

EDITORIAL

Discipline

As a conference superintendent, I often was asked to visit classrooms and determine the reason for a breakdown in discipline. These requests came from two sources: school administration, including the local board, and the teachers themselves. The latter were always more enjoyable to follow through, for these teachers genuinely wanted help. In such cases, better classroom control nearly always resulted.

In one school I visited, the teacher had nearly 30 junior high students in a multigrade classroom. He was the home-room teacher and taught most of the academic courses. No one envied this teacher's load. After observing for some time, I found that the teacher competently performed the mechanics of teaching: the yearly long-range plans were well defined; his monthly and weekly plans were clearly built on the yearly plans; he wrote and followed daily lesson plans; student activities were clearly defined and given; he graded and properly recorded assignments. What then was missing?

As the day slowly dragged on, the students were uneasy and restless. The teacher was nearly exhausted. Then in a flash, the solution came. Both of us realized it together. The daily routines involved little active teaching or learning. The students were bored with repetitious work sheets, drill sheets, problem sheets and busy sheets. The teacher was busy handing out work sheets, collecting work sheets, marking work sheets, recording marks, and distributing grades. There was too little active teaching and too much passive learning.

To solve the problem, we planned some new short-range objectives for "teacher-up-front" and "student-participation" activities. It worked. Discipline improved, students became active participants in learning, and the teacher's frustrations were greatly reduced.

I believe that classroom discipline is often more easily attained through prevention than through a structured system of discipline. Students who are excited with learning have little time for other activities. Four approaches have been shown to lessen the need for a structured system of discipline:

1. *Involve the students in a variety of active learning experiences.* Using the example of planting seeds, Ellen G. White states, "Let the children themselves prepare. . ." ¹ She later states, "The youth should be instructed in a similar way." ²

2. *Plan all activities with a specific purpose in mind.* Again we can learn from God's servant: "To Him [Christ] nothing was without purpose." ³ Every moment needs to be carefully planned to support the daily teaching objectives.

3. *Choose a wide variety of activities for your students.* "Our ideas of education take too narrow and too low a range. There is need of a broader scope, a higher aim." ⁴ School schedules are often too rigid and the programs often too restrictive. Creative thinking and planning of new and exciting activities will reduce undesirable student behavior.

4. *Develop and demonstrate trust in your students.* "The wise educator, in dealing with his pupils, will seek to encourage confidence and to strengthen the sense of honor. Children and youth are benefited by being trusted." ⁵

This issue contains many other suggestions to help you maintain a Christian discipline program in your classroom. We trust that you will find these suggestions helpful and useful.—R.E.G.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1903), p. 111.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 289.

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