

Introduction

Positive Discipline in the School and Classroom: Teachers' Guide - Activities for Students has grown out of the collective experience of the authors, using and teaching Positive Discipline in public, private and parochial schools in diverse communities and student populations of schools over the last 20 years. Positive Discipline weaves the teaching of social-emotional skills and character development into the fabric of each and every school day. The result is a campus-wide approach for effective discipline and a nurturing school culture and climate.

This *Activities for Students* manual, which is the first of a series, primarily addresses social-emotional learning, although other skills and concepts are covered as well. *Positive Discipline in the Classroom, 4th Ed* (in press) by Jane Nelsen, Lynn Lott and H. Stephen Glenn and this manual were designed to complement each other. The series, which will include manuals for administrators, teachers, counselors and early childhood educators, will provide the materials to empower schools to develop and implement a comprehensive school program that teaches mutual respect and fosters academic excellence and to teach students the basic skills they need in a structured, experiential manner.

Social Skills Make a Difference

Numerous studies have demonstrated that a systematic approach to the implementation of social-emotional learning (SEL) programs offers significant benefits. A recent review of programs by Durlak, et al (2011)¹ showed that SEL programs:

- Are effective in both school and after-school settings and for students with and without behavioral and emotional problems.
- Are effective for racially and ethnically diverse students from urban, rural, and suburban settings across the K-12 grade range.
- Improve students' social-emotional skills, attitudes about self and others, connection to school, and positive social behavior; and reduce conduct problems and emotional distress.
- Improve students' achievement test scores across the spectrum by up to 11 percentile points.

The paper also noted that school-based programs are most effective when they are conducted by school staff (e.g., teachers and student support staff) and can be incorporated into routine educational practice. In addition, effective programs and approaches are sequenced, active, focused, and explicit (S.A.F.E.), meaning they:

- S: Use a **S**equenced set of activities to achieve skill objectives;
- A: Use **A**ctive forms of learning;
- F: Include at least one program component **F**ocused on developing personal or social skills; and
- E: **E**xplicitly target particular personal or social skills for development.

¹ Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B, Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011) The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions. *Child Development*, 82 (1), 405–432. A link to the full paper can be found at <http://casel.org/why-it-matters/benefits-of-sel/>

Introduction

Like other effective programs, the Positive Discipline curriculum outlined in this manual is sequenced, active, focused and explicit.

Implementing the Positive Discipline Social-Emotional Curriculum

Changing the culture of a school does not happen overnight; in fact, it requires commitment, patience, education, and practice. The way adults respond to inappropriate student behavior is an important model for student conduct. In a Positive Discipline School, every adult:

- Understands that the quality of relationships and school climate are absolutely critical to successful student learning.
- Seeks to establish strong meaning and connection for students, families and staff in social and academic contexts.
- Implements principles of mutual respect and encouragement.
- Focuses on long-term solutions to misbehavior at individual, class and school-wide levels.
- Views mistakes as opportunities to learn, and misbehavior as opportunities to practice critical life skills.
- Questions the tradition of adult control, rewards and punishments.

The long-term strategies for successful implementation of the Positive Discipline Social-Emotional Curriculum include:

- Training all school staff;²
- A commitment to school-wide teaching of the full curriculum;
- Making a respectful climate and culture a school priority;
- Regular practice (for adults and students);
- The presence of an oversight team;
- The use of behavior and climate data as feedback;
- Incorporating the model into school-wide practices (student council and students solving school-wide problems); and
- Engaging the broader community, which includes parents and caregivers.

School-wide Discipline

Although incorporating social skills and character development training into a school has significant long-term positive impacts, it is only one component of a comprehensive Positive Discipline system. Developing a discipline program that is consistent *and* leaves enough flexibility to allow for consideration of the individual student requires thought and commitment on the part of the school's staff and administration. It is the foundation of a culture of respect within the school.

Engaging all staff, students and families in building a learning community that models mutual respect and fosters academic excellence for all students is a huge task and will be covered in the Administrator's Manual (currently scheduled for publication in 2013). Successfully addressing the challenge requires:

² The Positive Discipline Association maintains a network of certified trainers. (For more information see www.positivediscipline.org)

² *Positive Discipline in the School and Classroom Teachers' Guide: Activities for Students*

- A general consensus among the school staff that *discipline is about teaching and learning--not punishment*. This does not mean eliminating consequences for serious or dangerous misbehavior. Such consequences are critical to civil society. Rather, it means rethinking everything that occurs up to that point. It also means rethinking how we implement consequences for serious or dangerous misbehavior and the downstream results of those consequences, so that students develop a *stronger connection* to their school community, rather than being pushed away.
- A principal and leadership team who believe that *rethinking discipline assumptions and practices to create more responsible, resilient and successful students is a high priority*.
- A principal, leadership team and staff who are *committed to increasing cultural competence* and who foster engagement and curiosity around issues of race, culture, class and gender.
- A school staff that accepts that improving discipline practices and school climate is far more demanding than merely adopting a new program. Rather, it is a *core school improvement strategy owned and managed well by the principal and staff*.
- A school staff that accepts that *improving discipline practices and school climate takes time* and who are willing to stay the course for three years or longer.
- A *willingness to collect and use discipline data* (including race information).
- A school staff that understand that *fostering a community of mutual respect to enhance student learning is a process* that will gradually include a larger and larger segment of the broader school community.

Positive Discipline at Work (a True Story)

At an urban elementary school in Seattle, a group of third- and fourth-graders consistently created problems at recess. The staff's response was to deny these students recess privileges for a period of time, and then allow them to return to recess. Their behavior did not improve. After some thought the administrative team decided to change their approach. Because the students were indoors anyway during recess, they decided to use that time to improve the students' skills at playing cooperatively. They began with simple games like "Chutes and Ladders." Despite the fact that staff already believed these students lacked critical skills, they were surprised by the students' inability to take turns, to remember any game "rules" or to play together, even in a small group.

The teacher who supervised the students during recess began to teach the students how to play games, and helped them teach each other about how rules helped people play together. They started the group with very small steps and stopped frequently to invite the students to notice what was happening. As the students began to gain skills they enjoyed their success with each other and seemed to learn more rapidly. Over a two-week period, the students progressed to less structured, more difficult indoor games, like checkers. The teacher then began to teach these students the rules of the games played outdoors at recess. After two weeks of working together indoors, the students took a recess "field trip" and found that they could play well with others. They were allowed to join their class at recess and were quite successful from then on.

The Philosophy Behind this Work

Positive Discipline is based on the work of Alfred Adler (1870-1937) and Rudolf Dreikurs (1897-1972), both Viennese psychiatrists. Adler’s theory and practice were influenced by living in a poor neighborhood in highly class-structured society, by his indigent patients and his traumatic experience as a psychiatrist for the Austrian Army during World War I. After the war, Adler initiated a series of child guidance clinics to teach parents and teachers more effective methods for working with young people, using the democratic principles of dignity and respect. He believed that children needed both order (structure and responsibility) and freedom in order to grow into responsible, contributing citizens of their community. Dreikurs was a student of Adler’s and led one of the guidance centers.

Adler saw human behavior as movement toward or striving toward a sense of belonging (connection) and significance. Though he developed his philosophy almost a century ago without the aid of modern technology, current brain science supports his theories, which were based on his careful observation of human behavior. Below is a graphic summary of the difference between common practice in our schools and the Adlerian approach.

Two Opposing Schools of Thought on Human Behavior

	Dominant and Traditional Practice in American Schools	The Positive Discipline (Solution-focused) Approach
Who developed the theory?	Common practice Pavlov, Thorndike, Skinner	Adler, Dreikurs, Glasser, Nelsen, Lott, Dinkmeyer
What motivates behavior?	People respond to rewards and punishments in their environment.	People seek a sense of belonging (connection) and significance (meaning) in their social context
When do we have the most influence on the behavior of others?	At the moment of response to a specific behavior.	In an ongoing relationship founded on mutual respect.
What are the most powerful tools for adults?	Control, rewards, and punishments	Empathy, understanding the perspective of the student, collaborative problem solving, kind <i>and</i> firm follow-through
“Respect” is...	Obedience and compliance in relationships in which dignity and respect of the adult is primary	Mutual, in relationships in which each person is equally worthy of dignity and respect
Response to inappropriate behavior	Censure, isolation, punishment	Naming without shaming and blaming, focus on solutions, follow through, addressing the belief behind the behavior
Response to dangerous and destructive behavior	Censure, isolation, punishment	Clear follow through while allowing students to experience the results of their actions.
Student learning is maximized when...	The adult has effective control over student behavior	The student feels belonging and significance in the classroom