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# discipline by design

by jody capehart

BY THIS TIME OF YEAR, THE RHYTHM OF SCHOOL OR HOME SCHOOLING IS IN FULL FORM. The students have become comfortable and thus, this is often the time when discipline issues become more than apparent and begin to disrupt the educational process. As teachers and parents, we want to cultivate a classroom climate that is conducive to learning, because if the students are engaged in the learning process, maintaining discipline will be much easier. However, children of all ages often use the school or home environment to try out their antics.

Each student is completely unique and, therefore, learns differently. This adds to the complexity of the teaching process as well as maintaining desirable discipline in the classroom and/or at home. Since each child or teenager is completely unique, it is important that we understand how to discipline by design. How do we discipline to the design of our students? How do we focus on cultivating a classroom climate or home environment that is conducive to the learning process as well as maintaining discipline?

Research shows that the most effective schools are those that are well organized with high expectations for behavioral and academic success. The Family Research Council states that the schools that are most successful, whether public or private,

have one common denominator: the degree of parental involvement in the school. The same would apply to parental involvement with our children's friends and extra curricular activities.

## WE WANT TO CREATE A CLASSROOM AND/OR HOME THAT IS:

- Orderly with clearly stated boundaries
- Learner driven: The purpose of school is to learn. That fact should be obvious when we observe the classroom. It is not a social club, even though relationships are important and often add a great deal to the learning process.
- At home we want it to be family focused. Children often misbehave because they do not have a sense of family that gives them a security in feeling that they belong to something bigger than themselves. Whether you are a single parent, blended family or however your family structure is set up, it becomes critically important to give your children the true sense of family. As Dr. James Dobson says so well, we need to focus on our family. In this busy culture, it is becoming more of a challenge to do so.
- Loving and positive.
- Affirming to the student and their differences.
- Encouraging, empowering and energizing.

## MAY I USE AN ANALOGY PLEASE?

Think of your classroom or home like an orchestra and you are the conductor. You want harmony and rhythm. Your students and/or children are like the individual musicians. Your lessons and/or family times are the music scores. You can make beautiful music or it can be loud and chaotic. Sometimes the music is fast and everyone must keep up, sometimes it is slow and melodic.

My husband is starting his 34<sup>th</sup> year of playing French horn in the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. When they have a guest conductor, I hear all about it. It either works beautifully and efficiently and the musicians are happy, or the person "wastes their time," doesn't keep them together and it does not make for happy musicians or beautiful music.

## FAMILY

As the conductor of your classroom or home, are you making harmony and beautiful music? Is there a rhythm to your teaching and/or family times? Does this create the balance needed for desired discipline? Think about that and determine what you can do to make it a more harmonious place to be.

### CLIMATE IN THE CULTURE:

There is a rhythm as well as a climate in our culture, and at this time, it is not serving us well as educators or parents. The rhythm keeps moving back and forth, much like a metronome. Back in the good ole days, we may have been too rigid. The “board” of education was used to determine the classroom and school climate. There were fewer activities and distractions outside the home in those days and so, school may have been the exciting time and place to be. The school was the center of activity, as well as the church. Not so today. We feel like we have to compete with the culture. Then the pendulum swung and in the 60s, things were too lax and we raised a self-centered, self-indulgent generation. We are still seeing the “fruit” of that time.

“We have our rights!” is the swan song of this generation.

We may hear variations on a theme such as:

“Lining up is legalism.”  
“Manners are manipulative.”  
“My clothing should make a personal statement.”  
“I don’t care” becomes a power game.

As educators and parents, we must train our students to do the right thing, not just be concerned about their rights.

Adults are often afraid of children today. Some parents have abdicated their authority. In many schools and homes, the students rule. Don’t let that be true of your school or home! Children and teenagers want us to be in charge, even if they don’t act like it.

Students and our kids today must learn to come under authority if we are to have any order in our schools, homes and in our world. Learning to submit to authority is a life skill, a very necessary life skill.



Jody Capehart has been an educator for over thirty years, primarily serving as Head of School or principal. She is the author of 12 books on education and parenting, and she is Head of School at Legacy Christian Academy.