
CHAPTER 6

Classroom Management

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A. The Research Literature

Management and Order

Classroom management has been defined as the provisions and procedures necessary to establish and maintain an environment in which instruction and learning can occur (Duke, 1979). The primary goal of effective classroom management is not the reduction of misbehavior or even the creation of an "orderly" environment (see Figure 6.1). Although they are related issues, effective classroom management and the establishment of order are not synonymous. For example, teaching practices that lead to passive nonengagement would not threaten an orderly environment, but would reduce opportunities for learning (Doyle, 1986). Student learning is the primary goal of effective classroom management.

Although the presence of order in a classroom does not necessarily indicate high levels of learning, the research clearly suggests that an emphasis on effective strategies to promote learning can facilitate order. Doyle (1984) reported that effective teachers in difficult management situations pushed students through the curriculum as a way of achieving and sustaining order.

Classroom Management Concepts

Instructional Strength. In summarizing the findings from the research, Doyle (1986) made the observation that the quality of classroom management depends on "the strength and durability of the primary program, or vector of action" (p. 393). In essence, then, the essential prerequisite for effective classroom management is *instructional strength* in the implementation of:

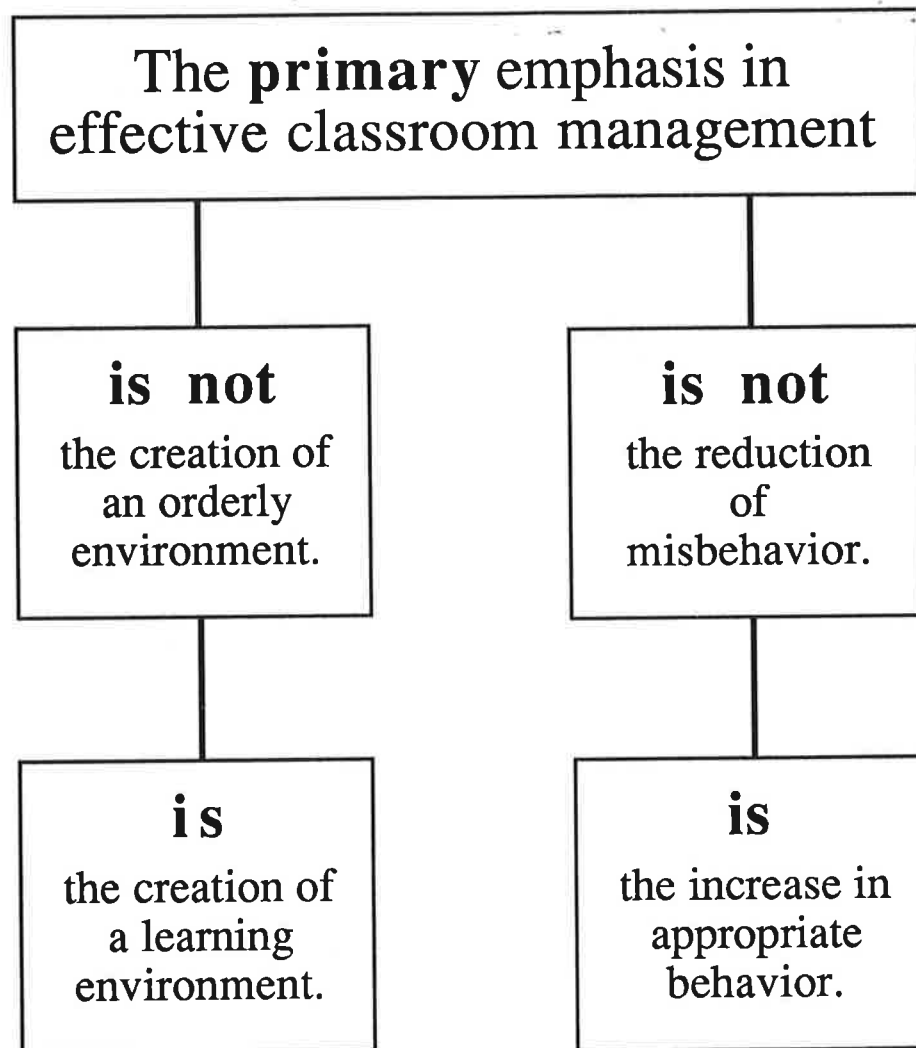
1. Time management procedures, such as appropriate pacing and well-planned transitions
2. Teaching functions, such as attention to prerequisites, guided practice and systematic reviews
3. Effective academic feedback and monitoring skills

Instructional strength supports a teacher's efforts to bring about both learning and order in a classroom.

Although it seems obvious to state that effective classroom management is facilitated if students are actively and successfully engaged in the planned program of instruction, most teachers know that it is easy to be distracted by student misbehavior and therefore to forget to stress the primary instructional tasks. A vicious cycle can be created, in which lack of attention to the

FIGURE 6.1

The Emphasis in Classroom Management



primary instructional tasks creates the vacuum in which misbehavior thrives, and this misbehavior further distracts the teacher from the primary instructional tasks.

The effective teacher knows full well that effective class management is not primarily the process of reducing misbehavior, but rather the process of increasing appropriate behavior.

Setting and Implementing Rules. In summarizing the findings from a study that involved the intense observation of classroom management procedures in 75 elementary school classrooms, Crocker and Brooker (1986) stated that "higher achievement is attained in classrooms that function in a businesslike manner, under high teacher direction, with a minimum of lost time or task disruption" (p. 10).

Teachers who operate classrooms in a businesslike manner explicitly communicate not only the goals of the instruction but also the rules students need to follow, so as to ensure a productive interaction between teaching procedures and student behavior. To the casual observer, the process of rule setting appears to inform students of new expectations. The effective classroom manager realizes that the process of rule setting is far more complex and subtle. In reality, most students in most grades already know the rules. What, then, is the primary purpose of rule setting if it is not the imparting of new information? The issue has been summarized by Doyle (1986) as follows:

By setting rules, a teacher communicates his or her awareness of what can happen in a classroom and demonstrates a degree of commitment to work. Students are thus able to acquire valuable information early in the year about a teacher's approach and expectations for behavior. The more explicit the rules and the more clearly they are communicated, the more likely the teacher will care about maintaining order and not tolerate inappropriate and disruptive behavior. But simply stating the rules is not enough. A teacher must also demonstrate a willingness and an ability to act when rules are broken [p. 413].

Rules should have a strong preventive role. For example, if a teacher constantly reprimands students for playing with objects on their desks and sets no rules related to what should be on the desk for a specific activity, he or she has failed to make use of a simple preventive option—the use of a set of rules to guide the effective use of desk space in school and in future work places.

The process of setting and implementing rules has instructional as well as management value. The students are learning procedures for ensuring their effective participation and acceptance in social settings. For this reason, rules should be introduced in the same way as any academic concept is introduced. The rationale for the rules should be clarified, and the processes used to present the rules should promote both understanding and respect for the rules. Rules should not be defined and followed just “because the teacher says so.”

Managing Interventions. The process of monitoring student behavior and intervening when necessary is clearly one of the most demanding requirements for effective classroom management. The need for interventions is reduced if credible rules are clarified and instructional activities are appropriately implemented, but there may still be several times in each lesson when some type of intervention is necessary.

The misbehavior being addressed in this discussion is the kind teachers typically encounter. Typical misbehaviors include tardiness, cutting classes, failure to bring supplies and books, inattentiveness, talking, call-outs, and mild forms of verbal and physical aggression (Silverstein, 1979).

The propensity for student misbehavior is clearly related to students' perceptions of the teacher as a manager. One way the teacher establishes credibility is by demonstrating an awareness of who will probably misbehave, and when. The research has consistently documented the fact that most misbehavior is initiated by only a few students (Metz, 1978). We also know that the time and the type of task are factors in predicting the occurrence of misbehavior. Rusnock and Brandler (1979) noted that higher-ability students were more prone to misbehavior during transitions and near the end of instructional segments. Lower-ability students were more likely to be off-task in the middle of an instructional segment.

The teacher who demonstrates an awareness of times of high probability for misbehavior, and exercises increased vigilance or takes other preventive action, is building credibility and preventing the occurrence of misbehavior. The teacher who, for example, initiates a transition and then turns to write on the blackboard is inviting challenges and reducing credibility.

The teacher's physical placement in the classroom can create or reduce opportunities for monitoring student behavior and managing interventions. The teacher who spends virtually all class time at the front of the class will not have the opportunity to observe what is really going on at each desk, nor will he or she be able to make the timely and personal contacts that build productive relationships between teacher and students. The effective teacher is very aware that management is far easier from the back than from the front of the classroom.

There is little in the research literature to suggest that there is a positive correlation between the frequency of interventions to reduce misbehavior and student achievement. Kounin (1983), in an observational study, noted that the least successful teacher in the study conducted 986 interventions to reduce misbehavior in one day. During that same day, the students were "on-task" in the same classroom only 25 percent of the time.

Interventions range from relatively unobtrusive signals to extremely disruptive actions. The less obtrusive signals would include such actions as pointing to the student's notepad, eye contact, proximity, and gesturing by touching a finger to the lips or ear to prompt the student to stop talking or to listen. Teacher statements such as "Wait," "My turn," "Jane's turn," and "Stop" can be very effective if the statements are delivered quickly and serve to terminate an inappropriate utterance or action without interrupting the lesson activity.

Interventions that interrupt the flow of the lesson and invite negotiation or discussion at an inappropriate time can be counterproductive. Teacher statements such as "Weren't you here when we discussed the rules on talking during seatwork?" open up class time to unnecessary and inappropriate discussions. Rules have little value if the teacher is not absolutely certain that all students know and understand them.

One intervention that preserves the flow of the lesson is the use of a work assignment to terminate an inappropriate behavior. Having the student answer a question does a number of things. It keeps the class focused on the learning task, serves notice to the student that the teacher is monitoring the student's behavior, and assigns the student a task that is usually incompatible with the inappropriate behavior.

If an intervention can't be handled quickly, the teacher should not interrupt the flow of the instruction, but rather set the class a task that ensures its active engagement while freeing the teacher to deal with the problem and with the student or students involved. One clear advantage to taking time to make sure the class is productively engaged is that it reduces the possibility of an irrational, negative response by the teacher. If the teacher takes a little time to "cool down" and plan the interaction, an unproductive confrontation can be avoided. The teacher can then use the opportunity to model appropriate social processes, such as asking the students to explain their perceptions of the problem before sharing the reasons for the teacher's concern.

More extreme forms of intervention, such as parental contacts and sending students to the principal's office, may be necessary, but they should be viewed as a sign of a breakdown in classroom management. The effective classroom manager will conduct a "post-mortem" each time a more extreme intervention has been used, to see whether other management procedures might be more effective. The excessive use of mild interventions should also prompt a review of instructional practices.

One form of intervention is *task engagement feedback*: feedback to the student about whether classroom behavior is acceptable or unacceptable. After intensely observing a large number of teachers, a group of researchers (Fisher et al., 1980) reported as follows:

Most of the task engagement feedback we observed turned out to be negative, such as reminders to students to get back to work when they were off task. We found no evidence that frequent use of such reprimands had any positive effect. It may be that some well-timed and well-phrased reminders are useful, but when task engagement feedback becomes frequent, it is a sign that some structural changes are needed. There is an important lesson here for teachers who use these findings to increase student engagement: Scolding students more often is not the answer. Instead, one might (1) check to see that tasks are not too hard for the student (task engagement feedback was positively correlated with low success rate), (2) increase the clarity and emphasis with which expectations are stated and the consistency with which students are held accountable, or (3) increase the amount of substantive interactive instruction [p. 28].

Increasing Appropriate Behavior. Clearly, one of the most important types of appropriate behavior is success in the curriculum,

and such success must be followed by timely reinforcing consequences. However, other competencies are often required of students, and these are not always formally stated. Trenholm and Rose (1981) identified the following categories: responding in appropriate form to academic requests or tasks, controlling impulsiveness, dealing with problems and negative feedback in mature ways, interacting courteously and cooperatively with peers, attending to and becoming involved in classroom activities and procedures, and recognizing appropriate contexts for different types of behavior. If the teacher feels that any of these behaviors are important, he or she should say so and possibly post a list of them. It is unfair and instructionally ineffective to expect a student to deduce a teacher's "silent curriculum" by observing or experiencing the teacher's system of rewards and punishments.

The *silent* (or *hidden*) *curriculum* refers to the nonacademic curriculum modeled and implied in the management procedures used by the teacher. Affective goals such as "respect for others," "improved self-concept," and "increased desire for learning" are modeled by the instructional and management practices in use in the classroom.

Perhaps the most frequently mentioned consequence for appropriate behavior is teacher praise. Researchers who have observed the use of praise in the classroom suggest that all is not well. Brophy (1981), in a summary of the research, reported that "Classroom-process data indicate teachers' verbal praise cannot be equated with reinforcement. Typically, such praise is used infrequently, without contingency, specificity, or credibility" (p. 5).

In an effort to exemplify effective and ineffective procedures for using praise in the classroom, Brophy (1981) provided a listing of examples. Table 6.1 is an adaption of the original listing.

Reducing Reprimands and Punishments. One of the most unfortunate misconceptions that can develop in a classroom is the confusion of academic errors with misbehavior. Students should be required to do their best, but they cannot be required to be successful on every response. If an affective climate is created in which students feel punished for making errors, whether subtly or overtly, then errors will have been equated with misbehavior. Such confusion can easily occur and must be guarded against.

The psychological climate created by the teacher's feedback procedures should be a critical element in keeping errors from being equated with misbehavior. If a reprimand is associated with an error, it must be made clear that the teacher's concern addresses the perceived cause of the error (e.g., homework not done) rather than the error itself. If the teacher uses reprimands, the same rules that are suggested for delivering praise must be followed. The reprimands should be contingent, specific, and credible.

If reprimands are too general and given too often, the long-term consequences can be devastating for student and teacher. Common consequences include confusion of errors with punishment;

TABLE 6.1 Guidelines for Effective Praise

Effective Praise	Ineffective Praise
1. Is delivered contingently (e.g., it is clearly linked in time with the student action)	1. Is delivered randomly or unsystematically
2. Specifies the particulars of the accomplishment (e.g., "good, you recognized the incomplete sentence")	2. Is restricted to global positive reactions (e.g., "good")
3. Shows spontaneity, variety, and other signs of credibility; suggests clear attention to student's accomplishment	3. Shows a bland uniformity, which suggests a conditioned response made with minimal attention
4. Rewards attainment of specified performance criteria (which can include effort criteria, however)	4. Rewards mere participation, without consideration of performance processes or outcomes
5. Provides information to students about their competence or the value of their accomplishments	5. Provides no information at all or gives students information about their status
6. Orients students toward better appreciation of their own task-related behavior and thinking about problem solving	6. Orients students toward comparing themselves with others and competing (e.g., "well, at least you did better than Jean")
7. Uses students' own prior accomplishments as the context for describing present accomplishments	7. Uses the accomplishments of peers as the context for describing students' present accomplishments
8. Is given in recognition of noteworthy effort or success at difficult (for this student) tasks (e.g., "you hung in there and made it!")	8. Is given without regard to the effort expended or the meaning of the accomplishment (for this student)
9. Attributes success to effort and ability, implying that similar successes can be expected in the future	9. Attributes success to ability alone or to external factors such as luck or easy task (e.g., "lucky guess")
10. Fosters endogenous attributions (students believe that they expend effort on the task because they enjoy the task and/or want to develop task-relevant skills)	10. Fosters exogenous attributions (students believe that they expend effort on the task for external reasons--to please the teacher, win a competition or reward, etc.)
11. Focuses students' attention on their own task-relevant behavior (e.g., "well done, you have really practiced reading")	11. Focuses students' attention on the teacher as an external authority figure who is manipulating them
12. Fosters appreciation of and desirable attributions about task-relevant behavior after the process is completed	12. Intrudes into the ongoing process, distracting attention from task-relevant behavior

a lowered student self-concept, which further decreases the student's interest in the curriculum; and reduced effect of the reprimand, which causes the students to take less notice of teacher statements. The following guidelines are suggested for verbal reprimands:

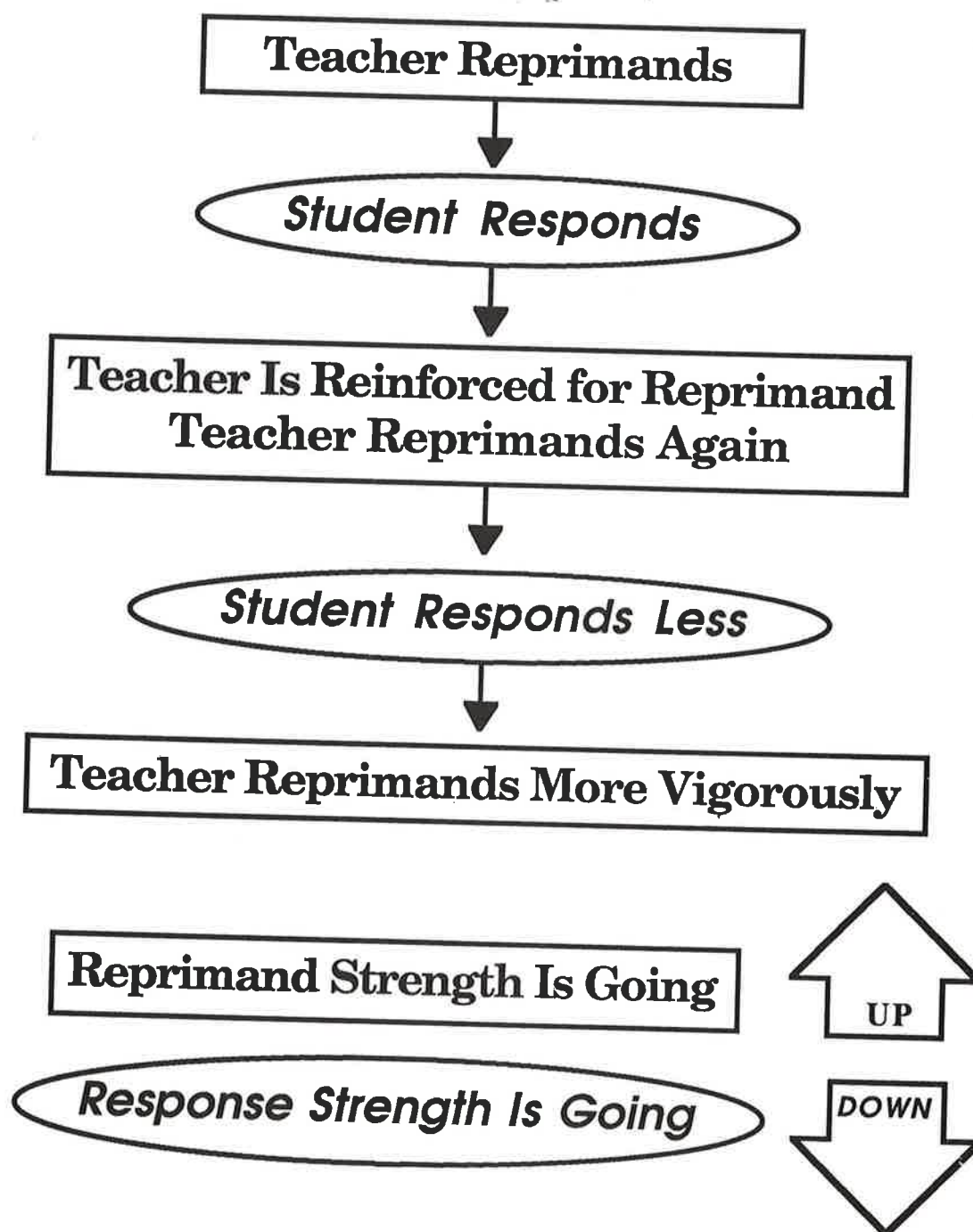
1. If reprimands are used, make sure that they are used sparingly and effectively.
2. Make certain that praise statements greatly outnumber verbal reprimands.
3. Ensure that no student is consistently subjected to verbal reprimands. The impact of a reprimand will vary with the student and the content, but if any student consistently receives more than one reprimand for every ten positive or neutral statements, the teachers should search for alternate instructional procedures.

In the short term, verbal reprimands and other punishment delivered in a public and personally destructive manner can be very effective in stopping a specific misbehavior. For this reason, a teacher can be trapped into increasing such responses to student misbehavior. Again, the long-term consequences of such teacher actions can be devastating for teacher and student. The teacher loses the respect of all students, and reprimands lose their effectiveness—future reprimands have to be even more personally destructive to be effective. The cycle of a gradually increasing emphasis on reprimands and decreasing student sensitivity to reprimands has been documented by a number of researchers. Becker (1986) refers to it as the “the criticism trap” (see Figure 6.2).

If a public reprimand is called for, the following suggestions are offered to minimize the damage and increase the effectiveness of the action.

1. Address the specific action, not the person, as undesirable.
2. Give a reason why the behavior is undesirable.
3. Provide a suggestion for a more appropriate behavior to address the underlying concern of the student and to replace the undesirable behavior with an incompatible, appropriate behavior.
4. Very often the underlying concern is valid, even though the form of expression is inappropriate. Validate the concern, not the inappropriate expression: “You have every right to be bored while waiting for me to check your paper, and I will get to you quickly next time. However, writing your initials on the desk is destroying a community resource. Erase it and start working on the next assignment while you are waiting.”
5. Take every opportunity to praise the individual for appropriate behavior during the remainder of the class.
6. Never imply by word or action that you are expressing a personal dislike for the student.

FIGURE 6.2
Reprimands— A Trap for the Unwary



One problem with punishment arises from the uncertainty of the consequences. Even a mild reprimand can be psychologically devastating for some very sensitive students but absolutely meaningless to other students. For some students, including those with chronic misbehavior, negative teacher attention can actually increase the misbehavior. One research summary reported that "any teacher attention (including reprimand) to the misbehavior of students with behavior problems may increase the frequency of the misbehavior" (Morsink, Soar, Soar, & Thomas, 1986, p. 35).

A teacher obviously cannot ignore all student misbehavior, since some misbehavior involves psychological and physical risk to the student and others, but any decision to give negative attention to students must be weighed carefully. The problems associated with punishment only increase the importance of prevention and early intervention before problems become severe.

Summary: Effective Classroom Management and the Profession

Most experienced teachers have encountered a few peers trapped in a vicious cycle in which they are heavily dependent on reprimands and punishment as the primary vehicles for attempting to create order and reduce misbehavior. Such an approach to management strips teacher and students of dignity and threatens the credibility and professionalism of all teachers.

In contrast, teachers who clarify the "hidden curriculum" effectively implement a well-planned and validated sequence of instruction, and frequently recognize and praise students thereby add to the credibility of the profession and have more positive feelings about themselves as persons and as educators. It has been reported that although effective teachers work hard, they rarely have difficulty "coping." Hosford (1984) summed up the issue as follows:

Effective teachers manage well. Coping is rarely an issue. The students are so busy at task-related activities, following sensible routines, and striving toward clearly understood objectives, that situations with which teachers must "cope" seldom have an opportunity to arise. Through management skills, superior teachers achieve what has commonly been labeled "preventive discipline" in the professional literature. They are not automatically superior teachers. They plan, worry, and work hard. I have never known superior teachers who "took it easy." But the secret to their success—what sets them above the good teachers who also work, plan, and worry—is their process of management. They have learned (and firmly believe) that process affects product; that how they manage their classroom significantly affects the climate, motivation, and goal achievement in their classrooms. In short, their knowledge base includes a thoughtful understanding of the importance of the Silent Curriculum [p. 145].

The achievement of affective and academic goals is an integrated and interdependent venture. No matter how affect-laden the communication used in the classroom may be, the student will not develop a positive self-concept when exposed to consistent failure experiences in the academic curriculum. The technical skills to ensure consistent demonstrations of success need to be complemented with management and communication processes that emphasize the worth and dignity of the individual. Teachers who are highly knowledgeable in the content area but deliver instruction in an arrogant manner, with no demonstrated respect for the weaker members of the class, are just as unprofessional as teachers so preoccupied with affective objectives that they fail to master the instructional skills needed to provide the consistent demonstrations of academic success that are so vital to the development of healthy self-concepts on the part of the students.