

2. THE REACH PROCESS: CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM CULTURE

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM CULTURE

Inclusion provides an environment in which all students can learn and grow together. All students in a school, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses, in any area, become part of a school community.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Creating an inclusive classroom begins with a desire to help all students succeed. Knowledge and skills are necessary and can be learned. Success, however, can only be achieved with a positive and willing attitude. Attitude is critical!

All four areas of development—spiritual, physical, social, and academic—must be addressed in an inclusive classroom.

SPIRITUAL

The teacher:

- Allows the Holy Spirit to direct.
- Seeks continuously for a deeper relationship with Christ.
- Integrates prayer continually in the classroom.
- Communicates unconditional love with appropriate boundaries.
- Shares vulnerabilities and asks forgiveness.

LEARNING

The instruction:

- Meets the varied learning styles and preferences as it builds on student strengths by customizing the instruction.
- Takes place anytime and anywhere while utilizing a wide variety of delivery methods.
- Supports teachers as they use curriculum that is dynamic, individually paced, and acknowledges student interests.
- Works with standards that are rigorous, comprehensive and relevant; they provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, but do not dictate when or how students learn.

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- Engages students authentically in their education experience.
- Supports assessment practices that are varied, relevant, and utilize sophisticated systems to track, illustrate, and translate student performance data. Assessment practices also incorporates innovative practices such as performance-based ePortfolios and embedded formative assessments that produce immediate results.
- Relies on feedback that occurs in rapid cycles and is objective, connected to learning goals, and suggests the next step in the learning process.

PHYSICAL

The classroom:

- Requires an orderly environment (clutter free).
- Uses calming colors (such as soft blues, greens, and earth tones).
- Allows for unobstructed movement.
- Facilitates cooperative learning.
- Provides for preferential seating.
- Accommodates multi-sensory learning.
- Provides for a non-punitive de-stressing zone.
- Ensures a comfortable environment (temperature, light, odor).

SOCIAL

The teacher:

- Creates an environment that embraces differences.
- Empowers students to advocate for themselves.
- Facilitates self-directed learning.
- Communicates that “fair” does not mean equal; rather it means giving each student what s/he needs.
- Enables students to resolve conflict peacefully.
- Fosters a cooperative working environment.

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ACADEMIC

The teacher:

- Modifies expectations to meet each student's needs.
- Incorporates a variety of methods (cooperative learning, differentiated instruction, multiple intelligences, brain compatible learning).
- Maintains a structured routine.
- Employs a variety of regular and assistive technology.
- Encourages active participation.
- Celebrates excellence and perseverance.
- **Does not diagnose or label.**

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

Differentiated Instruction is the way in which a teacher anticipates and responds to a variety of student needs in the classroom. It encompasses an entire philosophy of instruction, giving students multiple access points to essential instruction. To meet student needs, teachers **differentiate** by modifying the content (what is being taught), the process (how it is taught) and the product (how students demonstrate their learning).

REMEDIATION

Remedial education can be designed for any student, with or without special needs; the defining trait is simply that they have reached a point of underpreparedness, regardless of why.

Remedial education is designed to bring students who are lagging behind, up to the level of achievement realized by their peers. There are a number of reasons why a student might need remediation. Some students may not have had access to quality instruction, or may not have received adequate grounding in math and language arts to prepare them for grade level performance. Other students may have transferred in and out of schools or missed school a lot, creating gaps in their education which contribute to a lack of knowledge in core subjects.

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Students may also have learning disorders and other issues which have impaired their ability to learn.

Without access to remediation which provides direct, sequential, structured instruction, a student's likelihood of ever catching up to his/her grade level peers is impossible. Thus, when planning a remediation program for a student, a teacher should decide between the following options:

- Use the same whole group general education curriculum materials for remediation by providing additional instructional time daily in a small group or individual setting. If this option is used, the teacher re-explains the concepts/skills taught in the general whole-group curriculum using more manipulatives, illustrations, organizers, or a different instructional approach.
- Use a different curriculum altogether that is specifically designed for remedial instruction, and uses a mastery learning approach. It is important that curriculum materials be on the student's instructional level—not necessarily at their grade level, but selected to maximize progress.

INCLUSION IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

Creating an inclusive environment in early childhood education programs and environments begins with the belief that all children have a right and ability to learn. When children with disabilities or delays are valued as members of the early childhood community, then meeting their needs becomes second nature as your mindset becomes one of doing what is needed for every child. Here are a few suggestions for creating an inclusive environment in the early childhood setting:

First remember to CARE.

- **Collaborate:** Partnering with parents and building meaningful relationships will lay the foundation for sharing information that may be uncomfortable. When parents feel that you have their child's best interest at heart; when you have communicated all of the strengths and great things about their child as well as areas of concern consistently; when you have intentionally listened and sought their feedback and suggestions; then parents are more likely to be receptive of information shared regarding your concerns.

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- **Advocate:** Be vigilant in seeking resources and supports for children with disabilities. Having resources readily available will help parents as they strive to seek answers and support. Be proactive and have a plan in place for sharing concerns, for identifying strategies to support the child, for documenting what is working and what may still be needed, for making referrals and for working with local early interventionists.
- **Relate:** Remember that, although you may have worked with several children with disabilities, for most parents this may be their first experience and their primary concern will be for their child. Always relate to parents with compassion and genuine concern. Be mindful of the stages of acceptance they may experience and patiently work with them through every phase (denial, anger, bargaining, sadness, and/or acceptance). Remember every child and family is unique and will require your understanding.
- **Educate:** Learn all that you can about working with young children with disabilities. Adopt a philosophy that supports inclusive practices and have a communication plan in place for sharing your philosophy with other parents as well as the local community. Above all, commit to educating all children, working with them where they are and challenging them to achieve what is appropriate and reasonable.

(Adapted by Davenia Lea, Associate Director of Education, North American Division, 2012)

Additionally, the following strategies can be incorporated into the daily routine of an early childhood program to promote the growth and development of all children (Adapted from the work of Deanna Jordan, Early Childhood News, 2008):

CIRCLE TIME

The easiest way to include a child with special needs is to have them sit either in a lap or beside an adult. The child will probably need more direction and direct help with fingerplays, songs, and listening skills. The teacher or aide can help by whispering to the child about how well they are listening, affirming a point in a story, asking frequent questions and planning a shorter time. Children who use special equipment like a chair can be included by having all the children sit in chairs, or sitting the child in a supported position on the floor. Using sign language also helps not only hearing impaired children, but also gives other children a visual clue as to

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what you are saying. Some children with learning disabilities as well as those with communication disorders may understand a visual sign or picture easier than just the spoken word. Having small cards with songs pictured on them can also help a child to choose his or her favorites like everybody else. Using sign language also gives you, the teacher alternative ways to communicate with your children, for example you are able to remind children silently to listen or raise their hand or be more quiet without drawing attention to a particular child or without disrupting the lesson.

MEALS

For many special needs children, mealtime is one of the best learning opportunities. The areas of small motor skills, self-help, manners, language/communication, eye-hand coordination, and social interaction are all stressed at every meal. If the child has difficulty feeding himself, the adult needs to sit behind them gently guiding the child's hand through the process. As the child gains more skill, you can begin move to sitting behind and using only words to direct, work up to sitting beside the child, then finally moving away all together. You can provide finger foods that require certain grasps to pick up, or To work on communication skills, you can give children a small amount of food (for example, three Cheerios), providing ample opportunities for children to have to ask for more or to choose between two or more items. Communication can be facilitated verbally or non-verbally via the use of words, sign language, and/or pictures. As the teacher, you should prompt children who may have language or communication delays, encouraging them to communicate frequently. You can also work on social skills and peer interactions by having children pass items to one another, use manners such as please and thank-you, and encourage eye contact when interacting with others. You can work sensory concerns by providing varying textures and flavors for children to sample. Remember that mealtime should be enjoyable, thus it will most likely take time to address multiple skills.

CLASS TIME

The child with special needs will most likely require some adjustments to be able to fully participate in your classroom. Fortunately, most of the adjustments are minor and can be accomplished with minimum effort. The easiest things to do are change

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or adapt a few of your standard items. For example, use knobbed puzzles, include books on tape or board books or picture books in your library, use squeeze only scissors, have big sized legos in your block area, have giant-sized crayons, pencils and fat sized washable markers in the art area, increase spacing between tables and walls, make sure shelves are firmly anchored, ensure that shelves are marked with words and pictures, showing where toys belong to facilitate clean-up, Use Velcro for calendars, posters, and file folder games to also make putting things back on walls very easy and arrange rooms so that all of the areas can be easily seen by an adult from any position. Additionally, be sure to balance teacher-directed with child-directed activities, provide instruction in short stints of time, balance movement and sitting activities, and provide ample ways for children to acquire information as well as to demonstrate their understanding. All of these suggestions can be a benefit to not only the child with special needs, but to all children in your classroom.

OUTDOOR TIME

A child with mobility problems may require assistance using some materials or adaptations to equipment may be needed. A bucket type swing with a seatbelt is easily found. (Little Tykes) Likewise adding velcro foot straps to a tricycle or buying a low basketball goal may also assist. Bigger projects like a cement path for wheelchairs, and trikes, can be a fund-raising goal for your parents group. The key is supervision and ensuring that all children have access. Additionally, some children may need assistance with social interactions, thus intentional prompting or staging of small group interactions may be needed.

SELF-HELP

Many children with special needs may be slower to potty train and may still be in diapers or Pull-ups. Potty training is very important and should be done the same as for any other toddler. The important thing to remember is to use as much positive reinforcement as possible. For example; posting a photo schedule of the steps involved may help quite a bit. A simple 3 step poster keeps a child on track. Also, communication with parents is crucial. If the parents and the teacher are using the same technique and reward system, the child will learn much more quickly and be less confused. Dressing may also be a challenge for some children. Having shoes with Velcro or that the child

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slips on instead of shoestrings may help. Using mittens instead of gloves, having coats with snaps instead of buttons or zippers are all minor adaptations that can be made to assist children with being more independent and successful.

COMMON PROBLEM AREAS

Probably the biggest concern with children with special needs is behavior. Behavior challenges typically accompany such disabilities as attention deficit, hyperactivity, autism and learning disabilities. The greatest challenge for children with special needs is the inability to effectively communicate their wants and needs or to accomplish the many tasks that face them each day, thus leading to frustration. The best tool for handling negative behavior is to anticipate it. You can recognize what leads to an episode of unacceptable behavior and change things early to head it off.

For many children, transitions can be difficult. Try announcing any transition at least five minutes ahead of time and every minute thereafter. Go over to the child and tell them face to face that an activity is coming to an end. Give the child a specific job to do such as put away crayons, slide in chairs, set out carpet squares to re-focus their attention. Have a picture schedule up on the wall for children to reference or provide an individualized schedule to children who may require one. Have a predictable routine and when changes must occur, be sure to forewarn the child for whom transitions are a challenge. Using a kitchen timer to keep track of schedule changes is also a good idea. And using a recognizable signal to indicate that a transition is about to occur, such as a bell or buzzer may help as well.

Another challenge may be accomplishing tasks that have many steps. Breaking down tasks into smaller steps may help. For example, when painting, have the child first get a smock, then show the paint, then have her do her art. When she is finished, walk her through the steps to put things away and put away her picture. Avoid giving more than one or two steps at a time. Teach the child to break up big tasks as well. For instance, when doing a puzzle have him dump the pieces, then turn them over, then find all of the edge parts first. By having a system to follow, the child will be able to concentrate more and have less cause for frustration.

Another problem area is communicating with peers. Children who have language difficulties may also have challenges in problem solving, social interaction,

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and play. Try having an adult in the child's play group to model asking to play, interacting with others, sharing, exchanging ideas, and solving problems. Don't do all of the talking but give examples of what to say. "Ask Bill if he will trade his truck for your blocks." "You need to remind Jane that she can't knock down your blocks without asking." Children want to fit in and modeling gives any child a way to learn to fit in and make friends.

HANDLING AGGRESSION

In spite of your best efforts, any child with (or without) special needs may become aggressive. Understanding the "why" for the behavior is a first step in working towards preventing or eliminating the behavior. The most common reason for aggressive behavior in children with special needs is their inability to effectively communicate. Providing children with alternative ways to communicate their wants and needs may cut down on aggressive behaviors. Consider other triggers via observation and journaling. For example, perhaps the negative behavior occurs at a certain time of the day (before nap time, after snack, in the afternoon, etc) or perhaps during a certain activity or with a certain person. If you are able to identify a trigger, you can work to resolve the root cause of the problem. Also, avoid set-ups for meltdowns by structuring your environment so that children are always engaged and well supervised. Have routines that are predictable and work to not over-stimulate children. Model positive behavior and for some children you may need to be intentional about teaching them alternative and more appropriate behaviors. For example, you may provide a "punching pillow" and teach a child "we don't hit our friends, you may hit the pillow" or "we don't scream, use your words" or provide the child with pictures and instruct, "show me what you want". Sometimes children become over-stimulated and this may lead to frustration. Providing a quiet area or a place for a child decompress may assist. Communication with families is essential as well as having a plan in place that delineates ways to prevent the behavior, the consequences for when the behavior occurs as well as a reward system. Everyone should be on the same page with the implementation of the plan (the family as well as all staff) and the plan must be implemented consistently.

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INCLUSIVE PRINCIPLES IN THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

Adapted from Lifelong Guidelines/LIFESKILLS Program of Susan Kovalik & Associates

SYSTEMATIC CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Christian schools in general, and Adventist schools in particular, exist to educate young people to be like Jesus, and yet many function as a public school except for the addition of a Bible class once per day. On the other hand, schools which know how to really make a difference, integrate faith and learning all day, every day, as called for by *Journey to Excellence*. One vital component for doing so is systematic and Spirit led character development.

To ensure that character development is intentional, it is suggested that a teacher(s) brainstorms with other key figures a list of character traits which reflect a relationship with Jesus and the fruits of the Spirit. This list should include attributes such as patience, respect, perseverance, initiative, stewardship, courage, flexibility, organization, sense of humor, self control, punctuality (an indicator of respect), and active listening. The list may include as many as 20-25 character traits which should be simply defined. This list should be posted prominently throughout the school building and in every class where it can be seen and referred to frequently.

The identified character traits should be the subject of a year-long bulletin board in each classroom. Each week one of the character traits (sometimes referred to as “lightskills” because they enable students to let their “light shine”, or in the secular world as “life skills”) and its definition is featured and posted on the bulletin board. Students’ attention is drawn to the trait of the week each morning at worship or class meeting time where they discuss situations which would benefit from the use of the trait, or people they know who are skilled in its use.

Throughout the day students are assisted to think about the application of all of the character traits as opportunities arise. For example, if a teacher observes a student picking up a piece of trash on the playground, the student is affirmed for using the trait of initiative or stewardship of the earth. If a student is not on task, rather than reprimanding him, the teacher simply asks him to describe what it would look like if he were using the trait of responsibility or effort. This requires the young person not only to mentally visualize what he should be doing, but to verbalize it as well. The teacher then simply suggests that he use the trait just described.

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When reading literature, current events in the newspaper, or Bible stories, students are asked to think about what traits were used or should have been used and the impact it had on the outcome. Students may be asked at the beginning of the day to pray, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal one of these areas in which He would like to assist them to grow. They may be asked to self-evaluate periodically throughout the day or at the end of the day. It may be helpful, if appropriate, for teachers to share areas in which they are attempting to grow spiritually. Teachers and students praying for each other is a huge catalyst for the development of spiritual maturity.

If a student is experiencing repeated failure in the use of important character traits, it may be useful to have her complete the “Light-Skill Action Plan” form, at the end of this section, which facilitates thinking about what went wrong and how it can be remedied. This is a form of discipline which puts the student in charge of finding a solution to his or her inappropriate behaviors and does so in a spiritual context. The concept that two forces, Christ and Satan, are striving to obtain our allegiance may be further driven home through discussion with the student and prayer asking for forgiveness. Help the student to see that, while other students may have been injured by her actions, additionally she was personally harmed and God was dishonored. At the same time students should be continually reminded of the unconditional love of God, and that He only desires their happiness through obedient surrender.

Implementing a character development approach such as is described above requires of the teacher conscious habit-forming effort. Beautiful bulletin boards will have little or no effect if character development is not continually integrated throughout the school day. On the other hand, teachers enjoy a tremendous sense of satisfaction and partnership with the Holy Spirit when they learn to see in virtually every behavior, an opportunity to develop Christian character.

Additional valuable resources related to character development can be found at the following websites, though these are not specifically Christian in nature:

- www.kovalik.com
- www.responsiveclassroom.org
- www.charactercenter.com
- www.charactereducation.com

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LIGHT-SKILL ACTION PLAN

Name _____ Date _____

I did not use the light-skill of _____

Because I did not use this light-skill, the following people were hurt:

To repair the damage I have caused I will _____

I understand that the Holy Spirit can help me prevent the problem in the future if I am willing to listen and cooperate with Him.

- I have asked the Holy Spirit to help me.
- I would like someone to pray with me for the Holy Spirit's help.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

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CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

In order to create a smoothly running classroom where students know what is expected of them and can be held accountable for their behavior, it is vital that specific procedures be systematically taught to all students. This is usually done at the beginning of the school year and may take two or more weeks to accomplish. Teachers who hesitate to commit this much time, should be assured that the investment will pay richly in time saved throughout the school year.

Teachers generally have a variety of “non-negotiables” in terms of procedures. These should be carefully thought out in advance of the school year and written up in clear steps. When preparing written procedures for early elementary students it is helpful to illustrate them (see sample). This can be done with clip art or by involving a talented volunteer. Other procedures can be developed as needed, involving students in the process. A procedure should be created any time an activity consistently results in frustration or inefficiency, written procedures may be placed in plastic sleeves in a binder so that they may be referred to as needed or laminated, held together on a ring with a copy kept at each cooperative group.

Adults often assume that students have certain knowledge and behaviors which they may not actually have; therefore, once procedures have been written up, students must be systematically instructed in their use. This often requires modeling and role playing until all students understand what is expected and realize that nothing less will be accepted.

All procedural instruction should be done in a positive tone and students should be affirmed whenever they are complying. When one or more students are observed not following a previously taught procedure, it is helpful to simply stop the activity and say, “I notice we are not following our procedure. Is there someone who knows what we need to do differently?” or “I notice we are not following the procedure. Who will get the procedure manual so we can review it?” Then allow students to practice what has just been described. Whenever a relapse occurs, students should be stopped and the procedure reviewed again. If one particular student persists in non-compliance, s/he should be dealt with individually (see Light-Skill Action Plan).

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It is common at certain points in the school year for teachers to realize that they have gradually relaxed oversight of procedures and that the classroom is becoming increasingly chaotic. At this point, the solution is to share this observation with students, review procedures and consistently communicate their importance.

A list of procedures to be considered for the beginning of the school year follows. These ideas may assist teachers in creative and fun ways to provide varied instruction.

- Arrival (where personal belongings go, greeting adults and peers)
- Morning routine
- Introductions (etiquette and firm handshake)
- How to carry chairs safely
- Coming to circle
- Prayer
- Bathroom
- Hand-washing
- Compliments
- Water bottle
- Snack
- Lining up
- Walking in the hall
- Laps
- “Circling Up” (a procedure for getting kids gathered quickly when at recess or P.E.)
- Kinds of voices (thinking voice, partner voice, cooperative group voice, etc.)
- Lunch
- Lunch clean up

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- Peace table (see description which follows)
- “Escape Place” (sometimes referred to as “Australia”; see description which follows)
- Finished early (what activities are appropriate to do when finished early with assignments)
- Procedures for use of any classroom materials (paper, scissors, crayons/markers, pencils, stapler, pencil sharpener, etc.)
- Rest time (kindergarten)
- Playground
- Fire drill
- Dismissal

ESCAPE PLACE

At various points in our lives, negative circumstances converge to stress or overwhelm. This is true for children as well as adults. Both experience and brain research reveal that it is nearly impossible to learn when distressed. Resolving a student’s anguish is critical in order to facilitate his/her learning; therefore, it is recommended that a small area of the classroom be set aside as an “escape place”. This should be a pleasant and comfortable area where a student may choose to go to get refocused.

Teachers, perhaps in consultation with their students, should use creativity to design the “escape place”. It may be decorated with a theme, and should include comfortable seating. Other meaningful features might include calming music played through headphones, a framed picture of Jesus, stress balls, a portable “waterfall”, a small fish tank with fish, a stuffed animal, or pillows. It may be helpful to include a timer which would be used to help students monitor the amount of time spent there. The “escape place” should be located so as to provide as much privacy as possible while keeping the student within the teacher’s view.

Elementary teachers may introduce the “escape place” by reading the book, *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst. The book tells the story of a young boy who is experiencing one problem after another

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and, after each negative event, says that he is going to run away to Australia. For this reason, some teachers refer to the “escape place” as “Australia”.

Procedures need to be clearly established and taught with regard to this area of the room and should include when it is appropriate to use it and how long a student may stay there, as well as how other students should relate to someone who goes there. When procedures have been clearly taught in a classroom characterized by respect, it is unusual for students to abuse the privilege. If it is felt that the area is being overused by a particular student, the teacher should try to understand the reasons behind the behavior and determine if it is appropriate to limit the number of visits to the area.

Under no circumstances should the “escape place” be used in a punitive way or as a “time out” location. To do so, would undermine its purpose.

RESOLUTION STATION

Conflict between students is inevitable, but students can learn to resolve conflict in a manner that is consistent with Scripture and which helps to maintain a peaceful classroom. A “resolution station” or “peace table” procedure can be tremendously useful in accomplishing this goal.

The “resolution station” should be a small table or desk out of the direct view of most of the class but within the teacher’s view. There should be a small object such as a paper weight or large button kept on the table. This is used to indicate whose turn it is to talk. Students should be able to sit across from each other. Some teachers include a small white flag which a student may wave to indicate that adult help is needed to resolve the conflict.

For primary students the procedure for using the resolution station is scripted and students must be taught the following dialogue. Modeling and role playing work well to accomplish this task.

When one student is offended or angry at another student, s/he should request that the other student go to the table with her/him. When both are seated, the script goes as follows:

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- Offended:* (Picks up the paper weight or other object on the table) I didn't like it when you _____. (Passes the paper weight to the offender)
- Offender:* I'm sorry that I _____. Will you forgive me? (Passes the paper weight to the offended)
- Offended:* Yes, I will. (Passes the paper weight back to the offender)
- Offender:* Can we still be friends? (Passes the paper weight back to the offended)
- Offended:* Yes.
- Offender:* (Initiates a handshake)

While the procedure sounds a bit trite when described as above, it somehow has tremendous power to resolve conflict if teachers require its use consistently and refuse to solve students' problems for them. Role playing should be used, giving as many students as possible the opportunity to practice and memorize the script. Young students will enjoy the role playing which should begin between the teacher and a student until it is felt that two students are ready to demonstrate it well. It is helpful to introduce and teach it one day and then review and continue role playing the next.

Eventually, a real conflict will arise between students. Depending on the seriousness of the conflict, it may be appropriate to ask the students involved for special permission for the class to observe since it is the first "real" use of the procedure. Requests for privacy should be respected, but often students will appreciate the opportunity to be "experts" and this will help to hold them accountable for using the procedure well. If privacy is preferred, the class should provide it, but the teacher must be in the immediate area to ensure that the guidelines are followed. This supervision should be gradually faded as students become skilled at the procedure and recognize its power to resolve conflict. Students should be reminded of any steps they forget and affirmed for what they do well.

Disputes often occur over who will talk first. This is solved by establishing that the person who issued the request to go to the table is the first person to talk. An additional advantage of this rule is that it motivates students to initiate use of the procedure.

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Occasionally, a student will be taken to the table, but have a frame of mind which is not conducive to conflict resolution. This is often evident from body language such as folded arms, a frowning face, and a refusal to talk or make eye contact. A student in this state should not be allowed to hold the other “hostage”, so the teacher may simply say to the offended individual (in the hearing of the offender), “ _____ is not quite ready to resolve the conflict now so why don’t you go back to your work and she will let you know when she is ready.” Meanwhile, the offender stays at the table.

Some conflicts involve several students. When this occurs, students should identify whom they have issues with and go to the table in various pair combinations until all are satisfied. This may require some teacher intervention.

Older students do not need to use such a rigidly scripted approach. Teaching the use of “I statements” will enable them to use their own language. It is, however, important that all students state specifically what they are sorry for. It is too easy to simply say, “I’m sorry.”

Some offenses are too great to be adequately resolved using only the “resolution station”. In such cases, the teacher may require, or the offended student may request, an “act of apology”. This may include some sort of restitution if property was damaged, a carefully crafted letter or card, or a friendship gesture which clearly communicates remorse. The offender may be isolated, if necessary, for the time it takes him/her to prepare the act of apology.

A key to ensuring the success of the “resolution station” is for the teacher to develop the habit of requiring students to take responsibility for resolving their own conflicts. When a student complains about an injustice, an effective response is, “And how would you like to take care of that?” This communicates the expectation that students will resolve their own issues rather than turning them over to an adult. If they say they don’t know, respond with, “Well, if that had been done to me I would take the person to the ‘resolution station’ to work it out.” Some individuals are highly averse to confrontation and will be disinclined to use the procedure, in which case, it is wise to support them in learning this important skill. The teacher could partner with the student in a role play to rehearse what she or he will say to the actual offender. This provides an opportunity to teach the young person to make eye contact and share their feelings with greater confidence.

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While the process initially requires a significant investment of time and energy, it pays big dividends throughout the rest of the year as students begin to solve their problems with minimal teacher involvement.

Students should be assisted to understand that this procedure is Biblical and that many problems between adults would be prevented if they had learned how to use such a plan rather than “stuffing” their feelings or sharing the problem with people not involved.

Additional effective conflict resolution strategies and lesson plans with a Christian perspective are available on the web from Peacemaker Ministries at www.peacemaker.net/site/c.aqKFLTOBlpH/b.958199/k.AFBE/Young_Peacemaker.htm .

REDEMPTIVE DISCIPLINE

The concept of redemptive discipline is founded on the principle that it is essential from an eternal perspective, to change hearts rather than simply changing behaviors. Many systems of discipline are effective at changing the behavior of students, but their effectiveness vanishes once the authority figure is no longer present. Such is especially the case with systems founded upon applied behavior analysis. These rely on rewards for desired behaviors and punishments for undesired behaviors and are often seen in classrooms in the form of token economies in which students receive stickers or “funny money” as rewards. These are, conversely, taken away as punishment. Typically, tokens may be exchanged for inexpensive toys or trinkets through a class store or auction. Teachers who rely on these systems often feel as though they are more in control of the classroom with them than without, but the ineffectiveness of the system is quickly revealed when the students lose interest in the items available for “purchase” or when the teacher is not present to dispense the tokens. One of the most telling student comments often heard in a classroom operated under these systems is, “What will you give me if I... (comply)?” In other words, you can only expect my cooperation as long a reward which I value is available to me.

In using systems such as those described above, we are systematically disabling students morally. They are not being taught to listen and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit, but rather to rely on external rewards and punishments. Frequently,

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the Holy Spirit calls us to do that which will lead to ridicule or loss of material possessions. How can we expect students to make such a choice when we have been methodically training them to act based on human approval or the receipt of material advantage?

Many teachers and schools rely, not so much upon strategies founded on applied behavior analysis, but rather upon systems of punishment for punishment's sake. Take for example the student whose behavior is insubordinate. Eventually, the student's behavior involves sufficient risk, or the teacher becomes sufficiently frustrated to lead to a suspension from school. This leads, in many cases, to the student sitting at home for three days, often unsupervised because parents are working, so they bask in the influence of the television or internet, increasing the likelihood that their negative behaviors will continue. The only thing that is gained by the suspension is that the teacher and peers get a respite from the student's disruptive behaviors. Three days later the student returns with little or no change of heart, at least in a positive sense.

Though the term "redemptive discipline" is not found in Scripture or the writings of Ellen White, the concept is clearly articulated. Consider David's plea following his sin with Bathsheba: "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me." (Psalm 51:10, NIV) David was not content to simply change his outward behavior. He recognized that he needed an internal transformation. Repeatedly throughout Scripture, God makes it clear that what matters most to Him is the condition of the heart. Once this is made right, behavior falls into place.

Mrs. White's counsel is clear from the following passages:

The discipline of a human being who has reached the years of intelligence should differ from the training of a dumb animal. The beast is taught only submission to its master. For the beast, the master is mind, judgment, and will. This method, sometimes employed in the training of children, makes them little more than automatons. Mind, will, conscience, are under the control of another. It is not God's purpose that any mind should be thus dominated. Those who weaken or destroy individuality assume a responsibility that can result only in evil. While under authority, the children may appear like well-drilled soldiers; but when the control ceases, the character will be found to lack strength and steadfastness.

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Having never learned to govern himself, the youth recognizes no restraint except the requirement of parents or teacher. This removed, he knows not how to use his liberty, and often gives himself up to indulgence that proves his ruin. {Ed 288.1}

The true object of reproof is gained only when the wrongdoer himself is led to see his fault and his will is enlisted for its correction. When this is accomplished, point him to the source of pardon and power. {CG 223.2}

What does redemptive discipline look like in practical terms? First, it requires that the authority figures “seek first to understand, then to be understood” as Stephen Covey would say. Very often we are sure that we understand a students’ motives when in fact, if we would give them a safe opportunity to explain what they were thinking or feeling, we would discover something very different.

Second, we empower students to evaluate their behavior. This may require them to think about the sequence of events which led up to the problem or about other issues such as jealousy, hunger, need for sleep, or ignoring the voice of the Holy Spirit. It may require them to gather data or keep a journal so that they can, with help, identify patterns.

The next step in the process is involving the student in a discussion about what s/he would need in order to make changes, as well as asking peers what they would need to feel safe about the return of the offending student, and what they can do to support her/him. This process usually creates a climate in which those involved are willing to ask for and offer forgiveness, leading to the restoration (redemption) of the offending student. In the process logical, rather than arbitrary consequences, have been identified and implemented. The Responsive Classroom approach focuses on implementing a classroom management plan through community-building principles and practices. This approach integrates well with the “redemptive discipline” philosophy. For more information on Responsive Classroom, visit www.responsiveclassroom.org.

Following are some real life examples.

- Two students, a sixth grader and a seventh grader, were reported to have made threats on another student via the internet. When they were asked about it, one readily admitted that it had happened while the other

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at first denied, then later admitted it. A traditional response to such actions would have been suspension for a period of one to three days. It was decided that, yes, the students would be suspended because their actions had made the school emotionally unsafe, but while out of school they were to read the book *She Said Yes* by Misty Bernall (the story of a student who gave her life at Columbine because she answered yes when asked if she was a Christian). They were also assigned the task of researching and creating a PowerPoint presentation on bullying, including cyber-bullying. A rubric was provided clearly outlining what was required. Upon completion of these tasks the students were expected to present what they had learned to the school admissions committee (a subcommittee of the board). Both students completed the assigned tasks and each gave evidence of changed hearts. One student complained bitterly that the requirements were “stupid”, yet at the conclusion of her presentation to the board, as she was being dismissed, she tearfully asked to share some additional feelings. She said that she had thought the tasks stupid, but that through the experience she had come to see the seriousness of her actions, was truly sorry, and did not want to be involved in such things again. The goals of the consequences were achieved- changed hearts leading to changed behavior.

- One student frequently annoys his peers, bumping into them, or hitting them as he passes by. On the surface this would seem to be attention-seeking behavior which simply needs to be stopped. Further investigation reveals, however, that this is a student who has significant difficulty communicating feelings and needs and who lives with a host of fears (his mother reports that if he had his choice he would be unlikely to ever leave his house). He refuses to report frustrating behaviors of other students which may go unnoticed by the teacher, so he bottles up his frustrations until he explodes or responds with irritating behaviors. By creating a safe emotional climate for this student staff has come to understand him much better. Other students in the class have been involved in assessing the situation and came to realize that there are primarily two girls whom this student verbally disrespects. As it happens peers have been suggesting that these two are his “girlfriends,” a concept which distresses him highly. His putdowns of these girls are his attempt to prove that he does not like them. Peers have been helped to see their role in the problem. Punishing this boy for his annoying and disrespectful behaviors without investigating would have failed to remedy the real problems and would have, on some level, blamed the victim. This situation is complex, and problem-solving will be on-going, but staff are determined and confident that solutions can be redemptive.