

POSITIVE DISCIPLINE IN THE PHILIPPINE SETTING

by:

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In the present situation of Philippine education, teachers are faced with multitudes of challenges in their chosen profession, much different from the decades before. And one of these is classroom management which directly deals with student discipline and behavior. In addition to those, the issuance of Republic Act 7610 or the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act and DepEd Order No. 40, series 2012 or better known as the DepEd's Child Protection Policy, teachers find it more difficult to impose discipline over their students nowadays. The main reason is that these laws and policies highly discourage traditional forms of discipline such as corporal punishment which many of us were exposed to.

However, the said DepEd Order provides for alternative forms of discipline which is referred to as "Positive and Non-Violent Discipline of Children" is a way to protect not only the students but also the teachers as well. It is defined as "a way of thinking and a holistic, constructive and pro-active approach to teaching that helps children develop appropriate thinking and behavior in the short and long-term and fosters self-discipline." (Section 3, Paragraph P, page 9 of DepEd Order No. 40, s. 2012) On the same note, Positive Discipline or PD is about on-point and regular communication backed up by consistently reinforcing your expectations, rules, and limits of your students. Moreover, it is about inculcating in them non-violence, empathy, self-respect, human rights, and respect for others. (Durrant, 2010)

But the real question is since Positive Discipline is a relatively new approach to students' discipline, how does a regular classroom teacher implement PD in his or her

day-to-day teaching with forty or more different individual students? Are there specific steps one can follow in order to achieve its ideal results?

Having said that, Naker and Sekitoleko (2009) in their handbook entitled “Positive Discipline: Creating A Good School Without Corporal Punishment”, have listed three easy steps for starters in creating a positive classroom environment which eventually leads to positive discipline. These are as follows:

Set shared ground rules for learning. This may be done at the start of the school year when you and your class set rules of engagement for every day you meet for your class schedule. Routine building, therefore, is very important for the first to second weeks of class since it is the time for the students to get used to your routine. As for the authors’ routine, it includes cleaning the board, arranging their chairs, picking up pieces of paper and other waste on the floor, and checking their appearances, making sure everything and everyone is ready before starting the session. Other examples of which is reiterating to them positive behaviors you expect them to show during class such as raising their hands and waiting to be acknowledged by the teacher before they speak or speaking one at a time. Another is asking permission before going out of the room. Further, the author lets his class repeat their mantra to remind them about proper behavior during class that says, “Kapag tayo ay nakikinig, nakatikom ang bibig, at sa nagsasalita nakatitig.” All these and more, when practiced and checked every day with consistent reinforcement thru praises may lead to good positive routine. Other ways may also be implemented as long as these were agreed upon and were made clear to all of your students.

Engage students in classroom management. This is the reason why teacher advisers ask the class to elect their classroom officers at the beginning of their school year. However, the problem usually encountered is that some of the elected officers do not perform well and worse, abuse their power over their other classmates. Therefore, it is a necessity for the teacher adviser to explain to them clearly their duties and responsibilities as duly elected class officers and that they should actively participate in helping their

peers rather than reprimanding their fellow students. It is essential therefore that they should be given clear tasks that they have to perform on a regular basis and goals they have to achieve for a certain period of time. For example, the class officers may help in motivating their classmates to reduce incidents of student misbehavior by modeling positive behavior over their peers. They may also lead in group studies to help their struggling classmates in certain subjects. These consistent acts of kindness towards their peers develop a positive feeling of belongingness and empathy which eventually leads to self-respect and self-discipline. And as for the author's classroom, everyone is consistently engaged in reminding their classmates of the use of profane words saying, "Hey, that's a bad word, we don't use bad words here."

Create opportunities to celebrate success. Contrary to recent social media trends on student awards such as "Best in Late" and "Best in Lip Tint", it would be more meaningful for students if they actually receive recognition for exhibiting positive and desirable behaviors. Hence, it is also imperative that these awards should have clear criteria for choosing the awardees. Aside from "Best in Attendance" and "Most Behaved", it would be more substantial if these awards recognize students being helpful, being punctual, or even being a good role model for excellent student performance. For example, for performance tasks in TLE, the author selects "model plates" for every task to help students visualize what an excellent output looks like.

Thus, as an amateur in Positive Discipline, one may begin by using these easy steps and eventually develop your own techniques which you deem as suitable and reliable depending on the set of students you have for the year for as long as it fits into the Five Criteria for Effective Positive Discipline by Jane Nelsen in her book Positive Discipline.

According to Nelsen (1981), (a) effective discipline helps children feel a sense of connection, a feeling of belonging and significance. Also, (b) it is mutually respectful and encouraging. In other words, it is kind but firm at the same time. In addition, (c) it is effective long-term because it considers what children are thinking, feeling, learning, and

deciding about themselves and their world, especially what they have to do in the future to survive and thrive. Positive Discipline also (d) teaches important social and life skills such as respect, concern for others, problem-solving, and cooperation as well as the skills to contribute to the home, school or larger community. And finally, (e) an effective discipline invites children to discover how capable they are since it encourages the constructive use of personal power and autonomy.

Therefore, whatever Positive Discipline Techniques you choose to implement, it all boils down to teachers' ultimate consideration, the students, our children – that whatever is best for them brings out the best in them.

References:

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