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Effective Consequences

by

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A capstone thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Education.

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

August 2022

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Why Consequences?

Consequences are an extremely important part of teaching student behavior. This has been drilled into me by my peers, training, and administration. But implemented poorly, they are all negatives and no positives. A poorly implemented consequence will lead to an upset student, a damaged relationship, and no behavioral improvement. As such, I want to figure out *what are the most vital parts of effective consequences?* What allows them to change student behavior? How can you reduce or eliminate the negative side effects? I believe that learning this will allow me to be a far better teacher, giving me the skills to help students improve their lives and their futures.

In this chapter, I will cover the basics of *why*. Why is this important to me, why is this important to society, why are good consequences important, and why are bad consequences dangerous?

My Experience With “Bad Kids”

There is no such thing as a bad kid. Let me repeat that: there is no such thing as a bad kid. Behavior is a skill, just like math or reading, and labeling a kid as “bad” has the same impact as labeling them as “stupid.” It creates the belief that they have no hope for improvement, and therefore no action will be taken to improve the child’s behavioral skills. The kid will lose their self esteem and double down on being “the bad kid”, and teachers will double down on ineffective punishments that only increase student resentment.

As a child, I was not great at behavior. Things like social interaction confused me, making friendships hard for me. I often settled for attention of any kind as good enough; I annoyed kids on the playground, by calling them names and poking at them (sometimes literally) until they lashed out. I thought it was fun! Like playing tag! And then when the other kids yelled at me and chased me, all the adults gave us attention too! Sure they were mad at those other kids, but they felt sorry for me.

But this didn't last. The other kids got in trouble, so they stopped responding to me. Instead of getting the attention I wanted, I just burned the bridges of all my potential friendships. The teachers soon grew wise to my instigating ways and their moods toward me soured. I became the "bad kid"; the one no one wanted to hang out with, the one deserving of no sympathy. The one nobody liked.

Then my family moved. When we arrived at a new school, I got a fresh start. I had learned... *some* lessons. I didn't instigate anymore. I didn't get labeled as the bad kid. But I was still annoying, and only had friends that tolerated this. My skills lagged, and unlike when I lagged in reading or chemistry, no one noticed this or gave me remedial tutoring.

These days, I see myself in so many students. The "bad" kids. They might annoy other children, or misbehave to make others laugh, or pick fights with everyone within range; and when they do so, people label them, and lose hope for them. Often their parents have lost hope too, and are planning a move. Apparently this is often seen as the only solution; because once people have labeled your kid, the only way to fix it is to leave everything behind.

But in the good scenarios, the scenarios of success, this doesn't happen. I see kids learn! Not just on their own, but with specific, targeted help. They stop the maladaptive behaviors and redirect; they make friends, they stop acting out, they do well! But rarely can kids do this on their own. If teachers let them do whatever they want, it doesn't go well. If teachers shout at them, it doesn't go well. If the consequences are not well crafted? It does *not* go well.

So I want to help the kids like me, and step one is figuring out *how* to help the kids like me.

The Wide Reaching Repercussions

My interest in this topic isn't just personal. It's not an unfortunate experience kids have, a bump on the road, or a bad ending for a few children. The school to prison pipeline, according to Flannery (2015) at the National Education Association, is "The practice of pushing kids out of school and toward the juvenile and criminal justice systems" (Flannery 2015, para. 3). This is a scenario where consequences become so negative that, instead of simply correcting behavior, students get worse and worse until they end up in prison. It is a wide reaching problem, and according to the National Education Association, a suspension makes a child far more likely to drop out of school entirely. And in turn, school dropouts are far more likely to be unemployed or even imprisoned (Flannery, 2015).

Not only does the school-to-prison pipeline include consequences that damage childrens' futures. It is also well-documented that black children are punished and penalized at a far higher rate than any other group. According to the American Civil

Liberties Union, black youth are incarcerated *five times* more than white youth (ACLU, 2022).

The school I currently work at has three programs; I work with two. One is a level 4 high school. It is a special education school, one that mostly focuses on kids with Emotional Behavioral Disorder (EBD). Simply put, these are the kids that act out because they don't have positive skills to deal with their emotions and desires. The other program is Alternative to Expulsion (A2E). These are kids that got in trouble, sometimes for just one mistake, like forgetting a pocket knife in their backpack. Often though, they are kids who are acting out, who don't have the skills they need to get what they want without negative consequences. I have also worked at the Juvenile Detention Center. That place too is far too often filled with kids who want something, and don't have the skills to get it without negative consequences. And yes, the vast majority of these kids are young black boys.

It is extremely important to give kids productive and helpful behavioral skills. It's no question that those in the school system need to improve our disciplinary measures as a whole. What we are currently doing is not good enough and causes far too much harm. However, we can get a better understanding of how to correct behavior and create consequences that help kids, rather than sending them further down the path of being a "bad kid". Doing so would help save the futures of tens of thousands of children.

The Importance of Consequences

Now, it might be suggested that punishment should simply be removed. That if these consequences are damaging kids so much, they should be taken out entirely in favor of rewards for positive behavior. And for a time, I agreed with that idea. On my journey

as a teacher, I have often been wary of handing out negative consequences, a.k.a. punishment. This was in part because of my negative experience with them. It is also because of a cultural mark that punishment has in our society.

So, I began with the idea that I should focus on positive rewards, rather than punishing children. I started off believing that I would be the nice teacher; the one that didn't shout, but instead politely explained what they were doing wrong. The one that gave students rewards for good behavior, and got only good behavior in turn.

However, what I have seen since I started work is adults who use consequences *well*. One of the most impactful staff members at my program is the person in charge of behavioral management. If you are calling him, it is because a student is in trouble. If students are sent to his office, it is because they did something they weren't supposed to do. He gives students their consequences. These consequences include detention, In School Suspension (ISS), stern conversations, and many more. Based on my naive and uninformed ideas around this topic, these kids should have *hated* him, and come out of conversations with him seething. Instead, he is one of the most loved adults in the school.

The reality? Kids *improve* after being sent to him. Not immediately, not like magic, and not *just* because of him. But we have kids who come into the program who do nothing but yell insults all day: at other students, at staff, at the world in general. Nowadays? These kids have friends, they have positive relationships with staff, and some even call the program their family.

I have also experienced this in my own class. Kids that aren't given consequences get worse and worse. Kids that get negative outcomes for their behavior may very well shout and scream at you for a while. They may say you're a tyrant and accuse you of only

giving them consequences because you hate them. They may hate you forever, and the damage to the relationship goes on and on. But the vast majority of them *get over it*. Students come back with better behavior and your relationship with them improves. Their performance improves, and so does their hope for the future.

So *yes*, consequences are important.

Summation and Going Forward

All my experiences and knowledge indicate that punishment and consequences need to be done *right*, or they have extremely negative results. I have experienced this in my own life, in my work, and in what organizations far larger than mine have found in their studies. However, what I have seen in my work also tells me that consequences are not easily removed or replaced. So instead, I am going to study what elements of consequences make them successful and beneficial. This will then be boiled down to a professional development, in which educators will be able to enhance their skills in giving effective consequences.

In the following chapter, Chapter Two Literature Review, I will explain the research I have conducted on this topic. Chapter Three will provide an overview of the professional development I created from this information, and I will explain my learnings on the topic. Finally, in Chapter Four I will conclude, and explain what I have gathered from this experience.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Two Schools of Thought

This Capstone Projects seeks to answer the question: *What are the most vital parts of effective consequences?* This literature review provides a foundation for examining this question as well as the following: What allows consequences to change student behavior? How can you reduce or eliminate negative side effects of consequences? To answer these questions, the research was examined, compared, and synthesized.

What are the most vital parts of effective consequences? There are essentially two schools of thought on this. The first focuses on clarity and control, and the second on reflection and relationships. Many scholars focus more specifically on one school of thought or the other, while some instead blend the two methods together.

The first school of thought focuses on clarity and control; making sure the protocols and rules in the classroom are clear, and consequences reinforce the words around student expectations. This allows a classroom to run in a very orderly manner, conducive of learning, and teaches students the skills needed for appropriate behavior (Mackenzie & Stanzione, 2010; Skiba, Rausch, & Ritter, 2004; Suina-Lowery, 1977).

The second school of thought focuses on reflection and relationships by encouraging students to consider their actions, the consequences, how they impact others, and how to take responsibility for their behavior. This approach improves relationships in the class as a whole, and makes a warm, welcoming and safe environment for students to grow. This teaches students future reasoning skills on determining their own behavior morality, and puts focus on emotional development. (Kohn, 2006; Anyon et al., 2016;

Mergler, Cargas, & Caldwell, 2014; Maldonado-Carreño & Votruba-Drzal, 2011; Gregory, Skiba, & Mediratta, 2017).

These two approaches will be outlined in detail in the coming sections. The similarities and differences will be examined, with special attention paid to sources that adhere to these techniques, and what they say.

Clarity and Control

As will be seen in this section, many scholars agree that classroom management and order are extremely important. Students must have clear order pre-established in the classroom, teachers must remain consistent and follow-through on their consequences, consequences should be instructive instead of punitive, and the whole school must work together; this will lead to effective results. For example, Skiba, Rausch, and Ritter (2004) tell us that good classroom management reduces suspension, expulsion, dropout, teacher burnout, and improves student on-task behavior and academic achievement. Basically, for consequences to be effective, the teacher must have control at all times.

Preparation, Policies, and Procedures

A great deal of the strategy behind clarity and control involves preparation, specifically in implementing expectations and procedures in a very clear and concise manner. The elements of effective consequences don't just apply to the actual giving of consequences. They include preparation beforehand for order, and the teacher must do so in a clear manner.

According to the National Association of School Psychologists (2020), expectations should be clearly defined and explicitly taught. This means that a teacher must plan ahead about their expectations for maximum effectiveness, rather than just

deciding something is not okay when it happens. Explicitly taught also means students need practice. You shouldn't just tell students the rules verbally, and only teach them what you actually expect when they get it wrong. For example, if students are expected to line up before leaving, this should be practiced several times on the first day (NASP, 2020).

Mackenzie and Stanzione (2010) agree on this. They say that young students (elementary) in particular need much more practice, in very clear terms. Mackenzie is an educational psychologist and family therapist, while Stanzione, is a special education teacher and resource specialist, as well as an educational consultant and a parent educator. These two also tell us that these expectations should be posted in clear and simple language, explained in a positive or neutral tone. An example of a clear and practiced rule might be: when it's time for recess, we line up quietly at the door, whereas a bad rule might look like: if you run out the door without lining up, you will be in trouble! One is simple, and predicts success. The other is wordy, complicated, and assumes failure.

Having these positive, simple rules visible and teaching them explicitly prevents a great deal of student confusion. Therefore, they improve behavior by reducing accidental misbehavior. They set the structure for the class, and allow the students to remain orderly and well-behaved with more ease. Mackenzie and Stanzione (2010) specifically state that, "Discipline in the absence of effective structure is simply damage control" p. 23).

In short, if you want order, you must make sure the classroom already has planned order. Make sure that students understand what the order is so that they do not make

mistakes through unneeded confusion. Clarity is important, and it is the teacher's responsibility to provide it before the class even starts.

Follow Through

In addition to having clear expectations introduced, teachers must provide consistent follow-through on these expectations. Essentially, effective consequences must be delivered precisely as they have been taught. If it is not delivered precisely, it muddles the message and reduces clarity.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2017) explains in their guide for parents giving consequences, that consequences must be consistently implemented every time the behavior happens, and the consequence-giver mustn't change their mind or retract the consequence. In addition, consequences should be applied as soon as possible after the misbehavior, to clearly teach the lesson needed (CDC, 2017). While this article is for parents, the principle of delivering consequences remains the same and many educator-specific examples concur.

Mackenzie and Stanzione (2010), for example, state that if a teacher says one thing in words, but another in actions, they are actually teaching two rules. For example: if a teacher says that hitting someone in class is an automatic detention, then they give six warnings before finally applying the detention, their actions say the real rule is that you can hit people lots of times before getting in actual trouble. This teaches students you don't mean what you say (weakening your words in the future) and overwrites the spoken rule with the rule based on action. Often, this leads to a great deal of description before students take their teacher seriously, and the misbehavior continues for a long time as they test how far they can push it (Mackenzie & Stanzione, 2010).

So all the preparation in the world won't help if the execution contradicts what was planned and said. As such, follow-through is an extremely important aspect of consequences. Without it, a very put together teacher will stare at chaos in their class, wondering what went wrong.

Instructive Not Punitive

The type of consequence is also extremely important. But instead of having specific recommended consequences, the important part is the intent, both the actual intent of the teacher, and the perceived intent are part of this. The actual intent is important because it leads to a teacher's type of actions, and the perceived intent is important because it leads to the students' response to those actions.

In this matter, the several researchers (Carnot, 1973; TEDx Talks, 2019; NASP, 2020) are clear that when applying consequences, they should be instructive, not punitive. In other words, the point is not to make students feel bad or suffer. Anger should be controlled and left out of it. And teachers should never ever act on grudges. Instead, consequences should be simple but effective, and show the students how to behave correctly.

Carnot (1973) explains that good discipline involves inner growth, understanding, and self-control; bad discipline involves coercion, restraint, and punishment. Nelmes (2019), a veteran teacher of twenty-five years, explains that students who act out are doing so based on emotional needs because they don't have better skills to get those needs met. If students are not given alternative skills to meet their needs, they will continue to act out regardless of punishment. So consequences need to be opportunities

for learning, not punishment (TEDx Talks, 2019). The National Association of School Psychologists (2020) agrees that consequences must be instructional, not punitive.

To increase clarity, it is important to break down the idea of consequences into two contrasting types: first, what a teacher should do: teach skills; then, what a teacher should avoid, specifically: anger.

Teaching Alternative Skills. Teachers need to make their behavioral consequences instructional similar to how grading should be used. A teacher should always explain to a student why their answer on a test is incorrect, and how they can fix it. Otherwise nothing is gained but frustration. The same is true with teaching behavior; students must be taught how to correct their actions (Suina-Lowery, 1977; Mackenzie and Stanzione, 2010; NASP, 2020; Skiba, Rausch, & Ritter, 2004)

Suina-Lowery (1977) expands on the instructional aspect of how consequences should be applied, saying that educators should figure out what the student is seeking. Suina-Lowery references Dreikur's model of mistaken goals of behavior. This model includes the goals of attention, power, revenge, and avoidance. To be effective, the consequence should cut off the goal that the misbehavior is aiming for, and keep the students from continuing the behavior.

So if a student wants attention, remove them from their class to cut off their audience. If they want power, avoid power struggles and keep them from their objective. Refusing to rise to their bait, or show anger works if revenge is their objective. If students are trying to avoid work, explain they must complete their work no matter what, even if it means taking up recess or after school time (Suina-Lowery, 1977).

Mackenzie and Stanzione (2010) provide many examples of this kind of cutting-off consequence; the one that prevents further misbehavior. If a child cannot behave appropriately in a comfy swivel chair, they need to sit in a hard plastic chair for the rest of the hour. If they gossip during a lecture, they are separated from their friends for a while. If they break a toy, the toy is not replaced for a long time. These are what Mackenzie and Stanzione (2010) call Logical Consequences. The National Association of School Psychologists (2020) explains that a key component for school discipline requires teaching students alternatives to violence and aggression. This can involve preventative measures like Social Emotional Learning, or corrective ones like Restorative Justice (NASP, 2020). These ideas are echoed by others in more detail.

Skiba, Rausch, & Ritter (2004) go more in-depth on how to teach students alternate skills for their goals. They study a great number of schools for this conclusion, interviewing the principles of those schools. This teaching of alternative skills is in part preventative, as it can include things like Life Skills classes or a Resolving Conflict Creatively Program. They say that when there is conflict, schools should seek to reconnect alienated students through mentoring and anger management (Skiba, Rausch, & Ritter, 2004).

The research shows that it is effective for teachers to use consequences that show the behavior will not get students their desired goal and give them an alternative path. Through correction and opportunities to practice new behavioral skills, students will learn in the same manner as they learn any subject, and classes can improve accordingly.

Don't Act on Anger. As for what a teacher should not do: they should not be out to make kids feel badly for their misbehavior. That is not the point, and it makes things

worse. Further, it confuses the student. Consequences given with insults and shouting muddy the message. Shouting does not tell the student that the behavior is not acceptable; shouting, to the student, sounds more like the teacher is saying they hate the student, or expect nothing of them, or any number of hurtful things (Mackenzie and Stanzione, 2010).

Mackenzie and Stanzione (2010) also go into great detail about the negative effects of the punitive approach. They explain that shouting at students invites power struggles, not change. Students argue with teachers, or insult them, rather than following directions, because they know doing so will get a reaction. This often serves as entertainment to the class and delays the punishment as long as possible.

Further, shouting and insulting students is modeling bad behavior. If a teacher does not want students to act like that towards their peers in the future, then they must follow the same rules themselves to avoid confusing and contradictory messaging. Excessively long or humiliating punishments lead to resentment, making the student less likely to comply in the future. These punishments may involve things like writing lines or missing all of recess for forgetting to bring a pencil to class. Punishments, particularly for minor behaviors, don't have to be intense or dramatic to convey the desired meaning (Mackenzie & Stanzione, 2010).

Instead, teachers should apply consequences calmly and decisively, without any unneeded bluster. The consequences themselves should be the type already mentioned; one that simply cuts a student off from their goal for a short time to show them that misbehavior will not lead to the what they want. Then, after the consequence, a teacher should return to warm welcoming communication (Mackenzie & Stanzione, 2010). This

is backed up by the National Association of School Psychologists (2020) and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2017), which emphasize that consequences need to be delivered calmly, and grudges should not be held afterwards.

To apply effective consequences, a teacher must be the calm one in the class; they must be the rational one. They must not be about revenge or grudges. The teachers must be there to help their students grow. A teacher that delivers consequences in this manner will avoid muddying the message of their consequences and unneeded damage to their relationships with students.

Consistency and Collaboration

The final aspect of clarity and control in effective consequences is consistency and collaboration. This is a school-wide aspect that involves strong teamwork between all teammates: counselors, administration, discipline, paras, fellow teachers, families, and all others. For consequences to be effective, everyone must be on the same page. Everyone must support each other, rather than sabotaging teammates' efforts by accident.

Part of this aspect involves teachers dealing with as much of the discipline as they can within the classroom. Skiba, Rausch, and Ritter (2004) explain that discipline should be handled at the lowest level possible “because that sends a message to the student that the team has control.” (pp 2-3). Mackenzie and Stanzione (2010) also say that teachers passing consequences up the line too easily puts undue stress on the higher levels, leading to less effective discipline with less well thought out consequences. Worse is the possibility that those slapdash consequences lead to passing the kids back to the class, meaning the student simply goes in a loop back and forth without any real discipline happening (Mackenzie & Stanzione, 2010).

Mackenzie and Stazione (2010) further expand that communicating with coworkers is also extremely important to keep rules and techniques consistent across the school. It is much easier for students to adjust when they don't have to readjust from class to class to class. And they say that the school team can further include student families, who can extend skill building and consequences to home.

Mackenzie and Stazione (2010) explain, vitally, that communication with families should involve giving the parents requests and instructions on how they can help at home. This, like handling it at lower levels, reduces the pressure put on the family. For example, you could ask a child's family to help the student practice not interrupting at home. The family doesn't respond to the child if they blurt out in the middle of a conversation, but they do when they wait for a pause, and thank the child for doing so (Mackenzie & Stanzione, 2010).

Skiba, Rausch, and Ritter (2004) expand on this need for communication, saying that effective discipline absolutely must include families. This inclusion can involve simple tasks like sending the school disciplinary code for parents to sign, or calling them when certain disciplinary measures are taken).

This all is essentially applying the previous aspects to a larger scale, and amplifying it with teamwork. Policies and procedures amplify clarity if everyone is using the same expectations. If all a student's influences are consistently following through on those expectations, they all are giving the same message with their actions. Making consequences instructive with teamwork means that the student is being instructed in appropriate behavior over and over by every member of the team, and will learn it faster

One teacher can do everything they can to make effective consequences, but they are nowhere near as strong as if all the school and community is working together for that same goal. Without this teamwork, each class will struggle trying to keep its own ship afloat.

Summary of Clarity and Control

According to this school of thought for clarity and control, there are three main elements of effective consequences. One, teachers must prepare order in their class, and then follow through consistently with their actions to keep that order. Two, they must make sure the consequences they use are helpful in teaching students skills, and not the sort made in anger to get back at the students for perceived slights. Three: all of this must be done together with the school and one's coworkers, so that all may strengthen each other. In this manner, the teacher creates an orderly and polite classroom, where the students obey instructions and their behavior is appropriate.

Reflection and Relationships

On the other side of this debate is the school of thought involving reflection and relationships. This school of thought is much less strict than the last. It focuses less on the immediate behavior of children, and far more on the long term problem solving and prevention.

This style is not about precision and planning, but instead about keeping tabs on all students' thoughts and feelings, and teaching students how to do the same. To be clear, this style does still involve consequences. In this model, consequences are actions that follow misbehavior to prevent misbehavior from happening again. However, this school

of thought is about avoiding the dangers of punishment, leading students to reflect, the teacher reflecting on their own practices, and having good student-teacher relationships.

Pitfalls of Punishment

While writers in both these schools warn about harsh punitive measures, the experts and scholars that focus on reflection and relationships go further into the dangers of punishment in general. Kohn (2006) in particular has very strong opinions about the dangers of punishment. In Kohn's opinion, consequences of any type are dangerous and can cause emotional trauma. He also explains that it is very temporary compliance, and only exists while the teacher is nearby. For example, on the bus, students may go out of control without supervision, because students are only taught to respond to potential consequences, not to develop internal morals (Kohn, 2006). Kohn has experience in both teaching and parenting, and is a writer and speaker on both topics. His opinions are much more intense than most of the scholars in this school of thought.

Maldonado-Carreño and Votruba-Drza (2011) are more moderate in their opinions, using data from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Childcare to look at the impact of student-teacher relationships. They explain that if consequences lead to conflict, negativity, or hostility, then they negatively impact student-teacher relationships. Furthermore, they cause students to be less capable of self-reflection, due to being upset (Maldonado-Carreño & Votruba-Drza, 2011).

Punishment, including what the clarity and control school of thought would use, is dangerous and carries heavy damages according to these experts. Effective consequences are not, in this school of thought, about the teacher telling a student they must do X

because of their misbehavior. What teachers should do will be addressed below, but first let us look at an even more specific dangerous consequence.

Dangers of Exclusion. Danger of Exclusion is one particularly dangerous consequence brought up by these scholars. A great number of texts repeat the dangers of exclusion, particularly suspension or expulsion. This tells us that this topic needs extra attention, and thus it shall be explored in more detail.

In a TEDx talk (2017), Breeze explains that schools tend to send children away when they are difficult to work with and to make them “someone else’s problem”. Breeze has been a teacher for twenty-five years, working with students who are excluded from mainstream schools. But Breeze also explains that exclusion from school does not teach the students how to behave any better. Instead, it only creates more time that students are away from the relationships and experiences they need, and puts them further behind. These children need more attention, not less (TEDx Talks, 2017).

Mergler, Cargas, and Caldwell (2014) further expound that exclusion leads to less academic success and doesn’t even help with behavior. In fact behavior issues increase after the exclusion. This means that it is not an effective consequence, as the purpose of consequences is to correct behavior.

Anyon et al. (2016) expand on this. They conducted an in-depth study in the Denver Public Schools District and found several extremely negative things about suspension and expulsion. One thing they found was high rates of suspension or expulsion in a school make a school feel less safe to students, parents, and teachers. This means that exclusion is not only impacting the students involved in misbehavior, but the bystanders, and the staff. For point of reference, they found many alternative strategies

(described in the next section) that improved these dynamics in their research, meaning it was not the student behavior causing this feeling of negative community; it was the school response (Anyon et al., 2016).

Anyon et al. (2016) also found that there is also a strong racial gap, with students of color being suspended or expelled at far higher rates than their white peers, even for the same behavior. This is particularly alarming, as exclusion strongly raises the probability of students not completing school, and possibly ending up in the juvenile justice system Yang (2009), a teacher drawing from several other studies in their text, agrees and emphasizes this point, saying that any effective practices should improve student behavior, not sabotage it. Any efforts that make it worse are a terrible idea, and should not be used.

Even some of the texts in the clarity and control style emphasize that exclusion has heavy pitfalls. Mackenzie and Stanzone (2010), for one example, say that if a student is just suspended, it essentially feels like a day off to them. It is not a punishment at all and serves no corrective purpose.

Gregory, Skiba, and Mediratta (2017), in their research, emphasize that if exclusion is used, then there absolutely must be a program to reintegrate them when they return. In fact this should be used after any long-term absence, related to misbehavior or not. Reintegration programs help repair the damage of the time not spent with the school community, including damage to relationships and to student behavior (Gregory, Skiba, & Mediratta, 2017).

Even more so than punishment in general, exclusion is a bad idea. Effective consequences should not just remove a student from the school where the school cannot

help them. Effective consequences should not give students a mandatory vacation. Effective consequences should not keep students from building all the relationships and skills they need. And if this must be done, schools should make sure to reintegrate students to mitigate the damage done in such a practice. It does not help, and in fact damages the students' progress, as well as the progress of the entire school.

Student-Centered Problem Solving

If punishment is so bad, what do these experts suggest should be done instead?

The answer is that the writers of these texts focus on bringing student participation foremost. Essentially, effective consequences must be student-centered, and even involve students in deciding what the consequences should be. Greene (2011) explains that misbehavior is all about lacking skills. As such, teachers should use collaborative problem solving for misbehaviors. This is a process with three steps.

The first is the empathy step, where students are asked about their perspective and concerns. Step two is defining the problem, where the adult introduces their concern and perspective on the same incident. Step three is invitation, where the student and adult brainstorm solutions in which they can both have their concerns solved (Greene, 2011).

Mergler, Cargas, and Caldwell (2014) give further options. They explain that Social Emotional Learning classes and Restorative Justice can have a great impact on student behavior. Social Emotional Learning refers to classes specifically about teaching students to develop their social skills and emotional skills, thus giving them more acceptable options for meeting their needs. If they have acceptable options, they will be less likely to resort to misbehavior (Mergler, Cargas, & Caldwell, 2014).

As for Restorative Justice, Anyon et al. (2016) have a great deal more to expand on the topic. In their study they examine how restorative practices impact students, and find that they reduce suspensions and expulsions greatly. They explain that restorative practices are particularly useful when there are multiple people impacted by misbehavior, such as a fight.

Anyon et al. (2016). also go into greater detail on how a restorative practice is done. First, it should be confirmed that everyone involved is willing to participate. Those involved in the dispute and a supporter that each of them trusts (usually one for each person involved) must buy in. Very importantly, you also need a neutral facilitator trained in the technique. Second, if everyone is onboard they should all sit in a circle facing each other, and the facilitator will guide the discussion with questions like “what happened?” and “how did that make you feel?” Importantly, everyone must have a chance to voice their perspectives. Third and finally, all involved make a plan to fix the damage done by the incident. The purpose is to reflect, discuss, accept responsibility, and find ways to repair the harm (Anyon et al., 2016).

While not as specific about the type of program, Breeze agrees that students should be encouraged to reflect on the consequences of their actions to develop empathy and a conscience. Teachers should teach skills explicitly, and make consequences restorative rather than punitive (TEDx Talks, 2017). Kohn’s (2006) views are in much the same vein, saying that teachers should point out how student decisions affect others (both positive and negative). Teachers should include students in solving the problems, as well as making rules and guidelines for the class. Roleplay scenarios should also be included to help students think how they could help their classmates (Kohn, 2006).

This is the aspect that involves reflection, where students gain control by reflecting on themselves and their actions. Effective consequences involve students reflecting on their misbehavior and on how they can remedy it and improve in the future. Students reflecting in such a manner allows them to develop an internal behavioral compass, instead of just an external one. Instead of just following what the teacher says, students start to think about what they think is good.

The Teacher is Not Always Right

The reflection in this school of thought is not just for students. These experts also emphasize that the teacher needs to do a great deal of reflection as well. Teachers are human, and thus not always right. Gregory, Skiba, and Mediratta (2017) speak on two of the most damaging results from an unreflective teacher: unconscious bias and increasing the racial gap in schools.

Gregory, Skiba, and Mediratta (2017) first make it very clear that there is a consistent racial gap in how students are treated, and then put forth a school-wide strategy that can be used to combat it. Teachers must be made aware of the realities of unconscious bias to address them. The schools must look at behavior through data-based inquiry, to find where there may be hotspots of this sort of problem. And in such a case, the teacher should be taught how to remedy this practice (Gregory, Skiba, and Mediratta, 2017).

Kohn (2006) states that teachers should reflect on their expectations, and consider if said expectations are reasonable, or if there is a different action the teacher could take that could lead to less conflict. Who decides what misbehavior is? Who benefits from students behaving in the desired way? The answer should be the students, Kohn explains,

but sometimes this is not true. The class should be set up in a way that is ready to explain to students why they need to behave in a certain manner (Kohn, 2006).

Way (2011) explains that one of the incredibly vital variables in student behavior is how students perceive the teacher. That is, if they think the teacher acts fairly or not. If students see a teacher as an unfair tyrant, they will rebel. If they see them as a tough, caring mentor, they are far more likely to listen. In turn, harsher punishments don't improve discipline, but instead cause more rebellion. Teachers must be able to reflect on their own behavior, and see if they are being fair (Way, 2011).

Even teachers must always be learning. They are human and make mistakes. So as not to compound these mistakes, teachers must reflect on their behavior, just as they ask their students to reflect on theirs. In other words, effective consequences involve the teacher reflecting on what they apply consequences for in the first place. Are their expectations reasonable, or making the problem worse?

Caring Bonds

All of these techniques so far have touched on relationships; what damages relationships, and how certain consequences can help relationships. But it is important for positive bonds to exist first; for the relationships to be there to assist the techniques. As stated in restorative practice procedures, for example, the students need to have someone that they trust to support them. So how are relationships built in the first place, so that these techniques can be executed? Much like the prep, policies, and procedures step, this involves as much work before the consequences as during. Effective consequences must be supported by a teacher's whole practice.

Osher, Bear, Sprague, and Doyle (2010) look at different practices to improve school behavior. They explain that positive relationships between teachers and students, as well as student-student relationships, are extremely useful for improving school discipline. Way (2011) adds to this by compiling data from the National Education Longitudinal Study, and the National Center of Statistics for her own study. The data led her to conclude that if a teacher is perceived as competent, caring, and respectful, then behavior improves (Way, 2011).

Maldonado-Carreño and Votruba-Drza (2011) agree and expand that positive student-teacher relationships have a positive effect both at school and at home. This is consistent regardless of student age and grade. Good teacher relationships are important to all kids. These ties between positive relationships and positive behavior are further agreed upon by a wide range of research (Starr, 2018; Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016; Kohn, 2006; Minahan, 2019).

Starr (2018) explains that the first step in building relationships is to not hold grudges for misbehavior. Okonofua, Paunesku, and Walton (2016) agree, in their study on empathic discipline. They add that teachers should show respect and understanding, and try to address student needs (Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016). Kohn (2006) gives simple reminders: one builds relationships by remembering what is going on with student lives, and giving them time for casual conversation rather than only focusing on academic matters.

Minahan (2019) focuses on students with mental health struggles, but goes into great detail on how to build relationships. Essentially, teachers should of course spend time with the students, show interest in the student's interests, and they should get to

know the students. Not just facts about student lives, but how the student responds to various techniques in class. For example, do they need clear instructions or soft requests? Do they prefer being corrected one-on-one instead of in front of the class? What about praise? Should it be opinionated or factual (commenting that they've worked for a solid fifteen minutes without distraction)? Not only should a teacher learn these things, but they should make sure to communicate such things to coworkers so that all the staff can benefit from such knowledge (Minahan, 2019).

Relationships are an extremely important part of teaching and of effective consequences. As such, teachers should make sure they put aside this time and effort; giving the students time to bond with them, remembering things about the students, and paying attention to how to interact with this student in particular. Preparing this ahead of time is an extremely vital part of the whole process.

Summation of Reflection and Relationships

This school of thought for reflection and relationships does not see consequences in the same way as clarity and control does. In fact, some of these texts would consider the other school of thought harmful. As the name suggests, this school of thought is all about people thinking about their actions and their motives, to see how they impact others, and to think about how they can make their impacts more positive.

The reflection itself is the consequence, but also allows the students themselves to help determine what consequences will occur to repair the damage their misbehavior caused. Teachers must do this as well, understanding that they will make mistakes they also need to learn from. This reflection will in turn help the relationships, and the

relationships will in turn also help the reflection by making the parties more open to each other.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have shared information about what researchers and experts say about effective consequences, falling into two major schools of thought: clarity and control, and the style of reflections and relationships. The style of clarity and control focuses on designing and executing precise well-communicated rules. It also includes using precise consequences. Consequences must instruct students how to behave appropriately. This style says that if the teacher is in control of the class and the students understand what is expected of them, then learning will progress better because of it.

The style of reflection and relationships is much more flowing and free, with much flexibility for the particular situation and student. It says that all involved are to assume responsibility for their own actions. Students and teachers both should reflect on their actions, and how they impact others. All involved should work to build relationships, and repair hurt, in a collaborative style of community-building. When the community is strong, this style says, learning will progress better because of it.

At first these schools of thought may seem irreconcilable, but when we examine them, both these schools of thought focus on allowing the student to learn from mistakes, on working with coworkers as a team, and on building a positive environment for the children. As such, they are not entirely incompatible. In fact, some of the consequence types could be used in conjunction. The styles may differ, but at the end of the day all are working towards a common goal.

The next chapter will involve assimilating all of these ideas into a professional development that allows me and other educators to take advantage of all the combined knowledge. As established, these rules are actually quite compatible, and thus may be used in concert for a unified exploration of the vital elements of consequences. I will lay out my planned project in the next section, and explain how I will use this research to inform my project.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

In Chapter Two, a wide variety of sources were examined and synthesized in order to create a broad overview of the opinions on the topic of effective consequences. This was important both so that this project could be viewed in a wider context, and so the important knowledge for the project could be gathered. From these sources, it was concluded that effective consequences include clarity (in words and actions), reflection, collaboration, and consequences that focus on instruction (not anger or punishment).

In this chapter, I describe how this knowledge will be assimilated into a usable form, professional development for teachers, so that it can be applied and help improve school discipline in a useful manner. The potential impact and importance of the project will be examined. I provide details on what the project will look like, and how it will be designed for maximum effectiveness in its goals. The targeted audience and setting of the project will be described, so that any differing implementation may take into account modifications that may be needed. The potential failings going into this project will be examined, so that its validity may be evaluated and potentially improved upon. Finally, the timeline of the project will be established, so it is clear what the overall process will look like.

Impact

To begin with, why is this project important? The answer, put briefly, is that using consequences ineffectively is a potential hazard, less than ideal for the classroom environment, and is a wasted opportunity for growing student potential.

Consequences are already used in educational settings constantly. Having ineffective consequences can therefore potentially sabotage these settings (Anyon et al., 2016). At the very least, they will waste everyone's time if they do not improve behavior. A consequence that does not improve behavior is meaningless noise. In the worst case scenarios, they could actively make the situation worse (Yang, 2009). Because of this, teachers absolutely must know how to use consequences effectively.

In addition, being able to effectively manage student behavior improves classroom environment, and student learning. Less misbehavior means less time wasted in class, as teachers don't need to redirect as often. It means improved classroom climate, as students do not sabotage their relationships with classmates. It means improved student-teacher relationships as well, as the teacher will be able to focus on positive interactions more when misbehavior is reduced (Mackenzie & Stanzione, 2010).

Not only that, but effective consequences teach students how to behave in the future. Appropriate behavior is not school-exclusive. It applies to social interactions throughout student life. As such, improving student knowledge of how to act appropriately will improve their life in the future, and far beyond school.

As has been established, having effective consequences in the classroom is extremely important. Next comes the question of how to make consequences more effective in classrooms. What project can be undertaken that will improve knowledge of how to implement consequences in an effective manner?

Project Format

Now that the importance of the project has been established, the ideal format for effectiveness must be examined. Any number of formats could be applied to the

knowledge gathered. However, the focus must be on making sure it meets its goal of improving educational discipline, and decide what format will best reach that goal.

It can be concluded from the previous research that classroom teachers can control many of the variables involved in making consequences effective. As a reminder, effective consequences in this scenario mean consequences that change student conduct to appropriate behavior, while minimizing negative side effects as much as possible. Classroom teachers determine far more about making these consequences effective than students, administrators, or any others involved. So consequences are made effective primarily through the knowledge, skills, and actions of the classroom teachers.

Currently, most school districts provide regular training for their staff, allowing them to improve their skills and knowledge. As such, I designed training for the use of staff developmental purposes. By conveying the elements of effective consequences through such a training, teachers will be able to implement said vital elements, and educational discipline will hopefully improve.

This project was designed as a participatory development, as opposed to a simple compilation of information. Based on the writings of Mezirow (2000) and associates, adult learners gain such knowledge and skills most effectively when encouraged to participate in deep reflection. They must reflect on their experiences, views, and practices to see how they can improve. Only then can one introduce new and helpful information effectively to help them expand their abilities and worldviews (Mezirow, 2000; Darling-Hammond, Hyler, Gardner, 2017). As such, participatory training will be far more effective than a purely informative one.

It has been determined that participatory training for educator staff will be the most effective in improving educational discipline. In designing my training, the next step was to zoom in on to whom and in what contexts this information will be conveyed. After all, the more specific the target, the more likely to hit the mark. And in turn, if anyone wants to change the target, they should know how to adjust it based on the original mark.

Audience and Setting

The audience for this staff development will be a large urban school district, one with over 30,000 students. This is primarily due to the location of the creator. I live and teach in an urban area, and therefore it is a prime place for me to design for. However, an urban school district is also a prime target due to the widely recorded education and discipline gaps recorded in such settings (Flannery, 2015; Anyon et al., 2016). Improvements in discipline effectiveness would go a long way towards remedying these issues.

The professional development was designed primarily for those educators that are classroom teachers, that is, educators who are in charge of policies, consequences, and discipline for a whole classroom. This means they will have control over how consequences are used, as well as some control over what behavior warrants consequences and what the consequences for said behavior actually are. Participants may include teachers of elementary, middle, and high school, as consequences and discipline are important at all of these levels. There should be around twenty participants in a session. This number is based on my personal experience with both classrooms and

professional development. Having twenty participants will allow for a varied grouping, while also allowing participants to share ideas regularly.

Now the setting and audience have been established and the parameters have been set. The next step is to address the limitations of the project, and in particular the limitations of the creator.

Positionality

When laying out a guide on how to do anything, the biases and limitations of the creator must be taken into account. By doing so, those who consume the information can reflect on what information might be fallible, and how it can be improved. This is thus extremely important for the future use of this information.

While the target of this training will be a wide variety of teachers, my own personal experience is very limited. I am a relatively new teacher, with only a few years experience. I also teach primarily in alternative settings. This has included settings where students have special needs, and settings where they have increased behavioral issues. As such, these settings also tend to have fewer students in each class so that more attention can be given to each student. The research conducted is intended to compensate for this lack of experience, and has been extremely informative for me.

It is also worth mentioning that I am a white female, and as with all people, I have my own life experiences and biases that may impact my view of how to use consequences effectively. Once again, I have attempted to compensate through research of a variety of sources, with authors of diverse views and life experiences.

With all these factors acknowledged, what follows is the actual plan. Based on the parameters so far, how will the project be created?

Project Timeline

As this project is created in conjunction with a college course, the project in question was developed over the span of approximately four months. The actual staff development that comprises this project is planned to last four sessions, each over a time period of two hours. The plans should only take around ninety minutes each, but extra time is planned for leeway on discussions and questions. The flexibility of staff developments I have participated in so far informs me that this time should be estimated on the longer side. Participants are frequently glad to leave early, if learning takes less time than estimated. However, if training goes over time, then everyone involved becomes much less positive.

This time window will allow time for participant reflection, which will involve a great deal of back and forth and social processing. It will also allow for introduction of new information, including potential breaks. And finally it will include time for the participants to design an action plan, which they can execute between sessions. All of these have been shown to increase the effectiveness of professional developments (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, Gardner, 2017).

Having multiple sessions will allow participants time to implement and review learned skills in-between. Participants will set goals in all sessions. In each session after the first, participants will return and reflect on how those goals went, and how practice can be improved. Reflection and experience are an essential part of adult learning (Mezirow, 2000). Consequently, the importance of this practice time cannot be overstated.

Each session includes a different element of effective consequences: clarity, teamwork communication, warmth (instructive not punitive, and student/teacher relationships), and reflection. These have all been established as important elements of effective consequences, and thus must be established. However, the participants' own expertise will be given ample opportunity to contribute, as they are asked to give their own ideas on how these elements can be implemented in their personal experience and settings.

Surveys were designed to be used after the training, to assess the participant's experience of the project. These include what they learned, how they enjoyed it, and so forth. Such a survey will allow the training to improve over time.

In this way, a plan for the project has been created. In addition, the outline for the project itself should allow the participants plenty of time to absorb the actual information in a useful manner.

Summary

In this chapter, I have provided a rationale for this project and how to make it effective. To this end the audience and setting have been established, as well as the limitations of the creator. Then the actual plan for how the project will be developed was laid out, and how the project will be used. The next chapter will look over what was learned from the project. It will examine what impact the project had, and what that tells us for the future. I reflect on where to go moving forward to improve both my own practice and that of other educators.

CHAPTER FOUR

Reflection/Conclusion

Overview

This project has sought to answer the question: *What are the most vital parts of effective consequences?* To this end I have gone through my own experience with the topic, researched and reviewed the literature on the topic, and designed a professional development around effective consequences. In this chapter, I will review and reflect upon the project experience as a whole. I will first briefly revisit the research that has been done, and what was learned. Specifically, I will share how the literature shaped this project. Next, I will explain the implications of these learnings for educational policy. From there, I address the limitations of the project, future research possibilities for this topic. Finally, I will share how this information will be disseminated in order to benefit education. Information shouted into the void is useless, and information not shared appropriately is nearly the same.

The Research Learnings

In the process of creating this project, I explored in-depth the previously created research and scholarly papers on this topic. Mackenzie & Stanzione's (2010) writing proved to be extremely useful throughout the project. While many of the scholars discussed the value of consequence clarity, this book went the most in-depth. It even included classroom examples, which were very useful for the professional development I made as my project. A great deal of the Clarity PD (Professional Development) session was inspired by this book, as well as bits and pieces of the others.

I would like to also draw particular attention to Way's (2011) research. Way stated that if a teacher is seen as competent, caring, and respectful by the students, discipline improves. This is notable because it explains a great deal about the other researchers' and scholars' findings. The research shows that making consequences more punitive makes them less effective, and that improving relationships with students helps immensely (Mackenzie & Stanzione, 2010; Yang, 2009; Maldonado-Carreño, & Votruba-Drzal, 2011). Way's writing explains why these student-teacher relationships are important; because said relationships change if students see teachers as beneficial mentors or as unfair tyrants, and therefore if they are worth rebelling against or listening to. This research cemented the importance of warmth as one of the effective elements in consequence delivery, and as such I added it as one of the PD sessions.

The most unexpected thing I learned in the process of my research was how many scholars and educators have written against expulsion as a consequence (Anyon et al., 2016; Mergler, Vargas, & Caldwell, 2014; Yang, 2009). Expulsions are a commonly known and used consequence. I have never been to a school that did not have a process for expulsion. As such, it was very unexpected and a little worrisome to see that so many have written about its ineffectiveness. If it is not useful, why do so many schools still resort to it?

On the more positive and applicable side of things, I learned that harsher punishment actually decreases consequence effectiveness. To be most effective, teachers should design their consequences to stop the misbehavior (such as removing a student from their peers), rather than focusing on making the students feel badly (Mackenzie &

Stanzione, 2010; Way, 2011). I strongly appreciate this fact, as it is a very actionable variable of delivering consequences.

These are far from the only things learned, as the project itself will show. However, they are particularly notable and useful learnings that I wished to call attention to so I could give them credit. Having these learnings, it is important to now consider how they might help to shape current policy.

Education Policy Implications

Based on this research, the most important elements of effective consequences are: clarity, communication, warmth, and reflection. As the first line of defense, teachers should be expected to use their words and actions to make expectations and consequences clear to students. They should also focus on keeping consequences neutral rather than punitive, and build relationships with students.

If students still struggle to meet expectations, it is time for troubleshooting. During this time, communication and reflection are key. On the student end, they should be encouraged to reflect on what is happening and why; as well as reflecting on how the situation could be improved. Restorative circles and SEL are both very useful resources for this purpose. On the educator end, team members should discuss what is working and what is not working. They should check to make sure all the steps being taken are consistent and positive. This may include people coming into class to view what is happening, and what could improve.

So in short, schools should consider repeated misbehavior without improvement to be a sign to concentrate and search for answers. Repeating the same thing over and over does not solve problems; it just gives time to make them worse.

Limitations

While this research builds a very strong foundation, this project was *primarily* conducted through research, looking at what previous scholars and researchers have concluded on the topic of effective consequences. I attempted to find as reliable and diverse sources as I could on the topic, and I consider the foundation strong enough to take the advice I gathered while researching this topic. However, it is worth stating that I did not independently verify the efficacy of these techniques; I am relying on the expertise of others. As such, it is possible that some of these techniques do not mesh well together, or that some are simply not effective. So do not take this advice as an unshakable truth; verify with your own experience.

In addition, it is important to note my own frame of reference when conducting this research. I personally teach in an urban school district, meaning that I may lean towards techniques that work better with urban students than rural students. It is also worth mentioning that I am a white woman. As with all humans, my own biases may have impacted my research selection as well as the elements that I decided were most important from the research that was surveyed. I have attempted to mitigate this as much as possible, both by gathering feedback from my peers and superiors and from specifically searching for diverse information from a wide variety of sources, with authors of diverse views and life experiences.

Nonetheless, my life limitations and unknown biases are something to keep in mind. Once again, I personally consider my information to be reliable, and will be applying it thusly. But if the advice does not work in your own setting, always seek information from more and more sources.

Future Research

Due to these limitations, the most obvious future avenues of research would be conducting experiments on the effects of the principles I have detailed. Future research could delve into such questions as: Does applying these principles of effective consequences improve the behavior of students? Does it improve student/teacher relationships? Confirmation or denial of the hypothesized effective consequences would help cement what teachers should use in their classrooms and what best practice is.

In addition, now that the effective elements have been established, it would be very worthwhile to research how best to execute each element of consequences. For example, as communication is important, what makes for effective communication? Which schools communicate well, and which ones struggle to get their messages across?

Similarly, student-teacher relationships were shown to be important. So what makes for strong student-teacher relationships? Is it talking time, types of activities, demeanor of the teacher? Is it specific to each student, or are there certain activities that generalize improved relationships across all students?

As I am a practicing teacher, I will need to learn more about these topics as I work to better improve my results with students. However, I also greatly hope that others will research these various elements in more depth in order to have a fuller understanding of consequences.

Benefiting Education

I began this project because behavior management is a vital part of education, as all teachers must ensure that their students follow expectations. This may include such expectations as listening to instruction, completing assignments, or not throwing furniture

across the room. What the expectations are vary from setting to setting. If students do not follow expectations, classroom environments are not conducive to learning. It may simply be harder for learning to happen, or in the more extreme cases no learning may happen at all.

Consequences for failure to meet expectations are one of the many tools at a teacher's disposal to manage classroom behavior. All school environments have some flavor of consequences. So as they are so widely used, it only makes sense that educators should seek to maximize the effectiveness of their consequences. Thus, this project seeks to improve that effectiveness.

In order to help enrich the base of knowledge for educators and others who wish to learn about effective consequences, this paper and project will be posted on the Hamline University digital commons database, which can be accessed by anyone. This is the primary method of sharing the information from this project.

However, passively posting something only goes so far. As such, I will also be sharing my information on a person-to-person basis. Several of my coworkers have expressed interest in the project and research, so I will give them access via personal files and links. They in turn may share it as they wish if it is found to be useful for them. In this way, I hope to communicate the information gained through my project to my fellow educators. And in turn, by communicating this information, I hope to enrich the field, and the effectiveness of consequences in education.

Summary

In this chapter, I have revisited the research and what was learned from it, and looked at the possible implications of these learnings. I also discussed the limitations and

what could be explored further through additional research.. Finally, I suggested how this information could be spread to benefit the broader educational community of which I am a part. It is my hope that by reading this paper and exploring the accompanying professional development materials, the reader gains new ideas on how to appropriately apply consequences so they are as effective as possible.

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