Avoiding Power Struggles

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Pasadena ISD

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The Teacher is the Most Influential Factor in the Classroom


PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA
MARCH 10TH, 2010
Effective Teachers

Learning happens when teachers:

- Build trusting relationships
- Create a positive learning environment
- Model effective communication
- Teach Social Skills

A teacher takes a Hand, opens a Mind and touches a Heart

The influence of a good teacher can never be ERASED
Behavior Problem or Skill Deficit?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACADEMIC ERRORS</th>
<th>SOCIAL ERRORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assume student is trying</td>
<td>Assume student is not trying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assume error is accidental</td>
<td>Assume error is deliberate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We provide practice and scaffold to</td>
<td>We do not provide practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>help our students succeed</td>
<td>We repeat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assume the student has not</td>
<td>We assume the student has the skill and refuses to cooperate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learned the concept</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We reteach, provide practice, give</td>
<td>Write a referral, remove from the context, do not teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feedback</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Edward Kameenui (circa, 1990)
A power struggle with a student is like mud wrestling with a PIG!

You both get dirty---
And the pig LOVES it!!
Avoiding the Mud...
The First Step is **Prevention**
Create a physical and emotionally safe environment.
Building Relationships

The most powerful tool a teacher has is the relationship she/he has with the students.

Positive teacher-student relationships create effective learning environments.
A positive relationship with students is the key element for achieving academic success and preventing destructive behaviors.

Journal of American Medical Association
September 1998
Positive teacher-student relationships create effective learning environments.
Positive Relationships
Increase Productivity
Positive Relationships Improve Behavior
Positive Relationships
Increase Motivation
The **single most effective strategy** to develop positive relationships and improve overall classroom behavior is to

Increase Positive Interactions
Research shows that we can improve behavior by 80% just by pointing out what students are doing correctly.
However...
research also shows teachers give positive attention *less than* 10% of the time.
## What We Do

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Approval Statements</th>
<th>Disapproval Statements</th>
<th>Ratio of Positive: Negative Interactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic</strong></td>
<td>20.36 / hour</td>
<td>7.56 / hour</td>
<td>2.7 : 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
<td>1.56 / hour</td>
<td>19.2 / hour</td>
<td>1: 12.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research shows a direct link between increased positive interactions and decreased disruptive classroom behavior.

To build relationships and guide behavior change, increase the number of positive to corrective interactions. 3:1 to 5:1
"It’s a special hearing aid. It filters out criticism and amplifies compliments."
Effective Specific Positive Attention

Describe the behavior:
1. Explicitly describe what was done that you want to continue
2. Include words used to describe the expectation
3. Tie the behavior to classroom/school expectations
   
   Responsible, Respectful, Ready to Learn... etc.

Example:

“When I said it was time to begin, you followed directions by getting out your materials and immediately starting the assignment. That was responsible.”
Ways to Increase Positive Interactions

• Identify specific times during each day that you will focus on giving students positive feedback (set a reminder on your phone).

• Schedule individual conference time with students to compliment them on academics and behavior.

• Engage in frequent non-contingent positive attention (greetings, brain smart starts, compliments, ask about interests, etc.).
Examples of Positive Interactions

• Give feedback on progress during independent work

• Acknowledge appropriate student behavior with a smile, nod, thumbs up, positive note

• Give specific and sincere praise, “Great progress on the writing assignment”

• Meet with students independently to review progress
Starting the Day with Positive Interactions and Relationship Building

Video – morning meeting

https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/classroom-morning-meeting
Remember:

The behaviors you *pay most attention* to, are the behaviors that are *most likely to occur*, with the *most frequency* over time.
#3 Classroom Structures and Procedures

**STOIC**

- **Structure** – Routines, Procedures, Daily Schedule
- **Re-Teach** Expectations – Practice if needed
- **Observe and Monitor** – Are students actively engaged?
- **Interact Positively** – a minimum of 3 positive interactions: 1 corrective
- **Correct misbehavior** – Calmly, Consistently, Immediately

Adapted from Randy Sprick’s CHAMPS
Regular Routines and Structures Keep Students Engaged

- Create a daily schedule that maximizes instructional time
- Beginning/ending routines
- Well planned lessons with varied instruction
- Limited unstructured time
- Develop structures for the usual interrupters- pencils/bathroom/ etc.
- Start class with an independent task/bell activity
When you see it coming
Approaching the Mud

Prevent power struggles by encouraging compliance.
Behavior momentum encourages students to follow directions.

- Start by giving 2-3 requests that a student will readily do.
- After successfully completing each request, reinforce the student — this builds “behavior momentum.”
- Now the student is more likely to carry out a more difficult request.
Give 2-3 Easy Compliance Commands
Then Make the ‘Real’ Command

- “Now, work the first three problems on page 123.”
- Give praise for compliance.
- Give next command
Giving Two Positive Choices

Giving 2 positive choices helps students:

- Attend to teacher expectations
- Learn decision making skills
- Feel empowered - which reduces power struggles
- Redirect their behavior and learn impulse control
- Establish and maintain self-control
Delivering Two Positive Choices

1) Think in terms of *what you want* children to do—*Not* in terms of the problem.

2) Offer positive choices that are acceptable to you—*Not* a negative consequence with a positive.
Delivering Two Positive Choices

*Example:*

✅ You can sit at your desk to read or you can sit in the reading center. Which would you prefer?

🚫 Do the reading assignment or you will get detention.
Take a deep breath
Tell the student, “You have a choice”
Clearly state choices, “You may _____ or you may ______.”
Ask for a commitment, “What is better for you?” or “What is your choice?”
Acknowledge the student made a choice to cooperate. “You chose to_____. I know that can be difficult.”
Effective Teacher Commands

- Brief - one sentence or less
- Use a quiet, calm voice- audible only to the student
- Give directive within close proximity to the student – arms length
- State as a directive --- not a question! (focus on what you want)
- Give the student time to comply 5-15 seconds
- Use a matter of fact tone
- Refrain from negative tone or negative nonverbal
Example...

• Teacher A:
  • Notices 2 students off task and launches into a tirade...
  • “What are you doing? What voice level are we on during independent work? This is no way to act. Do you want me to call home?”

• Teacher B:
  • Notices 2 children off task; she walks over to them and calls them by name and says
  • “Focus your attention on your math problems. I want each of you to complete problems 2 through 4. I will watch so I know you understand what to do to be successful with your work.”
  • As the students shift their focus from each other to their work, the teacher encourages them by saying, “There you go. It’s hard to keep your focus on your work. You must help each other stay focused.”
The choice is yours!

- Teacher A chose to focus on what was wrong.
- Teacher B focused on the action needed to solve the problem.
- Both are present in the moment; however, they each chose different ways to focus on the situation.

Table Talk:
Where do you focus your attention?
Do you focus on what is not done?
Are you critical of yourself and others?
Do you notice strengths or shortcomings?
Let’s practice focusing on what we want…

• It is not helpful to carry on about the things we want students not to do
• In groups of 2-3 restate these commands/questions so that they focus on what we want:
  • Stop talking!
  • Don’t run in the halls!
  • Why are you standing up?
  • Why are you talking?
  • Who made this mess?
Summary:

The best way to handle a power struggle is **PREVENTION**.

**Prevention** starts with the classroom climate which is set by the teacher.

**Preventative Measures:**
- Relationship
- Positive Interactions
- Structured classrooms and safe environment
- Clear Expectations and Effective Commands
- Redirection when needed using Positive Choices and Behavior Momentum
Avoiding Power Struggles:
How to Stay out of the Mud
Disengage: Disrupt the Momentum of the Interaction

It starts with you

- Take a deep breath (or 3 deep breaths)
- Remain outwardly calm
- Do not immediately respond—count to 3 to yourself
- They expect you to engage with anger…. So don’t jump in the mud with them.
Reframe Your Thinking

- It is *not about you* but a skill deficit on the part of the child
- Use *your* calmness to model appropriate emotional regulation
- Use *your* frontal lobe to model problem solving and alternatives to anger/rage for the student
De-escalation Skills:

1. Start with **calm** neutral body language and tone of voice

2. **Acknowledge** the student’s experience. Notice the student’s behavior and label the emotion it conveys.
   
   (Samantha, you seem frustrated. What happened?)

3. Guide the student through the process of problem solving and communication by using **active/reflective listening**
Awareness of Body Language is Required

• Respond with a calm neutral tone

• Use calm neutral body language and facial expressions
• We can unconsciously add to the agitation of the student by mirroring their body language/stance.

• Use mirroring to your advantage by intentionally using a calm tone of voice and calm body language to lower the tension.
### What the Student Mirrors

- Raised Voice
- Rapid Speech
- High Pitched Voice
- Fidgeting
- Shaking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Balled Fists</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Erratic Movements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Gesturing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive Posture</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## What the Teacher Mirrors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nonverbal</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✔ Slow Breathing</td>
<td>✔ Empathy with feelings not behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Slow Soft Voice</td>
<td>✔ Listens-eye contact, nod, leaning in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Relaxed Body</td>
<td>✔ Paraphrases, acknowledges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔ Neutral Facial Expression</td>
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</table>
Calm is as Contagious as Fear
De-escalation Techniques

*There are two key concepts to remember:*

• Reasoning with an angry person is *not* possible. The first and only objective in de-escalation is to reduce the level of agitation so that discussion becomes possible.

• De-escalation techniques are inherently abnormal. They go against our natural ‘fight or flight’ reflexes. To be effective, we must remain calm and centered. We need to be professionally detached. Therefore *these skills require practice* to become useful.
Children are like wet cement...

Whatever falls on them leaves an impression.

What impression do you want to leave?
“The key to meditation is learning to stay.”