

TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR THE TWELVE VIRTUES OF A GOOD TEACHER



Acknowledgments

The Twelve Virtues of a Good Teacher was addressed to the Brothers of the Christian Schools as the first printed circular letter at a time when, novices included, there were close to 1,000 members in the Institute. It was, according to Brother Agathon's original preface, a complement to an earlier letter in which he had reflected on the religious duties of the Brothers. The writer takes the twelve virtues that Saint John Baptist de La Salle listed in both the manuscript of *The Conduct of the Christian Schools* (1706) and the *Collection of short Treatises* (1711) but without any further development. The fact that Brother Agathon was working in the 1780's on an updated version of *The Conduct* (the manuscript of which we possess) to meet the diversified needs of the Institute one hundred years after the first school in Reims may have been the spur that led to his launching this new work.¹

It is clear that THE TWELVE VIRTUES OF A GOOD TEACHER and THE CONDUCT OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS were a continued search for strategies to be used in the schools and the spirit behind them.

In the following pages, I have attempted to match some contemporary strategies with each of the originally listed virtues. The hope is that Lasallians in the English world will find this useful and will add their own strategies in order that our methods will grow with the practical theory explicated in the document THE TWELVE VIRTUES OF A GOOD TEACHER.

I would be remiss if I were not to acknowledge the monumental work of Dr. Merrill Harmin, a friend and colleague. Most of the strategies listed here come from the book that he and Melanie Toth wrote entitled INSPIRING ACTIVE LEARNING: A COMPLETE HANDBOOK FOR TODAY'S TEACHERS² I heartily recommend the book to any teacher serious about creating in his or her classroom a place where the dignity, energy, self-management, community and awareness of the student is promoted through active learning. It can be obtained from Amazon Books (www.amazon.com). It is truly a *vade mecum* for every serious teacher.

My own personal thanks to Brother Gerard Rummery, FSC, a confrere and colleague for many years. It was Gerard's initiative that brought an English version of Agathon's book to a contemporary audience. His video presentations and countless workshops on the 12 Virtues have awakened the nobility of the vocation of the teacher in the hearts of many. I am grateful for his encouragement in my venture to supply a beginning approach to the 12 Virtues through strategies that a teacher can use in the classroom.

And finally, a special word of thanks to Brendan Carroll, a vital member of our LES team, for his continued encouragement of me to get this project done and on-line.

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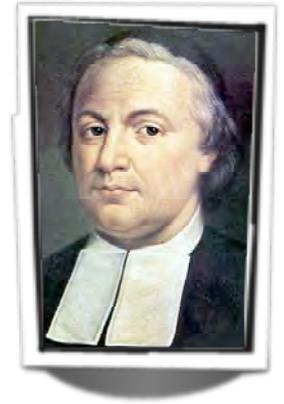
¹ Brother Gerard Rummery, FSC, *Preface to the English Edition*, THE TWELVE VIRTUES OF A GOOD TEACHER, Christian Brothers Conference, Landover, Maryland, © 2000, p. 7.

² Merrill Harmin, Melanie Toth, INSPIRING ACTIVE LEARNING: A COMPLETE HANDBOOK FOR TODAY'S TEACHERS, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, VA, © Merrill Harmin 2006.

GRAVITY

(Seriousness)

A virtue that regulates the exterior of a teacher conformably to modesty, politeness and good order.



Strategy 3-4: Efficient Classroom Structures

Purpose: To develop efficient routines for student learning.

Description: Settling on a few classroom routines that maximize learning and ease teaching.



Some lesson plans work so well that they can be profitably turned into regular classroom routines. Once students learn these routines, the classroom develops a structure that is familiar to students, and that often eases our teaching chores and maximizes student learning. As examples, below are three structures for a day's learning experiences that teachers have found particularly efficient.

Structure 1: Highlighting Independent Work time

The first structure is especially noteworthy because it provides time for students to learn independently both before and after the new lesson of the day. This structure uses eight elements. A discussion of each element follows the classroom example.

A Classroom Example:

1. *Immediate work assignment.* Students know that as soon as they enter the classroom they are to begin work on the posted *DO NOW* task (Strategy 6-1)¹ Today's *DO NOW* includes a quote. Students are to write a reaction to it in their personal journals. While students are doing this, the teacher can take attendance and attend to other housekeeping chores.

2. *Independent homework review.* After finishing their *DO NOW* task, students know they are then to form pairs. With their partner they compare answers to yesterday's homework, using a strategy called Homework Sharing Pairs (Strategy 10-1)²

3. *Independent tasks:* As students finish their homework review they work with individually created sets of Study Cards (Strategy 6-3)³

¹ Strategy 6-1: DO NOW **Purpose:** To engage students productively as soon as they enter the room. **Description:** Providing independent work for students to handle as soon as they arrive. -- Rather than delaying teaching until all students have arrived and we are ready to teach, we can establish a standing instruction that informs students they are to handle an announced task as soon as they enter the room. Some possibilities include asking students to: (1) Write thoughts about a posted quote or question of the day; (2) Solve a problem on the board or overhead and then create a new problem in the same style; (3) Draw something to illustrate a math concept or a line from a poem or an idea from social studies; (3) Time themselves and in one minute see how many ways they can produce a sum of 25, write words that rime with "slay," list states or rivers, or perform an such task; (4) Write a personal self-management goal for the day. The idea is o create a brief initial task so students waste no time and lose no energy waiting for activities to get underway. It also gives us time to prepare lesson materials, take attendance or consult with individual students. What do students do after finishing the *DO NOW* task? It is helpful to have a catch-all activity available. If students have homework to be checked, they might proceed to a homework review or move on to other independent task. It is often useful to begin class by randomly sampling one or two of the students' *DO NOW* responses. That can add a bit of fun and intrigue to the activity as students wonder, "Will I be called on today?"

² Strategy 10-1 Homework Sharing Pairs **Purpose:** To maximize academic learning and advance self-responsibility. **Description:** We could simply ask students to pair up in class and compare their homework. If the homework involved right/wrong answers, those could be posted or read aloud at the outset. We might tell students they are to teach each other when one person in the pair understands more than the other, and when both are unsure, they are to ask another pair for help We might also tell students that if they finish and time still remains, they are to create new questions for each other or to review past content in some appropriate way.

³ Strategy 6-3: Study Cards **Purpose:** To help students commit basic information to memory and to develop student study skills. **Description:** Asking students to create and study a set of cards containing material to be memorized. Students often need to memorize math facts, spelling words, scientific information, definitions of key terms, and the like. Study cards have proven to be valuable for this task. (1) *Creating cards:* Students create a set of cards for themselves in class or as homework perhaps using three-by-five cards, with each card having one item to be memorized. The front of a card might have a vocabulary word. for example, the back might contain a sample sentence and a definition and, if the student choses, a picture . Students might also decorate their cards. (2) *Categorizing cards.* Students then separate their *cards* into two categories, those with information they already now and those needing some attention. Students might store cards in two separate envelopes, perhaps marked "Know" and "Not yet". (3) *Studying cards.* Students then study on their own. Perhaps brainstorm with the class different times and way students might study the cards -- first thing in the morning, before going to sleep, drilling with a partner, and so on. And perhaps provide a few minutes in class for students to study cards in any way the choose. Instruct students to move cards from the "Not yet" envelop to the "Know" envelope whenever they feel confident to do so. (4) *Checking progress.* Regularly assess student progress, perhaps by having students meet weekly in pairs to test each other on the cards in their "know" envelopes, with a note signed by their partners verifying that the enclosed items were mastered. (5) *Appreciating progress.* To help students monitor their progress and appreciate their success, consider asking them to keep a private chart of how many cards they mastered each week. You might also offer special recognition when students show they mastered a certain number of items in a certain time period, with each student's threshold set individually, so the challenge is fair for all (To define the challenge, after they are familiar with the process, ask students to identify how many cards they learned each week for three weeks. Average those three numbers and that number becomes each student's "base" rate. The challenge is to meet or beat the base rate each week thereafter.) The Study Card strategy is highly flexible and self-managing. It allows each student to pursue independent learning geared to individual pace and style. Students who learn quickly are not bored or held back, and those requiring more time need not feel either pressured or inadequate.

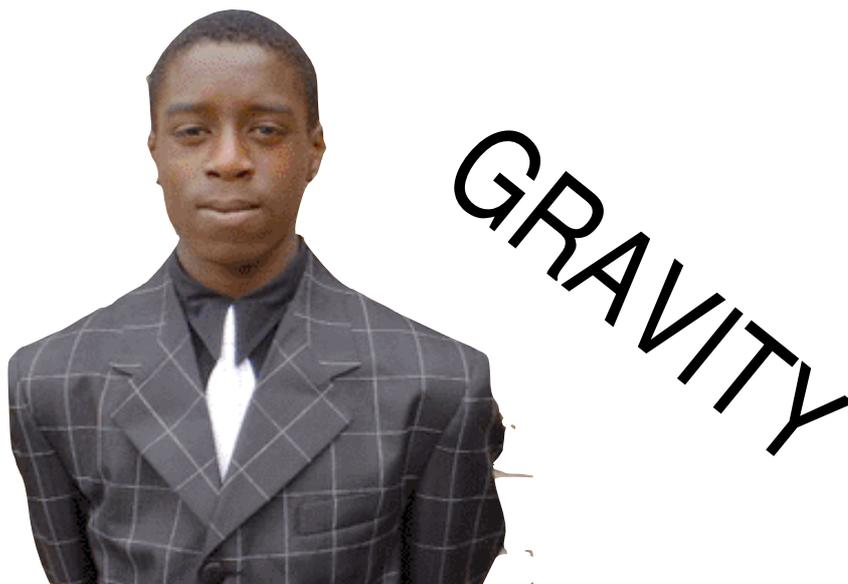
1. *Attention Getting.* The teacher uses a nonverbal Hand-Raising Signal to call the class together. When the class is fully attentive, the teacher asks for two volunteers to read what they wrote in response to the day's quote, using Set of Speakers (Strategy 16-5)⁴. *About 2 minutes.*

2. *Quick Review.* The teacher asks five quick questions that review prior material. For each question students write a response, which the teacher puts on the board while the students were writing. (Review Test, Strategy 11-1).⁵ *About 5 minutes.*

3. *Daily lesson.* The teacher then introduces the new material of the day, which today involves a lecture-discussion. At the end of the lesson, the teacher asks students to write what they learned in the form of Outcome Sentences. *About 15 minutes.*

4. *Independent tasks.* When students finish writing, they return to independent tasks. Most continuing with their Study Cards, although some choose another task from a posted list of options (which includes work at a learning center and independent reading) *About 5 minutes.*

5. *Wrap-up.* The teacher announces the day's homework assignment and then has a few students report one of their Outcome Sentences, using Whip Around, Pass Option (Strategy 16-4). *About 3 minutes.*

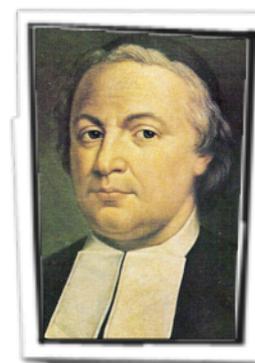


⁴ Strategy 16-5 Set of Speakers **Purpose:** To select speakers efficiently. **Description:** Requesting volunteers to speak and, then, from all volunteers, choosing a set that will take turns speaking. Rather than calling on one student at a time during the discussions, we can occasionally select a set of students to speak. "How many would be willing to share ideas?" we might ask. As hands go up, we point to some students; "Let's hear from five people today. You be first, You be second." And we continue until we have identified a set of five. We then ask the first person to speak. All students then tend to relax and pay attention. The speakers know their turns are coming up, and they know the order in which they will speak. The rest of the class knows the next bit of time is organized and they need not worry about whether or not to volunteer. Set of Speakers makes it easier to avoid calling repeatedly on the same students and to notice the more tentative hand-raising students who are almost ready to respond. We can often prompt more volunteers by saying something like, "How about some volunteers from those who have not spoken lately?" Or "Simpson, I see you might be willing to be one of the speakers. Are you?" It is easier for the reserved student to volunteer to be part of a set of speakers than to be a solo speaker.

⁵ Strategy 11-1: Review Test. **Purpose:** To keep all students involved in reviewing subject matter with many experiences of success. **Description:** Posting a set of review questions and having students (1) write answers and (2) immediately check their work against the provided correct answer. The Review Test covers material previously introduced in class. The "test" is for the students alone. Their challenge. To answer as many correctly as they can.

SILENCE

A virtue that leads the teacher to avoid speaking when (s)he should not speak and to speak when (s)he should not be silent.



Strategy 20-5: Silent Response to Errors

Purpose: To avoid responding in unproductive ways to student mistakes.

Description: Noticing an error or problem and leaving until later a consideration of what, if anything, to do about it.

According to Pilon (1996) the best response to a mistake is often no response, other than a mental note to think about the issue later. Consider these examples.

- John is giving a report of his work to the class. Several times he says “ain’t” and “ain’t not.” Often the best response to such errors is to say nothing and to make a mental note that he and perhaps others need more practice saying “isn’t” and “is not.”
- A student turns in a report that confuses *too* with *to*. Should we mark the error? If we do, two consequences are predictable. First, odd as it may seem, the student will continue making the error; that is, correcting such errors often fails to change a student’s behavior. Second, the student will be less willing to write – sometimes less willing to write anything for anybody, even himself. Students rarely enjoy activities that lead to many corrections.

Instead of on-the-spot corrections, we might do nothing other than to remember the error and make a note to create an appropriate mini-lesson on another day for the whole class or for a small group. And at that time, we probably do not want to say, “We need to review *too* and *to*; we have not mastered that yet,” or anything else that may communicate to the students, “You should have already learned this.” Such a message is unnecessary and may foster discouragement. We might instead simply teach the lesson as if it had never been taught before, perhaps as follows:

Here on the board is an example of *too* used correctly in a sentence. And here is an example of *to* used correctly. It is, of course easy to confuse them. I’d like each of you to please write a pair of sentences like these on scrap paper. In one, use *too* correctly. In the other, use *to* correctly.

When the students are finished writing, we might continue like this:

Now please share your sentences with a partner. Check to see that the *to* and the *to* are correctly used in all sentences. If your partner wrote something interesting, you might also enjoy reading it.

In short, it’s often wiser *not* to point out an error in order to get students to learn. Instead, simply teach a lesson about the topic again at another time. As long as the lesson has a quick pace, it will be an easy review for students who already understand, and for those who do not, a chance to learn it in a climate free of criticism or a sense of failure. Alternatively, we might teach the lesson only to the students who need it, allowing the others to work on something else.

Keep in mind the message of one of the *Truth Signs* (Strategy 4-1): “We each learn in our own ways, by our own time clocks.” Students sometimes encounter material they are simply not yet ready to master. We do well to accept such times as a natural part of the learning process and refrain from correcting all student misunderstandings on the spot.

Yet it is not always advisable to keep silent about errors. In solid, accepting relationships, people usually do not mind having someone point out a few of their mistakes. However, when unsure, choose the Silent Response to Errors. It is safer. Be like a physician who chooses the medicine most likely to avoid harmful side effects.

Strategy 33-12: Silent Response to Misbehavior

Purpose: To give students room to solve their own problem and to avoid a hasty, inappropriate response.

Description: Mentally noting misbehavior and leaving until later the consideration of what, if anything, to do about it.

A student fails to bring in the required notebook, chats with a neighbor while we are talking, neglects to do work assigned, or makes a smart-aleck remarks. Sometimes the best response is the Silent Response, a response to oneself that says, "There is a problem here. Let me note it now and see, later, if I want to do something about it and, if so, what." Sometimes such later attention is, in fact, needed. But sometimes it is not. The problem may disappear on its own. That outcome is especially likely if the class climate is lively, kind, and supportive and students have a growing respect for the teacher, who, by responding silently to misbehavior, demonstrates a self-confidence that itself inspires a positive response. In such cases it makes no sense to use our limited energies to respond immediately to every incident, especially when the problem is in no way dangerous and might well solve itself or soon be solved by student-initiated self-responsibility.

Other Reasons to Use a Silent Response

In addition to the possibility that a problem will disappear on its own, why else should we respond only by making a mental note to ourselves. Some reasons to consider:

- The Silent Response models an adult with personal security, someone who is not worried that one incident will destroy the group climate. It can be reassuring and educational for students to witness such a leader.
- The Silent Response communicates a confidence and trust in students. It demonstrates our confidence that they can and will learn to self-manage their behavior, that they do not need to be babied, told what is right and what is wrong at every turn. The Silent Response strengthens the power of positive expectations.
- The Silent Response seems to strengthen our own personal security and sense of community, perhaps partly because as we practice going with the flow, not trying to control every event around us, we learn how to live more peacefully ourselves.
- The Silent Response gives us the space to choose a response that will produce the best long-term effect. It helps us avoid a more impulsive response, one more likely to aggravate our problems. It is the wisdom of counting to 10 before acting.

TEACHER COMMENT

I like the Silent Response to Misbehavior, I use it all the time. If I had to react to each and every little disturbance, both the students and I would go crazy. My first reaction is to ignore a problem. If I reacted every time someone disturbed the class, I bet some students would only mess up more frequently and get pleasure out of that.

– Stuart Rabinowitz, Junior High Teacher

Teacher Comment

Ginger was repeatedly late to my class, but only a few seconds late. Then I sensed Ginger was playing an independence game, that her style was not going along with authority figures. She was bright enough so her lateness was not serious and it was not prompting others to be late, so I decided to ignore the issue and let her live her life in her way. Interestingly, when her lateness stopped bothering me, Ginger stopped being late. Odd, eh?

– Benj Ho, High School Teacher

- An immediate response to a student who has just misbehaved calls attention to the misbehavior. Often it's preferable to call attention to the behavior we *want* in the classroom, to accent the *positive*, rather than add attention to those acts we'd prefer to disappear. This is especially important in terms of our concern for student dignity and growth in self-management. When we call attention to an act of misbehavior by responding to it, a student with questionable self-worth often experiences a further weakening of self-worth, concluding that "I was bad," not "That act was bad."

Further Considerations

- *Demonstrating security, not timidity.* Teachers who respond to misbehavior by only making a mental note, not doing anything overtly, are not timid. They are secure – or at least strong and wise enough to act as if they feel secure until that security does emerge.
- *When silence is inappropriate.* A Silent Response is not appropriate when danger is involved – for example, a book is tossed across the room; a fight breaks out between students; a student waves a knife. Physical danger calls for direct, forceful action.
- *Silence now, action later.* Withholding an immediate overt response does not equal no response at any time. We might note a behavior problem and then, the next day, teach or reteach a lesson to some or all of the class. For example, if we notice too much aimless walking about, we can role-play walking in class with efficient purpose and dignity, without criticizing any students for prior behaviors.
- *Reflection and learning.* In some cases we may conclude that there is nothing we can do to prevent the misbehavior. We thereby accept reality. And we might do well to reflect on what we can learn from it, asking questions, like, Could that misbehaving student be providing me with an opportunity to learn more about treating people who displease me with dignity? About remaining calm in the midst of chaos? About finding new ways to run my classroom? Great lessons, after all, often come from experiences initially *judged* unfortunate.
- *Avoiding excessive intervention.* In general, minimal interventions are preferable. It's important to give students enough space to practice and eventually master the art of self-discipline. A Silent Response, indeed, can actually make things a lot easier for us. No action is often the best action.

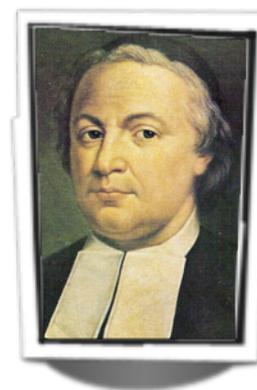


"It would be of little use for teachers to apply themselves to making the students keep silent if teachers did not do so themselves. Teachers will better teach students this practice by example than by words..."

-Conduct of the Christian Schools

HUMILITY

A virtue that inspires us with a realistic view of ourselves;
it attributes to us our just due.



Strategy 29-5: Respecting Our Own Stage

Purpose: To avoid frustrations and disillusionment that may come from unrealistic expectations.

Description: Reminding ourselves that teachers go through states of development and it is unwise to expect more of ourselves than is now appropriate.

Are you an experienced teacher? If so, strategies will probably help you improve quickly. Are you a beginning teacher? If so, strategies should help you move through the three stages most teachers experience.

Stage 1: Pleasing others. Beginners often start with a mind that is set on mastering job requirements, getting accepted, and especially, pleasing those in authority. They want students to like them. They want parents to like them. And they want whoever is in authority to like them, at least enough to offer them a permanent job. Some teachers call this the “survival” stage.

Stage 2: Teaching the subject matter. After some experience, particularly after receiving tenure, teachers typically enter a stage when what is most important to them is getting students to learn the subject matter they were hired to teach. Such teachers are willing to confront students, to push them to work hard, even to confront parents: “I believe your son would do better if he did not watch so much TV.” Teachers at this stage often feel it is important to cover the subject matter. Pleasing others has reduced priority.

Stage 3: Teaching beyond the subject matter. After some time at Stage 2, many teachers notice that no matter what they do, some students never learn much subject matter and many of those who do promptly forget it, often within days of exams. Furthermore, the teachers may come to see that students who do not forget what they learned hardly ever use it. How often, after all, are adults asked to find the area of a parallelogram or name the battles of the Civil War? This realization leads teachers to reevaluate the importance of subject matter. Typically, then, they become less obsessive about covering subject matter, more willing to allot class time to other matters, for example, to events that excite or worry students. Such teachers typically open their concerns beyond subject matter to show respect for good living as well as good learning.



If you are a beginner, you will almost certainly start at Stage 1. Guard against expecting so much from yourself that you invite disillusionment. Similarly, if you have recently moved into State 2, you may find it wise to allow yourself to remain where you are as long as you need to be there. In short, respect your own time clock. Know that strategies will help you move through your teaching stages smoothly. And if you are one of the few beginners willing to risk starting with a Stage 3 focus, know that strategies will make success easier. You might even discover, as others have, that you will not displease others by being a Stage 3 teacher. You might find many people absolutely delighted that you can teach in inspiring ways. You will also discover that you will not slight subject matter mastery by becoming a Stage 3 teacher. In fact, we know of no better way to advance learning than by teaching in a way that inspires students to apply the very best they have to daily schoolwork.

Strategy 33-13: Apologizing

Purpose: To model behavior that is healthy for mature relationships.

Description: Honestly apologizing to a student, modeling respectful social behavior.

It's strange how often apologies are misused. Some people feel they should never admit being wrong. Others feel they are always admitting they are wrong. yet an apology can be healthful for all concerned if it is clean, caring and honest – especially if it comes from a teacher. “I’m sorry,” we might say, “that I nagged so much yesterday about your lab reports. I wish I hadn’t done that. Now for today’s lesson...” Just a simple statement, without elaboration or discussion, can work wonders.

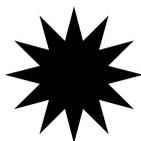
We might also encourage students to learn the art of apologizing, perhaps saying something like this:

Class, I’d like to see us apologize when we make a mistake and hurt someone. As you will probably notice, I will apologize from time to time. Sometimes I get too impatient, or too irritable, or too tired, or too something... I might snap at someone or sometimes snap at the whole class. I may not realize that until later. In those cases, I like to come back and say I’m sorry once I get a better perspective.

I might say to someone for example, “I’m sorry I got so angry and talked to irritably yesterday. No one deserves such treatment. I hope I didn’t hurt your feelings. I don’t want to hurt you or anybody else. It’s just that sometimes I am unable to do better. I’m sorry if I hurt you.” You, too, might apologize in class sometimes. It clears the air. It often dissolves guilt. It helps keep a group running smoothly. Usually it makes us all feel a bit closer.

To give us a bit of practice now, imagine you have made a mistake and acted in a way that was not your best self. Maybe start by imagining what you could say or do that might be hurtful to someone. Then write possible words you might say, maybe the next day, to that person. After a few moments, I’ll ask you to share your ideas with a partner. Maybe someone would be willing to role-play such talk for us all. Let’s see what we can learn about phrasing apologies.

Such a lesson may be unnecessary. Simply modeling the behavior – that is, simply apologizing in the classroom when you do something you regret – often leads students to pick up on the strategy and begin to apologize to each other more often. Such behavior can contribute substantially to a healthy class community.

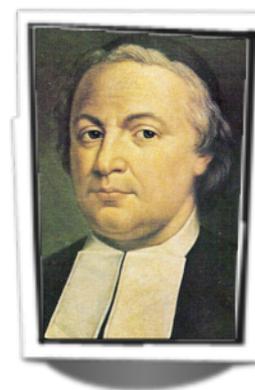


“The Humility of a good teacher makes him courageous. He does not turn away from whatever may be lowly and uninviting in the school and in the students. He welcomes them with kindness and mildness; without showing any distaste, he puts up with their natural defects: their rudeness, their ineptitude, the flaws in their character. He patiently bears with their indocility, impoliteness, ingratitude, opposition, and even insults without yielding to resentment or revenge, even when these faults are directed at him personally. Still, he does not forget that he must always repress whatever might weaken his authority and give rise to disorder, insolence, lack of application, or other forms of misconduct in the part of the students...”

-Brother Agathon, TWELVE VIRTUES OF A GOOD TEACHER

PRUDENCE

A virtue makes us understand
what we need to do and what we need to avoid.



Strategy 20-4: Praise and Rewards for All

Purpose: To encourage a group without slighting any student and to develop a close community in the classroom.

Description: Offering praise or a reward to the group as a whole.

Most students enjoy praise and rewards. Such attention makes them feel worthy and, presumably, motivates them to work harder and behave better. But a look under the surface might reveal undesirable side effects.

- *Addiction.* If students get too much praise and receive rewards too easily, the result can be like watching TV: easily attained satisfaction smothering the growth of independence, diligence, self-control, initiative. Or it can be like eating candy: a quick delight smothering interest in more nourishing choices. Praise and rewards can become addicting and, like other addictions lead to endless desires for more of the same, making students further dependent on others for their feelings of worth.
- *Devaluation.* Many students notice that whereas some classmates receive a lot of rewards and praise, they rarely receive either. “We are not at all appreciated in this class” is the message these students absorb, which too often leads to a sense of “I am not worth being appreciated.”
- *Manipulation.* “Look how good the first row is,” says the teacher with the intention of getting students in all the other rows to straighten up. The subtler message that students receive is this: “The teacher is just saying that to get what she herself wants. She does not really care about it.”
- *Puffery.* “Great answer!” gushes the teacher, followed by “Wonderful! Sensational! Super! Amazing! Let’s give a round of applause to Kendra for that answer.” Exaggerated praise can quickly devalue language and honest appreciation. Puffery can also lead students to say to themselves, “He must think I’m really dumb, expecting me to believe that nonsense,” or “She must think I’m really weak, needing such hype.”

The goal is to build personal dignity and motivate hard work and self-discipline without such harmful side effects (Brophy, 1981; Kohn, 1966; Marzano, Pickering & Pollock, 2001). Does that mean never praising students? Not at all. One way to avoid these side effects is to offer praise to the group as a whole when we feel they genuinely deserve it. Some examples:

- This group is making good progress. I appreciate that. It’s a pleasure for me to work with you.
- What a good group this is! Even though that material was hard, you folks stuck with it. I sure admire that perseverance.
- We did it right on time! Thanks for that.
- This sure is a powerful bunch, isn’t it?
- Let’s give ourselves a hand for the way we handled today’s lesson.
- You all are working so well together! I told the principal today how special you are.
- This class is going so well I’m giving you all a treat today.

No one loses when praise and rewards are honest and are directed to the group as a whole. There is no envy. No one is left out. Besides, it encourages feelings of the class being one warm community.

Even when rewards cannot be distributed equally, we may want to communicate appreciation to everyone, as when we say something like, “I’m proud that one of our own classmates, Nicky, won first prize. And I’m proud of the way you people supported Nicky. So, in honor of the occasion, let’s all give ourselves a hand.”

But Praise and Rewards for All can be used manipulatively, as when a teacher offers a reward only when students do what the teacher wants. A class party on Friday because of diligent work all week often falls into this category. The motive of the teacher, then, is less to bring the class together for a delightful occasion, or to show appreciation, or to share good feelings with the class. The motive is more to shape the behavior of students. Not only is that less generous, it models manipulation and may well encourage students to try to manipulate others.

We recommend against making group praise or rewards contingent on student behavior. It is not advisable, then to announce that if students do this or that they will get a reward. It is preferable to model someone who likes to bring joy into others’ lives – and not only when it is earned. Indeed, we might better model someone who brings joy into the lives of people who are *not* earning it, for those are the people who most often need positive feedback. And if the intention is to bring out students’ most positive, constructive traits, would we not want to model someone being positive and constructive?

Strategy 20-3: Incorrects with Appreciation

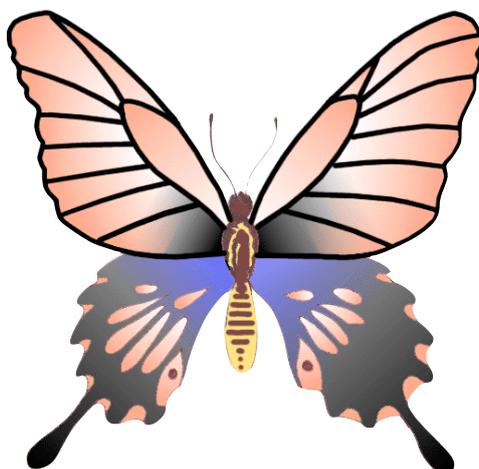
Purpose: To acknowledge a student’s efforts.

Description: Informing a student that although the answer was not correct, the effort was commendable and we appreciate it.

Here are a few examples:

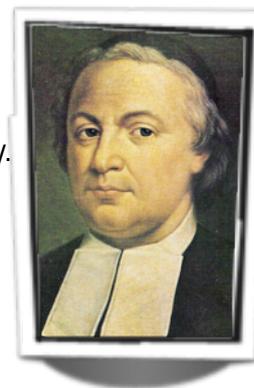
- The correct answer is 64, but that was a good risk taking on your part.
- The answer was *alternating current*, but that was good thinking.
- That is a good answer, but it doesn’t really apply to this situation. In this situation, the best answer would be *hardly ever*.
- You have the first part right, and you sure are on the right track. The complete correct answer is...

This strategy shifts the focus from the answer itself to the process of thinking or to the willingness to risk speaking up, which is honestly commendable. We thereby balance any disappointment the student might feel with some positive feedback. That is often valuable for students with a shaky self-confidence.



WISDOM

A virtue that gives us knowledge of the most exalted things through the most excellent principles so that we may act accordingly.



Strategy 0-1: Learning from Great Teachers

Purpose: To refresh and learn from great teachers.

Description: Through reflection, beliefs and values to provide a wisdom base for our understanding of what teaching is.

In a fantasy world, all students would march in on the first day of school, quietly seat themselves, and promptly look up, bright-eyed, ready and willing to get to work. But this is the real world. In this world, students show up with a variety of motivations, such as

1. *The fully active learners.* Some students will be ready and willing to dive into school work. When we assign four problems for homework, such students will not only do all four but do them with style. They might even recopy their work before handing it in, so it's very neat, or attach a cover sheet to make it look professional. Students in this category may not be the brightest in the classroom, and they may not get the highest exam scores. But they are our go-getters, self-motivated, ready to do the best work they possibly can. These students are a joy to teach.
2. *The responsible students.* Other students will enter the classroom ready to do whatever we ask, but not much more than that. When we assign these students four problems for homework, they will do all four carefully, but rarely will we get the sense that they did their very best. These are dutiful, respectful students, more motivated to please us than to put themselves fully into their work. These students are easy enough to teach.
3. *The halfhearted workers.* Our class is also likely to contain students who are, at best, halfhearted workers. Give them four problems and they complete only two. Or, if they do all four, their work will be sloppy, full of careless errors. These students are often slow to start work and quick to give up, and they can be quite frustrating to teach.
4. *The work avoiders.* Finally, we might have students who will do little or no work. Indeed, some will do their best to avoid work altogether. Give these students four problems for homework and they are likely to groan and then lose the assignment. They are the students most likely to become discipline problems, the ones most likely to drive us batty.

This is the array of motivations that we are likely to find when our students first arrive. Unfortunately, it is also the array of motivations we are likely to see in the last days of the school year. Despite all the books that have been written about motivation and all the teacher meetings devoted to the issue, most of us still have a hard time turning work avoiders and halfhearted workers into responsible students and fully active learners.

But this is not so for all teachers...

Learning from Great Teachers

Some teachers, those we might call our great teachers, have a knack for moving students up those motivational levels. If we visited their classrooms, we would see, week by week, fewer and fewer students working at levels three and four, more and more at levels one and two. Somehow these teachers are able to inspire students to work harder than they were initially inclined to work. As a result the students tend to climb what we call the Active Learning Ladder

The Active Learning Ladder

Level 1: Fully Active Learners
Level 2: Responsible Students
Level 3: Halfhearted Workers
Level 4: Work Avoiders

You probably remember having such teachers yourself. Most schools have at least a few. They are the ones who elicit such comments from students as

- I like coming to class. I hated being absent.
- She turned us on to history and made it come alive.
- I never worked so hard in my life.
- I didn't expect to like that class, but I really did.

We might reasonably conclude, therefore, that it is possible to inspire students to become more fully active learners. Clearly, some teachers manage to do it. Might we do it, too? If so, how?

Interestingly, those great teachers don't achieve their results in any standard way. Look at a group of great teachers and you will notice that some do a lot of lecturing, others very little. Some are strict and demanding, others lenient and accepting. Some appear warm, other to be distant. Apparently, there is no one way to motivate students to do the best work they are capable of doing. This is good news for those who would like to inspire active learning. It suggests that we need not change our teaching personality or follow any standard model. Rather, we can create our own brand of teaching, motivating higher levels of active learning in our own way. That is assuming, of course, we have a clear, realistic sense of how to go about doing so.

One of the *unrealistic* suggestions bantered about would have us start with students' interests and base all instruction on topics students are already motivated to learn more about: space travel, baseball, popular music. Another suggestion would have us build units around real-life issues that naturally motivate students: making friends, staying healthy, encouraging world peace, or the like. A third suggestion recommends that we convince students of the importance of grammar, history, or whatever else we want to teach them, so that the students will want to learn it.

These suggestions can help some of the time with some topics and some students, but rarely are they sufficient to move a classroom of students steadily up the Active Learning Ladder. Students need to be touched more deeply if they are to be inspired to do the best work they are capable of doing.

An Inspiring Approach

After years of experimentation, we have crafted a practical approach that does stir the deep positive abilities of students. Our approach resembles those that recommend a focus on the natural needs of students.

Yet our approach is distinct in several ways. First, our focus is squarely on the *highest* needs of students, such as the need for students to become fully functioning or to be the best persons they can be. It does not ignore other needs, including what Maslow (1999) calls students' *deficiency needs*, such as the need for food and safety. But we place those needs in the background. We want to concentrate on the heart of the matter, on bringing out the very best students have in them, which often includes positive qualities the students themselves do not yet know they possess. In this regard, we agree with Erich Fromm when he says that the heart of education is "helping the child realize his potentialities." By aiming high we also take advantage of Goethe's wisdom: "Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them to become what they are capable of being."

A second key difference in our approach is that our target is not to being our students' best potentials in a general way. We are teachers. We have jobs to do. Our approach is grounded in classroom realities. Our target, then, is very practical: to see students apply their best potentials to *daily schoolwork*.

A final difference is that our target is made more concrete and manageable by focusing on five student potentials that teachers have the power to influence and that directly contribute to school success. These five student abilities are *dignity*, *energy*, *self-management*, *community*, and *awareness*. We refer to them collectively as DESCAs.

FIVE KEY STUDENT ABILITIES

All students have an inherent ability to live with *dignity*, to engage tasks with *energy*, be appropriately *self-managing*, to work in *community* with at least some others, and to be *aware* of what is going on around them. Collectively, these DESCAs abilities point to the heart of students' best, most productive selves.

D is for Dignity

Students have an innate ability to live and work with dignity, as do we all. Moreover, deep down, students *want* to live and work with dignity. They do not want to feel belittled, demeaned, diminished, unimportant, unworthy. Yet traditional school practices can fail to take advantage of this ability to work with dignity. Some practices, in fact, frustrate students' impulses to do so. Our task, if we want to inspire students to be fully active learners, is to run our classrooms in a way that is comfortable to us, nourishing, never depressing, students' ability to work with dignity. We might, for example take care to

- Avoid embarrassing students, as by temporarily backing off when some feel blocked or are otherwise unable to learn what we are asking them to learn.
- Use only those discipline procedures that communicate care and high respect for students.
- Find practical ways to give students credit whenever they do the best they can, even when that falls far short of mastery.
- Announce high expectations without raising unproductive anxieties in low-ability students.

Practically speaking, can we do those things? Is it, for instance, realistic to expect us to avoid embarrassments and to discipline in ways that always communicate care? Yes, it is as strategies presented in these papers discussing the 12 virtues of a Good Teacher will explain.

E is for Energy

Students also have a natural ability to engage life energetically. They, in fact, *want* to engage life energetically. They suffer when they must sit still or stand around for too long with nothing much to do. We do well to nurture that ability to live energetically. It's after all what we, too, want. We certainly do not want students handling schoolwork apathetically or slumping in class listlessly. Nor do we want them running wildly out of control. Rather, we want students to engage schoolwork with a comfortable, steady flow of energy. To build on and draw out students' ability to do that, we might, for example

- Use very small groups, preferably pairs, to reduce chances that some students will be left uninvolved in group work.
- Adopt instructional procedures that allow students to occasionally move about so they can vent any built-up restlessness.
- Use whole-class choral work for information we want students to memorize.

S is for Self-Management

All humans also have the ability to self-manage, and we would do well to develop this in our students. We do not want students asking us every little question that comes to mind. Rather, we want them to think for themselves, managing themselves as intelligently as they can. This is what they, too, want. They do not want to be bossed. Nor do they want to fly about out of control. To nurture students' self-managing ability, we might

- Include choices in each homework assignment; for example, give options on how many questions to answer or on how to handle a topic.
- Allow students to select their own work partners, chairs in the room, or focus for a small-group discussion.
- Ask each student to make a personal plan to tutor a younger student.

C Is for Community

Students, as do we all, have an ability to get along and relate comfortably with at least some others. And they want to do so. They do not want to be rejected or isolated. Rather, they want to be in community with at least some others. If, then, we want to elicit students' more cooperative and generous abilities, we might

- Structure lessons so students can often help one another.
- Encourage talkative students to create enough space for all students to be able to speak out.
- Set up support groups in which students learn to support one another over and extended time period.

A Is for Awareness

Finally, all students are aware beings. They have the ability to be alert, wakeful, observant, attentive. And they have an innate *longing* to be aware. They are not meant to be bored. Indeed, it is their very nature to *avoid* boredom. And we, of course, want students to stay alert and aware. That recommends we do not repress but rather develop this awareness ability. To do this, we might

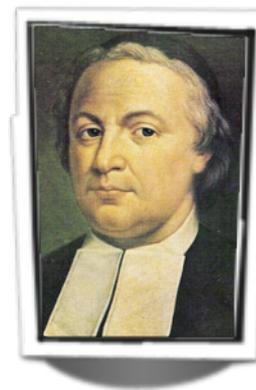
- Find a way to help slower learners without boring faster learners.
- Change whatever we are doing whenever we notice student attention sliding, as by changing topics or procedures.
- Avoid having quick thinkers answer all our questions, as by having all students jot an answer on scrap paper or share answers in pairs before we discuss correct answers.
- Include activities students are highly interested in completing, as by asking students to construct a toothpick model of an idea, teach a concept to a younger student, or solve a real problem showing up in school.

Teachers have a great deal of control over the degree to which students will express those DESCA potentials and apply them to daily school work.



PATIENCE

A virtue that makes us overcome, without murmuring and with submission to the will of God, all of the evils of this life, especially the cares inseparable from the education of youth.



Strategy 4-9: Let Them Be

Purpose: To avoid discouraging students by expecting more than they can produce at the time.

Description: When we suspect students have not learned because they are not yet ready to learn, letting them be, not attempting to force something before its time.

Most of us have the experience of being asked to learn something when, for one reason or another, it was not the time for us to learn it. We might have been asked to tell time, or to sing on key, or grasp calculus. Unable to learn what was requested, and especially if our peers were quite able to learn it or if we wanted to please our teacher, we might have felt defeated, weak, stupid. Those are not feelings that lead us to become confident learners.

We do well to be alert for such occasions. In our zeal to get students to learn, we don't want to overlook the possibility that, from the student's perspective, we may be asking more than the student is then able to produce. Strategy 3-2 described the advantage of teaching inlayers, not lumps. That strategy is a reminder to us that we can return to a topic another time, perhaps in another way, thereby avoiding pushing students too hard at any one time.

It is also helpful to remember that when in doubt, it may be wise to let students be, even if we cannot come back to the topic. There is wisdom in not discouraging students. More fundamentally, there is wisdom in communicating respect for students even when they cannot learn. Modeling such behavior is a fine way to teach students how they can accept their less capable neighbors, a primary skill in healthy community life.

Strategy 5-1: Student Procedure Mastery

Purpose: To motivate students to cooperate and follow classroom procedures smoothly and willingly.

Description: Spending enough time teaching classroom procedures early on so they become comfortable, automatic routines for students.

It is tempting to assume that students will understand and follow simple procedures: "Pick a partner and talk over last night's homework." "When you replace your folder on the shelf, replace it in alphabetical order." But if you have taught school for more than one hour, you probably notice that some students will neither comprehend nor follow directions carefully.

The remedy? Demonstrate that procedures are important by overteaching them, not underteaching them. Early on, announce that you care that things be done properly. Then aim for all students to reach absolute mastery of all key procedures and feel good about having that mastery. It's often wise to walk students through each procedure, giving explicit instructions, as does this teacher:

When I say, "Get a partner," first look around and make eye contact with someone. YOU can sit with someone nearby or not, as you choose. But if I ask you to pick someone with whom you have not recently worked, you might have to walk elsewhere to make that eye contact. Then sit close enough to that person so you can talk quietly. Let's try that. Pick a partner with whom you have not recently worked and sit together. Please do that now.

After the students have found partners, the teacher reviews what happened.

Let's talk about how we did. Maybe some of you felt anxious about being left out, and felt it was risky to get partners. I see that some of you were, in fact, left out, and it was tempting to form a trio instead of a pair, or to sit by yourself, or to come and ask me what to do. Please go back to your original seats, and let's try again.

The teacher then gives more detailed instructions:

This time, when I say "go," take a risk and do not rush to sit with the first person you see. If most others are paired up and you are still without a partner, look around to see if anyone else is available. A person might have been unwilling to risk today, so you may find someone sitting alone. Look carefully, like a detective looking for someone. If you have done that and still find no one without a partner, please make a trio. Ask a pair if you might join them. Let's try it again. Please get a partner with whom you have not recently worked. Go.

Like "pick a partner," an instruction to "talk over last night's homework" invites confusion, which invites noncompliance, which invites discipline problems. One teacher posts the following chart to specify what this instruction means:

Homework Groups

- Compare answers.
- Talk through disagreements.
- Help one another understand.
- Check with another group if unsure.
- Support one another in mastering the content.

"All that we have said concerning Patience in general applies very aptly to the good teacher. As he is nearly always with his students, this virtue consists, in his case, in supporting the disagreeable and unpleasant occurrences that may be met with in his employment. Consequently, he will not take to heart the students' whims, jokes, and bad manners or those of their parents; he learns to feel sorry for the limited powers of reason displayed by the students due to their age, their light-headedness, and their inexperience..."

Another teacher has a chart for checking homework that involves writing clearly.

For Homework in Writing

1. Exchange papers
2. Read thoughtfully.
3. Make helpful feedback notes for the writer.
4. If time permits, talk over your reactions.

-Brother Agathon, TWELVE
VIRTUES OF A GOOD
TEACHER

Note that it is generally best to teach and, if necessary, to reteach a procedure when it is first needed. Keep in mind, though, that it is also advisable not to introduce too many procedures at one time. The point: Spend enough time early on to make procedures perfectly clear and acceptable to all. And help students appreciate and enjoy their ability to perform procedures masterfully. Doing so not only eventually saves time, it also teaches students the importance of the little things in life. And mastery of classroom procedures provides all students, including the slowest learners, the opportunity to experience masterful success.

Strategy 5-3: Ask a Friend

Purpose: To have students get their questions answered efficiently and to nurture a classroom feeling of mutual support.

Description: Encouraging students who need help to ask a friend.

When a student asks what page the class is on, or asks that the homework directions be repeated, or is unsure of how to complete a worksheet, a good response is usually "Please ask a friend." The comment serves us in several ways. It eases our load; many students can easily get help they need from peers. It generates mutual respect and appreciation among students and builds a healthy, interdependent class community. And it communicates that we assume others in the class can be "friends" if only they are seen as such.

Grace Pilon (1966) notes that some students seem to create confusion for themselves so they can ask a teacher for help, perhaps because they thirst for attention. For such students, asking one friend may not be enough. Moorman and Moorman (1989) offer the phrase "Ask three then me." We might announce to the class, "Whenever you are working at individual tasks and need assistance, please ask three others before asking me." If a student approaches us, we can then simply inquire, "Did you ask three before me?"

Strategy 5-4: Once Principle

Purpose: To teach students both to listen and to live self responsibly.

Description: Announcing that from now on directions will be given only once and that students not hearing directions are to use a dignified, intelligent way to catch up.

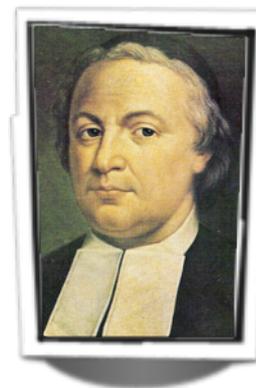
Pilon (1996) suggests that teachers introduce this strategy by saying something like this:

Please, everyone look at me. From now on, I will say things only once. Page numbers. Directions. Anything like that. So please practice keeping yourself aware. If you miss what I say, find a way to catch up. Perhaps whisper to a friend, or watch and see what others are doing or later quietly ask a friend what you missed. Call on your good intelligence. You will know the best thing to do. Now let's get started on today's lesson.

Note that the teacher said this only once. She did not say, "Any questions?" That might well have led to a repetition of the same announcement. Note, too, that the teacher by asking all students to look at her. If a direction is to be given only once, it is fair to call for attention and insert an appropriate beat of silence so all students have a fair chance of hearing it. Imagine, then, when students later ask, "When was that due?" or "What did you say the page was?" that the teacher simply smiles warmly and says, "Ask a friend," not "I told you..." or "I say things only once." Eventually the teacher need say nothing at all to communicate to students that they are smart enough to see a teacher smile as an unspoken answer to their question. Will this strategy work? Many teachers report that it works just fine. In our experience, if we have confidence that students will learn the Once Principle, they will. It is often more difficult for the teacher to stick to the Once Principle than it is for students to learn how to live with it.

RESERVE

A virtue that makes us think, speak, and act with moderation, discretion and honesty.



Strategy 5-9: Dignifying Acts

Purpose: To demonstrate underlying care for students in a way that grows a positive, personal class climate.

Description: Doing little things that show we value students as persons, not only as learners.

Almost all students appreciate personal attention from teachers. For some students, it's the key to getting them to invest themselves fully in learning (Combs, 1982; McCombs & Whistler, 1997). How can we communicate a personal interest in students? Some ideas:

- Learn students' names quickly and use them often. By the way, if we have many groups of students, learning names quickly can be eased by taking photographs of the students during the first day or two of school.
- During lessons, make direct, friendly eye contact with individual students, strolling about if necessary so you can eventually look at all students, and if they don't look your way at least be near them for a brief moment.
- Chat with students informally before and after class. Ask about their interests, their preferences, and their hobbies. And share your hobbies, interests and concerns. Perhaps mention the movies and TV programs you saw recently and ask if they saw them too.
- Remember students who made contributions and give them credit later by saying something such as, "Juan's comment adds to the suggestion Nel gave us earlier."
- Make a note to remind yourself which students were absent, and welcome them back warmly when they return.
- Keep a log of birthdays and ask each birthday person to stand for a moment while the classmates tap their fingers on their desks or otherwise acknowledge the day.
- Look for something you can turn into a small, private compliment. You can then bend close to a student as you walk by and softly say something like, "I like that blue shirt," or "I like how you spoke up today," Or "That is a great doodle!"
- Visit the lunchroom, perhaps once a week, and chat with a few students, taking care to sometimes include the quiet students and the loners. Perhaps even occasionally eat lunch with the students.
- Engage in some playground or gym activity with students (which might also demonstrate that people can do their best even when their best is dreadful.)
- Mention a student's special talent or accomplishment to the whole class. Perhaps invite students to tell you privately when they have something that might be suitable for such a public announcement.
- Send a personal note to every student's home early in the year saying why you appreciate having that student in class.

Strategy 8-2: Communicating Confident Authority

Purpose: To motivate students who are likely to act disruptively to exercise self-control.

Description: Exuding a confidence that we can handle whatever discipline problems arise.

Mr. Rainez was sitting at his desk, close to tears. His students had just left, and Mr. Rainez, in his first weeks as a teacher, concluded he could not possibly stop the disruptions that were wrecking his classroom. He felt totally disrespected – not an uncommon experience for new teachers. After all, many classrooms harbor students with pent-up hostilities, students who themselves may have suffered from hostility. When such students see a teacher seemingly vulnerable to attack, perhaps a teacher communicating uncertainty or an ambivalence about authority, or a new teacher apparently unskilled in exerting control, the temptations to create trouble are strong.

How can we avoid this situation? Exude enough confidence in our ability to handle discipline problems so students are not so readily tempted to act out. The problem, however, is that we may not *feel* confidence in our ability to handle all discipline problems. How, then, can we exude confidence? Do it the way plumbers cut their first pipe and surgeons their first bone. Step past lingering hesitations and just do what we have to do to get started. Behave as if we feel confident until we get enough experience to feel it in fact.

If you feel a lack of confidence, try this. Pick a lesson you might typically teach and imagine yourself teaching it to a class that contains potential trouble makers. Then imagine carrying out the following five-step process. Practice it many times, perhaps standing in front of a mirror or with a friend observing and giving you feedback. You want to make this practice as real for you as you can. Repeat the role-playing as many times as you need to, much like an actor practicing again and again to master a role.

1. *Being aware of students:* Continually scan the room as you teach, so you are constantly aware of what students are doing. You want students to see you as someone who is unquestionably in touch with classroom realities, not someone who is likely to be easily fooled. Therefore, practice looking about alertly as you teach, making direct eye contact with students, perhaps even waling about the classroom. Develop the distinct feeling of being a teacher who remains constantly on top of the classroom situation.

2. *Signaling disapproval.* Then imagine a student giving a first hint that he may soon create a disturbance. He might talk too long to a neighbor lose the book loudly, or stand up inappropriately. Imagine yourself responding immediately, without hesitation, yet *without communicating any distress*. Without interrupting the lesson, you might simply catch the student's eye and hold out a hand, palm down, as if to signal "cool down," much as you might signal a friend in a restaurant who may be losing his composure. Direct, clear eye contact indicates confidence. Or you might signal by giving a small shake of your head. Or you might simply walk near the student and teach a bit from that nearby position, so the student senses your presence. The key is not to hesitate. When in doubt, it is better to be overly sensitive and signal students too quickly. You can later communicate more tolerance and balance, but at the outset you want to model someone who has full confidence in his ability to take charge. Note that you do not want to communicate an impression of someone who is distressed. Confident people are not easily distressed. For now all you want to communicate is an impression of someone who is concerned that the classroom runs smoothly and who sends out mild signals to forestall possible disruptions.

3. *Inviting private talk.* Assume the signal does not work and the student repeats the behavior. Do not repeat your initial response. Do not signal again. Rather, walk toward the student, face him with square shoulders, make direct eye contact, and say quietly, directly, calmly, even pleasantly, "Please see me after class. I'd like to talk privately for a moment." Do not reply if the student asks why or claims innocent. Just make the request and return to the lesson, communicating that you fully assume the student will, as you requested, talk later. Be as unemotional as if you were asking a post office clerk for a roll of stamps. Just make a clear request. This step communicates to the class, including the student in question, that you are indeed ready to face classroom problems. Again, as you play this part, note that you do not want to communicate any distress, just a readiness to be in charge.

4. *Making authority statements in private.* Now imagine that it is after class, and you and the student are speaking privately. Your task now is to elaborate on your initial signal, not to warn or to scold the student. Squarely face the student and look directly in his eyes, sending a message of confidence, not submissiveness. "Pat," you might say, "I do not want even minor distractions or disruptions in our lessons. I'm not blaming you for anything you did. I just want to make it clear that I care very much that we become a cooperative class,

doing our best to help one another learn well, and I need you to do your share. Thank you. Please go now and join the rest of the students.” The content of your little speech is unimportant. What is important is that it does not blame or otherwise incite guilt or anger in the student and that it *does* communicate an unhesitant willingness to use your authority for the benefit of the class.

5. Making authority statements in public. Sometimes the first four steps will still not settle the student down. Assume the student again acts inappropriately. You now want to be prepared to square off and face him promptly, and this time, publicly. More specifically, imagine that the very next time he acts inappropriately you walk over to him, face him directly, and with a firm but still undistressed voice tell him exactly what behavior you want, such as, “I need you to stop talking to neighbors, It’s time to control that. Thank you.” Do not focus on what is wrong, but focus on what behavior you want to see. If the student complains or talks back. Simply repeat your statement verbatim: “I need you to stop talking to neighbors. It’s time to control that.” While practicing this step you may want to try several levels of intensity, aiming to be ready to use whatever level you need at any particular time, taking care, again, not to communicate an impression of someone who is distressed. It is someone who is confidently in charge that you want to model.

Practice this five-step process until you feel fully confident in your authority. Know that the more confidence this practice generates inside you, the less often you will need to use it – or any other discipline strategy. Students have an uncanny knack for identifying teachers who are willing to assert their authority. Most of them will control themselves quite well when faced with such teachers.

Strategy 8-3: Authority Statements

Purpose: To use authority respectfully

Description: Making a simple, direct statement of our authority as teachers.

There is no doubt about it – teachers have both the authority and the responsibility to keep student behavior within bounds. And that sometimes requires that we disapprove of what students are doing. The trick is to deliver such disapproval in ways respectful to human dignity – both our students’ and our own. We want to employ our responsibilities easily, comfortably, firmly, never harshly. Consider the following examples.

- When you say, “We do not do that here,” you do not want the student to feel chastised, just informed. You do not want to stir up resentment, just communicate clearly. You do not want the student to think you’re really saying “You should have known better than that.” It is preferable that the student hears your statement as “You just did not know this, so I’m giving you the information.”
- When you say, “That is just too much for me,” You do not want to sound apologetic or weak. You do not want the student to think you’re saying “You should not want to act the way you are acting.” You simply intend to say that you have limits. You, too, are a human being. Too much talk or noise or whatever is going on is, in fact, too much for you right now. Furthermore, you want the student to hear in your tone, “I know you are willing to make a reasonable adjustment to meet my needs, for that is what people do when they lie together as a cooperative community.
- When you say, “No, you may not leave now,” you do not want the student to hear “You should know better than to ask” or “What a silly question” or “Do not bother me with such questions.” You do not want the student to feel stupid or slighted or put down. You want the student to hear your statement simply as a fact; the responsible adult’s position is no, you may now leave now.
- When you say to a student who is arguing with you angrily, “I’ll be happy to speak about this, but not now; let’s do it when we can speak calmly,” you do not want to further infuriate the student. You want to acknowledge that disagreements arise and it’s good to talk them over, but it’s important to do so in a frame of mind that makes talking useful. You want the student to conclude, “I guess it’s no use trying to argue with the teacher now. I might as well wait until I simmer down.” Incidentally in this situation, you might well need to repeat your statement a few times, before angry students can hear the intended message.

- When you put a finger to your lips to signal someone to shush, you do not want the student to feel guilty or bad or irresponsible. You want the student to think, “Oops, I should stop talking. The teacher is reminding me of what I simply forgot.”
- When you say, “Sit down this very minute and turn to page 25. Please take control of those impulses.” You do not want the student to feel that you are being hostile and punitive or that the student is a defective or uncontrollable person. You want the student simply to notice that you are taking charge at a time when self-control has temporarily failed, that you are doing what is necessary to protect the welfare of all. You want the student to feel that you are on the side of safety and learning, not against her or anyone else.
- When you say, “Please sit over there for now,” you do not want the student to think you are against him. You want him to know that you object to the behavior, not the person. You want him to sense that you make your request simply to end a class distraction.
- When you say, “Will you do that for me?” you want to communicate a warm confidence that the student, at heart will want to go along with you. You do not want to leave the impression that you are unwilling to insist if need be. You rather want to leave the impression that you care that students choose to behave well. (By the way, when students answer such a question affirmatively, they have, in effect, given their word, which adds to their motivation to follow through.

The Authority Statement is similar to what Ginott (1972) calls a “sane authority message.” Ginott says that it would be insane for a teacher to belittle a student who has lost self-control or to suggest that a student should not be feeling what he or she is in fact feeling. Here are examples of “insane” messages and their “sane” counterparts:

Insane: Stop talking. You have no consideration for those who are working.

Sane: This is a quiet time. We need it to be absolutely quiet.

Insane: You have no right to be angry. You now what to do. You must wait your turn.

Sane: I know you are upset. We can all get upset sometimes. But now I really need you to wait your turn.

Three Guidelines for Authority Statements

1. *No hostility.* In general, disapproving statements should be emotionally neutral, like a red light. A red light does not communicate criticism or malice. It does not blame or sting. It just gives a signal to stop. We recommend that Authority Statements be similarly straight and simple, similarly unemotional, non-critical. They are to stir up no antagonism. Sometimes we can even exert our authority with a playful touch as in these examples:

* When a student is fussing about in a way that is too distracting, you might simply pause for a split second and glance her way, with a wink or a smile.

* Try a joke: “Let me finish this, please. I’ve been waiting all week to give this speech.”

* Simply keep talking and walk near the student and touch him warmly on the shoulder – not a sting, but a touch of care.

2. *No hesitancy.* It is best to make Authority Statements promptly and cleanly, not hesitantly or apologetically. You want students to see you as strong enough to speak forthrightly, not needing to apologize for your responsibilities. And you want students to see themselves as strong, too. Facing students directly and looking in their eyes conveys both a lack of submissiveness on your part and a respect for their ability to handle what you have to say. In general, you want each student sensing, “He clearly sees me as strong and smart enough to take straight talk.”

3. *No excessive intervention.* Some teachers voice disapproval more often than is necessary. A girl may be walking aimlessly about the classroom and that quickly trigger a disapproval reaction in those teachers. But saying nothing might have been a better choice. The girl might soon get back to work. Or she might not be disturbing others more than they can easily handle. Even if it is not easy for other students, it might be better to remain quiet. The other students might then practice calling up extra concentration power, or some of their conflict-resolution skills. There is some advantage to giving students the opportunity to stretch in these ways. When we too quickly solve the problems of healthy community living in the classroom, it sends a signal that we do not trust students to handle such events on their own. This assumption sets up dependency expectations. Students might then expect us to handle all group behavior problems, probably slowing the development of self-responsibility. For all these reasons, it is advisable to avoid intervening unnecessarily.

More Tips on Making Authority Statements

► *Use body language.* We can use body language to make a simple Authority Statement. Here is an example suggested by Frederic Jones:

Sam and Jim are talking while the teacher explains fractions to the class. The teacher makes eye contact, pauses momentarily, and then continues with the explanation.

If Sam and Jim continue to talk, the teacher pauses again, makes eye contact, and shakes his or her head slightly but emphatically, perhaps giving a fleeting palm-out signal.

If Sam and Jim continue talking, the teacher calmly walks over and stands near Sam and Jim while explaining, and perhaps increases the invitation for productive engagement by saying, "Now all work this problem on your scrap of paper."

If Sam and Jim still keep talking to each other, the teacher makes eye contact with each and calmly says, "Jim, Sam, I need you to stop talking right now" or "Speak with me before lunch."

► *Personal explanations.* Explanations are most effective when they are personal. Compare these two comments:

Teacher A: Everyone must have work in by Wednesday at 3:00 p.m. I cannot get my evaluations in on time if the any work comes in after that.

Teacher B: Everyone must have work in by Wednesday at 3:00 p.m. It is difficult for me to handle the papers and budget my time if work comes in after that.

Teacher B's authority is likely to be easier to accept. Students are more likely to believe that it is "difficult" to handle the paperwork than to believe that it "cannot" be done. Here is another example in which Teacher B's words are likely to be more effective, more likely to lead students to conclude that the teacher is on their side, not unsympathetic and certainly not against them:

Teacher A: No running in the halls. People who run in the halls get hurt.

Teacher B: No running in the halls. I do not want to see you or anyone else get hurt.

► *Activate your care for students before speaking.* You may have noticed that some very strict teachers are fully respected by students, and some very lenient teachers are very respected by students. On the other hand, some teachers who are very strict are not respected at all, and might even be highly resented and resisted. Similarly, some teachers who are very lenient are not respected, and runs a tight ship or leads a loose community. What is important is that students perceive the teacher as someone who sincerely cares for their welfare and who will act to serve that welfare. And that perception rests largely on whether or not they perceive the teacher as behaving reasonably, respectfully, and fairly.

Explanations can clear up potential misunderstandings about this. If students see our limits as too restrictive for them, for example, an explanation can make it clear that, say, we really need the limits so we can teach effectively, or they need the limits even though they may not currently appreciate it. Similarly, if students feel a need for more security or more guidance, an explanation can communicate, for example, that we do not feel comfortable being more controlling than we are now, or that they may feel insecure but they need to eventually learn to manage their own lives and this freedom can help them to do. The message in both cases is simple: I am doing the best I can to care for you.

Motives, then are critical. Authority tends to be accepted, indeed appreciated, when students know the intention is to do what is best for them, that we are, in effect, on their side. A caution, however: It is not enough to say, "This hurts me more than you." Words are not enough. If it isn't honestly hurting, students will sense that fact and will learn not to trust what we say. Similarly, it is not enough to say, "I'm doing this for your own good." Unless we can feel that, we are not entitled to say it. Truth, after all, also matters.



GENTLENESS

A virtue that inspires us with goodness, sensitivity and tenderness.



Strategy 4-6: Confidence Builders

Purpose: To provide reassurance for students who are anxious about learning.

Description: Before asking students to engage in lessons, making a reassuring statement, such as “We’ll go over this again, so don’t worry if you don’t grasp it right now.”

Like Cushioning Questions¹, Confidence Builders relieve student anxieties. Confidence Builders are usually brief statements and can be injected into teaching whenever we sense apprehension about new or challenging material. No dialogue is expected. We simply make a statement that tells students we understand the pressures they may feel while learning. Some examples:

- * We’ll go over this several times, so you can relax and know you’ll learn it eventually.
- * Don’t worry about making mistakes while you’re learning this. We all make mistakes sometimes.
- * Because this is important to learn, we’ll make sure you get all the help you’ll need. So don’t worry if you seem to be having trouble at first.
- * Today, we’ll be working with some new material. I might call upon you to try something you’ve never done before. Remember, it takes courage to risk, and often we learn more by doing so.
- * I know that some of you already know this material. But some of us do not – which is natural. We all learn some things faster, some things slower. So do not feel superior if you already know this, and do not feel inferior if you did not yet learn it. We will all learn it eventually.

Other reassuring statements that increase active learning:

- You can do it.
- This is a smart group.
- You are an intelligent human being.

...understand how singularly admirable is this virtue of Gentleness, since it has Humility as its companion, and because when it is patient, it is, in truth, the perfection of love...

– Brother Agathon

¹ Strategy 4-2: Cushioning Questions **Purpose:** To cushion student anxiety about learning and to expand student willingness to participate fully. **Description:** Before asking students to demonstrate how much they learned, reinforcing basic truths about learning by asking such questions as “Is it OK if someone gives us a wrong answer today? Why?” Posting a Truth Sign that says it’s all right to make mistakes doesn’t guarantee that students will not feel anxious about making a mistake. Many students need a long time to accept that making mistakes while learning is fully acceptable. Posting Truth Signs is a wise step first in the process of reducing learning anxieties and increasing learner confidence. However, a steady offering of reminders and support is almost always necessary. Pilon (1966) calls her strategy for doing this “cushioning.”

- I know you will remember this class as bringing out your very best.
- Remember that it's OK to make mistakes.
- I admire your risk taking.
- I trust you.
- You can do it in your own way, according to your own time clock.
- You handled that intelligently.

Strategy 4-7: Encouragement

Purpose: To support students who are low achievers or have a poor self-image.

Description: Offering verbal encouragement to students to struggle academically or personally or both.

Encouragement can be a powerful tool. A few well-placed comments to struggling students can mean the difference between them giving up and persisting. We don't want inflated compliments or empty praise here, simply honest, direct words that communicate the message "I want you to succeed, and I know you can do it." Some examples:

- ▶ Don't give up.
- ▶ Keep trying. I know you'll get it eventually.
- ▶ You've come a long way – don't stop now!
- ▶ Great effort! Keep it up!
- ▶ You're showing a lot of dedication to this work. Good for you!
- ▶ I'm here for you if you need help.
- ▶ I believe in you.
- ▶ Believe in yourself. You can do it.

Alison (2002-2003) reports that such encouraging comments are especially valuable for members of minority groups who experience discrimination, which would include special education students.

One teacher in our field tests attempted to make this strategy more personal to students by asking them to each create a list of actions and comments they would find personally encouraging and to keep that list handy, referring to it when they felt in need of a boost.

Strategy 4-10: Ability Salute

Purpose: To acknowledge effort, regardless of how much was accomplished.

Description: Telling groups we appreciate how much effort they are putting into learning.

We might try making one of these statements the next time we finish a lesson that seemed particularly difficult for students:

- ▶ I salute your ability to work hard. No one could ask for more.
- ▶ I appreciate how much effort you all put into this.

- ▶ This is a group that gives its best! Congratulations!
- ▶ You all played hard at this game of learning. In my book, that makes you all winners.
- ▶ No group I've had gave as much as you did.
- ▶ You gave it your all, and I appreciate that.
- ▶ That was not easy. When I was your age, I probably would not have done nearly as well.
- ▶ I'm sending a note to the principal about the special work you all did on this project.
- ▶ You all really rose to this challenge.

The Ability Salute lets students know we recognize their efforts, no matter how much they accomplished. It is not meant for individual praise, although it also can be used that way. It is rather meant to give encouragement to all students, especially those whose efforts do not usually meet individual praise and who therefore may be most in need of praise. When weak students feel they are full members of a strong group, they tend to internalize that strength.



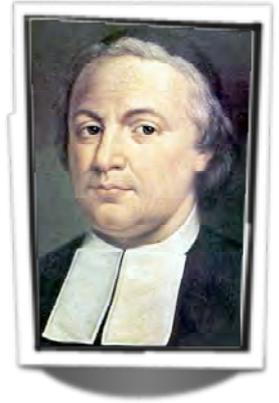
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"It is a general principle that love wins love; a teacher should, above and before all, cultivate the feelings of a father toward his students and look upon himself as holding the place of those who entrust them to him. He should borrow from the parents the sentiments of tenderness and goodness that are natural for them. He does this by showing Gentleness; it inspires him, with regard to students, with affection, tenderness, goodwill, and winning and persuasive manners. It removes from his commands whatever might be abrupt and austere, and it blunts their sting. Thus it makes the children happy and attaches them to the teacher; and if they are reasonable, will they not always willingly yield to his insinuations and his Gentleness rather than to constraint and force?"

-Brother Agathon, TWELVE VIRTUES OF A GOOD TEACHER

ZEAL

A virtue that makes us procure the glory of God with great affection.



Strategy 25–1

Purpose: To take advantage of the power of expectations.

Description: Maintaining an expectation that students will do the best they can even when there is no evidence they will do so.

As a teacher, we never want to give up on any students. When, for example, we plan a lesson, we are wise to fully expect that all students will get involved actively and responsibly. When some do not, we do well to assume they had good reason not to and, in the next lesson, they *will* become actively engaged. That is, we should never assume that any student lacks a willingness to be fully engaged. If we were to expect students *not* to become engaged unless, say, we gave them rewards and punishments, grades and tests, reminders and scoldings, they would likely oblige us. Expectations have power. We tend to get what we expect to get (Marzano, 2003).

It is valuable, then, to continually expect all students to be active learners. The message of this strategy is then simple. Find a way to hold that expectation. It is, we believe, one of our most influential, far-reaching strategies. If necessary, put a note on your desk or otherwise create a reminder that will help you to keep that expectation alive.

If you're doubtful, remind yourself that your students probably tackle their hobbies with high spirit. Perhaps check it out. Ask them about their non-school activities, their games, teams, social activities, the activities they really care about. The New or Goods strategy (Strategy 9-4) serves this purpose as well. As students talk about the activities they enjoy, observe their spirit. Use that as a reminder that the capacity for active engagement exists in these young people. Is it not possible that we can bring that life energy into the classroom?

We suspect that few students want to be poor readers, clumsy calculators, ignorant of what goes on in the world. It is unlikely that they see any advantage in being unskilled and ignorant. Said another way, students' natural motives support active learning. If, then, we design Action Flow Lessons (Strategy 3-1) that keep students naturally, comfortably engaged, would it not be reasonable to *expect* that they will, in fact, do the best they can with those lessons?

This is not to say that it's not sometimes challenging to keep expectations high. Here is one teacher's observation:

I had become disillusioned and frankly had low expectations for my students. I also had a lot of reason not to expect much. After all, none of the faculty was able to get much from them. At first I tried to imagine that my students would get actively involved in the lessons, but it never lasted long and I had trouble believing it. Then my support buddy and I agreed to ask each other at lunch each day how we

were doing at expecting active engagement, and that helped. In fact, we are now convinced that students do work harder when we expect them to. Yet, to be honest, we still need to remind each other at lunch. It's really hard, at least for us two, to hold high expectations in this depressed school.

It certainly be hard. But it also can be easy! Try *expecting* it to be easy and see what happens. And consider getting a support buddy as this teacher did. Progress is almost always smoother when we proceed with a friend.

Strategy 25-5: Inspiring Statements

Purpose: To inspire students to strive for excellence.

Description: Cheering students on to do their very best.

As all coaches know, the right comment at the right time can inspire people to reach down deep and exceed all expectations. If you are unpracticed in cheering students on, know that effective comments are rooted in genuine respect. They say, in effect, "*I am with you.*" "*I want this for you.*" "*Working together, we can do the job.*" They do NOT say: "Do this for me." "I'm insisting on it." "It is required." They pull, rather than push. Consider the distinction:

Pushing: I want you all to master this material. It is extremely important. I will have no student of leaving here without knowing this backward and forward.

Pulling: *You will really need this material. I'm committed to doing whatever I can to make sure you master it. Are you willing to work with me and go for it? It will be a challenge – let's do it!*

It is often the care of one person for another that ignites an inner power that leads to inspired results. Words without genuine care are largely ineffective. And if the care is mutual, if the students, in fact, also care for the teacher, the inspiration flows along a highly charged path. It can be of inspired service, even love. We can then in full honesty communicate the message: "We are in this together, but we can't do the learning for you. You must do it. By now you know how much I care for you. I want to be proud of you, not for me. Show the world you can do it. Go to it!" The words, of course, are not the main thing. It's the intention behind the words that counts.

We once heard about an elementary school principal in Illinois, Frank Beczkala, who wanted to inspire students to do more reading. "If every student reads more," he announced, "I, who am deathly afraid of high places, will stand on the roof of this building and read aloud a story to those assembled below." The students met their challenge. And so did he.

Strategy 25–6: Going for the Gold

Purpose: To inspire students to strive for excellence.

Description: Challenging students to handle everyday tasks at a high level of excellence.

Consider asking students to do a simple task without trying very hard, say, drawing 3 circles or writing the first 10 letters of the alphabet. Then tell them to repeat the task, this time doing their best. This means you might explain,

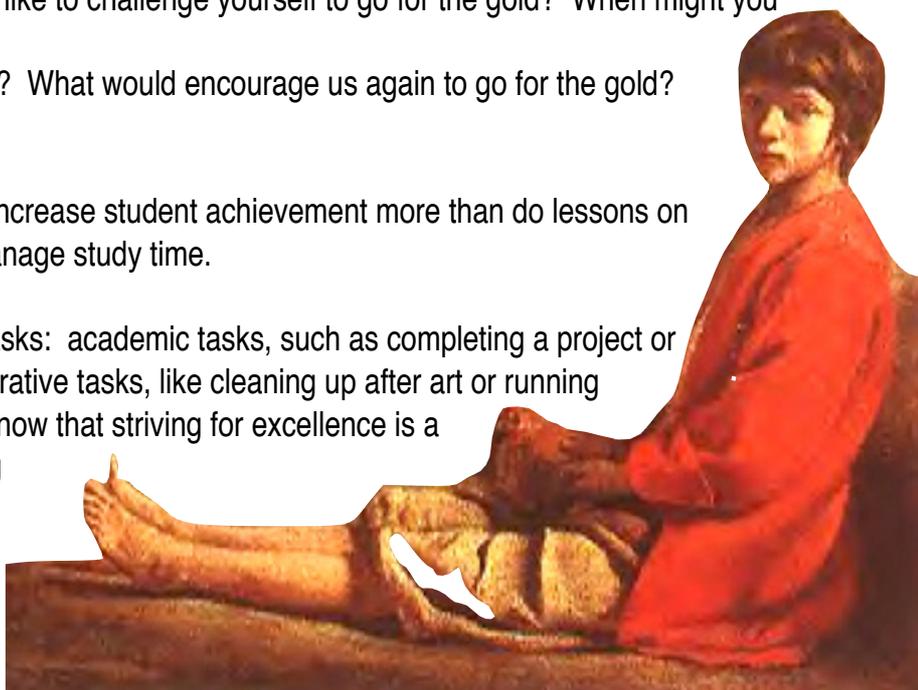
- *Striving:* Doing the very best you can, not doing just an ordinary job. Reaching far beyond the level of work you might do without this special challenge. Perhaps reaching for a level of excellence you never attained before. In essence, going for the gold.
- *Risking:* Trying new behaviors. Not saying with what you know you can readily handle. Perhaps reaching out for unfamiliar skills, speed, accuracy. Stretching yourself.
- *Persisting:* Not giving up. Sticking to it. Overcoming any urge to handle the task at a level below your very, very best. Absolutely refusing to accept less from yourself.

You might conclude by discussing which experience felt more satisfying and which produced better results. Some follow-up questions:

- * How did you do? What was hard? What was fun? Did anything surprise you?
- * Why do you think it's important to accept yourself if, this time, you didn't do your very best? What might happen if you didn't accept yourself in this situation>?
- * What if someone's best is not as good as another person's best?
- * What would you say about this quote: "It's not whether you win or lose. It's about how you play the game."
- * How many of you would sometimes like to challenge yourself to go for the gold? When might you do that?
- * How can we celebrate your efforts>? What would encourage us again to go for the gold? Why would we want to do that?

Evidence suggests that such lessons increase student achievement more than do lessons on ways to improve comprehension or manage study time.

As teachers, we give students many tasks: academic tasks, such as completing a project or a homework assignment; and administrative tasks, like cleaning up after art or running errands. We would want students to know that striving for excellence is a choice always available when handling any of these tasks.



Strategy 25–8: Personal Model

Purpose: To communicate high expectations through teacher modeling.

Description: Exemplifying a person who works with high DESCAs — dignity, energy, self-management, community, and awareness.

Historian and author Will Durant reminds us that “we teach more by what we are than by what we teach.” What we are speaks loudly — perhaps more loudly than anything we can say. It is best then, to practice what we preach. If we want to see our students working with high DESCAs — dignity, energy, self-management, community and awareness — we would do well to strive to do the same. More specifically, we should strive to act

- With dignity, ready to assert our own needs.
- With energy, not drained by too many commitments.
- With self-management, not afraid to take initiative.
- With a sense of community, not trying to go it alone.
- With awareness, alert to the needs of our students and ourselves.

When we shine our own light, we are more likely to see our students shining theirs.

Strategy 25 – 9: Inspiring Stories

Purpose: To strengthen student idealism and encourage students to act on their ideals.

Description: Calling attention to people with inspiring life stories.

Many teachers report it worthwhile to call attention to people who exemplify high levels of idealism or who successfully overcame serious obstacles, such as Helen Keller, Jackie Robinson, Nelson Mandela, and Thomas Edison. We might ask students to reflect on the stories of such people, to write about or illustrate their lives, or to role-play how they themselves might handle similar situations. For one rich source of inspiring stories, see the *Chicken Soup* series by Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen. We might also take time to share inspiring stories from our own life and encourage students to do the same. And we might create an area for posting inspiring stories, quotes, pictures, or anything else that we or our students find inspiring. Inspired students, after all, are not most likely to produce inspired schoolwork and to grow up to become positive, inspired citizens.

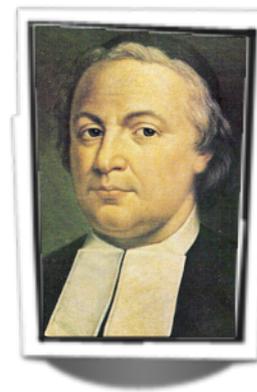


Check Lasallian Themes for an overall picture of the use of “the reflection.”¹

¹“Reflection,” LASALLIAN THEMES #2, article 50 by Brother Gerard Rummery, pages 146-153

VIGILANCE

A virtue that makes us diligent and painstaking
in fulfilling all our duties.



Strategy 25-10:DESCA Challenges

Purpose: To advance students' capacity to do excellent schoolwork.

Description: Challenging students to stretch their ability to live and work with dignity, energy, self-management, community and awareness (DESCA).

Teachers can empower students profoundly by occasionally offering non-demanding but stimulating challenges aligned with the five themes of DESCAs. Some examples for each quality follow:

*Challenges to increase **Dignity**:*

- Stand tall.
- Move ahead with confidence.
- When someone is being teased, step up and defend the person.
- Walk away when people are gossiping.
- Even if it feels risky, call up your courage and do what you think is best.
- Speak up for yourself
- Respect your own ways, your own time clock.
- Show your willpower.
- Look People in the eye.
- Refuse to be put down.
- Show you can take it.
- Say it as if you mean it.
- Show your inner strength.
- Stand up for what you believe it.
- Sit tall in your chair.
- Reach deep inside for your courage.
- Act with authority.

*Challenges to increase **Energy**:*

- When you are ready to give up, take one more step.
- Stick to it.
- Use all your brain power.
- Go for it – put your all into it.
- Walk briskly.
- Take initiative.
- Use your whole self.
- Practice stepping with a joyful aliveness.
- Speak with full energy.
- Make your eyes bright.
- Relax now to be strong later.
- Get yourself ready.

- Make sure you get enough exercise.
- Move right along.
- Reach down for more ability to persist.
- Make sure you get plenty of sleep.

*Challenges to increase **Self-management***

- Control your impulses.
- Take care of unfinished tasks.
- Think things through your self.
- Go past the first idea.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Look ahead and plan.
- Trust that you will know what to do.
- Proceed by your own time clock.
- Notice when something needs to be done.
- When feeling stuck in activity, get up and do something.
- Tell yourself you do not have to be negative.
- When you are angry, slowly count to 10.
- Practice starting immediately.
- Practice stopping immediately.
- Manage your own time.
- Take control of your behavior.
- Organize your papers.

*Challenges to increase **Community**:*

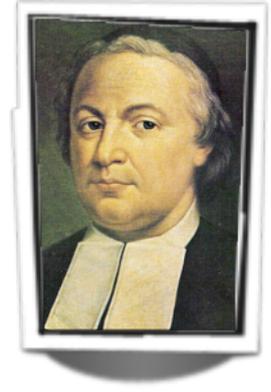
- Respect the differences in others.
- Practice going out of your way for others.
- Be all for one, one for all in this class.
- Listen to others.
- Help clean up.
- Do more than your share.
- Accept compliments.
- Care for those who need it.
- Cheer people on.
- Show your appreciation.
- Reach out to newcomers.
- Be honest.
- Accept all people for who they are.
- Tell people when you do not understand.
- Stand up for our group.
- Look for the good in everyone.
- Let us know when we make mistakes.
- Do something good for the community.
- Do something extra at home.
- Ask family members how you can help them.
- Pick up trash when you see it.
- Connect to someone new.

*Challenges to increase **Awareness**:*

- Keep alert.
- Read with an open mind.
- Call up your intelligence.
- When your attention drifts, bring it back, stay awake.
- Enjoy hearing, seeing, feeling, smelling, tasting.
- Practice ignoring distractions.
- Recall past ideas.
- Notice when someone needs help.
- Notice nonverbal messages.
- Focus your attention.
- Look closely at details.
- Look below the surface
- Wonder "what else?"
- Open yourself up to big ideas.
- Keep a log of your thoughts, dreams, feelings.
- Notice what is being left undone.
- Notice what is going on.
- Keep alert to the state of your body.
- Pay attention to colors and sounds.
- When you are going too fast, back off.
- Notice your feelings. Where do feelings show up in your body?
- End each day by asking what you liked and what you might do differently next time.

PIETY

A virtue that makes us fulfill worthily our duties toward God.



Strategy 0-2: Prayer in the Christian School.

Purpose: Prayer is the “wrap” which surrounds and animates all the activities and proceedings of the Christian School.

Description: The Christian School as envisaged by De La Salle is first and foremost the “work of God”. Its purpose is the well-being of its students. This is the conviction of the Lasallian Teachers. In time it becomes the conviction of the student.

The presence of God: Lasallian prayer begins with a recalling that we are always and everywhere in the presence of our omni-present, all-provident God. The formula used is: “Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.” After the formula is recited by a prayer leader, there is always a time of silence for about a minute. It is in this moment of silence that the class and its teacher exercise a moment of interiority. Several things may occur during this time of silence.

- One may focus on breath and simply on “being here”.
- One may recall that God is present here by power and love.
- One may recall that God is here because the school is God’s privileged place of presence.
- One may recall that God is present because we are a people gathered in the name of Jesus who has promised to be present where two or more gather in his name.

After recalling the presence of God, one joins in communal vocal prayer.

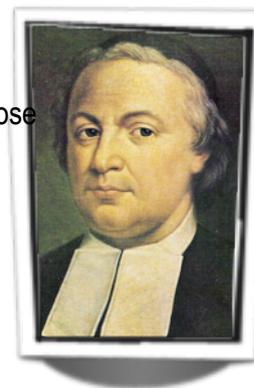
Closing prayer: Lasallian prayer closes with a series of short prayers. Usual among these is the prayer to St. John Baptist de La Salle. The Leader says “*St. John Baptist de La Salle*” and the group says “*pray for us.*” The final prayer is always the “community signal” *Live, Jesus, in our hearts. Forever!* The Leader says “*Live, Jesus, in our hearts.*” The community responds “*Forever!*”

The prayer that surrounds our activities helps us keep things in a faith perspective that is animating and enlivening. Through it we see all things with eyes of faith, we do all with God in view and we attribute all to God. This is the spirit of faith upon which our Lasallian perspective is founded.



GENEROSITY

A virtue that makes us voluntarily sacrifice our personal interests to those of our neighbor, conformably to the example of St. Paul, who said that he was “not seeking my own advantage but that of many so that they may be saved” (1 Cor. 10:33).



Strategy 0-3: Class Responsibilities

Purpose: Class members contribute to the life of the class community by performing services.

Description: On a regular schedule, the teacher will assign various classroom services to students who will willingly perform these for the smooth running of the classroom. The principle involved is that the teacher should not do any task that can be performed by a student.

In the Conduct of Christian Schools, De La Salle and the first community recommend 10 “officers” who performed tasks for the class. These included: Prayer Reciter, Holy Water Bearer, Rosary Carrier/Assistants, Bell Ringer, Monitors, Supervisors, Distributors and Collectors of Papers, Sweepers, Doorkeeper, and Keeper of the School Key.

The contemporary list of possible services below is not intended to be exhaustive. The needs of the class will determine the tasks to be performed.

- *Prayer Leader:* This student is responsible for leading the prayers that the class says. The Leader parts are pronounced clearly so that they can be heard clearly by all in the class. There is a tone of reverence and respect in the announcement, reverence and respect due to God and reverence and respect for the class itself.
- *Attendance Officer:* This student is the one who prepares the attendance report for class according with the reporting system of the class. When completed, this report is given to the teacher for verification and approval. The teacher is responsible for turning this report in.
- *Collector:* This student collects papers when they are to be handed in to the teacher. The method of passing in papers is to be arranged by the teacher. It is the task of the Collector to take the papers and arrange them as instructed by the teacher before handing them in to the teacher.
- *Distributor of materials:* When there are materials to be passed out to the class, the teacher gives the materials to this class officer who oversees the passing out of the materials involved. This can be books, papers, work materials, etc. The teacher simply oversees this. The actual distribution is done by this class officer.
- *Door-keeper:* This student sits near the door. When someone comes to the door, this student greets them and discovers what they desire. The student then communicates this to the teacher after asking the person at the door to wait a moment.
- *Board Eraser:* This student is responsible for cleaning the board (black board, white board, smart board...) in the classroom when the teacher indicates that this is desired. The student who holds this job will be careful NOT to clean the board until the teacher indicates it is to be cleaned. Often a teacher will want material to remain on the board. The student is trained only to remove material that the teacher indicates to be removed.
- *Mission Collector:* This student collects money for the missions or any other charity the classes wishes to assist. This student merely collects and counts the money. Both the money and the written account are given to the teacher immediately after the account is made. It may be advisable to appoint an assistant for the accounting so that there will be no discrepancy and so that there will be no temptation on the part of

the collector regarding an honest account and handing in of all the money collected. The teacher looks for ways to prevent any temptation to dishonesty in this matter.

● *Student Assistant:* Each row of students can be a row in which there are students who learn material easily and understand it well easily. These students are Learning Assistants to the other students in the row. When these students have completed their work they walk up and down the row assisting students who do not understand the work or who are having difficulties with it. Brighter students often learn the material more profoundly by teaching it. Slower students often are able to understand the explanation of a student who “gets” the material better than they are by listening to an added explanation of the teacher. This exercise of assistance helps the brighter student understand that his (her) brightness is a gift of God given them *for others* not for any prestige or pride on their part. Slower students will be served in such a way that they are not made to feel inferior or degraded by assistance. The entire class will be helped to understand the how and why of this assistance offered. The teacher presents it as one aspect of our community in the classroom where we help one another in every way possible.

● ...

Ecce quam bonum et quam iucundum, habitare fratres in unum.

Behold, how good and beneficial it is for brothers and sisters to live in unity.

Psalm 133

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