

## Better Curriculum--Better Discipline

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AGAIN AND AGAIN, school discipline problems grow out of a curriculum which does not make sense to the learner. A class in which academic content bears no relationship to the needs or the world of the learner is a breeding place for rebellious disturbances.

The thing that is wrong and the source of trouble, we often hear, is that the content is "too hard" or, less frequently, "too easy." But "too hard" and "too easy" assume that the curriculum content and method are fundamentally right, and only the level on which the instruction is pitched is wrong.

All too often, this assumption is fallacious. When the curriculum itself is trivial, academic, unrelated to the learner's needs, irrelevant to the social realities which surround him, the question of level is of little importance. The real villain is often the curriculum itself, not the level.

The importance of a meaningful curriculum is documented as occasional educators sponsor formal or informal research on discipline. After a continuing informal study of discipline was made by his faculty, the principal of a junior high school in Morris Plains, New Jersey, reported, "The number of discipline referrals to the office ebbs and flows according to the kind of job an individual teacher does in planning, motivating, and presenting the period's work."

Recently 38 practices associated with effective discipline were tested through observation of Baltimore teachers. Conclusions were "The practice of using all available equipment and visual aids to embellish and enrich a lesson so as to interest and promote the learning growth of pupils is closely associated with effective discipline. . . . The practice of presenting the subject matter in a vital and enthusiastic manner, of making the subject matter appealing so that ... [it] acts as a check or control to incipient misbehavior, is closely associated with effective discipline."

Better discipline will prevail when learning experiences relate closely to the present interests and needs of children who see the use of what they are learning. Better discipline will prevail when learning is related to the social realities which surround the child.

Better discipline will prevail as we develop active student participation, creative contributions, social travel, and all else that fosters significant experiences. Better discipline will grow out of a better curriculum in a better society.

You may know a little Jimmy who is a discipline problem despite an apparently meaningful curriculum. So do I. But in our concern for nonconforming little Jimmy, let us not neglect improving the environment of millions of Jimmies through gearing our curriculum to the lives of the young and avoiding needless disciplinary struggles.

