Preferred understandings / practices and core skills for school-wide behaviour leadership and discipline

Brief summary of practices and skills discussed in seminar/workshop sessions (all staff)

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Preferred practices (behaviour leadership)

Nb These *preferred* practices are a necessary 'key' to positive school-wide behaviour leadership*. These practices are interdependent with the language skills (and non-verbal skills) noted later in this summary.**   These 'practices' come with at least two caveats :

~ BDN   bad-day notwithstanding (!)

~ WP   wherever possible ...

It is the *characteristic* feature of these practices that matters in our day-to-day teaching / leadership (BDN). *Practices* and *skills* without reference to our humanity as teacher leaders is mere 'technique'. These practices and skills (summary – p 6 ff) may sound self-evident on paper; *it is in the demanding dynamic of day-to-day teaching that such practices and skills find their tested reality*. These practices in part describe, in part delineate, the kind of relational dynamic essential to respectful and effective teacher leadership – particularly in the area of behaviour management and discipline. In the references (noted later p 5) there are detailed case studies illustrating *how* these skills and practices come together in our day-to-day teaching and behaviour leadership.

❖ **Communicating and conveying calmness** [wherever possible], in tone / manner / language, when engaged in any discipline. Our 'calmness' is not some quiescent passivity or artificially 'holding in our feelings'. Such 'calmness' is not un-emotional; it is about clear – respectful – communication. Calmness (in the sense used here) is in part communicating our *appropriate* confidence as a teacher-leader and, in part, it is also conveying the sense that our students can trust us to manage the teaching/learning dynamic in classrooms. It is seen in the *characteristic* way we communicate (particularly when under pressure). Students sense – indeed they know – such 'calmness' in teachers through the characteristic tone and manner in our voice, our 'body language', and conveyed intent as well as the characteristic language we use. We are the adult (yes fallible) in the room.

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* There is, of course, no 'single' key to positive behaviour leadership. My colleagues and I have noted that these practices are consistently acknowledged in the research on behaviour leadership and school discipline. See particularly Rogers, B. (Ed) *Teacher Leadership and Behaviour Management* (2002) Sage Publications : London and Rogers 2011, *You Know the Fair Rule* 3rd Edition.

** Key behaviour leadership understandings and skills are noted as acronyms with *brief* descriptions (p 6 ff). For detailed case examples of these skills, and case studies illustrating how skills and practices are realised in our behaviour leadership in classrooms/and wider school settings, see the texts noted on p 5.

Such calmness is particularly important, for example, when we cue for whole-class settling, attention and focus at the beginning of a lesson and when addressing *any* distracting and disruptive behaviour. It is crucial when dealing with frustrated or angry students (or parents). Communicating and conveying calmness is not inconsistent with appropriate assertion where necessary, (assertion is to be distinguished from pettiness, mean-spiritedness, hostility or verbal aggression). Assertion is a skill; when we speak assertively we speak in a clear, firm and decisive way, emphasising that we seek to protect fundamental rights of students and teachers alike. We do so in a way that does not intentionally invoke hostility or verbal aggression from our students.

The skills of assertion are not addressed in this brief summary (see particularly Rogers, 2006a, 2011 and 2015).

- ❖ **Least To Most Intrusive** [wherever possible] when intervening into any corrective / discipline exchanges and in any context. Least intrusive interventions could be as basic as non-verbal cues or a brief description of reality/rule reminder or simple direction, (see p 6 f). When we are more intrusive (in discipline interventions) there will be a corresponding 'moral weight' directing the degree / kind of intervention we make regarding behaviour issues such as *repetitive* disruptions; or any situation of potential safety concern; or a student behaving aggressively, dangerously or abusively.

  In effect the least-to-most principle maximises appropriate (and fair) 'choice' given by the teacher to the student regarding their behaviour. Such 'choices' are *directed within the fundamental rights, responsibilities and rules in a school.* A typical, and basic, example : when we direct a student to put their i-Pod, phone, loud keyring, or distracting toy away "You need to put … (eg your iPhone) in your bag or on my table until the end of the lesson". This is in preference to merely taking the student's phone or …, or simply demanding the student to hand it over ... Giving a *directed* choice also minimises unnecessary confrontation, and increases co-operation.

- ❖ **Positive corrective language;** where possible our behaviour management focuses on the '*do*' (in the behaviour we address) rather than over-focusing (or over using) the '*don't*' ...

eg : "Hands up thanks ..." rather than, "Don't call out ..."; "Facing this way and listening thanks" *rather than*, "Don't talk while I'm teaching ..." ; "Remember our class rule for ..." *rather than* "Don't forget the rule for ..."

eg : "When ... then", (ie : a conditional direction) rather than, "No you can't because ..."

Any sense of *positive* corrective language is also significantly affected by our characteristic intent/manner; by our tone of voice and the degree of confidence and invitational trust that is present in any discipline communication (not bossiness or arrogance).

❖ **Keep the FOCUS [of reminding / correcting / disciplining]** directed to the **primary behaviour or issue at hand; we avoid over-servicing a student's 'secondary behaviours' (or secondary issues) unless necessary *at that point* in the exchange ...** It is very easy for students to distract our leadership focus by the extended, indulgent sigh; the whining voice; their minimal eye-contact; the attentional *tone* of voice; the sibilant (or not so sibilant) mutter; the raised eyes to the ceiling; the muttered last word ... These 'secondary behaviours' can easily distract us when we are leading a class or engaging distracting or disruptive students in one-to-one exchanges in class (or non-class settings). Our ability to utilise skills such as *tactical* ignoring; *selective* attention; *descriptive* and *directional* cues; *partial* agreement; *directed* choices; *consequential* choices and refocusing and the thoughtful use of *take-up-time* (in the language we use when addressing student behaviour). Conscious awareness and use of such practices (and the skills inherent in these practices) all have significant bearing on minimising unnecessary confrontation and engaging students' compliance (at least) – and even their co-operation.

Detailed discussions on how we engage typical 'secondary' behaviours – in student discipline – are developed at length in actual case studies in the reference literature (p 5).

❖ **Always follow-up and follow-through** with a student ('one-on-one') on issues that matter. This enables appropriate repairing and rebuilding of relationships and (where necessary) restitution. Some issues cannot be effectively addressed in the busy *social* setting of a classroom – they need follow-up, one-to-one. [See *Establishment Phase* notes 2019].

❖ **Always keep a complementary awareness, and focus, on encouragement** rather than overly ebullient, or unfocused, or general 'praise'. Encouragement and feedback are discussed at length in the books noted later (p 5). *Descriptive* feedback focuses on the *student's* effort/behaviour rather than on *praising* them (eg "*You're* so good at ..." or *global* descriptors such as 'Great', 'Brilliant', 'Awesome!' which give no information/ feedback about the work/effort or behaviour of the student).

❖ **When applying behaviour consequences** :

The 3R's principle ... does the consequence RELATE to the student's behaviour?

... is the consequence REASONABLE? (are these consequences appropriate in terms of *degrees* of seriousness/moral weight regarding the student's behaviour).

... do we keep the RESPECT (of/toward the student) intact when applying consequences?

We also distinguish between 'negotiable' consequences and non-negotiable consequences. A 'negotiable' consequence is one we work through *with* the student – one-to-one, at a calmer time (after class, or in a detention context …). We use restitutional questions that help the student identify what happened and how they can (with our help) make things better or engage in necessary restitution ... and restorative behaviour ... Questions such as: '*What actually happened*?' (regarding your behaviour), '*What rule/right was affected by your behaviour?', ('How did your behaviour affect others : students/teacher?') 'What is your understanding of what happened (regarding your behaviour)?'* This is a key right-of-reply question and '*What can you do to make things better? Sort things out? How can I (as your teacher) help you to ...?'*

A 'non-negotiable' consequences normally refers to behaviours that involve verbal or physical violence/bullying/drugs/weapons.

It is crucial to develop some common guidelines for 'negotiable' consequences for all staff / and a common framework for teacher discretion in use of behaviour consequences regarding the 'normal range' of less serious (but annoyingly distracting/disruptive) behaviours.

It is the fair *certainty* of the consequence that is more powerful (in any educative sense) than the *severity* of the consequence. It is the *fair and respectful certainty* of the behaviour consequence that is likely to engender any sense of justice in the carrying through of the consequence.

❖ **Have school-wide protocols for how we follow up and follow through with students** one-to-one : whether it is the basic after-class chat; the informal lunch-time 'behaviour interview'; following-up on an incident report sheet ...; informal (or formal) behaviour interviews; 'informal' or formal detentions; mediation sessions with two or more students; restitutional and civic-duty consequences. Such protocols will emphasise the need for the teacher to acknowledge (even briefly) the student's feelings; focus on the behaviour issue or task that relates to the consequence (rather than verbally 'attacking' the student) and giving the student an appropriate right-of-reply ... (See notes : *The Establishment Phase* 2019).
It is also important that the teacher who initiates a consequence such as time-out/detention should always follow up (with the student) themselves – beyond the primary consequence itself. This enables the emotional and relational 'repairing and rebuilding' necessary between teacher and student/s. There will, of course, be occasions when such follow-up will entail the support of a senior colleague (see notes : *The Establishment Phase* 2019).

❖ AXIOMATIC ... keep the fundamental respect (of the student) intact; even when being firm, direct or assertive / commanding. One can be firm, direct and assertive and still convey basic respect and dignity in our behaviour leadership.
{*nb Remember the caveats at the head of page 1*}.

See also (by Bill Rogers) :-

(2011) *You Know the Fair Rule 3rd Edition* Melbourne : Australian Council for Educational Research. [In the U.K. London : Pearson Publications].

(2006) *Cracking the Hard Class* (*strategies for managing the harder than average class) 2nd Edition* Sydney : Scholastic. [In the U.K. Sage Publications : London].

(2006) *Behaviour Management : A Whole-School Approach 2nd Edition* Sydney : Scholastic. [In the U.K. Sage Publications : London].

(2014) with Elizabeth McPherson *Critical First Steps : Behaviour Management in the Early Years* 2nd edition. Available from Sage Publication : London.
[In the U.K. *Behaviour Management With Young Children* Sage Publications : London.]

Rogers, B. (2015) *Classroom Behaviour* 4th Edition Sage Publications : London.

Rogers, B. (Ed) (2002) *Teacher Leadership and Behaviour Management* London : Sage Publications. Available in Australia via
Footprint Books
1/16 Prosperity Pde.,
Warriewood NSW 2012.
(02) 9997 3973 www.footprint.com.au
This book is particularly helpful for school leaders and year/pastoral heads/year co-ordinators/faculty heads ...

The language of leadership : core skills

Acronyms used in core behaviour leadership understandings and skills.	
This is only a *shorthand* framework. These skills are developed at length in the case studies in the books [see end notes (p 5)]. As with all skills they are not divorced from their underlying practices (in aim, intent and values pp 1-5 ...). Tone of voice, manner and intent are also crucial to any sense of humanity within the concept of leadership *skills*; particularly in the language framework skills noted below.	
BA	'*Behaviour awareness*', this refers to the aim of corrective language; we use language that is likely to raise the students' awareness of their distracting, disruptive behaviour (even in brief discipline exchanges).

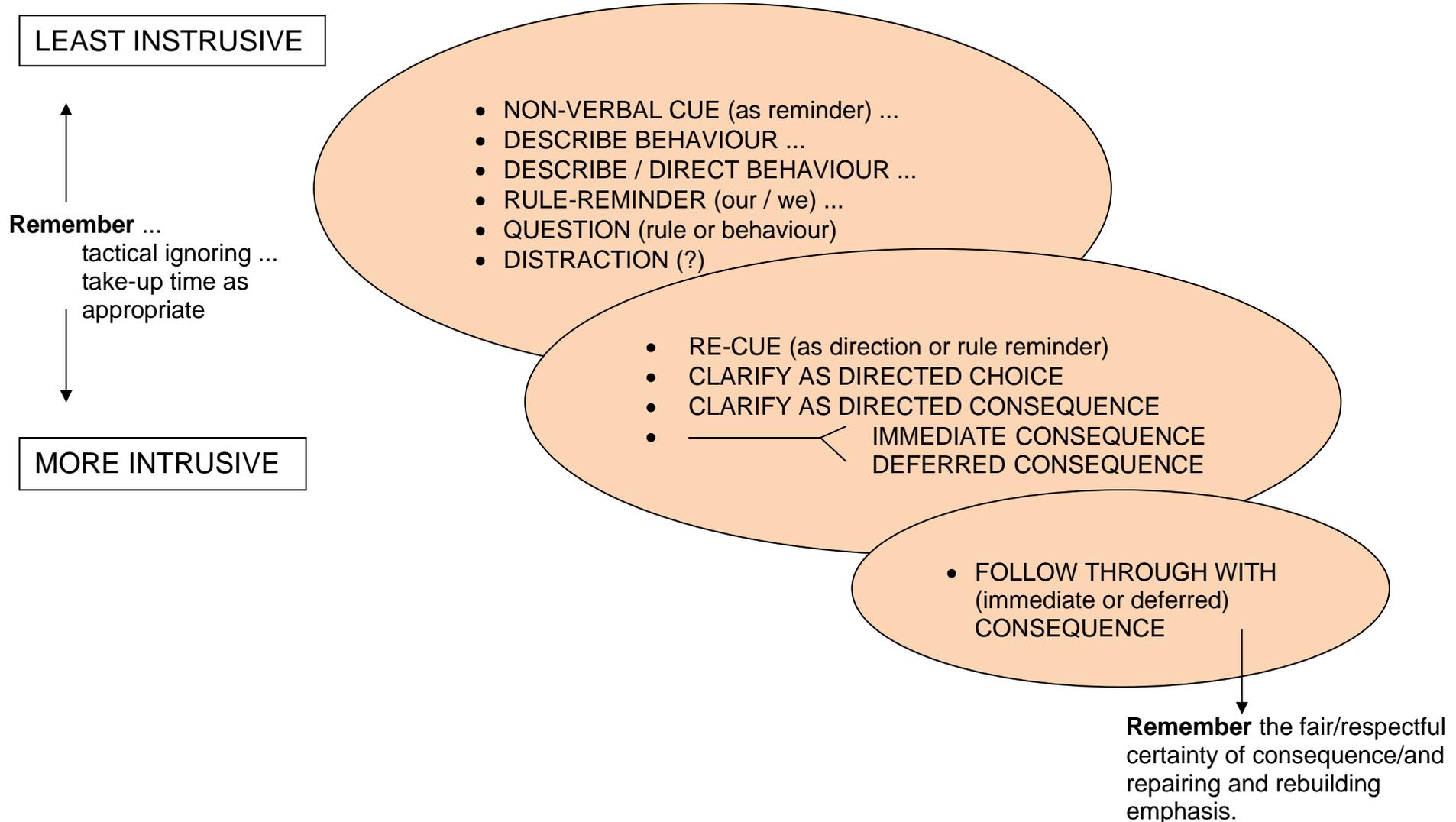| $\left\{\begin{array}{l} \text{TI} \\ \text{SA} \end{array}\right\}$ 'operate' together	*Tactical* ignoring {context dependent} *Selective* attention {context dependent}
TP (...)	*Tactical pausing (...)* to enable a student's attentional focus. This refers to the *brief* pause (...) after (say) cueing a student/s by name. It allows a cognitive take-up (as it were). See the example on page 7,under 'Take up time (TUT).
BITT	*'Break in the traffic'* (psychological/relational). The skill of being able to identify *when* to intervene in distractive/ discordant behaviours particularly in whole-class settling and focusing, say when several students are calling out while the teacher is talking. It is akin to 'selective attention' and 'tactical pausing'. Also helpful when communicating to overly garrulous students ...
TUT	Take-up time (after having given a direction, reminder ...). Eg : a few boys are fiddling with window blinds during *whole-class* teaching time. The teacher cues the whole class ("Excuse me everyone ...") **then** directs her attention to the boys ... "Bilal (...) Mitri (...) Connor (...) You're fiddling with the window blinds; its distracting." [This raises their *behaviour awareness*.] "Leave the blinds and face this way thanks." (this gives the brief *behaviour direction*). The teacher then turns away to give her attention back to the whole-class group giving the distracting boys *take-up time* and re-cueing the class to whole class teaching time.
NVC	*Non-verbal cue-ing* (as reminder, or even as a brief correction). These are cues or signals that enable the student to be aware of their behaviours and also to indicate the expected behaviour ie : as when a teacher raises her hand (briefly) as she cues the class (or the individual) to put their hand/s up (instead of calling out); or beckoning a student to bring their seat 'in' when they are rocking on their seat …

DOR	*Description of reality* (briefly *describing* the distracting/disruptive behaviour of individual student / or several students). Eg : "Several students are chatting (...) it's whole-class teaching time ..." – Again this raises the student's behaviour awareness.
SD	*Simple Direction* where we briefly direct to disruptive behaviour; positive where possible. We will often *briefly describe* first then *direct* ... eg " ... Michelle and Lisa you're chatting ... (the *descriptive* cue). You need to be looking this way and listening thanks." (the *directional* cue).
RR	*Rule reminders* "*Remember* our rule for ..." or "*Remember to* ..." is more positive and invitational than "Don't forget to ..." (providing our tone and manner is confidently positive ...).
DQ	*Direct question*: '*What ...?'; 'Where ...?'; 'When ...?'; 'How ...?'*. Avoid unhelpful interrogatives eg 'Why ...?'; 'Are you ...?'; 'Do you have to ...?'; 'Can't you ...?'. 'What's our rule for ...?, 'What should ...?', 'What are you supposed to be doing at the moment?', 'Where should ...?', 'How ...?', 'When do we ...?' *Direct* questions raise/focus student's behaviour awareness. Again, our tone and manner are important as to how the question is 'heard'.
PREF.	*Prefacing* (a brief comment, normative pleasantries, civility...) *before* the rule reminder, question, directed choice ... Particularly relevant in non-classroom settings.
FB	*Firm blocking,* where we *repeat* the direction or command. The firm repetition (*without* partial agreement) is used in contexts where the assertion is emphasised in the direction or command. If a student *continues* to argue or refuse, it is important to calmly/clearly clarify the immediate (or deferred) consequence.
DC	*Directed choices* are given within the context of rights / rules / responsibilities / routines ['choices' in such corrective contexts are not 'free' choices as such] ie : To a student fiddling with his I-phone; the teacher gives a quiet – but clear – *directed* choice, "You *need to*

	put your phone in your bag (or i-Pod) or leave it on my table until end of class." We often preface *before* giving a directed choice; for example a brief pleasantry and a chat about their work ... It can also help to *then* give the student take-up-time (TUT). If they prevaricate or argue *clarify the consequence and then* (again) allow some TUT (unless the behaviour is more serious).
DD	*Distraction / diversion*
PA	*Partial agreement* (when students prevaricate, whine, 'argue the toss').
CC	*Clarifying the consequence.* Where we clarify, briefly and calmly, what the immediate (or deferred) consequence will be if the student continues with their current behaviour.
⌈ AS ⌉ ⌊ AC ⌋	*Assertive statement*⌉ *Assertive command*⌋ often expressed in 'I' statements
COT	Cool-off-time (at primary level – 5-10 minutes sitting away from other students) ...
TO*	Time-out (outside classroom context) – we would not *normally* direct the student/s to stand outside the classroom as a form of time-out (at least not in challenging schools!) The student would be directed to another classroom (colleague assisted time-out), or directed to a senior teacher, or (where necessary) a senior teacher might 'escort' a student away from the classroom for time-out.
CATO*	Colleague Assisted time-out often a colleague's classroom 'next door' ...
FUFT*	Follow up / follow through (with a student one-to-one) generally in non-classroom time.

*For an extended discussion on time-out practice (and case examples) see the texts noted p. 5.

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BEHAVIOUR LEADERSHIP :
LEAST-TO-MOST-INTRUSIVE INTERVENTION

LEAST INSTRUSIVE

Remember ...
   tactical ignoring ...
   take-up time as
   appropriate

MORE INTRUSIVE

- NON-VERBAL CUE (as reminder) ...
- DESCRIBE BEHAVIOUR ...
- DESCRIBE / DIRECT BEHAVIOUR ...
- RULE-REMINDER (our / we) ...
- QUESTION (rule or behaviour)
- DISTRACTION (?)

- RE-CUE (as direction or rule reminder)
- CLARIFY AS DIRECTED CHOICE
- CLARIFY AS DIRECTED CONSEQUENCE
- IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCE
  DEFERRED CONSEQUENCE

- FOLLOW THROUGH WITH
  (immediate or deferred)
  CONSEQUENCE

Remember the fair/respectful
certainty of consequence/and
repairing and rebuilding
emphasis.

[See, particularly, *You Know the Fair Rule* Third Edition (2011) Australian Council for Educational Research. In the UK : London : Pearson Education].