

SOME IMPORTANT FACTORS IN  
SCHOOL DISCIPLINE.

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## Some Important Factors in School Discipline.

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## INTRODUCTION.

As education advances the question of discipline in the common schools is becoming more and more important. Moreover, this is a subject upon which the ideas of the teacher are rapidly changing. Only a few decades ago the school masters all believed in the maxim, "Spare the rod and spoil the child"; and, as a consequence, the rod was usual on every occasion, whether the most trivial offense, or that of fighting or immorality on the school grounds. But as education advances the people are beginning to learn that there is another side of the child's nature that can be appealed to, besides the feeling of physical pleasure or pain.

The pupil that cannot be governed without punishment now, is the exception rather than the rule. There is a sense of good in every child, if the teacher is only able to find it. Even the most unruly child in school is interested in something if the teacher can only discover and develop it. I believe that the question of a good or a bad school rests mainly with the teacher.

## CHARACTER OF THE TEACHER.

As has been said before the question of a successful school rests chiefly with the teacher. She must not only have a good moral character and a good supply of common sense, but she must be a good disciplinarian, with a deep insight and a ready knowledge of human nature. It is very important that she should set a good example, herself, of what she wants the students to be. The teacher should always be courteous and polite. It is easier to win children by kindness than to drive them by authority. Never show anger, but, firmness, diligence and uniformity in dealing with children are of first importance.

Self poise manifested in the school room is one of the best means of securing order. Nervous children if placed under a calm,



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quiet self-poised teacher - one that does not fret and worry and fidget - will become steady. She will teach them to avoid many excitants that would otherwise strain their nerves to the highest degree.

Personal magnetism is sure to enlist the attention of the pupils. If the teacher can easily secure the attention of the pupils there will be no need of discipline. If the teacher is filled with the subjects she teaches she will inspire the pupils and fill their minds so full of good thoughts that they will have no time for the bad. To stimulate and direct the will power of the pupils, to excite him to do the most for himself, is the best kind of instruction. To make him conscious of his own ability and capable of using it successfully is the fundamental work of the teacher.

#### INTUITIVE KNOWLEDGE.

Every person has a certain amount of ready knowledge which he does not have to wait to acquire by a long process of reasoning, but which comes to him instantly when occasion demands. This is absolutely necessary in the teacher, for she is continually having to deal with unusual cases, every case being a new one, in many respects. This must be carefully distinguished from impulsive action - acting on the spur of the moment, in some fit of anger or excitement. The quick decision of a well balanced, self-poised, impartial teacher is almost certain to be reliable.

#### NATURAL TACT.

A teacher might possess all knowledge but if she did not have, at least, some tact she would be a complete failure in the school room. Tact is the power of adapting one's self to meet successfully any circumstances, or being able to meet the conditions of every individual case. In my opinion, it is a great deal easier to prevent



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mischievous, than to attempt to correct by punishment after the mischief is done. The tactful teacher can use school opinion to aid her in this. Every school has some leaders. The teacher should use tact in obtaining the good will of the leaders of the school. Some pupils care more for the censure from other pupils than for censure from the teacher.

If a stubborn boy or a boy that is always causing trouble finds out that the teacher really likes him as well as the rest of the pupils, and if she will trust him and ask him to do little favors for her, such as going on errands, something the other pupils would like to do and he knows it; he will get so he will do anything for that teacher and will be proud of the fact that she likes him as well as the others. A boy of that kind likes a little attention although he would not admit it to his classmates.

The "Cook County Normal School" at Chicago, Ill., is experimenting along the line of Science Study in creating an interest in the pupil. They believe that every person has a germ of good in him and that this can be reached and developed through the study of the Sciences. As far as the experiments have been carried, the outlook is very favorable. Some think there is a moral discipline in science study, that the pupil does not get in any other branch. Herbert Spencer's argument for the moral discipline of Science Study is that in the sciences the pupil is at liberty to verify each fact. While in the study of languages he must take the authority of the teacher. From this he concludes that science study produces independence of mind, which is a most valuable element in character.

#### LOVE FOR THE CHILDREN.

The influence of the school teacher, though much more restricted on the emotional and moral side, is the most important of external



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stimuli to intellectual progress. As Pestalozzi has pointed out, the teacher stands in the place of the parent, having to carry in a more thorough and systematic manner, to a much higher point than the qualifications and opportunities of the parent commonly allow, the early intellectual instruction of the child; and regarded in this light her work is eminently a natural one, being the outgrowth of the instinct of instruction and is intertwined with the parental feeling and instinct. She not only has one family in her care, but also the children of the whole community. Since the welfare of from twenty to thirty human souls is entrusted to her, she should realize the responsibility, and love them from her innermost soul.

A very successful teacher in the schools of New York City was once asked the secret of her success, and she said the pupils obeyed her because they were her children and she loved them even as a mother. She likened them to a pansy bed. Each little face a pansy with its own quaint expression and she could not spare any of them. Is it any wonder that they loved her when she had such a beautiful idea of them?

We learn from Pestalozzi that the teacher must have a heart. He furnished us an example of this that will live for all time. He was the man who in the presence of ignorance, obstinancy, dirt, brutality and vice fought and conquered them all with his heart. When he commenced teaching he said, "My wishes were accomplished. I felt that my heart would change the condition as speedily as the springtide sun reanimates the earth frozen by the winter." "Nor", he adds "was I mistaken".

But Pestalozzi's heart was a dynamical heart - a heart that was constantly at work and vitalized his system. He was with his pupils all the time, and his hands administered to their every want. He did not teach them obedience by punishment, or by having them commit pre-



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cepts which they could not understand. But his whole heart went out to them, and they knew it, and after they had embraced him and called them their father he would say "Children could you deceive your father?" His work was certainly effective. His pupils were a dirty, half starved class that had been rendered destitute by war and had become cruel. He gave us an everlasting example of discipline without punishment.

#### PUNISHMENT.

Discipline is essential to the existence of a good school. I believe there are a few pupils in almost every school, who require some form of punishment to make them preserve order and respect the rights of others as the majority of the children do.

There is no general rule that can be applied to such cases, but each case is an individual one and must be considered separately. In the first place there should be but few rules made and these only as occasion demanded. After a rule is once made it should be enforced by all means. Pupils should be taught to respect law, and a good place to begin this is in the school room. One of the primary functions of the school is to teach the children to be law abiding citizens. And if Johnny cannot obey the rules as the others do he should be forced to do so.

The purpose of punishment is first to correct the error and second to serve as an example to warn others and to impress upon their minds that transgression always brings its own reward. It should never be administered in anger. If a teacher cannot punish a pupil when she is in a good humor she should not do it at all. She should make him understand that it is the natural result of the violation of any law. Children must be taught to realize not the severity of the punishment but the absolute sureness of it. Punishment should be



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adapted to the crime and should tend to correct the wrong. The stage of development of the child should be taken into consideration. Corporal punishment should be the last resort. A mild form can be used for small children who cannot be appealed to only through the senses. But the teacher should look into the history of the case and find out something of the child's parents and his inherited tendencies; also the motive of the child or the spirit in which he commits the offense, whether it was through ignorance or wilful disobedience. The repetition of the act should be considered also. Isolation or depriving the pupils of some privilege that the others enjoy is very effective as children like the association of others. It also gives him time to think over the action.

When a pupil has reached the age of fifteen or sixteen he usually has a keen sense of honor and feels shame easily and appealing to this sense will accomplish much. After a pupil has reached this age if he cannot be reached by any of the above methods it is sometimes wise to suspend him. But there are a few boys of this age that a good sound thrashing will do more for than anything else. The very fact that the teacher has this authority does much in giving him control over such characters

#### DISCIPLINE OF THE FUTURE.

Just as the absolute authority in national government is passing away and the individuality of the people is considered, and they are allowed a voice in their own government, so it is with the government of the public schools.

There has been a gradual evolution in this direction from the time when the school master had absolute authority over the pupils, and his authority was reason enough for inflicting any kind of punishment, (and corporal punishment was the only kind ever used,) to the



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present time when it is used in the fewest possible cases, When all are well governed at home there will be no such thing as punishment in the schools. I believe the time is coming, slowly to be sure, when the masses of the people will be educated and learn how to train their children at home, the question of discipline will practically be solved. Of course this will be a long time in coming to the large cities where the children of all classes attend.

The ideal teacher - and I believe this will be the only teacher of the future - will govern the pupils not through fear, but through love. If the teacher loves the pupils and shows by her actions a deep interest in them, they will return it. If she does not love a certain child, the trouble is with herself, and she should get it out. We can cultivate ourselves to like any child. I believe the time is not very far off when the teacher will not teach primarily for money or because there seems to be nothing she can do; but because she is filled with love of the work, and has such an interest in the souls of the children that she cannot help it. Then she will inspire them and lead them to see the chief end of education which is, as Herbert Spencer puts it "To prepare him for complete living."