Bringing out the Best in your Students

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4th July 2016

CRICOS Provider 00115M

Part 1: Student Talk

Why do students behave responsibly?

HEROES
addition
subtraction
multiplication
division

125 Student Interviews (10 schools)

Do you act anyway you want in this class. Are there some things you feel like doing that you don't do? For example, moving around, talking to your friends, swearing, hitting kids, jumping from desk to desk?

Why don't you do those things?

How would you behave if the school got rid of all punishments, rewards, reports to parents and teachers didn't say anything the way kids were behaving? Would you behave the same or differently?

Probing

- It's rude to do that

(*So why not be rude?*)

If You get 2 reds (traffic lights) you go to another room (1-2)

- It's rude, not polite
- (*So why not be rude?*)
- You get into trouble (3)

- I'd do whatever I want (5-6)

(*But what if the other kids can't hear*)

Yeah....I suppose that's a problem cause other kids can't learn.

Probing

- Can't distract other people and stop them learning

(what if no punishments, no rewards and no-one told your parents)

I'd yell out

(But you said..)

I don't really believe it (6)

Probing

I'd totally change. I'd swear and run in the library and yell and pull all the books on the floor.

But isn't running a bit dangerous? .... Yeah.....

*and yelling is distracting ....Uh ...Y*eah.....

and the swearing may make some kids uncomfortable..... .... Yeah, I guess.....

and without books kids would have trouble learning. .....Yeah

so would you still do it? .....

Yeah (3-4)

- I'd be good because you'd get into trouble.

(*But what if there were no punishments?*)

You'd get into trouble.

(*But ....what if there were no punishments?*)

You'd get into trouble.

(*But what if there's no more punishments, no more trouble!!*)

..... I'd say 'Can you please get the trouble back'. (5)

- There'll have to be punishments and there'll have to be a boss (4)

(What if no punishments, etc...)

Just muck around(9)

(*But what if kid next to you wanted to learn*)

Then I guess I couldn't. He (teacher) thinks we are interrupting him. Two thirds of the class don't care about the learning of other people.....We're never actually put in a group to talk about this kind of stuff.... that's why most students find bad behaviour amusing (9)

- When I’m good, I get a sticker from the teacher (prep)
- We get raffle tickets and awards (5)
- There’s free time on the computer (2-3)
- The teacher gives stickers (2)
- We have Earn and Learn (4)
- Our teacher has stickers, toys and lucky dips for good behavior (1)
- We get stickers and a ‘tick’ (1-2)
- Mrs X has free time, table points and table of the week (6)
- You get traffic lights because you’re good (prep)

Because of Rewards

- It’s not responsible, you get a bad reputation (5-6)
- They tell your parents (4-5)
- It’d be rude and they won’t be my friend (4-5)
- Miss X really likes my behaviour (2)
- No one would like you (6)
- If I interrupt people they might get angry and they mightn’t like me (3-4)

Because of Social Acceptance

- You'll get into really big trouble and get a detention (5)
- Mrs X would yell at me (prep)
- We have to listen to our teacher or be punished and sent to the office (2)
- The teacher will get angry (3-4)
- Can't be naughty or do anything bad. You get into trouble (2)
- You'd miss on going to specialist (2)
- You will go to time away (prep)
- That's breaking the school rules and bad behaviour gets into a lot of trouble (1-2)

- Might go down to the devil because you've been a bad person (2)

Because of Punishments

- Bad behaviour distracts us from our learning (5-6)
- Won't get an education(5)
- Get a good job (6)
- I wanna learn (6)
- You have the right to learn (3-4)
- We're not here to muck around...here to learn, get a good job(5-6)
- Otherwise we wouldn't learn anything (6)
- We need to concentrate to learn (7)
- We have to do jobs. We have to work (Prep)

Because of Own Learning

- It’s a rule (5)
- It’s the rules (8)
- It’s against the rules (5-6)
- The teacher made up the rules.... maybe the principal (4)
- I want to follow the responsibility and the law (2)

Because of Rules/Expectations

- It's rude, need to have respect for others (5)
- If you start singing, everyone can't do their work and will get bad marks. It distracts. (3-4)
- It affects other people in the class (8)
- Because it is rude to someone else (4)
- If you mess around they don't learn, the kids sitting next to you (7)
- It will distract the other kids and affect their learning (5)
- It's not fair to others (7)
- It would hurt some-one(Prep)
- It's a bad thing, it hurts people
- Other people have the right to be safe(3-4)
- Got to be role model for other children (5)
- There's other grades, sometimes they're trying to work (6)
- There are other people trying to learn (6)
- That's interrupting people (prep)
- That's interrupting her (teacher). She will forget what to say (prep)

Because of Learning/Safety of others

- It’s rude (what’s wrong with being rude?) It’ll be not fair (4-5)
- I’ll still be doing the right thing. Not showing respect otherwise (6)
- It’s wrong (6)

Because it’s wrong

- I’d just stay good (*Why?*) Don’t know….. but I would (2)
- Don’t like to be bad (6)
- If I hurt someone I wouldn’t feel comfortable (4-5)
- Being bad isn’t my thing (2)
- I’d feel really bad about it (6)
- I’m not that type of person (3-4)

Because of Self acceptance/condemnation

Which of the following reasons for behaving ‘well’ are best? Which reasons would you ideally like your students to provide?

Which are worst?

A. Because of Rewards

B. Because of Self acceptance

C. Because it's wrong

D. Because of Social Acceptance

E. Because of Punishments

F. Because of Rules/Expectations

G. Because of Own Learning

H. Because of Learning/Safety of others

Worst = Self interest: Because of Rewards, Punishments, Social acceptance, Own learning

Because of Rules/Expectations

Best = Internalised: Because of Learning/Safety of others, Wrong, Self acceptance

Why do students behave responsibly?

- fear of punishment (23% of comments)
- desire for reward (4%)
- avoidance of disapproval (6%),
- rules (5%)
- protecting own learning (22%)
- protecting the learning of others (23%)
- doing what's right (10%)
- being true to oneself (6%)

Conclusion

Some students maintain - even after being repeatedly challenged - a morally mature stance which is exemplified by *their* insistence that they would not behave irresponsibly because *they are "good"* and that *being irresponsible is "wrong."*

Such responses seem to suggest that these students have attained an authentic sense of moral agency.

Part 2: Teacher Talk

Assumption

What teachers say and do in class strongly affects students' learning and values.

We observed:

- hints
- directions
- demands

Two significant factors

Informational base

Potential for students to exercise autonomy

Informational Base

None

Hints

Directions

Demands

Informational Base

Student based

Hints

Directions

You need to look at the teacher

Demands

Informational base

- Teacher based
- Hints
- Directions
- Demands

Potential for exercising autonomy

Unrestricted

Hints

I couldn't speak when there was clapping

I love how many people have their hand up

Directions

What did we talk about? Hands up, one person at a time or I can't hear others

Put pens down, we want to see all of you thinking on the same page

Demands

Stop talking!

Pens down!

Potential for exercising autonomy

Restricted

Hints

I couldn't speak when you were clapping

X, you're interrupting the learning of others who are working

Directions

X, come sit on the floor so you can play with the other children

Move to this table please

Demands

X, Stop talking!

X and Y, put your pens down!

Potential for Autonomy

Unrestricted Directions

What did we talk about? Hands up, one person at a time or I can't hear others

Put pens down, we want to see all of you thinking on the same page

Remember, you have to play quietly while the other children are

Learning. Eyes to speakers. Show them respect

Restricted Directions

x, come sit on the floor so you can play with the other children

X, sit down please

Hinting

- Letting students know that rights are being ignored without telling them explicitly what to do
- This technique allows students ‘room’ to remain in their adult state (Berne, 1967) and act responsibly, rather than feeling they are being controlled and expected to be obedient without volitional discretion.
- Hinting may thus reduce the incidence of childlike resistance or rebellion which may occur in response to more authoritarian disciplinary approaches.

Three informational bases of hinting were observed

Hint without a reason provided:

Teacher touches table as hint

You're late and you left the door open

Hint based on the needs of the teacher:

I couldn't speak when you were clapping

I'm trying to teach and you're talking

Hint based on the needs of other students:

Everyone was listening and you interrupted

We need to give someone else a go

Level of identification of students

Generalized Hints:

I'm just going to wait. I'm waiting (Teacher waited)

Personalized Hints:

X you're interrupting the learning of others who are working

, Generalized Interrogative hints:

Is that necessary for the task?

Personalized Interrogative hints:

Y, are you ready to listen to X?

Generalized affective hints:

I love how many people have their hand up

Personalized affective hints:

I love the way X is listening

More Assertive Intervention

- Teachers were also observed being more overtly interventional in an apparent bid to seek obedience or compliance. This more assertive intervention took two forms:

➢ statements that functioned as behavioural directions

➢ statements that functioned as behavioural demands.

- Students tend to associate directions or demands, with or without aggression or sarcasm, with a more coercive style of classroom management (Roache & Lewis, 2011).
- Despite this perception, we propose that **hinting and assertion without aggression increases responsibility** whereas the use of aggression likely increases defiance.

Directing

- Telling or attempting to compel students to behave in a specified way.
- Directions were given both with and without reason.

Direction without reason:

You need to look at the teacher

X, stop!

Move to this table please

Pop your hands down

Stop calling out, please

Generalized directions:

- As distinct from hints, directions instruct students explicitly regarding the behavior they must desist from or adopt.
- Students do not generally perceive they have a choice in the way they respond. They must either comply with, or defy, the teacher's direct instruction.
- Directions were directed at the class as a whole or at a number of unidentified students.

Stop calling out, please

Move to this table, please

Directions with a reason:

Direction based on needs of the teacher:

I don't need any of you playing with the ink pads, I need you looking over here

What did we talk about? Hands up, one person at a time or I can't hear others

***Direction based on needs of the target student/s*:**

Put pens down, we want to see all of you thinking on the same page

I need to see your eyes. It's to help you for number 4 or you'll get it mucked up

Direction based on needs of other students:

Remember, you have to play quietly while the other children are

Learning. Eyes to speakers. Show them respect

Personalized directions:

- These directions were aimed at an individual student. In most cases, students were referred to by name.
- Personalized directions may be more effective at arresting attention and eliciting a compliant response.
- May also serve an affective function in the sense that students may perceive their teacher cares about them.
- **Tone** is a critically important element in determining the message the student hears in both hints and directions.

X, come sit on the floor so you can play with the other children

X, sit down please

Interrogative directions:

- The teacher makes an assertive request of the whole class, a group or an individual student as a question. "*Might we begin*?"
- The teacher's **body language and energy** convey a sense of implicit authority.
- Students may feel they have a choice regarding their decision to comply with the expected behavior or action.
- A distinctive **relational function** exists as students may perceive they hold some power over the outcome of their teacher's request.
- Risk involved in according students the power to determine whether the teacher's stated needs are met. This perceived power could be abused by students who choose **to defy**, rather than **comply** with expectations.

X, can you do me a favour and move to the back, please?

Directions which explicitly reference moral values:

- These directions explicitly refer students to attend to a value or attribute which enhances **citizenship**.
- Notably, relatively few hints or directions referred to moral positions or values.

If you are writing at the moment I'd like you to put your pens down... It's because if someone is sharing it's polite to listen

Guys we need to be a bit respectful. You should be facing X now

Some people aren't listening and they're not showing respect to you, or anyone else

Demanding

- Demands differed to directions in that they had a linguistic terseness and tended to be expressed without personalization.
- It appeared that **omitting a student's name** from the demand added to its **authoritative effect**.
- Demands strongly reflected teachers' use of Legitimate Power.
- Demands may be perceived as implicit reminders of the potential use of Coercive Power.
- Directions were often laced with conventionally polite words such as *please*. A demand such as '*Sit here*' may be perceived as rejecting whereas '*sit here, please'* may not

Stop talking!

Pens down!

Tone and Body Language

- A powerful difference between directions and demands resides in the tone and related body language of delivery.
- An identical sentence or phrase may function as either a direction or demand.
- Factors including tone, body language, pedagogical stance, facial expression and energy may distinguish between direction and demand and engender responses ranging from compliance to refusal borne of transference.
- A rejecting tone or body stance may trigger transference which is defined as “the unconscious projection of attitudes and feelings from past relationships, particularly with family, onto other persons in the present”, in this case the teacher. (Downey, 2007; Weiss, 2002,p.109)

Being your best?

- The apparent overwhelming focus of observed teacher talk was **to gain obedience or compliance** rather than referring to relevant value positions or notions of doing right or wrong.
- We observed no references to **self-actualization.**
- Hinting and directing were almost exclusively used in reference to individual/group learning, safety and **compliance with teacher expectations**.
- Demands appeared to be used almost exclusively with Legitimate Power and delivered without explicit or even implicit rationale other than that students needed to do what the teacher wanted.

Implications

- When teachers are explicit about the rationales for classroom behavioural expectations, students are more likely to choose to act responsibly; they may be persuaded that this is the right thing to do when in a structured group.

- To avoid student frustration borne of not understanding why their behaviour is deemed deficient or inappropriate, and to facilitate moral development, **behavioural rationales should be explicitly referenced** in either group or individual discussion so that students learn to internalize the moral basis for responsible behaviour.

What might teachers do to foster the development of moral agency in their classrooms?

Teachers' judicious use of techniques such as: pedagogically tactful teacher comments, hints, questions, directions or demands and discussion - some of which are aimed at facilitating student reflection - may also encourage students to internalize the value of prosocial personal and interpersonal conduct.

What's missing in Teacher Talk?

- The omission of teacher talk referencing higher moral reasoning or self-actualization was stark.
- We wonder why teachers did not refer more often to self-concept, social acceptance, and the wrongness of certain conduct or attitudes in teacher talk.
- Why do teachers not choose to consistently use interrogative hints such as:

Are you being your best?

Is what you're doing fair?

Is what you are doing reasonable/ responsible / right?

Morally driven classroom management strategies

- Actively promote prosocial skill development
- Help students learn to appreciate the rationales underpinning respectful conduct
- Celebrate responsible conduct
- Utilize **teacher talk** (focussed, purposeful and outcome oriented) to teach and support pro-social knowledge and skill development

Engaging Moral Reasoning

- Messages most likely to prompt moral reasoning rely minimally on Legitimate Power whilst maximizing Referent and Informational Power (eg. a focus on shared responsibility for others' learning.)
- Interrogative directing may generate moral development when teachers know a student's current pro-social behaviour capacity and pitch their comments so students perceive their teacher is appealing to their moral reasoning.
- "What are you doing?" may solicit high level moral reasoning if pitched at the student's adult ego-state in a tone that conveys the implicit rationale of the message and engages genuine student understanding.

You can do better!

For students to internalize moral values, messages need to be conveyed through sparingly used and tactfully worded hints, directions and demands and where warranted, augmented by discussion.

Consider how this might approach might sound to students:

Hint: *Are you being **your** best?*

Direction: ***You*** *can do better than this!*

Demand: *I expect you to live up to **your** potential.*

*You have to be the best person that **you** can be –*

you can do better! (Or even better: you can be better!)

Bringing out the best in your students

What teachers say likely influences their students' reasoning. Teachers can develop a student's moral reasoning or possibly regress it. We suggest that teachers who believe it is important to foster moral development

- Hint sometimes before giving directions
- Give a reason for expectations
- Give students space to make an 'adult' decision
- Base Classroom Management on the needs of others
- Use words like fair, reasonable, appropriate, responsible
- Tactfully discuss with students the negative impact their (mis)behaviour has on others (including the teacher)

References

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Thank you

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