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Improve relationships to improve student performance

By Richard Arum

*Phi Delta Kappan, 93 (2), 8-13.*

**OVERVIEW OF THE ARTICLE**

**KEY SENTENCE:** Educators need to establish a culture for learning that is, at a minimum, safe and orderly, but they’re hampered from doing so by legal decisions related to society’s lack of regard for traditional authority sources.

**KEY POINTS**

- From a sociologist’s point of view, the moral authority relationships between students and adults have been eroded in schools.
- Disorderly and dangerous school environments are prevalent in poor and nonwhite schools, although parents and students in mostly white suburbs are more likely to take an advocate, “rights,” or entitlement position with authority.
- At the same time that student rights have been expanded legally, educators are more uncertain about their authority to take disciplinary actions, such as suspension or lowering grades.
- Threats of a lawsuit — from parents and students — undermine the legitimate moral authority of educators in both urban and suburban schools.
- Solutions to this problem require recognition that there is a problem, and federal, state, and local actions to address it, including revisiting court decisions about student rights.
- Paths out of dangerous public schools by such means as vouchers for private schools, should be less of an issue as educators restore their authority to operate schools that are orderly, safe, and healthy for learning.

**FULL VALUE**

According to the web site established about him (www.emile-durkheim.com/), “Emile Durkheim is considered by many to be the father of sociology. He is credited with making sociology a science, and having made it part of the French academic curriculum as ‘Science Sociale.’ During his lifetime, Emile Durkheim gave many lectures, and published an impressive number of sociological studies on subjects such as religion, suicide, and all aspects of society.”

Durkheim established the first department of sociology at a university (the University of Bordeaux), began a journal of sociology, and “distinguished sociological analysis from psychology or philosophy” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_sociology).

**DEEPEN YOUR THINKING**

Choose one or more of these individual inquiry topics for thinking and writing.

1. How safe and orderly are the schools you know?
2. What are the apparent causes of safety and orderliness — or lack of it — in schools you know?
3. In your experience, how have school disciplinary climates changed over the last five years? What are some common disciplinary actions in the schools you know?
4. The author, referring to Emile Durkheim, suggests that students who accept the norms and values promulgated in schools are more likely to be successful adults than those who reject them. To what extent is this true for you or people you know?

5. What approach to advocacy works in safe and orderly schools? What approach doesn’t? How can student rights be protected in schools that are safe and orderly?

6. What needs to happen at school and district levels to ensure safe, orderly, and learning-focused schools?

**EXTEND YOUR THOUGHTS THROUGH ACTIVITIES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION**

With your colleagues, examine the strength of moral authority in areas other than education. Draw the following table on chart paper and post it so that your whole group can easily see it. As you discuss the trends in areas other than preK-12 education, record your thoughts on the chart paper. Are the changes over time in each area parallel to each other? Speculate on the reasons for changes in moral authority over time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas to consider</th>
<th>From 1950 to 1975</th>
<th>From 1975 to 2000</th>
<th>From 2000 to present</th>
<th>Possible reasons for change over time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents and families</td>
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<td>Health care</td>
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<td>Business</td>
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</table>

What conclusions can you draw from comparing changes in moral authority in areas other than education with those in education? What solutions to the erosion of moral authority occur to you?
Student input improves behavior, fosters leadership

By Marc Brasof

\textit{Phi Delta Kappan, 93 (2), 20-24}

\textbf{OVERVIEW OF THE ARTICLE}

\textbf{KEY SENTENCE:} Student participation in running a school through a democratic process can reap benefits for the entire school community.

\textbf{KEY POINTS}

- Constitution High School in Philadelphia, designed to promote the study of law, democracy, and history, operates according to a form of participatory government like that established in the U.S. Constitution.

- Students participate as part of the executive branch (including a cabinet), the legislative branch (with a Faculty Senate and a House of Students), and the nine-member Supreme Court with both faculty and student members.

- They create a system of checks and balances, protect individual freedoms, and separate powers.

- The author describes a student proposal to solve a lunchroom problem; the proposal, conceptually sound, considering all viewpoints, and well-written, made the case for responsible lunching off campus.

- The faculty’s response to the lunchroom problem didn’t recognize the real problem, but the student’s proposal did, made it through a thorough policy process, and was implemented with great success.

- The author describes the power of student voice, systems thinking (double-loop learning, in particular), natural buy-in, and authentic civic responsibility.

\textbf{FULL VALUE}

In his many books and articles, most recently \textit{Education and the Making of a Democratic People}, which he edited with Roger Soder and Bonnie McDaniel (2008), John I. Goodlad emphasized the importance of enculturating the young into a social and political democracy.

Goodlad and colleagues developed \textit{The Agenda for Education in a Democracy}, which seeks to:

1. Foster in the nation’s youths the skills, dispositions, and knowledge necessary for effective participation in a social and political democracy;
2. Ensure that youths have access to those understandings and skills required for satisfying and responsible lives;
3. Develop educators who nurture the learning and well-being of every student; and
4. Ensure educators’ competence in and commitment to serving as stewards of schools (www.ieisattle.org/AED.htm).
**DEEPEN YOUR THINKING**

Choose one or more of these individual inquiry topics for thinking and writing.

1. How did you learn about democracy in school? Were you allowed to participate in some way in a “living” democracy in the school?
2. As a student yourself, how frequently were your ideas (your “voice”) requested on issues related to school policy and practices?
3. In terms of schools today, how important is student voice in developing policies and practices?
4. Why would student voices be important in double-loop thinking?
5. What might be some challenges in a school like CHS that involve students in a democratic process of decision making?

**EXTEND YOUR THOUGHTS THROUGH ACTIVITIES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION**

Working with your colleagues, consider how you have engaged in single-loop or double-loop thinking related to problems or issues in your schools, districts, or state. Here are schematics of the two types of thinking and learning:

![Diagram of Double-loop Learning](https://www.cognitivedesignsolutions.com/KM/Learning.htm)

One of the chief differences between single- and double-loop learning is the reference to mental models (Senge, 1990) or assumptions that undergird decision making. Clarifying these frequently leads from a predictable (and, perhaps, ineffective) action to an unprecedented (and successful) action. Brasof described the single-loop thinking that led educators to solve a lunchtime problem predictably through increased monitoring and consequences. A student’s out-of-the-box double-loop thinking led to changing the mental model and solving the problem in a unique way.

Use the models to investigate whether you engaged in single- or double-loop learning regarding issues in accountability, standards, teacher effectiveness, curriculum, and other big issues in your school, district, or state.

**References**


Classroom misbehavior is predictable and preventable

By Timothy J. Landrum, Terrance M. Scott, and Amy S. Lingo

*Phi Delta Kappan, 93 (2), 30-34*

**OVERVIEW OF THE ARTICLE**

**KEY SENTENCE:** The odds of success with difficult students are increased when educators view misbehavior as predictable, preventable, and manageable through instructional strategies.

**KEY POINTS**

- Although schools may be portrayed as dangerous, data indicate that school violence has decreased; however, problem behavior that doesn’t necessarily lead to violence is seen every day in most schools.

- Educators need to be aware that problem behavior can be predicted in relation to what’s happening to students personally and in the classroom, school, and larger environment.

- Educators can manage an environmental problem (such as a learning deficit or whole-class discussion) to change behavior.

- They can also prevent problems from occurring (such as focusing on the needs of a child struggling to learn or having small groups engage in discussion).

- Prevention requires routines and arrangements that facilitate learning as well as teaching students strategies to become better learners.

- Educators can also use proven and engaging instructional strategies, such as feedback, to positively influence student behavior.

**FULL VALUE**

Robert J. Marzano, Debra J. Pickering, and Jane E. Pollock describe several “research-based strategies for increasing student achievement” in their book *Classroom Instruction That Works* (2001). These are listed at the end of this Professional Development Discussion Guide.

These strategies are becoming increasingly popular in today’s schools but, according to the authors, they were not understood and used 30 to 40 years ago. Indeed, “teaching had not been systematically studied in a scientific manner” (p. 1). Teaching was seen as an art rather than a science. In fact, in 1966, James Coleman and his colleagues determined as a result of analyzing data from 600,000 students in 1966 that “the quality of schooling a student receives accounts for only about 10% of the variance in student achievement” (in Marzano, et al., p. 1).


**DEEPEN YOUR THINKING**

Choose one or more of these individual inquiry topics for thinking and writing.

1. If you had been asked before reading this article whether violence has increased in schools, what would have been your response?

2. How are challenging behaviors related to school violence?
3. What are the key differences between the opening and closing scenarios with Jason and Mr. Monroe?

4. To what extent do you think problem behavior is predictable, preventable, and dependent on attention to instruction?

5. How well do educators today teach students the personal, social, and academic skills they want students to exhibit?

6. What percent of environmental conditions can a classroom teacher control, arrange, or manipulate?

7. What are the barriers to using instructional practices that help students succeed? Can these be overcome, and if so, how?

8. What kind of feedback do students receive in classrooms? To what extent do these types of feedback help students improve behavior?

**EXTEND YOUR THOUGHTS THROUGH ACTIVITIES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION**

**Activity: Applying the Double-Feedback Loop**

The authors suggest that academic deficits and challenging behavior are something like the chicken-or-the-egg problem. Which came first? Which influences the other?

With your colleagues, make a list of students who challenge their teachers in terms of personal, social, and educational behaviors. Select one student and picture this person; work together to describe this student. Prepare a chart like this:

| Student identifier (to ensure student privacy): |
| Demographic (as necessary): |
| Challenging personal, social, and education behaviors: |

Then, engage in the chicken-or-the-egg conundrum the authors mention. What came first? What reinforces the other?

Actually, if you read Marc Brasof’s article, “Student Input Improves Behavior, Fosters Leadership” and its Professional Development Discussion Guide in this issue of *Kappan*, you have encountered single- and double-loop thinking. What are the typical responses a teacher might make toward this student? These are chicken-or-the-egg or single-loop thinking. Draw single loops to represent these and consider that typical reactions might result in increased problem behavior.

Then, push yourselves to step out of single-loop thinking in order to consider other responses (based on different mental models or assumptions) that might help this student learn. Think about how this student’s teachers and principal could act or react, based on viewing misbehavior as predictable, preventable, and manageable through instructional strategies. Create some double-loop models.

Select another student you named and repeat the process.

**References**


Grades that mean something: Kentucky develops standards-based report cards

By Thomas R. Guskey, Gerry M. Swan, and Lee Ann Jung

*Phi Delta Kappan, 93 (2), 52-57*

OVERVIEW OF THE ARTICLE

**KEY SENTENCE:** While some Canadian provinces have used standards-based report cards for many years, Kentucky educators are the first in the U.S. to attempt such a statewide reform.

**KEY POINTS**

- Report cards and how they’re completed are highly variable from teacher to teacher at the same time that states are implementing statewide standards, assessments, and accountability.

- The authors collaborated with educators from three Kentucky school districts to develop and pilot standards-based report cards and grading processes for K-12; considered their application to students with disabilities and English language learners.

- Kentucky has used the Common Core State Standards in English/language arts and mathematics and those from subject-area professional organizations for the other subjects, reducing the long lists to between four and six “reporting standards” related to strands/domains in the standards.

- The pilot report cards, which take different forms for elementary and secondary students, present separate ways for providing information on academic performance and work habits, study skills, responsibility, behavior, and learning gain.

- Report cards and the process to complete them were developed using open source software.

- The pilot involved volunteer teachers in three districts who, for the first reporting period, issued the old as well as the new card; responses to the card were largely positive, although parents of secondary students wanted a numerical or percentage score.

- The authors provide examples of the draft report cards for elementary and secondary students as well as a diagram of the process for using them; they describe scaling up to whole-school use.

**FULL VALUE**

Current practices in grading and reporting student progress have roots in history. Ben Wilbrink (1997) writes, “Indeed, the university as an institution is one of the oldest of the western world, and university examinations are as old as the universities of Bologna and Paris” (p. 1). He suggests, “While examinations in the 13th century share characteristics with modern examinations, it is not to be assumed they had the same function and meaning to the actors involved as they have in the 20th. Assessment practice must be studied in its historical context, in order to understand how a particular practice was a solution to problems and tasks as perceived by historical actors.

The opposite is also true, “the solutions of the past still being thought valid in current education even though the original problems have long since ceased to exist. It is quite conceivable that our ineradicable habit of ordering and ranking students is such a solution to a problem that no longer exists, or that it is no longer a legitimate solution to an original and still existing problem” (pp. 1-2).

The first examinations were recitations by heart or productions of correct answers to known questions, except in U.S. universities and colleges during colonial times where “the examining part was in fact nonexistent,” student performance being just that — a
DEEPEN YOUR THINKING

Choose one or more of these individual inquiry topics for thinking and writing.

1. Have you ever experienced an alternative grading and reporting system (as a student yourself or as an educator)? What was its success?
2. How important is reliability in terms of grading and reporting student progress? To what extent should schools, districts, states, or the United States have a uniform grading and report process?
3. What are some of the reasons for providing grades of some kind? To whom are they important and why?
4. To what extent should academic grades be separated from other factors, such as work habits (preparation and participation, for example), study skills, responsibility, behavior (cooperation and respect), and learning gain?
5. How helpful is it to the various consumers of report cards to have standards represented as strands or domains rather than more specific lists of knowledge, concepts, or skills? What is the best level of abstraction or concreteness for report cards based on standards?
6. How well would Kentucky’s system, as it has been conceptualized and piloted so far, work in schools you know?

EXTEND YOUR THOUGHTS THROUGH ACTIVITIES FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Activity: From One Foot to 30,000 Feet

A reform at an “altitude” of one foot is, literally, a “down-to-earth” reform focused on what happens in the classroom between teachers and students. A reform at 30,000 feet is more likely to be focused on a policy issue, a big idea that affects state departments of education and school districts (although it has an effect on classrooms, too).

Think about the possible consumers of report cards. What are their needs? Are these at the one-foot or 30,000-feet level or somewhere between? Work with your group to list consumers of education, what they need, and at what altitude their reports should function. Then consider the effects on consumers of the system being piloted in Kentucky.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consumer</th>
<th>How the consumer will use the information</th>
<th>Altitude</th>
<th>Thoughts about the Kentucky grading pilot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
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</table>

What altitude would you want in your own state, district, or school?

According to Harvey Craft in *A Short History of Student Assessment: Assessment Has Never Been Exact and Still Needs Work* (2009), “In the U.S., grading seems to have begun at Yale University in 1785. A four-point scale was used that may well have resulted in the predominance of today’s four-point grading scale in colleges and universities” (p. 1). In the early 20th century, public schools followed Yale’s lead.
References


Applications

This Professional Development Guide was created with the characteristics of adult learners in mind (Tallerico, 2005):

- Active engagement
- Integration of experience
- Choice and self-direction
- Relevance to current challenges
- Learning style variation

As you think about sharing this article with other adults, how could you fulfill the adult learning needs above?

This Professional Development Guide was created so that readers could apply what they have learned to work in classrooms (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001):

- Identifying Similarities and Differences
- Reinforcing Effort and Providing Recognition
- Nonlinguistic Representations
- Setting Objectives and Providing Feedback
- Cues, Questions, and Advance Organizers
- Summarizing and Note-Taking
- Homework and Practice
- Cooperative Learning
- Generating and Testing Hypotheses

As you think about sharing this article with classroom teachers, how could you use these strategies with them?

References


About the Author

Lois Brown Easton is a consultant, coach, and author with a particular interest in learning designs — for adults and for students. She retired as director of professional development at Eagle Rock School and Professional Development Center, Estes Park, Colo. From 1992 to 1994, she was director of Re:Learning Systems at the Education Commission of the States (ECS). Re:Learning was a partnership between the Coalition of Essential Schools and ECS. Before that, she served in the Arizona Department of Education in a variety of positions: English/ language arts coordinator, director of curriculum and instruction, and director of curriculum and assessment planning.

A middle school English teacher for 15 years, Easton earned her Ph.D. at the University of Arizona. Easton has been a frequent presenter at conferences and a contributor to educational journals.

She was editor and contributor to Powerful Designs for Professional Learning (NSDC, 2004 & 2008). Her other books include:

- The Other Side of Curriculum: Lessons From Learners (Heinemann, 2002);
- Engaging the Disengaged: How Schools Can Help Struggling Students Succeed in (Corwin Press, 2008);
- Protocols for Professional Learning (ASCD, 2009); and

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