Guidelines for Use of Physical Restraint

Student Services

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NOVA SCOTIA

Guidelines for Use of Physical Restraint

Acknowledgements

Contents

Context

In Nova Scotia, all members of school communities have rights and responsibilities in creating and maintaining safe and orderly learning environments. The importance of achieving such environments is repeated in the rights and duties mandated under the *Education Act*. Under the act, students are required to contribute to an orderly and safe learning environment, to respect the rights of others, and to comply with the discipline policies of the school and school board. Teachers' duties under the act include the obligation to take all reasonable steps necessary to create and maintain an orderly and safe learning environment. Teachers are also required to maintain appropriate order and discipline in the school or room in a teacher's charge and to report to the principal or other person in charge of the school the conduct of any student who is persistently defiant or disobedient. The duties of principals under the act similarly include the requirement to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to create and maintain a safe, orderly, positive, and effective learning environment.

In instances where a safe and orderly learning environment of a public school is endangered by severely disruptive student behaviour, the principal of the school is obliged to intervene. The *Provincial School Code of Conduct and School Code of Conduct Guidelines* of the Department of Education defines severely disruptive behaviour as behaviour that is serious enough to significantly disrupt the learning climate of the school, endanger the well-being of others, or damage school property. The guidelines further state that such behaviour is never ignored, and that appropriate and immediate action must be taken. In addition, support must be provided both to students who are affected by the severely disruptive behaviour, and to the students responsible for it.

In keeping with these tenets of the *Education Act* and *Provincial School Code of Conduct and School Code of Conduct Guidelines, Guidelines for Use of Physical Restraint* is designed to promote safety and non-violent resolution of severely disruptive behaviour in schools. The document recognizes that the physical restraint of a student must be utilized judiciously, in the interest of

protecting all members of the school community from the effects of severely disruptive behaviour. These guidelines are intended to standardize practice and guide decision making when students require physical restraint as a rare, intensive, and immediate intervention to prevent self-harm and/or harm to others.

Preamble

The Guidelines for Use of Physical Restraint in Nova Scotia Schools are designed to promote safety and non-violent means to resolve conflicts, acknowledging that prevention plays a key role in promoting safety for everyone in schools. Behaviour problems can occur in classroom settings, as well as in non-learning settings, such as playgrounds, cafeterias, busses, or other settings with unstructured conditions or events. The guidelines are intended to standardize practice when students require, as a last resort, physical restraint, including students with special needs.

Definition: For the purpose of this document, "physical restraint" refers to any physical method that immobilizes or reduces the ability of a student to move his or her arms, legs, body, or head freely, in order to prevent him or her, other students, or staff, from harm.

In recent years, the Department of Education, in collaboration with school boards, has developed several documents, guides, programs, and approaches to assist school boards in establishing guidelines, policies, and procedures to proactively address students' engagement and behaviour. These include the *Comprehensive Guidance and Counselling Program*, 2007; *Increasing Learning Success*, 2008; *Provincial School Code of Conduct and School Code of Conduct Guidelines*, 2008; *Racial Equity Policy*, 2002; *Meeting Behavioural Challenges: Creating Safe and Caring Learning Environments—Part 1: Teacher Resource* and *Part 2: Professional Development Resource* (2011); and Positive and Effective Behavioural Support (PEBS). However, proactive measures will not always anticipate the needs of some students, and in rare cases a behaviour may require the physical restraint in order to protect the student, other students, or staff members.

Physical restraint plans may be part of an individualized program plan with behavioural outcomes, but the need for physical restraint may arise in response to a crisis situation, with no opportunity to plan. The decision to use physical restraint requires risk assessment and the educated judgment and confidence of staff members.

> " Behaviour is a form of communication about social and emotional experience that we need to understand before we decide how we are going to intervene. "
>
> – H. Geddes, Behaviour as Communication, in *Behaviour Matters*, March 2007

The following guidelines will assist boards and schools in the development of their own directives and procedures in anticipation of the rare occasion when physical restraint, always used as the last resort, is required.

Guiding Principles

- Behavioural interventions for children must promote the right of all children to be treated with dignity (*Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, 15(1), *Special Education Policy* 2008, Statement of Principles p. 5).
- Programs and services necessitate a service delivery model that emphasizes teamwork, collaboration, and co-operation in the provision of a continuum of programming options to meet student needs (*Special Education Policy* 2008, Policy 1.0).
- A proactive, positive, and preventative approach is the most effective method of achieving a school climate that is conducive to both teaching and learning (*Provincial School Code of Conduct and School Code of Conduct guidelines* 2005, Guiding Principles, p. 9).
- Positive and effective behavioural supports (PEBS) are in place in all Nova Scotia schools. All students are taught school-wide expectations for behaviour in classroom and in non-classroom settings. Students' good behaviour should be recognized and reinforced by teachers and principals.
- Physical restraint is the last and most restrictive procedure in a hierarchy of behaviour management strategies. It is to be used as a last resort, when someone's safety is at risk.
- Physical restraint may be used, but only after other less intrusive interventions have been first considered and/or tried. Adult intervention should not escalate the situation.
- De-escalation of crisis situations requires the intervention of trained personnel.

Procedures

A key concept in positive behaviour support is **prevention**. In order to reduce the need for physical restraint, it is necessary to anticipate, prevent, and review the potentially harmful behaviour(s) and to evaluate and review the team's response and strategies on an ongoing basis.

Other key concepts to positive behaviour support are appropriate **interventions**, training, and professional development, each of which ought to follow positive and effective behavioural support approaches and the program planning process when dealing with behavioural outcomes (Special Education Policy 2.2). Boards are expected to ensure that appropriate personnel qualifications and training opportunities are available (i.e. non-violent crisis intervention, first-aid, JOHSC, etc.).

Documentation and follow-up of physical restraint incidents is necessary for both planning and accountability. Every incident of physical restraint must be documented appropriately. Boards may have policies, procedures, and directives already in place for this process. Appendix A provides an example of this documentation process. Follow-up, including professional reflections, and debriefing are also necessary in order to program behaviour outcomes appropriately (Special Education Policy 2.2).

Prevention

Meeting Behavioural Challenges: Creating Safe and Caring Learning Environments—Part 1: Teacher Resource and *Part 2: Professional Development Resource* (Nova Scotia, 2011) reminds us that "behaviour has a purpose and a function," that "many behaviours are learned; therefore, they can be unlearned or changed," and that "behaviour may be a way of communicating." Therefore, a key component of positive and effective behavioural support would be, whenever possible, to anticipate behaviour, instead of preparing to respond or react to a crisis. Another important component of managing positive and effective behavioural support is

to establish desired behaviours, by teaching pro-social behaviours and recognizing students who are using them.

The program planning process will play a crucial role in the establishment of strategies to anticipate and prevent situations that could result in behaviours requiring physical restraint intervention. There are a wide range of non-intrusive strategies that should be our first line of response. The following list (not prioritized or meant to be all-inclusive) provides a range of these non-intrusive strategies.

Strategies

• communication with student • communication with parent/guardian (open, authentic, and ongoing) • collaboration with the program planning team • knowledge and understanding of exceptionalities • encouragement • active listening • problem solving • clarifying expectations • prompting and cueing • redirection • restructuring the environment • de-escalation strategies • others	• modelling • social skills training • behaviour modification strategies • planned ignoring • providing choices and consequences • time out • peer mediation • consult with police • functional behavioural assessment • visual supports • check in/check out • relaxation training • calming strategies

Source: Adapted by permission from Waterloo Catholic District School Board.

Intervention

As a last resort, when the need for physical restraint is necessary to keep the student, others, or property around him or her safe, a trained staff member or members should apply the least restrictive physical restraint in order to deal with school-based behaviour that endangers those present.

The decision to use unplanned physical restraint is a matter of individual judgment. The following factors are relevant in making the decision whether or not to restrain a student physically:

- level of immediate risk
- training, confidence, and willingness
- power balance (size, age, status, strength, gender, etc.)
- availability of support
- previous history of student (special needs, abuse, etc.)
- relationship to student
- previous successful and unsuccessful attempts at de-escalation strategies

With safety and the use of non-intrusive strategies and de-escalation strategies as primary considerations, physical restraint must be used in such a way that the risk of injury is minimized and should not exceed what is reasonable under the circumstances.

Historically in Nova Scotia, non-violent crisis intervention training has occurred in all boards. The physical intervention component is the most important one to consider in any of the training programs selected to provide non-violent crises intervention. The training program should include block and release strategies and physical restraint strategies. These strategies are used only as a last resort, when the safety of the student or of others is at imminent risk, and should not last more than three to five minutes.

Planned and Unplanned use of Physical Restraint

Planned use of physical restraint may be a necessary part of a general program plan or of an individual program plan for a student with special needs. Physical restraint should be considered to be the last resort in a continuum of behaviour management strategies used with that student. The psychological effects of physically restraining and of being physically restrained should be considered. The individual program plan should clearly outline the behavioural outcomes and recognize physical restraint as a strategy that may be required to support the achievement of the behavioural outcomes. The purpose, method, personnel, and conditions involved in the use of physical restraint must also be clear to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student and part of the informed consent.

Only trained personnel should participate in the use of planned physical restraint. All school staff should be aware of any student whose individual plan involves planned use of physical restraint.

When preventative and non-intrusive strategies have not contained the crisis, the following steps outline the physical restraint strategies suggested, from least to most intrusive.

1. non-verbal and/or verbal request of student to stop or alter his or her behaviour
2. de-escalation or time out options; refer to *Guidelines for Use of Designated Time-Out Rooms in Nova Scotia Schools* (Nova Scotia 2009) for details
3. non-verbal and/or verbal request of student and/or others to leave the vicinity
4. physical restraint of student using the least force necessary to immobilize or reduce the ability of a student to move his or her arms, legs, body, or head freely, in order to prevent him or her, other students, or staff, from harm

An unforeseen crisis situation may result in the **unplanned use of physical restraint**. Staff judgment or, when applicable, direction from the school's crisis response plan, will then dictate who will assist in the use of physical restraint. Some school boards have a crisis intervention process in place. When this is the case, schools should follow their board's directives or policy, and the process should be shared with school-based staff. For a sample of what is suggested in the Crisis Events Response Team (CERT) Protocol, refer to *Meeting Behavioural Challenges: Creating Safe and Caring Learning Environments—Part 2: Professional Development Resource* (Nova Scotia 2011, 93–100).

Individual school boards may have additional policies, directives, or procedures for the use of physical restraint or a protocol for crisis intervention. The school administrator must ensure that all staff are aware of these policies.

Effective procedures following physical restraint must include resolution, reporting, documenting, reviewing, and evaluating.

Resolution
- ensure that threat of harm is under control
- evaluate injuries of student(s)/staff and take appropriate first-aid action (e.g. provide cardiopulmonary resuscitation, call Emergency Health Services, contact local law enforcement, etc.)
- provide reassurance and follow-up support for the student(s) and staff

Reporting

- verbally report the incident to supervisor/administrator
- verbally inform parents/guardians of the incident as soon as possible
- contact local law enforcement concerning use of weapons, drugs, etc.
- contact outside agencies if and when appropriate (Child Protection, Correctional Services, etc.)

Documenting, Reviewing, and Evaluating

- document the incident to support current and future programming decisions
- ensure that the student, staff, and parents/guardians are appropriately debriefed
- assess the strategies and the response of personnel

Documentation and Follow-up

Documenting the use of physical restraint is of utmost importance, so as to inform individual programming and to provide accurate information after the incident and before subsequent meetings when this information must be shared with appropriate parties.

Follow-up ensures that physical and psychological effects of physical restraint have been considered, and that an assessment of the appropriateness of the response is made/carried out. This review is used to evaluate all possible non-intrusive or proactive strategies or options.

Documenting, debriefing, and evaluating should consider

- medical follow-up if necessary (both for students and for staff members)
- completion of a physical restraint incident report
- completion of other related or required forms (Workers' Compensation, Injury on Duty, School Insurance Program, etc.)
- review of the incident, strategies, and response with the school-based team
- review and clarification of program goals and interventions with the student
- report to and review strategies and program with family
- refer to self-care (employee assistance program, counselling, etc.)

Appendices

Appendix A

Note: This form is to be completed and submitted to the principal by a staff member as soon as possible or as board policy dictates.

Physical Restraint Incident Report (Sample)

Name of student: _____ Date of birth: _____

School: _____ Student ID number: _____

Program planning (IPP, Adaptation, etc.) with physical restraint listed as potential strategy: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Incident Date: _____ Time: _____

Description of Incident

_____

_____

_____

_____

Incident Location

☐ School ☐ Yard ☐ Bus

☐ Classroom ☐ Hallway ☐ Other: _____

Student's Actions/Potential Actions

☐ Hurt self (specify) _____

☐ Hurt others (specify) _____

☐ Damage property (specify) _____

☐ Other (specify) _____

Behaviour(s) Exhibited by Student During Incident

☐ Agitation ☐ Non-compliancy ☐ Verbal aggression toward peer

☐ Crying ☐ Physical aggression toward peer ☐ Verbal aggression toward staff

☐ Hostility ☐ Physical aggression toward staff ☐ Withdrawl

☐ Mood swings ☐ Self-abuse

☐ Verbal or physical threats (describe): _____

☐ Other: _____

Events prior to incident:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Strategies or interventions used in the past:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Description of previous incident(s):

_____

_____

_____

_____

Details of Physical Restraint

Student Restraint (under 80 lbs/36 kg)	Student Restraint (over 80 lbs/36 kg)
☐ Partial	☐ Partial
☐ Full	☐ Full
☐ Other (specify):_____	☐ Other (specify):_____

Description of student's reaction to the use of physical restraint:

_____

_____

_____

Length of time physical restraint was used (physical restraint should last no more than 3–5 minutes):

_____

Other Persons Involved

Name	Position/Title	Type of Involvement (active, witnessed, assisted)

Follow-up to Physical Restraint

1. Date of Report to Administrator: _____

2. Date and time of Parental Contact: _____

3. Date and time of Parental Debriefing: _____

4. Were local law enforcement involved?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No
   (Attach Police Incident Form)

5. Were there bruises, scratches, contusions   ☐ Yes   ☐ No
   or other marks on the student?

6. Were there bruises, scratches, contusions   ☐ Yes   ☐ No
   or other marks on the staff?

7. Were strategies used evaluated and   ☐ Yes   ☐ No
   compared to previous strategies used?

8. Was medical attention required by student,   ☐ Yes   ☐ No
   staff, or others?
   Describe: _____

   _____

   _____

Report completed by:

Name: _____ Position: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

Level 1: School-Wide Approaches—A Positive Process

Excerpted from *Meeting Behavioural Challenges: Creating Safe and Caring Learning Environments—Part 1: Teacher Resource* (Nova Scotia 2011)

As we read current research about teaching students with behaviour problems, we encounter several different terms such as positive behavioural supports (PBS), effective behavioural supports (EBS), and positive behavioural interventions and supports (PBIS). These terms are used interchangeably and suggest that the most effective way of dealing with student behaviour is to establish a school-wide behaviour support system. This method goes beyond managing behaviour or taking one approach to changing behaviour—to using multiple approaches: altering the environment, teaching skills, and focusing on positive behaviour. It recommends that educators and parents/guardians take the time to understand why a challenging behaviour occurs in order to determine the purpose or function of challenging behaviours. Once this is understood, appropriate strategies or interventions can be used to help students learn new behaviours (www.pbis.org).

The behavioural climate of a school rests on a solid school-wide approach. Level I reflects such an approach. This may be achieved through various approaches such as positive behaviour supports and codes of conduct. Whatever the philosophy ascribed to, discipline is an essential aspect of a positive school climate. For the purpose of this resource, discipline is defined as "the steps or actions, teachers, administrators, parents/guardians, and students follow to enhance student academic and social behaviour success" (www.pbis.org). Successful discipline methods teach appropriate behaviours and are never punitive in nature.

Discipline is an educational process that helps individuals develop self-control and a sense of responsibility for the collective good. Effective discipline policies and programs need to be based on the general premise that discipline is an integral element of teaching aimed at promoting academic success and teaching the common values and socially appropriate skills that enable students to work co-operatively within groups. Students come to realize that a measure of personal compliance and co-operation is necessary if the group is to function in a reasonable and productive manner. When applied judiciously and consistently, such policies are more liberating than restricting for students (Manitoba Education 1991).

Every school should formulate a school-wide policy to address behavioural issues based on a whole-school community concept. The policy should include a mission statement declaring the school's role in child development and education, and this should be based on articulated principles that reflect the developmental needs of students. The manner of policy development should also be governed by principles of best practice. A school code of conduct must be developed to operationalize the school's mission statement in concise language that is easily understood by students, staff, parents/guardians, and the community.

Note: For more information about the development and implementation of policies that address behavioural issues, refer to provincial/school board guidelines.

School Policies

School policies that address behavioural issues should be based on the following principles.

Principle 1

Policies are created through a consultative process, involving all stakeholders in the school community.

When writing a school code of conduct,

- the following stakeholders are included:
  - administrators
  - teachers
  - parents/guardians
  - students
- the rights and responsibilities of students and staff are included
- positive language is used
- all stakeholders are given the opportunity to review and make necessary revisions to the contents

Principle 2

Policies are sensitive to the developmental levels and special needs of students. While they must be consistently followed, they must also be flexible enough to provide for reasonable adjustment in various circumstances.

- Behavioural interventions take into account individual differences in the following areas of development:
  - social
  - emotional

  – cognitive
  – physical
  – sexual
- A range of options should be available for students with severe emotional and behavioural needs, generally implemented from restrictive to more restrictive. Some of these options are
  – additional responses to support the students in the classroom/school environment
  – alternative programming
  – alternative setting within the school
  – alternative placements outside the school with constant monitoring to determine when to return the student to placement with his or her peers

Principle 3

Policies address supportive prevention/intervention strategies and outline appropriate procedures and responses to be used with students.

Teachers and administrators dealing with behavioural incidents should ensure the following:

- Interventions used are based on the seriousness and frequency of the behaviour.
- The meaning and intent of the behaviour are taken into account when determining its seriousness and its consequences.
- Due process is followed:
  – the student shares her or his side of the story with the teacher and administrator dealing with the incident
  – the student/parent(s)/guardian(s) have a right to appeal decisions
- Behavioural incidents and/or intervention strategies are adequately documented.
- Contact with parents/guardians is made when deemed necessary.

Principle 4

Discipline is an essential aspect of a positive school climate.

The school has

- developed a clear school mission statement
- developed a process to operationalize the school code of conduct
- developed a shared responsibility for all students by all staff
- established a safe, well-ordered learning environment
- established consistently high expectations for student and staff behaviour
- established mechanisms to reinforce and acknowledge appropriate behaviour

- established a range of appropriate and immediate consequences for inappropriate behaviour, which are applied consistently throughout the school
- adopted/designed incentive programs that promote student achievement and attendance
- adopted/offered activities that promote school spirit
- addressed school climate through the school improvement process
- established liaison with community agencies
- adopted a mentoring program for new teachers
- adopted a mentoring program for students

Principle 5

Discipline is a compilation of concepts and skills that have a positive impact on learning (Willms 2000). Discipline is not punishment. It is preventive as well as corrective/instructive and should foster integrity and dignity while promoting the development of accountability and self-management. Approaches should be proactive rather than reactive.

This is accomplished by teaching and using the school code of conduct to

- communicate clear expectations for acceptable behaviour to all students, staff, and parents/guardians
- provide rationale for behavioural expectations that is understood by students, teachers, and parents/guardians
- provide instruction and/or awareness sessions to all students in areas such as
  - study skills/learning strategies
  - peer tutoring
  - self-awareness
  - self-esteem
  - self-concept
  - self-discipline
  - social skills
  - problem-solving skills
  - conflict resolution
  - stress/anger management
- provide professional development sessions for teachers and parents/guardians in areas such as
  - conflict resolution
  - non-violent crisis intervention
  - parenting skills
  - behaviour intervention techniques
  - suicide prevention
  - detecting and responding to signs of abuse

- focus on the inappropriate behaviour, not the individual:
    - have the student make value judgments about his or her behaviour
    - hold the student accountable for his or her actions
    - relate the consequences to the behaviour
    - refer the student to a counsellor for follow-up interventions
    - design behaviour intervention plans for individuals when needed
- deal with behavioural issues in a calm tone and controlled manner

Appendix C

Level 2: Classroom Management

Excerpted from *Meeting Behavioural Challenges: Creating Safe and Caring Learning Environments—Part 1: Teacher Resource* (Nova Scotia 2011)

Behaviour Management/Intervention Strategies

Teachers will have within their classrooms students with a range of behavioural issues. The following strategies and tips can assist teachers in addressing these.

- **Make the Home Connection.** Consistently work on setting up good communication with parents/guardians; it is key to effectively addressing behavioural problems.
- **Teach Pro-social Skills.** Include non-violent/non-racist/non-sexist ideas, values, and behaviours as a core part of the everyday curriculum. Teach pro-social skills, such as communication, friendship building, accepting/ giving constructive criticism, conflict resolution, peer mediation, assertiveness, anger management, problem-solving, and decision making. Use co-operative learning groups to expose students to positive small social groups and to promote teamwork.
- **Use Positive Reinforcers.** Teachers can use many types of positive reinforcers to foster appropriate behaviours. However, the reinforcer must be valued by the student in order for desired behaviours to be increased. For example, a student finishes a seatwork assignment (target behaviour) for free time (reinforcer) and is offered a 10-minute break by the teacher (reinforcement). The positive reinforcer may be natural, edible, material, and/or social.
- **Shape, Model, and Give Positive Reinforcement.** The use of these in the form of a token system or behavioural contract may help students develop appropriate behaviours.
- **Make the Personal Connection.** Have a genuine interest in your students. Greet students at the door. Attend to students as individuals, not just to the class as a whole. Seek to discover what interests or intrigues students. A timely reference to airplanes, sports, horses, television shows, toys, or cars may redirect a misbehaving student.
- **Focus on Behaviour.** Be objective and factual when focusing on the behaviour. By referencing classroom or school-wide rules, teachers can deal with the behaviour while minimizing the likelihood that the event will become personalized.
- **Be Objective, Not Judgmental.** Try to hear the student's perspective. Look at issues from a variety of perspectives. Examine the behaviour through a cultural lens.

- **Show That You Are Human.** Be prepared to admit mistakes or change your mind, when necessary.
- **Use Humour.** When teachers have a mental profile of students, humour can be used (with judgment) to diffuse a potentially disruptive event. Sarcasm and put-downs are not humourous.
- **Minimize the Power Differential in Everyday Communication.** Sitting behind a desk or standing behind a podium can send the message that we want to create some distance between ourselves and the students. Use gender-neutral language.
- **Address Challenging Behaviour Directly and Immediately.** Unresolved conflicts and issues often resurface and escalate. Addressing a problem early lessens the chance that it will expand.
- **Use Physical Proximity or Touch Control.** The teacher is on the scene before disruptive behaviour occurs. Simple proximity communicates that the teacher is aware of what is happening and is prepared to intervene if necessary. To minimize attention-seeking behaviour during a lesson, simply move to stand next to the student. Make no eye contact and say nothing, while continuing with the lesson. If you use touch control (hand on the shoulder or elbow) to advise students of proximity, you should do so with respect to cultural values and norms.
- **Make Eye Contact.** Making eye contact with a student can do a lot to discourage irritating or attention-seeking behaviour(s). However, insisting on eye contact may escalate a student's behaviour or violate cultural norms and values.
- **Provide Diversion.** This method suggests removing a student from a potentially disruptive situation. You may invent an important task that needs to be done immediately or an errand out of the room. This will remove the student from the situation and focus his or her energy in a constructive way.
- **Give the Unexpected Compliment.** A genuine compliment, quietly delivered at the right moment can defuse a potentially disruptive situation. Avoid hollow flattery because students will not respect overtures that are perceived as phony.
- **Do the Unexpected.** You can sometimes redirect student behaviour by engaging in unexpected activities such as turning out the lights, playing a musical sound, lowering their voice, changing your voice, or talking to the wall. Using this strategy gives the message that you are aware of what is happening and you expect it to stop.
- **Use Signaling.** Many teachers are masterful at stopping potential problems with a glance, a raised hand, a shake of the head, or a flick of the lights. Some students who have difficulty regulating their own behaviours may require a special signal from the teacher. One-to-one

signal systems must be discussed by the teacher and student before implementation in the classroom.

- **Give Written Notice.** Use notes to give a variety of messages, both positive and corrective, such as, "Please stop ...," "Thank you for ..." Place this note on the student's desk. There is no need to say a word. This technique works particularly well with high school students.

- **Use an I-Message.** I-messages tell students exactly how you feel without judging or blaming. This is one of the most effective ways of stopping a student who is disrupting the classroom. An I-message contains an objective description of the disruptive behaviour, relays what you are feeling, identifies the effect of the behaviour on others, and finishes with a request. For example, "When you talk to your neighbour, I get annoyed because I lose my train of thought. Please stop." (Albert 1996)

- **State "Grandma's Law."** First state the behaviour you want, then give permission for the student to do something he or she wants to do afterward. For example, "When you finish that assignment, then you may use the computer." Notice that Grandma's Law always follows a "when-then" format. Avoid using "if-then" format instead. A student may interpret an "if" statement as a threat, and this could escalate behaviour.

- **Use "Target-Stop-Do."** This three-part message, given in a calm, matter-of-fact tone of voice, targets the student name, identifies the behaviour to be stopped, and tells the student what he or she is expected to do at that moment. For example, "Diane, stop talking to Ben, face me, and see if you can find a solution to problem 3 on the board." (Albert 1996)

- **Adopt a Collaborative Approach.** Maximize student opportunities for choices within the classroom. Consider the perspective that this is "our" classroom, not "my" classroom. Actively solicit students' opinions. Choices give students a sense of control over their lives, turning their attention away from the behaviour and towards making the choice. For example, "Marie, you may pass in your assignment Thursday or Friday. You decide."

- **Involve Students in Decision Making.** When we involve students in the decision-making process, we are giving them the legitimate power that helps prevent power struggles. For many students, having their say is as important as having their way.

- **Delegate Responsibility.** Students who have a sense of real responsibility are less likely to strive for power in destructive ways.

- **De-escalate.** Encounters with students can be dealt with quickly and effectively or they can escalate into "nasty" exchanges or power struggles. De-escalation means that the teacher is managing the incident so as to reduce tension and maintain the student in a reasonable, responsive frame of mind.

- **Give Psychological and Physical Space.** Always give students their space, especially when they are upset or angry. Coming on too strong with an angry person will cause him or her to lash out.
- **Model Appropriate Behaviour.** Approach incidents in a cool and collected fashion, as this manner will serve as a de-escalating agent. Teach appropriate behaviour through modelling.
- **Deal with the Behaviour One on One.** Never engage in a public confrontation, if it can at all be helped. Allow the student to save face. Discuss the behaviour later. Find a place where you can approach the student one on one.
- **Use Threats/Ultimatums with Caution.** Do not issue threats or ultimatums that are either impractical ("I am keeping you after school every night for a month") where the student knows you will not follow through or that will force the student or you into a corner ("You get to the office right now or I'll drag you by the heels").
- **Acknowledge Students' Power.** When you acknowledge that you cannot dominate, you admit that students are of equal status as human beings. When students see that no one in the classroom is superior or inferior, you gain their co-operation rather than fuel confrontation. This does not mean that students are permitted to do whatever they want. When you acknowledge a student's power, you can also state your expectation: "Morgan, I can't make you do the math problems. But the assignment needs to be completed." As soon as you have made the statement, walk away. It is hard to continue a war of words when the opponent is no longer nearby. (Albert 1996)
- **Beware of Students Who Must Have the Last Word.** If you play the same game, it is highly probable the exchange will go on and on. Firmly end an intervention or defer until after class. Be fair and listen to the student.
- **Watch for Secondary Behaviours.** Beware of students who bring in secondary behaviours to cloud the issue. For example, a student caught writing an obscene note to a classmate may use argumentative points that result in confrontation where the original issue becomes lost. As above, firmly stop such efforts and stay to the point.
- **Be Assertive.** Communicate clearly without being aggressive. Keep conversation short and on topic.
- **Watch Your Voice Intonation and Non-verbal Cues.** Non-violent crisis intervention training emphasizes a calm, empathetic, and a directive/assertive manner when dealing with students who are agitated and angry. It is important to use a non-threatening approach.
- **Remove the Audience.** While confrontations invariably intensify when an audience is present, performance is often pointless without an

audience to applaud. In the classroom, sending the audience somewhere else is not always feasible. However, removing the audience's attention can be equally effective. You can make an important announcement, initiate a discussion on a topic of general interest, change the activity, or do something unexpected. Anything that distracts the rest of the class removes the audience. Again, walk away from the student whenever possible. Remember, distance makes it difficult for the student to continue the verbal battle.

- **Use Fogging Techniques.** This involves responding to statements as if they are of little or no importance. When students attack verbally, the best strategy to use is a fogging technique. Techniques such as agreeing with the student, changing the subject, stating both viewpoints, refusing responsibility, delivering a closing statement, or taking teacher time out are unexpected teacher responses that usually discontinue confrontations. (Albert 1996)

- **Use Time Out.** There are times when students need to be removed from a situation. The frequency and seriousness of the behaviour determines the time-out area, and the student's age should be considered when determining its duration. The intent is not to isolate students for great lengths of time, but to give them a supervised time and space, away from others, to cool down. Current research suggests that five minutes is an adequate length of time out for any age. A re-entry plan should start immediately after removal. (Refer to Appendix IV, Time Out Guidelines, in *Meeting Behavioural Challenges: Creating Safe and Caring Learning Environments—Part 2: Professional Development Resource*).

- **Physically Remove the Student.** This intervention is used as a last resort. However, there are times when the safety of others becomes a factor. Every school should designate staff members who are trained to remove students in a safe, non-violent manner when the safety of self/others cannot be guaranteed.

While the above strategies are listed separately, they can be combined and used to complement each other. Achieving good classroom management will contribute to learning and an overall positive environment within the classroom, the school, and the school community. The article in Appendix I, "When Students Say "No!" by Mark W. Kandel, discusses a number of practical strategies that teachers can use to prevent potentially confrontational situations from occurring and to help them deal with students who say, "No."

> " Never underestimate your ability to make a difference. As a teacher, you are shaping young lives. When you reach out to your students, notice their accomplishments and treat them with kindness and respect, you are giving them the positive attention they need. When you model acceptance and tolerance, you're leading the way for them to do the same. "
>
> – Beane 1999

Gathering Data

If a student continues to exhibit challenging behaviours after Level 1 responses have been applied, you should gather, document, and analyze the following data in order to ensure that you have a clear understanding of the situation at hand.

- What are the identified behaviours of concern?
- What does the student perceive the problem to be?
- What are the teacher and student expectations in situations when the behaviour occurs?
- What are the preceding events and the consequences of the behaviour?
- What appropriate behaviours can the student currently perform that could serve the same purpose as the inappropriate behaviour?
- Who is there when the behaviour occurs?
  - adult(s)
  - peers
  - other
- Where is the behaviour occurring?
  - structured/unstructured environments
  - during particular noise levels
  - under certain lighting conditions
  - when outside disturbances occur
  - in the gym
  - in the hallways
- How frequent is the behaviour?
  - once a month
  - once a week
  - daily
  - hourly
- What is happening in the student's life that could be contributing to the behaviour?

  School Issues
  - Is it test day?
  - What subject is being taught when the behaviour occurs?
  - Does the behaviour occur when the student is asked to engage in a particular task/activity?
  - Are reinforcers for positive behaviours readily available?

  Home and Peer Issues
  - poor diet
  - lack of sleep
  - lack of exercise

- – life stressors (family move, break-up, etc.)
- – addictions (student or family member)
- – behaviours/attitudes of others who spend time with the student
- Does the student seem to have control over what is happening to him or her?
- When is the behaviour happening?
  - – time of day
  - – day of week
  - – time of year
- What is the student's medical history?
- What is the student's preferred learning style?
- Is the student achieving at her or his current grade level placement?
- What other techniques/strategies can be explored to help the student experience success in the classroom?

After collecting the above data, you may be able to better identify and address the challenging behaviour. If not, then a problem-solving team should be used to determine the best approach to be taken in meeting the student's specific needs. The problem-solving team would include members from the school, the home, and possibly other outside agencies. The problem-solving process is described in Level 2 of this document.

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