement, and discouragement providing a further incentive to get off-task.

Constant discipline and management problems frustrate and discourage teachers. Teachers prefer to teach, but classroom conditions require them to manage disruptive behavior. They pay a price in lower self-esteem and less professional satisfaction. For many teachers in difficult schools, the price soon becomes intolerable: some transfer, some quit, some give in to student pressure, demanding little and expecting even less.

Acquiring the skills of effective classroom management takes first priority for most new teachers. These skills are best acquired in a public school classroom with supportive supervision; they are difficult to learn in a college classroom. When cultural differences and class differences divide teacher and students, or when cultural and ethnic conflict is common among students, conflict resolution and management skills become even more necessary.

When new teachers fail, they fail more often in their attempts to produce classroom control and motivation than in instruction. This chapter will provide you with detailed and specific ideas for establishing and maintaining positive, democratic classroom management. The principles and goals of democratic classroom management have long been accepted, but classroom practice suffers from frequent conflict and failure. Too many teachers, particularly new teachers, struggle and are frustrated in their futile attempts to control students, particularly in schools in marginalized neighborhoods. Disruptive and rebellious students demand so much of the teacher's time and energy that little remains for teaching. Teachers can reduce discipline problems and design their classrooms for better democratic control by (a) creating a positive classroom environment, (b) promoting student choice, (c) promoting on-task behavior, and (d) promoting positive teacher–student communications. We discuss these concepts throughout the following sections.

Reducing Discipline Problems

You probably chose to enter teaching to make positive contributions to students' lives—not to control unruly kids. But when teachers fail to achieve classroom control—and new teachers fail often—a common response is to seek more power,
more control. A major problem in this struggle is that teachers—and future teachers—have a great deal of experience with authoritarian practices and very little with democratic alternatives. They soon discover that their efforts to gain more control through power strategies fail. Endless power struggles exhaust them and remove much of their motivation for teaching. Teachers and students alike pay an enormous price in lost instructional time and damaged self-esteem.

To reverse this unwelcome state of affairs, democratic teachers learn strategies that promote learning and deal effectively with disruptive students. One way to begin effective classroom management and reduce discipline problems is by creating a positive classroom environment in which students feel safe and secure.

**Beyond Rewards and Punishment**

The behavior management systems of Fred Jones, Lee Canter, and others may serve a useful purpose to get control of an unruly class. At times, teachers may need to use these techniques (see “A Guide for New Teachers” later in this chapter). However, once control and reasonable rules have been established, teachers should move on to systems that teach students democracy, empowerment, and how to accept responsibility for their own conduct.

Teachers should decide on their own orientation toward class management by reflecting on their core values as they apply in the specific neighborhood in which they teach. Throughout this book, I argue that a central value of schools should be to promote democratic behavior and responsibility. Democracy is not anarchy. Nor is it a laissez-faire approach. Democracy includes the development of a series of fair rules and a respect for the rights of all members of the classroom. In a democracy, citizens (the students) participate in setting up the rules within the limits established by a social contract or a constitution (school policy). Then students are made responsible for keeping their own rules and for complying with reasonable class norms. Teachers and the students need to work together to establish norms for acceptable behavior, to encourage respect for all, and to develop sanctions for those who do not cooperate.

**Creating a Positive Classroom Environment**

**Choose Instructional Strategies That Encourage Success**

One thing successful teachers do to create a positive environment is to choose instructional strategies that help students to feel confident. Students need to believe that they are acquiring important information and skills. Success builds confidence, whereas failure produces anxiety and hopelessness. The environment and the curriculum should produce success.

You can ensure the success of instructional strategies by selecting quality curricula and demonstrating to students the value and usefulness of the subjects they are studying. An interesting, culturally relevant curriculum assists class management, whereas a boring curriculum invites students to respond with boredom, indifference, and disruption.
Communicate a Belief in Students' Ability to Succeed

Students need to be convinced that they can succeed. You can plan and teach this vital lesson. Students who have poorly developed study skills frequently encounter a failure-filled, tense, anxious environment. Unfortunately, experience has taught many teachers to have low expectations, to accept the failure of poor and minority children as normal. But failure seldom helps to achieve instructional objectives with young people. Failure produces tension and anxiety and interferes with learning. Currently popular proposals to end "social promotion" fail to offer an alternative to persistent failure.

Give Positive Feedback to Students

When classrooms are chaotic, full of tension and conflict, and students are fearful that teachers will respond to them with insults, the classroom is not a safe environment. Young people who fear sarcasm and demeaning comments from teachers or other students respond with anxiety and frustration. Arbitrary enforcement or settlements imposed by power and bullying do not promote democracy. Such classrooms produce failure for both students and teachers.

Communicating positive feedback to students, however, helps both you and your students. You, as the teacher, need to maintain a positive attitude. The school may be underfunded and the school administration less than helpful, but that is usually not the students' fault. Students need confirmation that you are there to help them succeed and receive feedback on how to succeed. When their needs for success are being met, they are less likely to be abusive and critical of other students. When a positive environment is created, you have fewer discipline problems and can spend more time on actual instruction.

Your task then is to learn to create a positive, productive environment that enhances the lives of both you and your students. Democratic teachers set up structures and systems that guide students toward positive interpersonal behavior and toward appropriate school behavior.

Arbitrary power and control will not teach democratic lifestyles and will not achieve a positive environment. You need to recruit students and encourage them to cooperate in creating a positive classroom environment.

Promoting Student Choice

Free and responsible choice is at the heart of democratic behavior. Students learn to make responsible choices, or they learn to comply, or they learn to resist. The emphasis in your classroom is significantly up to you. While some mistakenly believe that they enter teaching only to instruct students in math or biology, such a limited view of the teacher's role seldom leads to success. Teachers must also help students learn democratic behavior by assisting them to make responsible choices.

Not all issues in school are subject to choice. For example, students may not choose to disrupt your class without consequence. But they may choose to either
work cooperatively in class or leave. And you, the teacher, may choose to help them learn constructive behavior or to subject them to the school disciplinary system.

Problems and conflicts occur daily in school. Problems provide teachers with opportunities to instruct students in responsibility. They provide opportunities to teach pro-democratic behaviors. Whenever possible, convert the problem into a choice situation, instead of suppressing or trying to control the conflict or allowing a power struggle to develop.

For example, student A hits student B. Student B must choose whether to respond, to walk away, or to move on to conflict resolution. Through role play and discussion, students can learn to evaluate a conflict or violent situation and to make their own choices, including choosing safety for themselves and others. Students should learn decision-making and leadership skills to direct conflicts toward nonviolent resolutions. There are a number of available curriculum packages for teaching nonviolent conflict resolution (see the section on conflict resolution in Chapter 6).

Teachers assist students by making their choices conscious. Students need to be aware of the choices they are making. Discussion of conflict and choice should be a part of your curriculum. Such study can actually save class time for academic subjects. You can create and examine scenarios and practice alternative responses. Such practice can assist students to deal with violence in the school or neighborhood. Students are empowered when they have thought through in advance potentially violent situations.

Students can engage in planning and creating a safe school or a safe classroom environment. You can encourage your students to take leadership roles in decision-making by advocating school policies that lead to mutual respect and democracy.

Lessons and discussions are appropriate on self-control, setting boundaries, and impulse or anger management. Lessons are helpful on self-determination and recognizing those realms in which students have decision-making responsibilities. For example, if a student initiates a conflict, you can take her aside and explain, “You have a choice. You may choose to cooperate in this class, or you may choose to disrupt it. If you insist on obstructing class, I will ask you to leave.” Responding to conflict by providing choices opens opportunities for coaching (discussed later in this chapter).

Particularly after the primary grades, students need to learn to take ownership of their own behavior. Self-evaluation and self-regulation are far superior to teacher control. Counseling theory provides you with a powerful instrument in the understanding that you usually cannot change a student or force him to change. You may force compliance, but this is usually temporary and requires a great deal of your effort to maintain. Forced compliance, at times necessary for the safety of others, seldom leads to learning responsible, democratic behavior.

You can, however, provide powerful assistance to help students to change when they want to change. You can encourage change through coaching and through maintaining a safe, democratic environment, helping students to make responsible
choices. You gain additional influence by making contact with students’ homes. Teachers and parents need to work together to guide young people. Unless home and school can learn to work together, the urban education crisis will continue (Children’s Defense Fund, 1997; Meier, 1995). Your curriculum should include opportunities for students to actively work toward making their own community and school safe and productive places. This may include parental and/or community engagement projects and volunteering with community service agencies (see Chapter 7).

Promoting On-Task Behavior

Positive use of classroom time is an important issue. Students waste a great deal of time. Researchers have reported that they are off-task, not studying, and not learning up to 50 percent of the time (Charles, 1989; Costa, 1985; Squires, Huit, & Segars, 1983). Older students are often off-task because they believe that what they are being asked to study is boring or irrelevant to their lives. Teachers promote on-task behavior by demonstrating the relevance of lessons to students.

Demonstrate the Relevance of Lessons to Students

Effective teachers use a variety of instructional strategies that engage students in active learning. One way you can show students how schoolwork relates to their lives is by allowing some student choice and choosing student-centered projects. You may find excellent ideas for student-centered educational projects in It’s Our World, Too! Stories of Young People Who Are Making a Difference (Hoose, 1993) and in Open Minds to Equality (Schmiedewind & Davidson, 1998). At other times you will need to teach the approved curriculum and teach to state or district standards (see Chapter 12). A well-informed teacher who is a cultural mediator will use a variety of strategies and emphasize those elements of the standard curriculum that have practical or current relevance to students.

Use Positive, Managed Intervention Strategies

Teachers need to learn skills to assist students to stay on task and to pursue goals. Effective teachers plan for and manage potential conflicts and discipline problems before they even arise. Positive classroom management keeps students working on interesting, useful, and rewarding tasks.

In the elementary grades, when students are off-task, effective teachers intervene early and frequently to call on students to return to the learning task. In grades 4 through 8, early interventions produce success and can be employed with low levels of power, thus avoiding failure and confrontation.

Some teachers respond to off-task behavior by becoming more authoritarian and more aggressive toward students. Their efforts may achieve control, but authoritarian action interferes with efforts to provide the safe and supportive environment students need for success. Often, aggressive teacher behavior is self-defeating because
it produces more control problems, exhausts teachers, and interferes with productive learning—a cycle of frustration, failure, and repression. For many students during adolescence, constant power struggles between student and teacher disrupt the learning environment and encourage more off-task behavior, even for those students interested in learning.

Frequent, low-level, managed intervention provides an alternative. Teachers learn to use eye contact, body language, physical proximity, facial expression, and gestures to structure and manage the class and keep everyone on-task. This strategy combines commonsense teaching practices with rewards. Reward students for increased on-task learning time by giving them planned leisure and recreation time. Interventions can be effective and nondisruptive, encouraging students to return to the task at hand. Once classroom order is established, and at least by sixth grade, democratic management systems should be used.

Try Task Analysis
Your management task is primarily to establish a working system in the classroom for students and groups of students to learn. Rules, procedures, and routines are each important. Task analysis permits teachers to select rules and procedures and to design a positive environment to assist students to succeed. For example, numerous studies have demonstrated that cooperative learning is a helpful strategy, particularly for African American, Latino, and Native American children (E. Garcia, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994b). Both children and adults need instruction in how to work cooperatively. As teachers begin to use cooperative learning, they must teach the skills necessary for cooperative work (see Chapter 10).

Task analysis separates the skills of cooperative work into several teachable, learnable sets. For example, essential skills for a fourth- to eighth-grade class might include moving chairs, selecting persons for roles (e.g., monitor, checker, encourager), staying on the subject, listening to one another, taking turns, and supporting the authority of a student leader. Each of these skills is isolated, taught, practiced, and evaluated to improve the quality of cooperative work and classroom relationships.

Direct Instruction
Madeline Hunter of UCLA developed a process known as direct instruction that is useful and effective in teaching students new behaviors (Hunter, 1982). The format works well both for behavior issues and for introducing new concepts in lessons. Direct instruction is most appropriate when teaching clear, identifiable behavior or a specific concept and is far more effective than criticizing and punishing students for inappropriate behavior.

To use direct instruction, you would first identify the specific behavior you want to change. For example, you might want all students in their seats when class begins, or want students to raise their hands before talking. You would then plan lessons on the behavior. Dr. Hunter has developed a sequential series of steps for
Figure 8.1 Direct Instruction

1. **Anticipatory set.** Get students’ attention to the subject. Start with an example from their own lives, or an example of the problem that just occurred.

2. **Explanation.** Explain the lesson objective clearly. Tell students what they are going to learn and why it is important.

3. **Input.** Give students more information on the task. Explain why it is important for everyone to raise their hands before speaking. Explain the consequences of not establishing rules for polite discourse.

4. **Modeling.** Demonstrate, or have students demonstrate, the actual behavior you are trying to teach. It is essential that students see the actual behavior, not just talk about it.

5. **Check for understanding.** Ask students to explain the reasons for establishing the behavior. Perhaps have two or three students explain or model the behavior.

6. **Guided practice.** Have students actually practice the behavior. For example, several students could simultaneously attempt to answer a question you pose. You may want to repeat this practice two or three times.

7. **Independent practice.** Monitor and comment on the behavior for the next several days. If there are any problems, return to step 4 and repeat the process.

8. **Closure.** Summarize the lesson. Review its importance. Thank students for their participation.

direct instruction. Figure 8.1 illustrates Dr. Hunter’s steps applied to the issue of students raising their hands before talking.

**Promoting Positive Teacher-Student Communications**

Teacher behavior either contributes to or detracts from the building of a positive classroom environment. Studies indicate that the average teacher uses negative comments and commands much more often than positive comments. Positive communications strategies are important at all levels. They become increasingly important during adolescence. Violence and domination teach violence and domination, whereas respect teaches respect. Good teachers contribute to a positive environment by practicing positive comments that guide and structure student behavior (see Figure 8.2).

**Learn to Describe Positive Behavior**

Successful teachers learn to describe positive behavior. Consistent repetition of positive directions guides most students to respond without increasing defensiveness. Such repetition directs student behavior and lowers the anxiety and frustration levels
in the classroom. Teachers often produce success through encouragement and cooperation.

Redirect Students’ Nonhelpful Behavior
Effective teachers practice the skill of redirecting students from nonhelpful to helpful behavior by clearly describing precisely how to perform a task. Primary teachers often model the task rather than rely on oral instructions. In grades 4 through 8, role-playing and physical practice of a task reduce the need for criticism. A clear explanation of how to perform a task provides students with a positive alternative to criticism. Teachers who overrely on criticism and correction attack students’ self-esteem and make them feel hostile, defeated, alienated, or self-doubting. Because defeat and criticism only rarely lead to intensified effort, it is best to avoid strategies built on negative responses.

Give Clear Directions
Teachers frequently need to give instructions and commands on how to perform tasks. Giving clear, brief instructions provides a structure within which students can succeed. When a few students do not carry out the instruction, repeating the command is often more effective than criticizing them (e.g., say simply, “Open your books now. Please open your books to page 45.”).

Giving clear, appropriate instructions is essential to managing your class. But when instructions are demeaning or issued in an attacking manner, they become criticism and students receive them defensively. Of course, in real classrooms, you occasionally will need to criticize. It often helps to explain your reasoning when critiquing a student’s response. Effective teachers try to call students’ attention to the purpose behind the instructions. When it is evident that you give your instructions out of concern for the welfare of the class, even criticism can be heard in safety and can lead to positive student behavior. For example, saying, “Please stop talking, I want to go on with the lesson,” works better than saying only, “Please stop talking.”

Use a Supportive, Encouraging Speaking Style
Democratic teachers seek to give instructions, even commands, without using an aggressive or dominating style. They seek to replace divisive and demeaning communication with encouraging students to cooperate and support one another. Positive communication contributes to the positive social climate in the classroom necessary to promote personal and social growth.
For students beyond grade 6, feedback—or constructive direction—is a useful instructional strategy. The following guidelines promote positive, nurturing communication:

1. Concentrate on criticizing the act or the idea—not the person. Personalizing criticism is worse than useless because it interferes with the possibility of future positive communication.

2. Practice giving feedback and correction when the action occurs and then move on. Repeatedly reminding students of past offenses (nagging) frustrates both teachers and students. No one can change the past. Students cannot undo past mistakes. Concentrate on the present and the future.

3. Feedback and correction should be as specific and concrete as possible. Telling students to be respectful or to behave does not provide the information they need to change their behavior. The best feedback tells students precisely what they can begin doing correctly rather than offering negative evaluations of what they have done.

4. Labeling students and using sarcasm are not helpful. They seldom contribute to behavioral change or instruction.

5. Encouragement always works better than criticism because it helps students to build self-esteem.

Classroom management systems enable teachers to design student success. Unfortunately, not all students will respond to a positive environment. Prior school and home experiences may have taught some students to disrupt and to resist learning.

For students from low-status cultural groups experiencing cultural conflict in schools, the intensity of criticism can reinforce a desire to withdraw from participation and to flee school. Others resist even reasonable school norms. Teenagers frequently experience conflict, self-doubt, and lack of confidence. Teachers and other students overusing negative messages alienates and divorces some students from schooling.

Respect Students

Young people can be cruel and critical of each other. It is a mistake for the adults in a school to enter into the teenage culture of putdowns and sarcasm (Kagan, 1986). Even when a specific student appears arrogant or overconfident, public sarcasm is damaging, because it intimidates and injures other students. Although students may have developed apparent defenses against sarcasm from other students, too much criticism from teachers can be devastating. The consistent application of positive communication helps students develop a positive attitude. Respecting students encourages them to internalize new values supportive of civility and of classroom instruction.

Schools were established to instruct youth in information, values, and skills. The teacher has a right and a responsibility to establish a positive classroom atmosphere. Students do not have a right to be disruptive or disrespectful. The school and the
classroom need clear, reasonable parameters of appropriate behavior, and effective teachers enforce the rules. Democratic behavior can best be encouraged within a safe environment. When teachers and the school administration fail to consistently enforce a positive, appropriate, fair structure of discipline, peer group pressures will disrupt the school. Young people deserve and need adults in charge who will establish and maintain reasonable standards of school-appropriate behavior (see Figure 8.5).

**Isolate Disruptive School Groups and Provide Appropriate Intervention**

Classes tend to have several student-centered groups, some supportive of instruction and a positive school climate, others disruptive. By the middle grades (6 through 8), most students will want to belong to a group. Peer-group influences become increasingly important. If peer-group behavior is positive and supports instruction, most new students will accommodate the group. A major teaching task is to establish a positive, productive atmosphere and then to encourage and recruit the majority of the students to cooperate.

By the teenage years, peer-group and gang pressures can dominate a class. Teachers who encounter difficulties with gang members in classes should seek
support and additional resources from the school administration and from parent
groups.

Individual teachers cannot resolve problems of gangs, resistance, drugs, and vio-
ience. In fact, the isolation of teachers from each other and from parents encourages
and supports gang behavior in schools. Student groups dedicated to disruptive
behavior must first be isolated from influence and then redirected with strong inter-
vention systems, including the police, if necessary.

Reteach Appropriate School Behaviors if Necessary

Young students often need to be taught appropriate behavior. Even adolescents at
times need to be retaught basic interpersonal skills, such as talking to others without
making “putdowns.” You identify and teach the skills of positive behavior just as you
would teach the skill of writing a sentence. If you want students to move from a
large group into smaller groups, clear directions and rehearsing will help students
learn the skills involved. In the primary and intermediate grades, practicing class-
appropriate behavior helps students to belong within a positive group and to partici-
pate in creating a positive environment. In middle schools and secondary
classrooms, you need clear instruction and practice time early in each semester to
establish the appropriate behavior for your class.

Provide time for teaching, practicing, and evaluating of social skills. Make teach-
ing school-appropriate behavior a part of your curriculum. It will save you time for
instruction. You and your students will experience success from teaching and practic-
ing appropriate behavior. Instruction and practice lead to change. Management
and punishment lead to control that is always temporary.

Major, lasting changes in student behavior occur slowly. Disruptive behavior in
class may be the result of years of experience in school and at home. Producing
major changes in classroom behavior for some difficult students often requires
months and supplementary counseling resources.

Extending the Teacher's Influence Through Coaching

Our society has become increasingly depersonalized in the modern era. Many chil-
dren have less positive supervision by parents. Some disruptive children literally
need more parenting. In our troubled society, many students need guides, coaches,
and counselors.

Coaching and conferencing extend teachers’ influence in managing the class-
room. Successful democratic teachers use conferencing and coaching with those
students who continue disruptive and off-task behaviors. Coaching strategies pro-
vide monitoring, advising, and instruction particularly important to students in the
middle grades (6 through 8), as well as in high school. Students need positive, adult
interaction and interventions in school. Setting up coaching and advising sessions
helps teachers to guide classroom behavior and build important connections
between students and the school (Comer, 1988).
Teachers plan and implement coaching processes with students when weeks of instruction and reinforcement in cooperative behavior has not worked. Just as planning improves instructional delivery in math, science, and the social studies, systematic planning of coaching will improve most students' behaviors, and eventually, their attitudes.

Effective teachers need an intervention system to redirect disruptive students toward prosocial and constructive classroom behavior. A counseling and coaching strategy provides such a system. The system of individual psychology, as developed by Alfred Adler, Rudolph Dreikurs, and subsequent researchers, provides an effective democratic approach for helping students to move away from disturbing and destructive school behavior.

A Theory of Antisocial Student Behavior

The Dreikurs system (Dreikurs, Greenwald, & Pepper, 1998; Dreikurs & Stoltz, 1964) proposes a theory of how students learn their worldviews and role behavior and assists in developing an intervention system.

Martinez (1978) describes the theory of Adlerian psychology and of Dreikurs intervention systems as follows:

From infancy, the individual begins to formulate a cognitive representation, a picture of himself/herself, the world, and the individual's place in that world. This view is like a multi-dimensional puzzle with many sides and levels. The child perceives pieces of data and like a puzzle, he/she puts the pieces into some kind of picture (world view). This picture becomes a map which gives direction and purpose to the child's life. Children observe the environment, evaluate it, and arrive at conclusions about themselves, their worth, their potency, and their place in the environment. They decide on a view of what the world demands of them and how they can acquire a sense of belonging to or a sense of being part of that world. The family is the first social group the child encounters. (p. 59)

Martinez quotes Mosak and Dreikurs (1973) to say that through the child's interaction with the family,

[each child] stakes out for himself a piece of territory which includes the attributes of abilities that he hopes will give him a feeling of belonging, a feeling of having a place. If, through his evaluation of his own potency (abilities, courage and confidence), he is convinced that he can achieve this place through useful endeavors, he will pursue the useful side of life. Should he feel that he cannot attain the goal of having a place in this fashion, he will become a discouraged child and engage in disturbed or disturbing behavior in his effort to find a place. For the Adlerian, the "maladjusted" child is not a "sick" child, he is a "discouraged" child. Dreikurs classifies the goals of the discouraged child into four groups: attention-getting, power-seeking, revenge-taking, and declaring deficiency or defeat. It should be emphasized that Dreikurs is speaking of immediate, rather than long-range goals. These are the goals of children's "misbehavior," not of all child behavior. (Quoted in Martinez, 1978, p. 117)

Life, like culture, is dynamic rather than static. The world around children is continually changing, and they are changing. Children are continually confronted with
new information. Some new data agree with their existing worldviews. Other new information conflicts.

Conflicting information presents the recipient with two alternatives. She can incorporate it in her worldview in place of old information, and thus alter her view of the role she is playing in the classroom. Or she may reject or distort the new information so that it appears consistent with her existing self-image.

Worldviews and views of self serve as cognitive maps, guiding students in their actions. Immaturity, perceptual biases, distortions, and incomplete data make students' worldviews incomplete, but they appear adequate to their holders.

Students behave based on their worldviews and their perceptions of reality. A student's cognitive map and worldview guide her in comprehending new information. These perceptions are culturally influenced and largely subconscious. Students are aware of their behavior but usually unaware of its underlying worldview, cultural frame of reference, perceptual set, and motivation.

In his helpful guide to teachers and counselors, Martinez (1978) says that, as students move through life toward adulthood, they encounter three major tasks posed by society. Students must face social life and the necessity of achieving: (a) cooperative social adjustment, (b) defined work roles, and (c) sex roles. Mosak and Dreikurs (1975), important contributors to Adlerian theory, argue as follows:

Since man must live among his fellow man, the individual must come to realize that we live life together, and are responsible for each other. To the extent that the individual assumes this responsibility, he becomes socially contributive, interested in the common welfare. Secondly, the individual must define his sex roles, partly on the basis of cultural definition and stereotypes. He must learn to relate to the other sex, not as the opposite sex, for other people of the opposite sex do not represent the enemy, but rather they are his fellows with whom he must learn to cooperate. Third, since no man can claim self-sufficiency, we are interdependent and division of labor becomes a life requirement. Each of us is dependent upon our contribution. Work, thus, becomes essential for human survival. (Quoted in Martinez, 1978, p. 118)

Dreikurs (1998) argues that when teachers share these assumptions, they respond to disruptive students as if the students are discouraged. Children's prior life in and out of school may not have provided them with either the strategies for successful classroom behavior or the motivation to succeed. Prior experience has taught them to pursue short-term self-interest, such as attention-getting through disruption or fighting. Children need to learn to pursue their own long-term self-interest by contributing to a positive social environment where they can experience support and success.

Class Meetings

Teachers using the democratic recommendations of Alfred Adler (1870–1957) and of Dreikurs (1897–1972) and Stoltz (1964) have developed classroom meetings as an important aspect of problem-solving to improve behavior. Democratic teachers
provide leadership and structure to assist students in taking responsibility for resolving some class problems.

Students as young as first graders are taught to clearly identify the problem-causing disruption. In many classrooms, from grades 1 through 8, students set an agenda for the next classroom meeting by listing a problem behavior on an agenda sheet. At a specified time of the day or week, a classroom meeting is called. Classroom meetings work best when students have been prepared in cooperative learning skills (discussed in Chapter 10). The teacher and students together examine the problem behavior, and the students work together to suggest potential solutions. The teacher provides a structure for the meeting by insisting that all solutions must be reasonable, related, and respectful. Suggesting solutions does not resolve problems; students need to agree on the nature of the problem, and they need to agree on the solution.

Class meetings are useful at all grade levels, although rules for conducting them should change based on students' maturity. Typical rules for grades 1 through 4 include to give compliments as meeting starters, to use the agenda to keep focused on the problems, and to identify logical consequences for misbehavior rather than punishment (see Figure 8.4).

Classroom meetings work particularly well above grade 4 when combined with training teams of students in mediation and conflict resolution (Tennessee Education Association & Appalachian Educational Laboratory, 1993). (See Chapter 6.) Meetings alone will not resolve all conflicts in the classroom. When combined with an empowerment curriculum that encourages students to belong, to work cooperatively in groups, to be successful, and to be effective, problem-solving classroom meetings are very effective in improving classroom behavior, encouraging students to develop democratic behavior, and getting students to accept responsibility for their own actions.

Perhaps as a consequence of John Dewey's strong influence of educational theory, most teachers want to assist students in practicing democratic behavior even

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**Figure 8.4 Sample Problem-Solving Scenario**

The students in Mrs. G's fourth-grade class have practiced classroom meetings. They know the rules and the skills to facilitate conflict resolution. Mary places Heather's name on the agenda for the next meeting. At meeting time, the students sit in a circle. Mrs. G serves as a facilitator. She asks Mary to explain the issue. Mary says that Heather constantly calls her a "dirty Mexican." She wants the name-calling stopped.

Several classmates confirm that they have heard this name-calling. The class discusses name-calling and stereotypes. They decide that children often repeat what they hear from adults. But at school, all children deserve respect. The teacher guides the children in role-playing name-calling events to clarify the issues.

After a time, the subject changes to consequences.
though they frequently do not know how to advocate for these positions. In classroom meetings, strategies for empowerment and for cooperative learning combine to provide teachers with powerful strategies for encouraging democratic behavior.

Coaching Using Dreikurs's Ideas

Classroom meetings use the powerful motivations of group cohesion and group belonging to encourage students to learn cooperation, but some students will resist. Many individual students have strong desires to disrupt or to seek control of the classroom agenda. These powerful drives at times are too complex to simply turn the problem over to a problem-solving group; coaching and conferencing are additional strategies for you as a democratic teacher.

Even though students frequently bring enormous conflicts from their home and peer lives into school, your first task is to redirect their behavior to help them succeed and to function effectively in the classroom. Set up a coaching/counseling session to redirect the behavior of consistently disruptive students. The coaching-counseling relationship will encourage them to learn the motivation and strategies necessary to operate positively within your classroom environment.

Harried student teachers may quickly protest that they do not have the time or skills to arrange for counseling and coaching. Only a few urban schools have adequate counseling and support resources. Several leading educators advocate that teachers deserve substantial additional support and assistance to deal with the several children per class who are potentially disruptive, particularly in communities suffering a high degree of economic and social stress (Comer, 1997; O’Neil, 1997).

But, in the face of few resources, teachers have little choice. They must respond. The continued use of power and force for discipline does not resolve conflicts. Power only temporarily suppresses students’ disruptive behavior. The conflicts will emerge or explode at other times when teachers will be unprepared to manage the problems. If teachers do not develop effective response systems, such as coaching, students will continue to disrupt their classrooms.

As a teacher-coach, you first schedule a meeting with a disruptive student to analyze the problem and to plan for behavioral change. Initiate a positive, therapeutic relationship so that your coaching process can move forward. Typically, you and the student can agree on some fundamentals. You are in charge of the class. Disruptive behavior is not acceptable. You want to set up a system in which the student is not disruptive. After clearly explaining these fundamentals, analyze together the specific behavioral problem displayed in class and attempt to identify the problem’s relationship to the student’s own goals.

When you have established a safe relationship and a clear goal for coaching, the student can openly examine his behavior and select alternatives that will help him belong positively to the class. Work together with the student to give up the disruptive behavior and practice appropriate behavior. Successful coaching often requires a number of sessions to help a student gain a more positive and productive control
Figure 8.5  When a Disruption Occurs

1. Talk to the student privately.
2. Remove the student from the scene.
3. Establish a coaching relationship.
4. Teach the appropriate behavior rather than punish inappropriate behavior.
5. Have the student practice the behavior.
6. Contact the parents. Ask for their assistance.

over his classroom behavior. Detailed analysis and practice of each step help you direct most students toward constructive behavior (see Figure 8.5).

In our violence-prone society, teachers will encounter a few students who, as a result of a dysfunctional family life, drug abuse, or similar trauma, refuse to permit the classroom to function. The school administrator must provide alternative resource classrooms or other resources for such students. Teachers seldom have the time or skills for therapy, but they can advocate for and demand additional staff with appropriate skills.

When children in elementary school are taught self-direction and social cooperation skills, they improve school achievement and develop strong self-esteem. By 10 to 12 years of age, disruptive behavior may become a way of school life, and ever more sophisticated and powerful intervention systems are needed. Fortunately, older students can conceptualize, discuss, and relearn school-appropriate behavior. Respect and safety cannot be assumed, they must be taught.

The Work of James P. Comer

James P. Comer (2001) has developed a psychotherapeutic perspective to assist educators in creating nourishing and safe environments for schools and communities. Such a community-building approach, while beneficial for any school, is particularly important for schools in disenfranchised and marginalized communities.

The failure of schools to attend to safety problems and teach positive social behavior is quite expensive, leading eventually to students leaving school and often entering the far more expensive criminal justice system.

Comer argues (2001),

Given the purpose of education—to prepare students to become successful workers, family members, and citizens in a democratic society—-even many “good” traditional schools, as measured by high test scores, are not doing their job adequately. But test scores alone are too narrow a measure. A good education should help students to solve problems encountered at work and in personal relationships, to take on the responsibility of caring for themselves and their families, to get along well in a variety of life settings, and to be
motivated, contributing members of a democratic society. Such learning requires conditions that promote positive child-and-youth development.

Children begin to develop and learn through their first interactions with their consistent caretakers. And the eventual learning of basic academic skills—reading, writing, mathematics—and development are inextricably linked. Indeed, learning is an aspect of development and simultaneously facilitates it. Basic academic skills grow out of the fertile soil of overall development; they provide the platform for higher-order learning.

Working with the Rockefeller Foundation, Comer schools have demonstrated the value of schools and families working together, even in some of the most depressed neighborhoods.

People at school can then influence children's development in ways similar to competent parents. To be successful, schools must create the conditions that make good development and learning possible: positive and powerful social and academic interactions between students and staff. When this happens, students gain social and academic competence, confidence, and comfort. Also, when parents and their social networks value school success and school experiences are positive and powerful, students are likely to acquire an internal desire to be successful in school and in life, and to gain and express the skills and behavior necessary to do so. (Comer, 2001)

Comer and his associates have developed school reform systems in a number of communities that stress the importance of teachers themselves being both healthy and culturally competent to deal with the stresses of urban education. Creating positive, nurturing relationships for children requires a positive and supportive environment for adults, as well as a close working relationship between home and school.

The Rockefeller Foundation has supported extensive development of and evaluation of school reform based on these Comer principles. The schools achieve very positive academic success by focusing on the quality of the social and supportive climate in the school (Cook, 2001).

No one psychotherapeutic theory has proven adequate and useful to teachers in all situations. Nor has adequate quantifiable data validated any one theory's explanation of student behavior. Meanwhile, teachers need a strategy to work with on a daily basis. The Adler-Dreikurs theories presented are the theories most connected to the practice and extension of democracy. The promotion of democracy in the classroom is difficult and substantially underdeveloped (Banks, 1997; Cagan, 1978; Gross & Dynneson, 1991).

A Guide for New Teachers

Schools in minority neighborhoods have a high proportion of new teachers. Many experienced teachers transfer out of such schools to places where they can spend more time teaching and less time managing the classroom. Initially, new teachers experience a difficult time of trial and error. Their teaching skills are learned on the job through practice (see Figure 8.6).
Figure 8.6  New Teachers Can Learn the Skills of Classroom Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• communicate clearly and positively with students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• demonstrate concern for students’ many conflicts, including gender and cultural issues, peer pressure, and academic success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• are respected and trusted by students for their fairness and equity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• set clear, consistent limits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• defuse or divert many potential disruptive situations with coaching or with conflict resolution.</td>
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</tbody>
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New teachers in difficult schools face a number of hardships, and students inevitably suffer from having less experienced teachers. New teachers often suffer from having to learn to teach with the most difficult students (Bradley, 1994).

As a new teacher, you will work with children from diverse cultures and can benefit from getting to know the school community. Prior to the first day of school, you should travel around the community, visit its churches, its youth clubs, its neighborhoods. It helps to visit your school early to acquaint yourself with the principal, the secretary, and the resources you will need.

The school is not an island apart from the community. Teachers who arrive at school, spend their time teaching, and leave just after school will misunderstand their students. In the past, prior to the current concern for multicultural education, some teachers displayed an offensive colonial attitude in their relationship to school. They entered the community to teach. They received pay from the community, but they did not respect the community. They appeared like missionaries bringing outside culture to the natives. This colonial attitude led to misunderstanding, hostility, and resentment. Most parents know that education and schooling are important to economic success, but a colonial relationship prevents mutual support and respect between teachers and parents. When a gap exists between parents and schools, younger children suffer. Older students and gangs exploit the communication gap to resist school. To avoid such strained relationships, teachers should think of themselves as employees of the community and make it their responsibility to learn about the community so they can use community resources and culture to support the education program (Olsen & Dowell, 1997).

Instruction isolated from a community context too often fails. Quality teaching requires understanding children’s reality, rather than holding a series of stereotypes. Knowing students’ reality allows you to select experiences in their lives to build on.

One of the fundamental differences between successful middle-class schools and failing schools is that middle-class teachers in middle-class schools share the reality of their students. They draw from a common source of experiences for reading, writing,
and skill development. When teachers draw from students' own experiences, it validates and empowers the students. In contrast, teachers with a colonial attitude seek to impose curriculum content on students. This imposition of culture invalidates and negates students' own experiences and culture. They are made to feel inadequate. They do not learn confidence in themselves, their families, or their cultural competencies.

For students to succeed, your classroom must be reasonably orderly. Teachers and students have varying tolerances for disorder. Teaching should start on time, and the classroom needs to provide a safe and orderly environment, an environment that encourages learning. You need to provide students with successful learning experiences, particularly in the first few days of instruction. You should start with a well-organized, firm process of management and discipline. Management strategies must be practical and understood by the students (through modeling). And they must be applied consistently over time. When you are able to minimize disruptive behavior, you gain time on task, learning time (see Figure 8.7). When you have established order and have learned more about students' individual characteristics and personalities, you can move toward a more democratic environment.

All teachers benefit from personalizing their teaching. Personal influence, personal knowledge, personal contact provide you with your best instruments of instruction as well as the best instruments of classroom control. When you know students and communicate with them in ways that acknowledge their selfhood, such as learning a few words of their home language, your classroom environment improves dramatically.

You can be more helpful when you know your students well. Elementary school teachers master this problem with ease, whereas middle school and secondary school teachers facing 150+ students per day have difficulty. Instructors who do not learn about individual students are reduced to giving commands and instructions. This command relationship, in turn, produces student resistance. Such depersonalized relationships produce a significant portion of the discipline and conflict management problems of upper-grade teachers. Important school reforms suggested by the

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**Figure 8.7 Minimizing Disruptive Behavior**

1. Teach positive rules.
2. Teach positive roles.
3. Respond to small disruptions.
4. Teach responsibility.
5. Share responsibility with students through cooperative strategies.
6. Try to avoid power struggles. Provide students with a cooling-off period.
7. Maintain your adult composure and decision-making skills.
Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1988) include breaking middle schools down into smaller schools of 250 students each. Such subschools could personalize teacher–student relationships and thus provide coaching and guidance.

Small steps, such as calling students by name and asking them about their interests, personalize your interchanges. You can use transitions between activities and time provided by cooperative learning to talk with students about their lives and interests. Students from cultures that value reinforcing interpersonal relations before engaging in business and task exchanges (such as Latinos, Asians, Arabs, and Native Americans) will particularly benefit from your efforts to personalize your teaching.

Teachers acquire a powerful set of connections when they get to know students individually. You will soon get to know the “good” students. To improve classroom control, make an effort to get to know the potentially disruptive student, the clown, the resist. Talk to them. Telephone their parents or guardians. This individual contact will give you information that will help you direct them toward cooperative rather than disruptive behavior.

Your efforts to personalize your interactions with students will help make your classroom a safe environment. Students respond more positively, more respectfully, to teachers who treat them with respect.

It is easier for you, a new teacher, to establish a positive environment in the first few days than it is to dominate the class. A tense environment where commands are common and cooperation is minimal produces resistance and disruptions. Beyond grade 6, trying to win consent exclusively through the use of power is seldom effective with students, particularly when some are skilled in resistance.

This is not to argue for a hands-off, laissez-faire approach. Most students, except for those in kindergarten and first grade, already have experience with school and teachers. Students evaluate new teachers during the first few days to decide what kind of classroom to expect and to determine what they can get away with. It helps to make your goals clear: a safe and orderly classroom, clear and reasonable rules, a high degree of on-task learning time, and a personalized classroom where students and teacher all respect one another.

On the first few days of school, establish a few basic rules and post them where all students can read them. Rules commonly used by primary teachers include the following:

1. Only one student out of seat at a time.
2. Raise your hand to speak.
3. Keep your hands and feet to yourself.

Rules common to middle school students include the following (note the overlap with the primary school list):

1. Only one student out of seat at a time.
2. Raise your hand to speak.
3. No putdowns or negative personal comments.
Establishing a positive, productive classroom climate is particularly difficult in schools with large numbers of at-risk children. By adolescence, the cultural gaps between teacher and students are more clearly recognized, producing miscommunication and conflicting expectations. Establishing a positive, personal, supportive environment can turn an ineffective classroom into an effective one.

You have both a right and a responsibility to provide an organized, calm classroom. Once you have established rules, enforce them. Students require more than just reading and discussing rules. Demonstrate, model, and practice appropriate behavior. If lack of respect for a particular rule becomes a generalized problem, reteach the rule and practice the behavior again. You will save yourself important time and energy by teaching and reteaching rules instead of trying to manage and control each individual child.

Try to identify management problems within the first few days of class. Task analysis works well to design positive management alternatives. Some teachers have difficulty because six students need to sharpen their pencils just before an assignment, or four students come to them for assistance at the same time, or the noise level becomes intolerable when asking students to move into groups.

When problems appear, isolate and analyze the problem. Try to identify the precise behavior that is causing disruption, and then develop a process for teaching the appropriate skill and practicing the appropriate behavior. Learning school-appropriate behavior is like learning to play soccer; it takes practice. Practice improves student performance far more than does criticism and making demands.

As a new teacher, you can gain valuable insight by recruiting an experienced teacher as a mentor, someone who can answer the hundreds of simple questions you will have. You also benefit from recruiting an ally, someone with whom you can share frustrations and anxieties. If there are no other new teachers in the school, consider taking a course at a nearby university where you can discuss your concerns with other teachers.

There are a number of good guides for new teachers. For primary teachers, Bonnie Williamson’s A First-Year Teacher’s Guidebook for Success (1988) contains many useful ideas. Interested readers can find an excellent guide to classroom management in C. M. Charles’s Building Classroom Discipline: From Models to Practice (1989).

Drug Interventions

Students in their adolescent years are often trying out new identities. For many it is a dangerous world, and gang affiliation and crime may appear as attractive options. Schools need to offer alternative, positive affiliations through sports, clubs, service groups, and clinics. These supplemental services require the support of parents, church groups, and civic groups. If these positive alternatives are not available, encouraged, and made attractive, students seeking more affiliation may become alienated or drift into gang membership and drug use.
Schools are among the most dangerous locales in many communities. An alert visitor to many campuses can quickly identify areas of a school where discontented students "hang out." Smoking and drug sales may be common there. These areas place many students' lives at risk (Hechinger, 1992). Teachers, principals, and security personnel know these areas and in most cases can identify those students who are placing themselves and others in danger.

School personnel must be willing to intervene and to stop illegal drug sales and pre-gang activity on school grounds, rather than trying only to control the behavior. As a first step, the school should not permit drug use and weapons under any conditions. Administrators who allow such developments must be replaced by education leaders willing to work hard to create positive environments for students. School personnel unwilling to help implement plans to ban drugs and weapons should be removed from the school. Employee unions and parents alike should support such actions to protect the safety of students, faculty, and staff. Schools cannot allow young people to make life-threatening decisions. It may be true that in some areas governmental authorities have failed in the war on drugs and have not provided sufficient police, probation, and clinical recovery support. In these cases, educational leaders need to recruit parents and civic groups to stop these self-destructive behaviors.

In addition to strategies for controlling behavior problems, a principal, vice principal, or a respected teacher should set up a class, with mandatory attendance, for all students in this alienated group. The class can study drug abuse, physical abuse, and violence the students experience. Local antidrug and antigang community groups, such as Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous, and the local probation department may also become involved. The teacher may choose to hold separate classes for boys and girls to facilitate free discussion of issues of media literacy, physical abuse, sexual practices, and other sensitive topics. By converting the violence of adolescents' lives into something for them to study and analyze, the teacher moves from coercive power to adult authority.

Many adolescents go through a period of exploring a drug- or gang-related identity. During this time they are alienated from their families. With appropriate support, most will mature to become productive citizens. However, ongoing crises in many families require that schools provide assertive leadership roles, substitute parent roles, for some young people. We cannot simply assert that this is not the school's job, that the school is to teach only subject matter, not life skills. Many adolescents need additional adult authority in their lives. Students need guidance. They need help making fateful choices. They are full of fear about gangs, drugs, weapons, sexual identity, and similar explosive matters. Unless these students are helped, they will disrupt school and endanger their own lives (Children's Defense Fund, 2001; Fremon, 1995; Hechinger, 1992; Media Literacy Summit, 2001). We know that coaching and mentoring works. If schools are silent or ignore these issues, issues that are consuming students, then they become accomplices to the violence and terror of that part of society.
Summary

Teachers need to use classroom management skills with a commitment to cultural and social democracy. Without this commitment, management skills lead to control, not to student responsibility and self-direction. Neither teacher domination nor chaos and anarchy prepare young people to live responsible, democratic lives. Teachers can develop management skills that promote a democratic, trusting, caring environment in the classroom.

Questions Over the Chapter

1. List three classroom rules that would reduce interpersonal conflict.
2. What three student behaviors in your classroom produce the most off-task time for students? What steps could you take to prevent these behaviors in the future?
3. Define coaching.
4. How can a teacher get enough time for coaching?
5. What does Dreikurs describe as the four major goals of disruptive behavior by discouraged students?
6. Give two examples of personalizing the interaction between students and teachers.
7. List areas of authority where teachers should assert their adult-teacher responsibilities.
8. What are major in-school causes of class management problems?

Activities for Further Study of Classroom Management and Power

2. If you are having difficulty with class control, enroll in a workshop for assertive class management.
3. Consider new forms of student assessment (see Stiggins, 1997).
4. Attend a teen NarAnon (Narcotics Anonymous) or similar self-help group meeting. Find out if there is such a group in your school. Listen to teens discuss their own experiences and dependency on drugs.
5. Observe a teacher conducting a classroom meeting at your grade level.
6. Contact your local probation department. Investigate what programs they have for schools, and for drug or gang intervention.
7. Role play a coaching session with a student.
8. Observe and participate in training for conflict mediators in a school district. Learn these skills.
Teaching Strategies for Use with Your Students

1. Decide on your three most important classroom rules. Post them. Teach them. Consistently enforce them.
2. After completing strategy 1, add no more than one new rule per week. Clearly describe and practice appropriate behavior.
3. Isolate off-task behavior and reteach the rule and appropriate behavior to those who are off-task.
4. Step out of power struggles. Refer to strategies 1 through 3.
5. Use positive communications whenever possible. (See the suggestions given in this chapter.)
6. Teach and practice appropriate social skills.
7. Plan and implement a coaching strategy.
8. Teach the skills of conflict resolution to students.
9. Refer again to Figures 8.5, 8.6, and 8.7. Identify and practice ways to integrate these concepts into your relationships with students.