



THE DAY BRUCE THREW A CHAIR

The sophomores came up the stairs from their Physical Science class in the basement, through the spacious commons area, and down the hallway to English II. By the time they reached the English classroom, they were engaged in energetic banter, teasing, and high jinks. Bruce,¹ a quiet student who was small for his age and wore thick glasses, rarely entered into the chatter and scuffling. He had never been disruptive in English II; if having a quiet classroom

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was the teacher's goal, then Bruce was the perfect student. Yet, he was not engaged, seemingly attempting to make himself invisible by sitting in the back corner of the room. Often, at the end of the class period, he left as quietly as he entered, having added nothing to the discussion. Because they regarded

him as a "nerd," Bruce's more ram-bunctious peers often made him the object of teasing and bullying. On one such day, in math class, Bruce snapped, picked up a chair, and hurled it at another student at the front of the room. Pandemonium ensued, as students and teacher took evasive action to protect themselves from chairs and other missiles being thrown around. Bruce had to be forcibly removed by the principal, vice-principal, and two burly peers.

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Bruce's parents were called, his records were pulled, and the math teacher was asked to submit a report. When the discipline committee met, it interviewed several teachers and the dormitory dean, who reported that earlier in the year, Bruce had exhibited hostile behavior and had had several classroom confrontations, although of lesser intensity than the one in math class. On most occasions, the teachers had simply discussed the problem with Bruce. Only once had his parents been asked to meet with the principal. Because most of the discipline had been dealt with informally, the school's records did not reveal a pattern of behavior, and there had been no intervention for Bruce. Bruce was ultimately expelled, as the school had limited resources available to meet his needs.

What would have worked in Bruce's situation? A classroom-management plan or discipline plan? Who was responsible, ultimately, for his behavior? The teachers or dean for not being tuned in and failing to record previous outbursts in Bruce's permanent record?² The students for teasing him? Bruce for not being able to control his temper? The hall monitors for not attending to the teasing and joking between class periods? In Bruce's situation, there was plenty of blame to share. Beyond placing blame, though, is the need to consider what could have been done to prevent the situation, and what changes needed to be made in the school's culture to reduce the chance of something like this happening again.

In addition to implementing more-effective classroom-management procedures, someone needed to A.C.T. on Bruce's behalf. If teachers and support personnel had **Assessed** the situation, they would have noticed Bruce's behavior patterns, periods of inattention, and overall disconnect from peers, teachers, and others, and might have raised an alert. **Collaboration** across the campus would have facilitated sharing of these observations, and revealed that Bruce, and others, needed help. Ultimately, **Taking action** by intervening to stop the bullying and address Bruce's emo-

tional issues would have ensured that he was referred for testing, counseling, or other types of support. This would also have reinforced the school's zero tolerance for bullying and other hurtful behaviors. In other words, school personnel needed to A.C.T.—be alert in assessing the situation, collaborate with one another, and take action to help prevent or resolve behavior issues.

It's no secret that great procedures and well-articulated classroom-management or discipline plans, while helpful, do not prevent misbehavior; in fact, if management and discipline are not implemented school-wide, these plans, if limited to a particular class-

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room, may fail to address behaviors that occur elsewhere in the school.

At Bruce's school, classroom policies and procedures had been clearly discussed, and students had shared in creating them. The rules had been posted prominently in the classroom, yet Bruce's multiple outbursts still occurred. What was the problem? The policies and procedures had been narrowly designed to maintain order, rather than to teach students to achieve self-control. As a result, there was no behavior transformation—students failed to develop self-regulatory skills, which would have been helpful to them both in the classroom

and throughout their lives.

For students to learn and internalize self-management skills, teachers, administrators, and support personnel must be intentional about teaching these skills and giving students opportunities to practice and demonstrate their application both inside and outside of the classroom. Classroom management is effective and transformative only when based on shared goals that are implemented consistently throughout the learning environment. Prohibited and undesirable behaviors are less likely to occur if effective internal and external regulatory mechanisms are in place.

Classroom Management or Discipline?

What educators believe about how learning takes place, and who is responsible for student achievement, will influence their style of classroom management and discipline. As early as 1951, the works of psychiatrist Fritz Redl and educational psychologist William Wattenberg³ provided a framework for understanding the impact of perceived student and teacher roles on the learning environment. These researchers described groups of individuals as organisms at work, with each individual having specific roles and responsibilities for the healthy functioning of the group.

Other researchers followed with new theories about behavior and discipline. In 1954, B. F. Skinner produced the landmark article, "The Science of Learning and the Art of Teaching,"⁴ which revolutionized classroom thinking and practice, opening the door to an age of positive reinforcement and behavior-modification practices in schools. William Glasser⁵ daringly asserted that behavior and choice are inextricably linked. Jacob Kounin⁶ generated another shift in thinking about behavior by claiming that room arrangement, lesson management, and attention to individual student needs were the most important factors in teaching appropriate classroom behaviors. Rudolf Dreikurs⁷ added to the list of individual student needs the *need to belong*.

Greater understanding of teachers' roles in creating well-managed, disciplined classroom environments has recently emerged from the works of researchers such as Lee and Marlene Canter, C.M. Charles, Fred Jones, and Harry and Rosemary Wong.⁸ Approaches such as assertive discipline, positive classroom discipline, and other classroom-management strategies have had a major influence on current practices in schools. Building upon strategies for effective management, experts such as Alfie Kohn, Spencer Kagan, and David and Robert Johnson⁹ moved beyond schemes for controlling behavior into the realm of strategies for learning and for internalizing positive characteristics such as interdependence and accountability.

Each of these educators and practitioners has contributed to current understanding of student and teacher roles as well as methods for creating and sustaining effective learning environments. Their insights reveal the intricate web of connections between events in the classroom and what happens in the mind, and the teacher's role in integrating the two environments to facilitate learning.

Classroom Management

Classroom management is defined as anything that is done to create and preserve order in the classroom. This includes procedures, routines, and structures that are explained to students, practiced, and reinforced over time. Several approaches to management exist. Between the early work of Dreikurs¹⁰ which promoted positive classroom management, and the work of Lee and Marlene Canter¹¹ which deal with assertive classroom discipline, a shift occurred. However, because the terms "classroom management" and "discipline" are often used interchangeably in popular articles, and are combined with loosely defined concepts such as "positive classroom management" and "assertive discipline," teachers may find it hard to differentiate between the concepts.

Education theorists such as Harry and Rosemary Wong maintain that successful **classroom management** de-

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pends on clear procedures, routines, and structures. Having these in place will minimize, and in many cases, eliminate classroom disruptions. In the Wongs' primary work, *The First Days of School*, they devote a number of pages to advice on establishing procedures and routines, as well as how to establish authority in the classroom. The Wongs believe that discipline and management are inherently related, and that effective classroom management is impossible without intentionally teaching strategies of self-regulation and social and emotional competencies.

Classroom management, thus, is more than "discipline," which generally refers to the use of punishment or penalties as a way to educate students about established rules of conduct and thereby control their behaviors. Classroom management seeks to create an environment where on-task behavior is the norm, thereby reducing the incidence of behaviors that require disciplinary measures. If a student is on task, then behavior is regulated. If a student is frequently off task and lacks self-regulatory skills, he or she cannot learn the lesson for the day or successfully complete assigned tasks. In addition,

each student's behavior affects other pupils, either impeding or advancing their learning.

Classroom Discipline

By contrast, classroom discipline addresses student behavior—specifically, training students to control their impulses and regulate their behavior. Although management and discipline have different definitions, they also have a dynamic and complementary relationship. Classroom *management* is what the teacher does to create a structured learning environment, while classroom *discipline* addresses what he or she does to help students regulate and monitor their actions.

Researcher Fred Jones maintains that "discipline always comes before instruction—period!"¹² In his *Tools for Teaching*, Jones observes that seemingly small behavior problems become larger if left unattended. Through verbal and non-verbal routines, cues, and procedures, teachers can help students understand what constitutes acceptable classroom behavior. When procedures and routines are consistently implemented, misbehaviors are greatly diminished and effective instruction can take place. Behavioral issues not eliminated by classroom-management techniques can be referred to a back-up system outlined in a school-wide discipline plan.

However, despite these helpful guidelines, for the Christian teacher, the customary understanding of classroom management and discipline is incomplete. In *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, Ellen White stated that "the child must be taught to control himself. The will must be trained to obey the dictates of reason and conscience."¹³ In *Education*, she states that *true education* trains individuals to live lives "controlled by steadfast principle," which encompasses "the whole circle of obligation—to ourselves, to the world, and to God."¹⁴ Beyond policies and procedures, conditioning or coercion, exists a greater goal: creating learning environments that help students learn to monitor and regulate themselves as members of families, classrooms,

churches, and various communities, in order to live a moral life and prepare for an eternity with their Savior. Students need to see strategies demonstrated, and have opportunities to practice them in a supportive classroom environment. In addition, students should learn to anticipate how to use these strategies both in and out of the classroom.

Responsibility for Learning

In discussing how the terms “classroom management” and “discipline” are used, Charles¹⁵ notes the recent shifts in educational philosophy have shaped educators’ understanding of the roles of students and teachers—and who is ultimately responsible for learning. At one time, the perception was that the responsibility for students’ success rested solely with the teacher. However, classroom management is now seen as including everything that is done in the classroom to prevent or redirect misbehavior and support learning:¹⁶ varied instructional approaches, effective use of verbal and non-verbal communication, relationships with parents, a referral system for students who need counseling or academic assistance, and classroom arrangements that facilitate teacher movement. Jones¹⁷ notes that it is not only where the students sit that counts, but how easily the teacher is able to navigate the room.

Thus, “classroom management,” as currently defined, means the effortless weaving of behavior-management strategies into the composite of effective teaching: instruction, motivation, and discipline. Inherent in this process is the goal of helping students make good choices and learn self-regulatory behavior.

Additional Frameworks That Support Classroom Management

In recent years, a variety of researchers have begun to emphasize the connection between a structured learning environment, behavior, and learning. The *Dimensions of Learning* framework and Cooperative Learning

approach to instruction enable the teacher to organize content and environment to support self-regulatory behavior, instruction, and positive classroom environments. In their framework for learning, Marzano and Pickering emphasize the importance of a classroom climate that fosters positive attitudes and perceptions about learning. In *Dimension 1*, these authors describe how to create an environment in which learners feel accepted by teachers and peers, as well as experience a sense of belonging, comfort, and order. When instructors present con-

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tent in a way that affirms for students its value and relevance, create lessons that spark interest, and convince students they have the ability and resources to understand and complete assignments, there are fewer classroom disruptions and increased on-task behavior.¹⁸ A carefully managed environment thus influences attitude and behavior.

While not a management strategy, cooperative learning, with its emphasis on individual accountability and positive interdependence with peers, has been used as a framework to create a positive classroom environment.¹⁹ The teacher’s role in cooperative learning is facilitator of tasks and procedures. He or she thus implements strategies that ensure the smooth functioning of the classroom, incorporating into classroom planning a variety of learning ex-

periences that enable students to learn more about themselves and their relationships with others. Students, in turn, are equipped with well-defined roles and a clear level of accountability to themselves and their peers.

Classroom management is thus a vital component of effective teaching because it encompasses all of the procedures that direct the learning environment (behavior, instruction, and motivation).

Supporting the Classroom Management Through Social-Emotional Learning

To ensure effective classroom management, teachers must make sure that students are prepared and motivated to participate in classroom assignments. The results of discipline are effective and long-term only when the learner takes ownership of the growth that needs to occur. The educational environment can enhance or retard student growth and learning.

Research conducted by Brophy²⁰ has shown that learning is more effective in classroom settings that are nonthreatening and responsive to the needs of the students. Furthermore, Goleman²¹ asserted that people who are skilled at regulating their emotions are more likely to live happy, effective lives, and to choose and achieve societally acceptable goals. Therefore, timely and effective discipline strategies are an essential component for students’ lifelong success.

Social-Emotional Learning

Since the early 1960s, educators have successfully incorporated various behavior-modification approaches to help prevent or change disruptive student behaviors, or directly modify academic behavior.²² However, classroom discipline must go beyond administering reinforcement and punishment to building a framework that will enable students to effectively manage themselves and their interpersonal relationships.

This emotional competence framework, generally referred to as “emo-

Table 1

Essential Components of Social-Emotional Learning

Component	Key Skills
Self-Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing and naming one’s emotions and their effects • Understanding the reasons and circumstances for feeling as one does • Knowing one’s strengths and limitations • Building a strong sense of one’s worth and capabilities
Self-Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbalizing and coping with anxiety, anger, and depression • Controlling impulses, aggression, and self-destructive, antisocial behavior • Taking responsibility for personal performance • Building flexibility in handling change • Maintaining standards of honesty and integrity
Self-Monitoring and Performance (Motivation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing on the task at hand • Setting short- and long-term goals • Modifying behavior in light of feedback • Mobilizing positive motivation • Persistence in pursuing goals despite obstacles and setbacks (activating hope and optimism) • Working toward optimal performance states
Empathy and Perspective Taking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding others’ feelings, perspectives, and points of view • Increasing empathy and sensitivity to others’ feelings • Increasing active listening behaviors • Learning how to increase and develop feedback mechanisms for use in everyday life
Social Skills in Handling Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing emotions in relationships, harmonizing diverse feelings and viewpoints (conflict management) • Expressing emotions effectively • Exercising assertiveness, leadership, and persuasion • Cooperative learning group/working as part of a team • Showing sensitivity to social cues • Applying social decision-making and problem-solving skills • Responding constructively and in a problem-solving manner to interpersonal obstacles

tional intelligence,” consists of important social and emotional skills that each person can develop and/or strengthen. When the teacher uses a social-emotional learning approach, students acquire the necessary skills to more successfully manage their lives and environments.²³

Research indicates that the social-emotional learning approach effectively reduces the need for negative disciplinary action and increases academic performance.²⁴ Table 1 provides an integrated list of the essential components of a social-emotional learning approach proposed by Elias et al. and Goleman.²⁵

Self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-monitoring are personal competencies that help students manage themselves as individuals, while empathy and social skills are social competencies that enable them to negotiate interpersonal relationships. Teachers must provide instruction in social-emotional learning competencies to ensure that students develop attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors that promote academic achievement, healthy social relationships, and personal well-being.²⁶

A study by Lizarraga, Ugarte, Iriarte, and Baquedano²⁷ involving 40 middle school students who had difficulties with self-reflection, assertiveness, and empathy found that these competencies can be integrated into daily classroom practices. In fact, Pelco and Reed-Victor²⁸ have suggested that every elementary teacher, beginning at the kindergarten level, should provide social-emotional learning-skills instruction and practice, since he or she is the adult most available throughout the school day to help students develop these skills. Strategies include modeling, role-playing, and acknowledging examples of positive behavior until students can demonstrate them without prompting.

Integrating Social-Emotional Learning Into the Curriculum

As stated earlier, incorporating discipline in the classroom-management

process does not mean simply administering reinforcement or punishment when problem behaviors occur. Instead, it focuses on teaching students a self-regulation process based on individual behavioral goals that reflect educational, Christian, family, and personal values.²⁹ This encourages students to take personal responsibility for their actions. They thus come to understand and accept the consequences when their behaviors violate school and community values, and employ a self-evaluation process that empowers them to make better choices in the future. This decreases “acting out” and other inappropriate behavior, makes students feel more positive about learning, and reduces the time teachers spend on disciplinary issues in their classrooms.

Brown; Lizarraga, et al.; and Elias³⁰ have created practical applications of social-emotional learning skill building that can supplement traditional classroom disciplinary strategies and interventions. For instance, Brown designed a three-session model to help students explore the topic of emotions and behavior:

The first session focuses on connecting emotions to personal values, beliefs, skills, and goals; and discussing human temperaments and moods.

The second session explores how feelings and emotions affect behaviors such as delayed gratification and impulse control, emotional self-control, optimism, and empathy.

The third session emphasizes social and emotional learning, skill building, and decision making under pressure, using an interactive exercise design.

During each session, students separate into small groups to discuss and role-play various scenarios and situations. By incorporating Brown’s three-session model early in the school year, teachers can raise awareness of and validate students’ emotional experiences, thereby making it easier to address emotions as they occur through the rest of the year. His model can also be adapted to help reinforce and support previously learned skills.

Lizarraga, et al. created a “Portfolio” program that uses cooperative learning, modeling, role-playing, practical cases, feedback, and thinking aloud to teach students how to self-regulate their behavior using empathy and assertiveness to resolve interpersonal conflicts in the classroom. The study found that this intervention increased social-emotional learning skills among middle school students.

In 2003, Elias created a helpful academic and social-emotional learning resource booklet with (1) a summary of research findings; (2) practical ap-

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plication techniques; (3) a list of suggested readings for teachers; and (4) international online resources, materials, articles, and training. According to Herbert Walberg, International Academy for Education Educational Practice Series editor, “when academic and social-emotional learning both become part of schooling, students are more likely to remember and use what they are taught. They also incorporate into their education a sense of responsibility, caring, and concerns for the well being of others, as well as themselves. Learning thus can be said to touch both the ‘head’ and the ‘heart,’ and the result is classrooms that are run better and students who are more inspired.”³¹

Traditional disciplinary strategies and interventions will always be an important part of the classroom-manage-

ment and learning process. However, when educators incorporate essential skills for social-emotional learning within their curriculum and disciplinary practices, they will equip students to more effectively manage their actions both in and out of the classroom.

Conclusion

The teacher’s philosophy of learning will influence how classroom management and discipline are (or are not) integrated in the classroom environment. It will also establish student and teacher roles and expectations. The current literature suggests a more-inclusive view of classroom management that involves implementing policies and procedures, as well as behavior-modification strategies that will directly promote, support, and motivate instruction and learning.

Effective classroom management uses discipline to modify student behavior in order to facilitate learning and achievement. Integrating a social-emotional learning component will help to create an environment that empowers and encourages learners to take personal responsibility for their behavior. They will also begin to accept consequences for violating rules, acquire better decision-making habits, and develop more positive attitudes toward learning.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of the discipline component of management rests on the teacher’s ability to plan instruction and behavior, train for self-regulation, and be consistent in doing both. They will find in Scripture many examples of management and discipline—for example, Christ modeled and cultivated the graces of character in His interactions with the disciples.³²

For students, the goal is not only enhanced learning and academic achievement, but also knowing how to learn independently and collaboratively. Most teachers may not ever have a student like Bruce, or if they do, the experience might not be as dramatic as the one described here. However, every teacher has students who can benefit

from a clearer understanding of how to work independently, and how to share in the process of learning (interdependence). Intentional, focused attention on self-awareness, self-regulation, and monitoring, demonstrating empathy and valuing perspectives, and cultivating the social skills necessary to build and sustain relationships are essential for them to achieve wholeness and life-long learning in community. ☞



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- Names used in the story are pseudonyms.
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10. Rudolf Dreikurs’ thinking on social discipline (influenced by Alfred Adler), emerged from the idea that all learners are seeking a place to belong socially in the classroom; behavior and/or misbehavior is grounded in the desire to belong; and, decisions—both positive and negative—are based on this desire. Both *Psychology in the Classroom: A Manual for Teachers* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968) and *Discipline Without Tears* (1974) develop this concept.

11. Canter and Canter, *Assertive Discipline: Positive Behavior Management for Today’s Classroom*, op cit.

12. Jones, *Tools for Teaching*, op cit., p. 189.

13. Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Assn., 1923), p. 57.

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16. William Glasser, *The Quality School: Managing Students Without Coercion* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992); E. T. Emmer and L. M. Stough, “Classroom Management: A Critical Part of Psychology With Implications for Teacher Education,” *Educational Psychologist* 36:2 (2001), pp. 103-112; Kohn, *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community*, op cit.; Jones, *Tools for Teaching*, op cit.; Charles, *Building Classroom Discipline*, op cit.

17. Fred Jones describes classroom management as what the teacher does to facilitate learning through instructional approaches, the physical arrangement of the classroom, nonverbal communication, management of discipline, and motivation. These are the main principles that form the framework of *Tools for Teaching* (2007).

18. Robert J. Marzano and Debra J. Pickering, *Dimensions of Learning* (Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1997), pp. 13, 14.

19. Roger T. Johnson and David W. Johnson support, research, and promote positive interdependence and individual accountability as essential components of learning (*Circles of Learning: Cooperation in the Classroom*, op cit). See also Kagan, *Cooperative Learning*, op cit.; and J. S.

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31. Herbert Walberg, ed., International Academy for Education Educational Practice Series, cited in Elias, *Academic and Social-Emotional Learning*, op cit., p. 3.

32. Ellen White in the chapter “Methods of Teaching” of the book *Education* shares thoughtful reflections on Christ’s interactions with the disciples, as He sought to build in each one, unique to their individual needs, the necessary elements of character stemming from self-discipline (pp. 230-239).