A WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH TO BEHAVIOUR LEADERSHIP

The concept of *preferred practices* within a whole-school approach to behaviour-leadership and discipline : summary notes

Dr Bill Rogers
Education Consultant
2020

The concept of 'preferred practices' within a whole-school approach to behaviour-leadership

Bill Rogers Education Consultant

The concept of 'preferred practices' relates to a **school-wide consciousness** about the way we – as teachers – *characteristically* seek to lead and manage student behaviour (bad-day notwithstanding!) Though, even on our bad days our leadership can still model respect as well as normative fallibility.

The term **preferred** is deliberate; there are some behaviour management practices we prefer (when it comes to management and discipline) because of certain values we hold. **Core values** such as mutual regard, mutual respect, equality and dignity of the individual give a clear focus and direction to our daily management and discipline practice.

In relating our preferred practices back to our core values we also give **meaning and purpose** to why we discipline the way we do (our **characteristic** practices). Management and discipline practice, then, becomes purpose driven not merely task-driven.

The following preferred practices in these notes are outlined for staff discussion.

[See also, particularly, Rogers, 2006 *Behaviour Management : A Whole-School Approach* (Scholastic, 2nd edition). (In the UK : Sage Publications, London).]

A brief note on teacher skill within preferred practices

It is also worth noting that each 'preferred practice' – noted here – implies thoughtful conception, and utility, of teacher skill. For example the preferred practice No. 3, (p 3, these notes) ***The Language of Discipline... (least to most intrusive* management)**, implies that a teacher has a wide repertoire of positive corrective language.   A basic example :

two students are talking while the teacher is talking (during whole-class teaching time). Rather than say, "Lucas, Mark, stop talking …"   Or "Lucas … why[1] are you talking …"   or "Don't talk when I'm teaching …". The teacher could more thoughtfully say, "Lucas, Mark, you're talking …" (this **briefly** describes what they are doing that is disruptive – *at that point* in the lesson). This 'description of

reality' is often enough to raise behaviour awareness (in the student/s) and 'invite' their co-operation. Sometimes we will need to add (to that brief descriptive cue) a brief **behavioural** direction, " … Facing this way and listening now. Thank you." '*Facing* and *listening* ...' are the behaviour focus rather than merely saying "Don't talk ..." (which only tells the student what we don't want ...). This is one, small, example of countless examples that could be given. Of course the *mere* words in one's corrective language are hardly enough; one's characteristic tone, respectful manner and expectation [and – where necessary – assertion] all carry conviction, confidence, expectation *or* indecision ...**2**

Preferred practice No. 2 (p 4, these notes) implies skill in managing *potential*, *and actual, conflict* in a way that does not see the teacher engaging in petty emotional, 'brow-beating' or sarcasm, or 'cheap-shots' or other unnecessary, 'un-adult' (and unprofessional) teacher behaviour. Even when we need to communicate appropriate anger we can do so by :-

- Assertion rather than verbal hostility or aggression (assertion and respect are not inconsistent behaviours in the way we communicate).

- Communicating our frustration, even anger – *briefly* – on issues that matter (racist, sexist, abusive language) rather than on less significant issues such as lateness, uniform, homework not done; these are issues that have to be addressed (of course) but issues that merit *concern* rather than *anger*.

- Focusing on the distracting/disruptive *behaviour* or issue – at that point – rather than reactive behaviour simply directed at the student ... .

- De-escalating the natural tension; using a 'calmer' – slower voice – *after* having made our point briefly, and as clearly as we can.

- Allowing appropriate cool-off time (even formal 'time-out' where necessary). A time to 'separate' off, 'withdraw; for both teacher and student.

- Engaging in **repairing and rebuilding** with the student at a later stage that day (if possible). It is crucial that the teacher directly involved in the incident(s) take the initiative at this point (with support from senior staff where necessary).

The **skills** of positive correction and the skills of thoughtful follow-up with applied consequences are addressed in ancillary notes – *The Establishment Phase :* 2019

Preferred practices imply whole-school commitment to *skilled* discipline and management practice.

The concept of 'preferred practices' within a whole-school approach to behaviour-leadership

Core aims and core rights of our behaviour leadership, discipline and behaviour management :-

Within a whole school plan for behaviour management teachers agree to common behaviour management and discipline practices at the classroom level and 'duty of care' level (in non-classroom settings) and take **active** responsibility for management and discipline. These *school-wide and preferred practices* do not de-limit a teacher's own sense of professionalism and contextual management and discipline. They – rather – enhance such professionalism and increase the sense of **shared professional consistency across the school.**

The aims of all management and discipline are to : enable our student(s) to be aware of and own their behaviour; be accountable for their behaviour; to respect *mutual* rights and to do so within the context of workable relationships with other students, their teachers and to seek to co-operate with others in our learning community.

The core rights underpinning all our leadership are : **the right to feel safe**; **the right to learn** (without undue distraction or disruption) and **the right to respect and fair treatment**. These rights entail responsibilities by all. These rights and responsibilities need to be taught and given leadership protection by all teaching and support staff.

The teacher will consciously discipline within these aims – and rights – (above) in order that the primary business of the classroom (teaching and learning) can take place, and that students can feel safe within their school community.

Preferred practices

(1.) Each teacher will establish and clarify **classroom rules responsibilities and consequences** based on a year level framework and known 3Rs (rights, responsibilities and rules). These will be developed with the students in the 'establishment phase' of the year. At secondary level these *core* rights, responsibilities and rules are discussed at tutor / form group level and then fine-tuned / adapted by subject teachers. (See *Developing Behaviour Agreements With Students in Middle Years.* Rogers, 2016 in-service notes.)

The teacher will also establish (and teach) the **core routines** necessary for the smooth running of classroom learning eg :- calm/orderly entry to classroom; appropriate seating plans; a positive settling in their seating areas in preparation for whole-class teaching time; cues for questions / discussion in whole-class teaching time; appropriate movement around classroom; how to fairly get teacher assistance in learning-task time; teaching appropriate 'noise levels'; pack-up, clean-up and an 'orderly' exit from classroom … (See in-service notes on *The Establishment Phase* 2017).

The school wide **3Rs** (rights, responsibilities and rules) are the **basis** for corrective, consequential and supportive management/discipline, and those **3Rs** will be expressed in the *student code of behaviour*. At primary age level this can be developed within a **classroom behaviour agreement**. [See Rogers and McPherson (2014)]

(2.) When correcting / disciplining students, teachers minimise *any* unnecessary confrontation (in management and discipline) i.e. :- undue criticism, sarcasm, ridicule, embarrassment, public shaming... Unintended, (we hope unintended) hurtful communication by a teacher should *always* entail an apology.

(3.) When developing and utilising corrective discipline we :
- Plan the 'Language of Discipline' (giving some thought to words and meaning within our typical, **characteristic**, discipline language) : we seek to use *positive* corrective language wherever possible. (See notes on Preferred Understandings/Practices and Core Skills for School-wide Behaviour Leadership and Discipline) – notes, 2019.

- Balance 'Language of Discipline' with 'Language of Encouragement',*

- Use a least-to-most intrusive intervention approach when managing and disciplining individuals and groups ; becoming 'more intrusive' only as is necessary. This means becoming appropriately assertive where necessary (it does not mean becoming hostile, mean-spirited or verbally aggressive). It also means appropriate use of *directed* choices and directed consequences (always within the rights/rules framework).

(4.) In addressing distracting and disruptive behaviours we seek to keep the focus of our discipline directed to the 'primary behaviour' or 'primary issue' (wherever appropriate and possible) (Rogers, 2011). We avoid arguing or debating re : a student's 'secondary behaviours' (the sigh, the pout, the frown, the eyes-to-ceiling, the sulks ...) or 'side issues' and 'last word' ....
Where necessary –and where possible – we direct the student aside from their peers and in a heated conflict situation we always allow cool-off time (this may occasion formal time-out for the student).
Some behaviour consequences will need to be deferred until after 'cool-off' time. We need whole-school clarity *for all uses of informal and formal time-out procedures* (see Preferred Practice 8).

(5.) Establish a year level approach to the use of behaviour consequences for common rule-breaking behaviours and behaviours that infringe on others' rights. We emphasise reparation, restitution and reconciliation as the norm. There is also a degree of seriousness in the application and kind of behaviour consequences used say between 'homework not done' and bullying. Bullying is an extremely serious behaviour and the school's consequences should reflect that.

---

*See the in-service notes on *The Language of Encouragement,* 2019.

Distinguish between 'negotiable' and 'non-negotiable' consequences. Non-negotiable consequences are *school-wide* and address issues such as drugs (including smoking); any form of bullying; threats, aggression (verbal or physical) and violence. In 'negotiated' consequences we use *any* one-to-one follow-up with a student/behaviour interview or detention time to *raise a student's awareness* about their behaviour (and how it affects others' rights, including the teacher). We do this through key questions that enable a student's appropriate right of reply and an expectation of supported restitution where possible, see questions below ...). When applying behaviour consequences we emphasise the fair, and reasonable, *certainty* of the consequences rather than merely the severity of the consequences; we remember to always keep the fundamental respect intact when *applying the consequence*.

When establishing behaviour consequences we try – where possible – to gain a **relatedness** between the disruptive behaviour and the consequential outcome. Where appropriate we should ask the student what they think they should do to address their behaviour (in question). The sorts of questions we ask are :

- What happened (regarding your behaviour?);
- What rule (or right) was affected by your behaviour?;
- What is your 'side of the story' ...? (a basic right-of-reply question);
- What can you do to make things better? fix things up? repair/rebuild?;
- How can I help?

At the school wide level employ **degrees of seriousness** with respect to behaviour consequences (especially detention practices) eg as with the behaviours that occasion non-negotiable consequences.

(6.) Consciously 'separate' the distracting, disruptive, offending behaviour 'from' the student. This is not easy in practice; it is fundamentally about the way we treat the student when we have to discipline (particularly with respect to behaviour consequences).

(7.) Actively promote positive behaviours with all students through verbal, relational and appropriate symbolic encouragement. Consider the range of possible 'incentives' and public recognition programs (beyond academic 'achievement') – as distinct from *rewards* for responsible, co-operative, behaviour.

Regular use of *descriptive* feedback and encouragement should be the norm in our day-to-day teaching.

(8.)   'Exit' and 'time-out' procedures : - All teachers work together to establish appropriate year level, and school wide, due processes for exit, time-out and follow-up of any students whose distracting, disruptive or dangerous behaviour has necessitated 'exit' from the classroom. Eg :- **persistent** disruptive behaviours and refusal to work within the fair rules and within reasonable teacher direction; safety concerns; verbal abuse; aggressive behaviour.

Address fundamental questions with regard to time-out policy and practice such as : *How* do we respectfully – and decisively – direct a student from the classroom to supervised time-out?, *To whom*?, *What happens* when the student refuses to leave the classroom and go to the time-out area?, *Where* do they go for time-out?, *Who supervises* ...? *What happens* to/with the student *during* time-out? *How long* should the student stay in time-out?, On what basis does the *student re-negotiate entry back* to the classroom that day?

Class/subject teachers are – primarily – responsible for follow-up of any time-out consequences (with support of senior colleagues).

Emphasize the crucial importance of re-establishing working relationships and reconciliation between the teacher who initiated time-out and student(s) concerned. Avoid holding grudges with the student with whom we have had to apply the behaviour consequences ... (tempting as that may be!). Where the relational / conflict issues are serious, use supporting mediation for resolution and restitutional outcomes (from other colleagues with skill and experience in mediation/restorative practice). (See *Establishment Phase* notes, 2019).

Where necessary – and where possible – involve parents (case-by-case), through diaries, phone calls, parent/teacher conference (let them know positive outcomes too!).

- Clarify **roles** in the discipline/pastoral sense (ie of class/subject teacher through to principal).

Establish clear communication processes for follow-through of the more serious and persistent discipline incidents. It is important, however, that the grade teacher, or subject teacher, be **directly (and supportively) involved** in the follow-up and follow through of disruptive and challenging behaviour by any student. [3]

- Emphasise collegial responsibility of duty-of-care management *school-wide* : 'relaxed vigilance' in out-of-class contexts :- corridors, playground, lunch supervision, bus-supervision, after-school supervision. It will help to have a *school-wide plan* for such duty-of-care management rather than leaving such management merely to professional discretion, (see *Playground Supervision notes,* 2019)*.*

- Most of all, we need to build and utilise a supportive colleague culture for problem-solving and 'structural' / policy support. Colleague support is essential in the management of challenging student behaviour and students with emotional and behavioural disorders. The 'hard class syndrome' and playground supervision are also crucial areas that benefit from focused colleague support (both moral support and organised, planned, practical support options).

These preferred practices, and shared expectations, need to be expressed in a common policy school-wide :-

(i)   with a common discipline framework at the **classroom** level;

(ii)   a common 'duty-of-care' framework (ie : in non-classroom settings) eg corridors, playgrounds, lunch supervision, wet-day, bus supervision and out-of-school (eg excursion ...).

(iii)   **due processes for consequences, counselling and individual behaviour support plans** for long-term behaviour change with students who have on-going patterns of disruptive / challenging behaviours.

See framework over page.

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT : A WHOLE-SCHOOL FRAMEWORK

OUR CORE VALUES

AIMS
For group and
individual

- Behaviour ownership
- Respecting mutual rights
- Building workable relationships

PREFERRED PRACTICES – professional consistency

e.g. :-
- establishment of common rights, responsibilities, rules.
- least-to-most intrusive discipline / management.
- avoiding *unnecessary* confrontation in discipline and application of consequences.
- keeping fundamental respect and dignity intact in management / discipline contexts.

CLASSROOM PLANS	DUTY 0F CARE PLAN(S)	INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOUR PLAN(S)
• Common rights/responsibilities. • Class based rules and routines. • Least-to-most strategic discipline plan • Time-out options • STUDENT BEHAVIOUR AGREEMENT	Outside of class setting : • Corridor management • Playground management • Wet day management • Bus duty management • Excursions	Developing individual behaviour management plans. Case supervision of students with behaviour disorders. The 'Hard Class' issue

SCHOOL-WIDE CONSEQUENCES

- Negotiable (common framework) consequences

- Non-negotiable consequences

Sanctions policy

BEHAVIOUR RECOVERY

- Mediation
- Counselling
- Restitution
- Behaviour plans

© Dr Bill Rogers 2020

End notes

1. Interrogative questions ("Why are you …?" or "Are you …?") are the least helpful questions to ask in a *discipline* context (particularly in front of a student's peers). (See Rogers, 2011).

2. *Classroom Behaviour*   Bill Rogers
    Published by Sage Publications, London. Major 4th Edition (2015).

3. See notes on '**Establishment Phase** *(Practices and Skills*)' (2019).

References

ROGERS, B. (2006) *Behaviour Management : A Whole-School Approach.*
    Sydney : Scholastic Books. 2nd edition .
    (In the U.K. London : Sage Publications, 2006. 2nd edition 2006.)

ROGERS, B. (2006) *Cracking the Hard Class. Strategies for Managing the Harder Than Average Class.* Sydney : Scholastic Books. 2nd edition
    (In the U.K. London : Sage Publications,   2nd edition 2006.)

ROGERS, B. (2011) *You Know the Fair Rule and Much More : Strategies for making the hard job of discipline in schools easier.* 3rd Edition
    Melbourne : Australian Council for Educational Research.
    (In the U.K. London : Pearson Education.)

ROGERS, B. (2015) *Classroom Behaviour : A Practical Guide to Effective Teaching, Behaviour Management and Colleague Support* 4th Edition London : Sage Publications

See also ancillary in-service notes :

*   *Establishment Phase (Practices and Skills).* (2019).
*   *Student Behaviour Agreements : Middle school years* (2016)

_____

Dr. Bill Rogers is a teacher, education consultant and author. He conducts in-services and seminar programmes across Australia, New Zealand, Europe and the U.K. in the areas of behaviour management, effective teaching, stress management, colleague support and teacher welfare. He has also worked extensively as a mentor-coach in classrooms; team-teaching in challenging classes in Australia and the U.K. {He is a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators and Honorary Life Fellow of Leeds Trinity University and Honorary Fellow at the Graduate School of Education, Melbourne University}.

Reviewing whole-school approach
Dr Bill Rogers (July, 2015)
See (particularly) *Behaviour Management : A Whole-School Approach* Scholastic (2nd Edition) Sydney.

It is normally easier to start with workable
PLANS

This will encourage / focus our
preferred practices

Review current
key plans
:- classroom
:- duty-of-care

Follow-up
procedures

PREFERRED
PRACTICES
of
behaviour
leadership

Published
behaviour
policy

on-going review

Protocols of
follow up
- after-class chat / informal/formal
  behaviour interview
- use of detention
- policy role of class/ initiating teacher
- role of senior teacher in supporting

LEVELS of consequential (behaviour
consequences) follow up and
behaviour *support* and monitoring

What is working well and why?
How does our policy (its plan(s), its *practices)*
reflect our values and beliefs?
What isn't working well and why?
What do we need to do to fine-tune / adapt /
modify / change?
How? - realistically

Involve students in this review (at least
once a year).