

Conscious Discipline

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Problem Statement: Why are you studying this area? Why is this area important for your audience to know about?

I chose to study *Conscious Discipline* for my research project because it is a classroom management program that I have been interested in for a while now. This program, designed by Becky Bailey, centers around a close knit “school family” that helps children to feel connected and comfortable at school. It emphasizes getting to know and understand one another, helping our children become in control of their emotions and behavior, and guiding our students to become responsible, respectable, honest citizens. In reflecting on my own philosophy of education and what I believe to be true about how children learn and grow, I feel that *Conscious Discipline* parallels my thoughts on proactive classroom management, creating a positive atmosphere where students are valued and respected, and taking the time to teach students proper behavior. The neat thing about *Conscious Discipline* is that it first teaches teachers and adults how to take control of the various emotions we experience, and then shows how to model and explain these strategies to our students.

Furthermore, all too often teachers are continuing to use traditional methods of classroom management when society has changed to a more community-based model where relationships are valued. Research has shown that the ways in which consequences were implemented in the past are not effective in instilling positive values in children and helping them to understand why and how they act the way they do. *Conscious Discipline* helps teachers change their own attitudes and actions, which affects their students’ outlooks and conduct in and outside of the classroom. Instead of using

universal consequences, natural and logical consequences are employed, assisting children in becoming independent and responsible members of society.

Definition(s)/Description of condition (e.g., AD/HD), disability (e.g., Emotional Impairment), or program (e.g., Cooperative Discipline)

Conscious Discipline is a classroom management program with a goal of helping teachers develop and become attuned to their emotional intelligence so they are able to consciously respond to, interact with, and thus teach their students valuable communication skills. The program places a large focus on building positive relationships and teaching students social and conflict resolution strategies that they can apply in the real world. Using this program, teachers create a “school family” within their classrooms, which establishes community and provides students with a safe and comfortable environment where they are able to take risks and learn and grow. A major goal of *Conscious Discipline* is to help students become problem solvers and effective communicators. The idea is that through modeling and explicitly teaching these behaviors, our students will develop social and emotional awareness and will begin to value themselves and their relationships with others.

Conscious Discipline focuses on the “Seven Powers for Self Control,” including the Power of Perception, Unity, Attention, Free Will, Love, Acceptance, and Intention, all of which are supposed to help teachers change their attitudes and behaviors in order to become proactive rather than reactive in their management of the classroom. Within the

“Powers for Self Control” stem the basic skills needed in order to respond to conflicts that arise in a productive way. The skills include composure, encouragement, assertiveness, choices, positive intent, empathy, and consequences. “All of these skills are based on a very easy to understand Brain Model which teaches us about the different states in which we function” (Osborne).

Conscious Discipline discourages the use of rewards and punishments in the classroom. “External motivators like treasure boxes, point systems and other behavior-tracking programs are not used. Children are motivated by: caring, connection, contribution, and the empowerment of conflict resolution” (Hoffman, 3). In order to guide our students into becoming responsible citizens who can make good choices, we need to reinforce positive behavior by recognizing it, and correct misbehavior by using natural and logical consequences, as well as turning times of conflict into opportunities to learn. “‘The use of punishment and rewards exemplifies doing things to kids to make them obey. But the only way to help them grow into good people is to work with them – to explain, to guide, to listen, to solve problems together, to give them more chances to choose,’ says Kohn” (Schreiber).

Facts, Statistics, Incidence - What are key data that might be relevant to your audience (e.g., research support, incidence of this issue, statistical trends)?

The following are just some of the proven results of *Conscious Discipline*

(http://www.beckybailey.com/cd_research.cfm):

- *Conscious Discipline* decreases aggression in schools by creating a safe learning environment
- *Conscious Discipline* increases academic scores on state tests due to the large impact classroom management has on learning
- *Conscious Discipline* decreases impulsivity, hyperactivity in children in public schools by teaching children positive behaviors and attitudes
- *Conscious Discipline* creates a positive school climate by placing a large emphasis on building positive relationships and working together
- *Conscious Discipline* decreases behavior problems, thus increasing teaching time

“A growing body of scientifically based research on the impact that social and emotional behaviors have on success in school developed into a 17-state partnership (KIDS COUNT, 2005) that created a document entitled ‘Findings from the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative.’ **This research concludes that ‘healthy social-emotional development is the foundation for cognitive development. And, without saying, cognitive development is essential for academic progress’**” (Hoffman, 3).

Classroom Management programs, such as *Conscious Discipline*, that promote intrinsic motivation by focusing on developing emotional intelligence, lead to more positive school climate (Hoffman).

Implications for Classrooms, Parents, Building: What does this mean for your audience? What concrete things can we do or act upon tomorrow as a result of your project?

I hope that this project inspires educators to think closely about whether or not their current management practices match their beliefs about how children learn best. I hope this information about *Conscious Discipline* motivates some teachers to learn more about the program to enhance the management of their classroom, as it did me. This project is not all encompassing and teachers and parents interested in learning more will need to purchase the *Conscious Discipline* workbook and/or videos to gain a full perspective on this classroom management program. “According to brain research, it takes twenty-one days of stimulation to create a new neural network. In other words, it takes twenty-one days to develop new habits” (Bailey, 16). In order to truly reflect on ones practices and gain a full understanding on the seven powers and skills used in this program, Becky Bailey encourages educators to study one power and skill per month.

In the mean time, teachers should take advantage of “teaching moments” in their classrooms by turning times of conflict into opportunities to learn. Social skills as well as positive character traits and conflict resolution should be taught in context and in real-life situations as they occur in the classroom. Make an effort to build community in the classroom and makes students feel like valued members of a team. One thing that I personally took away from this program initially, before studying it at a deeper level, is to think about the ways in which I respond to children. It is important to notice rather than judge, in order to encourage children and help them develop into responsible,

independent learners. “For children to develop kindness, they must know what it looks like, feels like, and sounds like. It must be labeled and described as it occurs... By noticing helpful and kind acts in this way, we can achieve many developmental goals that lead our children to embrace our most cherished values” (Bailey). Finally, model the behaviors and attitudes you would like your students to learn and exhibit. I find that when I do all of these things, I feel better about my ability as a teacher and my students appear to not only enjoy school more, but also take more ownership in their learning.

Conclusion/Summary of "Big Ideas"

Throughout my study of *Conscious Discipline*, I have found this management program to be thorough, with realistic strategies that are based on current brain research on how children learn best. Its ultimate goal is to help children acquire self-control and establish real, honest relationships. I believe that the tools and ideas this program provides teachers are easily attainable and are practical to implement in the classroom. An important idea to consider is the importance of not only modeling behaviors to our students, but also labeling those behaviors and explaining what, why, and how to behavior in a particular way. These explanations will help students understand the importance of behaving in a particular way and they will then be able to add the attitudes and behaviors learned into their repertoires. As teachers we need to remember our ultimate goal, which is to have students become internally motivated and disciplined. We want to support our students to regulate their behavior in order to make good choices. Just as when we teach reading and math, we need to remember to explicitly teach

behaviors with direct instruction, give our students time to practice and rehearse, while providing reinforcement along the way. Additionally, we need to keep in mind the “hidden curriculum,” that is the behaviors that are assumed to be learned, but not always taught, and guide our students to learn these actions and attitudes before we can expect them to make good choices on their own.

Additional Resources: Where can I go to get more information?

Books

- Bailey, B. A., (2000). *Conscious Discipline: 7 Basic Skills for Brain Smart Classroom Management*. Oviedo, Florida: Loving Guidance.
- Bailey, B. A., (2000). *Easy to Love, Difficult to Discipline; The 7 Basic Skills for Turning Conflict into Cooperation*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Bailey, B. A., (1997). *I love you rituals: Activities to build bonds and strengthen relationships with children*. Oviedo, Florida: Loving Guidance.
- Bailey, B. A., (1996). *There's Got to be a better way: Discipline that works*. Oviedo, Florida: Loving Guidance.

Journals

- Bailey, B.A. (2006). Kindness counts. *Scholastic Parent & Child*.
- Gordon, D. 2001. Classroom management problems and solutions. *Music Educators Journal*, 88 (2), 17-23.
- Hoffman, L., Hutchinson, C., & Reiss, E. (2009). On improving school climate: reducing reliance of rewards and punishment. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, vol. 5 (3).
- LeCompte, M. (1978). Learning to work: the hidden curriculum of the classroom. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, vol. 9 (1), 22-37.
- Schreiber, T. (2008). Alternatives in Discipline. *Parentmap.com*.

- Soodak, L. (2003). Classroom management in inclusive settings. *Theory into Practice*, vol. 42 (4), 327-333.

Websites

- Bailey, B. 2008: Loving Guidance. Loving Guidance. Retrieved July 20, 2009 from <http://www.consciousdiscipline.com/>.
- Early Childhood. <http://www.wcwcw.com/earlychildhood/>.
- Osborne, P., L. Our Conscious Discipline Journey. Retrieved July 28, 2009 from <http://www.peggyosborne.net/CDJourney.html>.
- Traci. (2008, Nov.). Personal Journey with Conscious Discipline. Message posted to <http://consciousdispline.blogspot.com/>.

National Groups

- Character Education Partnership. <http://www.character.org/>.
- National Education Association. <http://www.nea.org/>
- National Network for Child Care. <http://www.ncc.org>.