

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE BEGINNING TEACHER IN ELEMENTARY
EDUCATION CONCERNING CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE

by

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INTRODUCTION

The word discipline as it was derived from early Christian literature meant the method Christ used in teaching and leading His disciples. The procedure Christ used was that He, as leader, demonstrated the desirable behavior so clearly that the disciples understood, became convinced, and patterned their behavior after the leader's example.

The most effective form of discipline still follows this same idea. The first requirement is for the teacher to be the leader in bringing into being the desired pattern of behavior. The second requirement is for followership on the part of the students as they attain self-control and self-restraint in accord with the established goal.¹

There are many ideas concerning what constitutes a properly controlled group of children. What would be a proper definition for one teacher might not suit another. However, a reasonable amount of agreement can be expected on some generalities. The properly disciplined group goes about its work with little confusion and accompanying noise; individuals move about quietly, if the occasion calls for movement, talking is kept to a minimum in amount and volume, and children take turns talking and show proper respect and regard for others.²

Discipline means desirable and effective organization, control, and management of a learning situation by means which are appropriate and defensible.³

Several definitions of discipline, advocated by various public-school authorities, were listed in the article, "Discipline in the

¹George K. Drake and John F. Weinhoff, "What Are Some Good Practices in Handling Student Discipline?", The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals, 44 (April, 1960), 66.

²A. C. Smith, "Is Your Discipline Showing," The Texas Outlook, 41 (April, 1957), 40.

³Carl Baumgardner, "Some Elementary Principles of Discipline," The School Review, 63 (September, 1955), 347.

Public Schools," National Education Association Research Bulletin, December, 1957. They are as follows: (1) the creation and preservation of conditions essential to work, (2) self-control, (3) preparation for adult leadership, (4) intelligent obedience, (5) training and learning acceptable behavior, (6) amount of control a teacher has over her group, (7) enforced obedience, and (8) control and direction of energy that produces behavior.¹

Discipline means different things to different people. Most laymen think of it as punishment. Many students themselves unwittingly come closer to the true meaning of discipline when they refer to a teacher as one who 'has' good discipline, in much the same manner as they would refer to one who has good manners, expressing it as a quality of the teacher and recognizing it in one whose classroom is orderly. It is not so much a condition that is imposed, rather, it is a quality that permeates the atmosphere and is readily perceived and accepted by everyone.²

Broadly interpreted, the achievement of discipline in the classroom is the process whereby a teacher arranges an environment and sets the stimuli in such a manner that all pupils in a given situation cooperate in desirable activities and experience satisfaction and intellectual growth in the undertaking.³

Discipline, then, is not to be seen as isolated from the work of teaching and learning. It is an integral part of it.⁴ Discipline involves the creation and preservation of the conditions that are essential to the orderly progress of the work for which the school exists.⁵

¹"Discipline in the Public Schools," National Education Association Research Bulletin, 35 (December, 1957), 152.

²Mazzei Renato, "Factors Affecting Discipline in the Classroom," The Clearing House, 31 (November, 1956), 150.

³Jesse A. Bond, "Analysis of Observed Traits of Teachers Who Were Rated Superior in School Discipline," Journal of Educational Research, 45 (March, 1952), 507.

⁴Julia Schwartz, "Beginning Teacher," School Arts, 59 (December, 1954), 43.

⁵William C. Bagley, School Discipline (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), p. 10.

Statement of the Problem

The ability to control a classroom is essential to every teacher who expects to rise above mediocrity in his profession.¹ Discipline in the classroom is only as strong as the individual teacher makes it² and it is often the new teacher who has the most serious problems in this area.³ The teacher's attitude toward discipline is a paramount consideration.⁴

Since adjustments to authority and the demands of group standards are difficult ones to make, it is essential for the classroom teacher to give special attention to good discipline.⁵ In the name of freedom students are left without the guidance that would help them know how to use their freedom. It is good for students to be allowed freedom but only as they learn how to use it wisely. They have to learn and they need a guiding hand in the process.⁶ Without the guidance provided by external controls, the youngsters tend to feel bewildered and apprehensive. Too great a burden is placed on their own limited capacity for self-control.⁷ When a teacher consistently maintains good order, the majority of his students feel

¹Arthur J. Prescott, "Classroom Control or Classroom Chaos," Ohio Schools, 41 (January, 1963), 32.

²R. G. Whittlemore, "'Poor' Discipline," The Clearing House, 34 (May, 1960), 527.

³William M. Kulstad and Martha Finkler, "What Practices in School Discipline Develop Better Student-Teacher Relationships?" The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals, 41 (April, 1957), 168.

⁴D. Keith Osborn, "Discipline," Grade Teacher, 80 (September, 1962) 167.

⁵Galen M. Jarvis, "Attention to Good Discipline," The Clearing House, 33 (December, 1958), 197.

⁶Grace Langdon and Irving W. Stout, Bringing Up Children (New York: The John Day Company, 1960), p. 17.

⁷David P. Ausubel, "A New Look at Classroom Discipline," Phi Delta Kappan, 43 (October, 1961), 28.

secure and are actually encouraged to undertake adventure in growth because they know they will not be allowed to go too far.¹

Since classroom discipline can be a real problem for beginning teachers, the purpose of this study is to give beginning teachers, in the elementary school, some helpful suggestions concerning discipline so that they might feel more secure in their classroom situations and thus be better able to meet the needs of their students.

Limits of the Study

Research on this problem included a review of available literature regarding this topic. Study was concentrated on suggestions for the beginning elementary teacher concerning discipline in the classroom.

Method of Study

The method of carrying out this investigation of suggestions for beginning teachers concerning classroom discipline was reading and library research. Available books and periodicals in the main libraries of Kansas State University, The University of Kansas, and Northern Illinois University were investigated.

Definition of Terms

In this report, discipline will be referred to as a phenomenon of orderliness that permeates the classroom and is conducive to learning.

¹Norma E. Cutts and Nicholas Moseley, "Four Schools of School Discipline--a Synthesis," School and Society, 87 (February, 1959), 87.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ESTABLISHING
AND MAINTAINING
DISCIPLINE IN THE CLASSROOM

Suggestions are organized into those practical for use before class, those practical for use during class, those practical for use after class, and those that are in effect at all times.

Before Class

One of the first things the beginning teacher should become aware of is that of all the factors in the classroom which influence the group environment, the strongest is that exerted by the teacher. He provides the framework within which a group reacts.¹ The teacher is the center of the class and the responsibility for class discipline rests with him.²

It will help the beginning teacher if he gets acquainted with his students before they ever enter the classroom. In order to develop a plan of discipline, he should study permanent records of each class member³ to get an idea of the nature of the students.⁴ He should know

¹Ruth Cunningham, "Group Discipline," NEA Journal, 38 (January, 1949), 34.

²Arthur C. Perry, Discipline As A School Problem (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915), p. 142.

³Martha R. Finkler and Delmer H. Battrick, "What Are Good Practices in Handling Student Discipline?" The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals. 43 (April, 1959), 192.

⁴Karl Bernhardt, Discipline and Child Guidance (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964) p. 21.

about each child's present level of achievement, his abilities, and his interests. Psychological tests are useful ways of learning these things. Conferences with, or reports from, previous teachers will be very helpful.¹ Again, it is important to know and to understand the pupils.²

Because pupils--like adults--are first impression prone, prepare for the first session and first week with special care.³ Preparation is a key to good discipline. This is especially true for the beginning teacher who faces a new situation in which his pupils are prone to be influenced strongly by first impressions. An adequately prepared teacher, will win the students' respect.⁴ Long-range preparation is the necessary daily routine of planning, preparing material, and correcting papers. Short-range preparation is the activity just before a class begins that results in students entering an orderly room.⁵

Careful advanced planning of the instructional program will solve most discipline problems before they arise; busy children are usually well-behaved children.⁶ Know in advance what the purposes and

¹E. Lakin Phillips, Daniel N. Wiener, and Norris G. Haring, Discipline, Achievement, and Mental Health (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960), p. 27.

²Anne Hoppock, "Operating a Free But Disciplined Classroom," NEA Journal, 51 (October, 1962), 22.

³L. D. Harris, "A Positive Approach to Student Behavior," The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals, 40 (September, 1956), 107.

⁴Thelma Christy, "Classroom Control," School and Community, 49 (September, 1962), 7.

⁵Sister Marion Frances, "Discipline Is," NEA Journal, 54 (September, 1965), 26.

⁶Smith, op. cit., p. 15.

procedure, in general, will be in each learning situation. Always provide some meaningful challenge. Anticipate what will occur; at the same time be resourceful enough to capitalize on the unexpected.¹ Write lesson plans that will meet the needs of the brighter pupils and the duller pupils as well as the "average ones."² In short, clear objectives, good motivating techniques, and appropriate learning activities are excellent preventives of behavior problems.³

Daisy Bortz, an elementary teacher, Washington Township, New Jersey, believes that one important way to assure order in a classroom is to arrange the room as a real workroom.⁴ As the students come into this workroom the "tone" of the classroom period is set by the manner in which the children enter it. Each should enter in an orderly manner and prepare for the work of the day.⁵

During Class

The students are now in the classroom. There are several suggestions for discipline that are useful for this time.

While keeping a disciplined classroom, the teacher must not exhibit an authoritarian, arbitrary, way of classroom living.⁶ However, be business-

¹Baumgardner, op. cit., p. 348.

²Richard Loughlin, "Controlling a Class," The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals, 42 (November, 1958), 107.

³Harris, op. cit., p. 117.

⁴Hoppock, op. cit., p. 21.

⁵Smith, op. cit., p. 15.

⁶Cunningham, op. cit., p. 197.

like from the first second of the first class. Youngsters often try to take advantage of over-friendly and easy-going adults.¹ The sooner and the more effectively a teacher shows he "means business," the less disciplinary trouble he will have and the more teaching he will be able to do.² Be firm the first two weeks of school. If a teacher plays it smart by being firm at first, it is almost a certainty that the students will love and respect the teacher later. When "no" is said, mean it. Think before you say it. Smile often, but genuinely--students do not accept a syrupy, sweet, habit smile.³ Seriousness can be friendly, and smiles pay off.⁴

Be quick, firm, but pleasant. Laugh with the children when it will not disturb the classroom situation.⁵ The secure teacher does laugh at the occasional disturbance; he does not regard the chronic offender as a personal opponent, but as a child to be helped.⁶

Have fun with the youngsters by laughing with them, talking with them, and sharing their concerns, their high spots, and low moments. By doing this, the teacher is living with the students; not apart or nearby, not above or below, but with them.⁷

¹Loughlin, op. cit., p. 108.

²Phillips, op. cit., p. 30.

³Amma Foster, "Discipline," The Instructor, 67 (September, 1957), 20.

⁴Loughlin, op. cit., p. 108.

⁵Perry, op. cit., p. 109.

⁶Cutts and Moseley, op. cit., p. 87.

⁷James Hymes, Behavior and Misbehavior (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), 45.

Have a sense of humor. The teacher should learn to laugh loud and long at himself. It is not necessary to become the class jester, of course, but it helps to look for the humorous side of class incidents. Let students know that their teacher enjoys a good laugh now and then, and they will soon learn the appropriate times when all can share in the fun.¹ This sense of humor will help avoid making a mountain out of a molehill.² Anna Foster says to "develop a sense of humor, and laugh with, not at, the children. Above all, laugh often."³

Have the physical condition of the room comfortable.⁴ Check the ventilation, cleanliness, seating, bulletin boards, decorations, and lighting.⁵ Be sure that children will have proper visibility.⁶ The room should be attractive as well as comfortable.⁷

Use conversational tones when addressing the group.⁸ Look directly at the child being spoken to. Speak in a moderate or low voice that is pleasant and controlled, not angry and harsh.⁹ Speak infrequently. Yelling, nagging, incessant talking, flippancy, and the

¹Baumgardner, op. cit., p. 348.

²Phyllis Edwards, "Discipline and the Elementary School," Grade Teacher, 74 (September, 1956), 135.

³Foster, op. cit., p. 21.

⁴Cutts and Moseley, op. cit., p. 109.

⁵Loughlin, op. cit., p. 108.

⁶Finkler and Battrick, op. cit., p. 192.

⁷Cutts and Moseley, op. cit., p. 109.

⁸Edwards, op. cit., p. 131.

⁹Foster, op. cit., p. 20.

regular repetition of instruction, questions, or answers insures dwindling attention, respect, and compliance. One way to avoid unnecessary repetition of instructions is to duplicate them or write them on the board.¹ In short--avoid talking too much, too fast, or too loudly.²

Several people have compiled lists of suggestions concerning discipline. Although they say similar things, it is helpful to study each contribution.

Delmer Battrick says that teachers may avoid trouble before it starts by observing these helpful hints. Quickly master names of every student in the class. A seating chart may be helpful.³ Practice marginal vision--glance around the room. Be courteous if courtesy is expected in return. Do not accept impertinence. Do not stay at the desk--move freely about the room. Be relaxed and natural. Word questions clearly and insist on clearly stated answers. Make all assignments clear and definite. Allow for supervised study in class. Have an understanding with the principal about what types of discipline problems should be sent to the office. Do not make a major issue out of trivial offenses. Avoid group punishment for the mistakes of individuals. Avoid threats that cannot be enforced. Look for ways to relieve or prevent tensions in the classroom by varying methods; for example, use films, tape recorders, field trips, etc.⁴

¹Loughlin, op. cit., p. 108.

²Finkler and Battrick, op. cit., p. 193.

³Ibid., 192.

⁴Ibid., 193.

Perhaps reviewing what good disciplinarians do will help beginning teachers, suggests Richard L. Loughlin. These are some of their techniques. Get attention before attempting instruction. Do not give students time to get disorderly; put them to work at once. The great preventive--and cure--for student disorder is involving them in an activity of interest to them.¹ Daisy Bortz, an elementary teacher, in New Jersey, believes the never-a-wasted-moment idea is important in a well-disciplined classroom. Trouble starts when children have to wait. Her students do not sit down in the morning and wait for morning exercises to start. As soon as a child comes in, he begins work on an uncompleted job or starts a new one.²

Discourage pupils from wanting to leave the room for drinks, to go to the washroom, or to get supplies from their lockers. Urgent need is a sound basis for allowing the student to leave. The first day, seat pupils in the order they are to sit. Separate friends to discourage "visiting" during class. Allow only one student to approach the desk at a time. Crowds prevent the teacher from knowing what is going on in the entire classroom.³

Adaptation of vocabulary to the group, without descending to ridiculous depths is a must. The students expect the teacher to keep his place in language, as well as in everything else. Popularity seekers and comics are immediately detected and exploited by pupils. Without being an easy mark, trust pupils. If one claims he forgot to do the assignment,

¹Loughlin, op. cit., p. 108.

²Hoppock, op. cit., p. 21.

³Loughlin, op. cit., p. 108.

for example, take his word for it, enter the zero, and tell him he has until tomorrow to make it up without loss of credit. Since good behavior and appropriate attire and posture seem to be inter-related, insist on proper dress and posture.¹

Aware that prevention is better than punishment, move about the room to make the teacher's presence felt everywhere, not just front and center. Accentuate the positive. Without preaching or scolding, point out briefly the individual and group values of good school citizenship. Disturbers deny the group full instruction time. They harm the pupils, not the teachers. Let students live up to a good opinion by praising them individually and as a group; for close attention, good attendance, good work--even honest effort. Youth crave attention and secretly admire adults. Help them to like their better selves.²

Take a special interest in each of the "adopted" children. Inquire about their health after illnesses, send notes to them and to their parents about good work of special service. Produce cooperation and additional effort and capitalize on individual interests and talents by providing optional or extra-credit assignments or by granting special privileges for exceptional work. Never allow a pupil to feel incapable of succeeding.³

Use available materials, such as filmstrips or motion pictures, for lessons on good conduct. Discourage calling out and chorus answers by saying, "It is good to see that all are interested, but in the future

¹Ibid., p. 108. ²Ibid., p. 109. ³Ibid.

please raise your hand if you wish to talk." Plan frequent activities to check and show pupils their progress. Remember that even the worst pupils may be the best children their parents have. Assume that they just do not know any better and "tip them off" tactfully, in private.¹

If the class is getting out of hand, try one or more of the following disciplinary techniques. Change the type of activity naturally. The teacher keeps his temper and poise. Sometimes, children are amused by a teacher that is easily angered. If the teacher argues, he becomes the student's equal. If the teacher uses his hands, he will not be able to use his head. Do not become committed by making threats or promises. Good discipline seeks reclamation, not condemnation. Never embarrass or shame a pupil. Discourage the misbehavior of the ring leader; the others are sheep. However, avoid comparing the good with the bad. Do not punish an entire class--except with a brief silent period, preceded by an explanation--if the offender cannot be located. Give the class something to do and deal with the "affection starved" child. Avoid handling the situation in front of the entire class. The class may side with the disrupter. Should a smart aleck identify himself, show the class that you will not tolerate discourtesy or nonsense. Showing that you know the business--and mean business--has a sobering effect on all. Never wait until a class is completely out of hand before doing something about it. Good discipline, everywhere, is good for everyone.²

Starting with the first dismissal, the teacher--not the bell or the pupils--dismisses the class in a quiet and systematic manner. Do

¹Ibid., p. 109. ²Ibid., p. 110.

not allow students to "close up shop" until the warning bell signals that work should terminate.¹

Amma Foster suggests that the teacher who is a first-timer may find these suggestions useful in handling many common discipline problems, particularly in, say, the third or fourth grade. Stop all normal classroom proceedings and stare quietly at the child who is misbehaving. Others will turn to stare, and most likely the guilty one will soon become quiet. Ask the misbehaver a direct question concerning classwork, or repeated questions, if necessary. This will center his attention on something besides himself. Be CONSISTENT! Be fair--but ever firm. Do not tolerate "begging" for special privileges. When a child wants to be a tattletale, look at him directly and say nothing except, "I cannot hear you." Walk over to the misbehaving child and quietly remove the article in his hand that he is using to make noise, without commenting or changing the tone of the voice if talking.²

Eliminate as many "don'ts" as possible. Discipline as much as possible by quiet action instead of words. Stop unwanted noise as soon as it starts. Do not make the mistake of thinking the children will get quiet later. If the entire class seems "to squirm" stop and play a simple action game; or have a stretching, jumping, or bending exercise for a few minutes. Appoint the noisy one as a "word helper" during his study period, if he is a fast reader. Seat pupils by sociogram method. Rearrange about once a month if necessary. The teacher should watch himself for mannerisms. Frowning, squinting, pacing the floor, twitching

¹Ibid., p. 110. ²Foster, op. cit., p. 20.

the nose, using a slang expression repeatedly, may incite the children to pay attention to the mannerism rather than to the schoolwork. Give every child an equal chance. Some teachers favor the smart ones, some favor the slow ones. The other children notice these things. Make it a challenge to win all the Johnnys and Marys who have, according to the record, driven their previous teachers to distraction. See everything that goes on. The teacher must not "hid his head in the sand and play ostrich." Even if it is not mentioned, know exactly what is happening. Have a pleasant little surprise every few days. Maybe it will be a new song, a story, a finger play, something to show, a class period outside, a puzzle or riddle. Reprimand a child in private, except in an emergency. In the reading circle, if a child is fidgety, give him something to hold; flash cards, crayons, or other objects used in teaching.¹

In a description of what discipline is, Sister Marion Frances also gives suggestions concerning discipline. She says that discipline is dignity. In the classroom, the teacher lives his dignity by avoiding casual sitting positions, casual vocabulary, casual joking, familiar give-and-take except when they are deliberately used as tools of emphasis. Discipline is moving deliberately and purposefully with the apparent self-confidence of a captain on top deck. It is knowing what to do. Discipline requires teaching a subject in terms of the interest level of the class. It involves questions and answers from the students and utilizing the natural tendencies of the students.²

¹Ibid., p. 21.

²Frances, op. cit., p. 26.

She goes on to suggest that discipline is perceiving and understanding causes of misbehavior. It is realizing that students are human beings.¹ Understanding is a precious thing. It is a healing thing. It makes people grow, and it makes people well.² Sister Marion Frances then says that discipline is knowing when to tighten, when to loosen, and when to hold firm.³

Discipline is anticipating difficulties and finally, it is having an effective attitude. Creative thinking develops in the classroom of a teacher who shows that he appreciates a student's point of view.⁴

Other means of anticipating difficulties and avoiding them include the following: (1) give children plenty of hard out-of-door exercise, (2) have good books available for those who finish their work, (3) visit with each child and become his personal friend, (4) be positive and not negative in commands, (5) refrain from scolding and nagging.⁵

Phyllis Edwards also has suggestions that may prove helpful to the beginning teacher. She suggests the following: (1) reduce to routine such details as passing papers and supplies, (2) use praise when truly merited, (3) give ear to every sincere contribution, (4) show consideration for pupils' feelings, (5) use suggestibility because children are fine imitators. For example say, "I like the way Mary is paying attention." (6) be consistent, (7) appeal to the better impulses of the boys and girls--to their sense of justice and honor.⁶

¹Ibid., p. 27. ²Hymes, op. cit., p. 101.

³Frances, op. cit., p. 27. ⁴Ibid., p. 28.

⁵Cutts and Moseley, op. cit., p. 109.

⁶Edwards, op. cit., p. 135.

Two simple suggestions to beginning teachers on the question of discipline are given by Carl Baumgardner. One is to expect the best of the students. It is a psychological fact that mind-set governs how we interpret what we see, and even what we see. Look for the better qualities and you will tend to see better qualities, while at the same time you will overlook worse ones. This attitude can be contagious, so that the pupils will come to see the teacher in the best light too. The other suggestion is to be inclined to overlook human faults and frailties. If the class is restless or noisy at times or if some children in the group seem unaccountably awkward or crude on occasions, remember that everyone has been, will be, or is a member of such a group. Typical school-agers have numerous inadequacies and deficiencies; chalk them up to immaturity and inexperience rather than to evil intent.¹

A few more suggestions might include remembering that as children share in making rules, they learn to take responsibility for their own behavior.² Also, some teachers are too nice to students. They try to reason with them when some students respect only authority.³

When the child challenges an adult with "who me? I wasn't talking," the teacher might share the umpire story. At a baseball game, when a ball is pitched and the umpire calls it a strike, some are pleased but others call out, "kill the umpire!" Why? The class will soon

¹Baumgardner, op. cit., p. 348.

²Sybil Richardson and Lois Williams, "Methods of Control Teachers Find Most Effective," California Journal of Elementary Education, 27 (August, 1958), 49.

³Whittemore, op. cit., p. 527.

determine that from where some people sit, the pitch ball looked like a strike, while to others it looked like a ball. The teacher has to rule in the same way. It is up to the student to not look as if he were talking or otherwise misbehaving.¹

The book Successful Classroom Control by Blanche McDonald and Leslie Nelson is devoted to helping the teacher maintain discipline. Some of the suggestions in this book include the following: (1) ending the school day with a smile and friendship,² (2) using a puppet as the "third man" when speaking to the class about behavior,³ (3) and distinguishing with the class between accepted and non-accepted noise.⁴ It also suggests providing standards when changing from one activity to another.⁵

After Class

Even though the bell rings and the class period is over, the teacher still has discipline responsibilities. These suggestions may be useful then. It has been suggested to deal with "offenders" in private. Williamson suggests sympathetic but firm counseling to aid the individual to gain insight and be willing to accept restrictions on his individual behavior.⁶ In an unhurried conference, ask the "offender" to state the teacher's side of the case and to suggest remedial punishment.

¹Paul Anderson, "Discipline in the Classroom Today," Phi Delta Kappan, 41 (December, 1959), 116.

²Blanche McDonald and Leslie Nelson, Successful Classroom Control (Dubuque, Ia.: Wm. C. Brown Co., 1959), p. 125.

³Ibid., p. 130. ⁴Ibid., p. 132. ⁵Ibid.

⁶E. G. Williamson, "A New Look at Discipline," Journal of Secondary Education, 38 (January, 1963), 13.

This shows the pupil that you want to approve, not disapprove.¹

Punishment should inspire good conduct and should be immediate, understood, and consistent within the group.² James Humes says to use "punishment" under the following conditions: (1) use it only with stable, sturdy, healthy youngsters,³ (2) use it only when the youngsters are not aware of the rule and have to learn it quickly, when there is not a moment to waste, (3) use it only when the rule broken is a specific one, applicable to some clearly defined and definite situation.⁴ Corporal punishment should be used sparingly. It may inhibit learning and foster in children an antagonism to all authority.⁵

Help the "offender" to grow into self-respecting citizenship by avoiding references to past errors, either in public or private. If there is an incorrigible student in the class, keep a dated record of types of disturbances and kinds of punishments administered. This will help the principal immeasurably. Encourage good manners everywhere: halls, auditorium, library, lunchroom, steps of the school, school or public bus, as well as in the classroom.⁶

In all actions be guided by mental health principles. Good mental health is achieved when the needs of every individual are met for developing a sense of personal worth and developing good interpersonal relationships. Realize how much good a single teacher can do.

¹Loughlin, op. cit., p. 110. ²Ibid.

³Humes, op. cit., p. 71. ⁴Ibid., p. 72.

⁵James M. Spinning, "Discipline Today," The Nations Schools, 58 (December, 1956), 47.

⁶Loughlin, op. cit., p. 110.

Finally, look upon the students as "goodly creatures that are part of a beauteous mankind."¹

Before, During, and After Class

Many suggestions for discipline should be kept in mind before, during, and after class. The following ideas are examples: One of the traditional ways of securing discipline is by fear.² However, youngsters are trained for democratic living by enforcing laws. In and out of the classroom, rule by rules--not fear, threats, shame, anxiety, or anger. The teacher may dislike the offense, but must continue to love the "offender."³ Another guidepost for teachers concerning discipline and dealing with students is to remember that all behavior, be it good or bad, is caused.⁴

Studies have shown that misbehavior has many causes. For example, the NEA Research Division's study on pupil behavior revealed that sheer "bigness" of the educational enterprise and trouble with pupils seem to go hand in hand; teachers with more experience tend to have less and less trouble with pupils; neighborhoods in which living conditions are below average are likely to produce children and youth who create serious problems in school; and the factors most frequently associated with misbehavior in school, in the opinions of classroom teachers, are related

¹Ibid., p. 111.

²Donald Snygg, "Discipline," Childhood Education, 31 (February, 1955), 47.

³Loughlin, op. cit., p. 107.

⁴Henry C. Gregory and Walter Snyder, "What Practices in School Discipline Develop Better Student-Teacher Relationships?", The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals, 40 (April, 1956), 257.

to irresponsible parents, unsatisfactory home conditions, and lack of parental supervision due to mothers' working outside the home.¹

Other guideposts for maintaining discipline include realizing that behavior patterns acquired over a period of years cannot be changed overnight. Good student management has as its ultimate aim the development of the students' ability toward self-direction. Firmness and friendliness are not incompatible--the successful teacher is both friendly and firm.²

Perhaps every teacher whose discipline is weak should be given the opportunity to observe the classes of those teachers whose discipline is strong--especially classes containing the same students who give the weak teacher so much trouble. This experience can be absolutely amazing and at the same time a rude awakening. It is almost unbelievable that those same students who have been misbehaving continually in one teacher's class can suddenly become in another teacher's class the essence of good behavior.³

The teacher should keep these things in mind: (1) never ignore but instead meet it head on; expect the principal to help with the occasional incorrigible in the class,⁴ (2) know the school community, its resources and its prejudices; and never be prejudiced against one

¹"Discipline in the Public Schools," National Education Association Research Bulletin, 35 (December, 1957), 152.

²Snyder, op. cit., p. 257.

³Arthur Prescott, "Control or Chaos in the Classroom," The Clearing House, 38 (January, 1964), 267.

⁴Herbert Michaels, "Thoughts on Discipline," The Clearing House, 34 (January, 1960), 287.

of the children.¹ Remember too that many parents are wonderful allies. Enlist their help. Handle problems alone as much as possible. Do not threaten to send a child to the principal. In fact, be very careful about threatening anything. But, having done it, carry it out.²

The teacher should keep neat and attractive. The children have to look at you all day, so make it as pleasant for them as possible. Women teachers might use light perfume, and dress in as good taste and as attractively as possible. It pays off in the students' admiration. Also, good health should be maintained. It is not fair to snap at children and punish them when it is the teacher who needs attention.³ Keep rested and relaxed in work. The tense, overfatigued teacher can find many petty annoyances in a classroom, and usually does. The tired teacher tends to act impetuously, sometimes inflating and magnifying a minor difficulty into the proportions of a major problem. So do not get too tired when it can be prevented. Learn to relax. Try new things.⁴

In closing the reader may be interested in reading the story, "A Lesson in Discipline," by Teresa Foley, in the February, 1961 NEA Journal, on page 24. It tells about how big, tall, and erect a teacher can appear to students when everything is always under control in that teacher's classroom.⁵

Obedience to authority is an important function in a highly organized society and each teacher should help the student to accept

¹Cutts and Moseley, op. cit., p. 108.

²Foster, op. cit., p. 21. ³Ibid.

⁴Baumgardner, op. cit., p. 348.

⁵Teresa Foley, "A Lesson in Discipline," NEA Journal, 50 (February, 1961), 24.

authority as friendly and reasonable. Good discipline builds up a healthy attitude toward authority as something necessary for gaining desired goals while adjusting to a complex culture.¹

Just punishing children over and over again does not insure good discipline. However, children cannot always be allowed to do whatever they please.

What then does discipline involve? Thinking, puzzling, searching--as a teacher must--for the way that is right for reaching each particular child.²

What about discipline? Discipline is a highly complex and complicated business. The new teacher must use a goodly measure of common sense fortified by power drawn from the patience of Job, the daring of Moses, and the wisdom of Solomon.³

¹Jarvis, op. cit., p. 197.

²Hymes, op. cit., p. 76.

³George Krall, "What About Discipline?" The Clearing House, (May, 1960), 536.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this investigation, it was discovered that discipline has several definitions. However, there are certain ideas held in common, as to what discipline involves such as: (1) interpreting the reasons and purposes of the rules, (2) treating the students as mature individuals, (3) being consistent in enforcement, (4) avoiding embarrassment whenever possible, (5) observing the rules as a teacher, (6) giving students opportunity to participate in making rules in areas where they are capable, (7) avoiding the wasting of class time with discipline cases that should be taken care of at another time. Also mentioned was making the work so challenging that the students will be kept busy and interested, conduct on the part of the teacher which demonstrates competence in dealing with students, and the teacher earning the respect of the students.¹ In the opinion of some, the most important practice for teachers to exhibit was fairness.²

Suggestions for maintaining classroom discipline were reported under the headings of those practical before class, those practical during class, those practical after class, and those practical at all times.

¹Lawrence E. Vredevoe, "Practices In School Discipline," The American School Board Journal, 139 (July, 1959), 21.

²Vincent Claypool and Werner S. Smith, "What Practices in School Discipline Develop Better Student-Teacher Relationships in Junior and Senior High Schools?," The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals, 42 (April, 1958), 6.

Before Class

1. Become acquainted with the students before class by reviewing permanent records.
2. Do adequate planning.
3. Arrange the classroom as a workroom.

During Class

1. Be friendly but firm.
2. Have a sense of humor.
3. Check that the physical condition of the room is always comfortable.
4. Speak clearly, speak only when necessary, and speak in a conversational tone.
5. Do not stay fixed at the teacher's desk.
6. Involve children in activity. Busy, interested children have fewer discipline problems.
7. Discourage leaving the room unless in the case of an emergency.
8. Trust the students without being an easy mark.
9. Point out the values of good citizenship to the class.
10. Take special interest in each student.
11. Never wait until the class is completely out of control before doing something about it.
12. Eliminate as many "don'ts" as possible.
13. When the class begins to "squirm" change the activity.
14. Reprimand children in private when possible.
15. Try to understand the cause of misbehavior.
16. Expect the best from the pupils.
17. End the school day with a smile.

After Class

1. Have a conference with the misbehaving child.
2. Think twice before administering punishment.
3. Help the "offender" to grow in good citizenship.

At All Times

1. Rule by love and not fear.
2. Remember that misbehavior has many causes.
3. Realize that behavior patterns acquired over a period of years are not changed overnight.
4. Observe teachers with strong discipline.
5. Be familiar with the school community.
6. Keep neat, attractive, and in good physical condition.

The classroom situation, the students involved, and the teacher in control will effect what techniques of discipline are practiced. It is up to the beginning teacher to exercise common sense and use those suggestions which best fit the situation.

Very little research has been done concerning what discipline practices are the most effective in certain situations. Not all discipline practices will be practical for all teachers. It would be helpful if studies could be conducted to determine which techniques are most effective in certain situations.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR THE BEGINNING TEACHER IN ELEMENTARY
EDUCATION CONCERNING CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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The word discipline has several definitions. In this report, discipline was referred to as a phenomenon of orderliness that permeates the classroom and is conducive to learning.

Classroom discipline is necessary if effective teaching is to take place and students actually desire having the teacher set limits for them. The beginning teacher often has difficulty in the area of discipline. It was the purpose of this study to give beginning teachers, in the elementary school, some helpful suggestions concerning discipline so that they might feel more secure in their classroom situations and thus be better able to meet the needs of their students.

The method of carrying out this investigation of classroom discipline was a review of all available literature regarding this topic. Emphasis was placed on suggestions for the beginning teacher in establishing and maintaining classroom control.

Suggestions for maintaining classroom discipline were reported under the headings of those practical before class, those practical during class, those practical after class, and those practical at all times.

Before Class

1. Become acquainted with the students before class by reviewing permanent records.
2. Do adequate planning.
3. Arrange the classroom as a workroom.

During Class

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2. Have a sense of humor.
3. Check that the physical condition of the room is always comfortable.
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