

**Institute of Christian Teaching
Education Department of the Seventh-Day Adventists**

**ADMINISTRATION OF DISCIPLINE IN
ADVENTIST SECONDARY SCHOOLS:
A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE**

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12501 Old Columbia Pike
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**Prepared for the 35th International Faith and Learning Seminar
Held at Hong Kong Adventist College
March 11-23, 2007**

Administration of Discipline in Adventist Secondary Schools: A Christian Perspective

Discipline problems are present in almost all school campuses. Administrators, teachers, and students, in one way or another are beset by these maladies which require their attention and immediate action. The administration of school discipline is one of the areas of education which have taken a lot of the educators' time and energy and have given them a lot of emotional stress. Gardner stated:

In many school systems management problems are prevalent. Children and adolescents are uninterested in the academic curriculum, skip school excessively, fight with teachers, steal, fail to adhere to rules, and fail to develop desired academic skills. Many display hyperactivity, inattention, disinterest, and other behavior patterns which interfere with effective acquisition of skills, knowledge, and appropriate modes of emotional expression.¹

Discipline problems among adolescents as mentioned by La Grand result from various factors: influence of television, the search for peer approval, home influences, in particular, broken homes and lack of parental control.² Roy succinctly added, "So many students come from dysfunctional backgrounds. Even young students face pressures and circumstances that most of us have never come close to having to deal with. They regularly deal with environments that include anger, violence, substance abuse, and sexual abuse."³ Commercials in TV's, uncensored shows in the internet and video games in computers have also influenced, to a certain degree, the behaviors of many children.

In particular, Adventist secondary schools encounter many discipline problems. Quite often, as observed by educators, the aftermath of these maladies become a heart-breaking issue for administrators, teachers, students and parents. On the other hand, offenders of school's rules and regulations have undergone pain and traumatic experiences manifested as bitter and ill feelings toward authority figures in the school. This is particularly true when the discipline measures are not administered justly and the offenders are not dealt with fairly.

In my experience as a high school teacher, dormitory dean, and guidance counselor, I observed various discipline problems confronting students in the academy. I saw students being punished, suspended from classes, or sent home because of infractions of the rules and regulations. The way they were handled became a heart-

¹ Gardner, William I. *Learning and Behavior Characteristics of Exceptional Children and Youth*, p. 5.

² La Grand, Louis E. *Discipline in the Secondary School*, p. 105.

³ Roy, Jim. *Soul Shapers: A Better Plan for Parents and Educators*, p. 133.

breaking experience. A number of students who were punished were discouraged, so much so that some of them left the church. Some parents lost faith in our Adventist educators' ability to handle discipline problems. They chose to send their children to public schools or other educational institutions.

With this background, the main purpose of this paper is to help administrators, teachers and staff understand the different discipline problems existing in Adventist schools, and how to integrate faith in their dealings with students involved in discipline problems. It is hoped that this information will give them biblical principles and Christian perspectives to serve as a guide in their efforts to help students who have gone beyond the limit of moral and ethical boundaries as set school rules.

Disciplinary problems occurring in Adventist secondary schools

It is generally observed that discipline problems exist in all our secondary schools and are counter productive to attaining educational goals. In 1985, I conducted a survey of seven Adventist secondary schools in the North Philippine Union Mission to identify existing discipline problems. Teachers and students were chosen as respondents. There were 35 discipline problems identified, ranging from the most serious to the least serious. Among the 35 problems identified, the "most serious" ones were: using drugs and narcotics, stealing, drinking liquor, fighting, using tobacco products, vandalizing and littering, cheating and gambling. The "serious" ones identified were: joining gangs and fraternities, possessing deadly weapons, going to movie houses, using profane and indecent words, being truant, forging, defying authority by acts of belligerence, and being discourteous.

The most commonly employed corrective measures for first offenders of these identified discipline problems were: report to parents, physical labor, counsel or advice, suspension from classes, dismissal from school, censure or reprimand, denial of admission, fines, voluntary transfer, report to authorities, campus bound, and lose of privilege and participation in religious and extra-curricular activities.⁴

Of all the institutions, civic, secular, or religious, the educational institution is one that is beset by discipline maladies. For many decades, educational experts have delved into the cause of discipline problems, studied its nature, and formulated measures that would correct or prevent their occurrences, but in spite of the maximum efforts made by experts, only minimum results have been realized. It seems that discipline problems are inevitable realities in school campuses. It is impossible to eradicate these maladies, since to do so is to negate the adolescent stage in the life cycle of human beings. However, Risk has pointed out that there is still a tremendous need for educators and school administrators to delve deeper and develop better insight into adolescent problems, study

⁴ Flores, Gladden. *Unpublished Master's Thesis*, 1985.

their nature carefully, and know the underlying reasons for their existence in order to understand and provide better ways to deal with them.⁵

Discipline Vs Punishment

Blonde E. Senior aptly defined and contrasted discipline with punishment. He said, “Discipline means to ‘disciple,’ meaning to follow me, to counsel, to guide, to train the mind. It teaches obedience, self-control, to think clearly, and to make his own decision.” Further, he added that “children who are disciplined learn to exercise self-control and to be more reasonable and rational. They can’t be easily swayed by peer pressure.” On the other hand, “punishment comes from prefix ‘puny,’ meaning small or weak, to inflict shame or pain to those smaller or weaker than us.” Further, that punishment is to “cause to suffer for some offense committed, to treat harshly, subject to rough treatment, to inflict pain, coercion, forcing, controlling the child to follow or obey, it teaches conformity by force. Punishment is always inflicted by the strong upon the weak.”⁶

Principles on discipline in the Bible and the writings of Ellen White

The Bible and Ellen White’s writings are replete with guidelines on “proper discipline.” The main purpose is for the child’s training and growth to maturity, not necessarily controlling or punishing him or her for the wrong done. The reason for it is for the good of the child, and the source of discipline comes from God Himself and the authority that He has given to parents who in turn delegate it to those who teach.⁷

God’s method of discipline is always based on love. “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”(Hebrews 12:6). “The word chastening comes from the Greek word, *paideia*, which means, ‘upbringing,’ ‘training,’ ‘instruction,’ ‘discipline,’ ‘correction.’ Discipline is training that corrects, molds, strengthens, and perfects character.”⁸

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, also stressed the relationship that should exist between parents and children. He said, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. . . .” He continued, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”⁹ (Ephesians 6:1, 4).

⁵ Risk, Thomas M. *Principles and Practices of Teaching in Secondary Schools*, p. 486.

⁶ Senior, Blonde E. “*Discipline without Punishment.*” North American Division Teachers’ Convention: Nashville, Tennessee, August, 2006.

⁷ Chambers, Joseph “*The Redemptive Powers of Biblical Discipline:* pawcreek.org/articles/.../RedemptivePowersOfBiblicalDiscipline.htm. (Accessed March 19, 2007).

⁸ White, Ellen G. Comments on Hebrews 12:6, SDA Bible Commentary Vol. 7, p. 483.

⁹ Ephesians 6: 1,4 (NKJV)

On the same line of thought, Kenneth Boa quoted another Bible translation: "Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart."(Colossians 3:20-21). "To exasperate means to provoke, embitter, inflame, harass, or anger. Discipline is crucial, but the wrong kind of discipline can lead to rebellion and resentment."¹⁰

Ellen White aptly said, "Before the child is old enough to reason, he must be taught to obey. By gentle, persistent effort the habit should be established. . . . There should be no loud voiced commands, no unkind, exasperating words, no hard, severe or gloomy expressions. Help them by loving words and kindly deeds to overcome their defects of character."¹¹ Further, she added, "Love begets love. Do not scold. . . . Talk kindly with the children. Pray with them, and teach them how to pray for themselves. . . . The blessing of God will rest upon such instruction, leading the hearts of the children to Christ."¹²

Solomon, explicitly instructed the parents to "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."(Proverbs 22:6). Based on this text, John Maxwell postulated three important key words:

1. **Modeling:** Abraham Lincoln said, "There is but one way to train up the child in the way he should go, and that is to travel it yourself. A good example is worth a thousand sermons. What you do has more impact in your child than all the lectures you could ever give.
2. **Management:** Good management is the ability to discern the uniqueness of a child and teach him or her accordingly. We are to train up a child in the way he should go. This may mean we will have to adapt our style, depending on the child's temperament and wiring.
3. **Memories:** Parents should create memories. Why? Because memories are more important than things. Note [what] the verse says, "When he is old, he will not depart from it." This implies that the child retains some memories of his early experiences and embraces them later in life.¹³

With these biblical concepts in mind, there is a need for those involved in the training of children to study the subject of discipline in order to have a clear understanding of the nature of students' behavior problems, and to learn possible ways of dealing with them. There is necessity for educators to go beyond hasty judgments and

¹⁰ Boa, Kenneth, Th. M.; Ph. D. "Perspective On Parenthood." www.bible.org/page.ph. Accessed March 27, 2007.

¹¹ White, Ellen G. *Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, p. 111.

¹² _____, *Review and Herald*, February 8, 1912.

¹³ Maxwell, John C. *The Maxwell Leadership Bible*, p. 770.

remedial measures, which many times never help but create animosity and bitterness in students and parents. A little more effort needs to be made to do everything possible for the welfare of the children, with a little more sympathy, understanding, and love, especially for those affected by this malady. It is unwise to use scolding and punishment to solve the problem. The treatment for wrongdoers needs to be humane. A school is a place school where children can learn to live well Christian principles and ideals.¹⁴

Discipline as corporate responsibility

The administration of school discipline is a corporate responsibility of the administrators, teachers, parents, and students. It is not done alone by the principal, or the discipline committee. All school personnel need to cooperate and work as a team in maintaining order in the school. Ellen White warned, “The faculty are to remain united in discipline and no teacher is to side with the students and thus increase the load of the administrators.”¹⁵ The students too are to cooperate with their teachers, and should place themselves under discipline, and “the teachers are to bind the students to their hearts by the cords of love and kindness and strict discipline.”¹⁶ Likewise, parents are also reminded that:

In all that concerns the well-being of the child, it should be the effort of parents and teachers to cooperate. . . . Their criticism and censure of the school management encourage insubordination in the children. . . . Nothing should be said or done to weaken the children’s respect for the one upon whom their well-being in so great degree depends. . . . Help the child to see that parents and teachers are representatives of God, and that, as they act in harmony with Him, their laws in the home and the school are also His.¹⁷

Preventing the occurrence of disciplinary problems

The old adage, “An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure” is true in all aspects of life. It is also true with discipline problems. A number of these discipline problems committed by students in school campuses are preventable. The following approaches may be helpful to school personnel in their efforts to prevent their occurrences and avert their possible results.

1. Few rules, but clearly understood and well enforced

It is imperative that at the start of every school year, school administrators and teachers need to sit down, formulate school rules and regulations, and solicit ideas and suggestions especially from those who will be affected. Once the rules and regulations

¹⁴ Tobing, Tigor L. “*Unpublished Masters Thesis*,” 1976.

¹⁵ White, Ellen G. *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 454.

¹⁶ _____. *Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, pp. 265; 553.

¹⁷ _____. *Education*, pp. 283, 284, 287.

are formulated, they should be presented to all students with clarity and with full understanding. As Ellen White put it, “Rules should be few and well considered; and when once made, they should be enforced.”¹⁸ There need to be rules to govern students’ behaviors, but they should be flexible and, when practicable, formulated by the students themselves.¹⁹

Antony Fortosis made this profound statement:

Too many rules made on the spur of the moment spell trouble. They represent a state of under discipline. Too many regulations mean either you will become a traffic cop perpetually handing out traffic tickets or you will find it difficult or impossible to keep up with the rules. Some are enforced sometime, some intermittently, and some not at all. This confuses students. Discipline with a few rules properly enforced works better than a bunch of regulations that cannot be followed up.²⁰

2. Create a friendly atmosphere

One cannot underestimate the value of friendship as an effective tool in preventing the occurrence of discipline problems among students. Many students attending Adventist schools come from dysfunctional homes. Students who come from an unhappy home atmosphere suffer from feelings of insecurity, inadequacy, and inferiority complex, resulting from autocratic parenting style, or, are “spoiled brats” emanating from a laissez faire style of home management. Violating school rules and regulations is a form of rebellion against authority, or, their attention-getting technique. Therefore, educators need to create a friendly school environment, where students feel secure, loved, and accepted, in order to fill the void which parents failed or could not provide. Antony Fortosis supported this idea when he said:

The basic need in our schools today, if not in our society, is for a warm personal relationship. To gain the confidence of children, to get to their hearts, to lead them to Christ for their need – it is imperative that we know our pupils and their needs. The teacher must gain their confidence and this takes time and effort. Youngsters are quick to sense a superficial attitude that exudes petulance and impatience. Threats and anger and ridicule have no place, but merely quench the Spirit. Try to get the confidence and love of a difficult student by demonstrating your love and trust.²¹

¹⁸ White, Ellen G. *Education*, p. 290.

¹⁹ “*Redemptive Discipline*.” www.oakwood.edu/ocgoldmine/sdoc/discipline/intro.htm. Accessed March 20, 2007.

²⁰ Fortosis, Antony C. Ed.D. Article: *Discipline in the Classroom*. In 1975, this article first appeared in *Keys to Christian School Administration*, when he was a professor at Columbia Bible College Columbia, South Carolina . www.csrnet.org/csrnet/articles/discipline-in-classroom.html

²¹ Ibid.

Jim Roy elucidated the value of friendship:

The friendship thing seems to be the simplest of principles, almost too simple to mention. Yet, as simple as it sounds, the principle of friendship is one of the most important components of student success. . . . It is so important, in fact that it must be intentionally developed. It is something teachers and principals of good schools do on purpose.²²

Along this vein of thought, Ellen White gave this profound counsel:

If teachers would gather the children close to them, and show that they love them, and would manifest an interest in their efforts, and even in their sports, sometimes even being a child among children, they would make the children very happy, and would gain their love and win their confidence. And the children would sooner respect and love the authority of their parents and teachers.²³

Dr. Friedbert Ninow added, “The closer and more personal the relationship between the student and the teacher, the more likely it is that teacher can have a significant impact on the life of the student.”²⁴ Building relationships with students is an effective method in preventing the occurrence of discipline problems. As Reggie Joiner pointed out, “Relationship comes before rules.”²⁵

3. Be good models

Those who are engaged in the training of the young need to consider that they are dealing with students who belong to the “age of modeling.” This age group is by nature a hero-worshiper and the influence of those whom this group idolizes cannot be taken for granted on the development of characters. This age group tends to idolize and follow people who are friendly, courteous, tactful, patient, sympathetic, kind, loving, forgiving, understanding, tolerant of their mistakes and failures, fair, and one who lives what he teaches. Ellen White, in stressing the importance of modeling in character formation, made this profound statement:

Children imitate their parents; hence, great care should be taken to give them correct models. Parents who are kind and polite at home, while at the same time they are firm and decided, will see the same traits manifested in their children. If they are

²² Roy, Jim. *Soul Shapers: A Better Plan for Parents and Educators*, p. 125.

²³ White, Ellen G. *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 18-19.

²⁴ Ninow, Friedbert, *Faith in situ: Digging God Out From the tell*. A paper presented during the 35th International Faith and Learning Seminar, held at Hongkong Adventist College, March 11-22, 2007.

²⁵ Reggie Joiner, cited by Maxwell, John C. *The Maxwell Leadership Bible*, p. 210.

upright, honest, and honorable, their children will be quite likely to resemble them in these particulars. If they reverence and worship God, their children, trained in the same way, will not forget to serve Him also. The power of imitation is strong; and in childhood and youth, when this faculty is most active, a perfect pattern should be set before the young.²⁶

The above statement also applies to a school setting, where teachers are most often perceived as either heroes or villains. Students, after leaving the portals of their school, may forget the things they learned in the classes, but they will not forget what their teachers meant to them while they were under their tutelage. As Henry Adams succinctly stated, “A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.”²⁷

Moreover, Moore and Kordenbrock said:

The best way to transfer eternal values is by ‘MODELING’ side by side during work, study and play, the ideals of Honesty, Purity, Promptness, Dependability, Courtesy, Manners, Kindness and Self-control. Children are much more likely to do as you do, than do as you say. This is discipline in practice as the fine art of discipleship. Such is the challenge to any teacher, parent, adult or even older child to be an “EXAMPLE,” helping children avoid peer dominance or the wrong kind of age mate altogether. As we look to the Master, seeking to ‘Let this Mind be in you which is in Christ Jesus,’ we model His character to our children.”²⁸

4. Exercise patience and understanding

Dealing with adolescents requires a lot of patience and understanding. Their youthful behaviors can drain our energies. Coupled with our own personal problems, we tend to lose patience and become fretful and irritable. Ellen White wrote: “Never should any one who is irritable deal with students. . . .”²⁹ Further, she added:

Teachers and students are to come close together in Christian fellowship. The youth will make many mistakes, and the teacher is never to forget to be compassionate and courteous. Never is he to seek to show his superiority. The greatest teachers are those who are most patient, most kind. By their simplicity and their willingness to learn, they encourage their students to climb higher and still higher . . . Let teachers remember their own faults and mistakes, and strive earnestly to be what they wish

²⁶ White, Ellen. *Child Guidance*, pp. 212-213.

²⁷ [www.franklin.college.edu/pwp/h/lovelace/philosophy of education](http://www.franklin.college.edu/pwp/h/lovelace/philosophy%20of%20education). Accessed March 19, 2007.

²⁸ Moore, Raymond S. and Kathleen Kordenbrock, Article, “*Character and Discipline*.” The Moore Foundation: Box 1, Camas, WA 98607. Web page: www.morefoundation.com.

²⁹ White, Ellen G. *Counsels to Teachers, Parents and Students*, p. 195.

their students to be. . . Make friends of them. Give them practical evidence of your unselfish interest in them.”³⁰

Again, she gave explicit counsel to teachers to be careful in the way they dealt with children, especially the way they talked to the erring, because “sharp words and continual censure bewilders the child, but do not reform him.”³¹ Those who are dealing with student discipline are reminded again that an effective method in preventing the occurrence of discipline problems is a loving and patient example in and outside the school campus. “This doesn’t mean, however, that the school will do away with reproof or punishment of some kind, but the teachers who are most sure of success are those whose lives are worth examples and whose love and patience inspire their discipline.”³²

5. Avoid physical punishment

Corporal punishment breeds negative results when used as a tool to correct erring students. Blonde Senior asserted that, “Children who are punished tend to resent it and develop anger and become impulsive.”³³ Dr. Murray Straus, of the University of New Hampshire Family Research Laboratory had been studying the effects of physical punishment of children for thirty years. Among others, the findings were as follows:

- Physical punishment, when administered regularly, increases antisocial behavior such as lying, stealing, cheating, bullying, . . . and lack of remorse for wrongdoing.
- Physical punishment increases the risk of child abuse.
- Physical punishment serves as a model for aggressive behavior and for inappropriate ways of dealing with conflict.
- Physical punishment erodes trust.
- Physical punishment adversely affects cognitive development.³⁴

On the other hand, Kenneth Boa pointed out some practices that were commonly committed which produced emotional pain and created psychological scars. The following were: humiliation, ridicule, sarcasm, scorn, perfectionism, withdrawal, comparing with other children, nagging, incessant crabbing, and criticizing. These treatments will devastate a child's self-image, lose any sense of security, reduce self-worth and produce alienation and rivalry and create a negative atmosphere which leads to

³⁰ White, Ellen G. *Counsels to Teachers, Parents and Students*, p. 269.

³¹ _____ . *Counsels on Education*, p. 214.

³² “*How to Properly Discipline your Child The Bible Way*: www.bible.ca/f-child.htm. Accessed March 16, 2007.

³³ Senior, Blonde E. “*Discipline without Punishment*.” NAD Teachers’ Convention: Nashville, Tennessee, USA, August, 2006.

³⁴ Straus, Murray. <http://pubpages.unh.edu/~mas2/cp.htm> . Access March 15, 2007.

strife and hostility.³⁵ Poet Robert Bly once said: “Verbal battering is injurious. Blows that lacerate self-esteem, puncture our sense of grandeur, pollute enthusiasm, poison and desolate confidence, give the soul black and blue marks, undermining and degrading. . . these all make a defilement. They damage and do harm.”³⁶

6. Provide wholesome activities

Another effective means of preventing the occurrence of discipline problems in school campuses is providing various physical, mental, social and spiritual programs and activities where students’ youthful energies will be expended for balanced development. It has been observed that discipline problems occur when students are not kept busy. “An idle mind is the workshop of the devil.” Administrators and teachers need to strengthen the work education program and engage students in useful manual labor. They also need to involve them in community outreach activities in order to develop civic consciousness. Ellen White aptly stated, “As a safeguard against evil, the preoccupation of the mind with good is worth more than unnumbered barriers of law and discipline.”³⁷

Moreover, there is also a need for administrators and teachers to participate with their students in their activities. They should not be merely spectators, but to engage and join them in all their recreational activities and extra-curricular programs; not to find faults or weaknesses, but to inspire and to cheer. Ellen White made this profound statement:

Jesus not only watched the children at play, but He got involved with them in their activities. . . . Christ watched children at their play, and often expressed His approval when they gained an innocent victory over something they were determined to do. He sang to children in sweet and blessed words. They knew that He loved them. He never frowned on them. He shared their childish joys and sorrows. Often He would gather flowers, and after pointing out their beauties to the children, would leave them with them as a gift. He had made the flowers and He delighted to point out their beauties.³⁸

Further, she added, “If they [administrators and teachers] would oftener gather the children about them, and manifest an interest in their work, and even in their sports, they would gain the love and confidence of the little ones, and the lesson of respect and obedience would be far more readily learned; for love is the best teacher.”³⁹

³⁵ Boa, Kenneth, Th. M.; Ph. D. “*Perspective On Parenthood.*” www.bible.org/page.php. Accessed March 27, 2007.

³⁶ Robert Bly, cited by Weaver, Andrew J, et al. *Counseling Troubled Teens and Their Families*, p. 35.

³⁷ White, Ellen G. *Education*, p. 213.

³⁸ _____ . *The Upward Look*, p. 57.

³⁹ _____ . *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 58.

7. Focus on the cause, not on the effects

Most of the overt misbehaviors displayed in the school are symptoms of an inner turmoil suffered by the students. As Antony Fortosis pointed out, "It is important in discipline to get beyond the outer signals to the heart of the matter. We can get so absorbed with the symptoms that we miss the crying need."⁴⁰ Focusing on the real cause of the discipline problem may help prevent its occurrence.

Clyde Narramore emphatically expressed:

Be alert to danger signals. Most typically, children who turn to violence have shown signs of maladjustment for many years. . . , we do need to be sensitive to our children's needs and to respond whenever we see signs of significant distress. . . . If you have a child who shows any of these symptoms, don't hesitate to seek professional psychological counseling. While most will never turn to physical violence, if you see any of these symptoms, realize that they are your child's way of crying out for help and telling you that he feels badly on the inside. Don't ignore his cry for help.⁴¹

Solving discipline problems

Solving student discipline problems in the school is time-consuming; however, when discipline measures outlined in the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen White are rightly administered, the administrators and teachers' time and energy will be saved, ill feelings and animosities will be minimized, the violators can be given opportunity to change and become more responsible.

The following guidelines may be worth considering by those who deal with discipline-related problems. To wit:

1. Inform and involve the parents

The Manual of Regulations for Private Schools in the Philippines, Dizon emphasized that one of the effective measures in solving discipline problems was to "report misconduct to parents and to ask the latter to consult the principal on the case."⁴² Also, Moore strongly suggested that "parents should be fully informed early in the investigation of such matters, and notified before the student comes home, if it is

⁴⁰ Fortosis, Antony C. Ed.D. Article: Discipline in the Classroom. *In 1975, this article first appeared in Keys to Christian School Administration, when he was a professor at Columbia Bible College, Columbia, South Carolina* . www.csrnet.org/csrnet/articles/discipline-in-classroom.html -

⁴¹ Narramore, Clyde. *Christian Counseling and Psychology* - Narramore Christian Foundation. www.ncfliving.org/?a - 36k - Cached - More from this site. Accessed March 29, 2007.

⁴² Dizon, Amado C. *The Law on School and Students*, p. 66.

necessary to send him home.”⁴³ Philips, et. al., also asserted that in the long run, the parents are the ones who bear the legal, moral, and social responsibility for their child in the school.⁴⁴

2. Observe due process

School administrators and teachers need to follow certain guidelines and policies for administering discipline measures to ensure that justice and fairness are observed in the process. The Orange Unified School District, Office of Child Welfare and Attendance outlined this guideline in secondary schools:

It is the school site’s responsibility to provide students with “Due Process” when administering district disciplinary guidelines. Students are informed of the charges being made against them and provided opportunity to present their side of the issue. Students may choose to remain silent regarding the charges. Upon requests, students are entitled to a hearing regarding discipline matters.⁴⁵

Mishandling discipline cases and making hasty decisions result in too many negative ill feelings and animosities among students and parents toward school authorities, even going to the extent of seeking legal advice and filing law suits in civil courts. A proper disciplinary procedure needs to be written in the policy in order to minimize the unnecessary negative reverberation of the case. The UK Law stated, “As far as possible, the objective of the disciplinary procedure should be to improve conduct, rather than simply to punish wrongdoing. Sometimes it will be clear that an allegation of misconduct is being made. . . . Any action taken should be in line with proper disciplinary procedures.”⁴⁶ Ellen White further elucidated, “Be careful what you do in the line of suspending students. This is a solemn business. It should be a very grave fault which requires this discipline. There should be a careful consideration of all the circumstances connected with the case.”⁴⁷

3. Integrate “redemptive discipline” principles

Integrating “redemptive discipline” principles in the administration of school discipline would enable students to understand God’s loving nature and His forgiving

⁴³ Moore, Raymond S. *Adventist Education at the Crossroads*, p. 85.

⁴⁴ Philips, Lakin E. and Daniel A. Wiener. *Discipline Achievement and Mental Health*, p. 143.

⁴⁵ Orange Unified School District, Office of the Child Welfare and Attendance: *Disciplinary Guidelines-Secondary Schools*, <http://www.orangeused.k12.ca.us/cwa/20DG%secondary.doc>.

⁴⁶ Guide based on UK Law: *Disciplining an employee*. Updated in June 2005, <http://www.outlaw.com/page 5801>. Accessed March 19, 2007.

⁴⁷ White, Ellen G. *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 282.

spirit, and develop in them faith in His saving grace toward sinners. On the other hand, giving violators a second chance and an opportunity to rectify their wrong course of action would deter them from treading on the enemy's enchanted ground.

Ellen White gave this solemn warning to those who were engaged in administering school discipline:

One thing I wish you to understand, that I have not been in harmony with the expelling of students from the school, unless human depravity and gross licentiousness makes it necessary, that others shall not be corrupted. There has been an error in sending students from the school . . . It never helps a student to be humiliated before the whole school. It creates a wound that mortifies. It heals nothing, cures nothing. There are students who are suspended from school. They are in this action thrust upon Satan's battle ground to cope with principalities and powers without armor or defense, to become an easy prey to Satan's devices. Let me speak a word to you in the name of the Lord. When there is a proper course taken, in cases where students seem so easily led astray, there will be found no necessity for suspension or expulsion. There is a right way, and the Spirit of the Lord must move the human agent or else there will be grave mistakes made.⁴⁸

Evans and Dyer, citing Paul Riley's lecture, mentioned important principles of redemptive discipline. To wit:⁴⁹

- Never discipline the group for a mistake of one person.
- If you are going to administer punishment of some kind, fit the punishment to the unacceptable act.
- Never embarrass a person for his wrong doing in front of a group of his peers or even in the presence of any of his peers.
- Refrain from making threats. . . . If you never make a threat, you are free to take care of each situation as it arises without any compromise.
- Do not over react. Do not pass judgment too quickly. . . . Silence is a powerful punishment for some.
- Keep the result of discipline as quiet and in as small a group as it is possible. It is difficult for a person to live down the disgrace of peers.
- Do not make one individual tell on another. No one likes a tattle-tale.
- Be willing to confess if you have misjudged or made a mistake with a person
- Remember you stand as a representative of God to your students. They should be able to look back at each experience and recognize that you were concerned about their eternal life.
- If discipline is taken to a committee, the attitude of the members before and after the session is very important. When a student is brought into the committee,

⁴⁸ White, Ellen G. *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 277; 282.

⁴⁹ Evans, Nelson E. and Mercedes H. Dyer, Citing Paul Riley's lecture on "*Principles of Redemptive Discipline*," pp. 6-7.

introduce him with kindness to all members of the committee and let him know that he has been called into the group because all are concerned about him.

- Always respect the individual. You never know the potential of a boy or girl. One day this student may be a great leader in God's work. Treat each student in the light of what he/she might become through the power and grace of God.
- Keep the long range perspective in mind whenever you are dealing with a young person. He is in the process of becoming. He is not perfect yet.

4. Refer to specialists or experts students with serious cases

There are certain serious offences which need to be referred to proper agencies and specialists who have the expertise in handling serious discipline cases. School administrators and teachers must provide assistance to students who are affected by drug use and abuse, tobacco and alcohol addiction, emotional disorders, and suicidal attempts, etc. Referring such cases to health agencies, Alcoholics Anonymous, psychiatrists, and dangerous drug agencies would be a great help to students and the school. In cases of fraternity hazing and violent behaviors, parents must be immediately notified, and those involved should be referred to proper authorities for proper handling. In cases of teenage pregnancy, illicit relationships, immoral acts, and other serious infractions, "rather than expelling, arrange with the parents for a quiet withdrawal."⁵⁰

5. Point offenders to the source of healing and forgiveness

When students violate school rules and regulations, educators need to bear in mind that it is not the "end of the rope." It is not a hopeless case. Along this line of thought, Ellen White gave this explicit counsel, "O tell the erring, God loves you, God died for you. Weep over them, pray with them. Shed tears over them, but do not get angry with them. They are Christ's purchased possessions. Let every one seek a character that will express love in all his actions."⁵¹ She further admonished that, "the true object of reproof is gained only when the wrong-doer himself is led to see his fault, and his will is enlisted for its correction. When this is accomplished, point him to the source of pardon and power. Seek to preserve his self-respect, and to inspire him with hope and courage."⁵²

Teachers and administrators need to constantly seek God's wisdom and direction as they administer school discipline, so as to develop in students self-control and self-discipline. The secret lies only on "our knees." Again, Ellen White aptly suggested, "This is the time of all times when you should act with humility and patience and prayer.

⁵⁰ White, Ellen G. *Education*, p. 293

⁵¹ _____ . *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 180

⁵² _____ . *Education*, p. 181.

This is the time to kneel down with the children and ask the Lord for pardon. . . . That prayer will bring angels to your side. . . .”⁵³ Further, she added, “The rough, stubborn, sullen dispositions are the ones who need help the most. How can they be helped? Only by the love practiced in dealing with them which Christ revealed to fallen man.”⁵⁴

Conclusion

The administration of discipline is not always a pleasant experience, especially for students who feel grown up. Many administrators seem to be at a loss in dealing with adolescents with discipline problems. They wonder what methods are effective in maintaining good behavior in the school. Teachers, on the other hand, are often unsure how to make their classrooms orderly and more productive.

The Bible, along with the writings of Ellen White and other authors has given enough guidelines on how to properly train students so that they will become mature and responsible individuals. The aim of proper discipline is to train children to develop self-control so as to display appropriate behavior in a given situation, even without the presence of administrators and teachers.

If administrators and teachers would religiously consider the guidelines outlined above, and other principles not included in this paper, the stress, headaches, heartaches, ill feelings, and animosities which are often experienced in the administration of school discipline would be minimized, if not eliminated. There is always a better way to handle discipline problems. The traditional method, which assumes that when students misbehave, they must be punished, may not be as effective as when giving them proper discipline. The school personnel need to be consistent and fair in their dealings with students, since inconsistency and unfair dealings create confusion, jealousy, hatred and dissatisfaction, thus, making the school a potential breeding place for anti-social behaviors toward school authorities.

Students would love to stay and study in a pleasant school environment where administrators, teachers and staff show respect, kindness, patience, love, understanding, tact, and tolerance toward their mistakes and failures. Perhaps, then, students would positively respond to these Christian virtues by acting and behaving according to the expectation of the school.

⁵³ White, Ellen G. *Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, p. 111.

⁵⁴ _____ . *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 281.

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