



## Micro-Workshop 5

### ***Responding to Inappropriate Behaviour— Discipline Paradigms***

One of the objectives of The Society Safe and Caring Schools Project is to encourage adults to use problem-solving strategies rather than punishment when dealing with children's and adolescents' inappropriate behaviour. When using a problem-solving approach, the goal is for the young person to learn a better way to behave. With a punishment approach the goal is to impose a penalty (or reward). However, making mistakes is part of growing and learning. Remember it is the behaviour not the child that is the issue. This micro-workshop will help teachers think about problem-solving versus punishment approaches.

This workshop poses three questions:

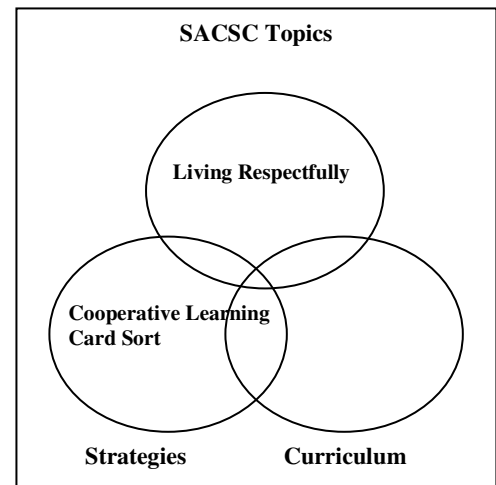
1. What behaviours do students learn from each approach?
2. Which paradigm reflects your approach?
3. How can we move to a problem-solving approach?

#### **Activity Card Sort**

Begin to engage teachers in thinking about problem-solving versus punishment approaches using this card sort activity. Facilitate a discussion about the process of sorting the cards to make meaning of the activity.

Step 1 Create card sets for each group using the characteristics listed on the chart below. For example, make a card that says Focused on mistakes, one that says Focused on 'making things right', and so on. Form groups of 4 or 5 and provide one set of cards per group. Shuffle the cards and ask one group member to deal them face down. Ask each participant to put his or her cards into one of two categories; Punishment or Problem-solving. Spread the cards out so that they can all be seen at a glance. Once the cards are all categorized, ask each group member to take turns justifying their choices. Ask participants to be prepared to make changes based on group consensus.

Step 2 Ask the participants to discuss these questions, "What does each approach teach students about how they should behave?" "How can the problem-solving approach be reflected in personal teaching practice, school discipline policy and district policy?" Use the overhead



(provided at the end of this document) and notes and information following this chart to help raise relevant points and provide additional information. Provide a hardcopy of the chart for participants.

| <b>Punishment</b>                          | <b>vs</b> | <b>Problem-solving</b>                            |
|--|-----------|---|
| Focused on mistakes                        | vs        | Focused on making things right                    |
| External control                           | vs        | Intrinsic motivation (values/prosocial character) |
| Rewards and punishment                     | vs        | Recognition, restitution and logical consequences |
| Abdication of responsibility               | vs        | Assumption of responsibility by all               |
| Exclusion/expulsion                        | vs        | Belonging/resocialization                         |
| One consequence fits all                   | vs        | Consequences are based on circumstances           |
| Moral condemnation                         | vs        | Preventive education and interagency approach     |
| A fight against delinquents                | vs        | A fight against delinquency                       |
| Intimidation                               | vs        | Respect   |
| Retaliation                                | vs        | Reconciliation                                    |
| discipline is a burden                     | vs        | discipline is learning a better way to behave     |
| \$7 Spent on the justice and penal systems | vs        | \$1 Spent on prevention and early Intervention    |

**NOTES**

The above chart (see overhead at the end of this document) parallels two approaches to dealing with children’s misbehaviour. Some will argue that the punishment model does modify behaviour, and this is true. It does so by imposing external controls, such as rewards and punishments which are dependent on external forces (adult approval or disapproval). This approach relies on intimidation, exclusion and expulsion. The punishment model fails to teach responsibility, because good behaviour is dependent on the presence of an adult. If one examines the personal backgrounds of juvenile and adult offenders ones sees that a history of punishment and abuse is not uncommon. Obviously punishment has not worked for them. In fact, many would argue that it caused misbehaviour.

It is important to note that a problem-solving approach is consistent with:

- The ATA’s Code of Professional Conduct, Clause 9, Section 8F, number 4, which states that *the teacher treats pupils with dignity and respect and is considerate of their circumstances.*
- The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child which states that *states shall protect children from physical and mental harm and neglect and—Discipline should respect the child’s dignity.*

Natural justice, which is reflected in Canada's Common Law, states that when individuals have been accused of a crime they have the right to state their case. Natural justice results in consequences that suit the circumstances. Sometimes imposing punishments ignores children's right to natural justice. A problem-solving approach builds in natural justice and should be part of a the school discipline policy.

Children can learn to behave respectfully and responsibly when the problem-solving model is used. This model teaches responsibility by:

- \*\* dealing with misbehaviour as it relates to given circumstances,
- \*\* considering how misbehaviour affects others, and
- \*\* learning how to make restitution.

Engaging in problem-solving teaches children how to learn pro-social behaviours from their mistakes whereas punishment works on the premise that children are best motivated by fear, intimidation and guilt.

When we change our thinking about student misbehaviour and about conflict it helps in implementing approaches that teach rather than punish. To keep our responses to misbehaviour in the problem-solving paradigm, we need to develop discipline policies that reflect problem-solving principles, be consistent in the application of the approach, ensure community and school involvement and above all always treat children with dignity. To work, problem-solving requires time, patience and a firm commitment to follow through with consequences or restitution.

Many people grew up in an era where punishment was used in their own upbringing. Shifting paradigms to thinking about problem-solving rather than punishment requires process that engages everyone in discussions about the real implications of punishment.

To stimulate further discussion and research on this topic consider booking these workshops

## **Follow-up workshops**

### **Building a Safe and Caring Classroom — Behavioural Strategies for Junior and Senior High**

#### **School Teachers**

This workshop is based on the ATA's SACS Project philosophy and the nationally renowned book *Classroom Management: A Thinking and Caring Approach* by Peter Smilanich and Barry Bennett. Co-author Peter Smilanich worked with the ATA's SACS Project to develop a workshop that melds the ATA's violence-prevention principles with proven strategies based on the teaching practices of thousands of teachers. This workshop can be given in half-day or full day sessions.

#### **Discipline: Learning a Better Way to Behave**

Discipline is not a product of policies and rules but a complex interplay of many factors that make up the climate of the classroom, school or community. School administrators and teachers are challenged to find new approaches to replace traditional discipline strategies like verbal reprimands, punishment, suspension and expulsion. There are many reasons why the old models don't work today: increased violence in society, the impact of drugs and alcohol, changing family values, increased poverty and difficult community issues. Yet in spite of these problems

and challenges many schools and classrooms have effective discipline programs that create environments where students can learn and feel safe.

This workshop offers participants an opportunity to critique several current discipline programs, refine techniques and refocus on developing positive relationships within the school. Using discussion and small group activities participants will analyze their current school and classroom discipline strategies in relation to a variety of successful programs. Topics covered will include punishment vs problem-solving approaches, positive-discipline techniques and violence prevention. A full-day workshop can be extended to include time for a more in-depth discussion of current issues such as zero tolerance, developing a code of conduct and restitution. This workshop was developed in collaboration with The Society for Safe and Caring Schools Project and reflects the philosophy and practices of a positive, problem-solving approach.

**To book this workshop contact:**

Janey Kemp

Barnett House,

11010 142 Street NW, Edmonton AB T5N 2R1; or phone (780) 447-9485 (Edmonton), toll free in Alberta 1-800-232-7208 or fax (780) 455-6481.

*Micro-Workshop #5 Teaching Paradigms*

**Which paradigm reflects your approach to misbehaviour?**

**Punishment**

**or**

**Problem-solving**

**Focused on mistakes**

**vs**

**Focused on “making things right”**

**External control**

**vs**

**Intrinsic motivation  
(values/prosocial  
character)**

**Rewards and punishment**

**vs**

**Recognition, restitution  
and logical consequences**

**Abdication of responsibility**

**vs**

**Assumption of  
responsibility by all**

**Exclusion/expulsion**

**vs**

**Belonging/resocialization**

**One consequence fits all**

**vs**

**Consequences are based on  
Circumstances**

**Moral condemnation**

**vs**

**Preventive education &  
interagency approach**

**A fight against delinquents**

**vs**

**A fight against delinquency**

**Intimidation**

**vs**

**Respect**

**Retaliation**

**vs**

**Reconciliation**

**Discipline as a burden**

**vs**

**Discipline as learning a  
better way to behave**

**\$7 spent on the justice and  
penal systems**

**vs**

**\$1 spent on prevention  
and early intervention**