

Chapter Two

Focusing on Prevention

Classroom Management Is Complicated

Getting Things Done

Classroom management is the business of getting kids to do what you want them to do. If the teacher is good at it, a lot gets done and kids enjoy coming to class. If the teacher is not so good at it, kids goof off and waste a lot of time while the teacher becomes stressed. When the teacher becomes stressed, nobody has a good time.

A Real Challenge

Teachers and parents constantly deal with the same issues. How do you get kids to *do* what you want them to do when you ask them to do it. How do you get kids to *stop doing* what you don't want them to do? How do you get kids to cooperate? How do you

get them to be nice to each other? How do you teach them to address you respectfully without argument or backtalk?

I will ask workshop participants, "How many of you are parents?" Most hands will go up. I will then ask, "Is being a parent an easy job?"

The response is a mixture of laughter and groans. Everybody knows that being a parent is one of the most challenging jobs on earth. It takes all of the intelligence and energy that you can muster. It takes never ending love and patience even when you are exhausted. It is all day, every day.

Can you think of anything more challenging than being a good *parent*? I can.

Preview

- This chapter is an overview of the topics described in the book.
- This book focuses on the fundamental skills of classroom management. These skills replace working hard with working smart.
- Instructional practices focus on making learning interactive while replacing helpless handraising with independent learning.
- The management of motivation focuses on helping students to internalize values of hard work and conscientiousness. Incentives for productivity combine enjoyment with accountability.
- Discipline management focuses on 1) making cooperation and responsible behavior a matter of routine, and 2) setting limits in a nonadversarial fashion through mobility, proximity, and the body language of meaning business.

Managing a Classroom Is Harder Than Parenting

Being a parent is a *piece of cake* compared to managing a classroom. For one thing, you have years to love your own children and teach them to be good kids.

That is a luxury you do not have in the classroom. In the classroom you have *other people's* kids. These "other people" will send you a room full of youngsters whose personality traits range from exemplary to highly inappropriate.

Some parents teach their children that *no means no*, but not all of them do. Some parents teach their children that *if a job is worth doing, it's worth doing right*, but not all of them do. Rather, some people raise kids who *don't* make their beds, *don't* clean their rooms, *don't* set the table, and *don't* pick up their clothes.

It's not that these parents don't *want* their kids to be responsible and well behaved. They are doing the best they can, but they don't know how to get results. They lack the necessary skills.

So, they make a lot of "rookie errors" as their kids are growing up. They are inconsistent when they attempt to say "no" to misbehavior. They nag instead of teach. They tell their kids to do something but don't follow through to make sure that it gets done. Attempts to get cooperation get an argument instead.

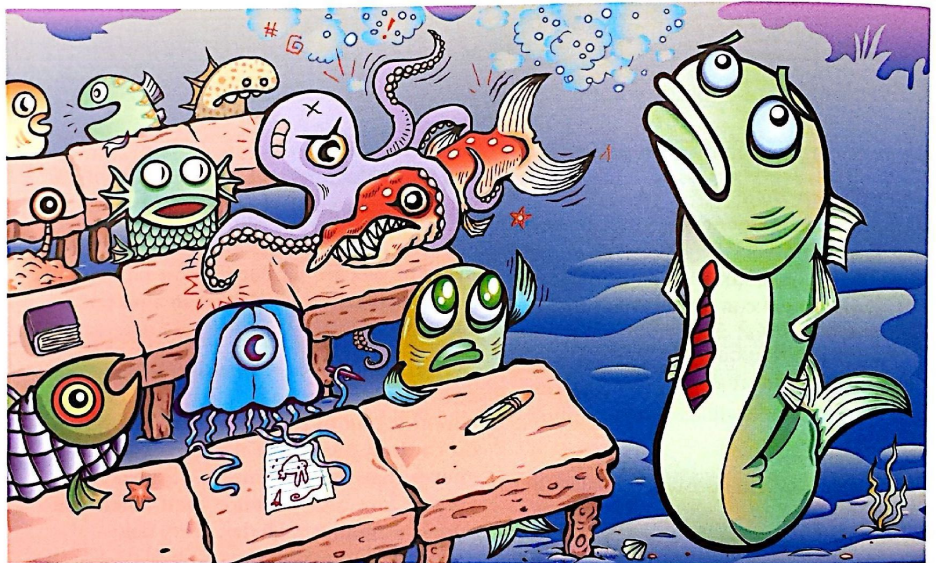
Over time these kids often learn to avoid work by being contrary. They master procrastination, heel dragging and, their favorite – doing a job so

sloppily that parents finally throw up their hands and say, "You know, it's just easier to do it *myself*!"

These kids will show up to your class on the first day of school. You will then ask them to do more work in *one day* than they do at home in a *month*. And you will want it:

- finished on time
- done correctly
- written legibly
- with a good attitude.

Lots of luck!



In every classroom you start out with a motley crew.

A Motley Crew

Add to this the usual assortment of characters that show up to any classroom on the first day of school – a handful of helpless handraisers, a couple of kids who can't stop talking, a bully, a social isolate, several students with learning disabilities, and one who is hyperactive. Even with a lot of good kids, you start out with a motley crew.

To this motley crew you do not just teach curriculum. You teach civilization. You teach your students to follow rules, to be responsible, to get along with each other, to show respect, and to value achievement through hard work.

Making Up for Lost Time

In many cases you have to make up for lost time. You have to train kids to cooperate who are quite uncooperative at home. You have to train kids to be respectful who backtalk their parents. And, you have to do it quickly. The longer it takes you to make up for lost time, the more stress your body will absorb.

How will you succeed – by “winging it” like their parents did? Are you kidding? You will need some serious, high-tech, industrial-strength classroom management skills.

The Management of Goofing Off

Focusing on Discipline

Tools for Teaching began with the observation of natural teachers who could make good students out of kids who were jumping off of the furniture in other classrooms. From the beginning, therefore, our understanding of classroom management focused on discipline.

While students jumping off of furniture is obviously extreme, extensive observations of regular classrooms showed this to be simply an exaggerated version of the

norm. In classrooms goofing off is the eternal enemy of time-on-task.

In the classroom life of children, goofing off is a given. Kids naturally talk. They don't naturally study. Managing a classroom requires that you replace the normal social life of young people with rigorous work for hours on end.

Every teacher, therefore, is a “disciplinarian” by necessity. Any classroom has the potential to be a problem classroom. Whether the class develops its full potential depends on how it is managed.

Avoiding Exhaustion

As we well know, getting a roomful of young people to quit goofing off long enough to get some work done can be a prescription for exhaustion. The number of teachers who attend burn-out workshops would indicate that we have a lot to learn about “cost containment” in the management of discipline.

Yet, the natural teachers that we observed made it look easy. They were spending very little time and energy dealing with disruptions. Rather, their time and energy went into teaching – the fun part of the job. How could they get so much good behavior and time-on-task out of so many highly disruptive students while remaining calm, cool, and collected?

“There is an easy way to do everything,” as the saying goes. Apparently, these natural teachers had found it. They could not explain it, and I could not see it, but knowing that it was possible kept us going.

If there is a concern that pervades *Tools for Teaching*, it is *exhaustion* – *your* exhaustion. How do you teach a classroom all day long, day after day, without working yourself to death? It's not obvious, but it is possible.

Research and Development

Useful Procedures

There is a huge literature on classroom management and discipline. Over the years, I have thrown out almost all of it.

The problem was not that the procedures didn't work. The problem was that they were *impractical*. They cost the teacher too much in terms of time and energy.

Time and energy are *finite*. All of the time and energy that goes *into* discipline management comes *out of* instruction.

My objective was not to saddle the teacher with expensive management programs. My objective was to drive the cost of discipline management as close to *zero* as possible.

Along the way I threw out most of my own ideas too. To be kept, a procedure had to meet three simple criteria:

- Better behavior
- More learning
- Less hassle for the teacher

Believe the Teacher

At this point I was aided by my coming from a family of teachers – a collection of parents, aunts and *great* aunts who were quite sure of themselves. I naturally assumed from early childhood, therefore, that if a teacher told you that something was *so*, it was *so*.

Consequently, in years of working with teachers, rather than telling them what *should* work, I let them tell me

what *did* work. We would get together after the kids went home to go over that day's "trial and error." If something did not work or was impractical, the teachers would tell me so in no uncertain terms. They might say, "It's all well and good Dr. Jones, but I don't have time during the day to fool around with all of that record keeping." If that was the verdict, I accepted it and went back to the drawing board.

A Useful Procedure Must Produce:

- Better behavior
- More learning
- Less hassle for the teacher

At least I had the sense not to tell experienced teachers that they should "go the extra mile" for my sake or for the kids' sake. They were already going the extra mile and then some. Rather, I knew from the naturals that running yourself ragged was not the answer.

A Long Journey

While "goofing off" was our initial focus, you cannot get very far with classroom discipline

without understanding instruction and motivation. And while we learned a lot through trial and error, entire areas of management had to be constructed from scratch.

How, for example, do you teach an entire class to be responsible? Parents scratch their heads over how to teach a single child to be responsible. But an entire class – the whole motley crew? And how do you do it *fast*? You don't have a decade to create a responsible ten-year-old. You need responsible behavior *now*.

While the natural teachers gave us our start, I never met a teacher who was using more than a portion of the skills described in *Tools for Teaching* prior to training. When you do it all, you will have amazing power.

A Profile of Classroom Management

The Classroom Through New Eyes

After about 15 years the pieces of *Tools for Teaching* began to coalesce into a unified picture. The pieces of the classroom management puzzle fall into three broad areas:

- **Instruction** – maximizing the rate of learning while making independent learners out of helpless handraisers
- **Discipline** – getting students to quit goofing off and get busy
- **Motivation** – giving students a reason to work hard while being conscientious

Although guided by theory, the “how to” of classroom management was perfected by trial and error in the field. Years of trial and error have produced a management program with the following characteristics:

- **Specificity** – *Tools for Teaching* deals with specifics rather than generalities. It answers the question, “What do I do?” by walking you through each procedure step-by-step. In addition, the Study Group Activity Guide gives you detailed protocols for practicing each skill.
- **Economy** – The procedures in this book have one characteristic in common – they produce dramatic results while *reducing* the

teacher’s workload. For example, constant Limit Setting is replaced by Meaning Business, and individualized behavioral programs are replaced by a single program that trains the *entire class* to be responsible.

- **Prevention** – In making management affordable, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” *Tools for Teaching*, therefore, is primarily about prevention. Prevention encompasses every aspect of classroom life – discipline, instruction, and motivation – and redefines each one. Prevention, therefore, functions as our unifying theme and provides *Tools for Teaching* with its unique perspective.

To give you an overview of *Tools for Teaching*, I will summarize each of the three major areas of classroom management – discipline, instruction, and motivation. Consider it an advance organizer.

Instruction

Working the Crowd

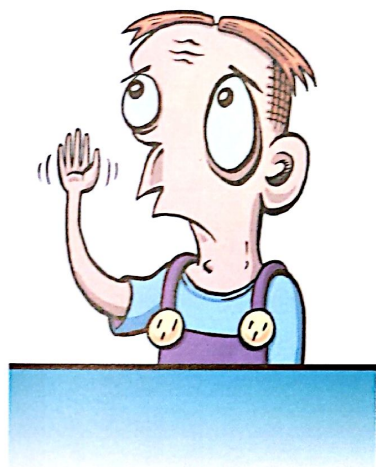
The easiest way to prevent goofing off is *location*. When students are *near* the teacher, they tend to be on their best behavior.

Effective teachers make an art form out of *working the crowd* – otherwise known as “management by walking around.” Rather than spending all of their time in the front of the classroom, they put the students to work and walk among the students as they supervise.

To make working the crowd as easy as possible, we will have to rearrange the furniture in the classroom. The optimal room arrangement allows you to get from any student to any other student in the fewest steps.

Helpless Handraisers

Once teachers focus on working the crowd, they immediately confront the natural enemy of working the crowd – the *helpless handraisers*. Every classroom seems to have



The natural enemy of working the crowd is the helpless handraiser.

five or six helpless handraisers who constantly demand the teacher's undivided time and attention – especially during Guided Practice.

During Guided Practice, the teacher tutors each helpless handraiser – a process that takes an average of four-and-a-half minutes. Unfortunately, the teacher pays a very high price for tutoring these needy students. In *ten seconds* the classroom becomes noisy. For the sake of tutoring, the teacher loses control of the class.

In addition, the teacher's time and attention reinforce help-seeking itself. For this reason, helpless handraising becomes chronic for the five or six most needy students. Their dependency is inadvertently shaped into a learning disability.

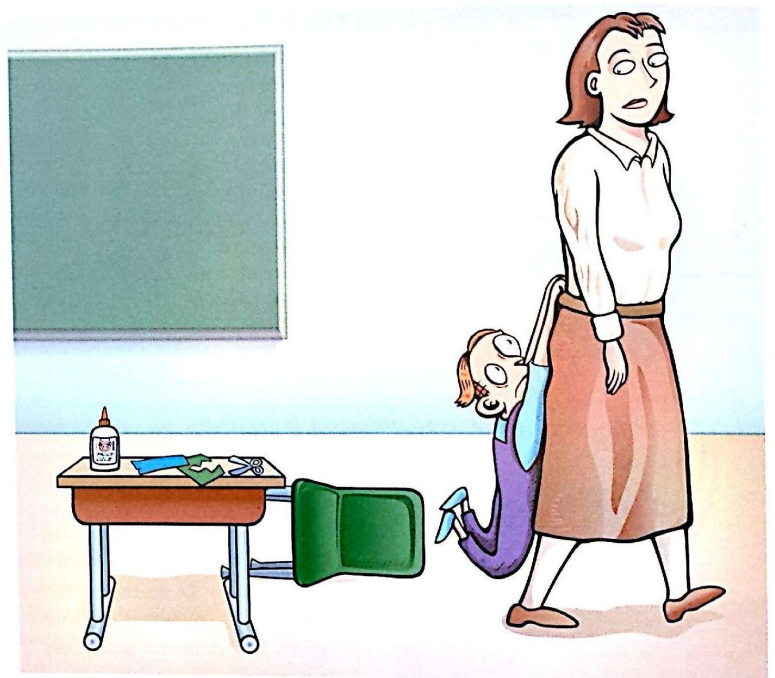
To keep the class from being rowdy during Guided Practice, the teacher must make independent learners out of their helpless handraisers. Achieving this will impact every aspect of instruction.

- **The Verbal Modality:** How, exactly, do you help a student who is stuck? It must be brief or the teacher will lose the benefits of working the crowd. Corrective feedback must be reduced to a simple prompt that answers the question, "What do I do next?" This pattern of giving corrective feedback is called "Praise, Prompt, and Leave." Praise, Prompt, and Leave reduces the average duration of corrective feedback from four-and-a-half minutes to thirty seconds.
- **The Visual Modality:** A helping interaction of thirty seconds is brief but not brief enough. The teacher will lose the class in ten seconds.

The only way to reduce the duration of corrective feedback further is to *substitute pictures for words*. Good graphics provide the students with a picture

for each step of performance. This *set of plans*, called a Visual Instructional Plan (VIP), prepackages the information normally contained in the teacher's explanations.

The teacher can now give corrective feedback by pointing out a critical feature of one of the steps in



*If working the crowd is to have a chance,
we must free the helpless handraisers from their dependency on the teacher.*

the VIP. This will reduce the duration of helping interactions to 5-10 seconds.

In addition, a VIP is the crucial “halfway house” in weaning the helpless handraisers. Needy students learn that, if they want the teacher’s attention, they must produce some work. For help with the assignment, they must rely on the VIP. The students refer to the VIP as often as necessary until they gain confidence and no longer need it.

- **The Physical Modality:** Efficient verbal and visual prompts will only take us halfway to our goal of creating independent learners. The most direct way of minimizing the need for corrective feedback *after* the lesson is to teach the lesson correctly in the first place.

We learn by doing. Effective teaching, therefore, must exploit the physical modality. Making learning physical has much to do with the *packaging* of student activity.

There are two basic ways to package the activity of learning. The first is:

Input, Input, Input, Input – Output

This characterizes most teaching, especially at the secondary level. The second pattern is:

Input, Output, Input, Output, Input, Output

With the second pattern, output is immediate which eliminates most problems of forgetting. In addition, it is fast moving and interactive, which maximizes student involvement.

As you can see, the prevention of discipline problems reconfigures the process of instruction. Effective teachers structure the lesson as *Input, Output, Input, Output, Input, Output*. The students are active rather than passive, and teachers continually monitor and adjust the students’ performance as they work the crowd.

What separates the natural teachers from their colleagues is *not* the curriculum. The difference is in *process* – the *organization* of learning activity. Naturals focus on the building of correct performance, whether it is the mastery of a skill or the expression of a concept.

Discipline

Consequences and Cost

When a problem occurs, there must, of course, be consequences. Therefore, the traditional wisdom of discipline management focuses upon consequences. But consequences can be extremely *expensive*. The appearance of success is often an illusion.

For example, imagine that a student in your class pulls some stunt, and you deal with it. As a result of your intervention, you do not see that behavior for the rest of the day. Would you conclude that what you did was effective? Most teachers would.

But suppose that the same student does the same thing tomorrow and you respond in the same way with the same result. Once again, the student does not repeat the problem behavior for the rest of the day. Would you conclude that your technique had worked for a second time? Most teachers would.

But suppose that the same student pulls the same stunt for the third day in a row, and you respond in the same way with the same result. Are you having doubts yet?

Meaning Business

In addition to solving a problem, consequences need to be cheap. With our natural teachers, when a student got out of line, a simple look put an end to the problem. That was *cheap*! How did they do that?

Rather than using traditional consequences, our natural teachers simply “meant business.” It was so subtle that, for a long time, we could not even see it.

When we finally cracked the code, we realized that Meaning Business was a combination of *calm*, *commitment*, and utter *consistency* that taught the students that “no” *always* means “no” and that consequences would *always* be delivered.

Once this understanding was established, the teacher could signal the students to “cool it” using progressively smaller cues until a word, a look, a pause, or ultimately, the teacher’s mere presence was enough to enforce limits. Rather than providing consequences, the teacher *became* the consequence. When the teacher walked into the classroom, the management program arrived.

This made perfect sense to me. My mother and father meant business. I knew that look. I knew from an early age that “no meant no” and that, while we could always talk something over, arguing was not an option.

Meaning Business is conveyed to the students primarily through the teacher’s body language. The students read you like a book. They know what they can get away with and how far they can push you at any moment.

When learning to mean business, you will learn to read and speak a new language – body language. You will have to practice until you are good at it. Providing practice to mastery is the purpose of the Study Group Activity Guide.

Responsibility Training

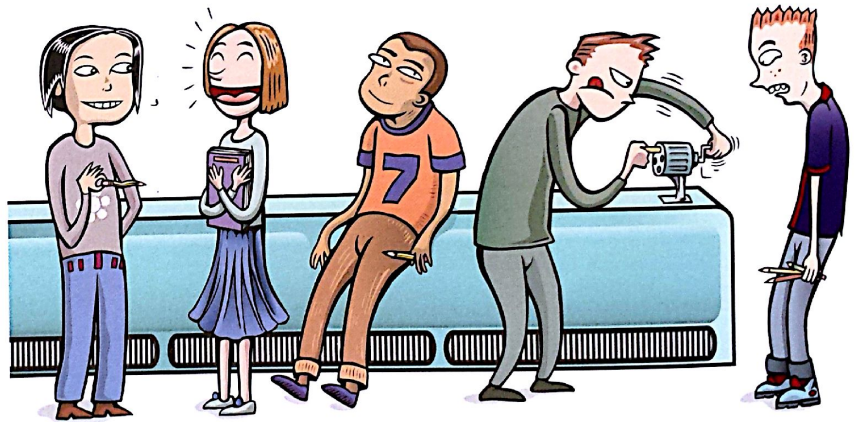
Getting students to stop doing what you don’t want them to do is only half of discipline management. The other

half is getting students to do what you want them to do *the first time you ask*.

How do you train students to be responsible? The management system that achieves this goal is called Responsibility Training. Responsibility Training represents a significant advance in technology and a great economy for the teacher because it trains the *entire class* to be responsible for very little effort. It can save large amounts of learning time by simply eliminating dawdling.

Omission Training

Unfortunately, there is usually at least one student in any class who will ruin any group management program just to prove that he or she can. How do you succeed with the highly alienated and oppositional student?



Responsibility Training can save huge amounts of learning time by eliminating dawdling.

Omission Training is a specialized incentive system for dealing with these alienated and oppositional students. It can be added to Responsibility Training at almost no cost to the teacher.

Omission Training provides a powerful reason for the alienated student to work *with* the group rather than *against* the group. As a by-product, these alienated students, who are often highly unpopular, are rapidly accepted into the peer group.

Omission Training is your response of choice for extremely difficult students. It is a win-win solution to a management dilemma that often appears to have no solution. It will eliminate most of your office referrals.

The Backup System

In discipline management, when push comes to shove, there is the School Discipline Code – the teacher's Backup System. While necessary, the Backup System is also extremely expensive. At the very least it requires the involvement of both teachers and administrators. Incident reports and meetings with parents after school run up the price even more.

While aggressive or dangerous behavior may require the use of the Backup System, in practice most office referrals are for repeated goofing off and insolence that finally has teachers "at their wit's end."

For teachers who are at their wit's end, the office offers only respite, not remedy. The same teachers will send the same students to the office all year long.

For the vast majority of office referrals, the only effective remedy is effective classroom management. It is therefore cost-effective for administrators to invest in training the faculty in *Tools for Teaching*. Only by reducing the steady stream of office referrals can administrators finally devote their time to instructional leadership.

A Criterion for Success

To help clarify success and failure in providing consequences, we need a *criterion of success*. Here is a simple, down to earth criterion:

*If a procedure is working,
the problem should go away.*

While this criterion may seem stringent, it is the only price a teacher can afford to pay in the long run. The alternative is to manage the same problems from the same students using the same consequences all year long.

The more you use an *effective* procedure, the *less* you should need to use it. For example, Meaning Business begins with setting limits and providing consequences, but eventually your mere presence enforces your rules.

Consequently, as the school year progresses, discipline management should take up less and less of your time until you finally work yourself out of a job. Eventually, your time and energy can be devoted to instruction without interruption. Hence, our maxim:

*Any discipline management technique that is working
should self-eliminate.*

Motivation

Why Should I?

Students who do not care about the lesson can be just as frustrating to the teacher as students who disrupt or constantly seek help. These are the students who say:

"Do we have to do this?"

"This stuff is dumb."

Before an unmotivated student will work hard, the teacher must answer one simple question, "Why should I?" The answer to that question is known as an *incentive*. Any

classroom teacher will have to know a thing or two about the design of incentive systems.

Building a Work Ethic

Some students have internalized standards that motivate them to work hard and to be conscientious. However, many, if not most, of our students do not.

How do you train students to be hard working and conscientious? For starters, they will have to have something to work for – something they want – something in the not too distant future. Call it a *preferred activity*.

But for students to learn to be conscientious, you must be able to check their work *as it is being done*. Only then can you hold them to high standards. Otherwise, they learn to do quick, sloppy work in order to finish the assignment as quickly as possible.

How can you be free to check students' work while it is being done? First, you must wean the helpless handraisers who monopolize your time during Guided Practice so you can devote your time to checking work.

Once you can check work while it is being done, you can then provide a Criterion of Mastery for students to meet in order to be done with the assignment. When they meet your Criterion of Mastery, you can excuse them to do their preferred activities.

In order for you to build a work ethic in your students, you must become a provider of preferred activities. You *must* have fun in the classroom. As teachers learn during training: *no joy, no work*.

Tools for Teaching Is a System

Basic Characteristics of a System

To begin with, "system" has to be one of the most overused words in education. *Everything* is a system. So, for clarity's sake, let's describe what we mean by a *system*.

- It gives you the pieces you need.
- The pieces fit together like a puzzle.
- The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Tools for Teaching is a system – a comprehensive system of classroom management. It began in classrooms where students were jumping off of furniture and evolved over time to include discipline, instruction, and motivation.

Our objective has always been shaped by that first experience – a desire to replace goofing off with time-on-task. It is not surprising, therefore, that the most practical way to organize *Tools for Teaching* is in terms of discipline.

Discipline management can best be organized under four major headings beginning with prevention and ending with the management of severe behavior problems. The four areas of discipline management are as follows:

1. **Classroom Structure** (i.e. Prevention)
 - Room arrangement and working the crowd
 - All of instruction
 - All of motivation
 - Classroom rules, routines, and standards
 - Procedures for the first day and week of school
2. **Limit Setting** (i.e. Meaning Business)
3. **Responsibility Training**
4. **The Backup System**

Areas of Discipline Management

- Classroom Structure
- Limit Setting
- Responsibility Training
- The Backup System

In this schema prevention plays the dominant role. Prevention brings the process of instruction front and center. As the system unfolds, most of the hallowed objectives of teaching – independent learning, the integration of modalities, high standards, learning to be responsible – are brought within the teacher's grasp.

As you read *Tools for Teaching*, your cognitive map of classroom management will develop. As it does, you will realize that there is no "big answer," no "silver bullet" for "shaping kids up." Rather, there are many skills. The more of them you master, the better your life in the classroom will be.

Nor is there a "bag of tricks" through which to rummage when in need of an answer. Rather, there is systematic problem solving. Here's how it works.

Keep It Cheap

A room full of students can keep the teacher in high gear all day long. To avoid exhaustion, discipline management has to be *cheap*. Here are some of the characteristics of the management system that define cost:

- Classroom Structure is *cheaper* than Limit Setting.
- Limit Setting is *cheaper* than Responsibility Training.
- Responsibility Training is *cheaper* than the Backup System.

Here is a criterion to use when choosing a procedure:

Always use the cheapest remedy.

Choose the procedure that is the least work, requires the least planning, and, hopefully, requires no paperwork. When solving a problem, therefore, always begin with Classroom Structure because prevention is always cheaper than remediation. If the problem is not yet eliminated, go to Limit Setting. If the problem is still not eliminated, go to Responsibility Training and then to the Backup System.

Management Is Cumulative

Another characteristic of the system is that it is cumulative. Each procedure is built upon a foundation of management provided by the system. The foundation must be in place for any procedure to work properly. The system functions as follows:

- The Backup System is *built upon* Responsibility Training.
- Responsibility Training is *built upon* Limit Setting.
- Limit Setting is *built upon* Classroom Structure.

To take a simple example, if you do not train the class to walk quietly through the halls during the first week of school, you will have to set limits on the noise they make during the second week of school.

And, since the system is cumulative, you can't try procedures in any order just because they look interesting. Responsibility Training, for example, may look like a wonder cure, but it needs Classroom Structure and Limit Setting in order to succeed.

Focusing on Fundamentals

Tools for Teaching describes the fundamentals of classroom management. Fundamentals are basic to everything you do, and they never change.

Take Meaning Business as an example. It is conveyed primarily through body language, and the human race has only one body language. You can either master it in order to create learning, or you can spend your career one step behind the students who read you like a book.

Working the crowd is another example. The biggest single variable that governs the likelihood of students goofing off in your class is their physical distance from your body. You can either exploit mobility and proximity to create time-on-task, or you can pay the price.

Teaching in small chunks with immediate performance and feedback (*Input, Output – Input, Output*) is another example. If you teach to the brain the way it is built, learning will be relatively rapid and errors relatively infrequent.

Mastery of the fundamentals also allows you to adapt to the unpredictable. Without that mastery, you are con-

stantly forced to scramble in order to solve problems in the heat of the moment. *That* is hard work.

Some of our most typical feedback from teachers is:

“I have energy at the end of the day. I have a life after school.”



*It is the undying hope of green teachers that,
if they love their students and are nice to them, everything will turn out fine.*

"I have recouped the time that the students used to waste. I now have time for the enrichment activities and learning games that students love."

"Why didn't I get this twenty years ago?"

Paradigm Shifts

A paradigm shift is a change in your entire frame of reference for analyzing a problem and its solution. A paradigm shift can be hard to wrap your mind around.

Tools for Teaching is a long series of paradigm shifts. But, they are gentle and sensible shifts. You won't have to fight them. In fact, they often affirm the solutions to classroom management problems that you have developed on your own over the years. As workshop participants often say at the end of three days:

"Dr. Jones, it's just a big collection of common sense."

Discipline Dreams

"It's Simple"

When teachers and administrators begin their training in discipline management, they are usually looking for "the answer." They say things like:

"What is the key to your program?"

"What is the trick to keeping kids on task?"

"What is the *one thing* that is most important for a teacher to keep in mind?"

Even after decades of teacher training, I am still taken aback by such questions. We are dealing with a topic that is far more complex than being a parent. We are attempting to rear a room full of other people's children while simultaneously teaching them academic skills and the basics of civilization.

Yet, people keep looking for the answer in a "one-liner." It takes time to develop a cognitive map for something as complex as classroom management. Until the cognitive map is developed, we are prone to categorical thinking.

"Love Is Enough"

Every good teacher wants to have a positive classroom atmosphere. However, wanting to be positive and pulling it off under pressure are as different as day and night. They are separated by a deep chasm that can only be bridged by the mastery of the requisite skills.

As mentioned earlier, it is the undying hope of green teachers that, if they just love their students and are nice to them, everything will turn out fine. This is the sweet dream of the uninitiated.

Success requires expertise. Without expertise, the struggle to manage the motley crew will leave you exhausted, and your patience will be the first casualty.

Love without expertise is powerless. To succeed, you will need them both in equal measure.

