

RETHINK A DEMERIT SYSTEM FOR GRADES 6-8

When a school has used Discipline With Purpose for 3 or more years students and parents expect that each teacher will adopt the same rules and each teacher will develop a discipline plan for their classroom. This information is routinely taught to students and shared with parents at the beginning of each school year.

When reviewing discipline plans, teachers of students in grades 6-8 often come to the realization that a demerit or behavior card is not effective for an entire class. There are several reasons for this.

- A) When classes are departmentalized demerits are often issued inconsistently based on a teacher's tolerance level for ambiguity.
- B) Issuing demerits can leave out the teaching component needed in a successful discipline plan.
- C) When students have been taught the self-discipline skills and how to take responsibility for their actions in grades four and five, they begin to view the demerits as an expedient way for teachers to deal with missing skills.

Junior High teachers who desire to create a developmentally appropriate discipline plan might consider these ideas:

1. Before school starts offer an invitation to student council members and/or a select group of students to help create the discipline plan that will be used.

2. Tell the students they are being invited to offer suggestions so they can practice some of the higher level self-discipline skills. Share with students some of the facts:

- a) Each classroom functions under the same rules to keep students safe and to maximize learning.
- b) Students have a right to know the plan teachers will follow when rules are broken or students disrupt class and refuse to help themselves.
- c) Teachers have a right to request that students follow the plan and inform parents when it is not followed.

d) Since 6-8th graders are developmentally capable of understanding the rules and resolving problems you are inviting them to offer suggestions on the discipline plan that will be used during the year.

e) Teachers have the right to veto any suggestions that do not fit the criteria. The criteria includes:

- 1) Ideas are feasible and not too complicated.
- 2) Ideas require less work for the teacher and more for the student.
- 3) Ideas help a student learn an alternative to inappropriate behavior because they contain documentation and a teaching component.

f) Students who help with the plan will be given the opportunity to explain the plan to students and parents.

3. A sample discipline plan can be prepared by the teachers before such a meeting occurs.

Step 1: The teacher will coach or cue the student giving him/her a chance to self-correct.

Step 2: In a face-to-face confrontation the teacher will remind a student of the rule and the consequences

Step 3: Student will document the difficulty:

- * Record their name in a class appointment book indicating a meeting is needed with the teacher.
- * Fill out an action plan
- * Write the answers to questions on the back of a Wait/Think/Plan card.
 - What skills were you not using when this card was given to you?
 - What would it look/sound like if you used the skill?
 - What is your plan for rejoining the class?
- * Call a parent to obtain advice.
- * Write an essay prepared by the teacher or one of your own design about the need for self-discipline.

Step 4: If the documentation step is reached three times within a month (week, 2 weeks) a meeting with Parents/Teachers/Student - or a Faculty Review Board will be held.

Step 5: When no behavioral change occurs meet with an Administrator to draw up a contract.

RETHINK A DEMERIT SYSTEM FOR GRADES 6-8

Balance the Discipline Plan with Incentives

1. Students carry a small card which lists the 15 skills. Under the list of skills are 20 blank lines. Teachers who observe students practicing a skill can ask for the card and initial it. Students try to get as many initials as they can within each quarter. Recognition given to students who exhibit the skills most often.

2. Students who practice the skills of Organization and Completing a Task by completing all assignments during a two week period can be eligible for a drawing. Consider offering a tangible reward or incentives.

3. Students who need to correct their behavior can select 2-3 classmates who will help them design a contract which outlines stipulations to improve.

4. Middle school students may be called for a faculty review of their academic or conduct performance. Consideration of the difficulties and solutions will be discussed during the meeting.

- a. Middle School staff decide who needs to have a review. A minimum of two staff members attend.
- b. The student is notified when and where to appear. Parents are informed.
- c. The Committee will guide the student in making recommendations for improvements over a given period of time. The student will be counseled to realize some possible consequences if the recommendations are not followed.
- d. A written report of the review will be given to the student, the parents, and one will be kept on file. The student may be assigned a Teacher Mentor. The teacher agrees to make contact with the student several times a week to direct, encourage and monitor academic and behavioral progress.
- e. If a student is called to appear a second time, (within a given time-frame) the students' parents will be requested to appear. The same procedure will be followed.

- f. If a student is called to appear a third time, (within a given time-frame) a recommended transfer may be considered in accordance with school policy.

Example: Student essay:



On a separate piece of paper, copy the following paragraphs, then sign and date the paper. Use handwriting that is legible. Remember to indent paragraphs, capitalize the letter at the beginning of each sentence, and use proper punctuation.

I had the option to write my own essay about the self-discipline skills everyone needs to develop to get along with other people, but I chose to rewrite the words of an adult who knows a lot about the skills. Learning from the words of others is a good way for me to gain and review information. My behavior suggests that a review is needed.

There are five basic skills: listening, following instructions, asking questions, sharing and social skills. We have many chances to practice these skills every day. When we use these skills, we get along with others.

If no one used these skills at school, learning would be difficult. We would have chaos instead of order.

I must do my part in practicing the self-discipline skills. It is necessary for success. Here is what I plan to do.....