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The "Core" of the Matter: Creating a Community for Making Common Core State Standards Work

Jane Bluestein
Instructional Support Services, Inc., janebluestein2@gmail.com

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Handouts to accompany

The "Core" of the Matter:
Creating a Community for Making Common Core Standards Work

by Dr. Jane Bluestein

Presented for the
National Youth at Risk Conference
Savannah, GA
March 3, 2015

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- If you have any questions about anything on this page, or in these mateials, contact Dr. Bluestein at Instructional Support Services, 1709 Father Sky Ct NE, Albuquerque, NM, 87112, 1-800-688-1960, 505-323-9044, 505-323-9045 (fax), 505-250-3965 (cell or text), or by email at jane@janebluestein.com.

Thank you for your consideration, and for spreading the word.

Definition:

An emotionally safe school culture means:

An environment in which adults are committed to **doing no harm**, including:

- Establishing authority relationships that respect everyone's needs
- Minimizing reasons for students acting out (prevention)
- Helping students achieve success and improve academic performance (placement, instruction, assessment issues)
- Encouraging commitment, cooperation and self-management in positive ways (behavior, discipline issues)
- Building accountability and personal responsibility
- Eliminating power struggles (meeting students' needs for power, dignity, and structure/limits)
- Building social skills and interactive competence
- Supporting emotional needs; avoiding non-supportive responses
- Improving problem-solving and decision-making skills
- **Building relationships and connections**

Does NOT mean:

- Punishing, disempowering, exacting revenge
- Finding ways to get them out of class (or school)
- Giving warnings or using threats
- Labeling misbehavior
- Asking for excuses
- Criticizing or shaming
- Continuing the cycle of failure
- Doing "business as usual" and expecting different results

A multi-dimensional approach to building success, achievement, and cooperation

Power Dynamics, Discipline, and Behavior Management

Learning Styles and Needs (Body and Brain)
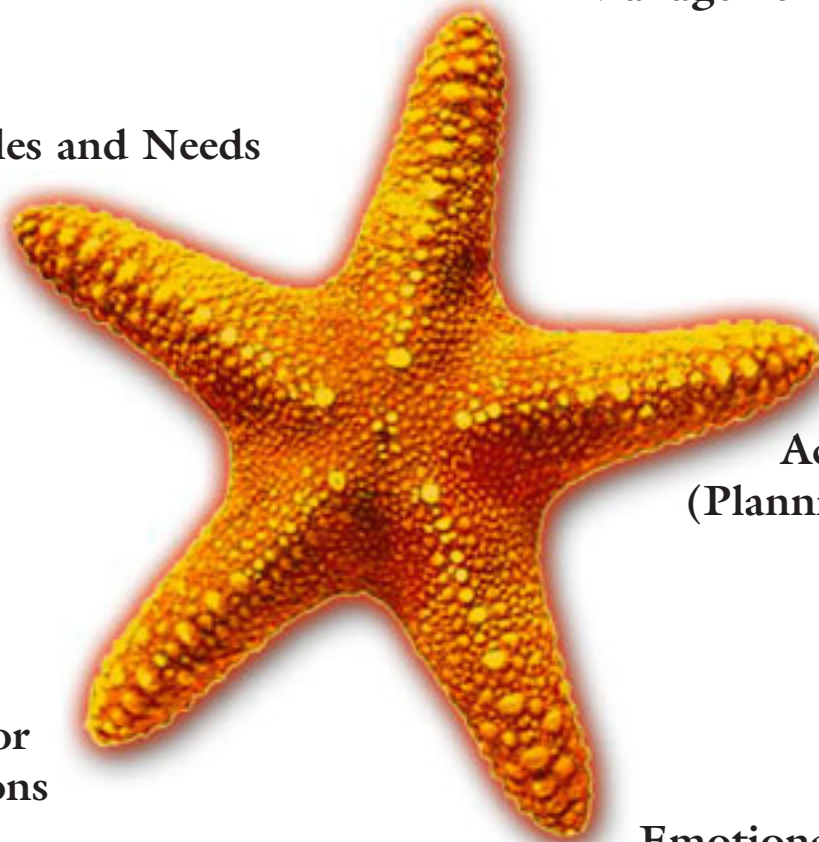
Academic Success (Planning, Placement)

Social Behavior and Interactions

Emotional Issues and Support

Classroom climate and relationships are key!

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Children at Risk

These two lists were originally developed to focus on patterns observed in children (and in their families) as possible predictors of the child's vulnerability for substance abuse and addiction, including alcohol, tobacco, and other addictive substances and behaviors. While these children would certainly come under the heading of being "at risk," this list has expanded over the years to also include children who are at risk for school failure, dropping out, gang involvement, early (or unprotected) sexual activity, violence, and vandalism, as well as those children who are at risk for perfectionism, overachieving, compulsive behavior, social vulnerability, food and body issues, intentional self-injury, and suicide.

- Do not feel valued, connected, or secure in the family
- Do not feel valued, connected, or secure in school
- Do not feel visible or listened to in a meaningful way
- Have a strong sense of not fitting in; feel excluded; not have an important aspect of their identity acknowledged; experience actual discrimination (cultural, social, religious, racial, sexual orientation, disability; family income or socioeconomic status; appearance, clothing, style; ability, for example)
- Lack meaningful connection with a caring, significant adult (in the family, community, or school)
- Lack meaningful connection with positive role models
- Do not believe that their opinions are valued or heard
- Frequently demonstrate a low tolerance for frustration
- Have unrealistic expectations of themselves, others, or situations
- Have difficulty seeing connection between their choices and the outcomes of their choices
- Have difficulty predicting outcomes of possible choices; difficulty thinking things through
- Have difficulty seeing alternatives or "ways out" of problem situations
- Experience despair much of the time; believe that they cannot positively affect or change their lives
- Have a strong sense of victimization, powerlessness, helplessness; low sense of autonomy OR a strong sense of entitlement
- Have feelings of inadequacy, a sense of never being good enough; low sense of worth, capability; may tend to equate achievement with worth; may confuse making a mistake with being a failure
- Have difficulty expressing feelings constructively; tend to "stuff" feelings or blow up (little provocation)
- Compete for power with most adults (and, often, peers)
- Have difficulty taking no for an answer
- Have difficulty hearing negative feedback
- Have difficulty balancing consideration for others with consideration for selves
- Have few interests; may use TV, video games, or other electronics to numb out OR likely to be significantly overscheduled, involved in too many activities; use busyness to numb out or prove worth
- Rarely invite other kids to their homes; apparent social isolation
- Lack a strong positive core belief system
- Have difficulty solving problems or making decisions
- Tend to blame or avoid responsibility; OR tend to act and feel overly responsible for other people
- Have difficulty asking for help
- Have difficulty thinking independently; easily talked into things
- Have a tendency toward people pleasing, compliance, approval-seeking,dependency OR rebelliousness, bullying, abusiveness, hostile behavior
- Reluctant to try new things; have a fear of failure OR reckless, dare-devil behavior
- Are perfectionistic, self-critical OR seemingly indifferent
- Have difficulty finishing projects or assignments OR compulsive involvement and overachievement
- Rarely share feelings and thoughts with at least one family member (or other safe adult)
- Demonstrate poor school performance; dislike of school; poor attendance OR compulsive overachiever
- Frequently experience a mismatch between instruction and learning style (how they learn)
- Frequently experience a mismatch between content and interest; perception of content as useless or irrelevant

- Frequently experience a mismatch between content and cognitive ability (work is either too hard or too easy); lack of prerequisite skills OR bored because they're not being adequately challenged
- Demonstrate delinquent behavior; school misbehavior; acting out (often to cover-up inability to perform, lack of knowledge)
- Have friends who use drugs or alcohol; friends who are in gangs; friends who have dropped out
- Have favorable attitudes toward drug use; early first use of drugs or alcohol; early sexual activity or other risk behavior

Note: Everyone probably experiences some of these risk factors from time to time and I doubt there are many kids who would not relate to several of the items on this list. The presence of many risk factors does not condemn students to negative or dangerous outcomes, nor does the apparent lack of these characteristics mean they will avoid problems. However, students who frequently characterize many of the factors described above are typically at greater risk than students who do not, especially those who receive support, encouragement, and necessary intervention.

Family patterns and adult behaviors of at-risk children may include:

- Negative or antagonistic relationship with the school, with the legal system, or community resources
- Lack of involvement in child's education; places low value on school and education
- Substance abuse and addiction; compulsive behavior; issues involving food, weight, or appearance
- Codependency (supporting someone's addiction, or irresponsible or abusive behavior)
- Compulsive behavior, mental illness (especially with no support or intervention)
- Verbal, physical, sexual, or emotional abuse
- Inconsistency or neglect; does not hold child accountable to family for behaviors or whereabouts; OR overinvolvement and control of child; lack of privacy or boundaries with other family members
- Dependence on child's appearance, achievement, or performance (academic, athletic, other) to give a sense of worth to the family; or to distract from patterns of addiction or abuse practiced by adult family member; pressure on child
- Reactivity, rigidity, perfectionism, dishonesty, double standards, shaming, blaming, mistrust, all-or-nothing thinking, disempowering, martyrdom, intolerance, future or past orientation, negativity, criticism, boundary violations, self-righteousness, denial, or enabling.
- Tendency to notice flaws, errors, and omissions; infrequent expressions of recognition, validation, acknowledgement; praise expressed to manipulate and control (or expressed only publicly, "for show.")
- Lack of encouragement, lack of faith in child's ability (or lack of faith in school or child's ability to succeed there)
- Drug use; use of illegal drugs around children; heavy recreational drinking in the home
- Involvement of children in adult drug use (for example, asking the child to get a beer or light a cigarette for the adult)
- Family patterns of dismissing feelings, distracting or rescuing person from feelings, or using feelings as a basis for shaming, blaming, attacking, or making someone wrong.
- Family pattern of superficial identity and comparison; pigeonholing children, even with apparently positive labels: "the smart one," "the popular one," or "the cute one."
- Infrequent or inconsistent expressions of love and acceptance; conditional love based on specifics such as appearance, achievement, social competence, performance, or how well the child takes care of the adult's needs, (rather than on unconditional worth of the child)

Adapted from numerous sources, including *Creating Emotionally Safe Schools,* by Dr. Jane Bluestein (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, Inc, 2001); How to Drug-Proof Kids (by Jodi Freeman, Albuquerque, NM: The Think Shop, Inc., 1989); and "Risk Check for your Child," (handout from Garfield Middle School, Albuquerque, NM). Additional items on these lists have come from comments or correspondences from workshop participants, as well as personal observation and experience. This page has been excerpted from http://janebluestein.com/2012/children-at-risk/

Survival and Adaptation Strategies of Children at Risk:
Family Roles

Roles adopted to create safety in a troubled (or even non-supportive) family can be carried into adult relationships, impacting effectiveness socially and professionally.

Mode of survival (Family role assumed)	Visible Traits (Observable Behaviors)	How the child feels	Role in family system	Type of adult child may grow up to be (without help)	Type of adult child may grow up to be (with help)
FAMILY HERO (Super Kid)	"Little mother" or "little man." Always does what's right; over achiever; over responsible; needs everyone's approval; not much fun.	Hurt, inadequate, confused, guilty, fearful; low self-esteem; sense of never being or doing enough. May doubt worth and adequacy even with much approval.	Provides self-worth to family; someone to be proud of; compensates for parents' dysfunctionality or unhappiness; makes the family "look good."	Workaholic; can never be wrong; marries a dependent person; needs to control; compulsive; can't say no; can't fail; depression, suicide, use of stimulants.	Competent; organized; responsible; good manager; successful and healthy.
SCAPE-GOAT (Trouble-maker)	Hostile and defiant; withdrawn and sullen; gets negative attention; troublemaker.	Hurt and abandoned; angry; rejected; feels totally inadequate; no or low self-worth; impulsive; defeated.	Takes the heat off the dysfunctional parent: "See what *he's* done! Leave me alone!"	Alcoholic or addict; unplanned pregnancy; dropout; legal trouble and/or prison.	Recovery; courageous; good under pressure; can see reality; helpful to others; can take risks.
LOST CHILD (Invisible Child)	Loner; day dreamer; solitary; withdrawn; drifts and floats through life; may not be missed for days; quiet; shy; ignored.	Unimportant, not allowed to have feelings; loneliness; hurt and abandoned; defeated; given up; fearful; low worth.	Relief for the parents (and teachers); the one child no one worries about.	Indecisive; no zest; little fun; stays the same; alone or promiscuous; dies early; undeveloped talents; dropout; can't say no.	Independent; talented; creative; imaginative; assertive; resourceful.
MASCOT (Class Clown)	Supercute; immature; anything for a laugh or attention; fragile; hyperactive; short attention span; learning disabilities; anxious; may appear indifferent.	Low self-esteem; terror; loneliness; inadequate; unimportant.	Comic relief; provides fun, humor.	Compulsive clown; can't handle stress; marries a "hero;" often on the verge of hysterics; depends on appearance or external validation of worth.	Charming; good with company; quick wit; good sense of humor; independent; helpful; good people skills.

Adapted from Choicemaking *by Sharon Wegscheider Cruse, (Health Communications, Inc., 1985)*

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Continuum of Effort and Commitment

by Jane Bluestein, Ph.D.

Mastery
Competent. Likely to be striving for continual growth in that area or related areas, OR ready to move on to the next challenge

Sticking with it
Efforts to complete task even with mistakes or rough-draft outcomes with a commitment to keep at it, gain skill, achieve mastery

Willing to try
Efforts to complete task, satisfied with adequate achievement for short-term outcome (grade, token, privilege)

Learned helplessness
Willing to make an effort but only with a great deal of support and attention; sense of being incapable (real or imagined)

Easily discouraged
Tries but gives up at first setback, often before having had a chance to experience success or progress

Too afraid to try
Afraid of making a mistake, looking foolish, being embarrassed.
(May be related to sensory issues: touch, noise, etc.)

Indifference
Can reflect lack of interest or awareness.
May also reflect sense of entitlement or power struggle (need to win, indifference to negative outcomes of refusal to participate or do the work).
OR may be related to fear: Better to look bad than dumb.

Note: Perfectionism may be an issue in several of these categories. I'm also thinking of instances of recklessness, over-confidence, or even a sense of delusion; refusing to accept honest, helpful feedback. I also believe that we all have experiences along the entire continuum. Feedback welcome.

So: How do we move kids up toward mastery?
What do we need to have in place (resources, climate, relationships, instruction, sensory accommodations, room arrangement, etc.) to create a passion for learning, or at least to overcome indifference, fear, and discouragement?

The School as a Dysfunctional Family
or the Legacy of Industrial-Era Thinking

OLD PATTERNS (Destructive, Counterproductive)	NEW PATTERNS (Constructive, Productive)
Impression Management	*Authenticity*
People pleasing, looking good, being fine; need for approval, fear of being judged, fear of lawsuits	Honesty, being oneself (safety to be); tolerance of disapproval from others; accountability
Denial, damage control	Conscientiousness, awareness
Ignoring, enabling, dismissing, excusing	Admitting, confronting, courage, awareness, clarity
Blame, need to fix (or be fixed)	Responsibility, support of others (within boundaries)
Dependence, codependence	Interdependence
Loyalty/disloyalty, dishonesty	Integrity, trust, honesty
Disregard for others, inconsideration	Concern, respect for others
Protecting the system	Advocating for the individual
Lack of communications; poor or miscommunications, triangulation	Healthy communications
Oversimplification	*Complexity*
Black and white thinking; dualism (win-lose); need for simplicity	Willingness to live with conflict and paradox
Misunderstanding, misrepresenting; reducing a concept to most simplistic (if incorrect) dimensions	Ability to view and grasp multiple dimensions of a concept
Focusing on the irrelevant (missing the point)	Focusing on the relevant (getting the point)
Impatience, despair; desire for a quick fix	Persistence, patience
Surface changes	Long-term, deep changes
Tunnel vision	Context
Attention to extremes (trouble makers, gifted, popular kids)	Attention to everyone
One set of values (assumptions)	Diversity of values (appreciation, accept)

From Creating Emotionally Safe Schools *by Jane Bluestein, Ph.D. (Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, Inc., 2001).*

Reactivity	Proactivity
Crisis orientation	Prevention orientation
"Get tough."	"Get connected."
Fear, pressure ("War on…")	Love, encouragement
Hierarchies, power-down, control	Networks, relationships, shared power
Commanding, ordering	"Selling," securing buy-in
Punitive orientation	Encouragement, reward orientation
Inspires avoidance of punishment, penalty or other negative outcome	Inspires seeking satisfaction, other positive outcome
Controlling	Asking, asserting what you want
Relies on rules, punishment	Relies on commitment
Complaining, blaming, "fixing"	Creating opportunities, making things better
Threats	Promises
Incongruence: mismatched goals and behaviors; policies, beliefs conflict with goals	Congruence: behaviors and policies support goals

Scarcity Thinking	Abundance Thinking
Negativity; pessimism; despair	Positivity; optimism
Competition	Cooperation, synergy
Resistance to change	Openness to possibilities
Attachment to tradition for tradition's sake (whether it makes sense or is good or not)	Willingness to drop or change destructive traditions; to invite or invent new traditions
Judgments, discrimination	Acceptance, tolerance
Uniformity	Tolerance of diversity, variety
Suppressing	Expressing, tolerance for intensity
Victim thinking	Empowerment
Lack of resources, withholding resources	Creative uses of resources, availability of resources
Conditionality	Unconditionality
Double standards	Absence of double standards

Product Orientation	Process Orientation
Learning to know; facts, procedures	Learning to learn; thinking
Fragmentation (linear)	Cohesiveness (multidimensional, holographic)
Telling (arrogance, I know what's best)	Asking (trusting, may not know what's best)
Expectations	Goals
Linear	Complex, multi-dimensional
Hypocrisy (incongruence between goals and behaviors/beliefs/policies)	Congruence (modeling, consistency)
Teaching according to curriculum	Teaching according to need
Past/future orientation	Present orientation (in context of goals, eye to future)
Fixing, knowing what's best	Guiding, trusting
Blocked awareness (to control)	Communications (to build commitment)
Eliminating problems	Correcting, solving problems

Industrial Age (Traditional Classroom)	**Information Age** (Win-Win Classroom)

Industrial Age
(Traditional Classroom)

Values, Priorities, and Motivators
- Uniformity, sameness; fitting in (standards)• Stability, permanence, security (rigid roles)
- Competition
- Motivation: approval-seeking, avoiding punishment, humiliation, rejection, disapproval; oriented to adult and adult's reaction
- Outcome- or product-orientation
- Black-and-white thinking

Skills: Student Behaviors that are Encouraged or Reinforced
- Following orders, obedience, people-pleasing, asking permission, compliance, dependence
- Listening
- Protecting existing power structure
- Not making waves; maintaining status quo
- Following (unquestioning)
- Dependence on leader (credit or blame)

Authority Relationships
- Reactive
- Win-Lose (powering or permissive)
- Command-oriented; demands; few choices offered
- Student empowerment discouraged; initiative perceived as a threat to adult authority
- Rules and boundaries established to protect teacher power
- Approval of students conditional on students' cooperative, teacher-pleasing behavior
- Arrogance, self-centeredness, self-righteousness; "shoulds;" blame-oriented

Discipline Goal: Controlling Students, Disempowerment
- Students make few decisions, have few opportunities to act independently or self-manage
- Critical; focus on negative behavior and outcomes

Needs of the Economy: What Businesses Want
- Ability to "fit in," follow orders (chain of command), think inside the box, perform as directed; expectation that tasks/assignments would not vary much in one job description
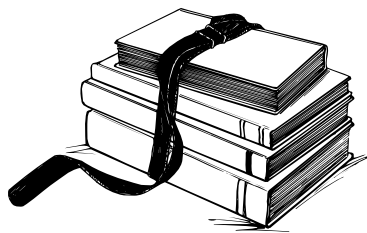
Information Age
(Win-Win Classroom)

Values, Priorities and Motivators
- Diversity, personal potential and fulfillment
- Flexibility, choices, personal control
- Cooperation
- Motivation: personal satisfaction; curiosity; positive consequences or outcomes unrelated to adult's reaction; oriented to student
- Process- or person-orientation
- Many options and alternatives

Skills: Student Behaviors that are Encouraged or Reinforced
- Taking initiative, making decisions within limits of rules or boundaries; self-caring choices
- Communicating
- Networking, negotiating
- Taking risks, trying new things; innovating
- Initiative
- Assuming personal responsibility; teamwork

Authority Relationships
- Proactive, preventative
- Win-win (cooperative)
- Agreement- or negotiation-oriented; many choices may be offered
- Student empowerment encouraged within limits that respect everyone's rights
- Rules or boundaries established to protect everyone's rights, consider everyone's needs
- Acceptance of students regardless of their behavior
- No need to make student wrong for teacher to be right; respect for students' needs

Discipline Goal: Student Self-Control
- Students have opportunities to make decisions, act independently or self-manage
- Focus on positive behavior and outcomes

Needs of the Economy: What Businesses Want
- Higher priority on networking, people skills, communication skills, creative thinking ("outside the box") and problem solving, initiative, flexibility, adaptability; ability to multi-task, shift gears, change to shifting demands of the workplace; people with "vision and attitude."

What is school usually like for kids with "vision and attitude" and other skills desired by the 21st-century workplace?

Adapted from The Win-Win Classroom, *by Jane Bluestein, Ph.D. (Corwin Press, 2008).*

Motivating Cooperative Behavior

Win-Lose approaches that can compromise the emotional safety of the classroom:

POWERING: Win-Lose

Strategies:
- Humiliation, loss of dignity, violation of self-esteem; criticism, shaming, verbal/emotional violence
- Threat to physical safety, physical violence
- Conditional approval or love; threat of emotional abandonment
- Deprivation of meaningful privilege or activity (ex: recess, eligibility, graduation)

Dynamic/Outcomes:
- Depends on your reaction, power, anger and student's fear of your reaction
- May generate superficial compliance. Reinforces people-pleasing, dependence on approval or at least minimal cooperation to avoid being hurt in some way. Passive learning.
- Can inspire rebelliousness, particularly in students who aren't motivated by the need for your approval or the need to "save face."

Boundary Issues:
Does not respect students' boundaries or need for power; violates students' boundaries.

Effectiveness:
Can be effective in getting short-term cooperation from compliant students. Cost to emotional environment and quality of relationship between adult and student is HIGH.

PERMISSIVE: Lose-Win

Strategies:
- Allowing students to behave in ways that can create problems for you or others
- Letting kids have their way to avoid other conflicts
- Letting kids do something they want in order to obligate them to cooperate; attempt to motivate cooperation through guilt, by being "nice"
- Giving up; perception of having less influence or control than is true

Dynamic/Outcomes:
- Chaos, manipulation, lack of student self-management
- Tremendous insecurity when students' needs for limits are not met

- Adult frustration, often ending up in reactive "blow-up" when you reach the end of your rope; encourages kids to really push the limits.

Boundary Issues:
  General lack of boundaries, unclear boundaries based on differences between teacher's understanding and students' understanding ("Be good." "Clean this area."), ambiguous boundaries, or boundaries with built in loop-holes (using warnings, asking for excuses, etc.)

Effectiveness:
  Minimal; usually kids know that they don't have to listen until you start screaming, for example. Lack of limits and predictability makes cost to emotional environment and quality of adult-student relationship HIGH.

Win-Win approach that does not compromise the emotional safety of the classroom:

COOPERATIVE: Win-Win

Strategies:
- May include meaningful activities such as going to a center, self-selection, use of certain equipment, games, extra free time, time with adult, working with a friend, drawing, running an errand, a chance to help in another classroom; good grades (motivating for students who find grades meaningful) or a "good" note home; a "night off" from homework; etc. What's worked for you?
- May offer students a chance to choose between two or more activities, the sequence in which they do assignments, or choices about where, when, how, or with whom to do particular activities

Dynamic/Outcome:
- NOT based on adult's reaction, fear of adult's power, or need for approval
- Proactive approach that considers and attempts to accommodate the students' needs for both limits and power within those limits
- Clearly-communicated contingencies, boundaries, guidelines, limits before the students have a chance to mess up.
- Student needs for limits and control are accommodated as much as possible in an environment in which the teacher is still the authority
- Reward-oriented; focuses on positive outcomes to student (not externally based)
- Predictable (so long as boundaries are maintained); mutually respectful

Boundary Issues:
  None. Boundaries are respected; communicated and upheld.

Effectiveness:
  Best possibility for success of all configurations of authority

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Student Behavior Profiles

	Options available with All-or-Nothing Thinking		An Alternative
Behavior	Rebellious, Defiant, Dis-obedient	Compliant, Obedient	Cooperative
Descriptor	Self-Centered	Self-Abandoning	Self-Caring
Focus	My needs	Your needs (or my need to look like I'm more concerned with your needs)	My needs *and* your needs
Goal	Having my own way no matter what; Power; Being Left Alone	Avoiding conflict and abandonment; Approval seeking	Getting what I want with a minimum of conflict and inconvenience for others
Responsibility	Someone else's fault; sees little connection between behavior and outcomes	"Just following orders;" disempowered; sees self as victim, having few choices	Responsible for own behavior; sees self as having choices and power
Power Play	Uses power to disempower; win-lose	Gives power away; lose-win	Shares power; win-win
Power Tools	Anger, violence; passive-aggressiveness; secrecy; isolation	Being "nice;" being perfect; doing what everyone expects; achievement, recognition; tears, guilt; passive-aggressiveness	Negotiating, compromise; ability to identify personal needs; self-expression; ability to make you a deal you can't refuse.
Feelings	Difficulty expressing feelings in constructive, non-violating ways	Feelings are often "stuffed" and/or denied; vulnerable to tolerance breaks, can be explosive.	Not necessary to use feelings to manipulate, hurt or control; can express feelings in non-hurtful ways
Costs	Relationships	Sense of self; self-worth	May create conflict with authoritarian or manipulative people. Can threaten, upset or alienate people with weak or no boundaries.
Stays Safe by	Not needing you, not caring	Keeping you happy (so you won't criticize, express disapproval, be disappointment or leave)	Identifying and expressing needs; Taking care of self. (Probably feels pretty safe to begin with.)
Boundaries	Few, as far as others are concerned	Few, as far as self is concerned	Has personal boundaries; respects others' boundaries

Guidelines for Offering Choices

- Choices build responsibility and commitment, and communicate the teacher's respect for students' needs and preferences.

- Choices, like boundaries, are motivational tools that encourage cooperation through input and empowerment. Offer choices in the absence of desirable student behavior, to encourage the student to perform a particular behavior he is not currently demonstrating.

- Choices can also help prevent disruptive behaviors, however other strategies will be suggested for intervening negative behavior or reinforcing performance, growth and existing positive behavior.

- Present available options in a positive manner. Be careful that the choice doesn't end up spoken as "do it or else."

- Be honest. Make sure that all options you offer are acceptable. Avoid setting the students up to people-please by choosing the right option or reading your mind. Make sure there are no wrong choices: If you don't want the student to choose something, don't make it an option. (For example, if you want them to do the outline first, offer sequence options about the other activities—after the outline is finished.)

- Make sure the choices you offer are clear and specific. Asking a child to *"Select a meaningful learning activity,"* leaves you open for some pretty broad interpretations. Instead, define choices with clearly-stated limits. *"Select one meaningful learning activity from the five on the board"* is much easier for the student to understand—and perform successfully.

- Start simple. If a student is having difficulty making decisions, it may be that there are too many options or that the limits are too broad or unclear.

- If a student is having difficulty with even a simple choice, add another limit if necessary, by asking him to choose within a certain amount of time (after which you get to help him choose). Be patient. Some young students and well-conditioned order-takers need time and practice to develop confidence in their ability to choose.

- Increase options as the students can handle them, either by widening the range of choices you offer or by making the options more complex.

- Depending on your goals, schedule and resources, you might leave room for students to change their minds if they are disappointed with a choice they've made. If time and management require the student to make a choice and stick with it, make that clear when you present the available options. Reassure the students that they can *"try again later (or tomorrow or next week)."*

- As they become more capable, encourage the students to participate in setting up choices (or negotiate an alternative assignment, for example) whenever possible. Clear limits are especially important in such cases; you might also want to suggest that they present their ideas to you for a final OK before they act.

- If students suggest a choice that you think is inappropriate, tell them your concerns and ask if they can come up with another idea. (Stating *s* is a terrific way to get this message across without attacking the student.) Reiterate your criteria if necessary. If something is just plain non-negotiable, say so, but help the student look for acceptable options available within those limits.

Building Decision-Making Skills

Responsible behavior includes the ability to connect "what I've done" to "what happens or happened as a result of what I've done." Likewise, self-concept is influenced by an individual's belief that "I have the power and ability to impact my environment and change what isn't working in my life."

Offering choices not only builds valuable life-long skills, it also a way to create "win-win" power dynamics in your classroom. Additionally a positive self-concept and sense of empowerment is reinforced every time an individual has the opportunity to experience the outcomes of his or her own choosing. Offering choices—within limits that don't make you crazy—has numerous advantages, including:

- It models flexibility and respect on our part.
- It provides ways for the student to meet various learning needs.
- It generates commitment from students.
- It empowers students and increases the likelihood of cooperative behavior.
- It teaches self-management and builds decision-making skills
- It helps students connect their choices to the outcomes of their choices.
- It offers students opportunities to develop and practice valuable skills such as exploring available options and weighing alternatives, identifying personal preferences, making independent choices and developing a sense of multiple options or solutions in problem-solving situations
- It increases the opportunity for students to take responsibility and initiative in their own learning.
- It decreases resistance and defiance that often accompany demands.

Some choices you can make available to students in your classroom:

- deciding which of two activities to do first
- deciding which two crayons to use in a drawing
- deciding which two of three language puzzles to complete
- deciding which 10 math problems to do on page 174.
- deciding where to sit for independent work
- deciding whether to submit a final project on disk, on paper or on videotape.
- deciding on a work space where he or she will not be tempted to talk.
- deciding, in a group, how to share 2 cookies between 3 people so that all 3 are satisfied with the decision.
- deciding which science experiment to conduct to demonstrate photosynthesis
- deciding how to arrange certain materials in a display
- deciding the order in which the class will discuss certain non-sequential topics.
- deciding to which rock star to write a fan letter.
- deciding on a 1-minute break now or a 3-minute break in 10 minutes.
- deciding which center to visit during self-selection
- deciding whether to display your drawing or take it home
- deciding whether or not you still needs more practice on that particular skill.
- choosing 3 out of the 5 activities suggested in the biology contract.

- designing his or her own project to demonstrate a particular concept.
- selecting 10 out of the 20 spelling words on the list to master this week.
- choosing a partner for a given project or activity.
- deciding whether to do the 15 math problems on the board or the 15 problems in the book.
- exploring 10 topics or questions about the country of your choice.
- identifying a cause you feel passionate about and proposing a specific course of action

Other choices you can offer in your own classroom:

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Remember that in offering choices, make sure that all options you offer are acceptable. Don't expect the students to "people-please" by choosing the "right" option or reading your mind. *Not all things are negotiable,* but when you have the opportunity to offer choices, do so honestly.

Also, if your students are overwhelmed by choices—which is quite common among older students who have been "dummied down" from years of being told what to do (or not having had many opportunities to make choices) or among young students who are offered too many choices to begin with—start slowly with few choices and, if necessary, time limits for making the choices (after which, *you* get to choose).

It may always seem easier and faster to just tell your students what to do, but the time invested in giving choices will pay off handsomely in the long run—for both them and you!
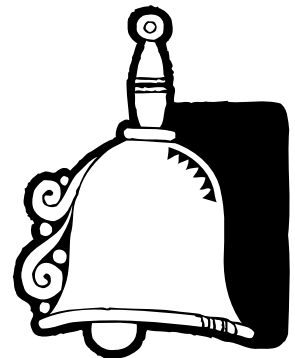
Adapted from Being a Successful Teacher *by Jane Bluestein, Ph.D. (Fearon Teacher Aids, Frank Schaffer Publications, Inc., 1989).*

The Power of Positive Consequences

☛ *Sounds like:*

- "If you do this, you can…"
- "When you finish, you can…"
- "As long as you (comply with this condition), you can…"

☛ *Benefits of emphasizing positive consequences:*

- Less stress in interaction
- Reduces likelihood of opposition or refusal
- Puts responsibility on child

A very different approach

Adapted from article at http://janebluestein.com/2012/positive-consequences/

- Nearly all discipline models emphasize negative outcomes for negative behavior, a nearly universal, long-standing, and familiar response to teachers' concerns about "what do I do when my students misbehave?" These models have conditioned us to think of a student's negative behavior as something that demands a negative adult response, rooted in the notion that some form of deprivation, discomfort, embarrassment, or even physical pain is the best (or only) way to get kids to change their behavior.

- We can achieve the same outcomes— inspiring desirable, cooperative, respectful, and responsible behaviors from your students— without depending on threats, fear, anger, frustration, disappointment, or conditional approval. The alternative approach is not only more effective, but also less likely to escalate negative behavior or cause resentment, and is therefore less stressful to all concerned.

- The approach involves shifting the emphasis from the negative outcomes of your students doing something you don't want (or *not* doing something you've asked them to do) to the *positive* outcomes of positive behaviors, language, tone, and attitude.

- The emphasis on the negative outcome ("If you don't return your library book, you can't take another one out.") is so pervasive and well-ingrained that it's easy to forget that we almost always have a positive consequence available as well ("As soon as you bring back your library book, you can take another one home.")

- Focusing on positive outcomes allows you to require certain behaviors or a certain amount of work from your kids in order for them to earn, or continue to enjoy, these benefits.

- It's easier to get kids to respect limits and buy into a sense of accountability when offered outcomes they perceive as positive and meaningful.

- Bribery question: There is no such thing as unmotivated behavior. Every decision we make is influenced by an anticipated outcome. We either choose the option that offers us the most valuable or meaningful benefit at that moment (money, privileges, toys or some desirable tangible outcome, a sense of accomplishment, comfort, acceptance, or even a feeling of self-righteousness,

for example) or we choose the option that protects us from some form of loss (dignity, belonging, status, privilege or possession, freedom, or emotional or physical safety, for example). So it really comes down to whether we're going to use positive bribes— including work-related options and earned privileges— in place of the negative ones on which we currently depend.

• We connect desired behavior to consequences one way or the other, so why not focus on the good stuff? Threatening to not allow the kids out for recess is just as much a "bribe" as giving them a break as soon as their desks are clear. Either way, choice connects to outcome.

• Our orientation to the choices we offer, positive or negative, has a huge impact on the quality of the climate in the classroom, and gives you a great deal of leverage and authority without compromising your students' need for autonomy and dignity, and without creating a great deal of stress for anyone.

• Simply stating a contingency as a promise (as opposed to a threat), transfers the responsibility for your students getting what they want where it belongs— on them.

• A reward-orientated environment that emphasizes the payoff for cooperation (rather than punishment for non-compliance) is not only a cornerstone of win-win classroom, but it's also a lot easier to manage and generally a whole lot more fun. Even if you have always depended on your kids' fear of punishment or disapproval, it's not likely to very take long for even the most cynical, well-defended students to start seeing your classroom as a place where "good things happen when…" And therein lies the incentive to come to class on time, put things back when they're done with them, or stay quiet while you're reading the story.

• Start thinking of what you can offer, starting with stuff you know your students enjoy. This is where things like interest inventories, observations, and even casual conversations will come in handy. Positive outcomes could be as simple as saving a few minutes at the end of each class, or day, for an enrichment activity, story or short video, or time to start on a homework assignment (with teacher nearby to answer questions or offer help as needed). They might also include opportunities to work as a peer helper with other students, design projects based on certain criteria, or use certain equipment or accommodations to satisfy personal learning style preferences— as long as the privilege is earned and practiced within clearly-defined limits.

• Also consider some of the things you may never have thought of as privileges before, things like being able to go on to the next level or chapter, getting to help out in another classroom, being able to design their own assignments (within stated parameters), or even being able to continue having a discussion with you (as long as they aren't yelling).

• Simply being able to make certain decisions about things like content, sequence, presentation, or where they want to work, for example, offers a host of positive consequences, and in many cases will be all you need to engage some, if not most or all of your students.

• When students fail to earn a privilege— or lose a privilege because they aren't working within previously prescribed limits— a punitive or shaming response is not necessary. It's perfectly reasonable to withdraw or withhold a desired outcome until the kids' behavior changes.

• The lack of access to the positive teaches more than anything you could possibly say— as will earning back privileges according to their behavior. Because in a win-win classroom, students will presumably have lots of opportunities to refine the behaviors and strategies necessary for gaining access to these positive outcomes until they eventually get it right.

Motivation & Response Strategies and Tools

Effective/Safe

- Building relationships and connections with students
- Building a sense of community, mutual respect among students; developing and encouraging friendship and interaction skills; peer tutoring, mentoring
- Boundaries
- Focusing on *positive* outcomes or consequences: conditional (earned) access to privileges and activities
- Attention to non-verbal cues, the energy in the classroom
- Emotional maturity, not reactive; ability to not take students' behavior personally; ability to keep a cool head; willingness to attack problems, not people
- Unconditional acceptance of students, valuing them as people
- Recognition
- Offering students choices (within limits)
- Providing clear instructions (in ways students can understand them)

- Providing structure and routines
- Following through (immediately); withdrawing or withholding privileges when infractions occur

Ineffective/Unsafe

- Discounting importance of connectedness
- Disregarding importance of community and interpersonal skills among students

- Rules (and more rules)
- Focus on punishments and negative consequences (even if logical)

- Inattention, disregard; "Just get busy."

- Reactivity; tendency to take students' behavior personally; tendency to label students, criticize, make students wrong

- Conditional approval (dependent on people-pleasing behavior)
- Praise
- Commands; limiting students' access to options; fear of student autonomy
- Lack of clear instructions; making assumptions about students' understanding or about how they process information
- Lack of structure and routines;
- Lack of immediate follow through; delaying follow through with warnings or asking for excuses

(Effective/Safe)	*(Inffective/Unsafe)*
• Asking for what you want; giving students information about what they need or need to do to be successful (get what they want)	• Telling students how their behavior makes you feel; labeling misbehavior
• Listening and validating students' emotional experiences	• Dismissing, ignoring, or interfering students' emotions; criticizing feelings; blaming students; trying to fix feelings or situation
• Expressing understanding of, concurrence (agreement) with students' emotional expression; defusing	• Reacting, criticizing, punishing; escalating
• Building problem-solving skills	• Giving advice or commands; rescuing; telling kids how to solve problems
• Controlling anger	• Depending on students' fear of your anger or disapproval
• Respect for students' dignity regardless of behavior	• Humiliation; yelling; verbal or physical violence against student
• Intentions	• Expectations
• Accommodating students' needs for success; matching instruction to cognitive ability; differentiating as necessary	• Following curriculum without regard for students' academic needs or abilities
• Meeting learning style needs; teaching the way kids learn	• Presenting material without regard for how students process information
• Modeling respectful and responsible behavior	• Expecting behavior from students that they do not see in you
• Handling misbehavior, keeping other adults (administration, parents) informed	• Relying on other adults to punish or intervene negative student behavior
• Building in flexibility (before there is a problem)	• Rigid application of rules; asking for excuses; giving warnings
• Being able to separate students' behavior from achievement	• Withholding credit or advancement from students who misbehave

5 Characteristics of a Good Boundary*

- **Clarity:** Boundaries are clear, specific and clearly communicated. They work best when you have the students' attention, when they understand what you're requesting, when the positive outcome of their cooperation is clear and when specific requirements, conditions or time factors are spelled out. For example, *"I'll read for the last 10 minutes of class as long as you're quiet."* (or, *". . . if your desks are cleared."*)

- **Win-win:** Boundaries respect and consider the needs of everyone involved. They attempt to create ways for both you and your students to get what you want. For example, *"You can take another library book home as soon as you return the ones you borrowed last week,"* or *"I want to hear about this problem. I'll be free to give you my full attention as soon as I give the reading group their assignments."*

- **Proactivity**: Boundaries work to prevent problems and are typically expressed before a problem occurs or before it is allowed to continue (or get worse). For example, *"You can use this equipment as soon as you can demonstrate how to use it correctly." "Let's stay quiet in the hall so we don't disturb any of the other classes."*

- **Positivity:** The most effective boundaries typically focus on the positive outcomes of cooperation. They are also expressed positively, as promises rather than threats or simply as information (with the implication that the positive outcome is available, for example, until a certain time or under certain conditions). For example, *"If you do your homework 10 days in a row, you can have the 11th day off (or do for extra credit),"* or *"The art center closes at 2:00."*

- **Follow through:** Follow through—allowing a positive consequence to occur only when the child does what you've asked—is what communicates that you mean what you say and you say what you mean. It increases the likelihood that your students will take you seriously when you ask for what you want, and it improves the chances that they will cooperate as well (if it's really the only way they can get what they want).**

*Boundaries are tools for building cooperation in relationships, for letting others know what you want and for letting them know which options are available to them (for getting what they want). Set boundaries when you want behaviors to change and wish to avoid negative, stressful behaviors such as nagging, yelling, threatening or punishing to get what you want. Whether you use boundaries in relationships with children or other adults, the characteristics of boundaries and dynamics of boundary setting are the same.

**Boundaries allow you to follow through without even getting angry! Follow-through works wonders, but it requires patience, faith, consistency and courage!

☛ The Power of Positive Consequences

Sounds like:

- "If you do this, you can…"
- "When you finish, you can…"
- "As long as you (comply with this condition), you can…"

Benefits of emphasizing positive consequences:

- Less stress in interaction
- Reduces likelihood of opposition or refusal
- Puts responsibility on child

Homework Options:
No More Excuses

- Requesting a certain percentage of assignments be turned in on time: *"You are responsible for 37 out of 40 of the assignments you'll be getting this semester."* BONUS: Giving extra credit for any of the extras that are turned in, even if late!
- Giving some token for one free "excuse" which does not need any explanation for its use: *"Here is a* 'Get Out of Jail Free' *card which you can use if you forget your homework any time during the semester."* BONUS: Not requiring kids to actually SHOW the card to get off the hook.
- Giving kids a break after a certain number of assignments are completed: *"If you turn in completed homework 10 days in a row, you can have the next night off (or you can do the work for extra credit)."*
- Having a specific date for assignments to be turned in. (Similar to deadlines used in many college classes, may work best for specific assignments or projects, or with advanced level classes and self-managing kids.) *"As long as you get your homework in two weeks before the end of the grading period, you'll get credit for it."*
- Not counting one or more missed assignment, or the lowest score on a series of assignments or quizzes, for example: *"You can drop your lowest grade each semester."*
- Extending daily deadlines beyond the end of class, giving kids until the end of the following day to turn in work: *"You have until the 3:30 bell* tomorrow *to turn in this assignment."*

6 Reasons to Not Ask Why*

- It focuses on excuses rather than commitment.
- It assumes the student knows why he did it (or forgot) and can adequately explain his reasons to you.
- It suggests that your boundaries and limits are flexible if your students have a good enough excuse: *"If you're creative (or pathetic) enough, you're off the hook."*
- It puts you in the position of having to judge the "validity" of your student's excuses and arbitrarily decide whether or not to hold her accountable.
- If you've got a good boundary with a positive outcome, if your students are developmentally able to do what you've asked and if they have had enough time, training or reminders (ahead of time) to succeed, *why* doesn't matter—the positive outcome is simply not available until the students change their behavior or fulfill their commitments.
- It may give you ammunition to attack or shame the student *("You should have thought of that before," "You should have known better," "How could you have been so stupid?")* instead of using the occasion as an opportunity for the child to make more responsible choices and correct his or her behavior.

    *This title refers to not asking for excuses by asking kids to explain why they did something wrong or forgot to do something they were supposed to do (or had agreed to do).

Ingredients of Effective Adult-Student Relationships:
Motivation & Follow Through

The ability to connect what you want
with what the student wants in positive ways.

The ability to motivate and reinforce cooperative behavior
with outcomes *other than* adult approval or the threat of negative
adult reactions (shaming, criticism, abandonment, etc.).

The willingness to make learning personally meaningful,
exiting and/or relevant
to encourage commitment and engagement from students.

The willingness to identify a variety of meaningful
positive outcomes (including enrichment or additional work)
that are conditionally available while students are on task,
or when certain tasks are completed.

The willingness to *withhold* positive consequences
until the student has held up her end of the bargain.

The ability to *immediately* intervene breaches
in conditions or limits of a boundary,
avoiding warnings, delayed consequences, punishment or praise
(used to manipulate behaviors that are not being exhibited);
the willingness to build in flexibility *before* a boundary is violated
(in order to accommodate occasional problems without
compromising one's boundaries);
the willingness to resist asking for excuses.

Ingredients of Effective Adult-Student Relationships:
Success Orientation

Needs: Success, dignity, purpose, potential, confidence.

The willingness to **accommodate a variety of student strengths** and intelligences, learning styles and modality preferences. The ability to help a student succeed by giving appropriate information and clear directions, setting and communicating boundaries, offering opportunities to choose and negotiate, requesting age-appropriate behaviors and responses and giving opportunities to self-manage (to increase behavioral success).

The willingness to base instructional decision on actual student needs— **starting where the student is** rather than simply "covering content."

The ability to **teach (or work with kids) in present time** (according to a student's current needs rather than the anticipated demands of future teachers or grade levels).

The willingness to **differentiate instruction,** adjusting placement, quantity of work required and other curricular expectations to accommodate student readiness, experience and acquisition of prerequisite skills. The willingness to present information more than once, explain something in a variety of ways or offer additional practice when necessary.

The willingness to **encourage progress** and **raise the bar as achievement warrants.** Alternative to unrealistic expectations, misunderstandings, instruction or environments poorly matched to student's needs, and "set ups" for failure or passivity.

Remember: "Fair" does not mean "same."
21st Century (Win-Win) Definition:
Fair = Equally Appropriately Challenged

Getting Away with Success

by Jane Bluestein, Ph.D.

Note: *The following is a preview of material from Dr. Bluestein's latest book* **The Win-Win Classroom** *(Corwin Press, 2008).*

When we look back over the traditions from which our current school practices arose, we can see a system that practically guarantees failure for at least a portion of our students. Maybe it made some sense, when the majority of our students were heading to factory-era jobs, to stress the importance of uniformity as much as our schools did. And nowhere is this value more evident—still!—than in our obsession with standards and standardization. Even without disputing the questionable importance of everything we believe all children should know or be able to do, the notion that we should be able to walk into any group of eighth graders, for example, and teach them all the same concept at the same time and expect uniform mastery is certainly not based in the reality of any group of human beings I've ever met. Throw in our attachment to the good old bell curve and we end up with a lot of kids left out of the loop. One of the unfortunate places to which these traditions lead is the expectations that teachers' evaluations reflect a normal distribution (that is, bell-shaped curve) of grades. As much as we may talk about wanting all children to succeed, you can be sure if you have too many successful kids in your class, somebody is going to be on your case for not doing your job. Still, even in a highly structured (or even repressive) system, there are things we can do to, yes, get away with success.

- Assess what your students already know. If they can already demonstrate mastery, you've got justification for moving them ahead. If they lack prerequisite skills, you have something to back up your decision to teach what they need.

- Document like there's no tomorrow. Good documentation is more than a sign of professionalism and accountability. It also helps to protect your administration, whose support can be invaluable in actually matching your instruction to the needs of your students. Keep track of assessments, dates specific skills were mastered, work samples, progress.

- Move along the lines of district-mandated curriculum. If you have to back up the content you're teaching or choose to include content that is not listed in the mandates for your grade level or subject area, working within what's already established in the system can give you more leverage than arbitrarily choosing skills or content to teach.

- Maintain high levels of performance as your criteria for achievement. Continue raising hurdles as kids make progress. You can fend off charges of "lowering the bar" or grade inflation when you keep pushing and refuse to accept inferior or sub-standard work based on your assessment of what is possible for a particular class, group or individual to do.

- Back up decisions with research that will support your instructional choices—anything about how kids learn, or how they learn that particular content, can help.

- Build relationships and communication with your administration, department, support staff and grade-level colleagues.

- Build relationships with parents. I never had a parent insist on a placement that would guarantee failure for his or her child. And once they saw evidence of success, achievement, progress or even enthusiasm for my class, I found parental support to be one of the best weapons in the arsenal.

- Keep your intentions in mind. If you are there to ensure that your students gain knowledge and proficiency, you will choose very different behaviors than if you just want to barrel through the curriculum.

- Be willing to take a few hits. Bucking tradition can cost you some conflict or disapproval from colleagues.

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Dealing with Feelings (or Problems)

Nonsupportive responses to children's feelings and problems:

Responses that attempt to make the feelings go away

Dynamic: Protects children from their feelings; or protects adults who are uncomfortable with children's feelings.

Outcomes: Child's self-doubt, confusion; need to "stuff" feelings; feelings not OK.

- **Dismissing/Minimizing**
  "That's nothing to be upset over." "That doesn't mean anything." "So she called you a camel. Big deal!"

- **Excusing**
  "She didn't mean it." "He didn't know what he was saying." "She must be having a bad day." "Well, you know, her parents are going through a divorce."

- **Denying**
  "Oh, you don't really feel that way." "There's no such thing as monsters." "People shouldn't hate their brothers."

- **Distracting**
  "But you're so good in your other subjects." "Things could be worse." "You're lucky you have a brother." "You think you've got problems." "But his parents are so nice." "Cheer up! This is the best time in your life!"

- **Medicating**
  Uses some type of substance (usually food) or activity (schoolwork, TV, chores, shopping) to distract children from their feelings: *"Just get busy."*

Responses that make the child wrong for having feelings

Dynamic: Serves as outlet for adult's anger, impatience, frustration, or feelings of inadequacy or shame triggered by child's feelings.

Outcome: Shame/wrongness; defensiveness; feelings not OK.

- **Attacking/Shaming**
  "I told you this would happen!" "Don't be a sissy." "You're so ungrateful!" "Nice boys don't hate their sisters." "You're just too sensitive." "How could you be so stupid!"

- **Blaming**
  "What did you do to her?" "Well, if you had just studied!" "Of course it died! You never changed the water!" "That's what happens when you overeat."

- **Challenging**
  "Why does that bother you?" (requires child to defend feelings, convincing adult that the feelings are legitimate/getting adult's approval for feelings)

- **Enmeshing**
  "Well I never had a problem with math." "So now you know how I feel." "Your problems really give me a headache." "That wouldn't bother me."

Responses that attempt to fix it or make it better

Dynamic: Makes adult responsible for child's problems, allows adult to feel important.

Outcome: Reduced sense of responsibility for problems (for child); lack of confidence in problem-solving abilities; helplessness; using feelings to get "rescued"

- **Commiserating**
  "Ain't it awful." "Well, he's a jerk anyway." "You don't need her anyway." "You're so unlucky!" (Unlike validating, commiserating can imply a certain amount of powerlessness or victimhood. It is not supportive or particularly comforting and rarely what the person wants to hear.)

- **Rescuing**
  "Here. Let me see those math problems." "OK. You can have the car again next weekend if you have a good enough excuse for breaking curfew." "Look, I'll talk to your teacher about it." "That's OK. I'll pay those insurance premiums."

- **Advising**
  "Go study and you won't feel so scared about that test." "Tell her how you feel." "You know if you cut your hair and lost five pounds you wouldn't feel that way." "Just ignore her."

Creating a Safe Emotional Environment

- Remember that it's OK for children to have feelings without explaining or defending them.

- Feelings are not behaviors. Feelings are never right or wrong, but behaviors that hurt other people are not OK. Adults do not need to protect other people from a child's feelings, but they may need to intervene in hurtful behaviors.

- It's OK to express feelings as long as doing so does not hurt anyone or create problems for others.

- Most children (and many adults) do not have healthy, non-hurtful outlets for expressing their feelings, especially anger or frustration. In a non-conflict time, discuss and present options available to help kids "externalize" their feelings without hurting themselves or others. (Ex: Having a stuffed animal or picture they can talk to when you're not available. Being able to draw a picture or write a letter about how they're feeling—and then tearing it up! Going for a run, hitting a pillow, tearing up paper, or going down the hall for a drink of water and a chance to catch their breath!)

- Adults and children are distinct, separate individuals. It is not necessary to own someone's feelings or problems to show that person love.

- Adults are not responsible for changing or controlling the child's feelings. It's more loving and supportive to communicate that a child's feelings are heard, respected, and taken seriously —even when you don't understand them.

- Children learn to deal with feelings more effectively when they don't have to "stuff" or hide them to protect a critical, guilt-ridden, or over-reacting adult.

- Responses that interfere with children's ability to own, feel, or process their feelings can block communications, teach children to mistrust their own feelings and perceptions, and interfere with the development of their problem-solving capabilities.

Supportive Alternatives for Dealing with Other People's Problems and Feelings

- **Get clear on your role**
  Are we there to protect children or to teach children to protect and defend themselves; to give solutions or to help them find their own?

- **Listen**
  Maintain eye contact, with minimal or no talking

- **Distinguish between feelings and behaviors**
  There's a difference between wanting to hurt someone and actually hurting someone. Feelings are never right or wrong.

- **Accept**
  Avoid judgmental, shocked, disappointed words, looks, body language. Avoid making others wrong for their feelings.

- **Validate**
  Support the other person's right to his or her feelings. Offer words or non-verbal assurances that gives children permission to have feelings.

- **Maintain your boundaries**
  Let kids know when you'll be available. Watch the tendency to take responsibility for the child's feelings or problems by trying to fix the situation, cheer them up (fix them), or by rescuing or advising.

- **Provide and encourage healthy, non-hurtful outlets for feelings (and meeting needs)**

- **Ask—don't tell**
  This is for problem-solving rather than dealing with affective states—two different situations, each of which requires different behaviors. Once the emotional crisis has passed and the child is ready to access the part of the brain that deals with cognitive functions, help him find solutions to his own problems, think about options available, anticipate probable outcomes. This process puts you in the role of facilitator or guide. A great alternative to advice-giving!

- **Model and teach conflict-management**
  If necessary, model and teach conflict-management Demonstrate non-destructive ways to have, express, and process feelings; express needs; set and maintain boundaries.

- **Leave the door open for future discussion**.

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Alternatives to Advice-Giving:
Ask, Don't Tell
Sample Questions to Build Responsibility & Problem-Solving Skills

The questions that follow are provided to help with the mechanics of mastering the technique of "asking—not telling," an effective alternative to giving kids advice that encourages independence and problem-solving competence. The questions are in no particular order and will neither be relevant nor appropriate for every child or situation you encounter. Read through the list for ideas and to "ground" yourself in the process. Use what works for you. Add to this list as you think of other questions or want to note ideas that work.

The purpose of these questions—and this process—is to allow you to put the responsibility for solving a particular problem on the child, almost like throwing a ball back to him, over and over, even though it will almost always seem easier to just catch the ball (the problem) and run with it yourself. Remember, you want to get a dialogue going, one in which your students do most of the talking and you do most of the listening. You want to help them get a better grip on what's going on in a particular situation, and to determine what they want, which options are available (and won't create additional problems) and what they're ultimately going to try to make it better or make it right.

This process is only as good as your ability to listen and respond to what you're hearing. Be careful that you don't simply run down this list (or some other), bombarding your child with a series of questions. Please do not "drill" your students or get impatient to ask the next question. This is not a script and the questions are not the issue—*the process is!*

So next time one of your students trusts you enough to come to you with a problem, watch the tendency to offer solutions or advice. Try this process and watch how smart your students can be!

Adapted from a still-to-be-published booklet entitled Feelings & Problem-Solving, *book 6 in a series entitled* Proactive Parenting: Creating Great Relationships with Your Kids, *by Jane Bluestein, Ph.D. (I.S.S. Publications, Albuquerque, NM.)*

Some Sample Questions

What happened?

What would you like to happen next?

What do you think will (or might) happen next?

How do you think you'll feel later (or afterwards)?

How would you feel if that happened to you?

What have you tried so far?

What's worked for you in the past?

What else could you try?

What kind of back-up plans do you have if that doesn't work?

What have you tried that's worked with this person?

What have you tried that's worked in similar situations?

What are you risking by doing that?

Is it worth it?

How can you take care of yourself in this situation?

How would you like him/her to treat you?

What do you plan to say?

What seems to work for the other kids?

If you had a magic wand, how would you make this turn out?

What do you think the other person wants?

What have you just agreed to?

Will that create any problems for you?

Will that create any problems for anyone?

What if you change your mind?

What else might you try?

What have you learned from this?

What are you going to do the next time you're tempted to do that?

How are you going to avoid this problem in the future?

How are you going to prevent this problem in the future?

Is this helping?

How important is it for you to (pass this class, get the part, stay in this relationship, make the team. . .)?

What are you willing to do to (pass this class, get the part, stay in this relationship, make the team...)?

What will happen if you don't (pass this class, get the part, stay in this relationship, make the team...)?

How will you know if that's a good choice?

What would you have to do differently to make this work?

What are you willing to change?

How can you find out?

What questions do you have?

How do you think you might handle this the next time it occurs?

What do you wish you could say to this person?

Do you want the situation to change?

How do you want the situation to change?

Are you willing to consider other options?

What will you do the next time you run into him/ her?

What does this person want you to do to make things right?

What might you propose as an alternative?

What will happen if you get caught?

Would you like to talk about it?

Would you like to talk to someone else about this?

Can you live with that?

What are you being blamed for?

What parts of this situation are beyond your control?

What parts of this situation are within your control (or influence)?

What are the limits (or criteria or deadlines) in this situation?

How much time do you need to decide?

What if you're OK the way you are?

What would that sound like?

How are you going to follow up on this?

When are you going to follow up on this?

What do you wish this other person would do?

If the situation doesn't change, how can you take care of yourself?

What bothers you the most about this situation?

What do you like best about this person?

Do you want to solve this problem?

Do you need more time to think about it?

Do you want me to leave you alone?

Problem Solving Strategies

- Deal with affect (emotional hijacking) first. Don't try to solve problems, or ask kids to solve problems when they're upset. (They can't access the cognitive parts of the brain until they calm down.)*
- Help student get rational. Breathing or relaxation exercises; walking or going to get a drink of water; Brain Gym (especially "Hook Ups") can help.
- Encourage Problem Solving: ASK— Don't Tell. (See examples at left.)
- Help student assume responsibility for solutions. This can not happen if we tell the students how to solve their problems.
- Help students explore options, possible outcomes (more questions).
- Model conflict prevention skills (good boundary-setting language; asking directly for what you want; not blaming or asking others (parents, principal, counselor) to solve your problems.

*Telling them to "Calm down" usually has the opposite effect!

Other questions:

How I will remember to ASK (or just LISTEN!) the next time I'm tempted to give advices

Ways to Improve the School's Social Culture

• Increase awareness, advocacy and a willingness to take
immediate, positive action
(regarding how kids treat one another).

• Use conflicts as opportunities to teach, build interactive
skills and positive attitudes/beliefs about others
(rather than simply punishing violators).

• Build problem solving skills. (Ask, don't tell.)

• Build social skills or friendship skills as needed.

• Build emotional intelligence, resilience, self-control.

• Model tolerance, respect (avoid double standards).

• Work to deglamorize and eliminate elitist status
of certain students over others.
(Value *all* students, holding a wider range of
possible contributions in high regard.)

• Provide opportunities for service.

What's Wrong With "I- Messages"?

by Jane Bluestein, Ph.D.

Description:

Formula for expressing feelings in conjunction with another person's behavior: *"When you _____, I feel _____ (and I want you to _____)."* in order to get the other person to act differently.

Problems:

- They are still "You" messages, literally (verbally) and energetically, carrying a message of blame: Your emotional state is the fault of someone else's behavior. ("Victim" talk.)
- They put the responsibility for your feelings and emotional well-being on someone else.
- They assume that the other person is invested in your emotional well being and would be willing to change his or her behavior to care-take you. This is especially not true of typical playground or hallway social dynamics.
- They give a great deal of power to someone who may not have your best interests at heart, someone who may, in fact, be hoping to cause you discomfort, embarrassment, inconvenience or pain.
- If someone's intention is, indeed, to hurt you, "I messages" tell that person that his or her strategies for doing so are effective and, in fact, working!
- Few child relationships have (or should have) the intimacy required for dealing with the emotional impact of behaviors—and such intimacy is neither necessary nor relevant for generating cooperative, respectful behavior.
- Kids who are willing to change their behavior so other people won't feel sad or angry often have a hard time making good decisions on their own behalf. Their behavior tends to be other-motivated and people-pleasing, patterns which carry their own dangers and risks.
- There are other, better ways to generate cooperation from others, regardless of their personal feelings for you

Alternatives:

- Dealing with confrontation by "agreeing" and changing the subject
- Requesting different behavior (or that a certain behavior stop): *"Pleasse stop kicking my chair." "I don't like that word. Please don't use it around me." "Please don't touch the stuff on my desk."* (No need to justify or explain why.)
- Stating a preference: *"I don't care to discuss that."* (And then cheerfully change the subject, redirect discussion.)
- Set a boundary, using a promise with a positive consequence: *"I don't play with people who call me names." "I don't date people who hit." "I'll be happy to continue this discussion when you stop yelling at me."*
- Simply refusing to engage or respond is also appropriate in some instances.

Free article on my Web site, What's Wrong with "I-Messages"?: *http://janebluestein.com/2013/whats-wrong-with-i-messages/*

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Ways to Increase Positivity in School

- Offer positive feedback
    - Keep the focus on the positive (Let kids know what they've done right and teach them the rest.)
    - Allow "do-overs" to correct mistake, get full credit
    - Build on strengths (vs. criticize weaknesses, mistakes, errors, flaws, omissions, etc.)

- Eliminate double standards (Subtle but powerful message communicated when we "walk the talk," modeling behaviors, language, tone, attitudes we want from kids.)

- Change threats to promises, focusing on the positive outcomes of their cooperation or performance

- Think: *Consequences = POSITIVE outcomes* (Energetically, everything else is punitive, even if logical. Really.)

- Reinforce with recognition rather than praise. Rather than talking about the student being good or making you happy, use a 2-part statement which:
    - Describes the behavior: *"You brought your library book back!"*
    - Tells the student the outcomes of this choice: *"Now you can take another one home."* (See page __)

- Let parents know about the good stuff! (See pages _____)

- Maintain your sense of humor!

Guidelines for
Reinforcing Positive Behavior

- Use positive reinforcement—verbal or non-verbal (interactive, token or activity)—to acknowledge and strengthen *already-existing* behaviors. Avoid attempting to use reinforcement *before* the desired behavior has occurred. (Use different strategies to motivate the student to *initiate* a desired behavior [promise a meaningful positive consequence for cooperation] or to *intervene* a disruptive behavior [withdraw or withhold a privilege or positive consequence].)

- Watch for a tendency to use praise to help a student solve a problem or feel good about himself. Flattery can appear manipulative even to a young or needy student. Such messages are superficial at best and will not contribute to the student's genuine sense of self-worth.

- Avoid praising one child (or group) to motivate others. "I like the way Bobby is sitting" only serves to reinforce Bobby (and may, in fact, back-fire if Bobby isn't happy about the attention), promising conditional approval to others when they, too, sit.

- Avoid using teacher approval as a means of reinforcing desired behavior. Learn to distinguish between reinforcers intended to maintain a particular student behavior and genuine expressions of appreciation, affection or enjoyment of your students. In a win-win classroom, behaviors such as a smile, touch, nod or wink—which obviously communicate the fact that the teacher is pleased—are not used as expressions of conditional approval or caring. Although they may sometimes be used as reinforcers, such behaviors may also appear randomly, regardless of the student's performance or behavior, as expressions of appreciation or affection.

- Phrase reinforcements as an affirmation or acknowledgement of a behavior the student has demonstrated and the positive consequences now available (not as "if . . . then" statements, which are more useful for motivating behavior that has not yet been demonstrated). Reinforcements may be effectively communicated in either oral or written form.

- To reinforce a desirable behavior, first *describe* the behavior that took place. Be specific and concrete and avoid making judgments about the behavior or the worth of the student.
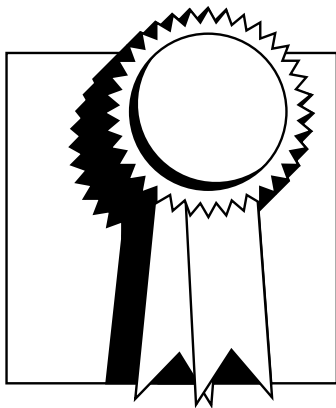
- Secondly, whenever possible, attach a comment that *connects* the immediate benefits of the student's behavior to the student. (Occasionally, it may be appropriate to state the positive outcomes in terms of their benefits to the group.) Focus on the payoff for the student, making sure the outcome is positive and meaningful. Avoid projecting your own feelings and values, which may or may not be relevant to those of the student, or suggesting how the student should feel.

- Look for the positive. You can almost always find something to recognize in any performance. Reinforce what was done right and work to correct or improve the rest.

- Perhaps because of the rigidity of roles during the factory-era, there was a tendency for teachers to recognize certain behaviors in boys (such as strength, mechanical skill, and ability in math and the sciences) more frequently than girls (who are more often reinforced for neatness, creativity, attractiveness, and writing and artistic abilities). In recognizing students, be aware of any tendencies to promote stereotypes.

Adapted from **The Win-Win Classroom**, *by Jane Bluestein, Ph.D. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2008).*

Success with Students' Parents

Parents and guardians can provide a great deal of support and reinforcement. For the most part, they want to know what's happening in school, how their children are doing and how they, the parents, can help. They tend to be far more enthusiastic and positive in their support when they feel informed and included, when they feel welcomed in our classrooms, and when their interest in their children's well-being is respected. Unfortunately parent-teacher relationships rarely attain their maximum potential. Often both parties complain of a lack of contact unless there's a problem. If this has indeed been the case with the parents of your students, imagine how effective a more positive approach can be! Here are a few ideas that might help:

- Get acquainted early in the year, either by note, phone, in-school conferences, welcome meetings or home visits. Keep first meetings positive.

- Keep parents informed about your policies and goals. If you have certain specific requirements about how you want work done, when assignments are due, or other boundaries or follow-through intentions they may have some questions about, let them know ahead of time.

- Keep them informed about your classroom projects and practices. For example: If you are doing a special program, or allowing new behavior options—like leaving the class to work in the library or sitting on the floor to read or do special assignments—let the parents know.

- **Maintain regular positive contact.** *Best bet:* A weekly progress report that focuses on responsible learning behaviors necessary for success in the classroom. (Sample below.) Having the students (or one student) put the names on the forms will leave you free to quickly fill in the progress. I have found that these reports work best when we only mark the skills that had indeed been demonstrated (only positive marks, rather than "grading" each skill) and when we make sure that each student gets at least three stars or smiley faces every week. (I frequently checked all 5, as often as possible!) Made a point, when you can, to write a few words on the back or bottom of the form—always something positive! *"Doing great in math!" "Self-control is improving." "Great sense of humor!" "Very helpful and caring with other students." "I love teaching your child."* The little time you put in will pay off in a big way.

- Make positive "surprise" contact. Example: An unanticipated phone call or note home about something special that happened or something that you noticed. These calls don't need to take more than a minute. Pick one class that really needs a lot of encouragement. Attempt to get back to the parents of *each* child in the class—say once a month, or even once a semester.

- Create (or supervise the creation of) a monthly newsletter. Be sure to include samples of the students' work—including *all* students in some way during the course of the year. Tell about new projects, guests, field trips or special events. You might also include reviews of parenting resources, parenting tips and ideas, and/or excerpts from books, magazines or web sites (be *sure* to reference them correctly).

- PROOFREAD all correspondences that go home or, better yet, have someone else check for spelling, punctuation, grammatical and even format errors. Make sure your correspondences reflect your care and professionalism.

Based on material in Dr. Bluestein's books, **Being a Successful Teacher** *(Fearon Teacher Aids, Frank Schaffer Publishing, Torrance, CA.) and* **The Win-Win Classroom** *(Corwin Press, 2008.)*

Name	For week of:	
Takes care of materials		
Is caught up on all homework assignments		
Is caught up on all seatwork assignments		
Says "please" and "thank you"		
Raises hand before speaking		
Signed		

- Invite parents to visit your classroom, to see your class in action, to help out or to share their own expertise in some area.

- Be respectful of constraints on parents' time. Begin and end meetings on time.

- If a student is experiencing difficulty, either with the work or social behavior, or if the student is demonstrating behaviors that are interfering with her potential success in school, get in touch with the parents right away. Don't allow yourself to be placed in the embarrassing position of having to explain why you didn't contact the parents until the behavior became enough of a problem to affect the student's grades, progress or placement.

- IF THERE IS AN INCIDENT, call only to *report* what happened. Watch your tone and any tendency to judge. Stick to the behavior—what you *saw*—rather than trying to interpret or analyze the child's intent. Avoid blaming or criticizing, or judgments about personalities, character or values that might leave parents feeling defensive, protective, shamed, anxious, angry or resentful.

- When reporting an incident watch the tendency to suggest that this is the parent's problem or demand that they solve it *for* you. **Best bet:** Describe the problem and how you plan to deal with it. You might ask for input or suggestions, but avoid asking the parent to "talk to him" or punish him for you. Offer to follow up in a few days (and then make sure that you do). Remember, if you've been maintaining positive contact, regularly sharing what the child has been doing *well* and building a positive, respectful relationship with parents all along, you're much more likely to find them much more supportive when there's a problem.

- You have specialized knowledge that makes you qualified for your line of work. Do not use that knowledge against the parent by using jargon or talking down to him or her.

- Work with parents toward a mutual goal: the child's success and well-being in school. Do not presume to care more about the student than the parent does.

- Do not speak ill of coworkers, the administration or other students, teachers or parents. At all times, keep your actions and interactions professional.

- If confronted with an angry parent, STAY CALM and maintain your boundaries. Speak softly if they speak loudly. Acknowledge the parent's anger as well as how important it is for you to hear what he or she has to say. If you need to, suggest going to an appropriate place for this kind of discussion. Encourage the parent to talk about what's going on and LISTEN! Try to avoid getting defensive or making the parent wrong for being upset. If you feel the least bit threatened, make sure to include (or call for) another teacher, administrator or support staff. It is OK for parents to get angry and blow off steam. It is *not* OK for anyone to use their anger as an excuse to violate you!

- Watch out for requests from parents for you to punish a child in the classroom for misbehaviors that happened at home. It is neither appropriate nor necessary for you to withhold privileges for events you did not witness, although you can suggest resources or classes for parents who are having problems and seem open to receiving such information.

- DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT. Keep track of all contact with parents in which you have shared important information or discussed a student's progress or behavior. Note the date, the purpose of the call, the parent's response and the outcome. Alert administrators to problems you may be having. Also make a note to follow up as necessary and then do so.

Great news about your great kid:

Guidelines for
Handling Negative Behavior

- **_Think prevention._** Although no one can predict every possible opportunity for disaster, many problems can be avoided by taking the time to anticipate what you and your students will need, considering any possibility for misunderstandings or difficulties and setting very specific limits ahead of time.

- When something comes up, try to isolate what's bothering you. Are you reacting to a personality trait or value conflict, or is the student's behavior actually interfering with the teaching or learning process?

- **_Attack the problem, not the person._** Mentally separate the student from the behavior. It's the interruption that's annoying—not the student.

- Minimize your reaction. Count to ten, or at least to five. Use this time to remind yourself that you don't have to get angry, lecture, criticize, interrogate or punish. (Often, you don't even have to get involved!) Staying calm can help you avoid compounding the problem at hand. A brief pause can also allow the student to resolve or correct the problem behavior on his own.

- Deal specifically with the behavior—not the morality of the behavior, previous incidents or the personality behind the misconduct.

- If your reaction starts to create a win-lose (or no-win) situation, stop and back off: **_"Wait. This isn't the way I want to handle this."_** If necessary—and possible—withdraw for a few seconds to regain your perspective.

- At all times, stay responsible for your actions and words. We are most vulnerable to negative adult behavior patterns in the presence of negative or disruptive student behaviors. Regardless of our commitment to maintaining a positive, win-win environment, there will be times we will most likely slip up and say or do something hurtful or destructive. At those times, be careful to model responsible language and not blame the student. For example, avoid statements like, **_"You make me so angry,"_** or **_"If you hadn't done that I wouldn't have said that to you."_** If you act or speak in a hurtful way, apologize and switch to more a constructive approach—just like you would want the student to do!

- Look for ways to offer many choices and positive outcomes for cooperation, building in incentives and motivators. This is a proactive and positive approach that will eliminate many of the incidents that arise when students are competing for power.

- Withdraw the privilege or positive consequence as soon as a misconduct occurs. Keep your tone and body language as neutral as possible. (A statement like **_"This isn't working"_** can help you intervene decisively without attacking or criticizing.)

Adapted from **The Win-Win Classroom: A Fresh and Positive Look at Classroom Management**, _by Jane Bluestein, Ph.D. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2008)._

- Whenever possible, invite the student to reclaim his privilege or possession as soon as the misbehavior ceases: *"You may return to the group as soon as you can control your talking," "You can continue playing with this game as soon as you finish cleaning up the area you just left."*

- If correcting his behavior will not give the student immediate access to the privilege or possession, let him know when it will be available again: *"Please return to your seats. Let's try (working together) again tomorrow,"* or *"Please put the puzzle back on the shelf until you finish your seatwork."*

- Provide support, feedback, guidelines and limits to help, but leave the responsibility for the student's behavior with the student.

- If instruction and activities would help in areas such as problem solving, social interaction, or handling anger and frustration, for example, save them for a non-crisis setting. Likewise, if you feel that you and your students could benefit from the administration or support staff (counselor, school psychologist, social worker), invite them to conduct or participate in these activities. These individuals may also be available to discuss particular problems and help you brainstorm possible win-win solutions, and will be especially helpful when you can provide documentation and don't attempt to dump the responsibility for the problem on them.

- In problem-solving activities and discussions, keep coming back to win-win: *"How can we both get what we want?"*

Intervention Strategies

Behavior	*Productive (Positive, Desirable)*	*Non-Productive (Neutral, Non-disruptive)*	*Counter-Productive (Negative, Disruptive)*
Intervention Strategy	Positive Reinforcement/ Recognition	Contingency Contracting, Offering Choices	Follow-through; loss of privilege (positive consequence); new boundary
Goal	Maintaining existing behavior, improving the likelihood of behavior recurring on its own	Encouraging more cooperative, more productive behavioral choices; building commitment	Stopping negative behavior; replacing with cooperative, non-disruptive behavior
Process	1. Describe the behavior 2. Connect to positive outcome	Connecting what you want to what the student wants; making productive behavior more desirable	Might include: • remove or delay access to positive consequence • ask student to *stop*, change behavior • present acceptable alternative • use promises (set new contingency)
Caution	Avoid praise that connects behavior to worth. *"I really like you when..." "You're good because..."* Avoid praise that reinforces dependence on approval: *"I like the way..."*	Motivators must be need fulfilling to be effective. This will vary from student to student. Motivators must also appear accessible (immediate enough). Avoid using conditional approval as a motivator. Avoid depending on your students' fear of your anger or power to motivate their cooperation.	Once limits have been violated, follow through immediately. Avoid warnings, reminders after the fact. Do not ask for excuses. Instead, ask what the student plans to do to correct the situation. Avoid punishing, moralizing, giving advice or solutions, making excuses or taking responsibility for the student's problem. Avoid making the child wrong; accept the student, *not* the behavior.

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