

Promoting Discipline & Learning

by Dr. Marvin Marshall

A system is superior to talent.

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Having a system to rely on and refer to is superior to having a talent.

Working in Harlem under contract for three years with the New York City Board of Education taught me an invaluable lesson: Having a teaching *SYSTEM* is far superior to talent when a teacher faces challenging behaviors in the classroom.

The assistant superintendent and I were very impressed while observing a teacher one year. We agreed that the teacher was a "natural." However, when I visited the teacher the following year, she told me that three boys were such challenges that she could use some assistance.

Even teachers with "natural talent" are challenged by student behaviors that teachers in former generations did not have to deal with. To retain the joy that the teaching profession offers and to reduce one's stress, having a *SYSTEM* to rely on can significantly help. The [Discipline Without Stress Teaching Model](#) describes such a *SYSTEM*. It contains four essential phases to successful teaching and learning:

I. Teaching Procedures

The first phase differentiates *classroom management* from *discipline*. Classroom management is about *teaching, practicing, and reinforcing procedures* and is the *teacher's* responsibility. *Discipline*, in contrast, is about *self-control and impulse*

management and is the *student's* responsibility. More on this topic is available at [Classroom Management](#).

II. Practicing Three Principles

This second phase describes three universal principles teachers employ to *inspire* and *induce students to initiate their own changes*. The principles are **positivity**, **choice**, and **reflection**. How using just these three principles can change a person's personal as well as a one's professional life as can be read at [A Principal's Experience](#).

III. Being Proactive in Discipline

The third phase refers to teaching a lesson that inspires students to behave responsibly *at the outset--before* any disruption occurs. This is in contrast to the usual approach of first reacting *after* an irresponsible behavior. Teaching a lesson that has students WANT to behave responsibly reduces stress and is both more efficient and effective. The [Raise Responsibility System](#) describes teaching four (4) concepts relating to social (and personal) development. After teaching the concepts, *checking for understanding* is used when a disruption occurs. If misbehavior continues, than *guided choices* are used to help the student develop a procedure to help himself or in severe cases to *elicit* a consequence. The approach is totally noncoercive (but not permissive) and employs *internal motivation*--rather than relying on shorter-lasting *external manipulations* of threats, punishments, or rewards. The link to [Discipline without Stress](#) lists some indications as to the success and growing popularity of this *SYSTEM*.

IV. Using the System to Increase Academic Performance

This phase has students become motivated to put forth effort to increase learning *without* the teacher's use of any external

motivators. Instead, the teacher refers to the four (4) concepts referred to above. The [**Hierarchy of Social Development**](#) describes the concepts. First, pictures are painted of the concepts in students' minds *before* students engage in a lesson or activity. Then after the activity, students take just a moment to *reflect* on their chosen concept. Students WANT to achieve at the highest concept level just by the nature of the levels in the hierarchy. By being *proactive before* and employing *reflection afterwards*, motivation toward learning is significantly increased.

More explanations of each of the above are available for further study and download at [**MarvinMarshall.com**](#). For those who desire a more in-depth understanding and would like to share the *Raise Responsibility System* with administrators and others, please print the pdf version of the ***Phi Delta Kappan*** cover article at the [**articles**](#) ink.

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