

1986

## Developing a framework for effective discipline

Allan Ray Billings  
*University of Northern Iowa*

*Let us know how access to this document benefits you*

Copyright ©1986 Allan Ray Billings

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Billings, Allan Ray, "Developing a framework for effective discipline" (1986). *Graduate Research Papers*. 2064.

<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/grp/2064>

This Open Access Graduate Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Work at UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Papers by an authorized administrator of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@uni.edu](mailto:scholarworks@uni.edu).

**Offensive Materials Statement:** Materials located in UNI ScholarWorks come from a broad range of sources and time periods. Some of these materials may contain offensive stereotypes, ideas, visuals, or language.

---

## Developing a framework for effective discipline

### Abstract

The single most important responsibility of the principal is in effectively performing his or her role as an instructional leader. The relationship between strong instructional leadership and effective schools has been well documented and most principals desire to devote a majority of their time in activity related to that role (Byrne, Hines, & McCleary, 1978; Hager & Scarr, 1983; Huddle, 1984; Kimball, 1984).

DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK FOR  
EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE

---

A Research Paper  
Presented to  
The Department of Educational Administration  
and Counseling  
University of Northern Iowa

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts in Education

---

by  
Allan Ray Billings

December 1986

This Research Paper by: Allan Ray Billings

Entitled: Developing a Framework for Effective Discipline

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirement for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in Education.

Donald L. Hanson

Sept 8, 1986  
Date Approved

Advisor/Director of Research Paper

Norman McCumsey

Sept 10, 1986  
Date Approved

Second Reader of Research Paper

Norman McCumsey

Sept 10, 1986  
Date Received

Head, Department of Educational  
Administration and Counseling

## INTRODUCTION

The single most important responsibility of the principal is in effectively performing his or her role as an instructional leader. The relationship between strong instructional leadership and effective schools has been well documented and most principals desire to devote a majority of their time in activity related to that role (Byrne, Hines, & McCleary, 1978; Hager & Scarr, 1983; Huddle, 1984; Kimball, 1984).

However, Byrne, Hines, and McCleary (1978) report one national survey which indicates that the greatest amount of time is actually spent on functions that principals consider less important, such as, school management, personnel problems, student activities, and student behavior. Mendez (1986) gives the following breakdown of the principal's management time:

- A. Maintenance 51.5% (mail, reports, attendance)
- B. Critical-crisis 31.2% (student discipline, vandalism, personnel)
- C. Professional 31.2% (curriculum development and planning)

Therefore, discipline problems deteriorate the effectiveness of a school by taking too much time from the principal.

The purpose of this paper was to identify three theoretical bases which a principal could use to develop effective discipline within secondary schools. These theories were: A. Change of School Climate; B. Discipline Record Systems; and C. Courage and

Leadership to Carry Out Discipline Goals. A proper discipline program should directly improve the effectiveness of the school and give the principal more time for instructional leadership activities, further enhancing the school's effectiveness.

#### The Discipline Problem

Research into secondary school discipline has established that there have been many effective theories used in the past 15 years (Burns, 1985), yet, discipline continues to be a major problem (Bartosh & Barilla, 1985; Deitz & Hummel, 1978). Senator Bayh (1975) brought the discipline problems of our schools to the public's attention with his subcommittee's report titled "Our Nation's Schools - A Report Card: 'A' in School Violence and Vandalism." Also, a poll conducted by Gallup (1975) showed that for 6 of the past 7 years the biggest problem facing our schools was a lack of discipline.

#### Discipline: Definition and Goals

Perhaps Hollingsworth, Lufler, and Clune (1984) best described discipline when they wrote "we see discipline as the formal system involving school rules, who breaks them, and what punishments occur." Discipline programs should recognize the requirement of balancing the needs of the teacher and the students for order and structure (Hollingsworth, Lufler & Clune, 1984). Good discipline, provided by schools, nurtures social, emotional, and intellectual growth which leads to self discipline (Olsen, 1985). David Gray

(1983, p. 29) wrote "discipline can and should be something positive. It should be used to bring about positive behavioral changes and to develop a self disciplined person."

#### School Culture

Burns (1985) wrote that "if we want to resolve our discipline problems, we must deal with the school culture and the problems that grow out of that culture." The reason why many past programs and practices have not eliminated our discipline programs is they have not really changed the institutional culture of the schools (Sizer, 1984; Lufler, 1984).

Examples of school culture often being at the root of poor discipline are given by Grossnickle and Sesko (1985) and Burns (1985). Both articles included the following characteristics of a poor school culture: Teachers provided little or no supervision of halls, rest rooms, and public areas of the building; the principal was expected by the teachers to discipline the students; teachers and principals had little common agreement about enforcement of rules; teachers felt they were not being supported by the administration; and, students were not clear about what behavior was expected of them. Burns (1985, p. 2) stated that "these characteristics are a matter of degree and the degree to which they exist is determined by the socio-political culture of that school."

Administrators must realize that schools are made up of humans and "the human side of organizations cries out for a set of common

values and expectations" (Burns, 1985). When a set of common values does not exist, any program an administrator tries to implement "will have limited or short success since the socio-political forces will continue to be the dominant force" (Burns, 1985).

There are many ways to change a poor school culture. Hollingsworth, Lufler, and Clune (1984) suggested the principal and teachers agreed upon the standards of conduct and steps for enforcing the appropriate behavior in the halls and class rooms. Burns (1985) stated that the principal must see that all the teachers and the staff take the responsibility of disciplining and that he or she does not take the responsibility alone.

Emphasis must be placed upon communicating the expectations of behavior and the certainty that violators will be dealt with (Grossnickle & Sesko, 1985). Expelling students that are hard core discipline problems is an important aspect of this. Burns (1985, p. 2) wrote that students who do not have enough of a value system to accept behavior standards appropriate to a school must be expelled when all other efforts to help have failed. Teachers and students should not be exposed to gross disrespect and repeated misbehavior that continues to be unresolved.

A school culture of shared values and commitments must be established (Howard, 1978; Grossnickle & Sesko, 1985; Fortwengler & Konnert, 1982). "Shared values have to become the overriding principal of operating a school system, because many forces



increasingly tend to pull it apart" (Hollingsworth, Luffler, & Clune, 1984).

The philosophy of changing the school culture must have strong commitment from the school administration and, more importantly, from the school board and the superintendent (Grossnickle & Sesko, 1985; Burns, 1985). Through the requirement commitment, Conant High School applied the principles of school culture and benefited by a reduction in discipline referrals of 40% the first year (Grossnickle & Sesko, 1985).

#### Discipline Record Systems

The second part of the framework of effective discipline is to maintain a quality discipline record system. If it is important to change the school culture, then it is equally important to keep track of which students are causing behavior problems and where they are happening (Howard, 1978; Dietz & Hummel, 1978). By keeping track of who and where the discipline behavioral problems are, the principal can make changes to eliminate future discipline problems (Hollingsworth, Luffler, & Clune, 1984). Bartosh (1985) made the following list of some of the components of an effective record system:

- "1. The system should communicate clearly to others.
2. The system should list types of behaviors that are often repeated.
3. The system should indicate the persistence of teachers

involved in the discipline incidents.

4. The system should reveal patterns and locations of problems within the school or master schedule (i.e., hallways, classes, study halls, etc.).
5. The system should contain the time of the day, week, or month when the incident occurred.
6. The system should record the administrator's response to each incident.
7. The system should denote the amount of involvement the administrator had with the parents as a result of each incident" (Bartosh, 1985, pp. 6-7).

This system can help a principal see behavioral patterns and may be able to identify larger problems which are underneath the surface of a simple discipline problem.

To make a discipline record system work, all data must be clearly recorded. Sometimes teachers develop their own codes or shortcuts; they must be avoided. Some of the information included in the records could hurt someone and should be handled with extreme care or even left off the record (Furtwengler & Konnert, 1982; Hollingsworth, Lufler, & Clune, 1984; Bartosh, 1985).

After looking over a particular discipline record of a student, the principal can often come to a conclusion such as, the student is having troubles with certain teachers, at particular times of the day, or in one part of the building. With the given data the

discipline record system provides, the principal can then set a course of corrective action. The discipline record system may sometimes reveal that the corrective measures are not successful, and a change in the way the administration is responding might be necessary (Grossnickle & Sesko, 1985; Furtwengler & Konnert, 1982; Bartosh, 1985). Bartosh (1985) wrote that a discipline record system is a simple "chronology of date - event - time - teacher reaction - parent response." Analysis of the record should uncover the real problems and should "lead the administration away from the action-reaction syndrome into a more successful effort of behavior modification."

#### Courage

The third aspect of effective discipline to be focused on in this paper was the role of the school principal. Ramsey (1981) stated "more than any other single person, the school principal is the key to successful discipline. Consciously and unconsciously the entire school staff mirrors the strengths, weaknesses, and priorities of the principal. It is up to the building leader to set the limits and to stick to them." Ramsey's theory was backed up by Furtwengler and Konnert (1982) who wrote that the principal is almost always held accountable for student behavior and that the effectiveness of a principal is often measured by his or her success with discipline.

It has already been stated elsewhere in this paper that schools

with poor discipline must undergo a change in school culture to affect any kind of permanent improvement in student behavior (Grossnickle & Sesko, 1985; Ramsey, 1981; Furtwengler & Konnert, 1982). The principal or administrator is the one responsible to monitor the discipline report systems. The principal or administrator is the one who monitors the school for problems indicating a poor school discipline culture (Grossnickle & Sesko, 1985; Ramsey, 1981). Because of the extreme job complexities, the principal must monitor how much time is spent on discipline matters (Anderson & Lavid, 1986) and use the school discipline record system to determine what modifications must be made.

Research documents that both the staff and the administrator working together is the only way to improve discipline (Ramsey, 1981; Grossnickle & Sesko, 1985; Burns, 1985). However, the principal is responsible for in-service training for the teachers, setting an example, and often implementing changes and programs for better discipline (Gray, 1983).

Charles Madsen (1974) wrote that 'courage' was the major ingredient to diagnose cause-and-effect relationships and to then put into effect solutions to correct poor behavior even if it may be unpopular. Rudolf Dreikurs (1985) agreed with Madsen on the role of courage to make a decision, however, he went even further to state that courage was to be unafraid to make a mistake. Rules that were put down had to be enforced, and discipline had to be

consistent so that students would be secure in knowing their expectations and limitations.

### Implementation

Implementation of the discipline philosophies given can be approached in different ways. Graff (1981) wrote that he encouraged his administrative staff to get as much office work done before or after the school day, allowing the administrators to be visible in the halls, class rooms, and public places. This indicated to both staff and students that the administration 'cared' and was interested in them.

Don Houck (1981, p. 26) listed five principles necessary to the implementation of a discipline philosophy. These principles included: genuine concern shown by staff members and administrators; staff members and administrators were highly visible; expected behavior was clearly defined and the consequences of bad behavior was well communicated; the principal should be the best example of expected behavior; and administrative actions should cause the staff and students to feel supported and challenged. The principal was primarily responsible for the establishment of these philosophies in the school (Gray, 1985; Ramsey, 1981).

### Conclusion

In forming a framework for effective discipline it is very important that the starting point is an administrator who has the courage to make decisions. The administrator will need to set up

an accurate, fair discipline record system that will aid in establishing goals and objectives. These goals and objectives will often deal with a change in the school culture. It will be necessary for both the students and the staff to know the rules, philosophy, and objectives set down for the school. The administrator will need to make sure the staff follows through on the agreed upon objectives and rules. The administrator will need the courage to carry out the consequences to rule violations while showing genuine concern for the students, with the aim of helping the students to develop self discipline.

## References

- Anderson, R. E. and Lavid, J. S. (1986). The Effective Principal: Leader or Manager? NASSP Bulletin, 70, pp. 82-84.
- Bartosh, F. J. and Barilla, J. (1985). Discipline - Still Number One On the Administrator's List Of Problems, NASSP Bulletin, 69, pp. 6-10.
- Bayh, B. (1975). Our Nation's Schools - A Report Card: "A" in School Violence and Vandalism. (U.S. Senate Subcommittee Report on Juvenile Delinquency). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Burns, J. A. (1985). Discipline: Why Does It Continue to Be a Problem? Solution Is in Changing School Culture. NASSP Bulletin, 69, pp. 1-5.
- Byrne, D. R., Hines, S. A., & McCleary, L. D. (1978). The Senior High School Principalship. The National Survey. (Volume 1) Reston, Virginia, NASSP.
- Deitz, S. M. & Hummel, J. H. (1978). Discipline in the Schools. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Ed. Technology Publications, Inc.
- Dreikurs, R. (1965). Children: The Challenge. New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce.
- Farley, J. (1985). Alternative Approaches to Discipline (or Beating the Bandwagon). American Secondary Education, 14 (2) p. 31.
- Furtwengler, W. J. & Konnert, W. (1982). Improving School Discipline: An Administrator's Guide. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

- Gable, S. K., Dedrick, C. V. L., & Hawkes, R. P. (1984). Stress and the School Administrator, American Secondary Education, 13 (2) pp. 28, 29.
- Gallup, George (1975, December 1). Discipline No. 1 School Crisis. The Atlanta Journal/Constitution.
- Graff, P. R. (1981). Is There a Bag of Tricks? Or Is Organization The Solution? NASSP Bulletin, 64, pp. 1-5.
- Gray, D. A. (1983). Discipline and Education, American Secondary Education, 13 (1) pp. 28, 29.
- Grossnickle, D. R. & Sesko, F. P. (1985). Promoting Effective Discipline in School & Classroom. Reston, Virginia: NASSP.
- Hager, J. L. & Scarr, L. E. (1983). Effective School - Effective Principals: How to Develop Both. Educational Leadership, 39 (5) pp. 83-85.
- Hollingsworth, E. J., Lufler, H. Jr., & Clune, W. H. (1984). School Discipline Order and Autonomy. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Houck, D. (1981). The Discipline Ladder - A Strategy for Managing Disruptive Behavior. NASSP Bulletin, 64, pp. 25-28.
- Howard, E. R. (1984). School Discipline Desk Book. West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Co., Inc.
- Huddle, G. (1984). How Complex Is the Principal's Job? What Actions Can Principals Take To Be More Effective: NASSP Bulletin, 68, pp. 63-67.



- Kimball, P. (1984). Most School Principals Do Not Practice Potter's Principle. American Secondary Education, 13 (4) pp. 24, 25.
- Madsen, C. H. & Madsen, C. K. (1974). Teaching/Discipline; A Positive Approach for Educational Development. Boston, Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
- Mendez, R. (1986). How Can Principals Improve Their Instructional Leadership? NASSP Bulletin, pp. 1-5.
- Olson, W. C. (1949). Child Development. Boston: D. C. Heath and Co.
- Raines, S. E. (1984). Let's Get Visible. American Secondary Education, 13 (3) pp. 30, 31.
- Ramsey, R. D. (1981). Educator's Discipline Handbook. West Nyack, New York: Parker Publishing Co., Inc.
- Sizer, T. (1984). Horace's Compromise. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.