



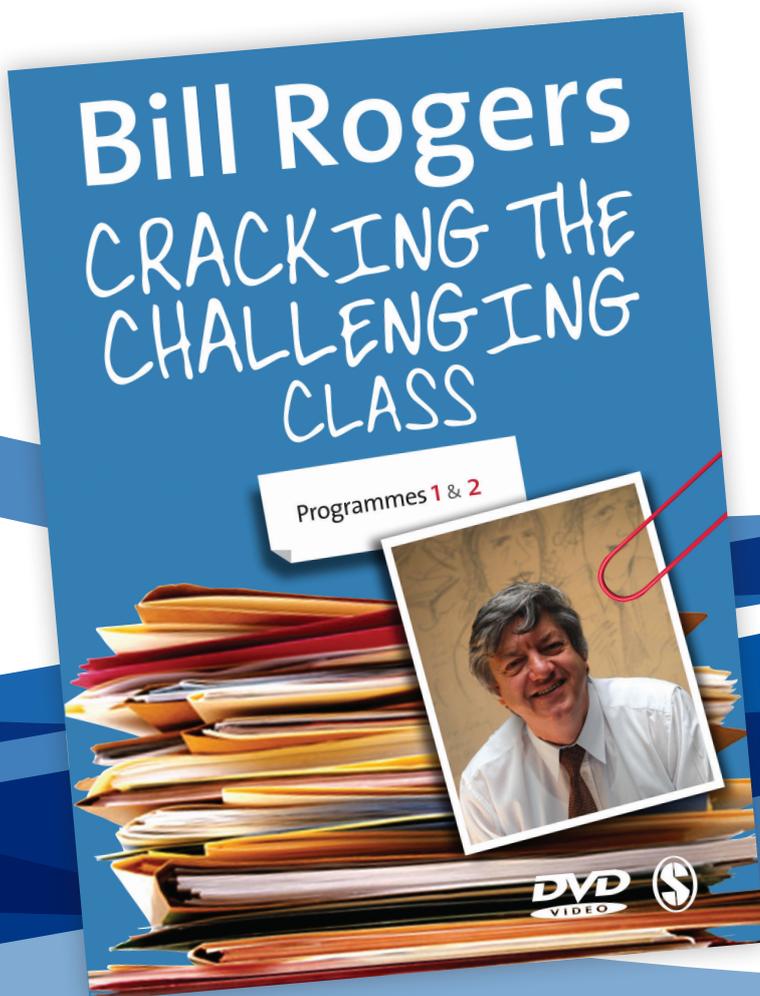
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Supporting Materials for the DVD

'Cracking the Challenging Class'

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Revised Notes
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Part One of the DVD

‘Cracking The Challenging Class’

Short briefing notes to accompany classroom scenes.

These notes accompany the classroom vignettes where teacher(s) and students interact with challenging classes and challenging students.

The following notes are linked to the vignettes by number (the number appears top left on the screen).

1

Colleague Support Part One

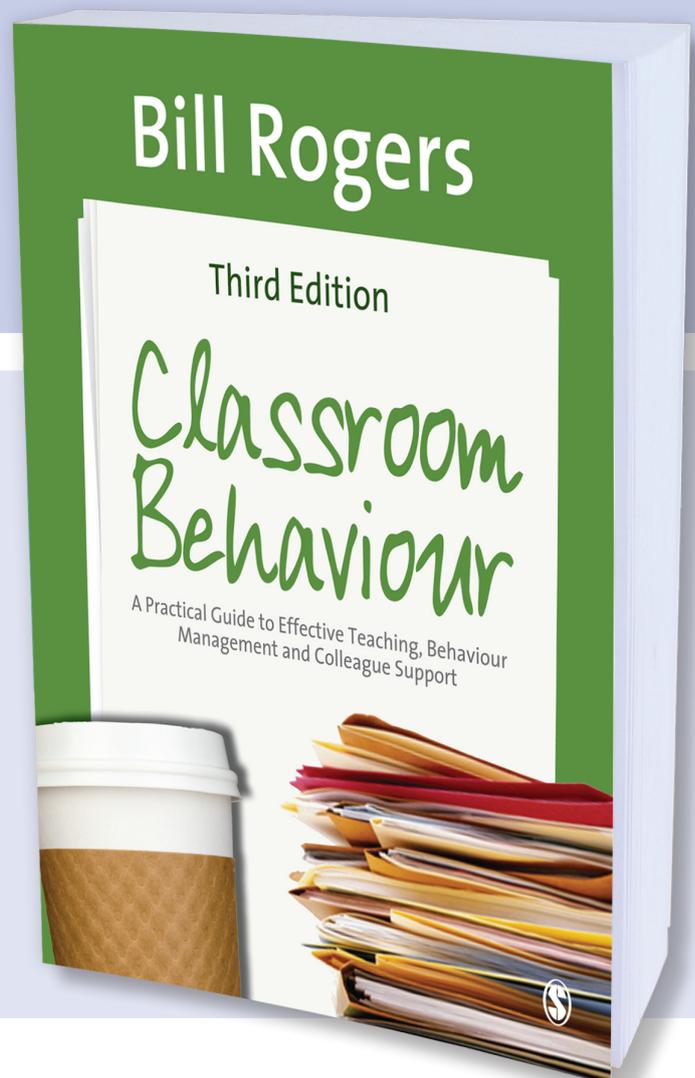
In this vignette a senior teacher stares in (through the door) at a very restless class, with a teacher struggling to gain *some* sense of order and focus. This vignette illustrates what some senior teachers do in the name of colleague support.

2

Colleague Support Part Two

The second vignette compares a similar ‘episode’ where a senior teacher wants to assist a colleague with the same very restless class (in the *immediate* short-term). What we are seeking to do is contrast how we can (indeed should – on occasions) give immediate short-term support – but with considered respect to our colleague’s professional (and personal) esteem. This immediate colleague support option is never an end in itself. We should always follow-up with our colleague; de-briefing (later that day) and ascertain whether this is an occasional, or on-going, concern and then discuss what longer-term support-options could best assist our colleague.

There should always be an in-house protocol for this kind of short-term, classroom-entry, colleague support. See – particularly – *Classroom Behaviour* 3rd Edition (2011): Chapter 8



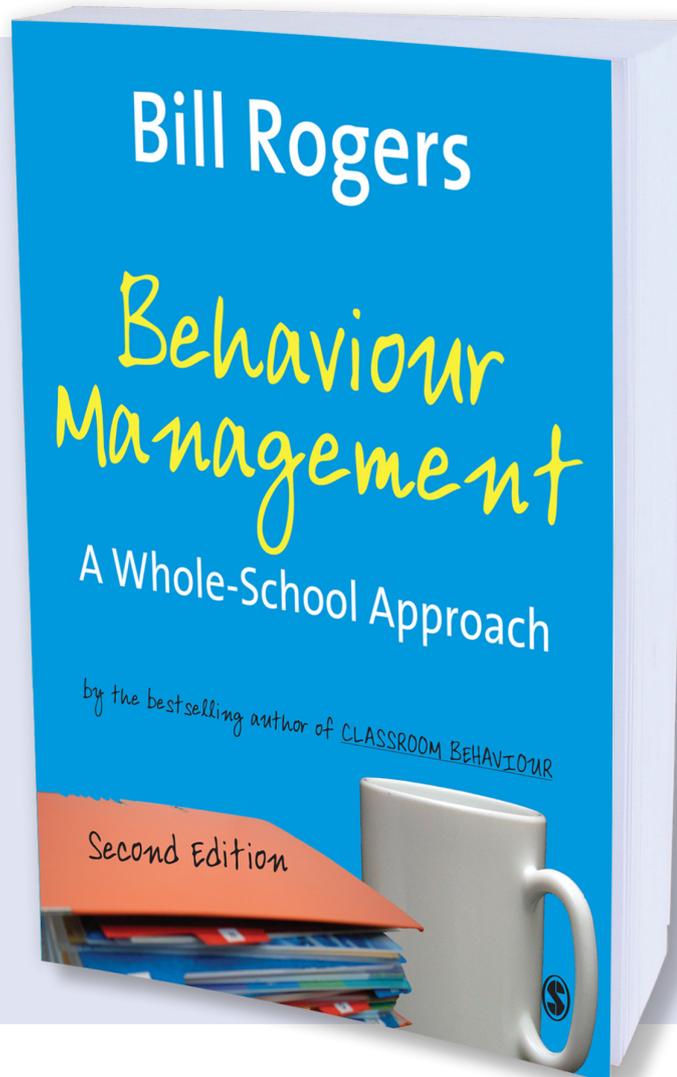
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Colleague Support Part Three

Early intervention is crucial when addressing challenging behaviour of students. Colleague support is an essential factor in any successful intervention and change when addressing challenging classes:

- Moral support (we are all in the same ‘boat’, day-to-day); moral support can give us assurance, allow us to share our concerns (without censure or blame) and most of all can initiate the possibility of ‘openness’ to options for supportive intervention (see later).
- Offer support that is meaningful without denying colleague responsibility – within our professional role (this is explored later in the DVD when addressing the ‘fresh-start’ approach).
- Avoid the patronising: ‘Well I don’t have a problem with that class ...’.

See *I Get By With a Little Help* (2006) (particularly chapter 5).



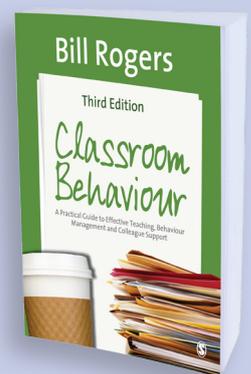
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Classroom Entry Part One

This vignette typifies a restless class as the students begin another ‘classroom- entry’. There is a lot of restlessness, a lot of energy, many students are still in ‘social-time’ behaviour. What we have sought to portray here is the importance of a reasonable ‘calm’ entry to the classroom. One should never underestimate the importance of some brief out-of-class ‘settling’ by the teacher (as the students enter the classroom).

- The teacher has a brief calming and welcoming chat before the students enter the classroom. (I have seen some groups of students almost push, or ‘hurry’, their teacher into the room!).
- From day one it is important to set a standard; to habituate a reasonable norm for classroom entry, and settling: pleasant, relaxed, purposeful, welcoming and ‘calm’.
- Even our language is important here: ‘Settling down ...’, ‘Fellas (the vigorous boys) playtime’s over ...’ We avoid asking ‘why’ the group (or individuals) is restless, or why they have mobile phones or are chewing gum (etc). Describing, reminding, or giving brief directions is often enough.
- When the group is settled enough (we do not want to keep them outside for more than a minute or so ...) a pleasant ‘Good morning / afternoon everyone’ (or ‘ ... guys’, or ‘... folks’, or ‘... 8D’, or ‘ ... class’. We all have generic, group, expressions for ‘our class’).
- What we are seeking to do on the first few meetings with a new class is develop a reasonable, orderly, positive entry into the classroom. This helps in the settling and focus of the class once they are in the classroom.

It is always worth discussing this essential core routine with team/faculty colleagues. Including the sorts of things we say/do within our leadership. **(See particularly Chapter 2, in *Classroom Behaviour 3rd Edition*).**



5

Classroom Entry Part Two

In this vignette a few boys rush into class with some play-fighting 'in tow' – what my colleagues and I call 'testosteronic bonding'. As with all teacher correction where there is high emotion it is important to:

- Communicate calmness and assertion (not incompatible behaviours in teachers).
- Direct the immediate audience 'away', or 'aside'.
- Check the lad is not hurt.
- Give the lads some brief 'time-out' while directing the class back into the classroom to settle...
- When the class is settled, direct the lads back into the classroom – making sure they do not sit together.
- It is pointless asking the two lads 'why' they are 'fighting' at this point (they see it only as 'mucking around').

Settling and Focusing a Class Group

In this longer vignette we are seeking to portray a ‘bread-and-butter’ feature of our classroom management: settling and focusing a class group. This is a crucial feature of our behaviour leadership in the establishment phase of the year. In this longer vignette the issue of how we address student lateness is also included.

In settling a class down, our overall ‘calmness’ and confidence is crucial – particularly in the first meetings with the class group. It is not easy to convey this on camera. It is in part our planning (beforehand); consciously thinking about our language, consciously thinking ahead about how we will address typical distractions and disruptions and our ability to convey appropriate confidence to all the students. See particularly *Cracking the Hard Class* (2006) Chapter 5. Students are natural, astute, observers of our behaviour as classroom teachers from those very first meetings that will naturally test our leadership of the class. There are many ‘defining moments’ (in those first meetings) that will naturally test our leadership of the class. Our first ‘settling’ of the class is one of those ‘moments’.

What we are seeking to convey whenever we initiate (and sustain) whole-class attention and focus is:

- A clear sense of change from ‘social time’ to class learning time.
- A ‘calm’ (not overly confident or ‘cocky’) demeanour.
- We avoid overly kinaesthetic movement while we communicate to the class (i.e. we avoid overly ‘pacing’, moving in amongst the group while directing them to settle ...); this can telegraph unnecessary restlessness to the more ‘kinaesthetic’ students.
- Cue the class with brief, directional and positive language. Scan the class to make positive eye- contact while cueing for attention.
- Avoid ‘asking’ students to settle (or ‘be quiet’) when we mean to direct and remind; it is not a request i.e. we avoid saying, ‘Would you face the front and listen please?’ ‘Can you please be quiet?’ ‘Will you stop talking please ...’ It is more appropriate to cue the students’ attention to the necessary behaviour:

‘Settling ...’, ‘Facing the front ...’, ‘Listening ...thanks’ is enough. We may need to repeat this as we scan the faces of our students. We may need to cue the students who are still chatting, or calling out or distractedly fiddling with objects (pencil cases, water bottles etc). Again brief descriptive cues are more effective than asking questions such as ‘Why are you ...?’

or using straight negatives ('Don't talk while I'm teaching ...'). 'Don't fiddle with the window blinds.' A descriptive cue raises behaviour awareness in our students 'David (...) Shannon (...) you're fiddling with the window blinds. It's distracting.' We may need to follow with a brief direction 'Leave the blinds and facing this way thanks.' 'Leave' and 'facing' cue the student to the expect behaviour. ('Thanks' is more expectational than 'please' when giving behaviour directions and rule reminders.)

Of course, our characteristic tone of voice – the manner and intent we convey in our language cues – are just as important as the words themselves. Again, see ***Classroom Behaviour*** [3rd Edition] particularly Chapter 3 'The language of behaviour management'.

Lateness

When addressing lateness it is important to:

- Welcome the student first.
- Acknowledge (briefly) their lateness.
- We do this while cueing the class briefly (' ... excuse me class ...'). This lets the class know we are 'in control' (not of them, but of the flow of events at this point ...).
- It is pointless asking students 'why' they are late at this point in the lesson.
- The other pointless interrogative is, 'Are you late?'
- Direct the student/s to a seat.
- Follow-up with the student later in the lesson (or after class) re: the reason for their lateness.
- If the student argues/refuses or becomes argumentative/challenging a calm, clear, directed choice is necessary. We do not need to threaten the student ... 'If you don't sit where I've told you to sit I'll ...!' Compare:

'... the spare seats are over there. It's not an argument Craig (...). If you choose not to join us I'll have to ask you to leave our class and go to ...'

We need to know (of course) where we can send an argumentative and challenging student who insistently refuses to co-operate (see later).

In this vignette we have sought to contrast how teachers address students who are late (I have my convincing role-playing glasses on to help me here!).

When a class is 'settled' (it happens!) there are often 'small' distracting / disruptive behaviours in the more challenging classes. Most of these sorts of behaviours we have portrayed here occur in the establishment phase of one's relationship with a new class. The term used – earlier – was 'defining moments'. In part, the students are simply 'getting used' to their new teacher; seeing how they 'tick' ... Some students are also seeking some early 'attention' within their peer group. A few may set out to challenge even defy. Some students have behaviour disorders that affect their behaviour, some have learning needs that – also – affect their behaviour in front of their peers. At this stage of our relationship with a new class group our overall calm, respectful, confident leadership is crucial in determining how our students begin to trust our ability to lead, engage, teach and manage. See particularly ***Classroom Behaviour*** 3rd Edition (2011) Chapter 1 pp.30-36.

As has been noted several times (in DVDs 1 and 2) how we address these behaviours with these students in our first meetings also affects the 60%-70% of students (in most classes) who are ready and willing to co-operate with any confident, respectful, teacher leader right from the very first moments of the very first day. We cannot afford to 'lose' that natural, ready, support by the way we manage and lead the more attentional and challenging elements in the class group. I have seen moderate, co-operative students actively (and passively) collude with the more catalytic, challenging, students if the teacher is overly confronting, overly vigilant – or non-vigilant and non-assertive (when confident – respectful – assertion is needed).

Whether we are addressing group restlessness, calling-out, butting-in, students talking while the teacher is talking ... there are core practices and skills that can enable a more positive behaviour/leadership climate (when needed) so that we can keep the focus of our time with our students directed to teaching and learning and building a positive working relationship that enhances teaching, learning and respectful peer relationships.

Core practices and skills we have sought to model in these vignettes.

The core practices:

- Keeping our corrective discipline least intrusive where possible (only moving to more intrusive as is really necessary).
- Avoiding unnecessary confrontation (this includes any sarcasm, 'cheap shots' at the students' expense, publicly embarrassing a student ...).
- Where we need to be more intrusive in our corrective discipline (as circumstances do demand) we address the student(s) assertively (without hostility or verbal aggression).
- Where possible we use positive corrective language.
- After addressing a student's distracting / disruptive behaviour, we re-engage the focus of the class / individual back to the main business of the learning activities for that class period.
- Keep the focus of the intervention directed to the primary / main / important or essential issue relating to the student(s) at that point. We avoid getting easily drawn into the students' side-tracking and 'secondary behaviours' those annoyingly postural non-verbal behaviours (the sighs; the eyes – raised to the ceiling; the sibilant moan/whinge; the averted eyes and frown ...). See – particularly – ***Classroom Behaviour*** 3rd Edition (2011) Chapter 1 pp. 17-24.

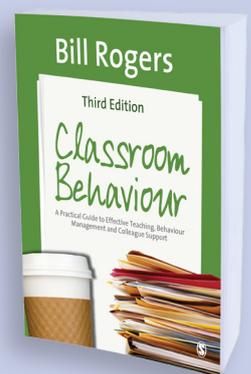
For example, the student who calls out repeatedly (with her hand up). The teacher tactically ignores most of the calling out. When the student finally puts her hand up (without calling out) there is a big sigh, '... I suppose you're going to notice me now' (just above sotto voce (?) – to gain class attention?). It is these sorts of behaviours we can learn to tactically ignore.

Core skills

We have sought to illustrate how teachers can use positive verbal and non-verbal behaviour in discipline transactions. These are key aspects of skill within our overall behaviour leadership:

- tactical ignoring / selective attention;
- non-verbal cueing;
- incidental / descriptive reminders or directions;
- reminders and directions that focus on expected behaviours, using targeted behaviour language eg: - do rather than don't: 'Paul and Troy, leave the curtains (...) facing this way and listening (...) Thanks.' Rather than 'Don't fiddle with those curtains ...'
- partial agreement / refocusing;
- take-up-time;
- rule reminders;
- directed choices;
- deferred consequences;
- assertive comments/commands.

These core skills are also discussed, at length and within case studies, in ***Classroom Behaviour*** 3rd Edition (2011) and ***Cracking the Hard Class*** 2nd Edition (2007).



7

Settling a Very Restless Class

In this longer vignette the class is very restless and we have illustrated how it can help to settle the class by moving around the classroom addressing the 'micro bush fires' en route before we 'formally' settle / say good morning to the whole class from the front of the room. This often surprises students who may expect their teacher to

stand at the front of the room and 'shout them down' ... The settling and focusing of the class (portrayed in this vignette) is occasioned by speaking to key individuals, groups, while purposefully moving around the room. When the teacher senses those more 'catalytic' personalities are (now) more settled he / she will go to the front of the room and formally cue the class to 'face the front and ...'

Key Scenes

There are key scenes in this vignette where the teacher addresses some typical disruptive behaviours at the beginning of a lesson with a challenging class:

- students who have rushed to the back of the room to re-arrange furniture;
- a couple of girls talking to friends (out of the classroom window);
- seat wandering with a few lads (one of whom has kicked his chair ...).

What I've also sought to portray here – in these vignettes – are some of the essential practices and skills in classroom management (particularly the language of management and discipline).

E.g.: with the three girls moving the furniture we do not ask 'why' (it is irrelevant at this point in the lesson). It is enough to describe what they have done (this acts as an incidental, but clear, reminder – or implied direction – of what they should have done ...).

Much of the students' sulkiness, pouting, low-level insouciance can be tactically ignored (at this point). When addressing discourtesy, disrespect or rudeness a brief, confident, assertive, calm 'I' statement is enough. 'I'm not speaking to you in a disrespectful voice ... I don't expect ...' If we start saying things like, 'Who do you think you're speaking to!!', we make it look as if a 14 year old student is some kind of threat to us. A hostile, or easily reactive, response also gives the student far too much peer attention and triggers unnecessary counter-power. It also never helps to ask the student (in front of their class peers) 'why' they are being rude, discourteous or disrespectful ...

If the students refuse to move the furniture back it is enough to give a directed consequential choice and leave the responsibility with the student/s. i.e. : 'If you choose not to move the furniture back ... I'll have to follow this up with you at break time ...'

Our aim in all behaviour management is to enable the student to own their own behaviour in a way that respects the rights of others (including the teacher!) We also seek to do this in a way that seeks to enable a working relationship with the student. No mean feat!

Shouting a class 'down' or 'up' (?)

This vignette was not easy to simulate – it brings back memories! I look back to times when I have done silly, really unhelpful things in seeking to lead a class. I am sure this is mostly out of frustration in our first teaching year. Sometimes, though, it is also because of a lack of skills – of consciously thinking through what one needs to do in settling a class in a positive, firm, pleasant, confident and clear way. These are skills we can learn; the ability to confidently settle, lead and teach a group of disparate individuals is not a matter of mere personality it also is a matter of professional skill. It is always worth discussing these essential leadership practices with colleagues.

Shouting a class down is (obviously) a self-defeating exercise. It entertains; it even habituates the students' attentional behaviour (they only believe we are 'serious' when we are shouting!).

We also communicate too much reciprocal kinaesthetic energy! Pacing up and down, or communicating overly vigorous body language and a loud, carping tone of voice has a negative – reactive – effect with the more attentional and challenging students (particularly those students with diagnosed or symptomatic behaviour disorders such as autism spectrum disorder and attention deficit spectrum disorder).

9

Rules and community focus

When framing class (and school) rules, our use of language is important, not merely 'on paper' but in our day-to-day management.

I frequently hear teachers (some teachers) say things like, 'No calling out in my class ...', 'Put your hand up in my class', 'I won't tolerate chewing gum in my (or this) class ...' etc.

I have highlighted the pronouns because I believe we need to be using inclusive language both in the stated (and published) rules and in classroom reminders and corrective language: ... 'us', 'our', 'we', 'all', 'everyone', 'together' ...

'together', 'everyone ...'. This is not mere language pedantry. It is our class not my class. We are the teacher leader of our class/es.

When we use rule-reminders for example (as we often do in the establishment phase of the year) there is an important difference between ... 'Michael (...) remember our class rule for asking questions' and 'Michael remember my rule for asking questions.'

Of course (as noted before) our characteristic tone, manner and intent are also crucial in all our corrective language. Inclusive language communicated in a (characteristically) petty, brusque, off-hand way experienced merely as petty, brusque and off-hand teacher behaviour.

Example of students with objects d'art' (iPods, toys, phones etc ...)

The teacher avoids arguing with students about what 'other teachers do, do not, allow'. The teacher keeps the behaviour focus directed to the main issue (at this point in the lesson) by partially agreeing, refocusing – giving directed choices and appropriate take-up-time. If the student refuses the reasonable teacher reminders (or directed choices), teachers can use deferred consequences (in non-serious situations). 'If you choose not to put it away I'll have to follow this up with you at break time.' The teacher then walks 'away' (giving the student take-up-time) leaving the 'choice' – and responsibility – with the student.

I have seen teachers argue threaten, demand. 'OK. Which teachers let you have the iPods in class!?', 'Give it to me, now!'. 'I don't care if the Headteacher lets you chew gum, you don't chew gum in my class!'

I have seen teachers start 'considerate', overly generous – but pointless –discussions (with argumentative students) about 'why' we have rules for chewing gum, mobile phones, etc.

We do not have to defend the classroom, and school, rules; we do need to respectfully focus and refocus (where necessary) the student's responsibility as their behaviour relates to those rights/rules.

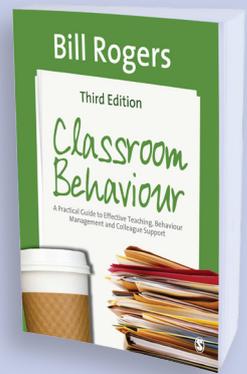
It is crucial to emphasise – again – that these skills are not mere 'technique', they enable us to build and sustain a positive respectful relationship with appropriate authority (as per our role). These skills enhance our purpose of enabling the student to own their own behaviour and consider others' rights.

Considered discipline language is part of our conscious behaviour management plan. It is too late (in the heat of the moment) to consider what we could, or might, say when there is natural tension created by distracting or disruptive behaviours. We cannot plan for every behaviour contingency, we can (however) have a framework for discipline based in a least-to-most approach that has considered language options.

Deferred consequences

When we use any deferred consequences, we communicate these as a 'directed choice' (no choices are free – in this sense – they occur within the fair rights / responsibilities rules of the class and school).

When following through with any deferred consequences the key is the certainty that we will (as teacher) follow-through with the consciously due process. The fair certainty of consequences is always more effective than the severity of a consequence. Any 'severity' in consequences needs to be implicit within the seriousness of the consequence. See, particularly, ***Classroom Behaviour*** 3rd Edition (2011) Chapter 3, p.88, pp.106-111 and pp.155-157.



The two female students in a play-fight that gets out of hand:

In this vignette we are seeking to model how a teacher:

- Communicates calmness to the class: we calm the class (and the individuals) more effectively by 'calming ourselves' first. Not easy, but essential in the immediate emotional moment. Shouting, threatening, pleading are all (obviously) going to 'wind up' the students even more and give unnecessary peer audience attention to the students in conflict.

Focuses quickly, calmly – with appropriate assertion – on the conflict behaviour.

Does not take sides.

Uses the brief cool-off-time option: time-out allows the students in conflict to calm down (away from their peer audience). This also allows the teacher and class to calm down too(!) enabling the rest of the students to continue their learning ...

What is crucial to any time-out usage is that there is a whole-school plan regarding what behaviours we use 'time-out' for; what colleague back-up we receive if students refuse to leave the class; where they go (at the point of temporary exclusion from the classroom); on what basis they return to their class and the role of the initiating teacher in any follow-through beyond the time-out process itself. It is also essential that the teacher who initiated time-out follows up with the student/s later, after class (or at an appointed time) to enable repairing and rebuilding. For more on this see, particularly, ***Cracking the Hard Class*** (2nd Edition) 2007 Chapter 6.

How we address any conflicting behaviours is crucial – not just for the students in conflict but also for the audience of peers, there is always the 'audience of peers'.

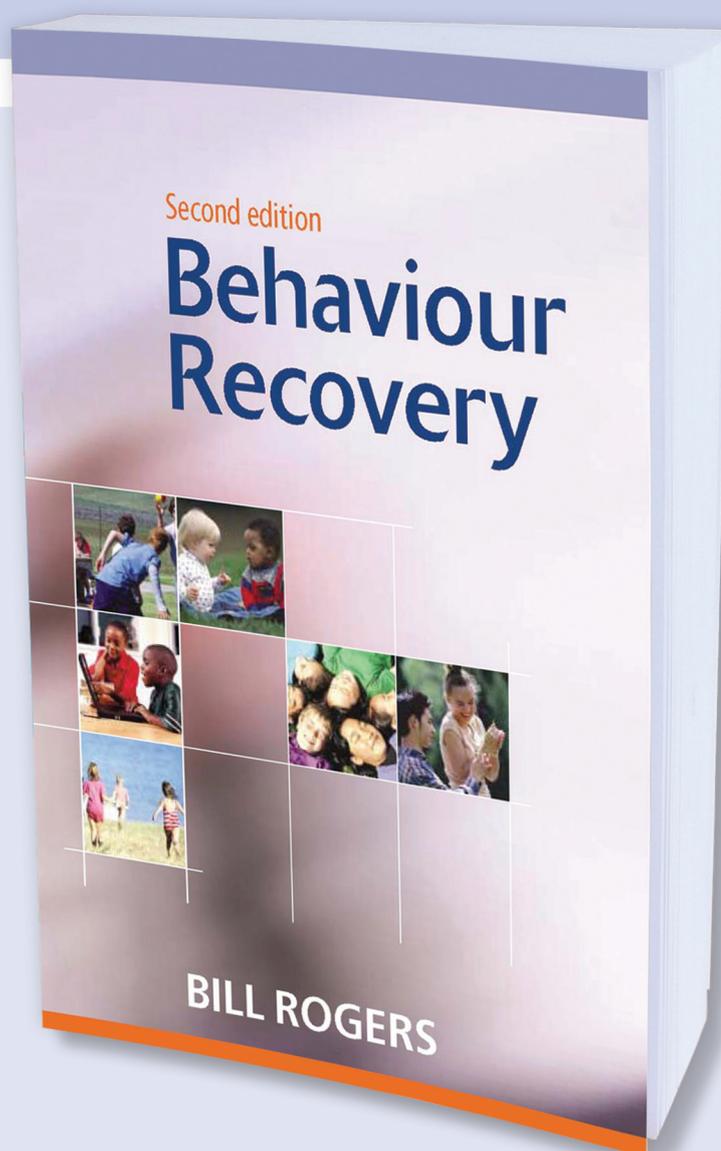
Following up with students after class (one-to-one)

This is discussed later in the notes in Part 2 of the DVD. The Establishment Phase: Core practices and skills, suffice to say here that when we follow-up after the incident (when both student(s) and teacher are – hopefully – calmer). We:

- Tune-in to how the student is feeling (in a non-sycophantic or patronising way). This communicates our appropriate concern and our acknowledgment of reality (the student is probably feeling annoyed, anxious or even angry that we have ‘kept them back’ at playtime or in some form of ‘detention’).
- Focus (as briefly as possible) on the behaviour, issue, task we have directed the student to stay back ‘for’ (whether after-class chat, detention, task-requirement, behaviour interview).
- It can sometimes help to ‘mirror’ the student’s behaviour to them (one-to-one settings). We have sought to model this in this vignette with the two lads. Wherever we use such an approach it is essential to request the student’s ‘permission’. E.g.: ‘Do you mind if I show you – now – what I saw you do (or say) in class when you (re: their behaviour) ...?’ Such ‘mirroring’ of the student’s behaviour (a brief teacher ‘modelling’) is helpful in keeping the behaviour in question, specific, ‘concrete’, visual. NB We would not use this approach (behaviour mirroring) with students diagnosed with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder), nor would we ever use this approach with students who are visibly hostile or angry in any one-to-one setting.
- Consider the ethical probity of any one-to-one meeting with a student (particularly in extended one-to-one meetings between a male teacher and a female student).
- Give the student a right of reply (verbal or written).
- Refocus the student’s current behaviour concern to the student behaviour agreement (the rights / rules / responsibilities) / or code of conduct where appropriate.
- Refocus the student to ‘their future’ – next lesson ‘Is there anything I can do to help you ...?’
- Always separate amicably (at least on the teacher’s part).

It is always important to track student behaviour (over the first few weeks of Term One) to see if there is a 'pattern' of distracting or disruptive behaviour, or if there is a behaviour disorder or learning disorder contributing to the student's behaviour. It is always worth tracking a student's behaviour across other classes and teachers, to see if the behaviour is 'general' (in its distracting/disruptive pattern) or if it is specific to one class or one teacher. This should be a supportive process for student and colleagues alike.

See particularly *Behaviour Recovery* 2nd Edition (2004).



This is an example of how a teacher might address whole-class noise level using a simple, novelty, of a class graph to give feedback to the class group about noise 'volume' of students during on-task learning time.

Like any core routine it is crucial we clarify expected, fair, behaviours in our first meeting with our new class/es. When there are 25+ people in a small space (like a classroom) noise level can easily become habituated; students and teacher alike may be unaware of their (group) noise volume. Of course 'noise levels' vary across subjects and that obviously needs to be taken into account. Notwithstanding that variance, there is an element of positive 'training' here by class teachers that balances the following:

- Explaining why noise level (of each class) can affect learning, 'We are in a small space here ...' Voice level and volume (and need for different voice levels) changes from playground to classroom that is reasonable, fair and necessary.
- Reminding the class when they are too loud (without too much nagging).
- Encouraging the whole class when they have made the effort to consider one another by using their 'inside voices', or 'partner-voices', or 'class voices' ... (more positive terms than working noise ...).

This particular routine (using the bar chart) and giving whole-class feedback every five minutes or so is discussed in ***Classroom Behaviour*** 3rd Edition (2011) pp.72-74.

Colleague planning for core routines

My colleagues and I always find it helpful to discuss core routines at a grade-team or faculty-team level prior to our first classes. This enhances reasonable consistency across classes and encourages relaxed vigilance by teachers. It is always important to explain to a class group why we have these routines 'in our class'. Core routines enable the reasonably 'smooth running' of classroom behaviours of a class group of 25 (or more) so we all get a fair go. Although many of these routines seem basic it is still important to clarify them with each new class and maintain those routines each lesson with a balance of encouragement and positive correction. Some routines are core-relevant to every class group. (These will have been discussed by tutor teachers with their tutor groups.) Some routines will vary across subject area or context (for example Physical Education, Food Technology, ICT) in terms of movement and noise level.

Other crucial routines such as:

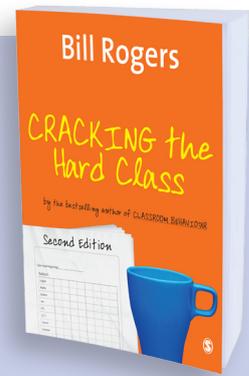
- appropriate movement around the room;
- how to have a reasonable class discussion;
- how to get teacher feedback and support (during on-task learning time)
- how to finish a lesson positively (and leave the room tidy for the next class)

are all modelled and discussed in DVD 2.

See also the notes: THE ESTABLISHMENT PHASE - Core practices and skills for DVD 2). See also the closing scene in DVD 1.

14

The 'fresh-start' approach



These following vignettes (13) and (14) introduce and seek to illustrate how teachers can work collegially, to support, one another with a challenging class group. This 'fresh-start' approach is modelled here with a real-time whole-class meeting. The process is developed at length in ***Cracking the Hard Class*** 2nd Edition (2007) Chapter 2. This process is not easy to initiate and develop on one's own. The support presence of a colleague in the classroom can assist the class teacher's confidence, focus and goodwill.

It is crucial that the role is supportive for the class teacher (struggling with a challenging class). It will be counter-productive if the supporting colleague comes in and effectively takes over the class (even with good motives!)

A 'fresh-start' approach (with a challenging class) involves supportive 'mentorship' – where the class teacher works with a colleague to re-engage the students – together with their teacher – to work on changes in behaviour to enjoy their rights within their responsibilities. The aim being to 'have a class where we can work together so that we can feel safe here, enjoy respect and fair treatment and teach and learn without undue distraction or disruption'. The primary emphasis is to re-engage the goodwill of the class by utilising their insights, perceptions and concerns through a classroom meeting approach.

This form of classroom meeting often gives the 'silent majority' of students the opportunity and confidence to air both concerns and suggestions. It is crucial we engage, and value, 'their voice' as a common starting point for any 'fresh-start'. Our students know more than anyone what their class is really (characteristically) like. (We have modelled this in scene 15.)

The class teacher and their support colleague plan this class meeting very carefully : telegraphing to the students – ahead of time – 'why we're having this meeting ...' The teacher will clarify the main issues to be addressed for class discussion; seating arrangements (etc) will need to be planned ahead of time. We also need to have basic rules clarified for any classroom meeting particularly the more 'open' classroom meeting. The crucial rule is 'no put-downs'. 'We're here to talk about our concerns and suggestions for what we need to do to change things here ... We do not attack anyone, or put them down; we will disagree yes, but respectfully – giving reasons for why we disagree ...'

Sometimes a student will 'have a go' at the class teacher. They will need to be firmly reminded of 'our class meeting rule' at this point. If they continue on in a disrespectful vein they will be given a clear directed choice to work by our fair rules to sit out of the group. If they continue to 'have a go' from the sidelines they will be directed to leave the classroom for time-out (and followed up by both teachers at a later stage).

Both the class teacher and the support colleague conduct the 'formal' or 'open' classroom meeting : who will 'introduce' the meeting and 'open' proceedings; how we will deal with difficult students who want to 'hog the floor'; how we will balance out the contributions from students; how we will draw together the common concerns and suggestions; how we will close the meeting.

If the class is very restless and challenging, we find it more helpful to have a more formal class feedback meeting. We have modelled this in vignette (14) where students are given a proforma with the following questions:

Our Class

Please record your answers on a separate sheet of paper. Thanks.

1. What's working well in our class at the moment?

Which things (activities and the way we run things) work well in our class and why?

2. What's not working well and why?

Anything upsetting you? Why? (If personal, put it in writing; it will be addressed.)

3. What are some things we can change? – need to change (?) How?

Later we will discuss together and make a plan for action:

Those things we can start soon; those issues we can address reasonably quickly.

Things that will take a little longer

How we'll do it – together.

When we introduce any form of class meeting in the fresh-start process we emphasise that ...

'This is your opportunity to raise your concerns with me / us today ... We're not going to lecture you. You know better than anyone how things have been going in our class these last ... weeks ... We do care about what you think and feel, that's why Mr / Ms , and I, wanted to have this meeting with you today.'

Student feedback and a second meeting :

The feedback from the students at the classroom meeting forms the basis for a second meeting. At this meeting the class teacher (and support colleague) report back the key, common concerns, issues and suggestions. These are utilised as the starting point for re-assessing the class rights, responsibilities and routines.

'Remember last week ... we had a class meeting where we raised our concerns with you all about how our class has been going ... We too (as your teachers) are part of this class group. As we said we'd be giving you feedback about the issues that were raised. We've listed your concerns and suggestions. We saw how many of you are annoyed how some students are making it hard for others to learn here ... 'too noisy'; 'calling out'; 'silly annoying behaviours'; 'put-downs', 'hassling' ... these were the common things you noted. You also noted what you want to change here regarding those concerns.

For some of you these things may not seem a big deal – just 'fooling around'. It's not; those behaviours affect everyone's rights here.

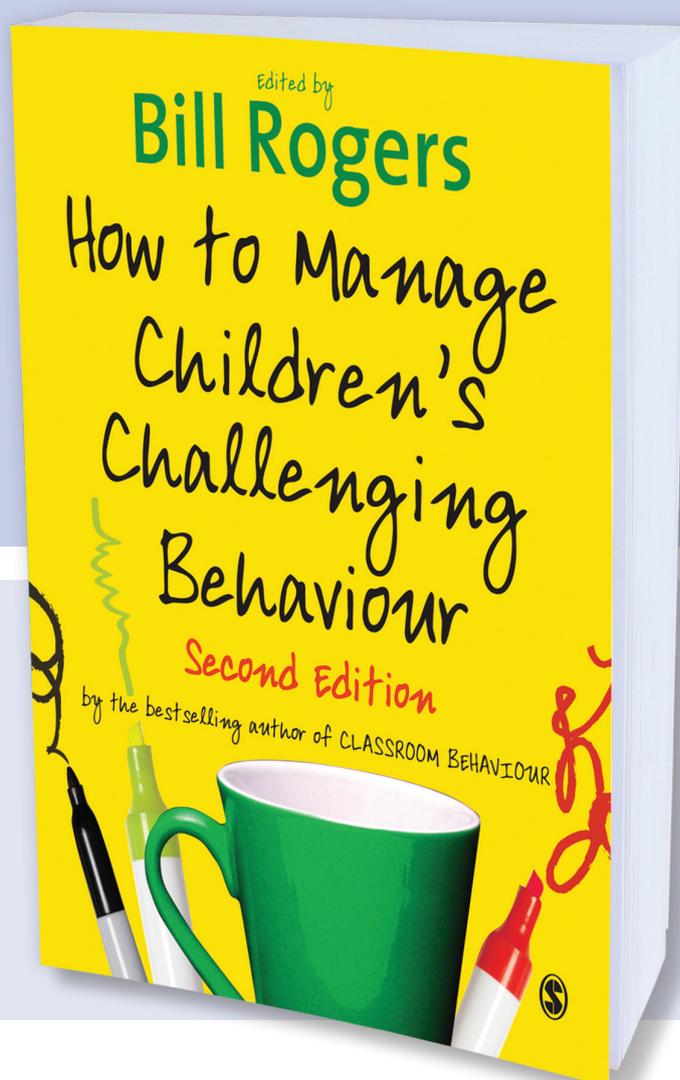
You know we'll also be talking though with some of you one-to-one to work through those behaviours. We've already started to do that ...

As you look at this list you can also see something else in the responses – you want things to change here. You've made lots of suggestions and recommendations and requests. As Mr / Ms___ and I went through these several key messages kept coming through.'

Over and over when my colleagues and I have conducted such meetings the overriding themes centre on : how we can all have a class where we feel safe, respected, and can learn well (without undue distractions and disruptions).

The task of the class teacher (with their support colleague) is to work with the class to frame those concerns (indeed – rights) into normative class behaviours.

It can help to frame these positive expectations as a class plan. This class plan is often published on a few, positive, posters or even a class booklet (at upper primary level). See – particularly – the case examples in **How To Manage Children's Challenging Behaviour** 2nd Edition (2009) Chapters 4 and 5.



Seat change plan (within a fresh-start plan)

In many challenging classes the seating arrangements are often a contributing factor to noise level, time-off-task, and students' engaging in 'social-time' behaviours (during on-task learning time). My colleagues and I find it helpful to change the current seating plan, both the physical seating plan (layout), and who sits with whom.

This process is best carried out with student involvement and at least some attempt at student co-operation.

The class teacher (and support colleague) direct the class to write down the names of two students 'they know they can sit with, work with, who will not hassle them or make it difficult for them to work ...' A simple printed proforma is then used to help students reflect on their teacher's concerns. See – particularly – *Cracking the Hard Class 2nd Edition* (2007) Chapter 1 p.26f.

Teaching, and utilising, co-operative learning approaches is a laudable aim in a classroom. Some classes, however, need time to come to terms with what co-operative really means. Simply putting students into groups (table groups) and expecting co-operative learning behaviour will rarely guarantee that aim. Simply allowing students to sit where they want, with whom they want, will also not mean they will be more focused and engaged in on-task learning time.

Students also need to be able to work with a range of peer-personalities beyond their 'best friend'. There is always time – on occasions – to have a lesson where friendship groupings are the order of the day – providing no student is easily left out of social engagement.

I have seen ludicrous seating arrangements where teachers basically say (day one), 'Sit where you want guys ' and the 'cool' students sit with the other 'cools' and the 'non-cools' get marginalised or excluded.

The classroom is not merely an extension of the social time children rightfully enjoy

in non-classroom time. The classroom is primarily a learning community and seating arrangements can enhance the class work or work against the aims we have for positive learning access and outcomes. Of course, changes can be made to seating arrangements; you might have 'rotation approaches', even gender mix (boy-girl paired seating, a novel experience and one that can actually enhance the on-task focus of the male students), alphabetic groupings, mixed ability and so on. Seating arrangements and organisation and who sits with whom are always worth discussing within grade team/faculty colleagues.

As with any aspect of classroom management it is always worth checking with colleagues to see how a 'student mix' works in other classes.

As noted earlier (in vignette 13) core routines are essential in the establishment phase with a new class. In this scene, when the teacher dismisses the class there is the reminder to:

- Do the next class a favour.
- Straighten furniture.
- Pick up any residual litter (even if it is not yours).
- Leave row-by-row, or table group by table group (avoids that rush at the door).

If each teacher in the grade/faculty team has a respectful and orderly class 'exit' it helps everyone across the school.

Ongoing colleague support

It will also help in the maintaining of the hopes and expectations (as expressed in any fresh start plan) for the class teacher to have some on-going colleague mentoring. However – any mentoring support offered (and given) needs to be elective. Colleagues have to see a need, a purpose, in such a process for any effective outcomes. See – particularly – ***Classroom Behaviour*** 3rd Edition (2011), Chapter 8, pp. 237-246.

My colleagues and I have found that when such collegial mentorship is offered / invited / elective and on-going there is always change for the better – for the class teacher and the students.

We hope this DVD programme will encourage that kind of colleague support.

In his moving play about personal and social conscience, some lines of J. B. Priestly have stayed with me, and they are the lines 'We don't live alone. We are members of one body. We are responsible for one another.' Taken from his play *An Inspector Calls* (1944), they resonate with me still.

Part Two of the DVD Series: 'Cracking The Challenging Class'

Part Two of the DVD series involves a small workshop where a group of teachers raise frequently asked questions (with the author) about challenging classes.

The following questions are those noted – and discussed – on the second DVD.

These extension notes relate directly to the questions raised in the second DVD. The first DVD containing classroom scenarios about teacher and student behaviour also support and integrate with these questions and responses.

I hope these resources will support and extend the DVD material to encourage, assist and practically support colleagues in their leadership and support of their students.

NB

In this part of the DVD – the workshop – there are several terms that teachers *outside of the UK* may find a little confusing:

- EBD = emotional behaviour disorder.
- NQT = newly qualified teacher.
- OfSTED = Office for Standards in Education) a government body that organises the formal inspection of teachers and schools in England, in terms of accountability and 'performance'.
- Dyadic = means (basically) one-to-one.
- 'Special measures' refers to a category used by OfSTED denoting a school that has (effectively) failed its OfSTED review and needs targeted support.

What I've done here is to list the questions – in order as they appear on the DVD – and give the *summary points* and *extend some of the points* I raised in the workshop.

The questions raised in this second DVD in order are:

- 1) “In the first DVD you modelled how to give support to a teacher with a really restless class – *what would you do if the class is out of control?*”
- 2) “Would you agree that a confident teacher could become unstuck with a hard class?”
- 3) “What do you do when half a dozen (or more) students are being disruptive *all at once* (i.e. in a lesson context)?”
- 4) “You emphasise the issue of ‘calmness’ a lot – there are times (though) when – surely – we should have the right to be angry?”
- 5) “You put great store on the way teachers *establish* their classes – should this be made a whole-school emphasis?”
- 6) “Do these skills you advocate – at the end of the day – really depend on personality? Take (the) ‘tactically ignoring’ as an example (?)”
- 7) “In one of the scenes you deal with a student without pens and paper etc. Shouldn’t they bring the right equipment in the first place?”
- 8) “In the first DVD you speak – after class – with female students who have been involved in a ‘play-fight’ in the classroom. You had a female colleague present while you followed up with the students – how important is this?”
- 9) “You spoke in the first DVD about *deferred* consequences – could you develop that a bit more?

You also advocate the crucial importance of the *class teacher* following up with a disruptive student? What if they don’t stay back?”
- 10) “In some of our classes students put each other down and swear – how should we respond to this?”
- 11) How important is a time-out policy and plan in addressing and managing disruptive and challenging behaviour?”
- 12) “You have worked extensively with students with EBD (emotional behaviour disorder) – how can we realistically support students ‘with’ EBD – *and* their teachers?”
- 13) “Is there a place for rewarding students as a way of motivating a challenging class?”
- 14) “You mentioned (in the first DVD) that harassment of teachers *is a factor* in some challenging classes – could you develop that point?”
- 15) “Supply teachers (can) get a hard time with challenging classes – how should we support them?”
- 16) “Is it ever *too late* for teacher to turn around – or ‘change’ – a challenging class?”
- 17) “You are a strong advocate of *colleague mentoring* – how do we realistically develop such an approach?”

Summary of the questions - Key points for discussion



Question 1

In the first DVD you modelled how to give support to a teacher with a really restless class – what would you do if the class is ‘out-of-control’?

‘Catalytic conversion’

If any of us have ever had this experience it is one of the most disconcerting, even debilitating, experiences as a teacher in a classroom. In the first DVD the example was modelled of a senior teacher staring in the window of a classroom and then storming in; shouting a class down. The class goes quiet ‘naturally’ (a senior, ‘important’ teacher is there – threatening ...). After shouting the class into temporary ‘submissive silence’ and a subsequent lecture the senior teacher walks out (!) One can imagine how the classroom teacher feels – not mere ineffective but incompetent.

Some teachers, in some schools, face serious significant stress with challenging classes with a ‘degrading survivalism’ rather than ask for the sort of help modelled in that vignette.

Some teachers – in asking for help – also struggle with the perceived likelihood that in asking for support it will be given at a ‘remembered cost’ (when review or inspection processes take place).

There are many reasons *why* a class can get so ‘out-of-control’. Some are temporary, even ‘occasional’, eg: a supply teacher, or a new teacher not used to the particular group of students or a ‘cover-class’ or a ‘bad day’. Some reasons why a class is so challenging may also be due to on-going issues – endemic to the structure of the class itself. Sometimes it may be the particular *grouping of students* and the *matching of particular teachers to subjects*. Sometimes known ‘hard class groupings’ are given to NQT’s or teachers new to (a more) challenging school. It may be the way the class was established in the first few meetings (see question 4). For a discussion of the common reasons some classes become hard to manage see ***Cracking the Hard Class 2nd Edition (2007)*** Chapter 1.

In the *short term*, when the class is that out-of-control (as portrayed in DVD 1) the class teacher deserves immediate, unquestioned and *dignified colleague* support – whatever the ‘causes’ of the situation as it is at hand.

At that point.

- The supporting colleague (often a senior teacher, but it could be a teacher 'next door') knocks on the door. *Always knock.*
- A clear, respectful firm (remember the class is very noisy!) "Excuse me ..." to the class and the class teacher.
- The supporting colleague then says something like, "Mr / Ms there is a message for you at the office." (This is 'code' for leave the class with some dignity now.) NB There is no actual message – as such – except that the class teacher notifies the office (or year head) who is now taking that class for the rest of that timetable period. It is important that the supporting colleague's tone / manner is professional and positive – without any hint of wearisome or angry sighing, or supercilious – "Well it takes someone like me to rescue a teacher like you ... (!)" A cup of tea or coffee and some self-calming is probably the next step for a teacher who has been given this – short-term – dignified 'time-out' support.
- The supporting colleague then calmly (and firmly) refocuses the class.

"Settling down everyone (...)* eyes, ears this way (...) Those students out of your seats, take a seat now. Sit down, face this way (...) Those students still chatting (...) facing this way and listening. Thank you (...) That's better. That's much calmer."

"Now ... what topic of work is this class working on at the moment? Hands up without calling out. Thank you ..."

The supporting teacher, therefore, takes the class until the end of that period, making no reference to the teacher who has just 'left'.

On some occasions it is appropriate to give a clear, respectfully firm, address regarding their behaviour *as observed on entry* to the classroom (see question 3).

- Later that day it will be crucial to speak to the 'catalytic ringleaders' one-to-one (rather than as a group). How we address their behaviour (as we observed it) will depend to some extent on whether this behaviour (stirring the class into the brief tactical pause (...)

Such 'catalytic conversion') is a 'one-off' or an on-going aspect of their behaviour. It is also crucial to debrief with the classroom teacher to ask: 'how they are'; is there anything we can do to support them now and the next session with that class (?); and to ask the inevitable: *how often* do similar whole-class disruptions occur (?); who are the ringleaders (?); how has the year / faculty head been involved (?). What has been done/attempted so far (to address such behaviours)?

- If the situation is on-going it will be advisable to set up some on-going professional mentoring (as well as the necessary on-going emotional and moral support. See question 17).

- If this issue is addressed early in its 'eruptive cycle' a fresh-start option can have a positive outcome for teacher and the students (see questions 2, 16 and 17). See also ***Cracking the Hard Class*** 2nd Edition (2007) Chapter 2.

NB Sometimes the issue of harassment of the teacher by *some* students is a factor in such out-of-control episodes is class behaviour. This is an issue that must be supportively addressed the moment that senior staff are aware of it (or if the class teacher reports it). (See question 14).



Question 2

Would you agree that a confident teacher could become unstuck with a hard- to-manage class?

I've had my confidence shaken on a number of occasions over the years. In my first year of teaching, I had a 12-year-old student jump out of a window in my class (fortunately first floor). I've had students run off in class time; I've had students swear at me, ignore me, shout and yell at me, threaten me ... It is one of the worst feelings – as a teacher – to feel as if the class is slipping away and there is little (seemingly) that we can do (at that point) to halt emerging loss of control (!) Or that one or two students who are (effectively) hijacking the class. On balance (thankfully) the percentage of such experiences is small compared to the positive experiences in our whole teaching journey.

I've also at times been brought 'back to ground', back to reality when I've become overly confident. We never ever get it *totally* sorted as teachers; I've had a few classes bring me back to reality on such occasions – quickly!

In the last 15 years I have been working with many colleagues as a mentor-teacher, team-teaching with them (across a variety of subjects and age-groups). Mainly in Australia but also with a number of schools (in 'Special Measures') in the UK in the last 10 years. In these settings I've had students (a few) swing from the rafters (literally); stand up and challenge me : "What are you doing in our class?! You can't tell us what to do!?" "You're not our normal teacher?!" – at least I can agree with them there (!)

On some occasions it has taken me (as the second teacher in the classroom) up to five minutes to calm, settle, and focus a very restless class. On almost every

(such) occasion the regular teacher (later) says, "It's not just me is it?!" My struggle with 'their' class acts as an existential reality check to their own struggle; it is an acknowledgement of their reality as they experience it. Collegial trust is built within such exchanges and often the spiral of disillusionment the teacher has experienced can begin to 'spiral back' – up to that confidence and goodwill essential for working with the more challenging students in our schools.

We are all fallible (even the very confident, successful, teachers are fallible at times!) ... as Noel Coward once said, "The secret of success is the ability to survive failure." This issue about fallibility, of course, is to acknowledge it and accept its natural, normative, aspect to our humanity. Taking Noel Coward's cue, though, we do not (then) simply acquiesce to our failure and struggle – we seek colleague support; we engage in professional self-reflection and work towards (and for) change.

Whenever I am working with a colleague who is struggling with a challenging class, as we sit and reflect (later) over tea and coffee, we often begin with a healthy collegial whinge (or ‘moan-bonding’ as some of my colleagues call it).

Of course whingeing is cathartic *up to a point*. If such whingeing degenerates into self and other blame, counter blame or defeatism (“been there”, “done that”, ‘won’t work”, “too impractical”, “too hard”) it only becomes a form of negative self-confirmation. It stifles the *possibility* of seeing things differently, of seeing the possibilities for change. It may also see some colleagues retreat into a ‘self-protective’ isolationism.

When we do become ‘unstuck’ as it were – as a leader of a class of students when our confidence is overly tested – it will always help to:

- Discuss the situation – as it is – with trusted, helpful, colleagues (not merely one’s friends either).
- Early intervention is crucial (before it becomes a term 2, or 3, problem).
- This early intervention is particularly crucial if there is *any* harassment (of the teacher) involved in their struggle in leading the class (see question 14).
- It is worth checking if *this* class is hard-to-manage for *all* teachers across that grade / year group. This does not delimit the support we should give any individual colleague but it may indicate particular curriculum / teacher / personality issues if a *single teacher* (rather than all the teachers in that year level team) notes that this is a very challenging / hard-to-manage class. In such cases, issues such as teacher-student relationship / ‘teaching’ style / ‘management style’ will need to be addressed through supportive mentoring.
- Where the class is hard for all – or most – colleagues a needs-analysis will be the starting point (beyond the natural ‘whinge’):
 - Who are the ringleaders? ‘Catalysts’?
 - What are the time-out records for this group (so far)? Which students? Do the time-out records vary with other teachers/subjects?
 - Which students have been referred to senior teachers to enable early behaviour support?
 - What behaviours – specifically – concern us within the group?
 - How do any ringleaders, or attentional or provocative students affect the rest of the class group? [In most class groups – even the very challenging – there is often a significant percentage of students willing to co-operate with respectful, positive, fair, consistent teacher leadership (see questions 4 and 6).]

- How was the class group established in the first instance? How were class rules / routines established? (e.g. seating plans, noise level routines etc. See question 5).
- What support options have been offered to colleagues so far? Has this helped in any way?
- It can also help to have some shared collegial observation across class / subject settings with the same students (who have been nominated as ‘catalytic’); a sort of ‘tracking’ of ‘key players’. I have had students say to me (often) when I’ve dropped into other classes where these students also ‘play up’– “You following us?” (too right!). It is interesting to see ‘catalytic students’ modify behaviours across subjects and with different teachers. These observations can be helpful in developing any change processes with individual students.
- Decide – together – as a grade / year level team on a common fresh-start approach for this class group.

This fresh-start approach can involve a range of options depending on how serious the situation is perceived by all colleagues working with the class in question.

The most common fresh-start options include some kind of guided classroom- meeting with the students (as a group). See – in particular – *Cracking the Challenging Class 2nd Edition (2007)* Chapter 2.

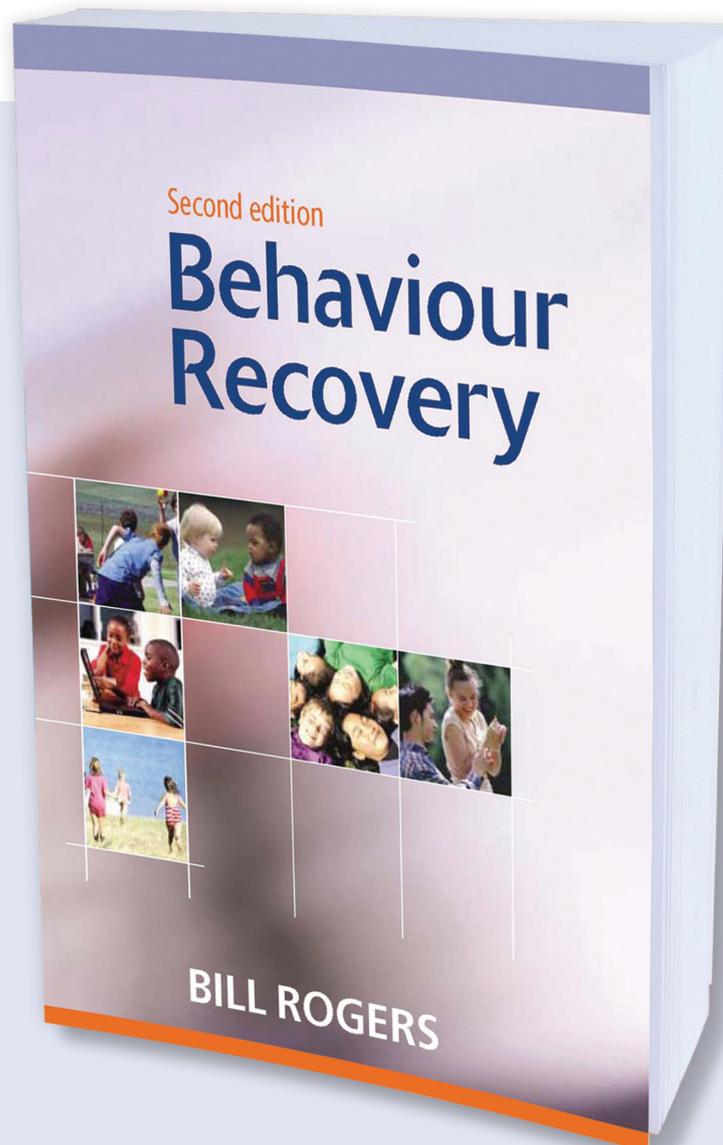
This classroom-meeting is a central feature in giving all students (particularly the 60%-70% of the ‘silent majority’) a fair, and reasonable voice about why the class is ‘as it is’ (at this stage in their journey) and what we (as a class) can do to bring about change.

(See also question 5, question 16 and question 17.)

The issue of a ‘fresh-start’ is given some space in the first DVD. We have tried to model the key features we normally go through in order to enable to students to address: what is working well in the class (and why?); what is not working well (and why?); and what can we do (as a class) to change things *so that* we can have a class where students do not frequently call out, are noisy, off-task ... hassling each other ... (etc)? E.g. Where we, together, respect the essential rights and responsibilities of safety (emotional and psychological safety as well as physical safety), the right to fair and respectful treatment of one another and the right to learn without undue (and unfair) distraction and disruption. *And* to be taught by teachers who care; who seek to engage students with a range of abilities and needs and who seek to enthuse and encourage (bad day notwithstanding), who model what they expect in their students ...

- Colleague support is crucial in developing such fresh-start approaches; no- blame moral and professional support. This can range from observation; collaborative team-meetings; thoughtful and respectful time-out options (for provocative, oppositionally-defiant students), mentoring options and – most of all – regular, team feedback to each other and to the senior staff.

- Any fresh-start plan with a challenging class needs to have on-going collegial evaluation (and where possible even celebration).
 - What has changed since any shared, team, approach to this challenging class? – and how?
 - How have time-out incidents changed, if at all?
 - Are the most troublesome students on some kind of individual (and) personal behaviour support plan? How have such plans helped modify peer dynamics – as well as individual patterns of behaviour. There are some helpful, practical, ideas for such plans in the book : **Behaviour Recovery** 2nd Edition (2004)
 - How do the students, and teacher, perceive the class since the ‘fresh-start plan’ was introduced and implemented?





Question 3

What do you do when half a dozen (or more) students are being disruptive all at once (i.e. in a lesson context)?

A few years ago in a 'challenging' school in South West London I was working in a Year 7 (Form 1) class as a mentor-teacher. At one point in the lesson several 'mini bush fires' started: one lad threw a pen at another student so that when he went to pick up his 'dropped' pen he could 'playfully' punch him; another young lad was chewing and dribbling over his fat sherbet straws and smearing the sugary residue on the table; a few students were calling out (repeatedly) for assistance; a couple of girls were wandering the room chatting to other students ... (When re-directed :- "I'm *just* getting a pen alright?!" Complete with overdrawn, attentional sigh; deeply furrowed brows and 'tsk, tsk, tsk ...'). I've worked in many classes like this (as a mentor-teacher, team-teaching).

Difficult as it sounds it is important to 'nip' any such emergent bush fires 'in the bud'.

- Reposition yourself at the front of the classroom. Direct the whole class to 'stop' – with a firm, clear, specific, group direction from the front of the room. It is important we go to the front of the room to do this. Our tone and language need to be firm and clear – yet calm.. A raised voice (to establish attention and focus); without shouting. "Everybody (...) Stop what you're doing (...). Facing this way and listening. Now." Allow some brief tactical pausing (...) Our firm calmness is crucial here. Shouting a class down is always counter-productive (particularly for the 60% - and more – of potentially, naturally, co- operative students).
- Specifically describe and redirect the necessary behaviour for those individuals who are the distracting or disruptive 'catalysts'.

"Kirsty and Michelle (...) you need to be in your seats now ..." "Damien (...) put the sherbet straws in your school bag or I'll need to have them on my desk until break time ..." At this point – as the few students sulkily slope off back to their seats (and drop – sighing – into their seats) and the class becomes calmer, we communicate that calmness back *to the group*: "That's better (...) people are calmer, more settled (...). Thank you."

"Several students were speaking far too loudly during their class work. Remember : *partner voices*. Those who are calling out need to remember our class rule for getting teacher assistance. No student needs to be wandering around at this time. If you need pens/pencils/ruler/paper I've got spares here. Put your hand up (without calling out) and I'll organise that ... Also we don't throw *anything* in our class; *even in fun*. I shouldn't need to remind anyone of that. (...) Now – we've got 20 minutes before this lesson is finished ... What you need to be doing now is ..."

- The challenge – always – is to make such a whole-class re-direction sound clear, fair, firm; not to long-winded and without making it sound like a lecture or hectoring.
- Refocus the class to the set, learning task – or activity – at that point (reminding them how much time we have before the lesson ends and where they should – reasonably – be up to by now in relation to their class work/activity).
- Once the class is ‘working’ again, move around the classroom to chat, encourage and support students (as ‘normal’).
- Finish the lesson a little earlier (by, say, 5 minutes) to have a chat with the class about their behaviour (“I know it’s not all of you ...”) in a positive (non- patronising) way (without hint of threat). Remind them that “We are a learning community. We have our class – together – in this subject 4 periods a week. As a learning community we need to remember our classroom agreement about how we support one another’s learning here ... ” This reminder needs to be brief, positive, encouraging and non-patronising.
- With some classes this kind of ‘refocusing’ (during lesson times) may need to occur several times in the establishing of a new (and challenging) class over the first few lessons.
- Of course if this sort of behaviour becomes an on-going ‘pattern’ it will be necessary to seek out colleague support (as soon as possible) from grade-team / faculty leaders. Such support will often need to address the issues raised in question 2. It is always worth checking if this sort of class behaviour is typical or atypical.
- Dismiss the class positively. “I look forward to seeing you all on ...” Give a brief, positive, goodbye as each student leaves the class. Building relationships with individuals is essential in building a workable, classroom-learning community. I’ve seen and heard colleagues finish the ‘bad-day lesson’ with the haranguing lecture:

“You’re the worst class I’ve ever had! I’m sick and tired of your stupid behaviour! You never learn do you?! You can all go to a class detention ...!! No – I don’t care; I *don’t*. I’ve had it with you. You had your chance and you blew it ...!”
- It is also important to start the next lesson positively; no retrospective recriminations. E.g: “Right! Before we start I hope none of you are going to behave like you did yesterday! Alright?! I went home with a bad headache and the five Valium and six Aspirin and ... did nothing to help and it’s all your fault – do you hear?! I don’t know why I went into teaching to end up with people like you ...!”
- With the more ‘catalytic’ students personal follow-up (by the subject/grade teacher) is essential to see if such behaviour is more than ‘bad-day’ syndrome. (See question 9 and question 11.) See also ***Cracking the Hard Class*** [2nd Edition] chapter 6 particularly pp 92-98.

Whole-class detentions

Whole-class detentions almost always backfire. They are unfair; they target all (when only 4 – 6 students, at most, are ‘accountable’ ...) and – worse – they alienate the 60 – 70% of (potentially) supportive and co-operative students.

Detention (as a consequence) has its place in whole-school behaviour policy but not whole-class detentions. There are rare / exceptional occasions when we will need

to keep a whole class back at the close of a class period (significant theft, injury ...) but detaining the whole class for the disruptive behaviour of a few students will ‘boomerang’ on the very group whose support is crucial in building positive working relationships and class cohesion.



Question 4

You emphasise the issue of ‘calmness’ a lot – there are times, though, when – surely – we have a right to be angry?

Calmness is not the same as being unemotional, ‘passive’ or merely quiet in manner, or speaking in a bland anodyne way. Calmness is more about being in control of self in relation to others – even when we have to be assertive, and particularly when we communicate anger. In fact we can’t be effectively assertive without necessary calmness.

I have noticed countless times in my years as a teacher that the calmness we bring to a class group can have a significant effect on their corresponding ‘calmness’ (as a group) – particularly to the more restless and attention seeking students.

When we begin a lesson (for example) – in that first few minutes when we establish and maintain whole-class attention, and focus – our calmness is crucial. The way we stand (with relaxed confidence – not cocky or cavalier!); the way we scan the group; the way we engage even brief, transitory, eye-contact with each student; the way we smile (relaxedly, confidently, non-sycophantically); the tactical pausing (...), our general relaxed, and confident, bearing; knowing what we will say to *cue* for whole-class attention; how we will address those distracting or disruptive students *while we’re cueing for whole-class focus*; how we will engage the class (*that lesson, that day*) beyond our initial attention ... All these factors, our behaviour – communicate our ‘calmness’. These behaviours communicate we are confident in what we are doing *now* (as teacher-leader).

These ‘factors’ are not *mere* personality; there are skills here that one can consciously develop and build into our *normative* teaching practice.

Anger

- We need to distinguish ANGER from concern, being ‘cheesed-off’, irritation, annoyance, frustration, high frustration or on-going frustration. All these emotional ‘expressions’ are in the same, broad, area of stressful ‘arousal’, as it were, but ANGER is different in degree.

For example I’ve heard some teachers say to students, “I’m angry that you haven’t done your homework!” Angry? Concerned yes, annoyed (perhaps) and willing to offer support or work with the student on a homework plan – *but angry?* When we say to students, “I am angry about / because ...!?” there ought to be some ‘moral weight’ in our anger – *relative to the issue, episode or behaviour*.

- It is also important to distinguish between our angry feelings and our angry behaviour. We cannot stop feeling frustrated or angry (or such) about others' behaviour we can learn to communicate our anger in a fairer, more just, more appropriate way.
- It is also important to learn to get angry on issues that matter; (it is not always a natural trait!). On occasions when I have been angry (very angry) with a whole class (or a significant group within the class) they really feel it and hopefully know where the morality or justice of one's anger is directed (!)

Whenever any of my classes have given a supply teacher a really hard time and have behaved disturbingly (a few disgustingly on occasion) I recall saying (to a hushed class group): "I am really angry with our class today, in fact with some of you I am disgusted *by the way you behaved* yesterday to Ms _____ . I can't believe that members of our class – OUR CLASS (!) – could have said and done the things I've had to read about in this report from the supply teacher and the principal (!)"

I could have heard a pin drop. The furrowed eyes, folded arms, the 'hang-dog' looks ... I sensed they were saying to themselves: "We are in serious manure here ...". I rarely speak like that to a class. Obviously I – then – brought the degree of emotional arousal 'down' and we then discussed how we could communicate an appropriate apology to the said teacher and how this class (any class in fact) ought to fairly behave with any relief / supply teacher.

Of course if we were to express our anger in *similar* ways over – say – inappropriate jewellery, uniform, lateness, homework, students without equipment we would easily and quickly lose *any* 'moral weight' of anger we express.

- When we communicate our anger to a student, or a group, of students it is important to remember to:-
 - get angry on issues that matter.
 - keep the communication of such anger brief (where possible), particularly when addressing an individual); avoid the temptation to go on and on and on ...
 - address the behaviour, or issue, without attacking the person. Easier said than done. The skill of assertion is the ability to communicate our needs and rights, to others (especially when angry), or to protect others' needs and rights without being overly hostile or aggressive.
 - Assertion is a skill not merely an attribute to temperament. It is also a skill that can be learned.
 - de-escalate the arousal naturally created by our expression of our anger (directed at another's behaviour ...). Speak in a calmer voice (now) after having made one's point clearly – briefly – (and with passion at times).
 - If the anger context involves a very challenging / oppositional student it will be necessary, and appropriate, to direct an individual student to a supervised time-out situation away from the class group and then follow-

up with the student at a later stage, when both student(s) and teacher are calmer and able to work towards some awareness, understanding and (hopefully) resolution.

- Always take time to repair and rebuild with those we have been angry with (whether individual or group). Mostly our anger will have been justified; even so it is the adult (the teacher) who will need to take the initiative to effect repairing and rebuilding (and appropriate consequences or restitution where necessary). Even when a student has faced a temporary exclusion from the class group our willingness to effect repairing and rebuilding will go a long way to re-establishing a workable relationship beyond the due consequential process.
- Of course if we are at fault and our anger has been poorly, badly, unfairly expressed then it is the right and proper thing for us to apologise to the individual or group.

It is worth recalling the words of St Paul (in Ephesians, in the New Testament) “ ... Don't let the sun go down on your anger.”

*For an extended discussion on anger, the principles of anger management and assertion and follow-up ... see ***Classroom Behaviour 3rd Edition (2011)*** Chapter 7.

Bad day syndrome

We get tired, we get annoyed, we get frustrated – even jaded at times – with attentional behaviour, with laziness in our students, with cavalier, insouciant and rude behaviour. We naturally – and rightly – get angry at times.

Sometimes our anger is justified, sometimes it is the result of ‘the straw that broke

...’. We all have ‘off’ days as well as days when things just do not go right. We also bring to our daily teaching, our own struggles, concerns over health, money, relationships. We cannot escape this; it is our humanity.

Our thoughts sometimes race along with our own issues and concerns, well outside our Maths, English or History teaching responsibilities. Our students too have the same ‘racing minds’ on some days.

There we are, together, in that classroom – yet again – teaching directed numbers, percentages, the Tudor dynasty, the tragedy of Hamlet, Lear or Macbeth, the marvellous Comedy of Errors, or helping students to embrace French, German, culinary arts or South-East Asian geography. We are teachers. Yet on those days when other thoughts race – and other concerns seem to dominate – we may ‘snap’, ‘miscue’, wrongly ‘target’ a student, ‘shout’, act unfairly. Our students understand this; they too are human, they too come to school (at times) from stressful environments. They too have ‘bad days’.

In the balance ‘of it all’, what students *always remember* is *the characteristic way we treat them*: our respect, our humanity, the way we apologise and repair and rebuild. The way we are prepared to move on without grudges and start each day afresh.

*How would our students describe our **characteristic** behaviour as a teacher/leader? – beyond our ‘bad day syndrome’(?) That is what matters as much as our ability to ‘know our subjects’, teach well and ‘get results’. The fourth ‘R’ of relationships is what stays in the memory alongside any education that hopefully comes with their schooling journey.*



Question 5

You put great store on the way teachers establish their classes; should this be made a whole-school approach?

As noted earlier, there are many reasons why some classes become hard to manage and challenging. This can range from:- poor grouping options; it can be the lousy physical environment (I've taught in corridors, staffrooms, annexes – my first grade – when I taught primary – was in a converted bike shed!). I've taught English in woodwork classes on some occasions.

It may also be unfair matching of teacher to class as when a young newly qualified teacher is given the class 'no-one really wants' ("Welcome to the school. You've got 9X for 5 periods after lunch in the demountable (portable) classroom, 5 light years away from the front office and the toilets are a long way away and ...).

Beyond the 'local' and – at times – temporary reasons why a class becomes hard to manage, the more common reasons centre on the way the class teacher establishes themselves as a leader in their critical first meetings with the class group. The way a teacher/leader develops the 'establishment phase' is crucial to the on-going workable relationship that the teacher will have with that class as individuals *and as a group*.

Students at this time of the school year (first meeting(s) term one) are psychologically and developmentally ready for us (as the teacher/leader) to clarify expectations, routines, rights and responsibilities, consequences, and –most of all – how we will support them as the term progresses.

Effective teachers never assume students merely 'know' how they ought to reasonably, fairly, enter a small space called a classroom; how they will relaxedly take their seats without spending several minutes play-punching, wandering, having several loud chats ...; how they will settle and face the front of the room ready to listen, ask questions without calling out or playing loudly with *objects d'art* ...; how 25 or more students will work with a fair and reasonable level of noise

(in that small room); how they will *fairly* get teacher assistance (among 25 students) ...

These routines and (more importantly) these expected student *behaviours* will not occur 'naturally' with a challenging class. Effective teachers know that they need to *establish fair and sensible routines, expectations and rules to underpin* the right to learn, the right to basic respect and the right to feel psychologically and physically safe in schools. There are three basic 'phases' in the life of a classroom group as they interact with teacher and each other.

The establishment phase: This defining stage with a new class involves more than a clarification of

the rules and routines. It involves clarifying, and *teaching*, the fair / reasonable limits of acceptable behaviour. At this stage in our leadership of a new class group it is also important to firmly, fairly address distracting and disruptive behaviours whether it is pushing in during class entry, calling out, fiddling loudly with objects or talking *while* the teacher is establishing the lesson ... Where possible we need to address such behaviours in a least intrusive way, with positive corrective language cueing.

The teacher's skill of corrective leadership, at this time, also needs to be balanced with encouragement. In the first meetings with the class – those first lessons – the teacher will also follow-up with students *one-to-one*, where necessary, to clarify expected behaviours and engage in appropriate consequences where necessary.

The 'maintenance' phase: Effective teachers always maintain, consolidate and 'habituate' what they establish; from day one. It is pointless having a class rule (for example) that outlines a fair routine of hands-up-without-calling-out (and waiting one's turn and not talking over others while they are involved in class questions / discussion) *if we, then, do not address such behaviours when they occur*. I've seen teachers list a few rules, even on a published poster, then accept the loudest student voices who call out (with hands up to indicate they are doing the 'right thing' even though they are calling out). There is an element of 'training' here by the teacher/leader regarding expected positive behaviours.

The cohesive phase: This is that phase in the life of a class group where teachers have established the leadership and relationship positively, and confidently, with their classes and a positive 'habituation' has developed regarding behaviour and learning.

Also the teacher has *built* a workable, positive, relationship with the class from day one. It is the quality of those relationships and the ability to lead and engage the class that *builds* that kind of cohesion.

Core Routines

in the establishment phase with a new class group there are core routines that are essential to engage workable relationships with our students and enable a positive climate for teacher and learning.

- Teachers need to establish core routines on an age-related, subject-focused, way with their grade / faculty team. These common / core routines (will) address behaviour issues such as:-
 - Corridor settling / calming. We clarify with students – briefly and positively – the distinction between social time (eg : play time) and classroom learning time. A considerate entry does not include serious wrestling, pushing, shoving, 'friendly strangling' (testosteronic bonding) and loud shouting etc.
 - Entry to the class and appropriate seating plan (where necessary). Seating plans will also need to include who sits with whom. Students will need to know and appreciate that they do not have to be sitting with their best friend in class time. They need to learn to sit and work with a range of other students. It hardly helps (for example) if the students with ADHD behaviour patterns are sitting together in class time.

- Settling in one's seating / desk / table / table group area:- students need to be settling, relaxing, (quietly), facing the front ready to begin another teaching / learning period with their teacher. Of course such a routine (indeed any routine) needs positive teacher leadership; this will necessitate a balance of correcting and encouragement.
- Communicating cues for class discussion during whole-class teaching / learning time. E.g. 'hands up (without calling out or butting in)'; 'If we disagree with others in class discussion we do so respectfully'; 'We take our fair turn so there's a fair go for all'; 'When others (other students) share / contribute / ask / answer questions that sharing is for all therefore we all listen as we would expect if we were the one who was sharing / contributing / asking ...'

As with all basic cues / routines it is important teachers clarify these with their classes both in tutor / form-groups, and in their first meetings with their regular classes.

It can help in middle-school years to publish these core routines on a couple of large, positively worded, posters in the classroom as a visual reference: an *aide memoire* for all as it were.

- Communicating cues and routines for transition between whole-class teaching time and on-task learning time:
 - Clarify appropriate, reasonable, *noise during on-task learning time*,
 - Clarify how to get *teacher assistance* reasonably and fairly,
 - *Appropriate and reasonable movement around the classroom* (this will – naturally – vary across subject areas);
 - Enabling students without equipment (*always have a box of spare pens, rulers, pencils A4 lined and plain paper*). (See question 7.)
 - Options for early finishers.
- Plan for lesson closure:
 - Cue the class regarding time to complete class work 'before the bell' (this may need the group suggestion 'what they need to have covered by now' – notwithstanding the students with special needs.
 - Focus, settle and cue the class group well before 'the bell' (particularly re: pack up materials / tools etc. Monitors can help in pack-up time.
 - Cue for homework (a small visual reminder will help) / notices etc.

- Remind the class to ‘do the next class a favour thanks’: straighten the furniture (chairs on tables a day’s close); pick up any residual litter (*en route* to the door and bin) and leave the class row-by-row (or table-group by table-group ...). It saves the Darwinian rush of the more kinaesthetic students to the door! Some students will whinge (day one, two, three) but it will become a fair routine after several lessons with our positive – expectant – leadership.

Below is a typical *visual* routine cue I often use in the first few lessons with a new class. The students soon remember the meaning of the acronyms.

DTNCAFT	(do the next class a favour thanks)
(1) SF (COTP6)	(straighten furniture) (chairs on tables period 6)
(2) RL B	(residual litter: bin)
(3) RBR	(row by row)
(4) TTFN	(ta-ta for now)

On some occasions (in the first meetings) it will be necessary to direct a student (or two) to ‘stay back briefly after class’ (for a chat about behaviour concerns).

It can help to have a small notebook to record the names of students we need to briefly follow-up after classtime. We do before lesson closure so we can briefly, positively, say “I’d like to see __after class for a few moments.” The notebook adds a ‘quasi-legal authenticity’ to this process (it also aids memory!)

Whenever we follow-up we will need to keep it brief (unless it is class break time). We may need to give a student a time to meet us later that day to talk about their behaviour (say the year co-ordinator’s area).

Any follow-up with a student, whether it is a *brief* after-class chat; a subject teacher chat at lunchtime (a behaviour interview); a subject teacher or formal year level

detention we will need to bear in mind basic protocols of follow-up – not the least our respectful treatment and ethical probity.

See particularly ***Cracking the Hard Class 2nd (2007) Edition*** Chapter 6.

NB

All routines / responsibilities of students depend on the core rights and responsibilities discussed by tutor teachers in their first meetings with their tutor groups. These *core, non-negotiable* rights and responsibilities centre on:-

- *The right to learn here* (without undue, unfair, distraction and disruption).
- *The right to respect and fair treatment* (of property, place, personal space, one's feelings).
- *The right to safety: to feel safe here in our school* (not just physical safety but psychological and emotional safety as well).
- These rights imply – indeed entail – responsibilities. The routines and cues we establish are a way of enabling and enhancing those rights.
- It can help to publish these core rights on a large, laminated, poster in each classroom and corridor as a visual reference and aide memoire. They are, in effect, the fundamental basis of the school's 'code of conduct'. They highlight 'the fair expectations of our school'.
- Any work we do on clarifying, and discussing, rights and responsibilities and rules is of little use unless each teacher, in each class (and in non-class settings) encourages and disciplines, within these rights and responsibilities. Effective teachers encourage these rights and responsibilities and create learning environments that enhance their likelihood. They also correct, and assert – to protect those rights wherever necessary. They also bring appropriate consequences to bear on behaviour wherever those rights are infringed (see later question 9).

Trust between a teacher leader and a group of students takes time to develop. From the start – from these first meetings – we seek to promote a classroom environment where students feel valued; where they feel they belong; where they feel safe (psychologically as well as physically); *where their dignity and respect are never taken for granted.*

This never happens by chance.

That kind of trust takes time to develop.

It is always developed from the way we establish the class group in those critical first meetings and from the kind of leadership we exercise from day one. (See also question 4.)



Question 6

Do the skills that you advocate – at the end of the day – really depend on personality? Take ‘tactical ignoring’ as an example ...?

I once had a teacher say to me – an ‘older’ teacher – “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.”

We were discussing professional development and the ‘skills’ of classroom discipline. In response to her comment (“ ... can’t teach an old dog new tricks.”) I replied (with I hope a positive smile), “You’re not a dog. You’re a teacher. We can always reflect, refine, fine-tune, adapt, develop, even change ...” We also had a robust, spirited and positive discussion about the difference between ‘tricks’ and ‘skills’.

What we are discussing in these DVDs (and this supporting, written, material) is not a ‘bag of tricks’ or some ‘neat formula’ – there are no simple (or simplistic) formulas when addressing distracting, disruptive or challenging behaviour in our students. We are discussing *core practices and skills* essential to teacher leadership. Recall the old saying? – Don’t learn the ‘tricks of the trade’, *learn the trade*.

There are practices and skills we can learn that do not depend *merely* on personality. There are, obviously, personality traits: liking to work with young people; wanting to assist their learning and development; having good humour; an even temper (bad day notwithstanding); being fair, just, reasonable (as distinct from ‘petty’, ‘bossy’ or non-assertive when assertion is needed); the ability to engage students in their learning journey with some enthusiasm (without being a ‘tap-dancer’ – and we can’t always make everything ‘fun’) ... The personality and behaviour traits – noted here – *all help* – of course. There are *skills*, however, that support these teacher traits; skills that enable us to be *relaxedly* vigilant in our behaviour leadership as contrasted with teachers who are *characteristically* overly vigilant or characteristically non-vigilant.

It is not the ‘bad-day syndrome’ – the occasional ill-tempered comment, or rebuke, or ‘sarcastic slip’ – that our students remember; it is how ‘we are’ and how we ‘come across’ in the long haul. That is what our students respond to and remember.

- What is our characteristic behaviour leadership like? How would our students describe our day-to-day leadership of ‘our class’?
- Do we use our power (as a teacher/leader) for and with our students, instead of merely using our power over them. Do we seek to ‘control’ our students rather than lead, guide, motivate, challenge and encourage them?

- When we discipline our students there are skills that enable positive behaviour leadership that can enable us to engage student co-operation instead of unnecessary resistance. Of particular note is how we use the 'language of correction' within our behaviour leadership.

There are many examples of these language skills noted in the classroom vignettes in the first DVD. See also *Classroom Behaviour 3rd Edition (2011) Chapter 3*.

Tactical ignoring

Tactical ignoring was noted in this question as an example of a 'skill'. I have italicised the word because we *never* merely ignore distracting, disruptive or confronting behaviour. There are occasions, however, when it is appropriate to *tactically* ignore and *selectively* attend.

Take the example in the first DVD of a student coming late to class. (See the earlier note referring to vignette 6 on the first DVD.) When the sulky student enters the class late (quite late) with a swagger, a scowl, eyes-to- ceiling or grinning to his mates (as in the vignette in the first DVD). What we say to the student – now – is important. *How* we say it, and what aspects of his behaviour we *tactically* ignore (in that naturally emotional and attentional exchange) is also important.

We do not ignore the grand late entrance. In respect of the lateness itself it will help to pause in our teaching – to the class (as a whole) – turn to face the student and welcome him (instead of asking him *why* he is late). When he sighs and twists his mouth into a wry, whingeing, moan, our focus needs to be directed to the primary issue – his lateness and then direct him to his seat ... A pleasant, respectful, confident "Welcome Jason; you're late. (It is important to briefly acknowledge his lateness; important for him and the students 'observing' his lateness ...) I'll have a chat later. Take your seat. Thanks." That is enough, *at this point*. We *tactically* ignore the sigh, the mutter, the swagger as he takes his seat. These aspects of his behaviour are 'secondary' to the 'main' or 'primary' behaviour / issue *at that point*. If we argue with him *and* lecture him about his sighing etc., "Why can't you once come into this class without making a song and dance about it?! I'm sick and tired of you coming late and ... and don't you smirk at me! It's not funny alright?!"

Of course it is tempting to focus on the 'sigh', the 'raised eyes', the 'insouciant look', the 'swagger' ... it is easy to get 'drawn-in'. Skilful teachers not only *tactically* ignore such 'secondary' behaviour, they also give the student take-up-time by reclaiming *whole class focus* (turning 'away' from the student as he takes his seat) : "As I was saying everyone ..." (this to the whole class) thus resuming core teaching *at that point*. It also avoids over- servicing the individual student's attentional goals in front of the rest of the class.

These skills are not easy but they are skills. They are particularly effective with the discipline of challenging behaviour issues as we have sought to portray them in the first DVD.

The key to *tactical* ignoring, as a skill, is to remember that :-

- It is tactical; it is a context dependent skill relevant mostly for the sorts of non-verbal behaviours that students exhibit on receipt of teacher correction. Its corollary is selective attention.
- We should never ignore (even tactically ignore) any hostile, aggressive, or potentially dangerous behaviours (verbal or physical in expression); If a student kicks a chair en route to his seat (as in the late-to-class example) we need to address that behaviour as well as the lateness ... “Jayson, we take our seats without kicking the chair.” Brief and clear, we’ll then follow-up with the student – later – away from the peer-audience (one-to- one).
- We also do not ignore unremitting – repeatedly – distracting or disruptive behaviour. I have (on many, many, occasions) tactically ignored (say) a student who calls out (with, or without, hand up) several times to get my help – sighing “I’m talking to you!” and then observed (out of the ‘corner of my eye’) the student ‘give up’ as it were. A little later I will go over and then give assistance. If they then say “I was calling you before!” I will quietly remind them that when they have their hand up without calling out then I am more than happy to come and help. I will also quietly remind them of the fair-rule that gives a fair-go-for-all (when they want, or need, teacher assistance during on-task learning time).

Sometimes we’ll ‘preface’ our tactical ignoring with a conditional direction e.g. “Craig (...) When you’ve got your hand up without calling out I’ll be over to help.” We then tactically ignore until the student works by everyone’s fair rule (in busy on-task learning time). Where a student’s behaviour is unremitting, or very loudly distracting (to other students, let alone the teacher) then we need to intervene with a clear, firm, reminder or direction.

- If a student is verbally rude (as in the example in the first DVD of the female student who says, “What do you want to know my name for!”) we should not ignore such disrespectful behaviour. A brief, firm, ‘I’ statement is enough, “I’m not speaking to you in a disrespectful tone of voice.” Then refocus to the main issue :- “What’s your name thanks?” – we can tactically ignore the sigh as they give their name (oh dramatis personae!). It is not easy to describe this skill in words, it is clearly observed when we see it in a teacher’s leadership behaviour.
- Avoid ‘enjoying’ tactical ignoring of some student behaviour; we do not *tactically* ignore insouciant or ‘cocky’, ‘smart-alecky’ or ‘attentional’ behaviour to ‘score’ or ‘prove a point’. We *tactically* ignore *within* our overall leadership, to send the message to the student (and their audience) that we are keeping our focus directed to the main issue or behaviour necessity *now*. We will not get drawn into their ‘sighs’, ‘whines’, ‘moans’ or ...
- Any skill of behaviour leadership depends on, and should develop from, our core values rather than mere expediency or utility. It is not easy – in the heat of the moment – to think how we can better respond to challenging behaviour (particularly rude, or hostile, or confronting behaviour). Having a *discipline plan* will help us frame reasonable responses to typical distracting, and disruptive, behaviours. This is not a formula but a *framework* plan; a way of enabling us to have a least-to-most intrusive framework of interaction when addressing distracting and disruptive behaviour. There are no ‘formulas’ for effective behaviour leadership. There are – however – values, practices, skills we can make our own; it is these that inform, and shape, our ‘plan’.

- Our core values also enable and inform, even evaluate our professional practice. When we review school-wide discipline practice I believe it behoves us to think professionally, and collegially, about our characteristic discipline language; even specific ‘forms’ of language. No discipline practices are ‘value free’. This is particularly important when we need to be assertive; assertive language requires some prior thought and skill.

There is, for example, an important difference even when addressing two students chatting while the teacher is engaged in whole-class teaching. To say, “*Why* are you two talking?” or “You shouldn’t be talking *should you?*” or “*Are you* talking?” are (all) really unhelpful questions. Do we really want to have a discussion with the students about ‘why’ they are talking **at this point** in a whole-class lesson? A better option is to briefly *describe* the students’ behaviour, or *direct* the students to the appropriate behaviour. E.g. “Melissa (..) Katrina(..) You’re talking. It’s whole-class teaching time.” This briefly *describes* the students’ behaviour and also acts as an *incidental* reminder or direction, about what they should be doing during whole-class teaching time.

Sometimes we need to *describe and direct* eg : “Melissa (..) Katrina (..) You’re talking (the descriptive ‘part raises behaviour awareness). Facing this way and listening thanks (the directional ‘part’).” Thanks is also more

‘expectational’ than please.

It is always difficult to talk about corrective language by merely listing the *words* as such. It is *always* more than words. As noted several times in these notes, our tone of voice and intent will carry the meaning of the words : our respect, our confidence, our communication of expectant co-operation are also carried along *with the words*.

This is difficult to describe *in print*. One can quickly, and easily, see it in teacher behaviour as they interact with their students.

It is important to stress – again – that the non-verbal aspects of our behaviour also have some conscious element of ‘skill’. We can learn to communicate (as behaviour leaders) more effectively and more positively; it is not merely personality.

A discipline plan

A discipline plan is our reasonable attempt to think ahead about how we can (indeed should) reasonably respond to *typical* distracting, disruptive and even confronting behaviours.

Whether it is calling out , attentional lateness, task-avoidance, loudness, rudeness or swearing – there are key principles and skills that will better address such behaviours in terms of whether the student is more likely to:

- take some awareness and even ‘ownership’ of their behaviour;
- co-operate with the teacher (and the fair rights / rules / responsibilities at stake:

- respect others' rights.

These key principles and skills also assist the building of a workable relationship with the student, as well as modelling (to the class as a whole) the fundamental respect we hope to see in them!

The key principles in a discipline plan

- A common, year-level focus on core rights / responsibilities and rules for all classes. Even a published class poster can act as a visual 'aide memoire'.
- Core routines for the class group (see previous points made about the 'Establishment Phase'). Even deceptively basic routines such as considerate classroom entry / 'settling down' and thoughtful seating plans ... how to contribute (fairly) in a whole-class discussion or asking questions in whole-class teaching time ... will have a positive effect on classroom 'tone' and group behaviour.
- A conscious framework – in the teacher's discipline engagement – that enables us to be least intrusive (whenever possible) when addressing distracting / disruptive behaviour. If we need to be more intrusive (as circumstance necessitates) we become more assertive, we do not become more hostile or verbally aggressive.
- A conscious focus (in our discipline) on positive corrective language wherever possible. There is a difference between saying, "Don't call out" or "Don't lean back in your chair" (etc) and, "Craig (...) hands up (without calling out) thanks." Contrast : "Don't lean back in your seat like that Halid", and "Halid (...) sitting up relaxed, Thanks." or "Four on the floor Halid. Better. Thanks." Focus the language to the desired/expected/fair behaviour "*do*" instead of merely "*don't* ...").

Even brief '*tactical pausing*' (...) when we give a direction, or reminder, allows for some conscious attentional focus and 'registration' by the student about what the teacher is saying.

When we give a direction *take-up-time* is also important as when we give a '*directed choice*' to a student (eg:- in the vignette episode where a student has a toy, or Walkman, or other *object d'art* that is distracting ...) *Take-up-time* communicates that we both trust the student to at least comply with the teacher reminder or direction and it reduces attentional focus on the student. It is unprofessional, disrespectful and unnecessary when a teacher merely marches over to a student and takes the distracting object off them. We are using our 'power' *for* and *with* the student by the way we lead them in such discipline transactions. We do not use our adult power (as teacher-leaders) to merely control our students.

- Avoid unnecessary confrontation (this includes pettiness, sarcasm, cheap- shots, 'scoring' over a student ...)

Working as a mentor (in an English school) I was on my way to a registration class (with a colleague) – walking down the corridor – when I heard (then saw) a teacher yell down the corridor to a student not wearing a tie. (Oh crime despair!)

“Over here! Yes over here – you know I’m speaking to you!” The boy trotted over (minus a tie). The teacher (a ‘very senior’ teacher) then said – loudly – “Why aren’t you wearing a tie?!”

- He didn’t even say good morning,
- ... or ask the student his name ... ,
- ... or quietly usher him to the side of the corridor to minimise

unnecessary confrontation, and keep it all least intrusive.

I could still hear him ‘rabbiting on’ like this (holding up ‘through traffic’ of students and teachers on their way to classes) as I walked past him on my way to class.

I think he wanted to put on ‘the show’. ‘I’ve got power, status and reputation (and) *people are going to know it* – particularly this boy.’

I mean, who speaks to young people like that? – on a piddling issue of not wearing a tie?

I am not saying that we should not address dress code / uniform code; I am saying we do so least intrusively, respectfully; with positive corrective language.

- Keep the fundament respect intact (even when we need to convey appropriate and necessary anger on occasion ...). Obviously this is not easy at times – by respect I mean at least civility, basic courtesy, manners and fair treatment. We do not have to like all our students (anyway ‘liking’ is not an emotive behaviour we can simply ‘manufacture’). We can (however) make it hard for a student to dislike us – by the way we behave towards them. We can, at least, build a workable relationship with our students, even our most challenging students. We can start each day afresh. We can make sure we do not ‘nurse the grudge(!)’ We can make sure we make a conscious effort to communicate care and respect; who knows – in time we might even grow to like them as well!
- The hardest discipline practice / skill is that of keeping the corrective focus directed to the main, necessary, primary issue or behaviour in a discipline transaction. It is so easy to get drawn-in to ‘secondary issues’ and ‘secondary behaviours’ in those immediate emotional moments (such as sighing, pouting, tongue-clicking, eyes-to-the-ceiling, the insouciant shoulder shrug, ‘the gait’ ...).

When a student sighs, rolls their eyes and says, “Other teachers don’t care if we chew gum ...” (or ‘wear hats in class’ or ‘sit wherever we want’, or ‘play our iPods in class as long as we get our work done’ or ...) it is easy to become defensive; to want to argue the point! Other teachers start ‘meaningful’ discussions about ‘fairness’, ‘the rules’ or ‘other teachers’. These are not the *primary issue at this point in a busy lesson*.

One of the skills noted in the vignettes (in the first DVD) is that of *partial agreement*. When a student says, “Other teachers don’t care if ...” we can respond with “Even if some teachers do (I can check that), what’s our school rule for chewing gum?” (or whatever). “But the other day ... Miss Snod said we could ...” “I can check that; what’s our school rule?” If the student chooses not to respond and continues arguing, a calm, clear *deferred consequence* can be given. “If you

choose not to put the iPod (or toy or ...) away (in your bag or on my desk) I'll have to follow it up with you at break time." (See question 9.)

At this point it is helpful to give *take-up-time* and 'walk away'; *tactically ignoring* the sigh, the muttered student comment of "... if it makes you happy."

If the student refuses to put the *object d'art* away it is important that we do follow-up with the earlier stated consequence (of following up with the student at break time). It is the *fair, reasonable, certainty of a consequence* that will convince the student that when we say 'if – then', we mean it.

Partial agreement (as a skill in our discipline language) in part says, 'Yes I'm hearing you', 'now let's get back to the main issue *at this point* :- the fair, clear, reason(able) rule, or right *as it relates to your behaviour at hand now*. *Partial agreement* is a skill that enables us to avoid unnecessary argument, or defence of the rule, or overly 'reasoning', or bargaining ...

It is also important that these skills (in our discipline language) are never an end in themselves. We are always seeking to build a *workable relationship* with all our students. It is within a positive working relationship that student co-operation and effective learning (and teaching) can take place.

- In the busy, short-term, engagement of a lesson we need to keep our corrective discipline:
 - as brief as we can;
 - as positive as we can in our language, tone and manner (wherever possible);
 - as least intrusive as we can (again where possible);
 - where we need to be more intrusive – in our discipline – we are more assertive. We clarify the directed choices and deferred (or immediate) consequences.
- Follow-up and follow-through. This is crucial in any discipline plan. On occasion when student behaviour is repeatedly distracting or disruptive or potentially dangerous we will need to calmly, firmly, exercise the time-out option. This, too, is a crucial feature of our plan. Directing a student with challenging (or dangerous) behaviour to leave the classroom to go to a 'time-out place' is a very intrusive 'step' to take for a teacher. We do not engage the time-out option lightly; its usage, and options, need to be planned on a whole-school basis. (See question 12.)

Later – after any discipline of a student in a public setting (in front of the audience of their peers) – we will need to spend some time following up and following through with the student(s) one-to-one. This is time consuming, requires some planning (say for a behaviour interview or detention) but *it is always worth it*. (See, particularly, *Cracking the Hard Class 2nd Edition (2007) Chapter 6*).

- Follow-up and follow-through (even an ‘after class chat’) :-
 - draws the distinction between what we can address ‘publicly’ in a busy lesson and what we can address ‘longer term’ – later – away from the peer audience.
 - shows we care enough to make the effort to communicate, connect and share our concern and offer support as well as due consequences where necessary.
 - When we need to follow-up with a consequence (even an after-class ‘chat’ has a consequential element) it emphasises the ‘*fair certainty*’ that the ‘consequential chickens do come home to roost’ as it were.
 - The key is to follow-up respectfully.

Summary

There are many skills we can develop within our characteristic behaviour leadership. These skills *enable us* (in the emotional moments) to keep our focus directed to the teaching and learning dynamic, as well as directed to the rights-enhancing behaviours in our students. They also enable us to keep some sense of fundamental dignity and respect intact within teacher-student relations.

While this is no mean feat, it is our professional responsibility.



Question 7

In one of the scenes (in the first DVD) you deal with a student without pens and paper (etc). Shouldn't they bring the right equipment in the first place?

Yes. The reality is, though, some students do not (mostly in the establishment phase of the year).

The issue of 'non-equipment' should not become one of argument, threat or vilification. Again the management principle of :- avoiding unnecessary confrontation, and keeping corrective transaction least intrusive are important in this case (see question 6).

The management issue – at this point – focuses on 'how can I address this as the teacher in a way that avoids unnecessary conflict, yet enables the student to engage in the learning task / activity *for that class period?*'

Of course students 'should' bring pens (etc), a small percentage of students do not; that is reality. And, yes, it is 'wearing' (with some students). *How* we address that reality is the important issue, as well as enabling the student's personal responsibility. We do not enable their responsibility (about not bringing 'x', 'y', 'z') when we get drawn into a power struggle or a blame exercise *at that point* in 'lesson time'.

- Avoid arguing or asking students 'why they haven't got a pen' or comparing them to the responsible students ... "Other students bring equipment, why can't you?!"
- I have had students sent to me (when I was a full-time senior teacher) with the student arriving on my 'classroom doorstep' with the words, "I was sent to you because I didn't have a pen." I felt like say, "You're winding me up Troy – surely?" They were almost, always, sent because their class teacher was engaged in an argument about why they did not / would not bring a pen (or whatever).

Sometimes the resulting argument about "Why ...?!" was more stressful, attentional, than the fact the student did not have the necessary equipment, for that lesson.

- Always have a box of spare pens (red and blue), rulers, even erasers and lined / plain A4 paper. (We have modelled this in a vignette in the first DVD.) Personally, I call it the 'yellow box'. Each item in it – apart from the paper – has a band of yellow electrical tape around it to track the pens (etc.) back to the box. I don't lose many.

- My rule of thumb about not-bringing-pens (etc) is that if a student does not bring the necessary equipment on three times (in close succession in the first week or so) then we have a one-to-one meeting to discuss the issue and look for ways to come up with a plan for the student to get his responsibility 'into gear'.

In some schools we have found that a 'school-based' table-pencil-case (containing the key writing implements) can help that small percentage of students with learning / behaviour disorders.

- Ideally we should develop a collegial response so there is reasonable consistency across colleague responses to the issue of students not bringing appropriate / necessary equipment.

The issue of equipment and other common 'behaviour' issues like lateness, dress code / uniform needs whole-school responses that are sensible, considered, consistent with a *relaxedly* vigilant response that balances appropriate correction *and support*.



Question 8

In the first DVD you speak – after class – to two female students who had been involved in a ‘play-fight’ in the classroom. You had a female colleague present while you followed up with the students – how important is this?

In my view it is essential that a male teacher have a female colleague present in any extended after-class chat, behaviour interview, mediation session or detention.

Ethical probity is crucial for all colleagues, perhaps more so in these litigation-conscious times (and the stories in the press) particularly for male teachers in one-to-one meetings with female students.

The female colleague does not need to engage with the student and the male teacher (in their role of one-to-one follow-up). Their presence is enough (abstractly working on marking nearby – whatever). The female colleague is part witness, part emotional support. Sometimes (of course) they will be directly involved particularly when the context, circumstance, or issue is particularly sensitive or whose emotional constraint is present and a female student ‘breaks down’. The female colleague can give appropriate ‘physical’ and emotional support that would be contextually inappropriate for the male teacher.

It is worth having a school-wide protocol addressing this aspect of our professional responsibility.



Question 9

You spoke in the first DVD about *deferred consequences* – could you develop that a bit more?

You also advocate the crucial importance of the class teacher following up (with a disruptive student) – what if they don't stay back (after class)?

A framework for behaviour consequences :-

When it comes to *any* behaviour consequences in a school it is essential to have a whole-school framework – and protocols – for how we responsibly exercise this aspect of behaviour leadership and policy

- Some consequences (for example) will be 'negotiable'. By 'negotiable' I mean that the teacher who initiates the consequence will ask the student (in the one-to-one context) questions such as: "*What happened* (re : your behaviour) that caused you to be in detention?" "*What rule or right was affected by your behaviour?*"

"How do you 'see' what happened?" (Students deserve a verbal, or written, right-of-reply in a calmer, follow-up, time-away from the emotion of the original behaviour ...)

"What can you do to fix things up, makes things better?"

I often add another question : "*How can I help you to fix things up ...?*"

These questions can also be expressed in a written form (as during detentions). 'Empty detentions' are pointless – in an educational sense (i.e. just sitting in a room for thirty minutes after school or copying out school rules ...).

Teachers need professional discretion (and trust) in carrying out 'negotiable' consequences. It will also help to have some guidelines for the sorts of issues/ behaviours for which such 'negotiable' consequences are appropriate.

- Some consequences have to be non-negotiable; set in 'policy concrete' as it were : drugs, weapons, violence, harassment, bullying. These behaviours will involve some immediate consequence ranging from immediate time-out for the student from the classroom (or playground) through to temporary exclusion from the school.

With any non-negotiable consequences, however, there should be some possibility of accountability-mediation at some later stage with the student before coming back to the school, and back to regular class(es).

Those in the school trained, or skilled, in mediation and behaviour support will need to work with the student and the aggrieved teacher/s as soon as possible on the student's return to school.

- The 3Rs principle is important when framing any behaviour consequence :
 - Is the consequence related in some way to the behaviour at issue? (How does picking up papers – as a behaviour consequence – relate to talking in class?)
 - Is the consequence reasonable (reasonable)? Is there an appropriate degree of seriousness in our use / application of consequences? I have seen students put on detention for homework not done, uniform, lateness (etc) as well as more serious issues such as harassment. Where does the student perceive detention (in terms of a consequence) when it is used for minor issues (such as those noted above) as well as very serious behaviour issues? Using detention for homework / uniform issues devalues a serious behaviour consequence such as detention.
 - Is the consequence applied respectfully? Do we keep the fundamental respect of the student intact when we apply the consequence? I have seen teachers rail, shout, berate, harangue a student (replete with pointed finger) even in an after-class 'chat'. This is unnecessary, unacceptable and unprofessional.

See, particularly – ***Classroom Behaviour 3rd Edition (2011)*** Chapter 6 (note pp.159-162 i.e. detention).

- It is worth having a detention policy that outlines the sorts of behaviour we believe relate to a consequence that involves time-detaining as its key feature. We also need to ask, however, what we ought to expect of the student and teacher during detention. What should the student do? If it is a 'time-trade consequence' then we build in some *relatedness* (e.g. picking up litter because they were seen dropping it, or chewing gum cleaning duty because they are repeated 'chewing gummers'). Civic duty / student time is restitutorially 'traded' re : their rights ignoring behaviours.
- Most consequences should be carried out by the initiating teacher, or at least (as in faculty detentions) the initiating teacher will follow-up with the student beyond the detention, with some repairing and rebuilding. This is particularly important when we exercise time-out as a consequence.
- In some follow-up consequences a senior teacher should be there to support the teacher who initiates the consequence in the first instance. This is crucial with behaviours of serious concern.

- It is also worth discussing with colleagues what are the reasonable consequences for say: repeated lateness (three times in close succession); homework; students without equipment; uniform; repeated toilet usage in class time ... (etc).

Nb. With lateness, uniform issues and not having necessary equipment ... we also need to be sensitive as to home-related issues that impinge on student behaviour at school. Consequences can and should be supportive not *merely*, or only, punitive.

- In applying consequences we need to emphasise the fair, reasonable, known certainty rather than merely emphasise the severity. We are back to the issue of respect here. Some teachers apply the consequence in a climate of emotional pay-back (probably out of frustration). Of course some consequences are 'severe' because of the nature of the student's behaviour – even here we can convey our displeasure, even anger, in respectful ways. Villifying, yelling at and threatening students, are behaviours that demean us and do not help in the consequential process (nor do they help when an audience of student peers are observing a teacher villifying a student ...). I am not saying it is not tempting! We all get annoyed, disgruntled, even angry with some students and their behaviour (it is hard to separate the two at times!) We can learn to communicate our anger firmly, with assertive passion (briefly if possible). See question 4.

Students who do not stay back after class

If we direct a student to stay back after class and they 'do a runner' it is pointless to chase them. It looks ludicrous; most students are entertained by the spectacle and (if we are not fit) it can be dangerous to our health!

It is the *certainty* of the consequences , (even twenty-four hours later on occasion) that will carry any relational 'learning' in the mind of the student. We convey the message that the 'consequential chickens do come home to roost'.

It is also not about winning; it is about the *fair* certainty of any consequence *as related to behaviour and as related to the right affected or abused by that behaviour*.

Deferred consequences

As contrasted to immediate consequences for repeated disruptive or safety issues, a *deferred* consequence is communicated to the student as a 'directed choice'. The example in the first DVD of a student with a iPod who refuses to put it away ... The teacher says, "If you choose not to put it away I'll have to follow it up with you at break time." If the student mutters, "I don't care" it is enough to say, "I care" and leave the student with *their* choice (within the fair school rules). It is pointless saying, "You will care!! I'll report you to the head teacher, and to your mother and ... (!)"

If a student complains that ‘other teachers let them have iPods (etc) in class’ or ‘chewing gum’ or ‘...’ it is important that we do not make other colleagues look inefficient, or ineffective or not as competent or consistent as we are (!) This will happen if we say something like, “I don’t care what Ms Smith says, in MY class you will ...!”

It is enough to say, “I can check that with Mr _____. What’s our school rule for iPods in class ...” This *partial agreement*, and refocusing to the fair rule, keeps the student focussed on the primary issue *at that point* in the lesson.

It is pointless trying to simply snatch the object – particularly with challenging students. We can hardly *make* the student hand over ear-rings, nail varnish, mobile phones or iPods, toys, comics

If their behaviour is *too* distracting – or *repeatedly* distracting – we may have to consider a time-out consequence.

Most students – on receipt of a *directed choice* – (“David ... I know it’s enjoyable to listen to ... You know the rule. In your bag or on my desk till break time. Thanks.”) will put the object away when given take-up-time. ‘Take-up-time’ is important following a *directed* choice. The teacher does not need to ‘stand over’ the student (as it were) until they put the object away. Take-up-time can convey our trust and confidence in the student’s willingness to co-operate (or at least comply!)

If they persist in keeping the distracting object on their desk, the teacher can return and make the *deferred* consequence clear. There is still (even now) an element of ‘choice’; *deferred* consequence clarifies the student’s responsibility *at that point*. We leave the responsibility with the student and engage in certain follow-up.



Question 10

In some of our classes students put each other down and swear – how should we respond to this?

I once heard a speaker say (not a teacher) that teachers get too uptight about what he termed ‘street language’ where students say things like dickhead,

a_____hole, w__ker, ‘poofter’, ‘gay-boy’ etc. He suggested, strongly, that this language is mostly used in fun. ‘Street banter?’. I agree – in part. My response, though, is that the classroom is not merely ‘a street’.

When a student calls a classmate a poofter (in fun, non-homophobicly) we still need (in my view) to give the student a quiet and *clear* reminder about considered language *in our school*.

With some students it can become a ‘conversational habit’ if we allow it.

- Have a school-wide approach to addressing inappropriate language. This needs to include an initial discussion the tutor group about put-downs, swearing, abusive, sexist and racist language and using considered language. This – too – is an important part of our establishment process with our tutor classes. ‘No put-down zone’ is both an aim and an expectation, this aim requires our relaxed vigilance to protect rights of students who are overly teased, made fun of, or verbally abused.
- Distinguish between :-
 - frustration swearing (loud or ‘quiet’)
 - sotto voce swearing or inappropriate language eg : the muttered ‘shit!’ – I sometimes reply, “Where?” (Humour is only appropriate when we know our students and the situation is not tense and the humour defuses the tension and is not sarcastic or seeking to ‘score’.)
 - ‘conversational swearing’ (“See the great f____ing game with Man. U. on TV?”)
 - Abusive swearing to a student or teacher.

Each of these expressions of inappropriate language, put-downs or swearing needs to be addressed differently (in my view). Clearly not *all* swearing is the same in degree or intent.

The principles and skills discussed earlier in question 6 are relevant here.

- With any abusive swearing it is essential to assertively address the student with direct eye-contact. “I don’t swear at you I don’t expect you to swear at me.” If directed at the teacher “That language is unacceptable in our classroom.” (or even : “Knock it off – now.”)

If the student retorts that it was the other student’s fault :- “He started it, the

f_____ing idiot.” (Even if it is true) a firm, calm assertive ‘blocking’ is enough. A blocking hand gesture and, “We can talk about that later. I’m reminding you, now, that language is not acceptable here.” It will also help if we can direct the student aside from his peers (if possible) to avoid any overt confrontation and to minimise peer-audience focus.

If the student is too angry (or distraught) and cannot or will not settle down we will need to use time-out options. Some students get angrily embarrassed in front of their class peers; some want to prove a point, “that no-one can tell me what to do and what I can or can’t f_ing say!”

On some occasions, it will help to preface any correction with :- “I know you’re upset, angry, however *that* language is unacceptable here. Obviously if the student is irrationally angry we will need to use a calm, firm, time-out procedure. How can I help you to ...” How well we know the student will also affect what we say.

The context is important. See – particularly – ***Classroom Behaviour 3rd Edition (2011).***

- If there is a recurring pattern of put-down language in the classroom it will be crucial to have a classroom meeting (at a calmer, prepared, time) and discuss with the class the issue of put-downs, what they are and what they do, and discuss perspective-taking : How do people feel when ...? Why do some people feel that they have to put others down? What are they trying to do? What response should we make? Why?

The classroom meeting should re-emphasise *our right* to a safe place here in our classroom; a no put-down zone.

Such a meeting is best conducted with a colleague who has had some experience of conducting whole-class meetings. See ***Cracking the Hard Class 2nd Edition (2007) Chapter 2.***



Question 11

How important is a time-out policy and plan in addressing and managing disruptive and challenging behaviour?

TIME-OUT – a behaviour consequence – is an essential option *within* a whole-school approach to behaviour management.

It allows cool-off-time for the student and the teacher.

It allows the rest of the class to calm, settle and refocus – it also enables and protects *their* rights.

It is never an end in itself, it is a short-term, necessary, consequence when a student is *repeatedly* distracting and disruptive, or when there is abusive, unsafe, hostile or aggressive behaviour.

- The school-wide policy on time-out needs to have least-to-more intrusive options
 - in class options [this can work with some students],
 - colleague assisted (a teacher nearby, where we are able to direct a student to that classroom for cool-off-time),
 - directing a student to a supervised time-out room or area. It should be a considered option in a secondary school setting. It needs to be well-planned, staffed at all times and have a clear policy and practice of what should happen when / while the student is in the 'time-out room/area'.
- When framing a whole-school policy / practice (for time-out) we will need to have answered such questions as :-
 - What behaviours reasonably necessitate time-out?
 - Where do we direct the student to (for time-out); what are the practical options?
 - If we direct a student to leave the classroom to go to timeout and he refuses to go ... what are the realistic / practical options? Do we send a trusted student to get a senior teacher? Internal mobile phone cueing? How can we implement that as a working policy?
 - How long should a student normally remain in time-out? For just that class period? For the rest of the day? (Some serious behaviours may necessitate this option).
 - On what basis does the student go back to his class? (if at all for that class period).

- What is the role of the supervising teacher *during* time-out?
- What is the follow-up role of the initiating teacher (the teacher who directed the student *to* time-out in the first instance)?
- There need to be clear ‘cues’, and even considered teacher language at the point when we direct a student to a time-out setting. We should never call a time-out ‘place’ a ‘sin-bin’ (that is bad theology and bad psychology) nor should we make it a ‘slanging match’ with the student at the point we direct them to leave : “Get out!! I’m sick of you and your stupid antics!! Now get out ...!” This is unnecessary and unprofessional – what we need with *any* time-out plan is colleague clarity (in its purpose and application) and no-blame colleague support in its usage. ‘Time-out’, ‘thinking / calming time’, ‘cool-off- time’ describes what the process seeks to enable for the student.
- Time-out – of itself – does not change a student’ behaviour. It is also crucial that the teacher who initiates the time-out process also be involved in some reasonable follow-up later that day and certainly before the student comes back into the classroom next period. If the student behaviour that occasioned time-out was particularly serious there should be some formal mediation and due process between the class teacher and the student in question. This will need to be facilitated and supported by a senior teacher.
- If a student has been in time-out three times in close succession – (across several classes) – it will be crucial to set up an individual behaviour management plan (for that student). This plan will need to be supported by all the teachers who teach that student. Such a plan will normally be developed by a senior teacher on behalf of all the subject teachers working with that student. The senior teacher will – in effect – ‘case supervise’ the student in question. The purpose of such a plan is to teach the student strategies to cope with their behaviour and learning expectations in a school environment. (See next question).



Question 12

You have worked extensively with students with emotional and behavioural disorders (EBDs). How can we realistically support students with EBD – and their teachers?

Teachers are used to *behaviour disorders* such as *attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD)*. We are also increasingly aware of children who present with *autistic spectrum disorder*. We have also been familiar, for many years, with the general term EBD – *Emotional Behavioural Disorder*.

Increasingly, some of our students are prescribed medication related to their behaviour disorder (the most common being Ritalin or dexamphetamine for attention deficit spectrum disorder). These amphetamine-based medications can often help stimulate that part of the brain that engages attention / focus / concentration (it targets the attention *deficit* aspect of that part of brain chemistry).

No medication can – of itself – *teach* behaviour; this is obvious. Medication can aid brain function; it cannot teach a young person *what to do with increased attention and focus*. When a student says, “I’ve got ADHD”, we need to help him focus on his behaviour / learning skills (whether he is on medication or not).

Causative Pathology and EBD

Some children come from home backgrounds that create, or contribute, to stressful and disturbing behaviours in school settings : substance abuse of parents; serious family dysfunction; poor / inadequate dietary intake; structural and generational poverty; long-term unemployment; family housing ... the lack of *some* reasonable, stable, male influence in their extended family dynamics.

Most of these factors are not ‘new’ to the challenges teachers face in schools. What is different – in our present time – is our commitment to inclusive schooling (and education), a commitment to achieve support of students with special needs. This has put a lot of pressure on schools (natural pressure) to be supportively inclusive to children with special needs and to still meet the overall demands of a National Curriculum.

What we can / cannot control

Without minimising or disregarding a child’s diagnosed behaviour disorder, or any ‘causative pathology’, it is important to remember that one cannot control many of the factors outside our schools that affect the behaviour of some of our most disturbed, disruptive and vulnerable students. We can, however, control what we seek to do to support these students *within our schools* and to work as constructively as possible with their parents.

When addressing any recurrent challenging behaviours, whether diagnosed (or symptomatic) behaviour disorders, EBD or not, a whole-school approach is crucial. It is not a simplistic, “Oh well he’s your kid in your class (or lesson) ...” The emphasis needs to be, “He is ‘our’ student, in our school. What can we do to *practically and realistically*, help the student *and* the teachers who have the responsibility to teach, encourage and support him?”

- Whatever the child’s circumstances we also need to remember that behaviour is not only (or merely) conditioned (by causative pathology) it is also learned; it is also learned in context. If it is learned (poorly, badly) in other contexts behaviours can be re-learned more positively and constructively in the schooling context. This is a crucial stance to take; it avoids us (as teachers) re-victimising the child relative to their background, their ‘causative pathology’ or their behaviour disorder.
- A common behaviour profile : the first few weeks is crucial in supporting students and teachers alike with students who present with significantly distracting and disruptive behaviours. We need to ask questions such as :
 - How frequent is the distracting disruptive behaviour of this student? How frequently – each lesson (for example) – does the student call out?; push in line?; seat wander?; task-avoid / refuse?; exhibit inappropriate loudness?; attentional clowning?; obstructive, challenging and defiant behaviour?;
 - How durably are such behaviours exhibited? More than ‘bad-day syndrome’? Or several times each lesson, each day?
 - How general are such behaviours? Do these students exhibit such behaviours across all class with all teachers or are they selectively disruptive depending on which subject, which teacher? Some students are ‘selectively’ disruptive (only in *some* classes, with *some* teachers).
 - The other crucial aspect of any behaviour profile concerns the intensity of any distracting / disruptive behaviour; intensity of behaviour is normally more ‘occasional’ than is ‘frequency’ of behaviour.

See – particularly – ***Cracking the Hard Class*** 2nd Edition (2007) Chapter 7.

- If a student ‘presents’ with frequent, durable and general behaviours that distract / disrupt learning and safety of other students it is crucial that an individual behaviour management plan is developed with the student. All behaviour plans, such as these, are our best attempt to assist a student to be self-aware about their behaviour and to self-monitor and regulate their behaviour (without ‘constant’ teacher direction, reminder or discipline).
- A ‘case-supervisor’ (acting on behalf of all the subject teachers who work with the student) will develop the plan, one-to-one, with the student in question. This process is labour-intensive (on behalf of the school) but often has positive outcomes for the student (and his teachers alike).
- In developing such a plan the ‘case-supervisor’ (or ‘behaviour-tutor’ / or ‘adult teacher-mentor’)

'titles' vary across schools will help the student to focus on the academic / or social-survival skills he needs at school. The emphasis is educational not (primarily) a counselling approach. For example in the first DVD an example is given of a student (diagnosed with ADD) who engages in task-avoidance and distracting behaviours. He has a huge pencil case (with pens that do not work, little toys, football cards etc). His desk is overly cluttered. He cannot seem to find the right book. He is disorganised. These behaviours are not uncommon in students who present with ADD spectrum behaviours.

In developing an individual plan with any student the 'case-supervisor' works with the student one-to-one across several :

- discussing their current, frequent, pattern of behaviour and how it affects others in class time. In discussing such behaviour the 'supervising teacher' will often use picture cue (drawings) or role-play. Any 'role-play' (in this one-to-one setting) is an attempt to 'mirror' the student's distracting behaviour; to raise their self- awareness about their typical distracting behaviour.. It should never be used to embarrass or humiliate the student (and only ever in one-to-one sessions). We should also ask the student if they mind us 'showing them what it look or sounds like in class when they ...' It is never 'forced'. NB We do not use this approach with students diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- *Explaining the need to work – together – on a plan to help the student with his behaviour and learning in class time.*
- *Identifying those specific behaviours and even modelling them to the student – in the one-to-one sessions (often this creates good-humoured laughter).*
- *Encouraging the student to practise his plan with the case-supervisor – in the one-to-one sessions (the behaviours he needs to work on in class).*
- *Explaining how each teacher – in his year level – will support him with his plan (this support should be given quietly, unobtrusively, so as not to unnecessarily embarrass or 'single' out the student in class time).*

It is also important to teach the student *how* to fairly and reasonable get teacher assistance during busy on-task learning time.

Craig's Plan

1. **DO?** →
(desk organised?)
2. **TPC?** →
(table pencil case?)



3. **RC** →
(read carefully)
4. **RP** →
(check with your reading partner)
4. **WAIATDN?** →
(**BBW**) →
(what am I asked to do now – board, book or worksheet?)



5. **SA, BE**
(Start ... and give it your best effort)

{
CHECK
Think about
setting out the work.
}

6. **TA?**
If you need teacher assistance
Remember – without calling out.



All the best, Craig : Mr Rogers Mr James

Taken from *How to Manage Children's Challenging Behaviour* 2nd Edition (2009) pp58

In the student's plan (in the DVD vignette) the case-supervisor discusses and teaches a student several 'academic survival skills' (obviously he does not use that term) :

- how to have an organised desk (and why);
- have a 'table pencil case' (a small pencil case with a small ruler, one red and blue pen, an eraser, no sharpener, a couple of pencils);
- colour band his workbooks (a band of colour, or small coloured disks, across the bottom of each book so the student can easily, quickly, identify the subject class book). Some students have half a dozen class/subject books on their class table along with the large, weighty, cluttered pencil case all adding to disorganisation and attention disorder/distraction and contributing to task avoidance.

- How to come to any task, and focus, and begin their class work.

The student is also taught to *read carefully* (board, book, or worksheet). If they struggle with their reading they are encouraged to ask for teacher (or fellow student *if comfortable*) to quietly support their reading of the set task. *All the elements of any plan need to be understood in one-to-one rehearsal time.* Many students find it helpful to have a 'reading-partner' in core subject areas where the reading/comprehension demand is high. We should always ask the student if they are comfortable to work with a 'reading-partner' in subjects such as Maths, English, Science, Foreign Languages, Social Studies ...

Any student we suggest as a 'reading-partner' will be a student with high social/emotional intelligence and willing to spend time sitting with a student (on a personal behaviour plan) to *quietly, and non-embarrassedly, support the student* in their reading, and comprehension, of 'board', 'book' or 'worksheet' tasks ...

- The student is also taught to ask themselves the question, "What am I asked to do now?" (with this set task : board, book or worksheet). This is a question some students easily – even habitually – forget to ask themselves. It needs to follow a careful reading of the set task for each lesson.

These skills are *practised* (in the one-to-one setting with the adult mentor) and set out on a small reminder card (postcard sized or smaller). When I have developed such plans with students I often add small cartoons alongside the key elements of their plan (see example earlier).

The key to any *individual* behaviour plan is that the case-supervisor develops a supportive, teaching, relationship with the student in developing the behaviour skills in question.

It will also be important to discuss with the student :-

- who they can sit with (in class), who can really be helpful (in terms of not hassling but helping – quietly particularly in reading, comprehension ...). It is important that the student is comfortable about the choice / suggestion of who they sit with for this kind of help,
- who will know about, and see, and have a copy of the student's plan, (including teaching assistants),
- how they will get feedback (from their regular class teacher(s) and their '*case supervisor*'),
- and that there will be a daily (or in some cases a twice-weekly) review meeting with their 'case-supervisor' about 'how their plan is going ... the difference it is making ... any concerns? Any modifications, changes, we need to make ...?'

It is also crucial that each subject teacher in the year-level teaching team understands the student's plan (and why this student needs such a plan ...) and that each subject teacher supports the plan as developed by the case-supervisor. Such plans will only be effective with on-going teacher encouragement and support *across the teaching team.*

Of course some students do not respond to any supportive interventions, options, plans, counselling. If a student continues to behave in *repeatedly* distracting, disruptive or dysfunctional ways – day-after-day, and week in, week out – the school has a right to permanent exclusion options. This is always a difficult step but no student [or their parent(s) at times(!)] have a right to ‘hold a school to ransom’ by on-going, daily, hourly, behaviours that create unsafe environments or effectively block any whole- class teaching and learning when that student is in ‘in class’. The most common example of this is extreme oppositional defiance ‘disorder’ behaviours seen in extreme hostility, bullying and aggression. *Any* exclusion options for such students need to be based in collegial review, as well as head teacher decision.

Thankfully most students in the ‘EBD range’ do respond to such support options as outlined here. See – particularly – ***Behaviour Recovery 2nd Edition*** (2004).

And for *some* of our students school is the sanest, most secure, part of their day.

For *all* students school should be a safe, sane, secure place – after all, they spend a third of their waking day there – as do we, their teachers. We need to create collegial-safety margins to support one another in managing our more challenging students.



Question 13

Is there a place for using rewards as a way of motivating a challenging class?

My colleagues and I prefer to use the term *behaviour enhancement outcomes* (B.E.O.s) – it sounds less like a 'reward' and more of a celebration, or acknowledgement of effort. It also helps 'confuse' those educators who say we should never use 'rewards' (i.e. : stickers, stamps, charts, pens, reward cards to trade ... etc).

I have used the '3 Bs' (biscuits, board games even BBQs) with hard classes over the years. I have used 'raffle systems' with whole groups. Group rewards (or B.E.O.s) are often more effective than individual B.E.O.s with challenging *groups* of students.

Yes, it is a form of 'behaviour modification', and where we do use it then it needs to be 'out in the open'. We let the students know – in advance – that when we reach 50 points on our class chart we will have a 'celebration' (a B.E.O.) . Points can range from 20 points equal to a five minute free chat time (towards the close of the lesson) 'when we keep within our class plan for partner-voices during class work time ... (see the example of the class 'noise' graph in vignette 13 in the first DVD).

I have had a number of very challenging classes where I have used B.E.O.s as a *part of* an overall 'feature' of a fresh-start and always found it successful. Some of these case examples of those classes are noted in the book : ***Cracking the Hard Class 2nd Edition*** (2007). See also the book : ***How To Manage Children's Challenging Behaviour 2nd Edition*** (2009) particularly Chapters 3 and 4.

Encouragement

What is crucial to any support we give to students is the way we characteristically use encouragement. Encouragement is the most effective and *normative* 'B.E.O.'

When we encourage our students we consider the difference between praise and encouragement, particularly for students whose self-esteem and learning are often reflected in their disruptive behaviours.

I have seen students who have written one or two sentences, or a few Maths algorithms, or a few answers on a worksheet and heard teachers say, "That's brilliant!", "That's wonderful ... fantastic ... great! ...".

Is it? Do we speak that way to all our students?

Encouragement is crucial to a child's self-esteem; some sense of affirmation, accomplishment, confidence, progress and development. When we *globally* praise, however, students do not often believe that those few sentences they have written are actually 'brilliant' (and what does it say about our use of such as an intensely, evaluative word?)

Some students will only make *any* effort if we keep saying their work (or behaviour) is 'brilliant' or 'fantastic' – what is that actually teaching?

When encouraging our students we find it more effective, honest, fair and appropriate to :-

- focus on the student's effort, energy, time, thought (in their learning application or behaviour) eg "You started quickly Oliver ... Your table is organised and you're getting stuck into it." Of course tone, manner, and some quiet joie de vivre will carry the genuineness of the descriptive comment and feedback.
- use descriptive feedback. I recall teaching in a Science class (some years back) and I quietly explained to a lad (year 9) that it was so much easier for me to follow how he had done the experiment by the way he had set out his table and in pictorial cues (particularly as I am not a science teacher). He smiled and said, "Ta" and the lad next to him said, "Can you see my work too?"

"Sure." I had not said (or needed to say) his work was 'great', 'marvellous' or 'brilliant'. Or, if we do occasionally use these terms, at least explain what we mean by them.

I have seen these positive sorts of responses from students countless times when giving *descriptive* verbal feedback. The principle is the same when we give written feedback/'marking': not merely '8 out of 10, great work!'. Explain – descriptively – (as briefly as is appropriate) what '8 out of 10-ness' means within the student's work.

- Keep the encouragement (when given in class time) 'quiet', 'private' – not a loud comment, "Oh look how wonderful Craig's story is!" (In my view we should never hold up a child's work without their permission, or force them to read aloud, or do work on the board in front of the class.) The quiet, descriptive, positive feedback (as we speak to the student at their 'workplace') is much more appreciated than the global – overly ebullient – praise.
- Avoid qualifying the 'praise', encouragement or feedback. Eg : "You've written half a page here Paul ..." (this to a student who has been struggling with his writing). "... you've got some really interesting words for sea mammals here ... The way you described that dolphin for example ..." All this is descriptive and positive. We do not need to add the qualifier :-
 - "Why can't you do that *all* the time?"
 - "If only you ... then ..."
 - "But you could have done better if ..."

Yes we need to remind the student to check for date, spelling etc; we do not need – though – to qualify the encouragement itself.

Another powerful 'encourager' is a positive note home to a student's parent(s). Its effectiveness (in terms of being valued by the student), though, depends (as all encouragement) on whether the teacher has a workable relationship with the student and there is mutual respect between them.



Question 14

You mentioned (in the first DVD) that harassment of teachers is a factor in some challenging classes – could you develop that point?

This is the most difficult and disturbing issue of all to address relative to the challenging class.

Bullying, harassment, does exist in schools. Some students do harass, and bully, *some* teachers. They are also able to gutlessly garner some collusive peer ‘support’ for their power games.

The harassment of teachers is an issue in our schools that we must take seriously whenever – and however – it expresses itself. It may be hard for some teachers to believe this happens in schools (some schools) – it does. It is *always* unwanted, *always* unacceptable, and should never be taken lightly, or tolerated (at all).

As with any bullying, the bully is seeking to exercise some psychological and social power; to gain some self / ‘peer kudos’.

Almost all bullying / harassment of teachers is psychological in its expression : comments about the way the teacher is teaching; their clothes; sexuality; voice, and speech (particularly for teachers from non-English speaking backgrounds). Sometimes the bullying is expressed non-verbally (in suggestive poses or simulated gestures about a teacher’s sexuality ...). It is often expressed in *repeated* innuendo, rumours, or written forms, or ‘texted’, ‘Twittered’ or ‘Facebooked’ these days.

It happens in schools because some senior teachers tolerate it, or ignore the sexist comments, the innuendo ... Some teachers genuinely do not know what to do when students make derogatory comments, or ‘wind up other students’ in collusive derogation. Some teachers (sadly) are anxious about asking for colleague support for fear they will be seen as weak, ineffective or even incompetent. Teachers (in some schools) are not supported when they express their concerns; there is a tacit message of, “Well if you can’t manage a class it’s down to you ...” so any bullying of the teacher is effectively excused or rationalised as a teacher’s weak discipline!

The bullying I am talking about here is not the occasional silly or ill-considered comment, or even the one-off ill-thought, silly ‘larking around’, or even a derogatory or sexist remark; it is the *intentional, purposeful, selective, repeated* psychological harassment of a teacher. This sort of behaviour has to be addressed decisively and unambiguously.

Of course we need to address any one-off comments with confident assertion – before the student(s) get the impression that this teacher is an ‘easy target’.

When addressing the issue of harassment we need to assure the teacher (as with *any* victim of *any* bullying) that they are right to report and seek support. As in any bullying, of any kind, (whether student or teacher) early intervention is crucial.

Bullying will rarely stop 'of itself'; it needs to be confronted. Bullies 'trade' in secrecy from other adults (not from their peers – they need peer approval to confirm and ratify their 'status'). It is essential to expose the bullying behaviour early, and intervene to support the teacher in an 'accountability process' with the student concerned. This gives the teacher (in question) their *supported* opportunity to directly speak with the student perpetrator and call them to account for their behaviour and to expect their assurance that such behaviour will cease.

An 'accountability conference' with a bullying perpetrator needs to be planned and supported by a senior teacher.

The bullying student is called into a meeting with the teacher he / she has been harassing. It is crucial that the senior teacher works with the teacher before any such meeting :-

- Marshall the facts of the bullying clearly, specifically – in writing – before the meeting. The student's harassing behaviour has to be clearly understood before the meeting; (both the verbal and non-verbal aspects of the harassing behaviour).
- Plan with the teacher concerned what sort of things they will say when they directly face the student/s who has been bullying them. It is also important to remember this young person is not defined merely as 'the bully'; this is a student – one of our students we are seeking to engage with, explain, and bring accountability and restitution to – that is our aim, our purpose, in this meeting. It is not merely a confrontation exercise.
- The facilitator will clarify to the student why this meeting has been called (the tone is serious; formal) "I want to talk with you about what has been happening in 8D ... You'll have your say later ...". The student is given a right of reply later in the meeting. The senior teacher then sets out, describes, the bullying behaviour (without attacking the student – tempting as that may be!)
- The teacher who has been the victim of this harassment then faces their perpetrator and briefly, clearly, specifically, (without hostility or verbal aggression) :
 - describes what the bully has done, said, suggested or implied (non-verbal bullying ...). "This is what you have been doing, (saying, suggesting ...) in 8D". It is important to be specific about the student's harassing behaviour. This is why it is helpful to have the behaviours recorded beforehand.
 - explains how such behaviour affects the teacher's right to respect and fair treatment, and how such behaviours are affecting the teaching and learning in the classroom.
 - Explains why this behaviour has to stop and what the teacher – rightfully – expects of the student in the future. It is important to stress, again, that the tone of this meeting is formal yet respectful.

- The student perpetrator is given a right of reply. Most students will ‘discount’ or ‘defend’ their behaviour : “I was just joking when I said Mr _____ was a poofter!” “It’s no big deal I was only mucking around – anyway I wasn’t the only one!” “Others were doing it too ...”

It is essential that the facilitator refocuses these discounting comments ... “You might think it is a joke but in our school it is *not* a joke ... because ...” The teacher (or senior teacher) explains why such language is *never* a joke ... “Even if others were doing it (be brief and specific) *you are responsible for what you do and say* ... Other students who say, and do, these things *will be spoken to as well.*”

Some students will immediately apologise. What has to be clarified at this point in the meeting is that this behaviour *is* bullying; why it is wrong and totally unacceptable and that it must stop. An apology is one thing, *assurance of a change in behaviour* is another.

- The student is then ‘asked’ what he / she will do – specifically – to make this behaviour stop (the emphasis is always directed to the student’s behaviour and how it attacks / abuses the teacher’s rights ...)
- Some students will fold their arms and say nothing. In this case the facilitator (the senior teacher) slowly, firmly, calmly says, “Perhaps you’re saying in your head it’s only a joke (because you’re not actually speaking to us right now). It’s not a joke because ...” In other words the facilitator reframes (aloud) what the student is probably (internally) saying to themselves.
- It is also important to reframe the responsibilities of the student as related to the bullying incidents recorded.
- Lastly the facilitator will point out that there will be a review meeting in a week’s time to see ‘how things are going’ in 8D (in terms of the student’s behaviour ...) This puts the student on notice – properly. It is not a threat, it is a call for the bullying student to change their behaviour towards the teacher.
- It is also crucial that the teacher and student conclude the meeting as amicably as possible. The role of the facilitating colleague is crucial here (and this aspect will have been discussed *prior* to the meeting). This student is *not* our enemy; we are addressing their *behaviour* in light of the rights and responsibilities of all the members of our school community.
- Where there are several collusive students who collude with the ‘instigating perpetrator’ it is normally advisable to address the ‘collusive students’ in a one-to- one meeting as well. A similar approach is pursued as before, though in these cases the dialogue begins with ... “This is what has been happening in 8D. What do you know about this ...? How has your behaviour (here be specific) made it easy for bullying to occur to Mr_____Mrs_____...?” Collusive bullies ‘clap’, ‘whistle’, ‘laugh along’, or tactically collude. They too need to be clearly (respectfully) confronted with their behaviour. A *review meeting* may also be necessary with these collusive students.

- Senior staff will need to keep a running review concerning any harassment by students, and if necessary formal due processes (including a parent meeting) will need to be pursued within the school's harassment policy. Where necessary this will occasion a temporary, or permanent, exclusion from the school.

The earlier the accountability process is engaged the more successful the outcome (for all concerned).

Longer term, some teachers may benefit from some professional development in the area of assertion skills and confident behaviour leadership. (See question 17.)

Within a supportive colleague culture, staff will have an attitude of *colleague watchfulness* about potential harassment behaviours in challenging classes. If a teacher (for some reason) does not come forward to seek understanding and support then others should approach their colleague to share their concerns and offer support.

The issue of harassment affects *fundamental* rights to feel safe, to basic respect and the right to engage in one's professional role as a teacher.



Question 15

Supply teachers can get a hard time with challenging classes – how should we support them?

Put yourself in the position of a supply teacher – just for a few moments. They arrive (hopefully early), they go to the front office to ask where / what class they have that day etc. In some schools nobody seems to know which class (or where) this teacher is supposed to be. They go to the staff room; nobody says hello (though they are obviously a ‘new face’ – a new teacher ...). They reach for a cup to make a drink and someone says, “Hey – that’s my cup!” Someone may say, “Are you *the supply*?” (Rather than the basic, civil, human :- “Hello, welcome ... my name is ...”). “You’ve probably got the lunatic class 9E!”

Not a great start to a supply teacher’s day! It can feel as if one is a bit of a ‘lost sheep’, or treated as merely a ‘baby sitter’ for the day. This happens in *some* schools.

What a difference it would make if the supply teacher had :

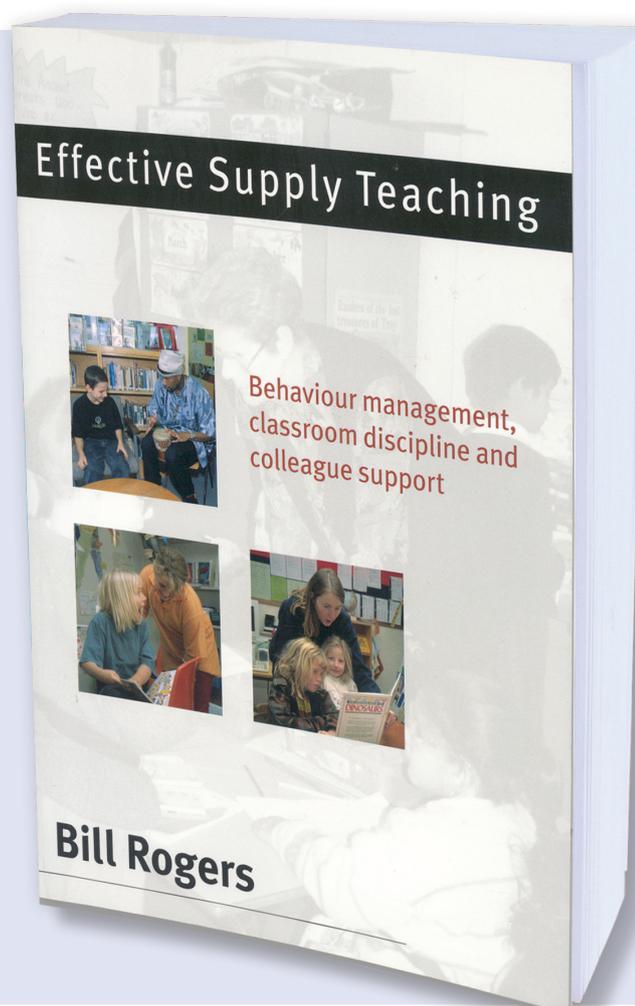
- a friendly, warm welcome at the outset;
- was introduced at the morning staff briefing – or at least introduced to their head of faculty/ department;
- a ‘teaching buddy’ for the day (not to ‘hold their hand’ but to be available for the normal queries ...);
- was given a decent, readable, map of the school, with the classroom marked (even better, a walk through the school to get a sense of where one is ...);
- If there are any really challenging students who are ‘catalytic’ (given half a chance) there should be the option of ‘enrolling’ these students in other class(es) for the day. It can be really difficult for a supply teacher who does not know these ‘challenging’ individuals to have to cope with the demanding responsibility of leading a more challenging class for the day, let alone supporting and managing some of the most challenging students in the school.
- Any essential routines and essential features of the school’s behaviour policy should be communicated clearly to the supply colleague, including how the school’s time-out policy operates (even the specifics of language used when directing a student to time-out); where they go and who to send the student to (etc).

- Some schools have a user-friendly ‘supply teacher kit’ handed to their ‘supply’ colleague on arrival to the school. For example the supply teacher should be aware of basic routines such as bell times / whether students line-up before they go into class, toilet rules etc.
- It will always help for a senior colleague to introduce their supply teacher colleague to the class group (positively) – even at secondary level at the very least to those more challenging classes. What should not happen is the patronising introduction where the senior staff member says, “This is Mr Smith, he’ll look after you while your regular teacher is away. And if there’s any problems Mr Smith you know where to send them to!”
- The supply colleague should also be made aware of ‘colleague safety-valve options’ (see question one).

If a class group has given a supply teacher a really hard, nasty, experience there should be immediate follow-up by a senior teacher *with the whole class*, and an apology process engaged and that apology passed on to the supply teacher concerned.

Students also need to be reminded that we treat *all* visiting teachers with respect, courtesy and manners.

See particularly the book ***Effective Supply Teaching*** (2003). Chapter 7, particularly, outlines the ways in which we can support our supply teaching colleagues within our schools.





Question 16

Is it ever too late to turn around, or 'change', a challenging class?

Sometimes – on some occasions – the behaviour of some students within a class group is so fractious, divisive, attentionally distracting (on a frequent basis); the catalysts have so entrenched their cliques and factions that the class might need to be 'divided-up'. The 'catalytic' students are given a clear, unambiguous, choice (with support offered) to change their behaviour or to be 're-enrolled' in another class group.

On rare occasions the class teacher may need to be 'taken off' that particular class group and given a fresh start with another class group. This is obviously the least elegant solution of all and can be very unsettling to a teacher's professional self-esteem. It needs to be carried through without censure or blame and other colleagues (who will have to pick up more challenging cohorts of students) will need to be empathetically supportive for such an approach to work in the best interests of all.

It also needs to be remembered that on *some* occasions the teacher's characteristic behaviour is so unreasonable, even untenable, that the best solution *is* to take the teacher off the class. This is always a difficult issue and requires very clear evidence (over time); a due process; (even union involvement on occasions) and should always be conducted with professional probity.

The fresh-start approach

In the first DVD we have emphasised colleague teaming, as the essential means of working with a very challenging class on a 'fresh-start'.

A teacher knows when they are – in a sense – 'losing' their class; when the behaviour of particular students are significantly affecting peer-behaviour and learning in negative ways. When early follow-up of individual students has not seen a positive change in attitude and behaviour then a 'fresh-start' is often an effective (and creative) means for change in attitude and behaviour (of the class and their teacher).

This fresh-start option essentially gives the students – as a class group – a shared voice about common concerns about 'how the class is going'. The aim is to work with that 'silent majority' (the 60% to 70%), re-engaging their 'silent' (sometimes active disapproval) into an active opportunity to communicate their concerns and work on shared solutions for change.

The vehicle for this process is normally a classroom-meeting process built around several questions :

- what is working well (at the moment) in our class and why?;
- what is not working well and why?
- what can we do to improve things here and now? (what do we need to do to change things and how?)

These questions can be explored through a formal writing process or within an ‘open’ classroom meeting approach. We have sought to model this in the first DVD.

This sort of classroom meeting process is often quite revealing; the issues of concern in a challenging class are rarely one-sided. Students know what is happening (and often why) and they have a keen sense of what is fair, what is reasonable, what is ‘right’ and what needs to change.

The meeting process will need planning and some guided rules (if it is an ‘open’ meeting). Even issues like seating (in the round) need to be carefully considered beforehand.

Some published rules for the discussion will need to be made clear at the outset eg :-

- *one student speaking at a time*; (a speaking ‘symbol’ will help – a class member can only speak / contribute when holding ‘the contribution symbol’. In the vignette in the first DVD we used a small box. Such ‘symbols’ are surprisingly effective). The other rules are obvious :-
- *we share respectfully* (no put-downs, slanging-off at anyone);
- *we disagree respectfully*.
It will help to set a time limit and have student ‘recorders’ to note down concerns, issues, and suggestions,(two students, one male, one female).

This form of classroom meeting process is not only a ‘vehicle for giving students an active voice it also re-enlists and re-engages the students’ goodwill towards shared solutions.

Beginning the process

Students are informed that there will be a specific classroom meeting (in the next week) to address issues of concern about behaviour and learning in our class. This is best communicated to the class with a support colleague (as we have modelled in the classroom vignette in the first DVD) eg :-

“ ... Mr Smith and I are really concerned about the behaviour of a number of students in our class – and the effect of that behaviour on the teaching and learning in our class and how we get on with one another. We’re talking about more than occasional ‘mucking around’. I’m not going to give you a lecture because you know better than anyone what it’s been like these last several weeks in our class. You know how concerned Mr Rogers and I are about how things are going. We’re having a special meeting where we can raise, share and discuss our concerns.

We want you to think about this between now and next _____ when we'll have our class meeting ...”

On the day of the classroom meeting itself we begin by explaining to the class group that, “This is your opportunity to raise your concerns (as we said last week...). At the close of the meeting we'll take your concerns, ideas suggestions and report back on ... We'll use your feedback to develop a whole-class opportunity to make a fresh-start as a class ...”

On the day that we give the feedback to the class, the class teacher (and their support colleague) will record the *common* concerns / issues / suggestions made by students (and teacher) on large charts for sharing the feedback.

“You remember last week we had a class meeting where you raised *your* concerns about our class (as we did with you as your teachers). Your concerns are also our concerns; we – too – are members of our class group.

“We want to share with you now your concerns and positive ideas and suggestions ...”

The students' concerns and suggestions always revolve around how we can have a safe class, a class where we can learn well (without unfair distraction /

disruption) and a class where we respect and treat one another fairly. Of course these are ideals – *but the right ideals*. It is then worth translating those ideals into some core, reasonable, expressed rights / responsibilities / rules with a strong emphasis on *our class*. Eg : WE ALL HAVE A RIGHT TO FEEL SAFE IN OUR CLASS : To feel safe here we remember to ... (we then list the essential expectations we need to remember to '*feel safe here ...*', and '*to learn well here ...*', and '*to enjoy the respect of one another here ...*'

“Every student here makes a difference. Every student's behaviour here affects *every other student* in ways that help or hurt.

- We all share the same place, space, and reason for being here. We *all* share the same basic feelings and needs in our classroom community ...”
- That's why we use respectful communication (no cheap shots / scoring off others / put-downs – bullying will not be tolerated).

When students and teachers can see and believe that they have needs in common they can then be encouraged (even expected) to work together and support one another.

The fresh-start process re-affirms those shared values, common needs and rights and responsibilities essential for every student, every class group.

The fresh-start process also works to change the spiral of negative feelings, experiences, behaviours the class has known up to this point.

As goodwill is re-affirmed and modelled and extended through this fresh-start process, the class (as a group) begins to experience what it can mean to be a class that works together constructively, supportively and co-operatively with each other and their teacher/s.

There is no single, simple, strategy that can change challenging behaviour in a challenging class just as there is no single reason why a class *is* challenging (or becomes challenging).

Whatever approach we take to the hard / challenging class *it is essential that we work collegially to :-*

- listen to our colleagues' concerns and anxieties without easy judgement or blame;
- listen to our students' concerns, anxieties without easy judgement or blame;
- harness the conscious, active goodwill of teachers;
- give the students a guided voice for – and about – their concerns;
- re-address the essential rights and responsibilities of all members of the classroom community;
- and work with the class, and their teacher, to realise their potential.



Question 17

You are a strong advocate of colleague mentoring – how do we realistically develop such an approach?

The colleague mentoring my colleagues and I engage in, is one that provides an opportunity to work *directly*, together, with a challenging class.. No-one is ever forced into mentorship; colleagues are invited into a professionally supportive journey. It is an elective opportunity based in professional trust.

The aims of such mentoring are :-

- to give moral support to our colleagues;
- to engage in meaningful professional self-awareness and reflection;
- to work directly in the classroom with a trusted colleague (over time). There is a shared focus on professional development with special reference to behaviour-leadership skills.

It is important to stress that this is not an evaluative approach, or linked to assessment review in any way. Its primary aim is to give moral support and enable professional development. Think of it as the opposite of OFSTED (no offence you understand).*

All colleague support needs to be conducted within a in a safe, trusting, environment. Yes, there is a risk with that trust (there always is when you invite a colleague into your class to work – directly – with you).

This kind of mentoring should never be set within a ‘superior’ / ‘inferior’ context. The mentor / ‘mentee’ work together, in challenging classes; the mentor experiencing firsthand the struggle and challenge of ‘hard classes’ and the struggle of their ‘mentee’ colleague.

This shared teaching also allows the mentor colleague *to both model and observe within a classroom context*. This becomes a basis for collegial discussion and feedback.

When giving feedback (from mentor to ‘mentee’) it is always descriptive, never judgemental or personal.

Eg : “Did you notice ...?”, “Were you aware of ...?”, “Did you hear yourself often say things like...?”, “Are you conscious of ...?” These questions raise professional self-awareness by focusing on specific (and characteristic) aspects of teacher leadership behaviour as evidenced in classroom contexts. NB * OfSTED involves *formal*, Government, inspection / evaluation of teachers – and schools, in England. (We do not have an Australian equivalent of OfSTED.)

I have seen (for example) teachers pace up and down in front of a class to try and settle them; I have seen them use characteristically loud voices, seemingly unaware that these teacher behaviours actually *over-stimulate* the class group. I have seen teachers over-engage student arguments; use really unhelpful corrective language (“*Why* are you calling out !?”; “*Don’t* talk while I’m teaching THANK YOU!”; “*Why* are you late?!”; “*Why* aren’t you working?”; “*Are you* supposed to be wandering around the room? EH?!”)

One of the areas we often focus on, in shared mentorship, is one’s *characteristic* use of corrective language and the effect that can have on how students co-operate with teacher expectations (within rights, rules, responsibilities) – see also question 6. See- particularly – ***Classroom Behaviour*** [3rd Edition] 2011 chapter 3.

All of us – at times – can become habituated in ineffective or unhelpful behaviours (as a class teacher). We may be unaware of what is it we *do*, and say, that is ineffective but also unaware of *the effect* that some of our characteristic behaviours have on students’ behaviour.

Mentoring, as a professional development option, needs to be :

- Elective and invitational. It should never be implied that mentor-coaching is only for ineffective, inadequate or struggling teachers. Of course ‘struggling teachers’ do benefit enormously from this kind of mentoring. Any success, however, depends on the colleague in question seeing a need, and purpose, in such a shared, professional, journey.
- Seen as purposeful in a professional development sense. The benefits of professional self-awareness, and supportive colleague feedback – arising from a challenging class context – can also significantly enhance one’s overall teacher leadership.
- Based in shared aims about how the ‘mentor’ / ‘mentee’ relationship will work together in the classroom.

Questions like :“How will the mentor-colleague be introduced to the class by the regular teacher? How will they team-teach? Even careful thought about where each teacher will stand in relation to one another during whole-class teaching time. Should the mentor colleague intervene in discipline settings *within the class* if the regular colleague (the ‘mentee’) is facing a challenging discipline situation that is getting out of hand? – and how should the mentor address such situations? All these issues need to be discussed *beforehand* and ‘cues’ discussed, and agreed, for how a mentor colleague might ‘intervene’.

- Based in a shared-purpose about practices and skills. No practices and skills are value free. It does matter what we do, and say, as teacher/leaders. In mentor-coaching approaches, colleagues work together on discipline practice in terms of whole-school core practices and the sorts of skills that support those practices.

For example, I have worked with many colleagues who struggle with settling, calming and focusing a class during the corridor-to-classroom entry, and then those critical first few minutes as students

settle in their seats. There are practices and skills that can enable a ‘calmer’ more ‘purposeful’ establishing (of a class lesson).

If a teacher is very loud, overly physically active (pacing, gesticulating) it often correlates with restlessness in students. If the management language is too interrogative, or questioning, in form it will often send the wrong message to students : eg : “*Why* are you pushing and shoving?”, “*Would* you all please face the front and listen?”, “*Can you* please face the front and be quiet?”, “Can you please stop talking?!”

We do not need to ask questions framed in ‘why’ or ‘would’ phrasing – it is not a ‘request’ that we need to communicate *in these contexts*. It is more effective (and appropriate) to give a whole class reminder or (more commonly) a direction to ‘settle’, ‘face the front’ (etc).

See – particularly – ***Classroom Behaviour*** [3rd Edition] 2011 chapter 2.

When we need to remind or direct a class group for whole-class attentional focus, we encourage a calm, confident, positional place at the front of the classroom; scanning the faces of our students as we wait for the residual noise to settle; then we verbally cue with directional language eg : “*Settling down* everyone (...)” “Eyes and ears this way (...).” “Thanks” – stepping the voice down with each brief direction.

Even the use of ‘thanks’ is more expectational than ‘please’ in this context.

Tactical pausing (...) gives brief attentional ‘take-up-time’ for students , and allows us to scan (even smile); and make transitional eye-contact. It can also convey our expectation of student co-operation.

These *skills* involve confident tone, manner and an ‘emotionally-intelligent’ awareness in the teacher. These skills can be meaningfully and practically taught within a mentor-coaching approach.

Shared feedback is always linked to the practices and skills.

Feedback is essential to professional *awareness* and *development* and *growth*. Much of the feedback in our profession is ‘incidental’ (apart from those stressful formal processes from government inspectors!) In mentor-coaching we seek to *descriptively* focus the feedback to a colleague’s behaviour and professional role. The place and purpose of feedback is discussed in the first planning meeting between mentor – ‘mentee’. Our ‘mentee’ colleague knows that they will receive, and give, feedback – both positive and *behaviourally/descriptive* – in areas where fine-tuning, or change, of behaviour will be of benefit to our ‘mentee’ colleague. At all times the shared aims, common practices and skills of discipline and management are our reference point for the feedback we give.

In most professions, mentoring involves feedback; because of the structural / physical isolation that is a feature of day-to-day teaching we often miss out opportunities for non-judgemental peer feedback. Mentor feedback is shared (over tea / coffee) after a teaching session. The feedback focuses on :-

- the behaviour of the teacher relative to their leadership in the classroom (their verbal, non-verbal behaviour);
- it is always non-judgemental and consciously respectful of our colleague and their feelings;
- it is descriptive : “Did you notice what you said when you ...?” (be specific), “Were you aware of ...?” (be specific), “Do you often hear yourself say things like ...?” (be specific);
- It is incremental (it does not overwhelm our colleague with too much, too quickly);
- The feedback is the basis for shared growth as professionals.

Feedback is naturally risky but without it we may not be aware (or aware *enough*) of what our *characteristic* language, tone and manner may be like (or its effect on our students’ behaviour, attitude, learning).

Mentor-coaching is time-consuming (labour-intensive) but often very beneficial to one’s professional growth. Organising shared timetable slots to work in a colleague’s class is a challenge but often when mentor-coaching is an integral (and valued) aspect of our school’s professional development options it is worth it.

In some larger schools we often have a colleague support group where mentors and ‘mentees’ meet over afternoon tea to discuss / share / laugh at our shared fallibility and our encouraging progress.

George Eliot (Mary Anne Evans 1819 – 1880) was once asked this question “Are you an optimist or a pessimist?” “Neither,” came the reply, “I am a *meliorist*.”

A ‘meliorist’ is someone who believes that we can *change things for the better – by persistent, practical effort ...*

When we support our colleagues (and our schools) with a ‘fresh-start’ then ‘*meliorism*’ is *back at work*.

More from Bill Rogers...

