

Enhancing teacher effectiveness in the classroom

This series of books offers teachers practical ways to help make the school day much more productive and a lot more enjoyable.

Specialist research findings on all sorts of topics have been coupled with decades of the author's classroom experience to give the busy classroom practitioner a multitude of workable solutions to make high-quality teaching a reality.

In a nutshell – within these books is the reassuring voice of experience ready to guide the classroom practitioner with tried and true ways to effectively manage the hazards of the typical school day – and come out shining.

The result is a very readable, helpful and practical professional resource.

The school day can then be something to look forward to – for you the teacher, and for the children in your care.



Books in this series

- Getting to the Heart of Learning Problems
- **From Bully to Model Citizen**
- Fixing Bad Behaviour

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From Bully to *Model* Citizen

Workable classroom strategies that can bring about life-changing benefits

Why is bullying becoming such a chronic problem?

Research all over the world keeps saying that bullying and bad behaviour are not only on the increase, but are becoming more deep-seated and vitriolic.

Some reasons as to why this is so:

- Research is showing that there is a definite link between poor literacy and bullying behaviour. Fixing this problem should be first and foremost on any teacher's agenda, regardless of the age of the child or student.
- Many families have been torn apart with marriage problems and divorce, with blended families not an unusual situation. New and very unsettling domestic arrangements can be so disturbing and full of an overwhelming grief for the way of life that has been lost that a child caught in the middle will find it impossible to continue trying to do well at school. Anger at one or both parents will override everything else, with a cathartic release of pent-up frustration and hurt often heaped onto the nearest and most vulnerable person available. Bullying can be an understandable way such children use to help release this distress.
- A feeling of dislike for the successful children in a classroom can result in bullying by less-able children as a way of punishing those who find schoolwork easy. The simple question to ask is here is: are the bullies of the class the best readers and mathematicians, or are they the ones who are having difficulties? The answer is probably (although not always) that the distressed children in the class are those with reading and numeracy issues.

... high levels of school engagement (or attachment) are inversely related to bullying and low literacy. Young students who enjoy school and have high rates of participation in academic and extracurricular activities are likely to develop strong literacy skills and make positive contributions to the school climate. Students with low levels of school engagement are most likely to be involved in bullying and experience literacy problems. School engagement can act as a protective factor, serving to buffer children from early onset aggression, negative peers, and environmental risks.

*http://www.cpha.ca/uploads/progs/_safeschools/discussion_paper_e.pdf
Discussion Paper May 16, 2003 Canadian Public Health Association*

- Boredom with the school curriculum and structure of lessons may be a hard pill to swallow, but this could well be the case for many children who are not challenged enough to stay happy. Gifted children in the average classroom may be squirming with frustration because their thirst for knowledge and need to be challenged is never there for them. Instead, the 6-year old violinist who has been playing since he was four and is now playing Bach will not be stretched in the class with a song such as *When I get mad I beat my drum* from the NSW Music Syllabus. (Has anyone considered that this might be a bully's anthem?)
- The children who are gifted but no-one knows it yet are especially badly done by if the teacher cannot see beyond their precociousness and bossiness to be best and first. A bored child is going to take out their frustrations one way or another as sure as eggs are eggs, and if it results in being called a bully, so be it. For children whose abilities are quashed and not allowed to flourish, expect trouble.
- The child whose irritability and inability to get along with others is labelled bullying may be merely trying to survive in a hostile environment. Perhaps the true reason for being on edge and frequently irritable is an inability to cope with the unrelenting noise of the classroom and being too close to people all the time. Crowdedness and noise can be the factors that are the cause of the problem. The only way to get through the long school day is to resort to violence.
- Poverty is a sinister beast and has far-reaching ramifications that can stretch over several generations. Chronic unemployment is often the result of illiteracy and innumeracy. Children who come from families where unemployment is a major component in their lives will need more dedication by teachers to ensure, if humanly possible, that this debilitating cycle is broken.

Education is a major factor in influencing employability. An international forum on youth unemployment concluded that barriers to education, a lack of appropriate education and a mismatch between skills gained through education and job opportunities are contributing factors to youth unemployment.

The OECD maintains that the high rates of youth unemployment can be largely attributed to the fact that numerous young people leave school without the skills needed to enter employment. An International Adult Literacy Survey also found 'employment and unemployment are strongly related to levels of literacy proficiency'.

And while internationally Australia is competitive in regard to the proportion of students achieving a high level of literacy (18 per cent of 15 year olds read at the highest level), it

falls behind in regard to reducing the proportion of students with low literacy levels (12 per cent of all 15 year olds remained at the lowest level).

*www.thesmithfamily.com.au/webdata/resources/files/Youth_unemployment_AMP_Report
November03.pdf*

- The world is becoming both wealthier and poorer so that the have and have-not groups are each creating their own problems. The gap between well-off and poor is getting deeper and wider, so those in the 'have not' category can see every day of their lives the unfairness of this disparity. Resentment and a need to punish those who have more advantages is a very natural human reaction. Seeing at close range how the 'other half' lives can rub salt in the wound.
- The media elevate those who look good and deride those who look less than beautiful. The need to have the best clothes, the nicest hair, the handsomest boyfriend and so on is an incessant message that hits hard at those unable to reach these high standards. Acceptance in society is becoming more and more reliant on how you look being the only true measure of success, with the result that even very young children are aware of these criteria. For those who cannot make the grade, life becomes difficult, and a constant anger at those who breeze along in relative ease – real or imagined – can create a very strong need to bully.
- When teenagers in a youth reform class (as a last-chance rehabilitation opportunity for habitual petty criminals) were asked what had happened in their early years at school that prevented them learning to read, their answers were significant. For all of them the answers had the same theme – that there had been some sort of disaster in their lives at that time, such as a death, a serious sickness in the family or a parent leaving home. In other words, the event was so traumatic that all schoolwork lost its purpose and meaning and from which recovery was not possible. If a teacher is unaware of these sorts of events in a child's life, or if they know but do not know how to help a child who is having emotional difficulties, an unresolved learning hurdle can emerge and remain in place for a very long time. A lifetime of unresolved distress because of a lack of basic skills can be the result. For some in this predicament, crime is the only way to survive.
- Significantly, in this same discussion, many said that the 'traumatic event' was having a 'terrible teacher' who turned them off school forever. A year is a very long time in a child's life, and to sit in a classroom feeling unsuccessful day after day in an uninspiring learning environment can be a life-crippling experience. A teacher who is