

DISCIPLINE RESEARCH

Discipline Research

Research shows that while a punitive, coercive approach toward behavior management may gain superficial compliance, students feel alienated from those teachers (and school in general), lose motivation to achieve, and resist changing the undesirable behavior.

Research indicates that behavior is more likely to change for the better when students are guided and directed to show an appropriate behavior, and then positively recognized (praise, rewards, thanks) for having done so. This approach also promotes a more cooperative and productive atmosphere in the classroom and builds a positive emotional bond between teachers and students. The days are gone when a stern teacher who kept students "under the thumb" was respected. The educator who yells or demeans needs to learn more about effective positive techniques that make students feel good about schools, teachers, and themselves.

In a study involving 600 teachers and 10,000 students (K-12), the students whose teachers were trained in the skills of emphatic understanding, acceptance, respect, and positive regard for students as persons were compared with students whose teachers were not trained. The students of the trained teachers were found to:

- Miss fewer days of school (4 fewer days a year)
- Make greater gains in academic achievement measures, including both math and reading scores
- Be more spontaneous
- Use higher levels of cognitive thinking
- Increase their scores on ten tests
- Make more gains in creativity scores
- Show increased scores on self-regard measures
- Commit fewer acts of vandalism
- Present fewer disciplinary problems

RESEARCH AREAS

Research indicates that student behavior is influenced by the smoothness and effectiveness of transitions between tasks in a lesson. Failure to gain the students' attention, unclear and confusing directions, using lengthy explanation, dwelling too much on details rather than focusing on key points, and allowing students to take too much time moving from one task to the next contribute to student misbehavior.

The research concludes that well-established routines, a consistent signal for gaining the class attention, clear directions, preparing students to shift their attention from one task to another, and concise explanations that highlight the main points of the lesson topic help to reduce student misbehavior.

Source: "The Case Against Discipline" by Thomas Gordon
<http://eqi.org/tgordon2.htm>

Misbehavior and Student Boredom

When students are bored, undesirable behaviors may emerge. These include introducing incorrect or unproductive variations into a task, working mechanically on the task without giving it much thought, or trying to create some excitement through fooling around or engaging in other forms of misbehavior. To alleviate this boredom, the instructor could provide the students with a feeling of progress, offer greater challenges in the lesson or task, and be more enthusiastic for the learning process and learning environment. Changing the level of challenges, restructuring groups, extending the task, and using different teaching styles add variety to the learning process and help to reduce boredom.

"Never give up on a student. Be perturbed with the actions of a student, but keep believing in their ability to change for the better."

"Order, limits, firmness, and kindness are the qualities of a positive and effective classroom."

"Discipline is a series of little victories, not something that occurs overnight. It takes thoughtful planning, implementation, and maintenance."
