

Preface

Effective teachers have high expectations for their students and provide the necessary supports for their students to live up to these expectations in an environment of low threat. I have attempted to write this book in a way that would challenge teachers in a nonthreatening manner and also provide them with the supports needed to succeed.

WHOM IS THIS BOOK FOR?

This book is designed for teachers, administrators, and support staff who are interested in classroom management strategies that enhance teacher-student relationships. If you are looking for a classroom management book full of quick fixes, this might not be the book for you. If, on the other hand, you are interested in a classroom management book that focuses on prevention, enhancing teacher-student relationships, long-term behavior change, and resilience, then this is the book for you.

WHAT IS RELATIONSHIP-DRIVEN CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT?

The purpose of this book is to empower educators to use classroom management strategies that enhance relationships and social-emotional skills. These factors have tremendous power to increase academic performance and build resilience. The importance of positive teacher-student relationships is not new to educators; however, discipline and management styles that weaken these relationships abound. An overreliance on common discipline strategies

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such as reactive strategies, punishment, harsh comments, nagging, yelling, and power struggles, to name just a few, can hurt teacher-student relationships.

Although research has shown the importance of positive relationships, resilience, and social-emotional literacy in prevention and learning, it does not appear to have translated into classroom and schoolwide management practices. A relationship-driven classroom focuses on proactive and behavior management strategies that enhance teacher-student connections, promote social-emotional competency, and protect children from future risk.

The Importance of Relationship Building

The most significant difference between this approach to classroom management and most others is the high priority placed on preserving and enhancing the teacher-student relationship. While many approaches indicate the importance of building a positive relationship prior to intervening on a student's behavior, the relationship-driven approach views building the relationship as a most powerful intervention. We may not always realize how our classroom management strategies place a wedge between us and our students. Relationship-driven classroom management strategies strive to prevent and correct misbehavior without hurting the teacher-student relationship.

The Link Between Behavior and Academic Success

Most teachers strive to maintain caring and positive relationships with their students. However, making this a priority can be difficult with the recent demand for higher state test scores and accountability. This book will provide evidence that the goals of higher test scores and positive relationships complement rather than conflict with one another.

Many classroom management resources ignore the connection between academic success and student behavior. Since classroom behavior is so closely tied with academic success and failure, the relationship-driven approach focuses on preventing misbehavior by implementing effective instructional strategies that enhance academic success and increase student motivation.

The Benefits of Social-Emotional Skills

This book is unique in its focus on behavioral and social-emotional skill building. Teaching behavior and social-emotional skills are just as important as academic skills and often need to be taught in a similar fashion. The relationship-driven approach focuses on teaching students appropriate behaviors and social skills rather than punishing students for inappropriate behavior. When students possess these skills, motivation and achievement increase, misbehavior decreases, relationships improve, and resilience is fostered.

Teacher Self-Evaluation

Another unique feature is that the relationship-driven approach asks teachers to examine or self-evaluate the discipline strategies in their toolbox to determine their long-term effectiveness and what impact they have on the teacher-student relationship. The reader will find numerous questions throughout this book and at the end of each chapter that are intended to facilitate teacher self-evaluation. Behavior change and motivation are stronger and more durable when the decision to change is based on self-evaluation rather than externally imposed by an authority figure. If the strategies you are currently using are working in more than just the short term and are preserving and enhancing your relationships with your students, by all means keep using them. If they are not effective or put distance between you and your students, consider trying some other strategies this approach offers.

In writing a book about teacher-student relationships and discipline, it is difficult to avoid using negative examples. I have tried to find a balance of negative and positive examples. Negative examples are included for learning purposes and should not be interpreted as blanket statements about teachers in general. Most teachers have the best intentions when they are dealing with students. This book is ultimately about being optimistic about the power of teachers to impact the present and the future quality of life of their students.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The bulk of this book is essentially about preventing misbehavior rather than reacting to misbehavior. Chapters 1 through 7 cover prevention, resilience, teacher attributes, proactive strategies,

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relationship-building strategies, teaching and modeling of social-emotional skills, enhancing academic success, and student responsibility. Implementing these strategies will significantly reduce the amount of necessary reactive strategies. Reactive strategies are covered in Chapters 8 through 10. Topics in these chapters include effective consequences, strategies for difficult and resistant youth, and assessment of classroom management.

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