

HANDLING CLASSROOM MISBEHAVIORS OF THE 21ST CENTURY ELEMENTARY LEARNERS THROUGH POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

by:
Cristina M. Salvador
Teacher I, Pentor Elementary School

The primary role of a classroom teacher is to prepare meaningful lessons and facilitate the learning process. However, this responsibility comes with various challenges that may hinder teaching effectiveness, one of the most significant being student misbehavior. Misbehavior, in simple terms, refers to actions that disrupt or interfere with the teaching and learning process. These behaviors often stem from negative experiences or influence within a learner's environment.

According to CM Charles, an esteemed educator and author, misbehavior is defined as intentional conduct that violates class norms. It can manifest in different ways, ranging from minor disruptions and withdrawal from learning to immaturity, indecency, or even hostile confrontation. Such behaviors not only derail the lesson but can also affect the morale of both teachers and students, compromising the overall learning environment.

Traditionally, teachers have addressed misbehavior through punitive measures such as assigning extra work, isolation, writing apology letters, withholding rewards, or even suspension. These strategies were used to respond to common classroom issues such as disruptive talking, refusal to participate in classwork, clowning, interfering with activities, verbal abuse, rudeness, defiance, tantrums, arguing, and calling out without permission. While some educators still use a system of punishment and rewards, others opt to motivate learners using both intrinsic and extrinsic means.

However, today's learners face new challenges brought about by the digital age, such as excessive screen time, the influence of social media, and the constant presence of gadgets like smartphones and tablets. These modern issues render traditional discipline strategies less effective. Furthermore, with the strict implementation of the Child Protection Policy, schools now place greater emphasis on safeguarding children's rights and well-being, limiting the use of punitive disciplinary measures.

Despite these challenges, teachers must still find effective ways to manage student behavior to ensure meaningful learning continues. Unaddressed misbehavior not only hampers teaching efficiency but also negatively impacts the quality of education, ultimately affecting the students themselves.

To address behavioral issues constructively, educators must employ strategies that maintain the integrity of the learning environment while positively guiding students. It is essential to recognize that every misbehavior has an underlying cause. Teachers must identify these root causes and respond with empathy and effective interventions. Rather than relying on fear or punishment, teachers should encourage compliance and cooperation through positive reinforcement and guidance.

One such approach is Positive Discipline. As explained by Eaton (1997), Positive Discipline involves several key components, including teaching children problem-solving skills, offering choices, and applying natural and logical consequences. This approach empowers students to take responsibility for their actions and equips them with the tools to resolve conflicts independently. When children are guided positively, they are more likely to develop self-discipline, independence, and sound decision-making skills.

On the other hand, punitive actions or shaming may lead to low self-esteem, which can result in even more behavioral issues. As Nelsen emphasizes, a well-disciplined environment is essential for effective teaching and learning. Positive Discipline does not

simply mean avoiding punishment; it is about fostering mutual respect, promoting student accountability, and supporting a child's right to a safe and nurturing learning environment.

In conclusion, managing classroom misbehavior in the 21st century requires a shift from traditional punitive approaches to more proactive and respectful strategies. Positive Discipline offers a constructive way to guide behavior, support emotional development, and create an environment where both teaching and learning can thrive. As educators, embracing this approach will not only address misbehavior but also help shape responsible, respectful, and empowered learners.

References:

Republic Act 7610 (Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act). DepEd Order No. 40, series 2012 (DepEd's Child Protection Policy).

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