

## The Problem

For decades, the predominant discipline in schools has been based on the idea that children learn to behave when misbehavior is responded to in a way that has “impact”. Traditionally this impact is some type of shame or humiliation inflicted on the child by the adult. Act out in class? Go see the principal. Two more times? Suspended. One more after that? Expelled.

The problem with this approach is that every minute a child spends missing valuable instruction time leads to learning loss. The vast majority of children who are missing the most class time due to disciplinary issues are those who can least afford it – poor children and children of color. These are the very students who need to be connected and engaged in school and are constantly feeling shamed and pushed out. We know that this approach doesn’t work.

## What We've Learned

Teachers understandably want disruptive students out of their classroom but often little thought is given to understanding why children are acting out in the first place, only that they broke the rules.

We now know children’s behavior is deeply affected by their life experiences. Adverse experiences (chronic stress, trauma, neglect) change the way the human brain develops. This in turn frequently leads to impulsivity and an inability to control emotions in stressful situations.

Teaching children the skills they need to regulate their emotional responses fosters academic success. In order to learn these skills children need healthy connections with the authority figures in their lives, from the playground attendant to teachers to parents. Students also benefit from learning in a safe, respectful community of peers. Harshly disciplining children when they fail only reinforces the behavior that got them there in the first place and decreases their ability to succeed academically.

## How Discipline Works

Sound Discipline empowers adults to be effective leaders, in the classroom, on the playground and in their own homes. Teaching educators and parents to build strong, respectful, culturally responsive relationships with young people empowers them to create environments in which young people thrive. This comprehensive approach uses social emotional learning to teach responsibility, problem solving, collaboration and communication skills. It helps children develop the skills they need to be responsible, respectful citizens who can contribute to their community as well as fostering academic success.

## Sound Discipline takes three approaches to working with schools:

- **Sound Discipline supports schools to integrate social learning with discipline practices.** By teaching educators about the impact of adverse experiences, the brain science behind behavior and development, we invite educators to approach their students with more compassion. We support teachers in using the Positive Discipline curriculum to build classroom community, create relationships with students, and empower student problem solving. Students who attend safe, respectful and collaborative classrooms or schools gain the tools they need to engage in learning and are able to self-regulate in stressful and challenging situations for the rest of their lives.

- **Sound Discipline supports administrators and school leadership to create solution-focused schools.** School leaders play a critical role in guiding their staff through the process to move away from traditional punitive practices. We coach school leaders to empower their staff, work with the most challenging students and implement effective systems for collecting accurate discipline data.
- **Sound Discipline coaches discipline data teams to improve outcomes.** The teams use school-wide discipline data to develop small school-wide interventions that improve climate and student behavior. This process empowers the staff to become effective school change agents.

## Sound Discipline is different because the program:

- **Integrates social learning and school discipline.** We know that students learn not just from what we say but from how they experience the adults in their world. In many schools students are taught to be empathetic but under stress, don't experience empathy from the adults around them. Educators are most effective when they model respectful, compassionate connections even when the adult him/herself is feeling stressed.
- **Supports schools to use their own data** to reflect on what is happening in the school and create solution-focused interventions that are trauma informed, doable and useful in the particular school community.
- **Is based on current brain science** related to adverse experiences and learning.
- **Is delivered experientially.** Students and adults learn by doing with lessons designed for students that involve them with their own real life experiences.
- **Is based on the belief that each human being is doing the best that they can in the moment.** Inappropriate behavior occurs when the person, (adult or child) is missing skills or is too overwhelmed to use the skills that he or she has when calm.
- **Offers tools to the whole community.** Sound Discipline provides training to medical, public health and juvenile justice professionals as well as workshops for open to the public. Trainings are also provided to parenting educators and parents so that the "whole village" can support the healthy development of children in the community.

## What Teachers Have to Say About Sound Discipline:

*"Thank you so much for suggesting this evening's Resiliency Building Conference. I came away with a lot of new ideas and tools for dealing with students and approaching discipline. It was very enlightening, and I'm looking forward to integrating some of these new perspectives into the way I work with students, especially my more challenging ones."*

- Elementary teacher, Title 1 School, Lake Washington School District

*"Rock solid and relevant not only to teaching in general but also to the positive behavioral emphasis that we are trying to employ here at Garfield."*

- Garfield High School Teacher, Seattle