

E I G H T H E D I T I O N

Building Classroom Discipline

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William Glasser's *Noncoercive Discipline*



OVERVIEW OF
GLASSER'S
MODEL

Focus

- Improving student satisfaction with school, which promotes motivation and learning.
- Helping teachers change from being boss teachers to lead teachers.
- Emphasizing quality in curriculum, teaching, and learning.
- Applying principles of Choice Theory for quality teaching, learning, and behavior.

Logic

- Most misbehavior occurs when students are bored or frustrated by class expectations.
- Students whose basic needs are being met do not often misbehave in school.
- Curriculum is most effective when focused on what students consider to be important.
- The best teaching is done in a leading manner rather than a bossing manner.

Contributions

- The concept and practice of regularly held classroom meetings.
- Focus on meeting students' basic needs as essential in teaching and discipline.
- Concepts and practices of quality in curriculum, teaching, and learning.
- Concepts of Choice Theory applied to teaching, learning, and behavior.

Glasser's Suggestions

- Do your best to meet student needs for security, belonging, freedom, power, and fun.
- Make quality paramount in all aspects of teaching, learning, and curriculum.
- Work with students through "lead teaching" rather than "boss teaching."
- Use noncoercive techniques to help students make responsible choices.

About William Glasser

William Glasser, a psychiatrist and educational consultant, has for many years written and spoken extensively on issues related to education and discipline. Born in 1926 in Cleveland, Ohio, he first studied chemical engineering but later turned to psychology and then to psychiatry. He achieved national acclaim in psychiatry for his theory called *reality therapy* (*Reality Therapy: A New Approach to Psychiatry*, 1965), which shifted the focus in treating behavior problems from past events to present reality. Glasser later extended reality therapy to the school arena. His work with juvenile offenders convinced him that teachers could help students make better choices concerning how they behaved in school. He explained how to do this in his book *Schools without Failure* (1969), judged to be one of the twentieth century's most influential books in education. In 1986, Glasser published *Control Theory in the Classroom*, which gave a new and different emphasis to his contentions concerning discipline, encapsulated in his pronouncement that if students are to continue working and behaving properly, they must "believe that if they do some work, they will be able to satisfy their needs enough so that it makes sense to keep working" (p. 15). Since the publication of that book, Glasser has emphasized the school's role in meeting basic needs as the primary means of encouraging participation and desirable behavior. In 1996, he changed the name of his approach from Control Theory to "Choice Theory," reemphasizing that all behavior is based on personal choice. This theme is furthered in his books *The Quality School: Managing Students without Coercion* (1998a), *Choice Theory in the Classroom* (1998c), *The Quality School Teacher* (1998b), and *Every Student Can Succeed* (2001). Glasser can be contacted through the William Glasser Institute, 22024 Lassen Street, Suite 118, Chatsworth, CA 91311. Phone: 800-899-0688; 818-700-8000. Fax: 818-700-0555. Website: www.wglasser.com. Email: wginst@wglasser.com.



William Glasser

Glasser's Contributions to Discipline

Glasser has greatly influenced thought and practice in school discipline. He was the first to insist that students are in control of their behavior, that no unseen factors are forcing them to do this or that, and that they actually choose to behave as they do. He claimed that misbehavior simply resulted from bad choices, whereas good behavior resulted from good choices. He insisted that teachers have the power and the obligation to help students make better behavioral choices, and he provided numerous suggestions for interacting with students in ways that help them succeed. He set forth the concept of **classroom meetings**, now widely used, in which teacher and students jointly discuss class matters and resolve problems. These contributions were all made in Glasser's earlier work.

Since 1985, Glasser has made many new contributions to thought and practice in discipline. His central contentions at present are:

- Virtually all human behavior is internally motivated and chosen by the individual.
- All of our behavior is our best attempt to satisfy one or more of five basic needs built into our genetic structure.
- All human behavior is purposeful.
- We make the best behavior choices we can, given the information we have.
- We are responsible for our own behavior.
- Effective discipline is based on meeting students' needs for survival, belonging, freedom, fun, and power.
- All students can do competent work and some quality work in school.

In developing these themes, Glasser contributed the concepts of Choice Theory, quality curriculum, quality learning, and quality teaching, maintaining that all play important roles in good discipline.

Glasser's Central Focus

Glasser believes that improvement in education and discipline can only be accomplished by changing the way classrooms function. He says it is clear that trying to force students to learn or behave properly will not succeed. His work, therefore, focuses on providing a curriculum that is naturally attractive to students and on working with students in ways that encourage their making responsible choices that lead to personal success.

In particular, Glasser emphasizes quality in curriculum, teaching, and learning. He says that if schools are to survive, they must be redesigned to emphasize quality throughout. They must give up trying to coerce or force students to learn or behave in a particular manner. Force does not work, but students willingly pursue matters they find interesting and that meet their needs for security, belonging, power, fun, and freedom. Glasser feels these are **basic needs**, built into the genetic codes. By genuinely trying to meet those needs, educators can entice students to engage in meaningful learning while conducting themselves appropriately. No pressure need be applied.

Glasser's Principal Teachings

- *Virtually all human behavior is internally motivated and chosen by the individual.*
True motives lie within the individual. Behavior is chosen, in keeping with those motives.
- *All human behavior is purposeful.*
Our behavior is never aimless or accidental. It reflects our attempts to meet certain specific needs.
- *We are responsible for our own behavior.*
Because our behavior is purposeful and chosen, we cannot blame our transgressions on circumstances, fate, or others. Any credit or blame goes to us.

- *All of our behavior is our best attempt to control ourselves to meet five basic needs: survival, belonging, power, fun, and freedom.*
The school experience should be refined to enable students to meet these five needs more easily.
- *Students feel pleasure when their basic needs are met and frustration when they are not.*
Students are usually contented and well behaved when their needs are being met but discontented and inclined to misbehave when their needs are not being met.
- *At least half of today's students will not commit themselves to learning if they find their school experience boring, frustrating, or otherwise dissatisfying.*
There is no way teachers can make students commit to learning, though they can usually force behavioral compliance temporarily.
- *Few students in today's schools do their best work.*
The overwhelming majority is apathetic about schoolwork. Many students do no schoolwork at all.
- *Today's schools must create quality conditions in which fewer students and teachers are frustrated.*
Students must feel they belong, enjoy a certain amount of power, have some fun in learning, and experience a sense of freedom in the process.
- *What schools require is a new commitment to quality education.*
Quality education occurs when the curriculum is attractive and students are encouraged, supported, and helped to learn.
- *The school curriculum should be limited to learnings that are useful or otherwise relevant to students' lives.*
Usefulness and relevance are hallmarks of quality curriculum, which is delivered through activities that attract student interest, involve students actively, provide enjoyment, and lead to meaningful accomplishments.
- *Students should be allowed to acquire in-depth information about topics they consider useful or relevant in their lives.*
This increases the likelihood of quality learning.
- *Quality learning is evident when students become able to demonstrate or explain how, why, and where their learnings are valuable.*
The opportunity for making such explanations should be incorporated in the daily classroom activities.
- *Instead of scolding, coercing, or punishing, teachers should try to befriend their students, provide encouragement and stimulation, and show unending willingness to help.*
Their ability to do these things is a mark of quality teaching.
- *Teachers who dictate procedures, order students to work, and berate them when they do not are increasingly ineffective with today's students.*
Teachers who function in this manner are called "boss teachers."

- Teachers who provide a stimulating learning environment, encourage students, and help them as much as possible are most effective with today's learners. Teachers who function in this way are called "lead teachers."

- Motivation is the key ingredient in learning. Students are motivated by what they find pleasurable at any given time.

It is up to teachers to make the curriculum and instruction pleasurable for students. When that is done, most learning difficulties and behavior problems disappear.

Analysis of Glasser's *Noncoercive Discipline*

Glasser points out the futility of attempting to force students to behave against their will. For example, when a student is not paying attention because the lesson is boring, it is a losing battle to try to force the student's attention. On the other hand, when lessons are interesting, students pay attention naturally and don't have to be continually cajoled. This fact has caused Glasser to focus on what he calls **quality education**, which entices students to engage willingly in the curriculum. **Choice Theory**, which helps teachers and students understand human nature and use it to advantage, plays a key role in quality education.

Earlier, Glasser concluded that the majority of students today are content to do low-quality schoolwork or even none at all. It was his conclusion that "no more than half of our secondary school students are willing to make an effort to learn, and therefore cannot be taught" (1986, p. 3), and that "... no more than 15 percent of high school students do quality work" (1990, p. 5). His solution to the problem is to offer instruction in a different manner—one in which a substantial majority of students willingly do high-quality schoolwork. Nothing less, he says, will suffice.

For many years now, Glasser has been refining procedures for achieving the quality education he envisions. What must be done, he says, is to provide instruction, support, and other conditions in the classroom that meet students' basic needs. This requires only modest changes in curricula, materials, and physical facilities but a significant change in the way teachers work with students. Glasser recognizes how difficult teaching can be. He expresses sympathy for beleaguered secondary teachers who yearn to work with dedicated, high-achieving students but are continually frustrated by students who make little effort to learn. Those teachers report that their main discipline problems are not defiance or disruption but, rather, students' overwhelming apathy, resignation, and unwillingness to participate in class activities or assignments. Students, for their part, tell Glasser that the problem with schoolwork is not that it is too difficult but that it is too boring. For Glasser, this is another way of saying that schoolwork does not meet students' psychological needs. He has a remedy for this problem, which he puts forth in three fundamental propositions:

1. The school curriculum must be organized to meet students' basic needs for survival, belonging, power, fun, and freedom.

2. **Quality schoolwork** and **self-evaluation** (of quality) by students must replace the fragmented and boring requirements on which students are typically tested and evaluated. This requires that teachers abandon traditional teaching practices and move toward **quality teaching** as described in **competency-based classrooms**.
3. **Choice Theory**, which contributes to success and responsibility, must be given central attention in teaching, learning, and behavior management.

Meeting Students' Needs

Glasser is adamant that education that does not give priority to students' five basic needs is bound to fail. Meeting the needs is not difficult. Glasser says students' need related to **survival** is met when the school environment is kept safe and free from personal threat. They sense **belonging** when they are involved in class matters, receive attention from the teacher and others, and are brought into discussions of matters that concern the class. Students sense **power** when the teacher asks them to participate in decisions about topics to be studied and procedures for working in the class. A sense of power also comes from being assigned responsibility for class duties, such as helping take attendance, caring for class animals, helping distribute and take care of materials, being in charge of audiovisual equipment, and so forth. Students experience **fun** when they are able to work and talk with others, engage in interesting activities, and share their accomplishments. And they sense **freedom** when the teacher allows them to make responsible choices concerning what they will study, how they will do so, and how they will demonstrate their accomplishments. Glasser frequently mentions the value of cooperative learning groups and **learning teams** in helping students meet their basic needs (Glasser, 1998c).

Quality Curriculum

Glasser finds much fault with the present school curriculum, the way it is presented, and how student learning is evaluated. He claims that present-day education consists too much of memorizing facts irrelevant to students' lives, and that its quality is judged by how many fragments of information students can retain long enough to be measured on tests. He says school should be converted into a place where students learn useful information and learn it well. To make that possible, a **quality curriculum** is necessary. The old curriculum should be revised so that it consists only of learnings that students find enjoyable and useful. The rest should be discarded as "nonsense" (Glasser, 1992).

When teachers introduce new segments of learning, they should hold discussions with students and, if the students are old enough, ask them to identify what they would like to explore in depth. Adequate time should then be allowed so the identified topics can be learned well. Quality learning requires depth of understanding together with a good grasp of its usefulness. Learning a smaller number of topics very well is always preferable to covering many topics superficially. As part of evaluating in-depth learning, students should expect to explain why the material they have learned is valuable and how and where it can be used. They should regularly be asked to assess the quality of their efforts as well.

Quality Teaching

Quality teaching is rather easy to accomplish, but it requires a change in approach. Even teachers who are committed intellectually to quality teaching may find the change difficult, as it is not easy to change one's teaching style. Glasser (1993, p. 22 ff) says it can be done by working toward the following:

1. *Provide a warm, supportive classroom climate.* This is done by helping students know and like you. Use natural occasions over time to tell students who you are, what you stand for, what you will ask them to do, what you will not ask them to do, what you will do for them, and what you will not do for them. Show that you are always willing to help.
2. *Use lead teaching rather than boss teaching.* This means using methods that encourage students and draw them out rather than trying to force information into them. (You will see how this is done in the section called "More on Lead Teaching," which follows presently.)
3. *Ask students only to do work that is useful.* **Useful work** involves developing skills that are useful in students' lives rather than merely acquiring information. At times teachers may have to point out the value of the new skills, but that value must become quickly apparent to students or they will not make a sustained effort to learn. Students should not be required to memorize information except that which is essential to the skill being learned. However, information should be taught and learned provided it meets one or more of the following criteria (1993, p. 48):
 - The information is directly related to an important skill.
 - The information is something that students express a desire to learn.
 - The information is something the teacher believes to be especially useful.
 - The information is required for college entrance exams.
4. *Always ask students to do the best they can.* The process of doing quality work occurs slowly and must be nurtured. Glasser (1998b) suggests that a focus on quality can be initiated as follows:
 - Discuss quality work enough so that students understand what you mean.
 - Begin with an assignment that is clearly important enough to do well.
 - Ask students to do their best work on the assignment. Do not grade their work because grades suggest to students that the work is finished.
5. *Ask students to evaluate work they have done and improve it.* Quality usually comes from modifications through continued effort. Glasser suggests that when students feel they have completed a piece of work on a topic they consider important, the teacher should help them make **value judgments** about it, as follows:
 - Ask students to explain why they feel their work has high quality.
 - Ask students how they think they might improve their work further. As students see the value of improving their work, higher quality will result naturally.
 - Progressively help students learn to use **SIR**, a process of self-evaluation, improvement, and repetition, until quality is achieved.

6. *Help students recognize that doing quality work makes them feel good.* This effect will occur naturally as students learn to do quality work. Glasser (1993) says,

There is no better human feeling than that which comes from the satisfaction of doing something useful that you believe is the very best you can do and finding that others agree. As students begin to sense this feeling, they will want more of it. (p. 25)

7. *Help students see that quality work is never destructive to oneself, others, or the environment.* Teachers should help students realize that it is not possible to achieve the good feeling of quality work if their efforts harm people, property, the environment, or other creatures.

More on Lead Teaching

Glasser has much to say about the style of teaching required for quality education. In essence, he says that teachers must move away from “boss teaching” and begin replacing it with “lead teaching.” Teachers typically function as bosses, Glasser contends, because they do not realize they cannot provide motivation—that instead they must call on motivation already residing within students.

Boss teachers, as Glasser describes them, do the following:

- Set the tasks and standards for student learning.
- Talk rather than demonstrate and rarely ask for student input.
- Grade the work without involving students in the evaluation.
- Use coercion to ensure students comply with expectations.

To illustrate how a boss teacher functions, consider the example of Mr. Márquez, who introduces his unit of study on South American geography in the following way:

Class, today we are going to begin our study of the geography of South America. You will be expected to do the following things:

1. Learn the names of the South American countries.
2. Locate those countries on a blank map.
3. Describe the types of terrain typical of each country.
4. Name two products associated with each country.
5. Describe the population of each country in terms of ethnic origin and economic well-being.
6. Name and locate the most important river in each country.

We will learn this information from our textbooks and encyclopedias. You will have two tests, one at . . .

Mr. Márquez's boss approach limits productivity and quality of work. It is unlikely that his students will pursue the work eagerly. Most will do only enough, and only well enough, to get by.

Lead teachers work differently. They realize that genuine motivation to learn resides within students, in the form of needs and interests, and must be activated. Toward that end, lead teachers spend most of their time organizing interesting activities and providing assistance to students. They teach in a way similar to the following:

- Discuss the curriculum with the class in such a way that many topics of interest are identified.
- Encourage students to identify topics they would like to explore in depth.
- Discuss with students the nature of the schoolwork that might ensue, emphasizing quality and asking for input on criteria of quality.
- Explore with students resources that might be needed for quality work and the amount of time such work might require.
- Demonstrate ways in which the work can be done, using models that reflect quality.
- Emphasize the importance of students' continually inspecting and evaluating their own work in terms of quality.
- Make evident to students that everything possible will be done to provide them with good tools and a good workplace that is noncoercive and nonadversarial.

To illustrate how lead teaching might proceed, consider the example of Mr. Garcia's introduction to a unit of study on the geography of South America:

Class, have any of you ever lived in South America? You did, Samuel? Which country? Peru? Fantastic! What an interesting country! I used to live in Brazil. I traveled in the Amazon quite a bit and spent some time with jungle Indians. Supposedly they were headhunters at one time. But not now. At least so they say. Tomorrow I'll show you a bow and arrow I brought from that tribe. Samuel, did you ever eat monkey when you were in Peru? I think Peru and Brazil are very alike in some ways but very different in others. What was Peru like compared to here? Did you get up into the Andes? They have fabulous ruins all over Peru, I hear, and those fantastic Chariots of the Gods lines and drawings on the landscape. Do you have any photographs or slides you could bring for us to see? What a resource you could be for us! You could teach us a lot!

Class, Samuel lived in Peru and traveled in the Andes. If we could get him to teach us about that country, what do you think you would most like to learn? (The class discusses this option and identifies topics.)

We have the opportunity in our class to learn a great deal about South America, its mountains and grasslands, its dense rain forests and huge rivers, and its interesting people and strange animals. Did you know there are groups of English, Welsh, Italians, and Germans living in many parts of South America, especially in Argentina? Did you know there are still thought to be tribes of Indians in the jungles that have no contact with the outside world? Did you know that almost half of all the river water in the world is in the Amazon Basin, and that in some places the Amazon River is so wide that from the middle you can't see either shore?

Speaking of the Amazon jungle, I swam in a lake there that contained piranhas, and look, I still have my legs and arms. Surprised about that? If you wanted to learn more about living in the Amazon jungle, what would you be interested in knowing? (Discussion ensues.)

How about people of the high Andes? Those Incas, for example, and their ancestors who in some unknown way cut and placed enormous boulders into gigantic, perfectly fitting fortress walls? Samuel has seen them. The Incas were very civilized and powerful, with an empire that stretched for three thousand miles. Yet they were conquered by a few Spaniards on horseback. How in the world could that have happened? If you could learn more about those amazing people, what would you like to know? (Discussion continues in this manner. Students identify topics about which they would be willing to make an effort to learn.) Now let me see what you think of this idea: I have written down the topics you said you were interested in, and I can help you with resources and materials. I have lots of my own, including slides, South American music, and many artifacts I have collected. I know two other people who lived in Argentina and Colombia that we could invite to talk with us. We can concentrate on what you have said you would like to learn. But if we decide to do so, I want to see if we can make this deal: We explore what interests you; I help you all I can; and you, for your part, agree to do the best work you are capable of. We would need to discuss that to get some ideas of what you might do that would show the quality of your learning. In addition, I hope I can persuade each of you regularly to evaluate yourselves as to how well you believe you are doing. Understand, this would not be me evaluating you, it would be you evaluating yourself—not for a grade but for you to decide what you are doing very well and what you think you might be able to do better. What do you think of that idea? Want to give it a try?

Choice Theory in the Classroom

Motivation is an extremely important contributor to academic and behavioral success. Students who like what they are doing and want to learn more about it almost always do well and conduct themselves appropriately. Glasser notes that educators have traditionally assumed that "external control" (what we do to students or for them) is teachers' most reliable means of motivating school learning. He points out that this assumption is seriously flawed because all students will do what is most satisfying to them at any given time, if they can. If they choose to work hard and comply with expectations, it is because they get satisfaction from doing so. If students do not experience that natural satisfaction, they will seldom work hard for long. The payoff for doing so is too remote to serve as a reliable motivator.

It has become clear that threat and punishment do not motivate students to do well in school. They can be replaced with principles of Choice Theory that help produce the results teachers desire. Choice Theory helps everyone become more realistic about human behavior, and it can be used to establish learning environments that lead to success and quality. The following are some of the main tenets of Choice Theory:

- We can control no one's behavior except our own.
- We cannot successfully make a person do anything. All we can do is open possibilities and provide information.
- All behavior is best understood as Total Behavior, comprised of four components: acting, thinking, feeling, and physiology (how we function).
- All Total Behavior is chosen, but we only have direct control over the acting and thinking components. In other words, we can choose how to act and how to think. Feeling and physiology are controlled indirectly through how we choose to act and think.
- What we do is not automatically determined by external causes. It is determined primarily by what goes on inside us.
- One way to improve behavior is through clarifying what a quality existence would be like and planning the choices that would help achieve that existence. In the classroom, this process occurs best when teachers establish warm, trusting relationships with students.

Applications of Choice Theory to the classroom are reflected in the work of Kathy Curtiss and Steven English (2003), who have been providing services to schools across the country for many years (see www.kathycurtissco.com/what_we_do.htm). Curtiss and English advocate using classroom meetings, integrating character development into curriculum content, and developing instructional strategies that lead to student ownership of learning. They also work on strengthening student reflection and self-evaluation with the aim of increasing students' responsibility for making the most of their educational opportunity. They recommend the use of portfolios and assessment rubrics (procedures) based on standards, as well as developing stronger partnerships between teachers and students. They point out that these provisions accomplish little unless the classroom is imbued with trust and respect and students learn to resolve their problems without hurting each other. Instructional strategies that make this possible include cooperative learning, conflict resolution, classroom meetings, and character education.

The Relation of Quality Teaching to Discipline

Teachers who function as leaders of quality classrooms assiduously avoid adversarial relationships with their students because they destroy incentives for student learning as well as pleasure in teaching. When teachers stay out of the adversity trap, they not only have an opportunity to foster quality learning but also reduce discipline problems to a minimum.

Glasser acknowledges that no approach can eliminate all behavior problems. He urges teachers to work with students to establish standards of conduct in the classroom. Toward that end, he makes the following suggestions: Begin with a discussion of the importance of quality work (to be given priority in the class) and explain that you will do everything possible to help students learn and enjoy themselves without using force. That discussion should lead naturally to asking students about class behavior they believe will help them get their work done and truly help them learn. Glasser says that if teachers can get students to see the importance of courtesy, no other rules may be necessary.

Teachers should also solicit student advice on what should happen when behavior agreements are broken. Glasser says students usually suggest punishment, though they know punishment is not effective. If asked further, they will agree that behavior problems are best solved by looking for ways to remedy whatever is causing the rule to be broken. Glasser urges teachers to ask, "What could I do to help?" and to hold classroom meetings to explore alternatives to inappropriate behavior. Once agreements and consequences are established, they should be put in writing and all students should sign the document, attesting that they understand the agreements and that, if they break them, they will try—with the teacher's help—to correct the underlying problem. Agreements established and dealt with in this way, says Glasser, show that the teacher's main concern lies in quality, not power, and that the teacher recognizes that power struggles are the main enemy of quality education.

When Rules Are Broken

Glasser reminds us that when class agreements or rules are broken teacher interventions are required. These interventions should be nonpunitive acts that stop the misbehavior and get the student's mind back on class work. Suppose that Jonathan has come into the room obviously upset. As the lesson begins, he turns heatedly and throws something at Michael. Glasser would suggest that the teacher do the following:

Teacher: It looks like you have a problem, Jonathan. How can I help you solve it?
[Jonathan frowns, still obviously upset.]

Teacher: If you will calm down, I will discuss it with you in a little while. I think we can work something out.

Glasser says you should make it clear that you are unable to help Jonathan unless he calms down. You say this without emotion in your voice, recognizing that anger on your part will only put Jonathan on the defensive. If Jonathan doesn't calm down, there is no good way to deal with the problem. Glasser (1990) says to allow him 20 seconds, and if he isn't calm by then, admit that there is no way to solve the problem at that time. Give Jonathan time out from the lesson but don't threaten or warn him. Say something like the following: "Jonathan, I want to help you work this out. I am not interested in punishing you. Whatever the problem is, let's solve it. But for now you must go sit at the table. When you are calm, come back to your seat." Later, at an opportune time, discuss the situation with Jonathan approximately as follows:

Teacher: What were you doing when the problem started? Was it against the rules?
Can we work things out so it won't happen again? What could you and I do to keep it from happening?

If the problem involves hostilities between Jonathan and Michael, the discussion should involve both boys and proceed along these lines:

Teacher: What were you doing, Jonathan? What were you doing, Michael? How can the three of us work things out so this won't happen anymore?

It is important to note that no blame is assigned to either Jonathan or Michael. No time is spent trying to find out whose fault it was. You remind the boys that all you are looking for is a solution so that the problem won't occur again. Glasser says if you treat Jonathan and Michael with respect and courtesy, if you show you don't want to punish them or throw your weight around, and if you talk to them as a problem solver, both their classroom behavior and the quality of their work will likely improve.

Moving toward Quality Classrooms

As of October 2001, there were 10 schools in the United States officially designated by William Glasser as Glasser Quality Schools (GQS). Glasser (2001) describes them as schools in which:

- Relationships are based on trust and respect, and all discipline problems (meaning intentional misbehavior) have disappeared.
- Total learning competence is stressed. Student work does not receive credit until it has reached the B level of quality on the traditional ABCDF grading system.
- Students and staff are taught to use Choice Theory in their lives and in their work at school.
- Students score significantly above average on proficiency tests and college entrance exams, typically at the 80th percentile or better.
- Staff, students, parents, and administrators view the school as a joyful place.

A fundamental operating principle of Glasser Quality Schools is that teachers and administrators endeavor to help students be happy at school. Glasser claims that if you are having trouble with a student, you can be absolutely sure that student is unhappy in your class and very likely unhappy in school. Almost all problems that occur between teachers and students are caused by unsatisfactory relationships. Glasser, therefore, stresses the fundamental importance of maintaining good relationships between teachers and students. Such relationships are established when teachers completely stop using what he calls "the seven deadly habits" and replace them with what he calls "the seven connecting habits."

The Seven Deadly Habits

The seven deadly habits that prevent the establishment of caring relationships between teachers and students are *criticizing, blaming, complaining, nagging, threatening, punishing, and rewarding students to control them*. (These same deadly habits function equally in relationships outside of school.) If teachers are to establish good relationships with students and gain their willing cooperation, they must decide they will never again use any of these deadly habits.

The Seven Connecting Habits

In place of the seven deadly habits that damage relationships, teachers should use behaviors that increase a sense of connection between them and their students. The seven connecting habits are *caring, listening, supporting, contributing, encouraging, trusting, and befriending*. Glasser believes—and his quality schools support his contentions—that all students who come to school can do competent work. In order for this to happen, teachers must strongly “connect” with their students. This connection is accomplished when teachers use the seven connecting habits and *give up* trying to use external controls to make students behave as they want them to. External control is exemplified in the seven deadly habits. It effectively prevents the close relationships needed between teachers and students. Glasser illustrates his contentions by describing how we relate to friends (and he does indeed urge teachers to befriend their students). He says we do not speak harshly to our friends, or criticize or blame them. Rather, we use connecting habits when relating with them.

Gaining the Benefits of Quality Classrooms

Here is a brief outline of Glasser's suggestions for working with your class in order to obtain the benefits of quality classrooms.

1. *Ways of relating.* Determine that, beginning today, you will assiduously avoid the seven deadly habits when working with your students and replace them with connecting habits.
2. *The basic message.* The message you want to get across to students is the following: “We are in this class together. I want to help you to be competent or go beyond. My job is to teach you and help you learn, not to find out what you don't know and punish you for not knowing it. If you have a question, ask me. If you need more time, I'll give it to you. If you have an idea how to do what we are trying to do better, tell me. I'll listen” (Glasser, 2001, p. 113).
3. *Befriending students.* Instead of telling students what they must do and not do, endeavor to befriend all of them. To set the stage, say something like, “I think an important part of my job is to do all I can to make sure you have a good time learning. You have to come to school and no one's going to pay you for doing schoolwork. So the least I can do is make this class fun for both you and me. I think we can learn a lot and still have a very good time” (Glasser, 2001, p. 54). Then assiduously use the seven connecting habits.
4. *Rules for the class.* Rely on one fundamental rule of behavior—the golden rule. Discuss the golden rule with students. A few other rules may occasionally be necessary, but the golden rule is fundamental to all others.
5. *Dealing with misbehavior.* Replace traditional discipline (external control) with talking and listening to students as soon as you sense impending trouble. Listen carefully. Inject humor into the situation if you can but only if, when doing so, you do not make light of students' concerns.

6. *Selecting knowledge.* Expect your students to learn only information and skills that will be useful to them in school and in life. They must be able to use what they learn. There is no memorizing information simply for the sake of "knowing" it. Explain to students that you will not ask them to learn anything that is not useful to them, and when there is doubt, you will explain clearly how the new learning will benefit them.
7. *Competency.* Tell students you have a new way of teaching in which everyone can do competent work and everyone will make good grades (meaning a grade of B or better.) Explain that you will ask students to work at any given assignment until they have brought it to a competent level. Nobody will fail or receive a low grade. They can use any resources available to help them, including textbooks, parents, and other students. The primary objective is to do competent work.
8. *Quality.* Often encourage students to work for still higher quality. This means they work at assignments until they have brought them to the A level.
9. *Teach, then test.* Use tests as much as you want. Teach students using your best techniques, then give them a test. Explain that the tests are for learning only. Since memorization is not emphasized, use short essay or multiple choice tests. Promise students no one will fail or receive a bad grade. When they have completed the test, have them go back over it and correct any incorrect or incomplete answers. Ask them to explain why the correction is better. Give them the time and help needed to get everything right.
10. *Understanding and using.* Ask students always to focus on understanding and using the information and skills being taught. Ask them to share and discuss the learnings with parents and guardians.
11. *For older students.* For students in middle school and high school, explain that you will teach and test for educational competence. This will involve thinking about the new knowledge being acquired and then using that thinking in speaking, listening, reading, writing, and problem solving. The point of this effort is always to improve knowledge.
12. *After competence is achieved.* Students who complete their work competently can then have the option of helping other students or moving ahead to doing something of yet higher quality.

To experience the full flavor and sense of Glasser's ideas, read his small book entitled *Every Student Can Succeed* (2001). Glasser suggests that this will be his culminating book in education.

Strengths of Glasser's *Noncoercive Discipline*

Glasser points out that schools traditionally expect students to do boring work while sitting and waiting, which goes strongly against students' nature and severely limits achievement for many. He says that expecting students to do boring work in school "is like asking someone who is sitting on a hot stove to sit still and stop complaining" (1986, p. 53) and that "teachers should not depend on any discipline program that demands that they do

something to or for students to get them to stop behaving badly in unsatisfying classes. Only a discipline program that is also concerned with classroom satisfaction will work" (1986, p. 56).

Glasser has also given us much to think about regarding quality in teaching and learning. He has shown how teachers can function more effectively as leaders who provide continual support and encouragement but do not coerce, intimidate, or punish. They know that if they meet students' needs adequately, students will stay in school and do better-quality work. In schools and classes that operate on the basis of quality, discipline problems will be few and relatively easily resolved.

Glasser's approach does not have to be set into place as a total and complete system of teaching and discipline. His suggestions for teachers acting as problem solvers without arguing or punishing should be seriously considered by all teachers. His procedures for increasing quality in teaching and learning can be put gradually into practice, thus allowing teachers to evaluate for themselves the effect on classroom climate and morale. Glasser's suggestions, although they may require some changes in teaching techniques, help bring about what all teachers desire, which is for their students to learn well and enjoy school while becoming more self-directing and responsible.

Initiating Glasser's *Noncoercive Discipline*

Suppose you like Glasser's ideas on schooling and discipline and want to try them in your classroom. How do you go about putting them into practice? You would begin by holding discussions with your class to get students' thoughts on how school could be made more interesting and enjoyable. You could do something like the following:

- Involve students in discussions about the curriculum, topics they would like to explore, ways in which they would like to work, procedures for reporting or demonstrating accomplishment, personal conduct that would make the class function better, and how disruptions might be handled positively and effectively. The process is mainly for student input, but you might offer some of your opinions as well.
- Make plain to students that you will try to organize a few activities as they have suggested and that you will do all you can to help them learn and succeed.

Meanwhile, you would also take the following steps:

- Learn how to function as a lead teacher rather than a boss teacher.
- Use the seven connecting habits while avoiding the seven deadly habits.
- Hold regular class meetings to discuss curriculum, procedures, behavior, and other educational topics. These meetings should always be conducted with an eye to improving learning conditions for students, never as a venue for finding fault, blaming, or criticizing.
- When students misbehave, discuss their behavior and why it was inappropriate for the class. Ask them what they feel they could do to avoid misbehaving in the future. If the misbehavior is serious or chronic, talk with the involved students privately at an appropriate time.

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS PRESENTED IN THIS CHAPTER

The following terms are central to Glasser's suggestions regarding education, teaching, learning, and discipline. Check yourself for understanding.

Choice Theory
responsibility
useful work
value judgments
basic needs
survival
belonging
power
fun

freedom
quality education
quality curriculum
quality learning
quality schoolwork
quality teaching
competency-based classrooms
SIR
boss teachers

lead teachers
class rules
classroom meetings
self-evaluation
learning teams
seven deadly habits
seven connecting habits

SELECTED SEVEN—SUMMARY SUGGESTIONS FROM WILLIAM GLASSER

William Glasser suggests that you emphasize the following, as well as his many other suggestions:

- 1 Remember that your students' behavior is internally motivated and purposeful, directed toward meeting certain needs. Therefore, adjust your curriculum and instructional activities to allow students to meet those needs.
- 2 A majority of your students will not commit themselves to learning they find boring, frustrating, or otherwise dissatisfying. Do away with that type of learning and replace it with instruction students enjoy.
- 3 Encourage your students to pursue in-depth information about socially approved topics they consider useful or relevant in their lives.
- 4 Encourage students to demonstrate or explain how, why, and where their preferred learnings are valuable in their lives.
- 5 Instead of coercing, scolding, and punishing your students to get them to learn and behave properly, befriend them, provide encouragement and stimulation, and show unending willingness to help.
- 6 Ask students what kinds of class behaviors will help them acquire quality learning. Ask them to reach agreements about such behavior in the class. Ask them what should happen when anyone breaks a behavior agreement. Ensure that the steps are positive, not negative.
- 7 When working with students, avoid the seven deadly habits of criticizing, blaming, complaining, nagging, threatening, punishing, and rewarding students to control them. Instead, rely on the seven connecting habits of caring, listening, supporting, contributing, encouraging, trusting, and befriending.

CONCEPT CASES

■ CASE 1 *Kristina Will Not Work*

Kristina, a student in Mr. Jake's class, is quite docile. She socializes little with other students and never disrupts class. However, despite Mr. Jake's best efforts, Kristina never does her work. She rarely completes an assignment. She is simply there, putting forth no effort. *How would Glasser deal with Kristina?*

Glasser would first suggest that Mr. Jake think carefully about the classroom and the program to try to determine whether they contain obstacles that prevent Kristina from meeting her needs for survival, belonging, power, fun, and freedom. He would then have Mr. Jake discuss the matter with Kristina, not blaming her but noting the problem of nonproductivity and asking what the

problem is and what he might be able to do to help. In that discussion, Mr. Jake might ask Kristina questions such as the following:

1. You have a problem with this work, don't you? Only you can decide whether to do it. Is there anything I can do to help you?
2. Is there anything I could do to make the work more interesting for you?
3. Is there anything in this class that you especially enjoy doing? Do you think that, for a while you might like to do only those things?
4. Is there anything we have discussed in class that you would like to learn very, very well? How could I help you do that?
5. What could I do differently that would help you want to learn?

Glasser would not want Mr. Jake to use a disapproving tone of voice with Kristina, but every day he should make a point of talking with her in a friendly and courteous way about nonschool matters such as trips, pets, and movies. He would do this casually, showing he is interested in her and willing to be her friend. Glasser would remind Mr. Jake that there is no magic formula for success with all students. Mr. Jake can only encourage and support Kristina. Scolding and coercion are likely to make matters worse, but as Mr. Jake befriends Kristina she is likely to begin to do more work and better-quality work.

■ CASE 2 *Sara Cannot Stop Talking*

Sara is a pleasant girl who participates in class activities and does most, though not all, of her assigned work. She

cannot seem to refrain from talking to classmates, however. Her teacher, Mr. Gonzales, has to speak to her repeatedly during lessons, to the point that he often becomes exasperated and loses his temper. *What suggestions would Glasser give Mr. Gonzales for dealing with Sara?*

■ CASE 3 *Joshua Clowns and Intimidates*

Larger and louder than his classmates, Joshua always wants to be the center of attention, which he accomplishes through a combination of clowning and intimidation. He makes wise remarks, talks back (smilingly) to the teacher, utters a variety of sound-effect noises such as automobile crashes and gunshots, and makes limitless sarcastic comments and put-downs of his classmates. Other students will not stand up to him, apparently fearing his size and verbal aggression. His teacher, Miss Pearl, has come to her wit's end. *How do you think Glasser would have Miss Pearl deal with Joshua?*

■ CASE 4 *Tom Is Hostile and Defiant*

Tom has appeared to be in his usual foul mood ever since arriving in class. On his way to sharpen his pencil, he bumps into Frank, who complains. Tom tells him loudly to shut up. Miss Baines, the teacher, says, "Tom, go back to your seat." Tom wheels around, swears loudly, and says heatedly, "I'll go when I'm damned good and ready!" *How would Glasser have Miss Baines deal with Tom?*

QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

1. Make notes in your journal concerning information from Glasser that relates to the five principles for developing a personal system of discipline.
2. Select a grade level and/or subject you enjoy teaching. Outline what you would consider and do, along the lines of Glasser's suggestions, concerning the following:
 - a. Organizing the classroom, class, curriculum, and activities to better meet your students' needs for belonging, fun, power, and freedom
 - b. Your continual efforts to help students improve the quality of their work
3. Do a comparative analysis of Glasser's system with that of either Canter or Jones, as concerns:
 - a. Effectiveness in suppressing inappropriate behavior
 - b. Effectiveness in improving long-term behavior
 - c. Ease of implementation
 - d. Effect on student self-concept
 - e. Effect on bonds of trust between teacher and student
 - f. The degree to which each model accurately depicts realities of student attitude and behavior.

YOU ARE THE TEACHER

Middle School World History

Your third-period world history class is comprised of students whose achievement levels vary from high to well below average. You pace their work accordingly, ask them to work cooperatively, and make sure everyone understands what they are supposed to do. For the most part you enjoy the class, finding the students interesting and refreshing. Your lessons follow a consistent pattern. First, you ask the students to read in groups from the textbook. Then you call on students at random to answer selected questions about the material. If a student who is called on is unable to answer a question, the group he or she represents loses a point. If able to answer correctly, the group gains a point. For partially correct answers, the group neither receives nor loses a point. For the second part of the period, the class groups do something productive or creative connected with the material they have read, such as making posters, writing a story, doing a skit, or the like. As appropriate, these efforts are shared with members of the class.

Typical Occurrences

You call on Hillary to answer a question. Although she has been participating, she shakes her head. This has happened several times before. Not wanting to hurt Hillary's feelings, you simply say, "That costs the group a point," and you call on someone else. Unfortunately, Hillary's group gets upset at her. The other students make comments under their breath. Later, Clarisse does the same thing that Hillary has done. When you speak with her about it, she replies, "You didn't make Hillary do it." You answer, "Look, we are talking about you, not Hillary." However, you let the matter lie there and say no more. Just then Deonne comes into the class late, appearing very angry. He slams his pack down on his desk and sits without opening his textbook. Although you

want to talk with Deonne, you don't know how to approach him at that time. Will is in an opposite mood. Throughout the oral reading portion of the class, he continually giggles at every mispronounced word and at every reply students give to your questions. Will sits at the front of the class and turns around to laugh, seeing if he can get anyone else to laugh with him. He makes some oooh and aaaah sounds when Hillary and Clarisse decline to respond. Although most students either ignore him or give him disgusted looks, he keeps laughing. You finally ask him what is so funny. He replies, "Nothing in particular," and looks back at the class and laughs. At the end of the period, there is time for sharing three posters students have made. Will makes comments and giggles about each of them. Clarisse, who has not participated, says, "Will, how about shutting up!" As the students leave the room, you take Deonne aside. "Is something wrong, Deonne?" you ask. "No," Deonne replies. His jaws are clenched as he strides past you.

Conceptualizing a Strategy

If you followed the suggestions of William Glasser, what would you conclude or do with regard to the following?

1. Preventing the problems from occurring in the first place.
2. Putting an immediate end to the undesirable behavior.
3. Involving other or all students in addressing the situation.
4. Maintaining student dignity and good personal relations.
5. Using follow-up procedures that would prevent the recurrence of the misbehavior.
6. Using the situation to help the students develop a sense of greater responsibility and self-control.

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