



# Suspend, or Not To Suspend: It is the question

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# Introduction

- ▶ School Climate and Culture
- ▶ Western Influence of Justice
- ▶ Suspensions
- ▶ Alternatives to Suspension
- ▶ Positive Discipline
- ▶ Restorative Discipline

# The Climate and Culture of Your School

- ▶ School Climate refers to:  
the school's effects on students, including teaching practices; diversity; and the relationships among administrators, teachers, parents and students.
- ▶ School culture refers to:  
the way teachers and other staff members work together and the set of beliefs, values and assumptions they share.
- ▶ A positive school climate and school culture promote students' ability to learn.

Source ASCD.org

# Western Influence of Justice

- ▶ The Code of Hammurabi (1754 BC)
  - ▶ An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth
- ▶ Hebrew Laws – 10 Commandments
- ▶ Roman Laws
- ▶ Christian Laws
- ▶ Western Legal System
  - ▶ Shaped our thinking and influenced the rest of the world
  - ▶ Strengths and Weaknesses



# Western Legal System

- ▶ Strengths
  - ▶ Those who have been harmed
  - ▶ Those who have caused harm
  - ▶ Community members in general
- ▶ Weakness
  - ▶ Criminal justice process deepens societal wounds
  - ▶ Conflicts rather than healing

# Suspensions



# What is a suspension?

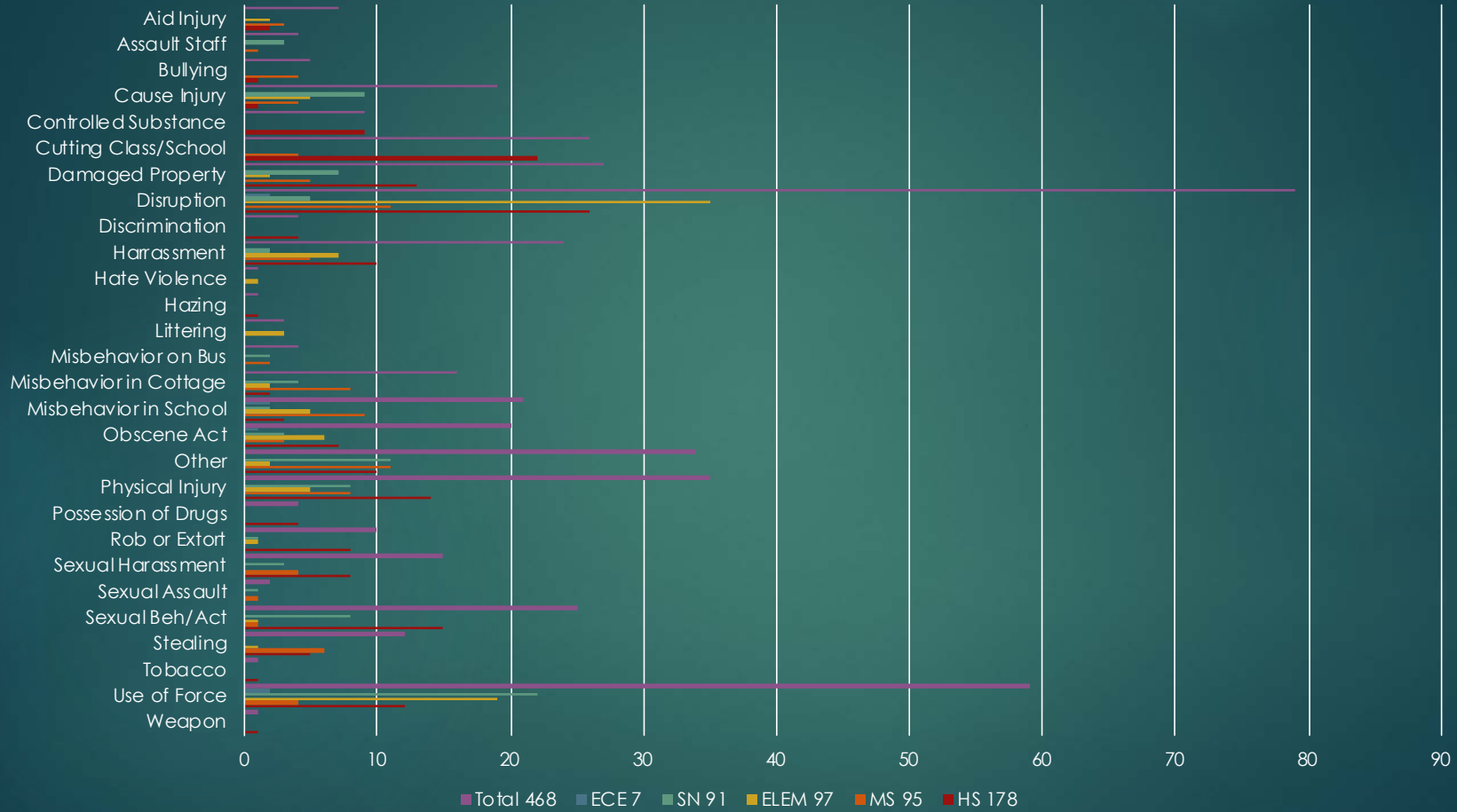
- ▶ A suspension means a student is temporarily prohibited from going to regular classes and/or school.
  - ▶ Being deliberately disobedient or disorderly,
  - ▶ Being violent,
  - ▶ Having a gun or dangerous weapon,
  - ▶ Hurting or threatening to hurt someone with a dangerous weapon,
  - ▶ Having drugs (possessing, selling, or giving them away), or
  - ▶ Otherwise violating a school's code of conduct rules.

# How Suspensions Affect Students

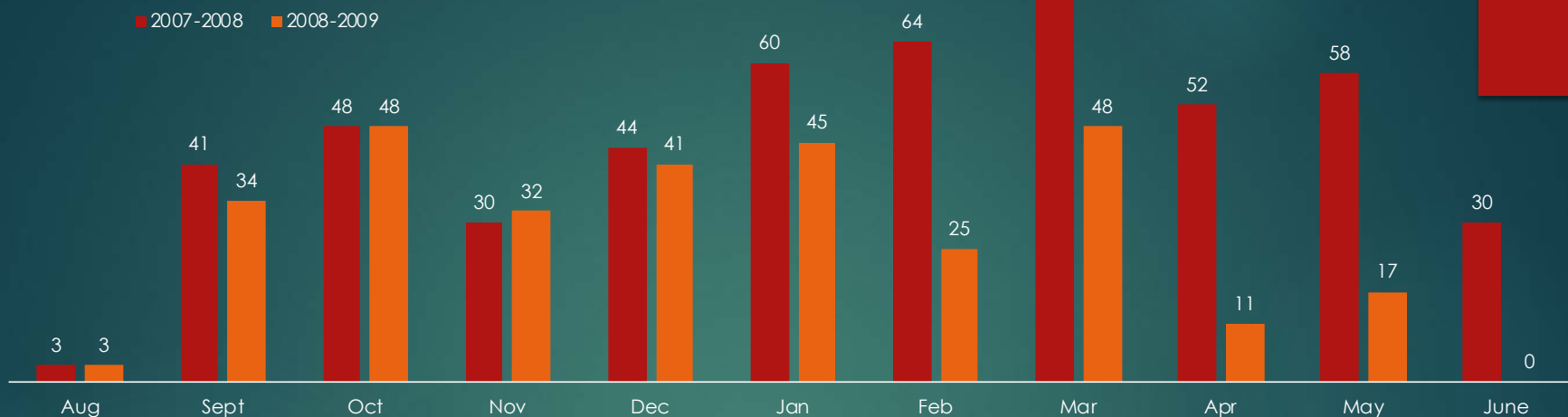
- ▶ Reduce the chances of students completing their education
- ▶ Can impair employment opportunities
- ▶ Can affect student's future
- ▶ For some students, suspensions are their reward



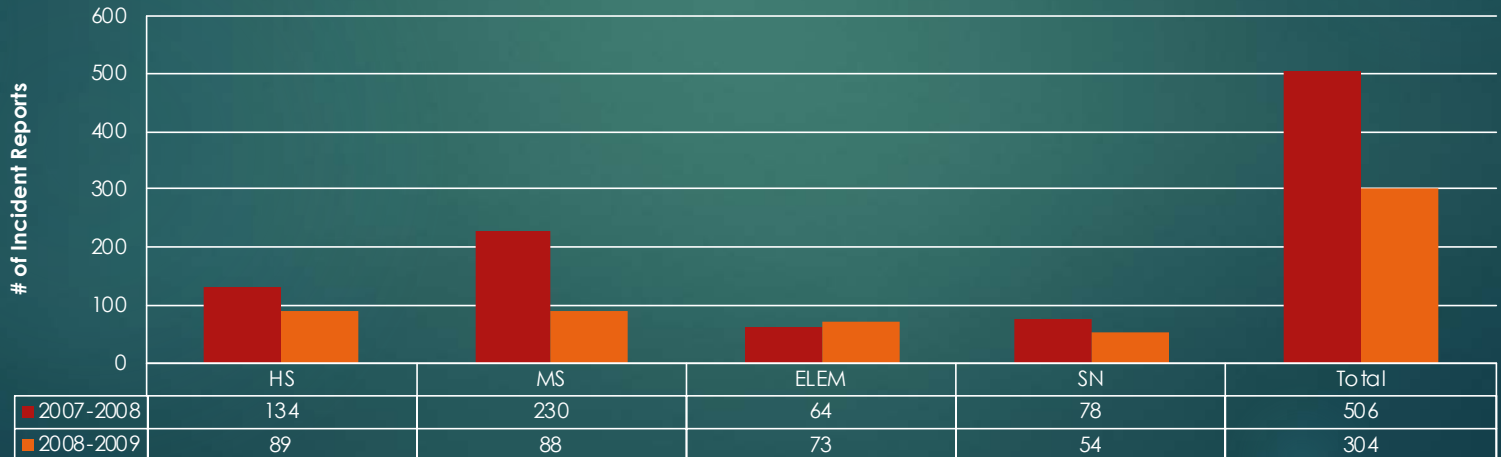
# 2009 - 2010 Student Incident Reports



### NUMBER OF INCIDENT REPORTS EACH MONTH OVER TWO YEARS



### 2007-2009 STUDENT INCIDENT REPORTS



# School-to-Pipeline

- ▶ Students who are punished with suspensions or expulsions often end up:
  - ▶ dropping out of school entirely,
  - ▶ getting in trouble with law, and
  - ▶ spending time behind bars
- ▶ Racial inequality
- ▶ Focus away from a zero-tolerance approach to discipline

Resource: School Leaders Now:

<https://schoolleadersnow.weareteachers.com/end-school-suspensions/>



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# Don't be Trigger-Happy

- ▶ Many actions/solutions take time
- ▶ Short term vs. long term “projects”
- ▶ Suspension is not always the solution
- ▶ Be consistent in handling students' behavior





STOPPING OUT-OF-SCHOOL  
SUSPENSIONS  
**A Guide for State Policy**

DECEMBER 2012



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## Suspensions Not Always the Solution

Written by Burny Matthews Published: Friday, 17 May 2013 03:24

Kids acting out in school often need more attention, not an unsupervised vacation from school.

One factor was not emphasized in the recent article published in the Alameda Sun regarding suspension rates in California ("State Looks at Suspension Rate," May 2): reducing student suspension rates will help improve graduation rates and could ultimately help cut crime.

As former police chief, I know the importance of keeping kids in school, so that they are prepared to succeed rather than turn to a life in crime. Research confirms what I have seen firsthand: Dropouts are more than three times more likely than high school graduates to be arrested, and eight times more likely to end up behind bars.

New data released by the California Department of Education show that the most serious grounds for about half of all suspensions in 2011-12 was "willful defiance/disruption."

This behavior falls short of a safety threat and certainly must be addressed but the punishment should fit the crime. There are many ways to keep students on campus and on track to graduate while holding them accountable and preserving a positive learning environment.

 OT Campaign  
www.otcampaign.org

 Stop Suspensions  
www.stopsuspensions.org

 Opportunity Action  
Promoting quality public education for all  
www.opportunityaction.org

## Suspensions Not Always the Solution

Written by Burny Matthews Published: Friday, 17 May 2013 03:24

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www.otccampaign.org

[Reach Senate Floor »](#)

## School Boards Join Movement Against Out-of-School Suspensions

By [Nirvi Shah](#) on April 17, 2013 7:53 AM | [No comments](#)

The National School Boards Association has labeled the use of out-of-school suspensions a "crisis" in [a new report](#).

The NSBA's new policy guide, developed jointly with the [National Opportunity to Learn Campaign](#), for school board members urges change, [citing statistics that show 3.3 million students](#) were suspended out of school during the 2009-10 school year, including one in

25

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## Suspensions Not A

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## School Boar

By [Nirvi Shah](#) on A

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The NSBA's new  
[Learn Campaign](#)  
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DISCIPLINE

## Suspensions and expulsions decline as districts adopt alternatives, state says

By [Jane Meredith Adams](#) | January 13, 2016 | 2 Comments



The number of students expelled and suspended from California schools continued to decline in 2014-15 as more school districts focused on resolving behavior issues without taking students out of class for long periods of time, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson said Wednesday.





## Schools suspend common sense

By RICHARD KIRK, Special to the U-T midnight May 25, 2013

Last week the Los Angeles Unified School District board voted 5-2 to halt the practice of suspending students for acts of “willful defiance.” Instead of sending kids home, alternative disciplinary methods will be employed — including placing defiant students in “intervention rooms” where tutoring and “reparative justice” conferences are supposed to occur. It’s unclear, however, where personnel for these new psycho-judicial sessions will come from.

Observers should note that “willful defiance” is a catch-all category that includes acts ranging from wearing baggy pants — a euphemism, I suspect, for the blatant display of underwear — to mouthing off in class or refusing to comply with an instructor’s directives. These generic offenses accounted for about half of the district’s 700,000 suspensions issued last year. Serious violations such as theft and acts of violence still can result in suspension.

without taking students out of class for long periods of time, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson said Wednesday.



## | Top Stories

### The Secret to Fixing School Discipline? Change the Behavior of Adults



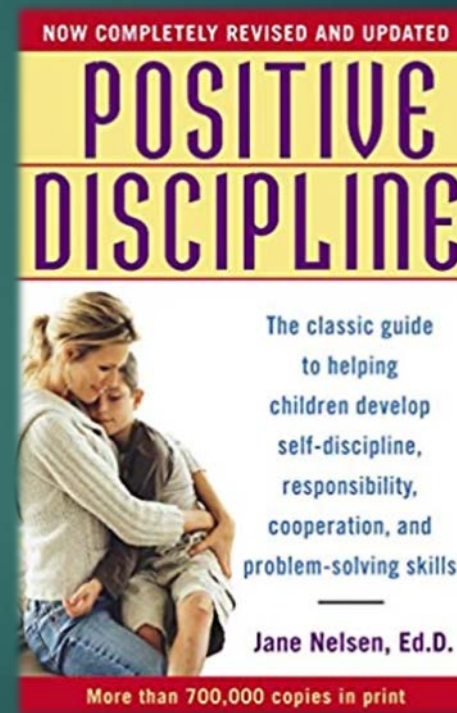
**ACEsTooHigh [URL: <http://acestoohigh.com>], News Feature, Jane Ellen Stevens, Posted: Mar 26, 2013**

*Photo (above): Andre Griggs, after school program director, Le Grand High School*

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Following is an excerpt of the first of a series of articles about how schools in California are moving from a punitive to a compassionate approach to school discipline. The full article [URL: <http://acestoohigh.com/2013/03/20/secret-to-fixing-school-discipline/>]*



# Positive Discipline



# History of Positive Discipline

- ▶ The Positive Discipline Parenting and Classroom Management Model is based on the work of **Alfred Adler** and **Rudolf Dreikurs** in Vienna, Austria.
- ▶ They first introduced the idea of parenting education to United States in the 1920s and 1930s, respectively.

Dr. Adler advocated treating children respectfully, but also argued that **spoiling** and **pampering** children was not encouraging to them and resulted in social and behavioral problems.

- ▶ **Jane Nelsen** wrote and self-published *Positive Discipline* in 1981.

# The Battle

- ▶ Punishment vs. Permissiveness
- ▶ Middle Ground
- ▶ Teach social and life skills to children
- ▶ Kind and Firm

# Too Kind or Too Firm

## ▶ Too Firm

Rebellion, resentment, damaged self-esteem

## ▶ Too Kind

Permissiveness, manipulation, spoiled brats, damaged self-esteem

## ▶ Practice both kind and firm at the same time!

# In the Good Old Days?

- ▶ Lost Models of Submissiveness
- ▶ Mom's submissiveness to Dad (his decisions were final!)
- ▶ People's submissiveness to authorities (boss, police, government, church, etc.)
- ▶ Minorities' submissiveness (women, people of color, people with disabilities)
- ▶ People want to be treated with dignity and respect



# Reverting to Reptilian Brain

- ▶ Reptilian brain (the brain stem)- the only options are...
- ▶ Fight or Flight
- ▶ “Fight” – Power Struggles
- ▶ “Flight” – Withdrawal and Poor Communication
- ▶ Best to be kind and firm at the same time after calming down
- ▶ Help children and staff feel *better* so they can do *better*
  
- ▶ *Example: Time out*

<https://www.positivediscipline.com/articles/positive-time-out>



# The Crazy Idea

- ▶ Where did we ever get the crazy idea that in order to make children do better, first we have to make them feel worse.
- ▶ Slide into old punishment habits (Reptilian Brain?)



# Parenting Style

Short-term Parenting	Long-term parenting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Controlling/Punitive/Rewarding</li><li>• Permissive/Overprotective/Rescuing</li><li>• Neglectful/Giving up on being a parent</li></ul>	Kind and Firm

# A Few Pieces of the Puzzle

- ▶ Kindness and Firmness at the Same Time
- ▶ Mutual Respect
- ▶ Mistakes as Opportunities to Learn
- ▶ Social Responsibility
- ▶ Group Meetings
- ▶ Involving Children in Problem Solving
- ▶ Encouragement

# Three Main Approaches

Strictness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Order without freedom</li><li>• No choice</li><li>• “You do it because I said so.”</li></ul>
Permissiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Freedom without choice</li><li>• Unlimited choices</li><li>• “You can do anything you want.”</li></ul>
Positive Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Freedom with order</li><li>• Limited choice</li><li>• “You can choose within limits that show respect for all.”</li></ul>

# Three Student Life Approaches

Strictness	These are rules by which you must abide, and this is the punishment you will receive for violation of the rules
Permissiveness	There are no rules. I am sure we will love each other and be happy, and you will be able to choose your rules later.
Positive Discipline	Together we will decide on rules for our mutual benefit. We will also decide together on solutions that will be helpful to all concerned when we have problems. When I must use my judgment without your input, I will use firmness with kindness, dignity and respect.

# The Four R's of Punishment

1. **Resentment**—“This is unfair. I can't trust adults.”
2. **Revenge**—“They are winning, but I'll get even.”
3. **Rebellion**—“I'll do just the opposite to prove I don't have to do it their way.”
4. **Retreat:**
  - a. Sneakiness—“I won't get caught next time.”
  - b. Reduced self-esteem—“I am a bad person.”

# The Four Criteria for Effective Discipline

1. Is it kind and firm at the same time? (Respectful and encouraging)
2. Does it help children feel a sense of belonging and significance? (Connection)
3. Is it effective long-term? (Punishment works in the short term, but has negative long-term results.)
4. Does it teach valuable social and life skills for good character? (Respect, concern for others, problem solving, accountability, contribution, cooperation)

# Adult's Creation

- ▶ What the adults did to help create the problem?
  - ▶ Children “rebelled” when adults made demands
  - ▶ Involve children in solutions during meetings
  - ▶ Children create routine charts or agreements
- 
- ▶ Example: Color-dyed Hair Rule



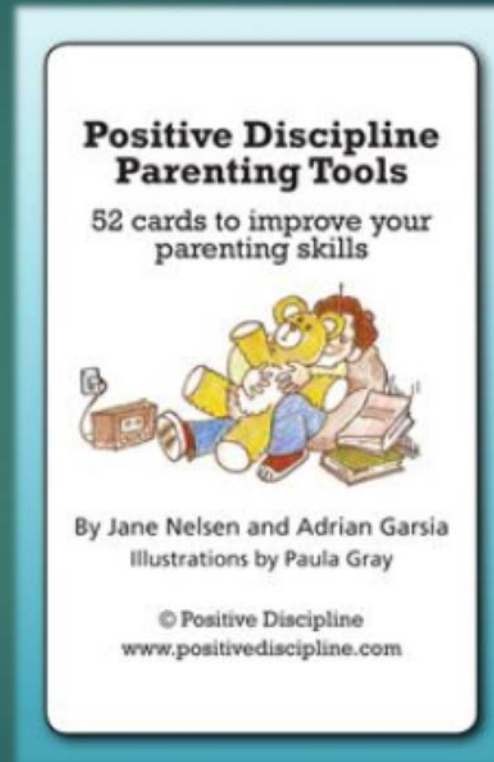


# Kind and Firm Phrases

- ▶ Your turn is coming.
- ▶ I know you can say that in a respectful way.
- ▶ I care about you and will wait until we can both be respectful to continue this conversation.
- ▶ I know you can think of a helpful solution.
- ▶ Act, don't talk (non-verbal).
- ▶ We'll talk about this later.
- ▶ We'll try again later.

# Group Activity

- ▶ Positive Discipline Cards



# Positive Discipline Review

- ▶ Eliminate punishment.
- ▶ Eliminate permissiveness
- ▶ Use kindness and firmness at the same time
- ▶ Give up the crazy idea of making them better, first you have to make them feel worse
- ▶ Involve children in setting limits
- ▶ Use kind and firm phrases

# Restorative Justice

- ▶ Restorative Justice began as an effort to deal
  - ▶ With burglary and other property crimes (viewed as minor offenses)
- ▶ Now it deals with the most severe forms of criminal violence:
  - ▶ Death from drunken driving, assault, rape, and even murder
- ▶ Reconciliation in South Africa: after mass violence
- ▶ Restorative Justice concept is not new!
  - ▶ First Nation communities in Canada

# Why Restorative Discipline?

- ▶ Role of Discipline
  - ▶ Assist our children to become responsible and caring adults through teaching and guidance
- ▶ The term *discipline*
  - ▶ means to teach or train
  - ▶ how to sign “*discipline*”
- ▶ Short-Term Discipline
- ▶ Long Term Discipline

# Key Goals

- ▶ For both the harmed and the harmer
- ▶ To understand the harm and develop empathy
- ▶ To listen and respond to the needs of both persons
- ▶ To encourage accountability and responsibility through personal reflection
- ▶ To reintegrate both into the community
- ▶ To create caring climates to support healthy communities

# A Restorative Approach

1. Who has been hurt?
2. What are their needs?
3. Whose obligations are they?
4. What are the causes?
5. Who has a “stake” in this?
6. What is the appropriate process to involve stakeholders in an effort to put things right?

# A Discipline Continuum





# Restorative Discipline

- ▶ Recognizes the purpose of misbehavior
- ▶ Addresses the needs of those harmed
- ▶ Works to put right the harm
- ▶ Aims to improve the future
- ▶ Seeks to heal
- ▶ Uses collaborative processes

# Amy

- ▶ A 13 years old
- ▶ Mother told her, “No!”
- ▶ Amy responded with anger, slamming doors and being disrespectful
- ▶ She got grounded for three weeks
- ▶ Both Amy and mother sat down to discuss what happened
- ▶ Amy felt her punishment was unfair
- ▶ Mother explained her punishment was on how Amy displayed her anger
- ▶ Amy agreed her behavior required consequences
- ▶ Amy agreed to cook the family meals for one week instead of grounding.

# Like a Checking Account

- ▶ If you take money out and make no deposits, you become bankrupt
- ▶ When a child is disciplined, a withdrawal is made on the relationship account
- ▶ Follow 5:1 ratio (deposits: withdrawals) for students to achieve
- ▶ Five affirmations for each confrontation
- ▶ Does the teacher (or counselor) like me?
- ▶ Does the child feel cared for?

# Characteristics for Children to Develop

- ▶ Positive self-concept
- ▶ Responsibility
- ▶ Self-discipline
- ▶ Cooperation
- ▶ Open-mindedness
- ▶ Respect for self and others
- ▶ Compassion
- ▶ Patience
- ▶ Enthusiasm for life
- ▶ Interest in learning
- ▶ Courtesy
- ▶ Honesty
- ▶ Self-control
- ▶ Sense of humor
- ▶ Problem-solving skills
- ▶ Integrity
- ▶ Inner wisdom
- ▶ Objective thinking skills

# Try for the Moon

“We choose to go to the moon... not because [it was] easy, but because [it was] hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills”

-JFK

No-one ever said it would be easy, otherwise we would not be needed here.





