

# Introduction

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*In describing the climate of a classroom, we are often guided by a certain set of values, a vision of what school ought to be like. We might begin with the premise, for example, that an ideal climate is one that promotes deep understanding, excitement about learning, and social as well as intellectual growth. (Kohn, 1996, p. 54)*

**E**very educator works toward establishing and maintaining an improved school climate to enrich school conditions so that teachers can teach better and students can learn more (Hansen & Childs, 1998). This goal is challenging because students in the twenty-first century live in an age of information overload and high-stakes testing; Internet access and text messages; personal insecurity and drug use; and sometimes violence in their homes, schools, and society. Thus, it is difficult for students to walk through the doors of a school and leave all their distractions and problems behind them.

In the students' search for their own identities and, sometimes, their search for an escape from family and societal problems, they look to the schools for the constant that is often missing in their home lives. Educators today need to do more than help students meet standards, score high on standardized tests, master the curriculum, secure jobs, or get accepted into college. Educators are also responsible for teaching students how to interact in socially acceptable ways and how to develop the interpersonal skills necessary to be successful in life. We need to focus on the "whole child."

The obedience model of discipline used by many educators in the past is no longer effective in today's world. Glasser (as cited in Gough, 1987) states that no amount of coercion in the schools is going to make students learn. "The old theory, 'we can make 'em work; all we have to do is get tougher,' has never produced intellectual effort in the history of the world, and it certainly won't work in this situation" (p. 657). Glasser (1997) advocates "choice theory" to help students. Choice theory shows people that behavior can only be controlled by themselves. If people are not personally satisfied with what they are doing, no amount of punishment or number of rules and restrictions will force them to comply with ideas or systems they do not believe in. "Individuals need to belong, to have power, to have freedom, and to have fun" (Glasser as cited in Hansen & Childs, 1998, p. 16).

Making students work and learn by "getting tough" is not the answer. Moreover, the "pour and store" philosophy of filling students' heads with

knowledge has been dispelled by brain research that shows students need time to make connections and process information. New strategies for instruction, assessment, curriculum, and classroom management that reflect students' learning needs are beginning to be implemented by schools throughout the world to meet the needs of all learners.

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

The purpose of this book is to help beginning teachers and veteran teachers alike establish a climate in their classrooms and schools that fosters a spirit of cooperation, a sense of responsibility, and a love of learning. Educators need to make the environment conducive for learning before they can address standards, curriculum, or assessment. The atmosphere of the classroom and the respect and courtesy students show to themselves, their peers, and their teachers form the essential foundation for engaged learning and increased student achievement.

This book is divided into eight chapters and an epilogue that can be summarized as follows:

*Chapter 1* addresses current issues in education such as Response to Interventions (RTI), attention deficit disorder (ADD), and violence in schools.

*Chapter 2* discusses the theories of brain-based learning, multiple intelligences, differentiated learning, authentic assessment, standards, the emotional intelligence, and cooperative learning.

*Chapter 3* introduces specific strategies to establish a positive classroom climate where students create rules and consequences to guide their conduct.

*Chapter 4* integrates the explicit teaching of social skills into the curriculum so that students are taught how to interact with peers, work in cooperative groups, and resolve conflicts.

*Chapter 5* explores strategies to deal with students who have trouble accepting responsibility for their behavior and learning.

*Chapter 6* introduces methods to help students who have weak interpersonal skills that hurt their relationships with peers and teachers.

*Chapter 7* offers problem-solving strategies to prevent and handle more serious discipline problems caused by aggressive, attention-seeking, or power-seeking students.

*Chapter 8* reviews Response to Interventions (RTI) and ways to help students with special needs deal with their learning challenges, behavior problems, and language and physical challenges.

The *Epilogue* provides an example of a class meeting where teachers and students meet to discuss problems and solutions to situations.

While Chapters 1 and 2 provide a review of issues, theories, and research related to classroom management, Chapters 3–8 contain scenarios that outline a specific social skill problem as well as activities, assignments, possible solutions, and specific strategies to address not only the problems outlined in the book, but also the real problems teachers experience in the classroom every day.

There are no “right” answers for the daily problems teachers face. Hopefully, however, educators can use or adapt some of the techniques presented in this book to achieve success preventing or solving problems they face in their own classrooms. To some, the words *discipline* and *management* sound somewhat coercive—almost conveying the idea that teachers are trying to “control” students. The techniques presented in this book, however, are problem-solving ideas that may be an alternative to traditional discipline or classroom management techniques. These techniques can help prevent, reduce, or resolve the disruptions that detract from a positive learning environment. Teachers can facilitate their students in developing their own sense of cooperation, self-discipline, and responsibility by establishing a caring classroom climate and providing a safe environment in which students can interact with others and learn.

### **What’s New in This Third Edition**

In this new third edition, the research has been updated and integrated into each chapter rather than concentrated in a single chapter. Additional topics and/or current statistics address the following: the “silent epidemic” of high school dropouts, problems with General Educational Development (GED) options, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) regulations, the Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004), Response to Interventions (RTI) approaches to helping all students learn, demographics about English Language Learners (ELL), grading issues related to classroom management, bullying and cyber-bullying, and children of poverty.

New activities and templates focus on how teachers

1. establish appropriate procedures and behavior expectations for the K–2, elementary, middle school, and high school classrooms;
2. differentiate learning to meet the needs of all students;
3. manage the standards-based classroom;
4. include more performance-based learning to motivate students;
5. develop formative assessments to provide constructive feedback to students; and
6. utilize effective brain-compatible instructional strategies to promote positive classroom interaction.

In addition, 10 new performance tasks, checklists, and rubrics have been added, including three checklists designed to help students self-assess their social skills, cooperative learning skills, and ability to accept responsibility for their own attitudes, behaviors, and learning goals.