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REVIEW OF RESEARCH

DISCIPLINE PAST AND PRESENT: SHIFTING PARADIGMS FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

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Catholic schools enjoy an international reputation as safe, disciplined, academic environments (Bryk, Lee, & Holland, 1993). In fact, the presence of a structured discipline system is one of the top three reasons parents choose to send their children to Catholic schools (Convey, 1992) and discipline may be the top reason that non-Catholic parents select a Catholic education for their children (McDonald, 2000).

This article provides an overview of existing research on educational disciplinary policies. Five topics are discussed: 1) a brief historical introduction; 2) traditional disciplinary procedures; 3) the needs of adolescents; 4) school-wide practices; and 5) effective versus ineffective models.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF DISCIPLINE

Rules have existed since civilization began. Without order, chaos would ensue. Rules have also governed the lives of children. Discipline was demonstrated in the home by the father who showed that his "word was law" and that his authority was not to be questioned (Chamberlin & Carnot, 1974, p. 5). The well-disciplined child was then expected to carry over to church and school life those ideas established in the home. Children were taught to obey. "The early years of our Puritan existence brought crude, dictatorial authority by parents and schoolmasters who believed they must 'break the child's will' if he was to grow up with a righteous adult conscience" (Chamberlin & Carnot, 1974, p. 5). Chamberlin and Carnot also reported that authoritarian

means of discipline were common and punitive in order to “establish rules in the training of children” (p. 5).

As America recognized the need for public education, educators recognized the need to discipline without fear. Thomas Jefferson and the founding fathers established the idea that students needed to have minds of their own if they were to be the future of the new democracy (Bear, 1998). Bear stated that the school was to enforce the hard work ethic of the Puritans without forcing students to obey by fearing a punishment or fearing God. Instead, students were taught habits and behaviors that would evoke a sense of duty, eventually leading to moral development, thus introducing the belief that self-discipline, rather than extrinsic factors, could be a way to help students become responsible young adults (Bear, 1998; Daly & Fowler, 1988). As Bear (1998) concurs, “Schools are expected to use discipline when children fail to exhibit self-discipline” (p. 15).

History has helped to shape the way discipline is defined. Researchers have often used the term *discipline* to describe two different approaches in educating children: prevention and remediation (Chernow & Chernow, 1989; Cotton, 1990; Daly & Fowler, 1988; Gushee, 1996). Researchers agreed that the ultimate goal of any disciplinary practice, however, was encouraging a student’s intrinsic motivation to want to behave appropriately, or self-discipline (Bear, 1998; Cameron, 1998; Chernow & Chernow, 1989; Cotton, 1990). Chernow and Chernow reported that behaving appropriately went beyond “staying on task” and included “self-control, polite attention, and respect for property and the rights of others” as a model for teaching students how they were to act in certain situations (p. 3).

Cotton (1990) maintained: “During most of its twenty-two year existence, the Annual Gallup Poll of the Public’s Attitudes Toward the Public Schools has identified ‘lack of discipline’ as the most serious problem facing the nation’s educational system” (p. 1). Researchers agree on the necessity of thoughtful disciplinary policies in schools (Bear, 1998; Cameron, 1998; Chernow & Chernow, 1989; Cotton, 1990). Chernow and Chernow (1989) described five major rationales: 1) Discipline was “psychologically necessary” in that it gave students a sense of security, 2) it was “democratic” so that everyone had equal status, 3) it was “expected” by students so that classroom control could be maintained, 4) it made “learning possible” when students received uninterrupted work time, and 5) it fostered “good human relations” (p. 4). Factors such as these have evolved over time but are not entirely autonomous from the original ideals of discipline established by Jefferson in educating children to be responsible citizens (Bear, 1998). As Chernow and Chernow (1989) stated, “Our schools are the training grounds for democracy” (p. 4). And, according to Cameron (1998), disciplined students created “widespread benefits” not only for school systems but also for “society at large” (p. 33).

TRADITIONAL DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

Researchers have examined from many angles the top categories of misbehavior. Cameron (1998) identified five major areas of misbehavior: 1) aggressive (including abusive language), 2) physically disruptive, 3) socially disruptive, 4) authority-challenging, and 5) self-disruptive behaviors. What complicated matters further for teachers and administrators, according to Cameron, was that these misbehavior categories were often intertwined and exhibited with varying magnitudes and frequencies. Additionally, teacher tolerance level and the context of the misbehavior were also factors in complicating behavioral situations (Wright & Dusek, 1998). Handling these discipline issues has traditionally been the responsibility of the building administrator, documented in the form of school disciplinary office referrals (Freiberg, Stein, & Parker, 1995; Nelson, Martella, & Galand, 1998; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997). The most common actions in response to these misbehaviors were the conventional methods of "conference, parental notices, detention, suspension, and expulsion" (Freiberg et al., 1995, p. 422).

Suspension and corporal punishment were outlined by Gushee (1996) as the two most common punitive measures in dealing with student misbehavior. These methods, however, have become highly scrutinized (Cotton, 1990; Gay, Rueth, & Williams, 1993; Gushee, 1996; Orentlicher, 1992). Corporal punishment, inflicted pain or discomfort, or use of physical force as a punishment for rule infraction or misbehavior came under negative scrutiny; however, as a reactive strategy to show an immediate decrease in disruptive behaviors, it was found to be effective (American Medical Association, 1985; Bear, 1998). Researchers stated that corporal methods psychologically harmed students and had no real value as a deterrent at home or school (Gay, et al., 1993; Gushee, 1996; Orentlicher, 1992). In fact, Cotton (1990) argued that corporal punishment might unintentionally increase the frequency of the misbehavior because of the attention received from adults. In addition to the legal and liability issues surrounding corporal punishment, ethical reasons kept many schools from making it common practice. Orentlicher (1992) stated that physical means of punishment were not always effective, and that they "may teach children that violence is an acceptable way of solving problems" (p. 3205).

Suspensions were criticized as well. Cotton (1990) estimated that "over 90 percent of suspensions occur over behaviors which are more irritating and annoying than truly serious" (p. 12). Dupper (1994) provided some examples of non-violent offenses which were remediated by out-of-school suspensions: "truancy, tardiness, pregnancy, smoking, and minor violations of dress codes" (p. 115). Gushee (1996) stated that, "Suspension may discriminate against racial minorities, remove from school those students who most need to be in school, and actually reward some by giving them a 'holiday'" (p. 1).

Anderman and Kimweli (1997); Colvin, Kameenui, and Sugai (1993); and Skiba et al. (1997) contended that methods of discipline that are exclusionary often lead to later occurrences of delinquency and dropout. Valuable learning time, according to Dupper (1998), is lost when a student is suspended. As Dupper (1998) maintained, "The increasing use of suspension and other zero tolerance discipline practices as a response to student misbehavior is unjustified, ineffective, and contributes to the school failure of many students" (p. 354). Some researchers argued that traditional procedures such as suspending or expelling students have not worked, especially when the attempt of the punishment was to decrease instances of violent behavior (Taylor-Greene et al., 1997).

A proponent of suspension argued:

When common sense prevails, suspension can be an effective tool to modify a student's behavior. If nothing else, an argument for suspension can certainly be made on behalf of the other students in the class and the teacher. Why should they be subjected to continual disruptions? (Ambrose & Gibson, 1995, p. 39)

Ambrose and Gibson (1995) noted that in order for suspension to be an effective tool in changing student misbehavior, constant communication among school staff and with parents is necessary. This way, suspensions would not be viewed as "another day off from school" (p. 39). This complemented the idea that schools needed to offer "a disciplined environment conducive to learning" as outlined by the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (National Educational Goals Panel, 1994, p. 13). Ambrose et al. admitted that suspensions were not used unless "all else fails to change student behavior, or when students commit serious offenses, such as fighting or bringing a weapon to school" (p. 39). Skiba et al. (1997) and Gushee (1996) ultimately concurred that preventive and instructional methods were more effective alternatives to suspension in attempting to change the behavior of disruptive students and combated recidivism over time.

THE NEEDS OF ADOLESCENTS

"The school environment strongly influences the psychological and social development of early adolescents" (Anderman & Kimweli 1997, p. 408). Researchers have agreed that the effectiveness of school discipline practices must be gauged by the needs of the students under their implementation (Anderman & Kimweli 1997; Dougherty, Greenspan, & Rodahan, 1996; Tobin, Sugai, & Colvin, 1996). For example, Tobin et al. (1996) found that students who were sent to the principal's office in the sixth grade due to a minor misbehavior would likely "return to the office in grades 7 and 8 with

major discipline problems, unless additional services are provided at the grade 6 level" (p. 82). Dougherty et al. (1996) acknowledged that many students found it difficult to view middle school as "an opportunity for a new beginning and a promise of success" after leaving elementary school (p. 45). Changing schools, compounded with poor self-esteem, few friends, and perhaps even low academic skills, contributed to students' frustration levels before they ever attended their first middle school class.

Adolescence was described as middle school students' time to change, grow, develop their individuality, and shape lifelong moral values and attitudes (Arth, Lounsbury, McEwin, & Swaim, 1995; Brophy & Good, 1974; Campbell, 1992; Hechinger, 1993; Hough, 1995). It has also been described as a time for testing limits, pushing authoritative boundaries, and seeking independence (Campbell, 1992; Hechinger, 1993). These types of behaviors prompted Kottler (1997) to state, "It seems incomprehensible [to adults] that some children will go to such lengths to make life so difficult, for themselves and for us, when it would be so much easier to be cooperative" (p. 11). Kottler continued, "All behavior, whether it is comprehensible to you or not, persists because it is helpful in some way to that person" (p. 12). For the adolescent, it is an easier choice to exhibit noncompliance and defy authority because "the rejection of adults seems to be part of the process of growing up" (Chernow & Chernow 1989, p. 5). Tierno (1991) stated that students with typically pleasant demeanors were often found to be more argumentative during adolescence due to rapid physiological changes. Therefore, developmental changes were seen as precursors to misbehavior. Middle school teachers and building staff who were "successful in understanding the students themselves" seemed to be more effective with adolescents in working on both their learning and their behavior (Tierno, 1991, p. 569).

In order to help adolescents make the transition from elementary to middle school, Chernow and Chernow (1989) suggested that students be weaned from their elementary dependence in order to prepare for the tougher academic demands and responsibilities of middle school. In addition, adolescents needed to be given a sense of belonging, according to George and Lawrence (1982). With regard to discipline, it was shown by Freiberg et al. (1995) that students educated under a team model exhibited significantly lower occurrences of victimization in school than those who did not. However, misbehaviors were likely to be demonstrated with increasing severity and frequency in the middle grades overall (Anderman & Kimweli, 1997). Hechinger (1993) stated, "The old view that adolescence was merely a phase that would pass seemed no longer acceptable" (p. 531). By meeting the needs of an adolescent, Hechinger argued, behaviors could be remediated earlier or prevented altogether, which in turn prevented the desire for dropping out of school.

Dreikurs and Cassel (1972) stated, "Most adults when correcting chil-

dren only make matters worse because they do exactly what the child wants them to do—and they end up reinforcing the child's mistaken goals" (p. 9). An adolescent's misbehavior can be changed only once recognition of that mistaken goal takes place. Students do not act out or misbehave haphazardly. Sometimes the misbehavior is rooted in the adolescent's overwhelming social need to belong.

All behavior is purposive. One cannot understand behavior of another person unless one knows to which goal it is directed, and it is always directed towards finding one's place. If a person or child misbehaves then it indicates that he has wrong ideas about how to be significant. (Dreikurs & Cassel, 1972, p. 8)

The role of the teacher largely facilitates this awareness in a child. Chamberlin and Carnot (1974) stated that "discipline is dignity" (p. 13) and that the way a teacher acts in front of his or her class determines the manner in which the students act. According to Amidon and Flanders (1971), to have influence on the children in the classroom teachers must evaluate and study their own behavior in order to model and demonstrate control. Tierno (1991) made a connection to this as educators examined their methods of teaching adolescents. He suggested that teachers who incorporate the child into their lesson are said to be the most effective in reaching that child educationally. Tierno continued to argue that teachers who demonstrate an awareness of the massive physical and emotional changes taking place in adolescents are more successful in classroom management. Chamberlin and Carnot argued that students comply with reasonable rules that give them a sense of self-satisfaction. Tierno encouraged educators to understand how adolescent maturation affects middle school learning and behavior and, in turn, use that knowledge to modify their teaching behaviors to accommodate the needs of the students.

SCHOOLWIDE DISCIPLINE PRACTICES

Schoolwide discipline practices were considered by researchers to be an innovative method for dealing with students' misbehaviors. Lewis (n.d.) wrote:

Schools can no longer assume children will enter classrooms ready to learn, understand social expectations, and comply with school rules. Schools can also be confident that the threat or implementation of suspension and other traditional discipline procedures are not going to reduce problem behaviors. Schools can assume that to be effective in reducing challenging behavior will require rethinking current practices. (p. 18)

In an attempt to create alternative behavioral interventions to traditional disciplinary procedures, researchers often suggested that schoolwide methods be considered. "Programs that treat the whole school, rather than isolating particular problems, are more likely to succeed" (Daly & Fowler 1988, p. 2). Schoolwide practices work well with adolescents, according to Cotton (1990), because student participation in developing the programs is encouraged in a manner that creates "a sense of ownership and belongingness" (p. 3). Common discipline standards also provide for students an expected and consistent manner in which they are to behave (Bain, Houghton, & Williams, 1991; Council for Exceptional Children, 1997; Gushee, 1996; Todd, Horner, Sugai, & Sprague, n.d.). Cotton (1990) added that the students are not the only ones who benefit from such programming: "Widespread dissemination of clearly stated rules and procedures assures that all students and staff understand what is and is not acceptable" (p. 3).

Schoolwide discipline practices were defined as "management plans, which serve as the foundation for positive school climate, high academic achievement, and efficient staff communication and collaboration" (Colvin, Sugai, Good, & Lee, 1997, p. 345). Taylor-Greene et al. (1997) contributed to the definition by stating that "schoolwide systems of behavioral support define, teach, and reward expected behaviors" (p. 100). This was not defined as a school's discipline policy, however. A discipline policy, according to Gushee (1996), includes three main goals: 1) informing the reader of the school board's discipline policy, 2) placing responsibility for policy reinforcement, and 3) specifying offenses and fixing their seriousness (p. 1). Schoolwide practices are not meant to replace discipline policies but rather provide "effective behavioral support" to already existing school rules (Lewis, n.d., p. 2).

As stated previously, researchers displayed information concerning discipline from either remedial or preventive viewpoints. Nelson, Martella, and Galand (1998) and Nelson, Crabtree, Marchand-Martella, and Martella (1998) agreed that schoolwide intervention practices are both remedial and preventive in nature. Nelson, Martella, and Galand found that they focused more on the practices of the school than on the behavior of the children and stated, "This approach...was...preventative, in that it helped ensure that school practices did not cause or reinforce disruptive behavior [and] remedial, in that it sought to reduce disruptive behavior" (p. 153).

Opposition to schoolwide discipline practices is documented in the research as resistance to change by both teachers and principals. Teachers resisted a change in discipline practices if change meant the implementation of systematic techniques (Bear, 1998; Cole, 1992; Dupper, 1994; Soodak & Podell, 1994). Principals viewed discipline as their job alone and had difficulty relinquishing some of the authority to teachers, as was required by some schoolwide practices (Cotton, 1990; Dupper, 1994; Greenfield, 1995). Todd

et al. (n.d.) stated, "The diversity of the challenge suggests that no one, simple solution will work for all students, all teachers, or all schools" (p. 2). They confirmed this statement by suggesting that chronic behavior patterns exhibited by students are not remediated by schoolwide practices. Todd et al. (n.d.) found that "3-7% of the student body of 200-600 students engage in chronic problem behaviors and require additional resources and individualized programming" (p. 2).

"Although many unique and promising features were found, the major limitation of packaged discipline programs was a lack of clear procedural implementation guidelines" (Colvin et al., 1993, p. 365). However, schoolwide discipline practices were described as powerful by Todd, Horner, Sugai, and Colvin (n.d.) in that "they allow a 'one-size-fits-all' approach" to discipline (p. 6). They continued to say that these practices "are efficient, and if done well, they are effective with the vast majority of the students" (p. 6). Since schoolwide practices, however, were said to be ineffective with some students, time "to assess, design, and implement systems of behavioral support" was a necessity (Taylor-Greene et al., 1997, p. 110). Time for ongoing staff development was also needed to help schoolwide discipline practices be successful (Cotton, 1990; Council for Exceptional Children, 1997). Overall, researchers agreed that collaboration from students and staff, commitment to the program, clearly outlined rules and consequences, and consistency of implementation were common guidelines for successful schoolwide discipline practices (Cotton, 1990; Council for Exceptional Children, 1997; Gable & Manning, 1997; Mehas, et al., 1998). Ultimately, a demonstrated change in behavior determined the effectiveness of schoolwide practices. (Bain et al., 1991).

EFFECTIVE AND INEFFECTIVE MODELS AND STRATEGIES

In recent times, the act of discipline has come under much scrutiny. As society began evaluating the treatment of children, the idea that harsh discipline could cause "severe damage" to children led parents and educators to rethink their methods of behavior management (Chamberlin & Carnot 1974, p. 5). Changing times have shown a change in practice (Chamberlin & Carnot 1974). Instead of verbally attacking children, Eglash (1981) encouraged adults to acquire a humanistic approach in dealing with discipline. Demanding that a child comply with rules leads to more conflict. Restating what the problem is or what the desired outcome of a situation is gives the child a feeling of self-worth (Eglash, 1981). Once the child senses a mutual respect with the adult, misbehavior becomes less of a focus and discipline is administered without confrontation (Dreikurs & Cassel, 1972).

Teachers' individual discipline practices and strategies largely dominated the literature. One author suggested that discipline can even be viewed not as the behavior of the child determining the model but rather the type of child being the model itself (DeBruyn & Larson, 1984). Models were described as "The Troublemaker," "The Whiner," "The Smartmouth," and "The Do-Nothing" (DeBruyn & Larson, 1984). However, most models were outlined in a philosophical approach, in that teachers were able to choose a model that best fit their personalities and classroom. For example, Teacher Effectiveness Training, developed by Thomas Gordon in the 1970s, examined discipline from the approach of problem ownership in order to meet both the students' and the teachers' needs (Cotton, 1990; Moles, 1989). Likewise, Lee Canter's Assertive Discipline and William Glasser's Reality Therapy both approached discipline from the idea that behavior led to consequences and that clearly stated rules and expectations were enforced (Cotton, 1990; Moles, 1989).

Some researchers stated that it was not the model that students responded to but the demeanor and the manner of rule enforcement of the teacher (Ozvold, 1996; Rademacher, Callahan, & Pederson-Seelye, 1998). Some teachers were said to have an "over concern with adult-direction" of student behavior which allowed "an inappropriate tendency to over generalize management strategies" (Cameron, 1998; p. 36). Those teachers were said to be less effective in managing classroom behavior than those who demonstrated authoritative approaches (Bear, 1998). Bear wrote that "authoritative" teachers set high standards for classroom behavior and enforce rules consistently, so that they manage short-term behavior problems while developing long-term self-discipline.

First-year teachers learned effective methods by trial and error in their field experiences and determined that strategies which were more humanistic in nature were more effective in correcting misbehavior than authoritarian strategies (Tulley & Chiu, 1995). According to the study by Tulley and Chiu, positive reinforcement was the overall most effective strategy, with a success rate of 92% when used by student teachers. Punishment was successful only 53% of the time, and threats and warnings, 27% of the time (Tulley & Chiu, 1995). Students, regardless of gender, school achievement level, or grade level, stated that they were more likely to have positive interactions and comply with rules when their input was sought to help create behavioral programs (Chiu & Tulley, 1997). Chiu and Tulley found that students rated teacher-directed and negatively or positively reinforced rules comparatively lower on their preference scale.

Cotton (1990) stated that effective teachers avoided the following practices to obtain discipline: 1) vague, unenforceable rules, 2) ignoring misconduct, 3) ambiguity in responding to misbehavior, and 4) excessive punishment. Cole (1992), Halsey (1994), and Wolfgramm (1995) suggested that teachers who encourage self-management techniques and responsibility in

their students find that students feel empowered to make changes in themselves. It is in these changes that students begin to see themselves as civil—a behavior necessary for respecting their life and the lives of others (Kauffman & Burbach, 1997).

The Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST) discipline model was perceived by teachers as an effective practice for helping students change their behavior as evidenced in a study by Edwards (1992). Effective elements included in the model were teacher-scripted verbal responses to de-escalate acting-out behaviors; use of think sheets where students recorded their feelings and outcome of their actions; buddy rooms, safe places, and recovery areas for students to calm down, reflect, and prepare to reenter the classroom; processing with the students to help them construct a behavior plan and take ownership of their actions; and conducting class meetings to solve classroom problems as a group (Behavior Intervention Support Team, 1998). Having BIST staff members available to consult with schools and to provide strategies for teachers was also effective (Edwards, 1992).

The BIST model is based philosophically on the premise that there are three reasons why children act out: They do not know any better, they have a need to test limits, and they do not have other ways to manage their feelings (Behavior Intervention Support Team, 1998). Even though this model has been used with a wide range of ages, it is shown to be sensitive to the needs of adolescents because the model supports the idea that children need acceptance partnered with accountability. The model also lends itself to schoolwide implementation since the problems that students bring to school are not confined to one classroom. Osterhaus (1995) concurs, "Individual staff are unable to remain consistent and balanced in isolation. Staff working with chronic offenders must function as part of a team" (p. 25).

Price (1998) conducted a study to determine the BIST model's effectiveness on students' attendance, achievement, and self-esteem. Results of that study concluded that no statistically significant difference existed between students who participated in the BIST model and those who did not participate in the model in the areas of absence rate, academic achievement, or self-esteem. Even though Price's study was unable to demonstrate a direct relationship to those areas mentioned, it was noted that the BIST model might have had "a positive impact on students at-risk" which failed to show up in whole group analysis (Price, 1998, p. 60).

Mason-Condra (1999) also studied the BIST model to determine its impact on student achievement. In that study, no statistical evidence was found to support the BIST model as having an impact on increasing student achievement. Mason-Condra commented, "Educators must continue to face increasing numbers of students whose behaviors prevent them from being successful" in public schools (p. 100). It was because of this that the current study was constructed to analyze the continuing effects of behavior using the

BIST model. If behavior was changed, over time students would be more successful in the classroom and achievement would be affected.

SUMMARY

In the past, children have been disciplined by parents and teachers in ways that were found to be overly harsh and punitive. They learned to behave and be obedient at home, church, and school out of fear. With the idea of public schools in mind, the focus of discipline evolved from obedience to citizenship in order to proliferate democracy. History, therefore, has helped shape the rationale underlying why discipline in schools is necessary and how we address and define discipline.

Methods of disciplining children have changed drastically over time. At the middle school level, most changes in disciplinary procedure came from the research, which stated that discipline must reflect the unique needs of the adolescent. Researchers stated that traditional disciplinary procedures, such as corporal punishment, retention, suspension, and other punitive methods, might actually have created more problems for students. Suspension, for example, was keeping students who needed to be there the most away from school. It was argued that these types of traditional discipline procedures were effective only for short-term behavioral correction rather than long-term changes in behavior.

Efforts to change the way discipline was managed at school have been numerous. Schoolwide discipline models were suggested as one way that a consistent approach in dealing with misbehaviors could be achieved. For implementation to be truly effective, schools must make sure that all staff is included, student input is requested, and everyone is committed to the program. Individual discipline techniques used in the classroom by teachers were also discussed for correcting misbehavior. Teachers who encourage self-management techniques and responsibility in their students are the most successful. Whether schools use schoolwide discipline models or individual techniques, the ultimate goal of effective discipline is self-discipline. The BIST model was presented as being one solution to the dilemma of meeting the needs of adolescents while providing support for consistent, schoolwide implementation.

Catholic educational leaders must be aware of research that documents the relative success of competing disciplinary practices and prepare to adapt and revise existing policies in ways that are congruent with the research. This focus leaves unaddressed the question of disciplinary policy as it relates to a Catholic philosophy of education and school mission. These connections will be explored in future issues.

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