

# What to Do **WITH THE KID** Who...

**Third Edition**

**Developing Cooperation, Self-Discipline,  
and Responsibility in the Classroom**

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# Introduction

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*In describing the climate of a classroom, we are often guided by a certain set of values, a vision of what school ought to be like. We might begin with the premise, for example, that an ideal climate is one that promotes deep understanding, excitement about learning, and social as well as intellectual growth. (Kohn, 1996, p. 54)*

**E**very educator works toward establishing and maintaining an improved school climate to enrich school conditions so that teachers can teach better and students can learn more (Hansen & Childs, 1998). This goal is challenging because students in the twenty-first century live in an age of information overload and high-stakes testing; Internet access and text messages; personal insecurity and drug use; and sometimes violence in their homes, schools, and society. Thus, it is difficult for students to walk through the doors of a school and leave all their distractions and problems behind them.

In the students' search for their own identities and, sometimes, their search for an escape from family and societal problems, they look to the schools for the constant that is often missing in their home lives. Educators today need to do more than help students meet standards, score high on standardized tests, master the curriculum, secure jobs, or get accepted into college. Educators are also responsible for teaching students how to interact in socially acceptable ways and how to develop the interpersonal skills necessary to be successful in life. We need to focus on the "whole child."

The obedience model of discipline used by many educators in the past is no longer effective in today's world. Glasser (as cited in Gough, 1987) states that no amount of coercion in the schools is going to make students learn. "The old theory, 'we can make 'em work; all we have to do is get tougher,' has never produced intellectual effort in the history of the world, and it certainly won't work in this situation" (p. 657). Glasser (1997) advocates "choice theory" to help students. Choice theory shows people that behavior can only be controlled by themselves. If people are not personally satisfied with what they are doing, no amount of punishment or number of rules and restrictions will force them to comply with ideas or systems they do not believe in. "Individuals need to belong, to have power, to have freedom, and to have fun" (Glasser as cited in Hansen & Childs, 1998, p. 16).

Making students work and learn by "getting tough" is not the answer. Moreover, the "pour and store" philosophy of filling students' heads with

knowledge has been dispelled by brain research that shows students need time to make connections and process information. New strategies for instruction, assessment, curriculum, and classroom management that reflect students' learning needs are beginning to be implemented by schools throughout the world to meet the needs of all learners.

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

The purpose of this book is to help beginning teachers and veteran teachers alike establish a climate in their classrooms and schools that fosters a spirit of cooperation, a sense of responsibility, and a love of learning. Educators need to make the environment conducive for learning before they can address standards, curriculum, or assessment. The atmosphere of the classroom and the respect and courtesy students show to themselves, their peers, and their teachers form the essential foundation for engaged learning and increased student achievement.

This book is divided into eight chapters and an epilogue that can be summarized as follows:

*Chapter 1* addresses current issues in education such as Response to Interventions (RTI), attention deficit disorder (ADD), and violence in schools.

*Chapter 2* discusses the theories of brain-based learning, multiple intelligences, differentiated learning, authentic assessment, standards, the emotional intelligence, and cooperative learning.

*Chapter 3* introduces specific strategies to establish a positive classroom climate where students create rules and consequences to guide their conduct.

*Chapter 4* integrates the explicit teaching of social skills into the curriculum so that students are taught how to interact with peers, work in cooperative groups, and resolve conflicts.

*Chapter 5* explores strategies to deal with students who have trouble accepting responsibility for their behavior and learning.

*Chapter 6* introduces methods to help students who have weak interpersonal skills that hurt their relationships with peers and teachers.

*Chapter 7* offers problem-solving strategies to prevent and handle more serious discipline problems caused by aggressive, attention-seeking, or power-seeking students.

*Chapter 8* reviews Response to Interventions (RTI) and ways to help students with special needs deal with their learning challenges, behavior problems, and language and physical challenges.

The *Epilogue* provides an example of a class meeting where teachers and students meet to discuss problems and solutions to situations.

While Chapters 1 and 2 provide a review of issues, theories, and research related to classroom management, Chapters 3–8 contain scenarios that outline a specific social skill problem as well as activities, assignments, possible solutions, and specific strategies to address not only the problems outlined in the book, but also the real problems teachers experience in the classroom every day.

There are no “right” answers for the daily problems teachers face. Hopefully, however, educators can use or adapt some of the techniques presented in this book to achieve success preventing or solving problems they face in their own classrooms. To some, the words *discipline* and *management* sound somewhat coercive—almost conveying the idea that teachers are trying to “control” students. The techniques presented in this book, however, are problem-solving ideas that may be an alternative to traditional discipline or classroom management techniques. These techniques can help prevent, reduce, or resolve the disruptions that detract from a positive learning environment. Teachers can facilitate their students in developing their own sense of cooperation, self-discipline, and responsibility by establishing a caring classroom climate and providing a safe environment in which students can interact with others and learn.

### **What’s New in This Third Edition**

In this new third edition, the research has been updated and integrated into each chapter rather than concentrated in a single chapter. Additional topics and/or current statistics address the following: the “silent epidemic” of high school dropouts, problems with General Educational Development (GED) options, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) regulations, the Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004), Response to Interventions (RTI) approaches to helping all students learn, demographics about English Language Learners (ELL), grading issues related to classroom management, bullying and cyber-bullying, and children of poverty.

New activities and templates focus on how teachers

1. establish appropriate procedures and behavior expectations for the K–2, elementary, middle school, and high school classrooms;
2. differentiate learning to meet the needs of all students;
3. manage the standards-based classroom;
4. include more performance-based learning to motivate students;
5. develop formative assessments to provide constructive feedback to students; and
6. utilize effective brain-compatible instructional strategies to promote positive classroom interaction.

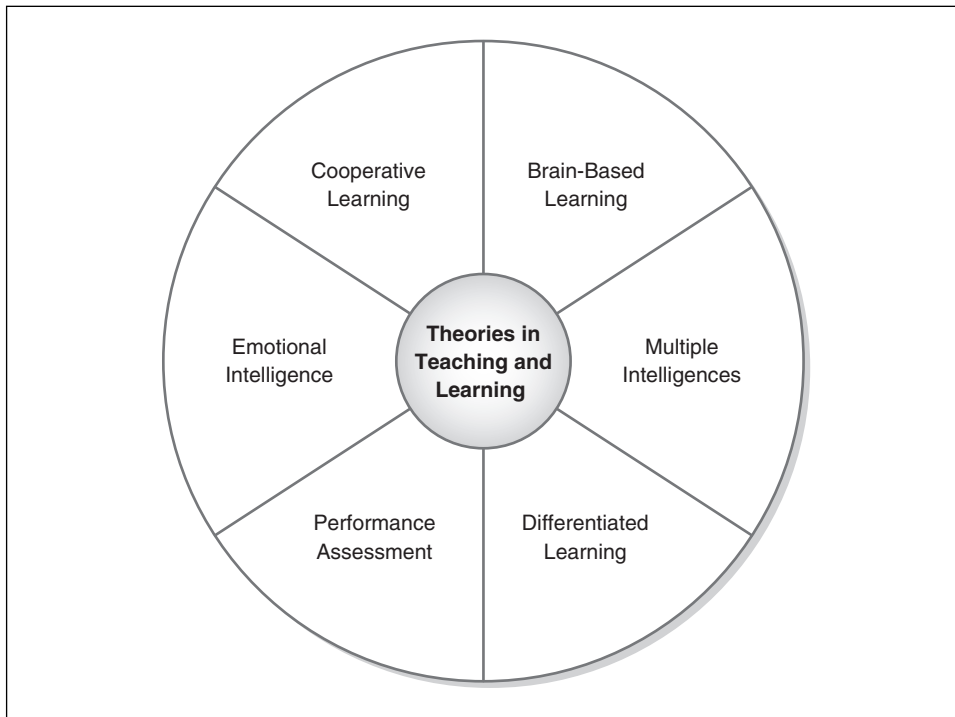
In addition, 10 new performance tasks, checklists, and rubrics have been added, including three checklists designed to help students self-assess their social skills, cooperative learning skills, and ability to accept responsibility for their own attitudes, behaviors, and learning goals.

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# Reviewing Current Teaching and Learning Theories 2

**Figure 2.0** Theories in Teaching and Learning

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**T**heory and theoretical frameworks play important roles in the teaching and learning process. Eisner (1985) feels that educational theories help teachers focus on aspects of classroom life that might otherwise be neglected. Psychological theory might address questions of self-esteem, forms of reinforcement, or the need to provide students with guided practice. However, these issues might be neglected if educational theories did not remind teachers of them. Glatthorn (1996) agrees, saying, “The professional who knows the theory and research on student motivation will be better able to develop the skills to motivate students than those who operate without that knowledge base” (p. 46).

There are many theories regarding students' abilities to learn and what can be done to help foster a better learning environment in schools. Some of these theories are outlined in this chapter and are applied in the activities in this book. The Industrial Revolution introduced society to a standardized "conveyor belt" curriculum, often called the "factory model," that "emphasized useful skills like obedience, orderliness, unity and respect for authority" (Jensen, 1998b, p. 2). In the 1950s and 1960s, psychologists John Watson and B. F. Skinner introduced behaviorist theories that attempted to modify human behavior with reinforcers. These theories advocated rewarding good behavior (gold stars, bonus points, food, and recess) and punishing bad behavior (name on the board, removal of privileges, detentions, time-out, and low grades). Behaviorism became an accepted form of educational practice during those decades and is still used in some classrooms. Some teachers still subscribe to discipline programs that advocate public embarrassment, removal of privileges such as field trips or recess, and a top-down approach to establishing rules and consequences.

Recent research and theories, however, indicate that this traditional model is not effective for all youth today. Several new theories, which support the use of block scheduling, brain-compatible learning techniques, and emotional intelligence, support the idea that educators need to look beyond controlling students' behavior and redefine their management and teaching approaches to best meet students' needs instead. Despite the comment "It worked for us, why won't it work for kids today?" research indicates that the ways that teachers taught students 50 years ago are not necessarily the best ways to teach the new generation.

As Jensen (1998b) notes, "We are on the verge of a revolution: the application of important new brain research to teaching and learning. This revolution will change school start times, discipline policies, assessment methods, teaching strategies, budget priorities, classroom environments . . ." (p. 1).

Emerging scientific research is providing educators everywhere with new directions for teaching and learning. Research on brain-based learning, the multiple intelligences, differentiated learning, authentic assessment, standards-based teaching, the emotional intelligence, and cooperative learning has important implications for establishing effective classroom management.

## **BRAIN-BASED LEARNING**

Effective teachers have always been aware of how students learn best, but they knew it either innately or from experience—not necessarily from scientific evidence. Now scientists studying the brain have substantiated effective teaching practice with evidence that supports the importance of establishing a brain-compatible classroom.

A brief synthesis of the experts' views on how brain-compatible classrooms affect learning and behavior includes the following:

- Brain structures are modified by the environment. An enriched environment stimulates growing dendrites or the creating of connections between brain cells (Diamond & Hopson, 1998).
- The brain needs to connect the new to the old. Students need to relate what they are learning—new knowledge—to what they already know—prior knowledge (Wolfe & Brandt, 1998).
- The brain is innately social and collaborative. Students' learning is enhanced when they discuss their learning out loud, share ideas with peers, and produce collaborative work (Wolfe & Brandt).
- Learning is strongly influenced by emotion because the stronger the emotion connected with an experience, the stronger the memory. Also, when emotions are involved with an experience, chemicals in the brain send a message to remember information, thereby increasing retention (Wolfe & Brandt).
- Learning occurs more easily in environments that are free from threat or intimidation (Sousa, 2001).
- When you're experiencing stress, the brain is more likely to recall stressful memories from your past than to recall upbeat ones (Johnson, 2004).
- Chronic negative feelings, limited academic engagement, and frequent disruptive behavior may have their roots in childhood traumas (Given, 2002).

Teachers who display students' work, take time to check for prior knowledge, allow students to talk about their learnings, and relate new ideas to prior learnings or experiences are establishing a climate conducive for learning. They are also engaging students in meaningful learning that has value to them.

## School Readiness

The first critical step in preparing students for learning occurs in the womb. If a pregnant mother takes drugs, smokes, drinks alcohol, has poor nutrition, or is under stress, problems result for the developing fetus. Also, the first few years of a baby's life and its relationship with its primary caretaker often determine whether or not the child develops learning problems. A troubled relationship in the child's early years causes the child's brain to consume glucose in dealing with stress—glucose that instead could be used to develop early cognitive functions. Therefore, if a baby or small child is dealing with an unpleasant environment, poor nutrition, parental apathy, or dangerous conditions, the brain consumes the glucose that should be used to develop patterns, recognize sounds and pictures, and form connections in response to mental stimulation (Kotulak, 1996).

Kotulak (1996) discusses how a child's early exposure to stress or violence causes the brain to reorganize itself, increasing reactivity to people, actions, or



comments, and raising blood pressure, which causes the child to be more impulsive and aggressive later on in school. Brain growth and development are also affected by the presence or absence of opportunities for mental stimulation. Parents who talk to their children and offer a rich sensory environment by providing mobiles, sounds, pictures, and music help them form connections in their brains by actually growing dendrites. Dendrites are branchlike extensions that grow outward from a nerve cell's body when the environment is enriched (Jensen, 1998b). Providing children with an enriched environment early in life provides them with the stimulation they need to grow emotionally and intellectually. A dangerous, apathetic, or stressful environment, on the other hand, causes children to react impulsively and sometimes aggressively—a pattern that continues into school and sometimes throughout life.

### **The Importance of Sleep**

In addition to aggressive and impulsive behavior, some of the biggest management problems facing teachers today are students' lack of motivation, inattention to schoolwork, and apathy as evidenced by coming late to class or falling asleep in class. Biologists have learned that puberty could be the cause of preteen and teenage students' listlessness. Sleep is regulated by many chemicals, one of which is oleamide, a drowsiness-inducing substance. The hormonal changes of puberty cause a delayed accumulation of oleamide, which results in a teen's natural sleep clock generating a bedtime closer to midnight and a wake-up time closer to 8 AM. If students wake up early (6:00 AM to catch the bus to high school, 6:30 AM for middle school), they will naturally be tired in school because of a lack of sleep. They may also miss out on the dream state or rapid-eye movement (REM) time, the type of sleep thought to be critical to maintaining memories. Therefore, they will not only be sleepy and inattentive in classes, but they also may have forgotten everything they learned the day before because they missed the REM time that is necessary for "rehearsing" the learning (Jensen, 1998b).

Carskadon (1999) discusses why teenagers may need more sleep as they get older as well as extra help (e.g., parents, alarm clocks) to get up in the morning. Other factors contributing to changing sleep patterns include an active social life, increased academic demands, and employment. One survey of young people in New England in the late 1980s reveals that two-thirds of the high school students had jobs and "nearly 30 percent worked 20 or more hours in a typical school week" (p. 349). Those kids reported later bedtimes, more frequent oversleeping resulting in tardiness to school, and more frequent episodes of falling asleep in class.

Because of the research, many middle schools and high schools across the country are starting school at 9:00 or 9:30 A.M. Schools that have established the later start time are reporting better learning, fewer teens sleeping in schools, and fewer discipline problems. If kids are going to learn, they need to stay awake in school and get enough sleep to reinforce their learning at night—especially during REM time. The REM time also helps them process intense emotions from the previous day that may "spill over" into the next day and give them a rough start in the morning. Therefore, a lack of quality sleep might also