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4

TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

The third aspect of effective classroom management, after rules and procedures and disciplinary interventions, is teacher-student relationships. One might make the case that teacher-student relationships are the keystone for the other factors. If a teacher has a good relationship with students, then students more readily accept the rules and procedures and the disciplinary actions that follow their violations. Without the foundation of a good relationship, students commonly resist rules and procedures along with the consequent disciplinary actions. Again, this makes good intuitive sense.

The Research and Theory

The results of my meta-analysis for teacher-student relationships are reported in Figure 4.1. What is perhaps most striking about the findings is not the average effect size of –.869 (which is sizable and impressive in itself), but the extremely large effect sizes for the middle school/junior high level and the upper elementary level. (Note that data were not available to compute an average effect size for the primary level.) I should caution that if more studies of the impact of teacher-student relationships on student behavior were available, these large average effect sizes would probably go down. They are simply much larger than are commonly found in the social sciences. Nevertheless, it makes sense that teacher-student relationships would be extremely important to students below the high school level and, therefore, would have a profound impact on student behavior.

Along with the meta-analytic evidence of the importance of teacher-student relationships is the more perceptual evidence. To illustrate, in a study involving 68 high school students, 84 percent said that disciplinary

Figure 4.1

Effect Sizes for Teacher-Student Relationships

	Average Effect Size	95% Confidence Interval	Number of Subjects	Number of Studies	Percentile Decrease in Disruptions
Teacher-Student Relationship	–.869	(–.743) to (–.995)	1,100	4	31
High School	–.549	(–.338) to (–.760)	720	2	21
Middle School/Junior High	–2.891	(–1.786) to (–4.008)	350	1	50
Upper Elementary	–1.606	(–1.364) to (–1.849)	350	1	45

Note: Data were not available to compute an effect size for the primary level.

problems that occurred could have been avoided by better teacher-student relationships (Sheets, 1994). In their review of the literature, Rosa Sheets and Geneva Gay (1996) note that many behavioral problems ultimately boil down to a breakdown in teacher-student relationships: "The causes of many classroom behaviors labeled and punished as rule infractions are, in fact, problems of students and teachers relating to each other interpersonally" (pp. 86–87). Some researchers have postulated that this breakdown occurs because many teachers position themselves in a "we-they" relationship with students (Plax & Kearney, 1990).

Researchers have tried repeatedly to identify general characteristics of teachers that make them more likable to students and, consequently, more likely to have good relationships with students (e.g., Barr, 1958; Good & Brophy, 1995). These studies identify characteristics such as consideration, buoyancy, patience, and the like, but they do not focus on the dynamics of the teacher-student relationship per se. However, a number of studies have focused either directly or indirectly on this dynamic.

In terms of classroom management techniques, one of the most useful efforts to identify the dynamics of an effective teacher-student relationship is the work of Theo Wubbels and his colleagues (see Wubbels, Brekelmans, van Tartwijk, & Admiral, 1999; Wubbels & Levy, 1993; Brekelmans, Wubbels, & Creton, 1990). Building on the early work of Timothy Leary (1957), Wubbels and his colleagues (see Wubbels & Levy, 1993; Wubbels et al., 1999) identify two dimensions whose interactions define the relationship between teacher and students. One dimension is dominance versus submission; the other is cooperation versus opposition.

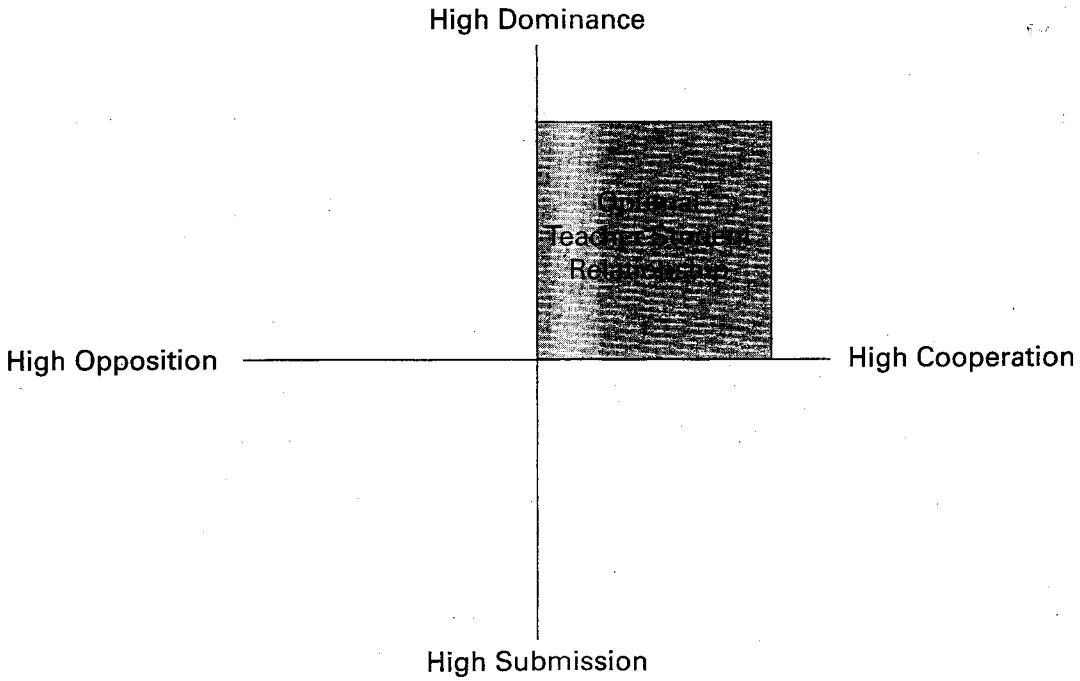
High dominance is characterized by clarity of purpose and strong guidance. The purpose and guidance provided by the teacher should be both academic and behavioral—that is, the teacher provides purpose and guidance relative to the content addressed in class as well as the behavior expected in class. These are certainly positive characteristics.

However, high dominance can also be characterized by lack of attentiveness to and concern for the interests of students. The other end of this continuum—high submission—is characterized by lack of clarity and purpose. Neither end point of the continuum—extreme dominance or extreme submission—defines an optimal teacher-student relationship. This is also the case with the second dimension—cooperation versus opposition.

High cooperation is characterized by a concern for the needs and opinions of others and a desire to function as a member of a team as opposed to an individual. Again, these are positive traits. But extreme cooperation is characterized by an inability or lack of resolve to act without the input and approval of others. Extreme opposition—the other end of this continuum—is characterized by active antagonism toward others and a desire to thwart their goals and desires. Again, neither end point—extreme cooperation or extreme opposition—can be characterized as the type of teacher-student relationship conducive to learning. It is the right combination of moderate to high dominance (as opposed to extreme dominance) and moderate to high cooperation (as opposed to extreme cooperation) that provides the optimal teacher-student relationship for learning. Figure 4.2 illustrates this relationship.

The shaded area in Figure 4.2 depicts the optimal teacher-student relationship profile in terms of dominance and cooperation. Again,

Figure 4.2
Interaction Between Dominance and Cooperation



notice that this area does not include extreme levels of dominance or cooperation. As Wubbels and his colleagues (1999) note:

> Briefly, teachers should be effective instructors and lecturers, as well as friendly, helpful, and congenial. They should be able to empathize with students, understand their world, and listen to them. Good teachers are not uncertain, undecided, or confusing in the way they communicate with students. They are not grouchy, gloomy, dissatisfied, aggressive, sarcastic, or quick-tempered. They should be able to set standards and maintain control while still allowing students responsibility and freedom to learn. (p. 167)

Interestingly, when teachers first enter the profession, they more readily exhibit behaviors that would be characterized as highly cooperative. However, given their lack of experience in leadership positions, they are not very good at exhibiting behaviors that are highly dominant (Wubbels & Levy, 1993). Over time (between 6 and 10 years), they become quite competent at dominant behaviors. Unfortunately, they also become less cooperative. As Wubbels and his colleagues put it: "Teachers appear to decline in cooperative behavior and increase in oppositional behavior, a change that negatively affects student attitudes" (Wubbels et al., 1999, p. 166).

Lian Chiu and Michael Tulley (1997) conducted a study that supports the conclusions of Wubbels and his colleagues. They interviewed 712 students in grades 4, 5, and 6 (368 males and 344 females). The students were presented with four options in terms of their preferences for the management style of teachers: (1) rules / rewards-punishments, (2) relationship-listening, (3) confronting-contracting, and (4) no preferred approach. The first three approaches were based on a description of classroom management styles articulated by Wolfgang and Glickman (1986). The *rules/rewards-punishments* style is described well by its title. Teachers using this style articulate rules and procedures and present them to students. Acting in accordance with the rules results in positive consequences; not acting in accordance with the rules results in negative consequences. The *relationship-listening* style is characterized by little or no emphasis on disciplinary issues per se. Rather, the emphasis is on attending to student concerns. Finally, the *confronting-contracting* style is characterized by direct attention to disciplinary problems but not in an inflexible way. Along with executing negative consequences for inappropriate behavior, the teacher demonstrates a concern for students' needs and preferences. The responses of students are summarized in Figure 4.3.

The data in Figure 4.3 confirm students' clear preference for the confronting-contracting style. The percentage of students who preferred the confronting-contracting approach is at least double that for any other approach. One might say that confronting-contracting by another name is the confluence of appropriate dominance with appropriate cooperation as defined by Wubbels.

A study by Jere Brophy and Carolyn Evertson (1976) also supports the importance of a combination of teacher dominance and cooperation. They examined the practices of some 30 second and third grade teachers who had consistently produced achievement gains greater than expected as compared to a group of randomly selected comparison teachers. Among other things, they noted:

Figure 4.3
Student Preferences for Management Types

Grade	Gender	Rules/ Reward-Punishment	Listening	Confront/ Contract	No Preference	Total
4	M	22 (20%)	16 (15%)	67 (62%)	3 (3%)	108
4	F	24 (27%)	16 (18%)	47 (53%)	2 (2%)	89
5	M	16 (14%)	27 (24%)	65 (57%)	6 (5%)	114
5	F	9 (10%)	18 (20%)	59 (64%)	6 (7%)	92
6	M	21 (14%)	34 (23%)	80 (55%)	11 (8%)	146
6	F	29 (18%)	24 (15%)	102 (63%)	8 (5%)	163
Total		121 (17%)	135 (19%)	420 (59%)	36 (5%)	712

Source: Adapted with permission from Lian Hwang Chiu and Micheal Tulley, Student preferences of teacher discipline styles, *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 24*(3), 169–175. Copyright 1997.

> Teachers who felt a sense of inner control and took personal responsibility for what went on in their classrooms showed that *they were in charge* [original emphasis]. They designed and maintained the general learning environment of the classroom. Although they often solicited or accepted suggestions from the children, they retained control over what went on, how it went on, and when it went on. These teachers also tended to be the ones who were the most successful in obtaining student learning gains. (p. 42)

The final conclusions of Brophy and Evertson are basically the same as those reached by Wubbels. An optimal teacher-student relationship consists of equal parts of dominance and cooperation.

A final line of research that provides a useful perspective on the nature of an effective teacher-student relationship is one that addresses the needs of different types of students. Public school teachers must deal with all of America's children with the exception of incarcerated teens and children and teens in mental hospitals. These students enter the classroom with a staggering array of serious issues in their lives. Figure 4.4 provides a brief summary of some types of problems students face in their lives and, consequently, the types of issues teachers must deal with.

The research findings reported in Figure 4.4 are sobering indeed. The more general descriptions of problems facing students are equally sobering. In their review of the research on child mistreatment, Ross Thompson and Jennifer Wyatt (1999) note that a high

Figure 4.4

Categories of Severe Problems Facing Students

Category	**Statistics**
Homelessness	On any given night, 700,000 people are homeless. Two million people are homeless annually. Twelve million people are homeless at some point in their lives. Forty percent of the homeless have homeless children. *(National Center on Homelessness and Poverty, in Crespi, 2001)*
Depression	About 8 percent of all adolescents are depressed in any given year. *(U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [1999], in Stanard, 2000)* Five percent of youth between 9 and 17 years old are depressed, and only a minority of youth are treated. *(Shaffer [1998] in Stanard, 2000)*
Suicide	Among youth 15 to 19 years old, suicide is responsible for more deaths than any disease. For 10- to 14-year-olds, suicide is the 4th leading cause of death. *(Centers for Disease Control [2000] in Stanard, 2000)*
Violent Students	A majority of violent and aggressive students who have been suspended or expelled have identifiable substance abuse or mental health disorders. *(Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention [1999], in Luongo, 2000)* For more than 56 percent of youth who are victims of violence, the emotional and physical assault occurred on school grounds. *(Porter, Epp, & Bryant, 2000)* More than 50 percent of all boys and 25 percent of all girls report that they have been physically assaulted in school. *(Centers for Disease Control [1992], in Porter, et al., 2000)* Twenty percent of all children and youth, or approximately 11 million, have diagnosable developmental, behavioral, and/or emotional problems that increase their risk of becoming victims and/or perpetrators of violence. *(Porter et al., 2000)*
Eating Disorders	Fifteen to 18 percent of high school students manifest bulimic symptoms. *(Crago, Shisslak, & Estes, 1996)* Five to 10 percent of cases of anorexia nervosa are males. *(Crosscope-Happel, Hutchins, Getz, & Hayes, 2000)*
Alcoholism	Twenty percent of children in the United States grow up in alcoholic families. *(National Institute on Drug Abuse [1998], in Johnson, 2001)* Alcoholic families exhibit greater levels of openly expressed anger and lower levels of warmth, cohesion, and direct communication than nonalcoholic families. *(Johnson, 2001)* Alcohol is a significant factor in approximately 81 percent of child abuse cases. *(Johnson, 2001)*
Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder	Three to 7 percent of school-age children, mostly males, experience ADHD disorder. *(American Psychiatric Association, 2000)* Approximately 50 percent of the 1.6 million elementary school–aged children with ADHD also have learning disorders. *(Centers for Disease Control [1997–98], in "CDC Study Confirms ADHD/Learning Disability Link," n.d.)*

▶ Continued...

Figure 4.4
Categories of Severe Problems Facing Students *(continued)*

Category	Statistics
Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder *(cont.)*	The predominantly inattentive subtype of ADHD has a prevalence rate of 3 to 5 percent. *(Erk, 2000)* Nearly 70 percent of those with ADHD simultaneously cope with other conditions such as learning disabilities, mood disorders, anxiety, and more. *(Ross, 2002)*
Sexual Orientation	Six percent of students describe themselves as homosexual or bisexual, and 13 percent are uncertain about their sexual orientation. Homosexual and bisexual students have higher than average rates of mental health problems and eating disorders and are more concerned about sexual victimization. *(Harvard Medical Newsletter, 2000)*
Incarcerated Parents	One and a half million children have an incarcerated parent. Ten million young people have had a mother or father or both behind bars at some point in their lives. *(Kleiner, 2002)*
Poverty	Approximately 15.7 million children live in households with incomes below the poverty line. Almost 50 percent of all children in mother-only families are impoverished. More than 4 million children are latch-key children. *(Herr, 2002)* Fifty percent of urban and rural poor students manifest learning, behavioral, and emotional problems. *(Adelman & Taylor, 2002)*
Sexual and Physical Abuse	In 1993, 1.55 million children were reported as maltreated, and another 1.22 million were in imminent danger, reflecting a near doubling of the abuse rate between 1986 and 1993. *(U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [1996], in Thompson & Wyatt, 1999)* On average, more than 5 children die every day from injuries or prolonged deprivation suffered from their caregivers. *(U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect [1995] in Thompson & Wyatt, 1999)*

proportion of students referred for behavioral or conduct problems in school have a history of physical or sexual abuse, with some reports estimating that as many as 60 to 70 percent of these students have been abused. In general, between 12 and 22 percent of all children in school suffer from mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders, and relatively few receive mental health services (Adelman & Taylor, 2002). The director of the Center for Demographics Policy estimates that 40 percent of young people are at risk of failure in school because of serious problems outside of school (Adelman &Taylor, 2002). Finally, the Association of School Counselors notes that 18 percent of students have special needs that require extraordinary intervention and treatment that go beyond the typical resources available to the classroom teacher (Dunn & Baker, 2002).

School may be the only place where the needs of many of these children facing extreme challenges are addressed. Although not usually considered part of the regular job of classroom teachers, addressing these severe issues is unfortunately a reality in today's schools. Jere Brophy examined this issue as part of the Classroom Strategy Study (see Brophy, 1996; Brophy & McCaslin, 1992). The study involved in-depth interviews with and observations of 98 teachers, some of whom were identified as effective managers and some of whom were not. The heart of the study involved presenting teachers with vignettes regarding specific types of students (e.g., hostile-aggressive students, passive-aggressive students, hyperactive students) in specific situations. Among the many findings from the study was that the most effective classroom managers tended to employ different strategies with different types of students, whereas ineffective managers did not. Specifically, effective managers made distinctions about the most appropriate strategies to use with individual students based on the unique needs of those students. Although Brophy does not couch the findings from his study in terms of teacher-student relationships, the link is obvious. Effective managers do not treat all students the same, particularly in situations involving behavior problems. Whereas some students need encouragement, other students need a gentle reprimand, and still others might require a not-so-gentle reprimand. In fact, one strong recommendation by Brophy (1996) is that teachers develop a set of "helping skills" to employ with different types of students.

Programs

Again, no one program focuses specifically on teacher-student relationships. However, one of the most popular staff development programs is very strong in this area. Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement, or TESA (Kerman, Kimball, & Martin, 1980), is a well-established teacher-training program that has been referred to as "one of the most-used offerings in staff development programs across the country" (Joyce & Showers, 1988, p. 42). It is based on an expansive body of research on teacher expectations (see Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968).

The principle underlying TESA is that teachers should ensure that their behaviors are equal and equitable for all students, thus creating an atmosphere in which all students feel accepted. In keeping with this principle, the program focuses on 15 teacher behaviors that are most often employed with perceived high achievers.

The behaviors are organized into three strands: response opportunities, feedback, and personal regard. The *response opportunities* strand addresses equitable distribution of positive types of responses, helping individual students, response latency (i.e., how long a teacher waits for a student's response), and types of questions. The *feedback* strand addresses affirmation of correct performance, praise and reasons for praise, listening, and accepting feelings. The *personal regard* strand addresses proximity, courtesy, personal interest, touching, and desisting. Although the initial research on TESA demonstrated that it positively affects teacher behavior, student behavior, and student achievement (see Kerman, Kimball, & Martin, 1980; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Grayson & Martin, 1985), some research has shown mixed results for its effectiveness (see Gottfredson, Marciniak, Birdseye, & Gottfredson, 1995).

ActionSteps

ACTION STEP 1 ▼

Use specific techniques to establish an appropriate level of dominance in the classroom.

The core of effective teacher-student relationships is a healthy balance between dominance and cooperation. One thing that makes such a balance difficult is that students rely primarily on teacher behavior as the indication of whether the teacher is providing guidance or not and whether the teacher is cooperative or not. As Wubbels, Brekelmans, van Tartwijk, and Admiral (1999) explain:

> We consider every behavior that someone displays in the presence of someone else as a communication, and therefore we assume that in the presence of someone else one cannot *not* [original emphasis] communicate . . . Whatever someone's intentions are, the other persons in the communication will infer meaning from that someone's behavior. If, for example, teachers ignore students' questions, perhaps because they do not hear them, then students may not only get this inattention but also infer that the teacher is too busy or thinks that the students are too dull to understand or that the questions are impertinent. The message that students take from the teacher's negation can be different from the teacher's intention . . . (p. 153–154)

Operationally, this implies that you must balance those behaviors that communicate a proper level of dominance with those behaviors that communicate a proper level of cooperation. Here we first consider dominance behaviors. I should note that addressing rules and procedures and disciplinary interventions as described in Chapters 2 and 3 goes a long way toward communicating a proper level of dominance. That is, if you have established and implemented rules and procedures as well as positive and negative consequences, you will have certainly communicated your dominance. At least two other areas are important to this communication: exhibiting assertive behavior and establishing clear learning goals.

▸ Exhibiting Assertive Behavior

One of the best ways to communicate a proper level of dominance is to exhibit *assertive behavior.* According to Emmer, Evertson, and Worsham (2003), assertive behavior is "the ability to stand up for one's legitimate rights in ways that make it less likely that others will ignore or circumvent them" (p. 146). It is significantly different from both passive behavior and aggressive behavior. Emmer, Evertson, and Worsham describe assertive behavior that is tailored specifically to the classroom. They refer to their approach as "constructive assertiveness." They explain that "the adjective *constructive* implies that the teacher does not tear down or attack the student" (p. 146). It can be thought of as a set of relatively specific teacher behaviors that involve three primary categories:

1. Use of assertive body language: Making and keeping eye contact; maintaining an erect posture, facing the offending student but

keeping enough distance so as not to appear threatening; matching one's facial expression with the content of the message being presented to students.

2. Use of appropriate tone of voice: Speaking clearly and deliberately; using a pitch that is slightly but not greatly elevated from normal classroom speech; avoiding any indication of emotion in one's voice.

3. Persisting until the appropriate behavior is displayed: Not ignoring an inappropriate behavior; not being diverted by a student denying, arguing, or blaming; but listening to legitimate explanations.

The following vignettes depict teachers using assertive behavior at the elementary and secondary levels.

Elementary

Mr. Saunders always involves his 4th graders in the establishment of classroom rules and procedures. During class meetings, students can raise issues about the rules and even about the consequences and rewards related to those rules. But Mr. Saunders is also very clear that some issues are not up for discussion. "This is one Mr. Saunders gets to decide on his own," he states, when appropriate. Very early in the year, the students know there is no point in arguing when he has made this declaration.

Secondary

When a freshman in high school is angry, he can be intimidating. Ms. Palmer, a veteran teacher and a petite woman, has learned how to stand her ground with the angriest of students. When a student confronts her and begins to yell about a rule or a grade, Ms. Palmer stands straight, looks the student in the eye, and says, "I will be happy to talk to you when you're speaking as calmly as I am." This rarely works the first time, but she repeats those exact words over and over, both as a way of communicating the message that she is willing to talk—on her terms—and as a way of reminding herself not to raise her own voice. Her calm, steadfast demeanor has the desired effect.

➤ Establishing Clear Learning Goals

A second way to exhibit proper levels of dominance is to be very clear about the learning goals that are to be addressed in a unit, a quarter, or a semester. Related behaviors include the following:

- Establishing learning goals at the beginning of a unit of instruction
- Providing feedback on those goals
- Continually and systematically revisiting the goals
- Providing summative feedback regarding the goals

To these ends, rubrics are an excellent tool. For example, assume that you have identified "understanding and utilizing fractions" as one of your learning goals for a unit. You might present students with the following rubric as a guide to your expectations regarding this topic:

4. You understand the characteristics of fractions along with the different types. You can accurately describe how fractions are related to decimals and percentages. You can convert fractions to decimals and can explain the process.

3. You understand the basic characteristics of fractions. You know how fractions are related to decimals and percentages. You can convert fractions to decimals.

2. You have a basic understanding of the following, but have some small misunderstandings with one or more: the characteristics of fractions; the relationship between fractions, decimals, and percentages; how to convert fractions to decimals.

1. You have some major problems or misunderstandings with one or more of the following: the characteristics of fractions; the relationship between fractions, decimals, and percentages; how to convert fractions to decimals.

The clarity of purpose provided by a rubric like this one goes a long way in communicating an appropriate level of dominance to students. Recall that dominance means that the teacher provides strong leadership not only in terms of classroom behavior but also in terms of the content addressed in the class. A detailed rubric says to students that you are clear about the content that will be addressed and the relative levels of importance of that content. It also communicates that you wish to lead the class by making the criteria for success highly visible. When you provide rubrics at the outset of a unit of instruction, you give students clear academic targets. Rubrics for specific types of content can be found in Marzano (2000b) and Marzano, Pickering, and McTighe (1993). The following vignettes depict how elementary and secondary teachers might effectively establish clear goals via the use of rubrics.

Elementary

"I get tired of kids asking what grade I am going to 'give' them. They earn the grades; I don't give the grade." Sam Flanders listened to the new teacher he was mentoring and then replied, "Let me tell you what I discovered about my own teaching when I heard the same things from students. On reflection, I realized that when I graded papers, I assigned points for so many different reasons that it was no wonder students thought I gave grades. My assignments now are always accompanied by a list of learning goals and a rubric to accompany each goal. Students now know that to earn an A, for example, they have to show in-depth understanding of key ideas or a high level of competence in applying a key process. They no longer beg me to give them points; they know how to earn the grade."

Secondary

During writing conferences, Mrs. Blighten began to hear more and more resistance from students when she made suggestions for improving their work. They whined and moaned, "C'mon, you know what I meant," or "I think my work is fine the way it is." She finally concluded that her students thought they should be trying to please her instead of trying to improve their writing. "Probably," she thought to herself, "they don't take ownership of the writing goals because they don't understand the goals described in the district writing rubric." To remedy this, one day she distributed the district rubric for writing and worked with the students to generate a class rubric with "kid-friendly" language. The learning goals represented in the district rubric remained, but words familiar to the students, such as "awesome" and "wow," replaced the technical language. From then on, students used this rubric to self-assess their own writing—before the writing conferences—to identify their areas of strength and weakness. Once she started to use the rubric with students, Ms. Blighten noticed that students seemed to understand the writing goals, and conferences were focused more on student learning than on the grades.

ACTION STEP 2 ▼

Use specific behaviors that communicate an appropriate level of cooperation.

At least four specific types of behavior communicate an appropriate level of cooperation: providing flexible learning goals, taking a personal interest in students, using equitable and positive learning behaviors, and responding appropriately to students' incorrect responses.

Providing Flexible Learning Goals

The preceding discussion explained how establishing clear learning goals communicates an appropriate level of dominance. However, some behaviors regarding learning goals also convey appropriate levels of cooperation. For example, allowing students to set some of their own learning goals at the beginning of a unit or asking students what they would like to learn conveys a sense of cooperation. To illustrate, assume that you have identified the topic of fractions as the focus of a unit of instruction and provided a rubric like that described above. In addition, though, you might ask students to identify some aspect of fractions or a related topic that is particularly interesting to them. This not only has the potential to increase students' interest in the topic, but also conveys the message that you are concerned about their interests and are making an attempt to include those interests in your instruction. The following vignettes exemplify how an elementary and a secondary teacher might establish flexible learning goals.

Elementary

The 3rd graders in Ms. Phillips's class were accustomed to using the KWL chart before specific lessons, but this time Ms. Phillips used it at the beginning of the entire unit on electricity. Before giving them the learning goals for the unit, she asked students what they already KNEW (K) about electricity, then asked what they WANTED (W) to learn. She recorded the students' ideas on the class chart. Ms. Phillips then handed out a list of the learning goals that were identified in the district curriculum guide for the electricity unit. "We need to achieve these district learning goals," explained Ms. Phillips, "but I want each of you to add some goals that interest you. Use our class KWL chart to stimulate your thinking." As they worked through the unit, Ms. Phillips noticed that some of the students' goals even got her more excited than the goals from the curriculum guide.

Secondary

Mr. Bard loved teaching Shakespeare and sometimes regretted that his students did not always share his excitement. Then one year he added the following learning goal to the unit: Students will understand and apply the characteristics of a "classic" in literature. *During the unit, students were required to study characteristics of a classic and to apply these characteristics to Shakespeare's plays to determine if, in fact, these plays could be considered classics. In addition, Mr. Bard asked students to identify another area where the word "classic" was used—areas such as movies, sports, fashion, cars, television, and music. He then asked students to select one area of interest to them, study the characteristics of a classic in that area, and apply these characteristics to identify true classics in their area of interest. The students, and Mr. Bard, had a wonderful time discovering how frequently the concept of classic could be applied to topics of interest to the students. Mr. Bard concluded that, with this additional learning* *goal, students showed more respect for his passion for Shakespeare because he demonstrated respect for their passions in the design of the unit.*

Taking a Personal Interest in Students

It is probably little or no exaggeration to say that all students appreciate the personal attention of the teacher. In fact, for some students the need for the teacher to show some personal interest in them is paramount to their learning (McCombs & Whisler, 1997; Combs, 1982). Therefore, virtually anything you do to show interest in students as individuals has a positive impact on their learning. Here are some behaviors that communicate personal interest:

- Talking informally with students before, during, and after class about their interests
- Greeting students outside of school—for instance, at extracurricular events or at stores
- Singling out a few students each day in the lunchroom and talking to them
- Being aware of and commenting on important events in students' lives, such as participation in sports, drama, or other extracurricular activities
- Complimenting students on important achievements in and outside of school
- Meeting students at the door as they come into class and saying hello to each child, making sure to use his or her first name

The following vignettes show how an elementary and a secondary teacher might implement these behaviors.

Elementary

"I notice that whenever you doodle, it always has something to do with horses. I loved horses when I was a girl, too. Bring in some of your pictures, because I would love to see them; and they might help you with topics in your writing." Devon blushed with pleasure and surprise that her teacher actually noticed how passionate she was about horses. She never talked to anyone about her love of horses and didn't even realize her doodles were always horse-related until her teacher made the comment. She couldn't wait to bring in her horse pictures to show her teacher. She also noticed that she was actually excited about her next writing assignment—a story about a horse.

Secondary

When each issue of the school newspaper was released, Ms. Jackson read through every article. This was just one of the many techniques she used for discovering something about the interests of her students, especially those who were so quiet they almost became invisible. More than once she stared into stunned eyes when she asked students about their times in the track meet, their attendance at a debate, or their volunteer work at the animal clinic.

Using Equitable and Positive Classroom Behaviors

Earlier in this chapter, we considered TESA as one program that is especially effective at fostering effective teacher-student relationships (Kerman, Kimball, & Martin, 1980; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Grayson & Martin, 1985). The aspect of TESA that is particularly useful in terms of fostering teacher-student relationships is strategies for equitable and positive interactions. Such behaviors include the following:

- Making eye contact with each student in the room (which you can do by scanning the entire room as you speak); freely moving about all sections of the room.

- Over the course of a class period, deliberately moving toward and being close to each student; making sure that the seating arrangement allows you and the students clear and easy access to move around the room.
- Attributing the ownership of ideas to the students who initiated them. (For instance, in a discussion you might say, "Dennis has just added to Mary's idea by saying that . . . .")
- Allowing and encouraging all students to be part of class discussions and interactions; making sure to call on students who do not commonly participate, not just students who respond most frequently.
- Providing appropriate "wait time" for all students, regardless of their past performance or your perception of their abilities.

The following vignette depicts how one teacher used some of these techniques in the classroom.

> *When Ms. McIntyre facilitated a classroom discussion, she tried to let students do most of the talking, especially on the first day of a new topic. As she listened, she almost always typed students' questions and comments into presentation slides on her laptop computer, making sure she put students' names next to their comments. The next day, as the discussion began again, she projected her slides on the screen as a way of stimulating more in-depth discussion of some of the students' ideas from the day before. Even students who were reluctant to participate on the first day, or who were just too shy to chime in, knew that they could express their ideas privately to Ms. McIntyre and she would include their ideas in her slides. In this way, all students—those who were comfortable in class discussions and those who were reluctant—were encouraged to think through their ideas and to be ready to expand on those ideas.*

Responding Appropriately to Students' Incorrect Responses

Questioning is a common instructional activity in many classrooms. The manner in which you respond to a student's incorrect response or lack of response conveys a strong message to students (Hunter, 1969). When students respond incorrectly or make no response at all to a question you have posed, they are particularly vulnerable. Your behavior at these critical junctures goes a long way toward establishing a relationship that enhances or detracts from student learning. Useful behaviors in these situations include the following:

- Emphasizing what was right. Giving credit to the aspects of an incorrect response that are correct and acknowledging when the student is headed in the right direction. Identifying the question that the incorrect response answered.
- Encouraging collaboration. Allowing students time to seek help from peers. This can result in better responses and can enhance learning.
- Restating the question. Asking the question a second time and allowing time for students to think before you expect a response.
- Rephrasing the question. Paraphrasing the question or asking it from a different perspective, one that may give students a better understanding of the question.
- Giving hints or cues. Providing enough guidance so that students gradually come up with the answer.
- Providing the answer and asking for elaboration. If a student absolutely cannot come up with the correct answer, providing it for him and then asking him to say it in his own words or providing another example of the answer.
- Respecting the student's option to pass, when appropriate.

The following vignette illustrates some of these behaviors.

> *David's worst nightmare was to be called on in class and feel every eye on him as the teacher waited for an answer. Even when he knew the answer, he always became so self-conscious that his mind became a blank. It was even worse when the teacher, although well intentioned, responded to his silence with overly kind comments such as, "That's OK, David. Don't worry." However, things were different in Mr. Prost's class. It is easy to understand why David, and many other students, loved his approach to class discussions. Mr. Prost would often write on the white board the major questions that he planned to ask during class. He would then start by saying, "Look at the first question. Turn to your partner and give him or her your best answer to the question. You have three minutes. Go." After the three minutes, Mr. Prost would call on students for the answer. Students had the option of providing their own answers, quoting their partners' answers, or asking their partners to quote them. If the answer was incorrect, no one student felt singled out. When students gave several incorrect answers, Mr. Prost allowed another three minutes for collaboration. For David, this approach worked perfectly. His anxieties about being wrong, and being alone, were so relieved that he began to shine in that class, revealing his true depth of knowledge.*

ACTION STEP 3 ▼

Be aware of the needs of different types of students.

As discussed earlier, effective classroom managers are aware of the unique needs of individual students, particularly those from backgrounds that include experiences like those presented in Figure 4.4. Although many teachers sense such needs instinctively, it is useful to formally identify categories of high-need students and the management strategies that are most effective within each category. Categories of high-need students have been identified by Jere Brophy (1996) and by Brenda Freeman (1994). Building on the works of Brophy and Freeman, Figure 4.5 shows five categories of high-need students: (1) passive, (2) aggressive, (3) attention problems, (4) perfectionist, and (5) socially inept. The first three categories have been divided into subcategories to provide a more detailed description of the variations in student behavior that you might encounter.

Passive

The category of *passive* is divided into two subcategories, *fear of relationships* and *fear of failure.* Although fear is the common denominator in both subcategories, the object of the fear is different. Some students in the passive category may be victims of neglect and abuse that is physical or verbal in nature. They may also suffer from medical problems including but not limited to depression and social phobias. These students will exhibit fear of relationships. Other students in the passive category may suffer from a deeply engrained belief that they do not have the requisite skills to succeed in school. These students will exhibit fear of failure. As with all the other categories in Figure 4.5, it is important to remember that the behaviors of these students are deeply rooted in causal factors that originate outside the classroom. Therefore, it is unreasonable to expect these students to be able to change their behaviors easily.

Figure 4.5
Five Categories of High-Need Students

Category	Subcategory
Passive	Fear of relationships
	Fear of failure
Aggressive	Hostile
	Oppositional
	Covert
Attention Problems	Hyperactive
	Inattentive
Perfectionist	None
Socially Inept	None

The following vignettes depict the type of interactions that are particularly effective with these types of students. You will note that all vignettes in this section depict one-to-one conversations between teacher and student. This is because interventions with the types of students described in this section typically require extraordinary personal attention from you, the teacher.

Passive: Fear of Relationships

Drake is a shy, reserved child. He will not ask questions in class and has difficulty answering when called on. He often looks down and seems sad. Other students tend to tease him or ignore him, as do many adults. His performance in class is probably average, but he seems capable of much more.

To reach Drake, Ms. Blake, his teacher, takes an approach that is not too direct. Rather, her strategy is to slowly develop a relationship with Drake and gain his trust. One of her first conversations with Drake proceeds as follows:

Ms. Blake: "Drake, I've noticed that you really tried hard on this last assignment."
Drake: [No response]
Ms. Blake: "I wanted you to know, I do notice you and your work even though you don't talk a lot."
Drake: "Thanks."
Ms. Blake: "If it's all right with you, I'll call on you a little more in class. I'd also like to talk to you privately every once in a while to see how you are doing."
Drake: "OK." With a slight smile, Drake walks away.

In the days and weeks following the conversation Ms. Blake follows through on her promise to call on Drake more frequently and to have a few private conversations. She takes particular care not to overwhelm Drake but slowly and gently increases the amount of contact and trust between them. The principle guiding her interactions with Drake is to exhibit kindness, consistency, and encouragement.

Passive: Fear of Failure

Beverly pouts a lot in class and seems to dislike school. She's been tested for learning disabilities and ADHD, and the results were negative. She rarely turns in her class work and produces sloppy work when she does. When questioned about this, she has no clear answers, just a lot of excuses that frequently begin with the words "I can't."

To establish a relationship, Mr. Waters has the following conversation with Beverly:

Mr. Waters: "Beverly, I would like to find out from you what is really causing your difficulties with your schoolwork."

Beverly: "I don't know." Beverly looks confused and on the spot.

Mr. Waters: "I know you are really bright, but somehow that's not showing up in your work. So, do you feel you could do better? I certainly do."

Beverly: "Probably not. I'm not very smart."

Mr. Waters: "Why do you say that? I really want to know."

Beverly: "I never do anything right. It doesn't matter anyway."

Mr. Waters: "It matters to me, Beverly. When was the last time you thought you did well at something? Not just school stuff?"

Beverly: "Never."

Mr. Waters: "Do you have hobbies or sports that you like?"

Beverly: "Well, I guess I do okay at piano and maybe reading my books at home."

Mr. Waters: "How did you get good at those things?"

Beverly: "Well, I guess I do them a lot and I don't get graded on them either. I like doing them."

Mr. Waters: "What else? Do you concentrate more?"

Beverly: "I pay more attention, and I don't rush so much."

Mr. Waters: "How would it be if you did that at school with your work, and I'll help you out, too?"

Beverly: "I'd probably do better."

Mr. Waters: "Let's give it a try, okay?"

Mr. Waters continues to have casual discussions with Beverly, always trying to emphasize the point that she is very successful at some things. He also meets with Beverly before and after significant classroom assignments. Before these assignments, they plan about what Beverly can do to keep herself on task and not give up. After the assignments, they both evaluate what worked and what did not work about their strategy.

▶ Aggressive

The category of *aggressive* students comprises three subcategories: *hostile, oppositional,* and *covert*. These categories closely correspond to diagnoses in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM), published by the American Psychiatric Association (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Although as a classroom teacher you cannot make formal diagnoses, it is useful to be conversant with the DSM and the descriptions of the various types of behaviors it contains. It is available in most bookstores.

The subcategory *hostile* is closely related to the clinical diagnosis of *conduct disorder* in the DSM. Characteristics of this disorder are poor anger control, poor impulse control, low capacity for empathy, a heightened sense of entitlement (i.e., "the world owes me"), inability to see the consequences of one's actions, low self-esteem (though students may not be able to admit it to themselves), propensity for thrill-seeking behavior, and a propensity to align with deviant peer groups and criminal behavior. Hostile students tend to give teachers and schools the most difficulty, take up much classroom time, and require schools and districts to provide added resources in terms of time, energy, and actual dollars to address the problems they create. For these reasons, they are the most widely researched group of problem students. It is important to remember that although they appear to be highly resistant to behavior change, hostile students are simply children experiencing a massive amount of fear and pain.

The second subcategory of aggressive students is referred to as *oppositional.* These students exhibit milder forms of behavior problems than do hostile students. This subcategory closely relates to the *oppositional-defiant* classification in the DSM. Typical characteristics of these students include consistent resistance to following rules, arguing with adults, frequent use of harsh, angry language, and a propensity to criticize, blame, and annoy others.

The subcategory of *covert* students does not have an identifiable DSM diagnosis, but these students are easily recognizable to most teachers. They may be quite pleasant and even charming at times. However, they are often around or nearby when trouble starts, and they never quite do what is asked of them even though they convey a pleasant demeanor. They seem to operate at the periphery of disruptive behavior, engaging in activities that skirt the letter of the law. Consequently, they avoid punishment and the necessary attention to their behavior.

The following vignettes depict interactions with these three types of students.

Aggressive-Hostile

Michelle is out of control at home and at school. She is verbally abusive to anyone who gets in her way. She throws school supplies around, slams her locker shut, and may be responsible for school vandalism. She is in and out of the vice principal's office often but never seems to improve her behavior.

Michelle requires a schoolwide solution, and possibly referrals to outside interventions, such as individual therapy and group programs. The beginning point for a successful intervention is a meeting involving Michelle, school officials, and her parents. In that meeting a program is established that focuses on providing specific rewards for positive behavior and specific consequences for negative behavior. Michelle is an active participant in that meeting, particularly in terms of identifying those things she considers to be rewards or positive consequences. The initial meeting with Michelle proceeds as follows:

Teacher: "Michelle, what are some activities you'd like to do at home or school, things that you've always wanted to do?"

Michelle: "I'd like to switch from math to photography."

Teacher: "What else?"

Michelle: "I want to get my parents off my back."

Teacher: "Good. We're going to try to see that you get more of these things you like. But you are going to be the one to determine if you get them or not."

To clarify the expectations and specifics of the program that is being established for Michelle, everyone at the meeting contributes ideas that are incorporated into a chart (see Figure 4.6). The meeting continues until everyone—particularly Michelle—agrees that the program is workable. Michelle's parents agree that they will stop "getting on Michelle's back" and let the program play itself out. Each month the teacher, Michelle's parents, and Michelle meet to review her progress and to make changes in the program as needed.

Aggressive-Oppositional

Jake is a source of frustration for his teacher, Ms. McNulty, and his classmates alike. It seems he always tries to do the opposite of what is asked of him, regardless of how much trouble he gets into. He seems to like getting attention but for all the wrong things. Ms. McNulty finally has a meeting with Jake.

Figure 4.6
A Sample Chart for Behavior Management of an Aggressive/Hostile Student

Type of Behavior	**Michelle's Behavior**	**Rewards and Consequences**
Excellent Behavior	Polite and helpful with teachers and other students Grades: *B*s and *C*s	Acknowledgment by class Allowed two free-choice activities to do at home or school
Good Behavior	Pleasant enough Minimal disruptive behavior Grades: *C*s and *D*s	Allowed one free-choice activity to do at home or school Stays after school to finish homework
Poor Behavior	Angry, destructive behavior toward others and/or property Grades: *D*s or *F*s Truancy, tardiness	Detention, community service, extra work after school
Unacceptable Behavior	Violent to others or property	Suspended Put in treatment program

Ms. McNulty: "Jake, I've noticed that in general you are a great kid and really fun to be around. Sometimes, however, you seem to do the opposite of what I ask. For example, when I asked you to sit quietly at your seat today, you continued to laugh and get out of your seat. Have you noticed this pattern too?"

Jake: "Whatever."

Ms. McNulty: "I've told you before that your behavior is disruptive to the class, and your grades are falling because of it. With your help, I'd like to put a program in place to make things better for you and for me and for the whole class. Will you help me figure this out?"

Jake: "Like what?"

Ms. McNulty: "What is the best part of the day for you?"

Jake: "Being at recess."

Ms. McNulty: "What's the worst part of school for you?"

Jake: "Detention."

With this information, Ms. McNulty and Jake create a chart that details specific types of behavior with related positive and negative consequences (see Figure 4.7).

Ms. McNulty assures Jake that her intentions are not to punish him. Rather she wants to help him learn how to control his behavior so that he can enjoy class and get the grades he wants and deserves. Periodically, Ms. McNulty and Jake meet to reevaluate the behavioral chart they have created.

Aggressive-Covert

Amy always seems to be nearby when trouble occurs. She doesn't do anything

Figure 4.7

A Sample Chart for Behavior Management of an Aggressive/Oppositional Student

Type of Behavior	Jake's Behavior	Rewards and Consequences
Excellent Behavior	Follows instructions almost all the time Stays in seat Doesn't create trouble	Recess every day
Good Behavior	Follows instructions most of the time Stays in seat most of the time Creates trouble sometimes	Recess 3 times a week Detention once a week
Poor Behavior	Doesn't follow instructions Gets out of seat Creates trouble	No recess Detention 3 times a week

extremely negative or overt, but teases, pulls pranks, and gossips about others until they get mad. It takes a while for Mr. Hardwick, the teacher, to realize that Amy has a behavioral problem. When he does, he starts making notes about Amy's inappropriate behavior. Finally he takes Amy aside and has the following conversation:

Mr. Hardwick: "Amy, I hope you know that I like you and that many times I really enjoy your participation in class. However, it seems to me that you tend to do things that get other people in trouble. Do you know what I'm talking about?

Amy: "No."

Mr. Hardwick: "Let me tell you what I see. I notice that sometimes you talk to people and then they get in a fight, or you'll take people's things and hide them and then chuckle when they get upset—I've seen you! Pretty creative. But it does cause problems for others, right?"

Amy: "I guess so."

Mr. Hardwick: "We're going to have to do something about this. I'd like to solve this problem with your help."

Amy: "But it's not my fault!"

Mr. Hardwick: "Not totally. Others are responsible for their behavior too. But I don't think you're innocent either. Do you?"

Amy: "I guess not."

The conversation continues until Amy finally sees that Mr. Hardwick is serious and has a good grasp of what has been going on. Together they identify specific behaviors Amy will try to avoid. They also identify some things Amy considers to be a reward for the effort she will make as well as some negative consequences if she continues to exhibit the identified inappropriate behaviors. Periodically Mr. Hardwick and Amy meet to discuss how the plan is working.

▶ Attention Problems

The category of *attention problems* contains two subcategories: *hyperactive* and *inattentive*. Both closely correspond to specific DSM diagnoses. The subcategory of hyperactive corresponds to the DSM diagnoses of *attention deficit/hyperactive disorder, predominately hyperactive-impulsive type*. The subcategory of inattentive corresponds to the DSM classification of *attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, predominately inattentive type*. Characteristics of the hyperactive subcategory include poor impulse control, inability to stay seated or work quietly, propensity to blurt out questions and answers, trouble taking turns, and propensity to interrupt others. Characteristics of the inattentive subcategory include failing to give close attention to details, rarely appearing to listen, having difficulty organizing tasks, forgetfulness in daily activities, and being easily distracted by extraneous stimuli. Students with this type of problem tend to be more anxious, whereas hyperactive students tend to be more impulsive (Erk, 2000). The following vignettes exemplify how you might interact with students with these two types of attention problems.

Attention Problems–Hyperactive

In class, David never seems to stop talking, moving, fidgeting, and telling jokes. He distracts others and rarely turns in his homework. He's bright, but his grades are well below his capabilities. He is quite likable at times, but generally wastes a lot of class time with his antics. His parents refuse to help him with medication or therapy, leaving the teacher, Ms. Paynter, with little outside help. After a number of attempts to gain David's attention, Ms. Paynter has the following conversation with him:

Ms. Paynter: "David, you seem to have real trouble sitting still. Would you agree with that?"

David: "I hate school and it's boring."

Ms. Paynter: "I know you sometimes have trouble concentrating. I'd like to suggest some things that will help you focus better. I'd like to spend some time helping you organize your assignments and write out how to do each project step by step so that in the future you can follow these steps. Let's also put you in a different place in the room so you have less to distract you."

The first thing Ms. Paynter does is to move David to a place in the class where it is easy for her to attend to David and for David to be more involved in what she is doing. For each major assignment, Ms. Paynter takes time to help David organize and prioritize what he will do to complete the assignment. Ms. Paynter and David keep meeting to discuss his progress.

Attention Problems–Inattentive

Cathy is a quiet adolescent who gets very frustrated when she can't do her schoolwork. She believes she is stupid and is becoming apathetic. After repeated failures, she has developed the habit of procrastinating. When she realizes her assignments are going to be late, she gets upset and turns in half-completed projects. She is thinking about dropping out of school and getting a job. Her parents are opposed to medication and therapy. When things look like they couldn't get much worse, Mr. Muuger sets up a meeting with Cathy.

Mr. Muuger: "Cathy, it seems to me that you are very frustrated and upset with school and with yourself. What's going on with you?"

Cathy: "I've tried for all these years and I can't stand it anymore. I am so ridiculously stupid!"

Mr. Muuger: "I wish someone would have helped you sooner. Has anyone ever given you tips about how to do better in school?"

Cathy: "Not really. Mostly I was told to try harder, but I don't know what that means. I try hard now."

Mr. Muuger provides Cathy with some concrete suggestions about how to study. He buys a book for Cathy on study skills. They meet periodically and go over some of the suggestions in the book together. They even brainstorm some ideas about things Cathy can do when she gets confused or gets "lost in the fog," as Cathy would say.

▶ Perfectionist

The category of *perfectionist* closely corresponds to the DSM diagnosis of *obsessive-compulsive personality disorder*. Perfectionist students are driven to succeed at levels that are close to, if not, unattainable. These students are often self-critical, have low self-esteem, and have deep-seated feelings of inferiority and vulnerability. They see being perfect as the only way to gain love, respect, or attention. At some level, they believe that they are liked or loved for what they can produce, not who they are. When confronted with a situation in which they feel they can't produce exceptional results, they may give up altogether, procrastinate, or make up excuses why they can't perform the task. As perfectionist children develop into adulthood, many of their behaviors are greatly rewarded because of their high output, minimal complaining, and willingness to put in long hours often for little or no financial reward. However, the end result of perfectionism can be self-destructive behaviors and thinking patterns that eventually lead to depression and even suicide (Blatt, 1995). The following vignette depicts how a teacher might interact with a perfectionist student.

> *Matt tries to be perfect at everything he does. Good isn't good enough. His desk is never left with anything out of place; his homework is in on time and complete with all directions followed to the letter. Yet Matt doesn't enjoy his success. He is constantly berating himself under his breath if he doesn't do as well as he expects. When things don't go well in his eyes, he has a hard time recomposing himself. Matt also has a tendency to be harsh and critical of others. His classmates are jealous of his success on one hand but also dislike his negativity. He won't try new things if he isn't sure he can succeed. When an opportunity arises, Ms. Becker, the teacher, has a private conversation with Matt.*
>
> *Ms. Becker: "Matt, let's talk. You are really trying hard for all A's and to be the best runner on the track team, and I admire that a lot. Sometimes, though, you seem awfully hard on yourself and say mean things to yourself. I've noticed that sometimes the standards you hold for yourself are unrealistic. I couldn't do much of what you expect of yourself. It also seems to me that you put high expectations on others. When they don't succeed, you criticize them like you criticize yourself. It all seems a bit harsh."*
>
> *Matt: "Well, shouldn't I try to be the best?"*
>
> *Ms. Becker: "Some of what you do will get you far in life, like your desire to learn and compete. However, other things you do will make life harder for you in the long run. For instance, when you criticize yourself so strongly, you take away your ability or willingness to try again. When you criticize others, they end up disliking you. What about doing it this way: when you or others make a mistake, just acknowledge that it was a mistake and that you, like everybody else, sometimes have to make mistakes to learn."*
>
> *Matt: "Hadn't thought of that."*
>
> *Ms. Becker: "How about helping those kids who are struggling with their schoolwork? You might find that it is one of the best ways to make friends—by giving people a hand. Here's another idea. Try being very positive about your mistakes one day, then very harsh and critical the next day. Switch back and forth for a while and see which one you like better and which produces better results for you."*
>
> *Periodically, Ms. Becker calls Matt aside for similar conversations. Over time Matt starts to see the negative consequences of his perfectionism and develops techniques to counteract them.*

▶ Socially Inept

Socially inept children have difficulty making and keeping friends. They stand too close and touch others in annoying ways, talk too much, make "stupid" or embarrassing remarks, misread others' comments, and, in general, don't seem to fit in. They are often well-meaning students who are trying too hard to relate to others and are baffled by the animosity others show them. These children often feel sad, confused, and different from others, and they have difficulty following complex sequences of events. Their behavior is often labeled as immaturity, tactlessness, and insensitivity. Parents often report that these children seemed different from birth (Nowicki & Duke, 1992). The following vignette depicts how a teacher might interact with a socially inept student.

> *Jason consistently has trouble making and keeping friends at school, and his mother says he has almost no friends at home either. His loud, "over the top," annoying behavior irritates others. He talks too much, doesn't listen, and stands too close to people. In general, he tries too hard to make friends and ends up getting teased and isolated. It affects his schoolwork because he is frequently upset. One day, Mr. Ciccinelli, his teacher, happens to overhear Jason say, "I don't understand why nobody likes me. I'm nice to people." Mr. Ciccinelli calls Jason aside, and they have the following conversation.*
>
> *Mr. Ciccinelli: "Jason, I heard you say that nobody likes you. I've noticed that you are having a hard time making friends in class. Would you like me to make some suggestions? I'd like to help."*
>
> *Jason: "Sure, anything."*
>
> *Mr. Ciccinelli: "Let's experiment. What if I stand too close to you and speak loudly like this, how do you feel?"*
>
> *Jason: "Like I want to back away."*
>
> *Mr. Ciccinelli: "Well, sometimes I see you do that with some of the other students in class. Did you know that?"*
>
> *Jason: "Not really."*
>
> *Mr. Ciccinelli: "How about if you stand further away and talk in a softer voice? That way it's easier for people to be with you."*
>
> *Jason: "I could do that."*
>
> *Mr. Ciccinelli: "Let me ask you another question. Do you like people who want you to talk or people who talk a lot about themselves?"*
>
> *Jason: "People who listen to me."*
>
> *Mr. Ciccinelli: "When you are talking to others, are you focused on what they are saying or are you thinking of what you will say next?"*
>
> *Jason: "I'm not so sure."*
>
> *Mr. Ciccinelli: "Try listening a lot, even if you think you can't stand it anymore, and see if you understand what they are trying to say before you talk. It's worth a try. Maybe you will find out that you get along better with people that way."*
>
> *Mr. Ciccinelli keeps meeting with Jason, informally discussing how things are going and coming up with new ideas that Jason then tries out.*

Summary

Teacher-student relationships are critical to the success of two of the other aspects of effective classroom management—rules and procedures, and disciplinary interventions. To build good relationships with students, it is important to communicate appropriate levels of dominance and to let students know that you are in control of the class and are willing and able to lead. It's also important to communicate appropriate levels of cooperation and to convey the message that you are interested in the concerns of students as individuals and the class as a whole. You may need to make a special effort to build positive relationships with high-need students, but using the proper techniques in working with these students can enhance the chance of successful classroom management.