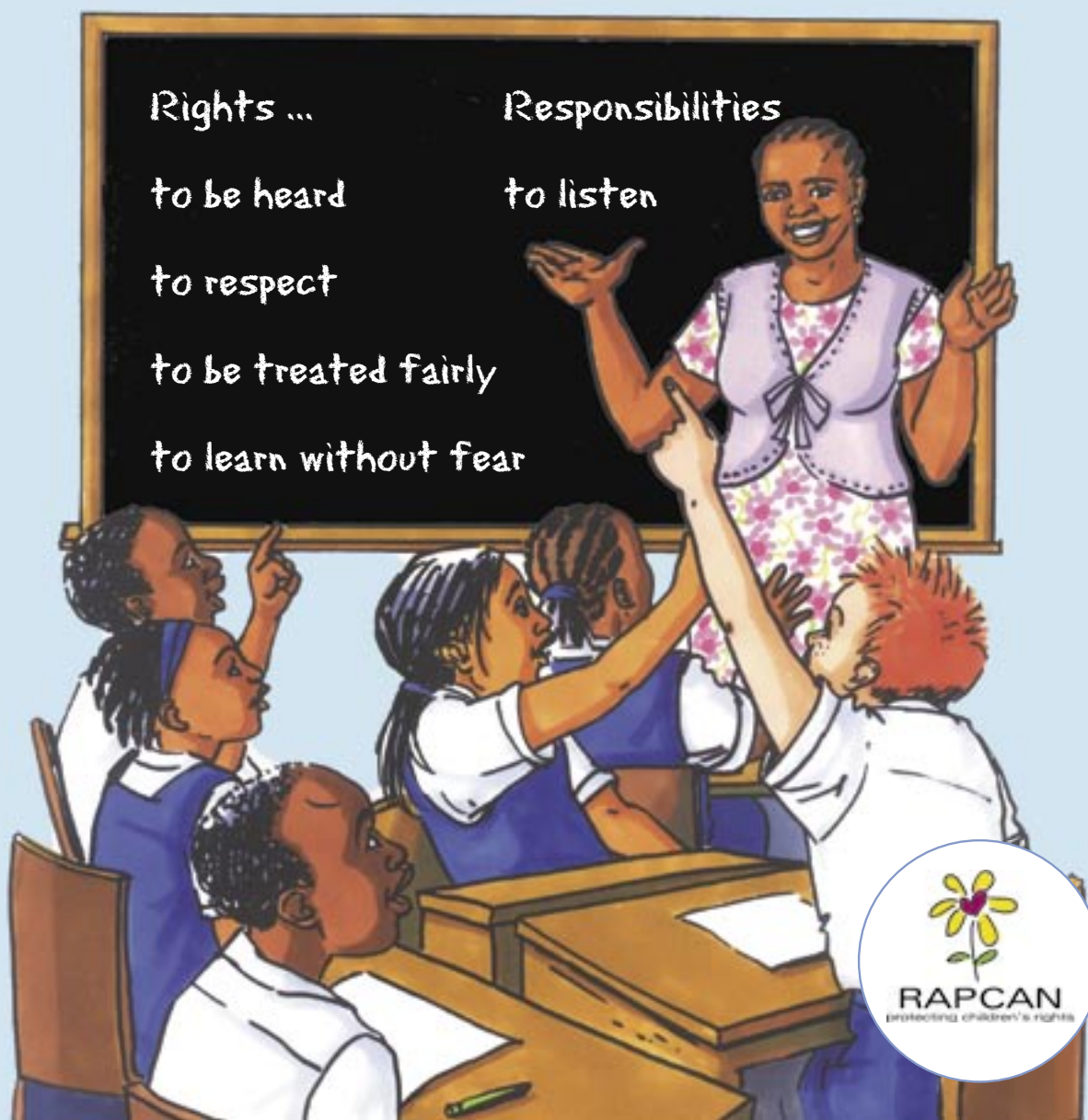


# A Teacher's Guide to Positive Discipline



Published by RAPCAN  
3rd Floor, Waterford House, Waterford Rd, Diep River  
ph: +27 +21 712 2330 fax: +27 +21 712 2365  
info@rapcan.org.za www.rapcan.org.za



RAPCAN is committed to developing child abuse prevention strategies to combat the patterns of abuse which affect the lives of children and adults everywhere. We do this through training adults, informing children, materials development, dissemination and advocacy.

We are committed to working actively within a non-racial, non-sexist, development framework, promoting the rights of all children.

© RAPCAN 2008

ISBN 978-0-620-40482-2

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior written permission of the copyright holder.

#### CREDITS

Contributors: Fatima Noordien, Sherry Samson and Mymoena Siers

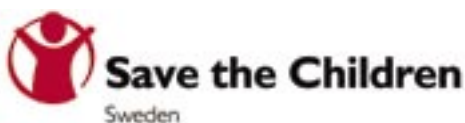
Editor: Lori Lake

Illustrations: Carole Howes

Design and layout: OpenBook

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication would not have been possible without the generous support of Save the Children Sweden and the D.G. Murray Trust.



# **A Teacher's Guide to Positive Discipline**



**RAPCAN**  
protecting children's rights

## Acknowledgements

The ideas in this book have evolved over the past seven years through RAPAN's involvement with teachers, learners and parents as well as members from local and international NGOs. We are indebted to all these people who have enriched and extended our knowledge - particularly the teachers at the RAPAN workshops with whom we had the opportunity to explore, examine and develop effective strategies for promoting positive discipline in the classroom and the wider school community.

Many people have contributed ideas and made insightful recommendations on earlier drafts. They include Jill Wenman; Ulrika Soneson and Lena Karlsson (Save the Children Sweden); Judith Mulenga (Zambia Civic Education Association); Natasha Abrahams; Celeste Solomons, Ruth Versfeld and Rosie Kumalo-Lande.

We extend our thanks to Fatima Noordien and Sherry Samson for all their hard work on the earlier drafts of the book. Thanks also to RAPAN team members Wilma Jantjies, Vuyiswa Sidiyo, Moefeeda Salie Kagee and Sam Waterhouse for their support and, in particular, Eugene Patentia for his invaluable assistance.

We are indebted to the following organisations for their pioneering work in this field and have drawn on many of their ideas in developing our own programme.

National Education Department of South Africa  
Save the Children Sweden (Regional Office for Southern Africa)  
Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children  
Education Rights Project, University of Witwatersrand  
Sacred Heart College (Research & Development)  
Quaker Peace Centre, Cape Town  
The Parent Centre, Cape Town  
EPOCH, South Africa  
United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child

While every effort has been made to trace the original copyright holders, we apologise for any oversights or omissions and will correct these in the event of reprint. In particular, we would like to thank Dorothy Nolie for her poem *Child learn what they live* as well as the children who participated in Save the Children's programmes to end corporal punishment in Zambia, Swaziland and South Africa whose voices speak out throughout this book calling for an end to violence against children.

A special thanks to our donors for their generous support and for making this book a reality namely, Save the Children Sweden and D.G. Murray Trust.

Lastly, we would like to dedicate this book to all the teachers, who have continued to strive for excellence despite the many challenges that face them. Teachers who have brought much joy and happiness into the lives of their learners and who have planted the seeds of hope for building a more compassionate and caring society.

*Mymoena Siers*  
*January 2008*

# Contents

- 1. Towards a culture of human rights .....
- 2. Understanding corporal punishment and positive discipline .....
- 3. The problem with corporal punishment .....
- 4. Examining the roots of misbehaviour .....
- 5. A whole school approach .....
- 6. Tips for teachers .....
- 6 Parents and teachers .....
- 7. School management initiatives .....
- 8. Disciplinary policies and procedures .....
- 9. Learner support materials .....
- 10. Conclusion.....
- Appendix: Key international conventions .....
- Resources .....

# Foreword

Understanding that corporal punishment is a violation of rights – and that children are also holders of rights – is a lot easier to grasp in theory than to put into practice. In our work in this field over a long period of time, it has been our privilege to work with many schools and educators, exploring a range of alternatives to corporal punishment in maintaining discipline in schools.

We are mindful that educators play a critical role in the lives of the learners in their classrooms, and that children learn much more than the three Rs during their school years. Very important lessons are learned also about how to manage differences – of opinion, of culture, of belief – and about self-discipline and making sensible and informed decisions. How discipline is dealt with in the school environment has a significant impact on the kinds of adults that children will become.

This booklet draws together best practice, and focuses on practical and proven ways of implementing positive discipline – thus protecting the rights of children and encouraging them to take greater responsibility for their actions.

Carol Bower  
Former Executive Director of RAPCAN  
Consultant on Child Rights  
November 2007



# 1. Building a culture of human rights

There is a direct link between the way we treat our children today and the kind of society our children will build tomorrow. The following poem by Dorothy Nolie reminds us that children learn by following our example and that we each have the power to make a difference.

## **Children learn what they live**

If a child lives with criticism,  
s/he learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility,  
s/he learns to fight.

If a child lives with ridicule,  
s/he learns to be shy or becomes a bully.

If a child lives with shame,  
s/he learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with tolerance,  
s/he learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement,  
s/he learns to be confident.

If a child lives with praise,  
s/he learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness,  
s/he learns justice.

If a child lives with security,  
s/he learns to have faith.

If a child lives with approval,  
s/he learns to believe in herself.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship,  
s/he learns to find love in the world.

© **Dorothy Nolie**

Why not make a copy of the poem and put it up in the staff room or discuss the poem with your family, friends, colleagues and learners?



# Human Rights and Child Rights

The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** was adopted by the United Nations in 1948 and sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms to which everyone is entitled - including children. This includes the right to human dignity, physical integrity and equal protection under the law.

The **Convention on the Rights of the Child** (1989) re-affirms these basic human rights and calls on governments to protect children from “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse”. More specifically, the CRC calls on governments to ensure that “school discipline is administered in a manner that is consistent with the child’s human dignity”.

*“If it’s against the law,  
they will think twice  
BEFORE hitting a child.”*



Many governments have failed to honour these human rights obligations and the United Nations **Global study on Violence against Children** (2003–2006) found that children experience unacceptably high levels of violence worldwide.

In 2006, the United Nations **Committee on the Rights of the Child** stated that all forms of corporal punishment, however light, are incompatible with the CRC and international human rights law. The Committee also called on governments to promote positive, non-violent relationships with children and to prohibit and eliminate corporal punishment in all settings including the home and school.

As teachers we need to explore educational systems that will respect the rights of all school members including children. No child can learn in an environment where they are treated in a cruel, inhuman or degrading manner.

We hope that the ideas shared in this book will help strengthen your motivation to end all forms of violence against children.

*“I want her  
to talk to me,  
but nicely,  
not shouting.”*



---

See Appendix A for more about children’s rights.

# 2. Understanding corporal punishment and positive discipline

## What is meant by corporal punishment?

The Committee on the Rights of the Child defines corporal or physical punishment as: ‘any punishment in which **physical force** is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light.’

This includes:

- hitting (smacking, slapping, spanking) children, with the hand or with an implement – a whip, stick, belt, shoe, wooden spoon, etc.
- kicking, shaking, throwing, burning or scalding children
- pinching, scratching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears
- forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions or forcing children to swallow hot spices or washing children’s mouths out with soap.

## What is humiliating punishment?

**Emotional abuse** in the form of humiliating and degrading punishment is more difficult to detect but it is just as harmful as corporal punishment. Both forms of punishment violate the child’s right to human dignity and physical integrity.

Humiliating punishment includes any punishment which ‘belittles, humiliates, denigrates, threatens, scapegoats, scares or ridicules the child’

“The teacher made me sit on the invisible chair for one hour. I was making a noise in class.”



“He said, ‘You stupid, I’ll moer [beat] you.’  
He always talks like that.  
He swears a lot.  
He is insulting all the time.”



## What is positive discipline?

Positive discipline is part of an ongoing educative and corrective process that promotes the development of self discipline and mutual respect within a non-violent and caring environment.

Positive discipline aims to build a culture of human rights where everyone (including learners and teachers) is treated with **dignity and respect**. The approach actively promotes child participation, positive reinforcement, problem-solving and positive role modelling. This means working with children and not against them in a **child-friendly environment**.

Positive discipline will flourish in a child-friendly environment that promotes:

- **listening** to learners' opinions when setting the ground rules and consequences for a code of conduct;
- **asking questions** before making judgements in order to find the reasons why a learner had broken a rule; and
- finding ways to **solve problems** and conflicts together with learners.



Positive discipline aims to build on learners' strengths instead of criticising their weaknesses and uses positive reinforcement to motivate good behaviour. Learners are encouraged to take responsibility and given opportunities to succeed. This builds learners' **trust** and self-confidence.

At the RAPCAN workshops teachers also emphasised the importance of clear expectations, consistency, fairness, taking responsibility and the involvement of parents to give more meaning to the definition of positive discipline.

*“There are other ways to solve problems other than hitting and it doesn't do parents or children any good”*

*“If we really want a peaceful and compassionate world, we need to build communities of trust where all children are respected, where home and school are safe places to be and where discipline is taught by example.”*

*Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu in support of the  
All Africa Special Report on Ending Legalised Violence against Children, 2007*

## Key elements of positive discipline

Here are some of the key elements needed to foster positive discipline:

### A caring environment

Research indicates that children ‘act out’ their problems when their basic needs are not being met. Teachers, particularly those working in poor communities, emphasized the importance of a caring teacher who shows empathy, kindness and understanding to connect with learners, make them feel special and create a sense of belonging in the classroom.



### Problem-solving

Studies have shown that learners who come from homes where aggression is used frequently to solve problems, are more likely to model that behaviour. Teachers agreed that regular problem-solving activities provide opportunities for learners to work together and explore non-violent solutions.

### Child participation

Teachers, who had involved learners in developing codes of conduct, felt that it boosted the learners’ self confidence and encouraged a greater sense of responsibility and ownership. They said that learners followed their own rules and monitored their peers behaviour independently of the teacher because they had been part of the process. They recognised that times had changed from ‘children being seen and not heard’ and that learners should have the right to express their views freely in matters that affect them.

### Positive reinforcement

The majority of teachers were in agreement that learners should be praised or given incentives when they showed improvement or ‘got it right’. The teachers preferred incentives that did not involve the spending of money such as giving extra time for reading or spending time with friends. They also stressed that incentives needed to be age appropriate and of interest to the particular child.



# Comparing corporal punishment and positive discipline

## Corporal punishment

### **Punish**

'punishment' comes from the Latin word, *punier* which means 'pain'.

### **Authoritarianism**

Corporal punishment flourishes in schools where principals make all the rules

### **Force & punishment**

Teachers use force to make learners obey rules and punish learners for making mistakes.

### **Criticism**

Teachers criticise learners' weaknesses and make them feel small.



## Positive discipline

### **Teach**

'discipline comes from the Latin word *disciplinare* which means 'teach'.

### **Participation**

Positive discipline flourishes in schools where codes of conduct are drawn up in consultation with learners, teachers and parents.

### **Positive reinforcement**

Teachers use praise, incentives and problem solving to motivate 'good' behaviour and give learners insight into their behaviour and its consequences.

### **Self-esteem**

Teachers build on learners' strengths and make them feel tall.



### 3. The problem with corporal punishment

It is not uncommon for teachers to initially defend corporal punishment on the grounds that, it worked for them and didn't do them any harm. Others may argue that "if you spare the rod, you spoil the child".\*

But this line of reasoning does not address the **harmful effects** of both corporal and humiliating punishment on children nor the fact that children are holders of human rights and are entitled to respect for their physical integrity and human dignity in the same way as adults.

#### Harmful effects of corporal punishment

Here are some of the negative effects that corporal and humiliating punishment can have on children.†

1. Corporal and humiliating punishment can perpetuate an ongoing **cycle of violence** as it teaches the child that it's acceptable to use anger and violence to get what you want particularly if you are older or stronger. Studies have shown that there is a greater likelihood of children perpetuating violence in adulthood if they themselves experienced frequent violence as a child.
2. Many people justify using corporal punishment by saying: "I am only doing it for your own good". When children are hurt by the very people who are supposed to love them, this can lead children to believe that **violence is normal** and acceptable in a loving relationship.
3. The frequent use of violence to solve problems can erode the **trust** between parent and child. It can teach children to fear adults rather than respect them. Without mutual respect and tolerance, we cannot build a culture of human rights. If children cannot trust adults to take care of them, they will not learn to care for others or develop a social conscience.



1  
Abusive father



2  
Class bully



3  
Abusive husband  
or boyfriend



4  
The abused child  
becomes an  
abusive parent

\* For more information on frequently used arguments justifying corporal punishment, see: *Ending corporal punishment of children in South Africa*, Save the Children Sweden, 2005.

† Adapted from: *Ending physical and humiliating punishment of children. A manual for action*, Save the Children Sweden, 2005

4. Corporal and humiliating punishment can undermine the child's **self-confidence** and self esteem. Many children are so scared of doing something wrong or making a mistake that they may give up trying and never learn to get it right. These children may also perform poorly at school.
5. Children tend to **focus on the punishment** and are more worried about being caught than in understanding what they did wrong or how to do it better next time. These children often rely on external punishments rather than developing self-discipline.
6. Corporal punishment is **not** an **effective** or reliable way to stop children behaving badly. This is particularly true with chronic offenders. The more you punish them, the more they do not respect the rules. If hitting works, why are the same learners being beaten for the same offences over and over again?
7. Corporal punishment is **unjust**. It teaches children that there are different standards for treating adults and children. Yet children are people too and are entitled to human rights in the same way as adults. There are no acceptable reasons for hitting children.

*“When adults get angry with children, they often smack, hit, shout, insult or belittle children.”*



*“Children have the same right to be treated with dignity and respect, So if its wrong to hit adults, then surely it is wrong to hit children who are only half their size.”*



**No violence against children is justifiable;  
all violence against children is preventable.**

A key message of the report of Paulo Sergio Pinheiro,  
the independent expert appointed by the United Nations Secretary General  
to lead the Global Study on Violence against Children (2006)

# 4. Examining the roots of misbehaviour

Many teachers stated that they agreed with positive discipline in principle - but when they faced badly behaved learners in their overcrowded classrooms - it just seemed impossible to put into practice.

So we asked teachers to draw up a list of what they considered to be 'bad' behaviour as well as a list of behaviour they would like to see in their classrooms.

Unacceptable behaviour	Acceptable behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• continuous requests to leave the room</li><li>• bullying and fighting</li><li>• not listening and not paying attention</li><li>• cheating and stealing</li><li>• disrespect for teacher &amp; peers</li><li>• lack of motivation and interest</li><li>• lack of responsibility</li><li>• challenging authority of teachers</li><li>• swearing and shouting</li><li>• smoking, taking and selling drugs</li><li>• vandalism</li><li>• not doing homework, failing tests</li><li>• bunking class &amp; absenteeism</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• learners paying attention and participating actively in class.</li><li>• mutual respect between learners and between learners and teachers</li><li>• learners having respect for property and the rights of others.</li><li>• self-discipline</li><li>• doing homework regularly</li><li>• taking initiative</li><li>• admitting mistakes and taking responsibility</li></ul>

In our experience, we have found that **focusing on the positives** is an essential step in breaking the cycle of negativity and effecting a change in attitude on which transformation depends.

## Factors contributing to bad behaviour

Another important issue RAPCAN tackled in workshops was to get teachers to grapple with the **roots of the problem** they faced in their classrooms and to see them in a broader context.

In the workshops, teachers demonstrated an in-depth understanding of how the **home, community** and **wider society** contributed to disciplinary problems in the classroom. But some of the problems lie within the **school** itself and we encouraged teachers to take a critical look at how school management, teachers and the education system can contribute to the problem.

In discussion sessions, teachers acknowledged that learners were sometimes punished for behaviour that was beyond the learners' control. We cannot make a fair judgement unless we find out why learners have broken the rules. Understanding the context and circumstances that shape learners' behaviour will help prevent **unfair punishment** that often results in an ongoing cycle of anger, resentment and disruptive behaviour.

As one teacher stated:

There are many factors that can contribute to a culture of violence that teachers and principals may be unaware of. Ask your class to draw a map of your school and neighbourhood and to mark the places where they feel unsafe. Let them discuss how to create a safe environment for children. Discuss the ideas with the school principal and PTSA so that the school and neighbourhood can be made safer for children.

*"I am so busy teaching and preparing all my admin that I often forget where the learners come from and the difficulties they face."*



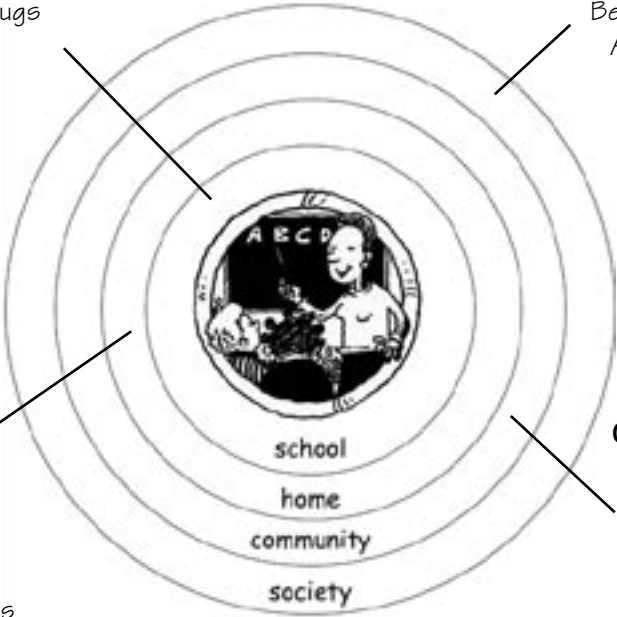
Here are some of the issues that teachers identified as factors contributing to bad behaviour.

**SCHOOL**

- Peer pressure & bullying
- Being different / discrimination
- Teachers often late/ absent
- Negative attitudes of teachers
- Teachers poorly prepared
- Large numbers / limited resources
- Discrimination and intolerance
- Weak school systems
- Gangsterism & drugs
- Boring lessons

**SOCIETY**

- Violence / pornography in media & TV
- Poor protection for vulnerable groups
- Corruption - Quick monetary gains
- Patriarchy & Gender-based violence
- Unemployment and poverty
- High levels of violent crime
- Bling Bling & drug culture
- Economic inequalities
- Being bad is cool
- AIDS Pandemic
- Brand names



**HOME**

- Relocation
- Death & divorce
- Domestic violence
- Lack of basic needs
- Too many single parents
- Rape / sexual abuse/ neglect
- High expectations of children
- Unemployment and poverty
- Corporal and humiliating punishment
- Poor male role-models & parenting skills

**COMMUNITY**

- Crime
- HIV/AIDS
- Drug culture
- Gang warfare
- Peer pressure
- Discrimination
- Teenage pregnancy
- Child-headed households
- High levels of violent crime
- Unemployment and poverty
- Rape and sexual harassment

What this exercise serves to highlight is that **no school exists in isolation** – it is an integral part of the community. This means problems in the home, community and wider society have an impact on both learners and educators, and that we need to engage the whole school community to address these problems.

## 5. A whole school approach

*“I like that school because there is a culture of respect that is visible from the teacher to the children.”*



The shift from an authoritarian approach involving corporal punishment to a rights-based approach involving respect for human rights is not an easy one. Corporal punishment has been a part of our lives for such a long time that we have accepted it as part of child-rearing and teaching. Positive discipline requires a complete **shift in perspective** and the commitment and involvement of all the role-players to bring about change.

The ultimate aim is for parents and teachers to work together towards a common goal namely, the **best interests of the child** and this includes respect for the child's human dignity and physical integrity. One of the best ways to start this process, is for the school to hold a PTA meeting at the beginning of the year to discuss positive discipline and how it can be put into practice in the school and in the home. It does not make sense for learners to have one set of expectations at home and another set at school.

Instead of focusing on problems and bad behaviour, start by looking at positives and what is already working at your school. Use this as a foundation to build a common vision of a school community that is child-centred and empowering. Then talk about how you can make your vision a reality.

1. Strive to create a **child-friendly learning environment** where learners, teachers and parents feel respected, supported and valued; and where children feel free to express their views and are encouraged to reach their full potential.
2. Systematically **teach and reinforce positive behaviour** in order to build respectful and caring relationships.
3. Design a strategy to **reduce unacceptable behaviour** by involving all role-players namely, teachers, parents, learners and school management.

## Positive discipline practices

Here are some of the key practices that have helped parents, teachers and school management implement positive discipline effectively.

**Focus on the positives** Build children's self-confidence by acknowledging and affirming positive behaviour. This will encourage the likelihood of children repeating that behaviour. Explain how their positive behaviour can contribute to a safe and caring environment.

### Case study 1: Focus on the positives

I had a boy in my class who constantly disrupted my lessons and was rude and insulting to me. Punishing him only made things worse. At our monthly staff meeting I heard that this boy was an outstanding soccer player, who had leadership potential. I was shocked, how could this be the same boy? It got me thinking. The next day in class I said, "Hey, I didn't know you were a soccer star!" He beamed! He agreed to be a class monitor for a month and to co-ordinate a class project on the 2010 soccer World Cup – with my guidance. The change was amazing.

**My lesson:** Each child has a gift. My job is to look for that gift and build on it.

**Show interest and pay attention** Create opportunities to talk and listen, so that you get to know each child. In this way children will feel valued and may not need to seek attention as often as they do. Asking children about their personal interests and hobbies can also foster self esteem and a sense of belonging.



**Set a good example** Children learn by observing the adults around them. If adults regularly behave aggressively, then children may react in the same way towards others. Model the positive behaviour that you expect from children such as kindness, patience and tolerance.

**Shared decision-making** Involve children in drawing up the code of conduct and deciding on the consequences. When children are involved in making the rules, they are more likely to follow them and to take responsibility for their actions.

**Listen before judging** Ask questions to find out *why* children misbehaved or did not complete a homework task – only then can you make a fair judgement. Listen to children's explanations because their reason for not doing their homework may be valid and related to conditions at home. Unfair punishments can lead to disruptive behaviour and erode positive relationships.



### **Case Study 2: Listen before judging**

Lindiwe is 14 and is often absent. When she does come to school, her homework is never done and she often falls asleep in class. She drove me CRAZY! I tried speaking to her but she was always sullen, so I sent her to the principal.

He then called me in and when he spoke to her, she burst into tears and her story came out. Her mother had died recently of AIDS and she now has the added responsibility of caring for four siblings. They live in an informal settlement with no electricity or running water.

When I was made aware of her circumstances, I felt bad that I had judged her without trying to find out why she was behaving in that manner. We realized that the school needed to intervene and help this child get social support. The problem was so much bigger than her undone homework or her lateness.

**My lesson:** I must learn to listen and get to know my learners before jumping to conclusions.

**Be consistent** Be fair and consistent and avoid showing any favouritism. Apply the same rules to everyone. If you do decide to make an exception, discuss this with the learners and explain the need for compassion because the circumstances of children have to be considered.

**Separate the behaviour from the child** If a child breaks a window while playing cricket, don't let your anger cloud your judgement. First separate the behaviour from the child. Remember that he has made a mistake, but that doesn't make him a bad person. So don't judge the child or call him a stupid fool. Focus on the behaviour and what needs to be done to make it right. Children often make poor decisions and they must be given the chance to learn from their mistakes.

**Respect diversity** Create opportunities to discuss, acknowledge and value the differences among learners including culture, language, religion, gender and age. Encourage them to listen to and respect other points of view.



**Cultivate mutual respect for rights** Children have the same human rights as adults and they are more likely to respect the rights of others if their own rights are being respected. In schools and homes there should be respect for human dignity and physical integrity of both adult and child. It is not acceptable for an adult to hit a child – at school or in the home.

## 6. Tips for teachers

*“My teacher explains the work nicely when I don’t understand. She does not get cross.”*



*“When I do something wrong, my teacher tells me what I do wrong. She is very kind and I love my teacher.”*



Implementing positive discipline is not easy and teachers need support and time to care for themselves if they are to continue nurturing others. The following ideas will help make the teacher’s load a bit lighter.

### **Classroom tools and techniques**

During our workshops, we asked teachers to draw on their experiences and compile a list of suggestions for creating a child-friendly learning environment in the classroom. Here are some of the tools and techniques they recommended.

**Be prepared and well-organised** Prepare lessons in advance so that you are ready to receive your learners with a smile and some positive comments. Involve the learners in routines that facilitate the learning process whereby group leaders hand out and collect books and resources in order to start on time. Create challenging activities for learners who complete work quickly to minimise or prevent disruptions while others are still busy working.

**Know your learners** Observe the learners carefully and respond appropriately to any unexpected behavioural changes such as a poor greeting or a sad smile. Show that you care by making time to talk. Find out how learners are feeling especially when they have been ill or absent. Find out what their passions are and try to include those ideas in your lessons.

**Involve the learners** Give learners a sense of ownership and responsibility by involving them in all aspects of learning so that ‘my class’ becomes ‘our class’. Let them help draw up the code of conduct including consequences for breaking the rules and the incentives to ‘get it right.’ Check with learners to see if the system is working fairly and make changes when needed.

**Be proactive** Reduce disruptions by walking around the classroom so that your presence can be seen and felt by everyone and not only those in the front row. Position your table so that you are near to learners who display poor behaviour or move them closer to your table. Model expected behaviour because learners learn more from what you do than from what you say.

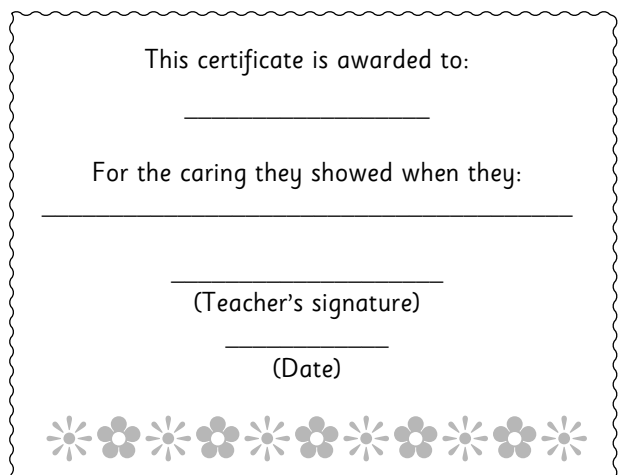
**Create a friendly atmosphere** Be friendly, open and honest and treat learners with respect. Encourage the learners to share interesting stories about themselves and their community using art, music and dance. Let the learners display their art on the walls.



**Praise learner behaviour**

Acknowledge and praise desirable behaviour because it boosts their self esteem and encourages the learners to repeat the good behaviour. For example:

- Praise learners when they do good deeds such as: “I liked the way you picked up John’s pencil without being asked to do so.”
- Write positive comments in learners’ books when marking their work. For example, “Good work. This is much better than yesterday.”
- Keep a record of learners who have been praised so that you reach each child once a week or once a month.
- Share good news with other teachers and make sure that this news gets back to the learners. For example: You could ask the maths teacher to say: “I hear you did well in your English test.”
- Acknowledge learners’ difficulties and offer support.
- Handout certificates to honour learners’ achievements. Don’t just focus on sport and academic achievements, remember to acknowledge other forms of good behaviour such as kindness, helpfulness, consistent improvement and hard work.



From: *Better behaviour: Ideas to go*. McGrath, 2003.

**Be willing to ask for help** Be prepared to learn from others and ask for help when you need it. If some teachers are coping better with learner discipline, try to arrange a session where you can observe and talk about good practice in action.

**Self-reflection** Implementing positive discipline effectively takes time and a willingness to think critically about what is working and to make changes when necessary. Find out from the learners which of your lessons they enjoy the most and use the feedback to improve your teaching. Use examples of misbehaviour as an opportunity to teach learners problem-solving skills.

## Positive reinforcement – Incentives and rewards

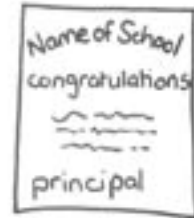
Many schools include incentives and rewards to reinforce positive behaviour. They **involve learners** in drawing up the list of incentives so that they are motivated to behave positively by repeating the behaviour.

Positive reinforcement can be anything that the learner sees as a reward but it must be **earned** for good behaviour. Since every reward has to be earned, it creates an opportunity for the teacher to talk about what it took to earn it – and to show how this is actually the real reward!

**Lunch with the educator** The learner earns the opportunity to eat their lunch with the educator. It is a wonderful opportunity to get to know the learner better. You can include additional incentives such as: letting the learner choose the venue; allowing a friend to join you; buying a small treat to share with the learner (e.g. fruit, nuts).

**Principal's office** Send the learners to the principal's office for a special acknowledgement of achievement or good behaviour. The learner can receive a principal's certificate or be praised in the school assembly.

**Glad note sent home** Send a note of praise to the learner's parents or caregivers describing any positive attributes observed towards his/her school work, towards peers or on the sports fields. Encourage the parents to paste the note where family members can see the note e.g. on the fridge door. Learners of all ages just love these notes.



---

Extract from the ReadRight supplement to the Sunday Times, 6 August 2001, South Africa.

**Educator's assistant** The learner earns the privilege of being an assistant to the teacher by helping the teacher with fun and interesting tasks that are age appropriate. Ask the learner which tasks she would like to do but make sure that the learner will not be victimized at a later stage. Examples are: writing on the board, calling on learners to answer questions, choosing a topic for class discussion, etc.

**Free time** The learner earns the privilege of having a 10-minute break with a friend. Encourage the learners to play quietly outside or in the classroom because other learners are still working.

**Phone call from the educator/principal** Learners love this too! Take 5-minutes and go to the telephone with the learner standing next to you. Tell the parents or caregivers what an excellent job the learner has done and say how proud the parent should be! This also builds positive communication between home and school as well as between learner and parent.

**Fun days** Learners, as a whole class, earn the privilege to have certain days allocated to fun activities of their choice. Examples could be: wearing t-shirts inside out or back to front; everyone wearing black; everyone wearing accessories such as sun glasses, caps or make-up. Encourage activities where all learners are able to join in easily.

**Principal/ teacher pranks** When the learners, as a whole grade, have earned a certain number of merit points, the principal has to perform a certain agreed task such as dressing up in fancy dress or playing a soccer match with the learners!

**Small incentives** Draw up a list of small affordable items with the learners as an incentive such as pencils, pens, erasers, scissors, glue, magic markers, stickers, books etc. Let the learners choose their own reward.

**Community counts** Get local businesses to donate items and ask learners to make thank you cards that are signed by all the learners or groups of learners.



# Self-discipline, self-esteem and mutual respect

“Our learners are far too aggressive. They need to learn self-control so that they can think with their heads and not their fists.”

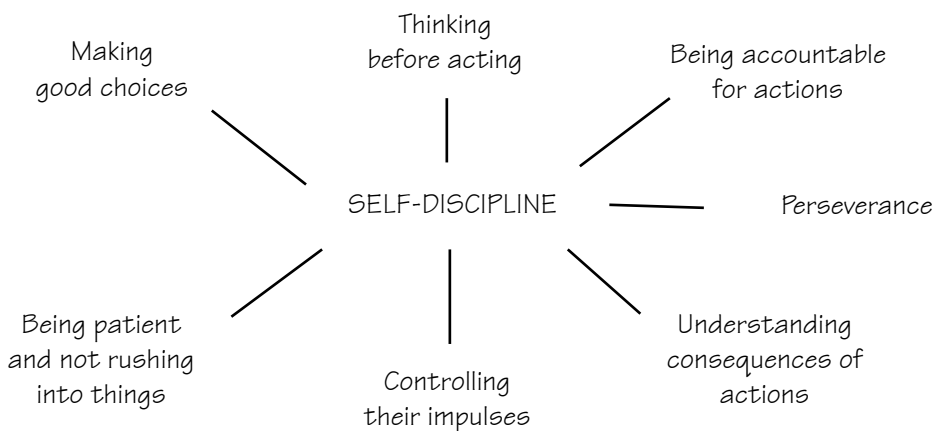


“There are too many learners at our school who do not have a good sense of right and wrong. We need to help them to think before they act so that they can make good choices.”



A **child-centred approach** to learning can help learners develop self-discipline by providing opportunities for learners to:

- express their thoughts and feelings
- participate in decision-making
- think about the consequences of their actions, and
- take responsibility for their mistakes without fear of being punished or humiliated.



The following exercises can be used to help learners develop self-discipline, self-esteem and mutual respect within a caring and supportive environment.

**New friends** Each learner draws the name of another learner to become their new friend for the week. They spend time getting to know their friend and then do something special to show that they care. This activity will bring children closer to each other and fosters positive relationships.



**Giving opinions** Set time aside each week where learners can give their opinions on things that happened in your class, school, home or community. Encourage learners to ask questions. Let them explore feelings and potential consequences of actions within a safe and supportive environment.

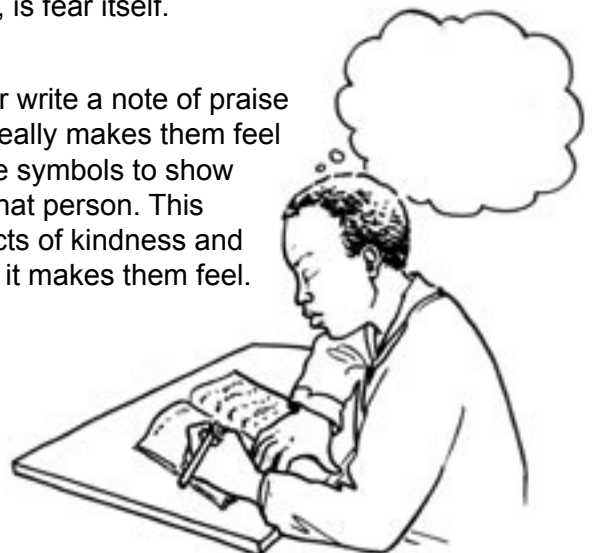
**Questions** Create a suggestion box and let children put in questions that are of special interest to them. The questions can range from “Why is the sky blue?” to “Why do children bully?” Select a question at the end of the day and write it on the board for discussion. If the class or teacher cannot answer the question, it becomes a homework task for all including the teacher. The freedom to ask questions helps to promote confidence and assertiveness.



**Quotes for reflection** Write down a common saying on the chalkboard on a daily or weekly basis and encourage the learners to reflect on it in silence. Let them think about what it means and then ask them for their opinions on it. Select age appropriate examples.

- Freedom is not worth having if it doesn't include the freedom to make mistakes. (Mahatma Gandhi)
- The important thing is to never stop questioning. (Albert Einstein)
- You can't build a reputation on what you are going to do. (Henry Ford)
- The only thing we have to fear, is fear itself. (Franklin D. Roosevelt)

**Letters of praise** Let each learner write a note of praise to a family member or friend who really makes them feel special. Encourage them to include symbols to show how they feel when they are with that person. This activity helps learners to identify acts of kindness and love shown to them and how good it makes them feel.



**What would happen if ...** Choose a range of scenarios for small group discussion. Ask learners to identify a range of responses and consequences and then decide which is the best choice and why. Ask each group to feed back to the rest of the class for further discussion.

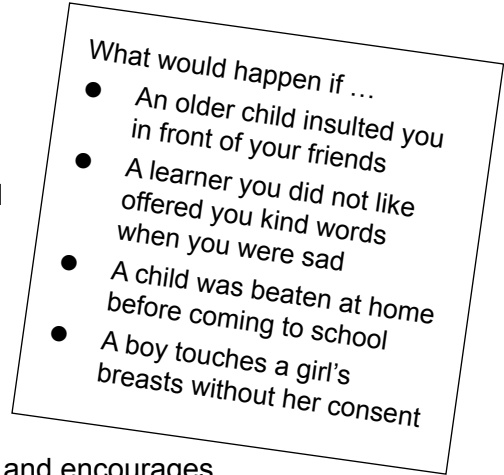
**Routines** Involve the learners in drawing up and monitoring the routines for the day. This provides learners with a chance to take responsibility for what happens in class and encourages learners to do the right thing even when the teacher is not present. For example:

- Line up quietly before entering the classroom.
- Group leaders hand out and collect books at the beginning and end of each session.
- A volunteer sharpens all the blunt pencils at the beginning of the lesson.
- Clean desks at the end of each day.

**'I' messages** Teach learners to use 'I' messages to communicate their feelings when someone does something that they do not like. 'I' messages involve (a) a description of the behaviour (b) the consequence/ negative effect (c) the preferred behaviour. The activity teaches learners to resolve conflict without blaming or threatening the other person. For example:

*I feel upset, when you take my pen without my permission, because I have to look for it. I would prefer that you ask me first and I will share it with you.*

**Feelings** Cut out faces with different expressions. Discuss what the child in the picture is feeling and what might have made him or her feel that way. This gives learners the opportunity to talk about feelings in a non-threatening environment.



**Problem solving** Let groups of learners discuss problems or things that have made them very hurt or angry. Ask each group to describe the problem either verbally or in writing. Then ask the groups to swap problems so that each group has a different problem to solve.

Ask learners to: (a) identify the problem; (b) describe the feelings of the people involved; (c) explore several solutions to the problem; (d) consider the consequences of each option; and (e) choose the best solution. After a specific time allocation, each group describes their solution and gives a motivation for their choice. Encourage the class to ask questions such as: Will the solution improve the relationship? Will it help to rebuild trust? Will it work? etc.

Here are some examples:

- A learner pushes and swears at another learner
- A learner steals another learner's lunch
- An older learner regularly bullies a younger learner



## 7. Parents and teachers

The Convention on the Rights of the Child reaffirms the parents' role in protecting children from all forms of violence and calls on parents to implement non-violent, positive forms of discipline in the home. We need to **build bridges** between the home and the school in order to reach the same objective. Here are some of the ways in which teachers have worked with parents and gained their support for positive discipline.

### **Code of conduct**

Encourage parents to discuss the school and classroom code of conduct with their children and to sign these documents together.

**Meet parents** Arrange home or school visits especially when you need support of parents or caregivers. Choose convenient times to meet parents (for example: after working hours or on a Saturday). Try to find a solution together with the parents and the learner and set up a follow-up meeting to review progress.



**Share the good news** Instead of focusing on the bad news, make an effort to share the good news with parents and caregivers. Phone parents or write a note to inform them about improvements in their child's behaviour and academic performance.

**Homework** Show parents how they can help their child with homework. Check with learners and parents how they are coping as too much homework can place unnecessary stress on the child and family relationships. Think carefully about what kind of homework tasks you are setting and whether these skills are best taught at school or at home. Homework is most helpful in tasks that rely on repetition such as spelling and multiplication tables.

## 8. School management initiatives

School management has a crucial role to play in mobilising the whole school community and creating a supportive environment in which positive discipline can flourish. This means leading by example and working with teachers, learners and parents to protect children from all forms of violence including corporal and humiliating punishment.

Here are some suggestions from schools that are already engaged in implementing positive discipline.

### Learner support

- Provide regular **adult supervision** in order to maintain high levels of safety on the playground and in the toilets.
- Arrange for selected learners to be trained as **peer counsellors** who can offer support and conflict resolution under the guidance of supportive adults (e.g. trained parent/ teacher counsellors).
- Invite local organisations to work with all the learners in **raising awareness** of children's rights and the harmful effects of corporal and humiliating punishment on children.
- Involve learners in deciding how to reduce all forms of violence against children at school including bullying.
- Hold exhibitions of learners work on positive discipline and invite the **media** to help raise awareness.
- Provide learners with their own **venue** where they can discuss issues with their peers and report any form of abuse confidentially to a trained peer/parent/teacher.
- Make sure all learners know **how to report all forms of abuse and violence** against children including toll-free numbers, peer counsellors and independent counselling services if learners prefer external support and privacy. Monitor the reporting systems regularly.



## Parent support

- **Discuss disciplinary problems** with parents in a supportive manner and choose times that are convenient for parents.
- Raise funds for **parent's workshops** on children's rights, parenting skills and basic counselling so that parents can implement positive discipline at home and at the school.
- Invite a non-governmental organisation to run a series of workshops on **parenting skills**. Discuss risk factors such as lack of parent-child attachment, family breakdown, abuse of alcohol or drugs, etc. and provide parents with information to help improve their home situation and explore positive forms of discipline with their children.
- Raise awareness of **children's rights** and the harmful effects of corporal and humiliating punishment on children. This should be a regular item on the agenda of parent-teacher meetings and prize-giving celebrations. Involve learners in writing and presenting plays on the topic so that parents are made aware of the issues by their own children.
- Invite guest speakers to address **gender stereotypes** and how these affect the way we parent children. Stress the need to foster core values such as respect, compassion and kindness in the parenting of both boy and girl children.
- Invite supportive **religious leaders** to your PTA meetings to address religious arguments raised by parents who believe that some level of corporal punishment is 'reasonable' or in the 'best interests of the child'.
- Involve parents in **social events** that are fun and interesting so that they feel part of the school community. For example: soccer tournaments (where parents play against teachers and learners), watching major sporting or cultural events on a big screen TV.
- Invite parents to form part of a **confidential forum** where children can report all forms of violence and receive counselling and support.



## Teacher support

- Arrange the training of selected teachers in basic **counselling and conflict resolution**.
- Organise the training of the same or a further group of teachers to strengthen and support the implementation of **positive discipline**.
- Organise a **mentoring system**. Place teachers who are struggling with discipline next door to more successful teachers and arrange times for them to observe and discuss examples of good classroom practice.
- Provide opportunities for **staff development** and training in positive discipline, children's rights and participatory learning approaches.



## School assemblies

- Highlight different **human rights** values at each assembly such as respect, tolerance, compassion, kindness, generosity and invite learners to read their essays, poems or rap music on the topic.
- Reinforce the importance of **good manners** and respect (for example: greeting visitors at school, not laughing at children when entering a class, etc.).
- Deepen learners' understanding of children's rights and **responsibilities** by discussing practical examples.
- Clarify what behaviour is expected in terms of the **school code**.
- Provide opportunities for teachers to **praise learners** who showed improvements in all spheres of schooling including behaviour.
- Create opportunities for **greater learner participation** by inviting learners to share their own understanding of children's rights through poetry, art and song.

# 9. Disciplinary policies and procedures

There are a number of policies and procedures that schools have put in place to strengthen and support positive discipline. Drawing up a **code of conduct** with all the role-players helps set the ground rules. A system of **merits and demerits** can be used to promote self-discipline. It is also important to identify different **levels of misbehaviour** so that learners are clear about the consequences if they do not honour the code of conduct.

## a. Codes of conduct

### What is a code of conduct?

A code of conduct is more than a set of rules for what happens in the school and in the classroom. It is **a living document** that needs to be assessed and revised on an ongoing basis. It clarifies what the key role-players (learners, educators, parents or caregivers, and school managers) expect from one another to ensure that schools are safe and supportive environments.

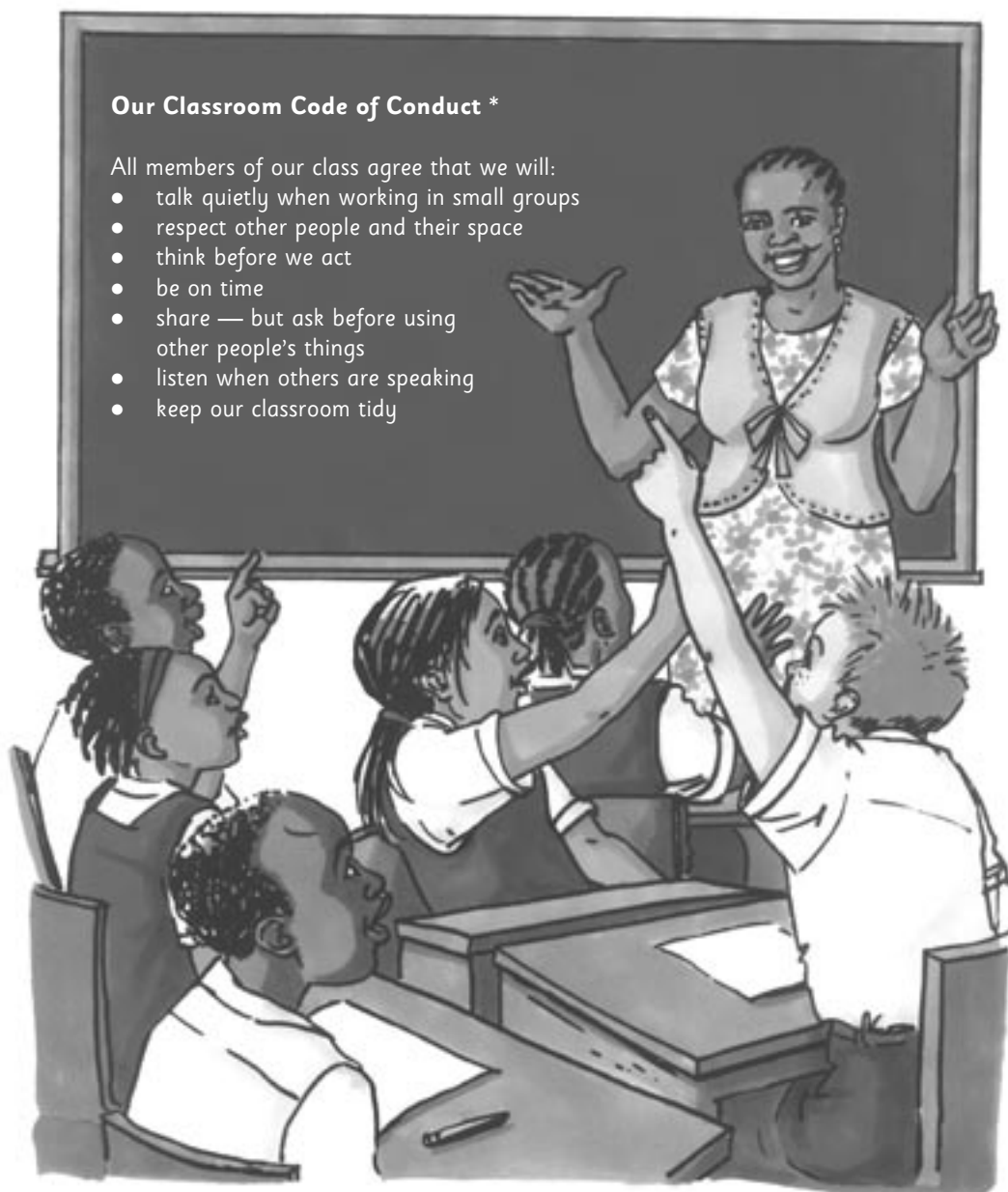
The aim is to create an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect that will make learning and teaching easier and more effective. Consultation needs to take place on an on-going basis to ensure that learners, teachers, parents and school managers **own and honour the rules**. Structures need to be set up to facilitate open communication and Parent Teacher Student Associations are a move in this direction.

### How do we draw up a code of conduct?

We asked teachers to share best practice at their schools and to give suggestions on how best to draw up a code of conduct for learners:

- It is best to do this with your class at the beginning of the year.
- Ask the class for their suggestions about their ideal class and add some of your own.
- Let the learners decide on rules that will help them work well together as a class and feel happy and safe.
- Make sure everyone understands the logic or thinking behind each “rule” and the consequences for breaking them.
- Discuss the importance of finding out the reason for breaking a “rule” **before** deciding whether a consequence should be applied or not.

- Put the rules up on the wall where everyone can see them and/or paste a copy in each learner's homework book for them and their parents to sign. This strengthens communication between home and school and parents' support is vital if learners are to arrive at school on time, complete their homework, etc.
- Review the class rules regularly with the learners and keep the list short.



\* *Alternatives to corporal punishment : The learning experience*, Department of Education, South Africa, 2000

## A code of conduct for educators

Teachers need to **lead by example** and show respect for their learners and the school rules. When we asked learners to draw up a code of conduct for their teachers, this is what they said:

## Finalising a code of conduct

Developing a code of conduct through a **consultative process** is not always that straightforward and sometimes it helps to ask a neighbouring school for help in writing up your codes.

Teachers should:

- Arrive on time
- Be prepared for us
- Be willing to listen and hear our side of the story before punishing us
- Make our lessons interesting and fun
- Mark our work on time and write helpful comments not just red crosses
- Be friendly and not take their moods out on us
- Be fair and not have favourites
- Help us when we don't understand and not treat us like donkeys

*“It wasn't easy for us to complete the school codes because, as teachers, we seldom participated in the development of official school documents in the past. We struggled to select words that reflected the human rights framework so that it made sense to the learners, the parents and ourselves.”*



*“What really helped us was learning from other schools where they had already gone through this process. Those schools had no problem sharing their documents and talking about their experiences.”*

*My advice is don't hesitate to ask for help from these schools because it makes the learning process so much easier.”*

## b. Merit and demerits

Many schools have chosen to implement merit and demerit systems with the aim of **promoting self-discipline** amongst learners. This approach combines positive incentives and an early warning system to help learners take responsibility for their behaviour.

### Merit system

A merit system recognizes that positive behaviour should be encouraged and rewarded. It is intended to build **confidence** and encourage learners to be accountable for their actions. Learners have incentives to motivate them to 'get it right' and keep on trying. Merits can be given for good work and good behaviour such as being helpful, or listening to instructions.

How it works:

- A learner who receives 10 or more merits in a week can select his/her reward from a list of incentives.
- A learner who receives more than 30 merits in a term will receive a special certificate of achievement.
- Merits must be issued fairly and consistently.



### Demerit system

The demerit system acts as an **early warning system** before learners are sent to detention. The system aims to promote self-discipline and encourages learners to keep track of their own behaviour.

How it works:

- Learners who receive more than 10 demerits in a week must go to detention.
- A new cycle begins each week.
- Demerits must be issued fairly and consistently.
- Strict records need to be kept and monitored.
- With good behaviour, the learners can accumulate merits that they had lost through bad behaviour.

### c. Consequences for misbehaviour

There are different levels of misbehaviour and it is important that the consequences correspond to the seriousness of the offence. The South African Education Department identifies five levels of misbehaviour and specifies when disciplinary action needs to be taken, who is responsible and what consequences will apply for each level of misbehaviour. Use the table on the opposite page as a guide and decide what is useful and relevant to your particular circumstances.

Remember to listen to each learner's story **before** making judgements. First speak to the learner and find out why a rule was broken before deciding whether to issue a warning, apply a consequence or offer help.

#### Case Study 3: Fighting and swearing

A principal shares her experience ...



Fighting and swearing are ongoing problems at our school. To address these problems, we use the following procedure:

- The learners who are fighting are separated to ensure their safety.
- They are sent to my office where they sit separately to cool down.
- I deal with the problem privately in my office.
- I try to be neutral and listen to both sides of the story.
- While one learner talks, the other listens without interrupting.
- I encourage them to talk about how they feel.
- I then involve them in finding a non-violent solution.
- I insist that the learner, who is not at fault, receive an apology.

## Levels of misbehaviour

Levels	Examples of misbehaviour	Examples of consequences
<p><b>Level 1: Misbehaviour inside the classroom</b></p> <p>Class teacher</p>	<p>late-coming   bunking   incomplete homework   not responding to instructions</p>	<p>verbal warnings   extra work related to offence   stay in class to complete work after school   making amends   community service   classroom chores, e.g. sweeping</p>
<p><b>Level 2: Misbehaviour by breaking rules</b></p> <p>Senior staff member</p>	<p>smoking   graffiti   dishonesty   abusive language   disrupting class work   leaving school without permission</p>	<p>written warnings   disciplinary talk with learner   sign behaviour contract with learner   talk with parent   daily behaviour report signed by teacher and learner</p>
<p><b>Level 3: Serious misbehaviour or violation of school codes</b></p> <p>Principal</p>	<p>inflicting minor injury on others   being racist, sexist or discriminatory   vandalism, stealing or cheating   possessing dangerous weapons</p>	<p>written warning of possibility of being suspended   referral to social worker or counsellor   community service</p>
<p><b>Level 4: Very serious misbehaviour or violation of school rules</b></p> <p>Principal and SGB (school governing body)</p>	<p>threats using dangerous weapon/s   causing intentional limited injury to others   engaging in sexual activities   possessing, selling or using alcohol/drugs   forging documents</p>	<p>refer learner for counselling   apply to education department for limited suspension from all school activities.</p>
<p><b>Level 5: Criminal acts which violate school codes and breach the law</b></p> <p>Principal, SGB and provincial education department</p>	<p>sexual harassment, abuse, rape or assault   robbery, stealing or burglary   using a dangerous weapon   murder</p>	<p>apply to education department for expulsion or transfer of learner   allow for civil or criminal prosecution</p>

## d. Individual behaviour contracts

Individual behaviour contracts are useful for changing specific behaviours. They can be drawn up as an agreement between the learner and teacher or you can ask both the parent and learner to sign the agreement.

**Can you do it?**

This is a contract between  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
(Teacher's name) (Learner's name)

I, (learner) agree that I will do  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ by (date).

I, (teacher) agree that if  
(learner) follows what has been agreed  
in this contract, then I will provide  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Learner's signature) (Teacher's signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

Adapted from: *Better Behaviour Ideas to Go*, McGrath, H., 2003.

# 10. Learner support materials

RAPCAN has developed a story and activity book that are designed to stimulate discussion and deepen learners' understanding of human rights, corporal punishment and positive discipline.

**The Tree by the River** tells the story of how Boniswa is punished and humiliated by her teacher Miss Mfeketo. Later that day she falls into the river and nearly drowns and this causes everyone to reconsider their attitudes to corporal punishment.

The book is divided into three chapters and each chapter tells the story from a different perspective. Chapter 1 describes how Boniswa feels about being punished and humiliated. Chapter 2 describes how Funda, a boy from her class, has a change of heart and Chapter 3 describes some of the challenges facing teachers like Miss Mfeketo.

Each chapter is followed by a series of questions designed to stimulate discussion and debate.

The **Activity Book** actively involves learners in painting, poetry, art, role-plays, interviews and group discussions that explore the links between positive discipline and children's rights and responsibilities. You can also draw up your own worksheets. For example: the worksheet on the following page provides an opportunity for learners to draw up their own set of rewards.



**Worksheet 10**

**Letters of criticism and letters of praise**

Work in pairs.

**How does it feel?**

- Discuss your past experiences of positive and negative feedback from a teacher.
- Use the following questions to guide your discussion and make notes of what is said:
  - Has a teacher ever called you in for a talk, sent you to the principal, or given you a note to take home to your parent or caregiver?
  - Was it to praise or criticise you?
  - What did he or she say and how did it make you feel?
  - How do you feel when you are criticised?
  - How do you feel when you are praised?

**1. Letters of criticism**


- Write the letter which Miss Mfeketo wrote to Boniswa's aunt, Mrs Mayosi, on the day Boniswa was punished. Remember that Boniswa was afraid to give this letter to her aunt, because she guessed it was a letter of criticism.
- This is a formal letter. It must be addressed to Boniswa's aunt, Mrs Mayosi, and be signed by Miss Mfeketo. Remember to write the date in the top right-hand corner.
- You will need to hand in this letter for assessment purposes.

**2. Letters of praise**

- Write a letter of praise to your partner. Describe what you think makes him or her special.
- This is a friendly letter addressed to your partner. You will give this letter to your partner to take home. So make sure this is a letter he or she will feel proud to share with his or her family.


10 April 2006

Dear Mrs Mayosi  
I am sorry...



Yours sincerely,  
Miss Mfeketo

Dear Friend  
You are...



I am so proud of you!

# Worksheet 8

## Rewarding good behaviour

Learner's Name:.....

Mark: ..... /6

Positive discipline uses rewards to motivate good behaviour  
and to encourage learners to be the best they can.



### You be the teacher

Read through the following examples of good behaviour  
and then decide what YOU would do to reward this behaviour.  
You can write down your own ideas or choose ones from the box at the bottom of the page.

- a. Helping other learners.....
- b. Completing homework on time for one month .....
- c. Arriving on time for one month.....
- d. Improvement in learning .....
- e. Improvement in general behaviour .....
- f. Sharing with others .....

### Rewards

certificate of praise	a fun outing for the whole class
an extra art period for the whole class	a surprise treat
an extra 10 minutes during break	choosing music for assembly
a letter of praise or phone call to the parent about their child	the whole class gets a sweet/apple

# How effective are your systems of positive discipline?

Use the following checklist to evaluate your systems of positive discipline and discuss the results at your next staff planning or PTSA meeting.

Disciplinary measures and procedures	No	Yes	Comments
1. Is there a code of conduct for learners?			
2. Is there a code of conduct for teachers?			
3. Are parents and learners aware of their rights and responsibilities?			
4. Are the codes of conduct accessible to all?			
5. Is there a system of incentives in place to motivate good behaviour?			
6. Are learners, parents and staff clear about the consequences of different types of offences?			
7. Are the consequences applied consistently and fairly to all?			
8. Are there child-friendly and confidential systems for children to report violence and abuse?			
9. Are the necessary structures and systems in place to deal with disciplinary issues?			
10. Are the structures working?			
11. Are there appropriate support systems for teachers who are struggling with discipline?			
12. Do teachers lead by example and provide positive role models for learners?			
13. Does the school management actively support positive, non-violent forms of discipline?			
14. Are the disciplinary structures and systems evaluated regularly to maintain effectiveness?			
15. Has your school managed to create a safe, happy and caring environment for learners?			

# Appendix A

## Key international conventions

### 1. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

The UDHR was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 and sets out the **fundamental rights and freedoms** to which everyone is entitled – women, men and children. The UDHR recognises ‘the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family’ including children. There are 30 articles that aim to realise these rights and freedoms without exception of any kind. For example:

- Article 1: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and should live together in a spirit of brotherhood.
- Article 5: No-one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
- Article 7: All are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law.

### 2. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The CRC was adopted by the United Nations in 1989. The Convention recognises that children under the age of 18 share the same basic human rights as adults and that they also need special care and protection. There are 54 articles in the Convention that aim to **protect children’s rights** and ensure that children develop their full potential.

- Article 3: All decisions that affect children must be made in the best interests of the child.  
Article 12: Children have the right to express their opinions about decisions that affect their lives. (This does not mean that children can now tell their parents what to do, but it does encourage adults to listen to children and involve them in decision-making.)
- Article 19: Governments must ensure that children are protected from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them.
- Article 29: Education must encourage children to respect the human rights of all people including their parents.

The United Nations **Committee on the Rights of the Child** has repeatedly called for the prohibition of all corporal punishment, in the family and other settings and stated quite clearly that all forms of corporal punishment, however light, and degrading forms of punishment are incompatible with the CRC.

### 3. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)

The Charter was adopted in 1990 by member states of the **Organization of African Unity** and supports the same human rights principles as the UDHR and CRC. The document spells out the obligations of governments, parents and caregivers in terms of what they have to do to make sure that children develop in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.

- Article 7: Every child has the right to express his opinions freely.
- Article 16: The State shall take specific legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment and especially physical or mental injury or abuse, neglect or maltreatment including sexual abuse.
- Article 21: The State shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate harmful social and cultural practices affecting the welfare, dignity, normal growth and development of the child.

### 4. United Nations Study on Violence against Children (UNVAC)

This global study was conducted by the United Nations between 2003 and 2006 with the help of 130 governments, numerous non-governmental organisations and thousands of children. The study aimed to stop violence against children and help children who have been harmed by violence. The study found that despite governments' obligation to honour international conventions, thousands of children around the world endured violence in the home, school and other settings on a regular basis. A key message in the report of the independent expert, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, stated that "No violence against children is justifiable; all violence against children is preventable." The report included **12 key recommendations** to help prevent violence against children and respond to it if it occurs. For example:

- Recommendation 2: Ensure that all violence against children is prohibited by law
- Recommendation 5: Teach everyone who works with and for children to respect children's rights
- Recommendation 7: Actively engage with children and respect their views in devising strategies to prevent and respond to violence against children
- Recommendation 8: Create safe and accessible systems for children to report violence

# Resources

African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect/ANPPCAN (2005). *From physical punishment to positive discipline: Alternatives to physical/corporal punishment in Kenya*, Kenya.

Bower, C. (2006). *Violence study has the best chance to make a difference where it counts – on the ground*, RAPCAN.

Brendtro, L. and Du Toit, L. (2005). *Response ability pathways: Restoring Bonds of Respect*, Pretext Publishers, South Africa.

Community Law Centre (2005). *Corporal punishment of children in the spotlight in Article 19*, University of the Western Cape, South Africa.

Durant, J., Newell, P., Clark Power, F. (2005). *Eliminating corporal punishment: The way forward to constructive child discipline* (S. N. Hart, Ed), UNESCO Publishing.

Epoch (1995). *Hitting people is wrong – and children are people too*, South Africa.

Fountain, S. (2006). *Our right to be protected from violence: Activities for learning and taking action for children and young people*, Secretariat of the United Nations Secretary-General's study on violence against children.

Frank, C. (2006) *Missed opportunities: The role of education, health and social development in preventing crime*, Institute for Security Studies, South Africa.

Global Initiative to End all Corporal Punishment of Children and Save the Children Sweden (2006). *Ending legalised violence against children: All Africa special report*.

Mcgrath, H. (2003). *Better Behaviour: Ideas to go*, A&C Black publishers limited, London.

Naker, D. (2007). *What is a good school? Imagining beyond the limits of today to create a better tomorrow*. Raising Voices, Uganda.

National Department of Education (2000). *Alternatives to corporal punishment: The learning experience*, South Africa.

Newell, P. (2006) *Hitting children is wrong*, an article presented at a Southern Africa workshop at RAPCAN, Cape Town.

Pinheiro, P. S. (2006) *A study that lives up to Children's Expectations in Children and Violence*. CRIN Newsletter, No. 19, May 2006.

Porteus, K., Vally, S. and Ruth, T. (2001). *Alternatives to corporal punishment: Growing discipline and respect in our classrooms*, Education Policy Unit, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, Heinemann Publishers.

Raising Voices (2006). *Creating safer schools; Lessons learned; strategies for action*, Uganda.

Save the Children Sweden (2005). *Ending corporal punishment of children in S.A.*, Regional Office for Southern Africa.

Save the Children Sweden and the International Save the Children Alliance (2005). *Ending physical and humiliating punishment of children: A manual for action*.

UNESCO (2006) *Positive discipline in the inclusive learning – friendly classroom: A guide for teachers and teacher educators*, UNESCO, Bangkok.

Waterhouse, S. (2006). *Corporal and humiliating punishment of children in South Africa*, RAPCAN (Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect).

Valley, S. (2005). *Corporal punishment and bullying: The rights of learners*, Education Policy Unit, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa.

## Useful websites

www.crin.org (Child Rights Information Network)      www.endcorporalpunishment.org  
www.childrenareunbeatable.org.uk      www.neverhitachild.org  
www.un.org (United Nations)      www.nospank.net  
www.rb.se (Save the children Sweden)      www.sahealthinfo.org  
www.erp.org.za (Education Rights Project)      www.savethechildren.org  
www.unicef.org (United Nations Children's Fund)      www.stophitting.com  
www.unhchr.ch (Committee on the Rights of the Child)  
www.sahrc.org.za (South African Human Rights Commission)

Here are some useful organisations in Southern Africa that address various issues related to human rights and children's rights – including law reform, prevention of violence against children and responding to child victims.

Childline (South Africa)  
email: [childlinesa@iafrica.com](mailto:childlinesa@iafrica.com)

Children's Resource Centre (South Africa)  
[crcchild@iafrica.com](mailto:crcchild@iafrica.com)    [www.childrensmovement.org.za](http://www.childrensmovement.org.za)

Community Law Centre, University of the Western Cape  
+27 21 959 2950.

Ditshwanelo, The Botswana Centre for Human Rights  
+26 7 390 6998

Education Policy Unit, University of Witwatersrand (South Africa)  
[www.erp.org.za](http://www.erp.org.za)

NGO Coalition on the Rights of a Child (Lesotho)  
[pmohapelo@ngoc.org.ls](mailto:pmohapelo@ngoc.org.ls)    +26 62 231 2905

Quaker Peace Centre (South Africa)  
+27 21 685 7800

Save the Children Sweden Regional Office for Southern Africa  
[postmaster@za.rb.se](mailto:postmaster@za.rb.se)

Save the Children Sweden (Zambia)  
[petronellam@za.rb.se](mailto:petronellam@za.rb.se)

Save the Children Swaziland  
+26 8 404 3255 [childsav@realnet.co.sz](mailto:childsav@realnet.co.sz)

The Parent Centre (South Africa)  
email: [parent@iafrica.com](mailto:parent@iafrica.com)

Zambia Civic Association  
[zamcivic@coppernet.zm](mailto:zamcivic@coppernet.zm)

Zambia Human Rights Commission  
+26 096 767 386

You can also contact your local Departments of Social Welfare and Education as well as non-profit organisations offering child protection and support services.

## *A Teacher's Guide to* **Positive Discipline**

This book is part of a toolkit commissioned by RAPCAN to promote positive discipline in schools. As Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu points out:

“If we really want a peaceful and compassionate world, we need to build communities of trust where all children are respected, where home and school are safe places to be and where discipline is taught by example.”

Teachers have a leading role to play in implementing positive discipline yet many teachers struggle to get learners to cooperate without hitting or humiliating them.

This book provides teachers with a range of practical tools and techniques to strengthen positive discipline in the classroom.

It also looks at how to get the whole school community involved in building a culture of human rights, dignity and respect so that learners can reach their full potential.

