

PART TWO OF THE VIDEO / DVD SERIES: CRACKING THE CHALLENGING CLASS

Part Two of the video / DVD series involves a small workshop where a group of teachers raise commonly asked questions about challenging classes.

The following questions are those noted – and discussed – on the second video.

These extension notes relate directly to the questions raised in the second video. The first video containing classroom scenarios about teacher and student behaviour also support and integrate with these questions.

Supporting these notes are several discussion papers that can be used by staff to extend and develop the concepts, issues and skills raised and answered in these questions.

I hope these resources will support and extend the video material to encourage, assist and practically support colleagues in their leadership and support of their students.

Bill Rogers

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NB

In this part of the video – the workshop – there are several terms that teachers outside of the UK may find a little confusing:–

EBD = emotional and behavioural disorder.

NQT = newly qualified teacher

OFSTED = basically this is a government body that organises the formal inspection of teacher and schools in terms of accountability and ‘performance’... (OFFICE FOR STANDARDS IN EDUCATION)

Dyadic = means (basically) one-to-one.

What I've done here is to list the questions – in order as they appear on the video – and give the *summary points* and *extend some of the points* I raised in the workshop :-

The questions raised in this video / DVD (Video B) in order are :-

- 1) “In the first video you modelled how to give support to a teacher with a really restless class – *what would you do if the class is out of control?*”
- 2) “Would you agree that a confident teacher could become unstuck with a hard class?”
- 3) “What do you do when half a dozen (or more) students are being disruptive all at once (i.e. in a lesson context)?”
- 4) “You emphasise the issue of ‘calmness’ a lot – there are times (though) when – surely – we should have the right to be angry?”
- 5) “You put great store on the way teachers *establish* their classes – should this be made a whole-school emphasis?”
- 6) “Do these skills you advocate – at the end of the day – really depend on personality? Take (the) ‘tactically ignoring’ as an example (?)”
- 7) “In one of the scenes you deal with a student without pens and paper etc. Shouldn’t they bring the right equipment in the first place?”
- 8) “In the first video you speak – after class – with female students who have been involved in a ‘play-fight’ in the classroom. You had a female colleague present while you followed up with the students – how important is this?”
- 9) “You spoke in the first video about *deferred* consequences – could you develop that a bit more?”

You also advocate the crucial importance of the *class teacher* following up with a disruptive student? What if they don't stay back?"

- 10) "In some of our classes students put each other down and swear – how should we respond to this?"
- 11) How important is a time-out policy and plan in addressing and managing disruptive and challenging behaviour?"
- 12) "You have worked extensively with students with EBD (emotional behaviour disorder) – how can we realistically support students 'with' EBD – *and* their teachers?"
- 13) "Is there a place for rewarding students as a way of motivating a challenging class?"
- 14) "You mentioned (in the first video) that harassment of teachers *is a factor* in some challenging classes – could you develop that point?"
- 15) "Supply teachers (can) get a hard time with challenging classes – how should we support them?"
- 16) "Is it ever *too late* for teacher to turn around, or 'change', a challenging class?"
- 17) "You are a strong advocate of *colleague mentoring* – how do we realistically develop such an approach?"

Summary of the questions:- Key points for discussion

Question 1

In the first video you modelled how to give support to a teacher with a really restless class – what would you do if the class is ‘out-of-control’?

Catalytic conversation

If any of us have ever had this experience it is one of the most disconcerting, even debilitating, experiences as a teacher in a classroom.

In the first video the example was modelled of a senior teacher staring in the window of a classroom and then storming in; shouting a class down.

The class goes quiet ‘naturally’ (a senior, ‘important’ teacher is there – threatening ...). After shouting the class into temporary ‘submissive silence’ and a subsequent lecture the senior teacher walks out (!) One can imagine how the classroom teacher feels – not mere ineffective but incompetent.

Some teachers, in some schools, face serious management stress with challenging classes with a degrading survivalism rather than ask for the sort of help modelled in that vignette.

Some teachers in asking for help also struggle with the perceived likelihood that in asking for support it will be given at a ‘remembered cost’ (when review or inspection processes take place).

There are many reasons *why* a class can get so out-of-control. Some are temporary, even ‘occasional’, eg: a supply teacher, or a new teacher not used to the particular group of students or a ‘cover-class’ or a totally bad day.

Some reasons why a class is so challenging may be due to on-going – endemic to the structure of the class itself or the *grouping of students* and the *matching of teacher-subject*.

It may be the way the class was established in the first few meetings (see question 4).

In the *short term*, when the class is that out-of-control the class teacher deserves immediate, unquestioned and *dignified* support – whatever the ‘causes’ of the situation as it is at hand.

- The supporting colleague (often a senior teacher, but it could be a teacher ‘next door’) knocks on the door. Always knock.
- A clear, *respectful* firm (the class is very noisy!) “Excuse me ...” to the class and the class teacher.
- The supporting colleague then says, “Mr / Ms _____ there is a message for you at the office.” (This is ‘code’ for leave the class with some dignity *now*.)
Nb. There is no actual message – as such – *except* that the class teacher notifies the office (or year head) who is taking that class for the rest of that timetable period. It is important that the supporting colleague’s tone / manner is professional and positive – without any hint of wearisome or angry sighing, or supercilious – “Well it takes someone like *me* to rescue a teacher like *you* ... (!)” A cup of tea or coffee and some self-calming is probably the next step for a teacher who has been given a dignified ‘time-out’.
- The supporting colleague then calmly (and firmly) refocuses the class.
 “Settling down everyone (...) eyes, ears this way (...) Those students out of your seats, take a seat now. Sit down, face this way (...) Thank you (...) That’s better. That’s much calmer.”
 “Now ... what topic of work is the class working on at the moment? Hands up without calling out. Thank you ...”
 The supporting teacher, therefore, takes the class until the end of that period, making no reference to the teacher who has just ‘left’.

On some occasions it is appropriate to give a clear, respectfully firm, address regarding their behaviour *as observed on entry* to the classroom (see question 3).

- Later that day it will be crucial to speak to the ‘catalytic ringleaders’ one-to-one (rather than as a group). How we address their behaviour (as we observed it) will depend to some extent on whether this behaviour (stirring the class into catalytic conversation) is a ‘one-off’ or an on-going aspect of their behaviour. It is also crucial to debrief with the classroom teacher to ask: how they are; is there anything we can do to support them now and the next session with that class; and to ask the inevitable: *how often* do similar eruptions occur (?); who are the ringleaders (?); how has the year / faculty head been involved (?)
- If the situation is on-going it will be advisable to set up some on-going professional mentoring (as well as the necessary emotional and moral support. See question 17).
- If this issue is addressed early in its ‘eruptive cycle’ a fresh-start option can have a positive outcome for teacher and the students (see questions 2, 16 and 17).

Nb. Sometimes the issue of harassment of the teacher by some students is a factor in such out-of-control episodes is class behaviour. This is an issue that must be supportively addressed the moment that senior staff are aware of it (or if the class teacher reports it). (See question 14).

Question 2

Would you agree that a confident teacher could become unstuck with a hard-to-manage class?

I've had my confidence shaken on a number of occasions over the years. In my first year of teaching, I had a 12-year-old student jump out of a window in my class (fortunately first floor). I've had students run off in class time; I've had students swear at me, ignore me, shout and yell at me, threaten me ... It is one of the worst feelings, as a teacher, to feel as if the class is slipping away and there is little (seemingly) that we can do (at that point) to halt the emerging loss of control (!) On balance (thankfully) the percentage of such experiences is small compared to the positive experiences in our whole teaching journey.

I've also at times been brought 'back to ground', back to reality when I've become overly confident. We never ever get it *totally* sorted as teachers; I've had a few classes bring me back to reality on such occasions – quickly!

In the last 10 years I have been working with colleagues as a mentor-teacher, team-teaching with them (across a variety of subjects and age-groups). In these settings I've had a *few* students swing from the rafters (literally); stand up and challenge me : "What are you doing in our class?! You can't tell us what to do!?" "You're not our normal teacher?!" – at least I can agree with them there (!)

On some occasions it has taken me (as the second teacher in the classroom) up to five minutes to calm, settle, and focus a very restless class. On almost every (such) occasion the regular teacher (later) says, "It's not just me is it!" My struggle with 'their' class acts as a filip to their own struggle; it is an acknowledgement of their reality as they experience it. Collegial trust is built within such exchanges and often the spiral of disillusionment the teacher has experienced can begin to 'spiral back' – up to that confidence and goodwill essential for working with young people in schools.

We are all fallible (even the very confident, successful, teachers are fallible at times!) ... as Noel Coward once said, “The secret of success is the ability to survive failure.” (We could add, “... and *learn* from and through it.”) This issue about fallibility, of course, is to acknowledge it and accept its natural, normative, aspect to our humanity. Taking Noel Coward’s cue, though, we do not (then) simply acquiesce to our failure and struggle.

Whenever I am working with a colleague who is struggling with a challenging class, as we sit and reflect (later) over tea and coffee, we often begin with a healthy collegial whinge (or ‘moan-bonding’ as some call it).

Of course whingeing is cathartic *up to a point*. If such whingeing degenerates into self and other blame, counter blame or defeatism (“been there”, “done that”, ‘won’t work’, “too impractical”, “too hard”) it only becomes a form of negative self-confirmation; it stifles the *possibility* of seeing things differently, of seeing the possibilities for change. It may also see us retreat into a ‘self-protective’ isolationism.

When we do become ‘unstuck’ as it were, as a leader of a class of students when our confidence is overly tested, it will always help to:-

- Discuss the situation – as it is – with trusted, helpful, colleagues (not merely one’s friends either).
Early intervention is crucial (before it becomes a term 2, or 3, problem).
- This early intervention is particularly crucial if there is *any* harassment (of the teacher) involved in their struggle in leading the class (see question 14).
- It is worth checking if *this* class is hard-to-manage for *all* teachers across that grade / year group. This does not delimit the support we should give any individual colleague but it may indicate particular curriculum / teacher / personality issues if a *single teacher* (rather than the team) notes that this is a very challenging / hard-to-manage class. In such cases issues such as teacher-student relationship / teacher style /management style will need to be addressed through supportive mentoring.

- Where the class is hard for all – or most – colleagues a needs-analysis will be the starting point (beyond the natural ‘whinge’) :-
 - Who are the ringleaders? Catalysts?
 - What are the time-out records for this group (so far)?
 - What referrals?
 - What behaviours – specifically – concern us?
 - How do any ringleaders, or attentional or provocative students affect the rest of the class group? [In most class groups – even the very challenging – there is often up to 60% of students willing to co-operate with respectful, positive, fair, consistent teacher leadership (see questions 4 and 6).]
 - How was the class group established in the first instance?
How were class rules / routines established? (eg: seating plans, noise level routines etc. See question 5).
 - What support options have been offered to colleagues so far?

- It can also help to have some shared collegial observation across class / subject settings with the same students; a sort of ‘tracking’ of ‘key players’. I have had students say to me (often) – “You following us?” (too right!). It is interesting to see ‘catalytic students’ modify behaviours across subjects and with different teachers. This can be helpful in developing any change processes with individual students.

- Decide, together, as a grade / year level team on a common *fresh-start* approach for this class group.
This fresh-start approach can involve a range of options depending on how serious the situation is perceived by all colleagues working with the class in question.
The most common fresh-start options include some kind of guided classroom-meeting with the students (as a group).
This classroom-meeting is a central feature in giving all students (particularly the 60% of the ‘silent majority’ a fair, and reasonable voice about why the class

is 'as it is' (at this stage in their journey) and what we (as a class) can do to bring about change.

(See also question 5, question 16 and question 17.)

The issue of a 'fresh-start' is given some space in the first video. We have tried to model the key features we normally go through in order to enable to students to address: what is working well in the class (and why?); what is not working well (and why?); and what can we do (as a class) to change things so *that* we can have a class where students do not frequently call out, are noisy, off-task ... hassling each other ... (etc)?

- Colleague support is crucial in developing such fresh-start approaches; no-blame moral and professional support. This can range from observation; collaborative team-meetings; thoughtful and *respectful* time-out options for provocative, oppositionally-defiant students, mentoring options and – most of all – regular, team feedback to each other and to the senior staff.
- Any plan needs to have on-going collegial evaluation (and where possible even celebration).
 - *What* has changed since any shared, team, approach to this challenging class? – and *how*?
 - How have time-out figures changed, if at all?
 - Are the most troublesome students on some kind of individual and personal behaviour support plan? How have such plans helped modify peer dynamics – as well as individual patterns of behaviour.

{ There are some helpful, practical, ideas for such plans in the book :
Behaviour Recovery (2nd Edition) 2004.
 Published by Paul Chapman (Sage Publications) : London. }

Question 3

What do you do when half a dozen (or more) students are being disruptive all at once (ie : in a lesson context)?

A few years ago in a 'challenging' school in South West London I was working in a year 7 class as a mentor-teacher (form1).

At one point in the lesson several 'mini bush fires' started: one lad threw a pen at another student so that when he went to pick up his 'dropped' pen he could 'playfully' punch him; another young lad was chewing and dribbling over his fat sherbet straws and smearing the sugary residue on the table; a few students were calling out (repeatedly) for student assistances; a young girl was wandering the room chatting to other students ... ("Gees I'm *just* getting a pen!")

I've worked in many classes like this (as a mentor-teacher, team-teaching).

Difficult as it sounds it is important to 'nip' any such emergent bush fires 'in the bud'.

- *Reposition yourself at the front of the classroom.* 'Stop' the whole class with a firm, clear, specific, *group direction* from the front of the room. It is important we go to the *front* of the room to do this.
Our tone and language need to be firm and clear. A raised voice (to establish attention and focus) – without shouting. "Stop what you're doing – everybody (...) Facing this way and listening. Now." Allow some brief *tactical* pausing (...) Our firm *calmness* is crucial here. Shouting a class down is always counter-productive (particularly for the 50 – 60% of potentially, naturally, co-operative students).
- Specifically *describe* and *redirect* the necessary behaviour for those individuals who are the distracting or disruptive 'catalysts'.
"Kirsty and Michelle (...) you need to be in your seats now ..." "Damien (...) put the sherbet straws in your school bag or I'll need to have them on my desk until break time ..." At this point – as the few students go back to their seats – and the class becomes calmer, communicate that calmness back *to the group*:
"That's better (...) people are calmer, more settled (...). Thank you.

”Several students were speaking too loudly during their class work. Those who are calling out need to remember our class rule for getting teacher assistance ... Now – we’ve got 20 minutes before this lesson is finished ... What you need to be doing now is ...”

- The difficult challenge – always – is to make our class re-direction sound clear, fair, firm without making it sound like a lecture or hectoring.
- Refocus the class to the set, learning task, or activity *at that point* (reminding them how much time we have before the lesson ends and what they should reasonably have been up to by now ...)
- Once the class is ‘working’ again, move around the classroom to chat, encourage and support students.
- Finish the lesson a little earlier (by, say, 5 minutes) to have a chat with the class about their behaviour (“I know it’s not all of you ...”) in a *positive* (non-patronising) way.
Remind them that “We are a learning community. We have our class – together – in this subject 4 periods a week. As a learning community we need to remember our classroom agreement about how we support one another’s learning here ... ” This reminder needs to be brief, positive, encouraging and non-patronising.
- With some classes this kind of ‘refocusing’ (during lesson times) may need to occur several times in the establishing of a new (and challenging) class.
- Of course if this sort of behaviour becomes a problem it will be necessary to seek out colleague support (as soon as possible) from grade-team / faculty leaders. Such support will often need to address the issues raised in question 2. It is always worth checking if this class behaviour is typical or atypical.

- Dismiss the class positively. “Look forward to seeing you all on ...” Give a brief goodbye as each student leaves the class. *Building* relationships with individuals is essential in building a workable, classroom-learning community. I’ve seen and heard colleagues finish the ‘bad-day lesson’ with the haranguing lecture:-
 “You’re the worst class I’ve ever had! I’m sick and tired of your stupid behaviour! You never learn do you?! You can all go to a class detention ...!! No – I don’t care; I don’t. I’ve had it with you. You had your chance and you blew it ...!”
- It is also important to start the *next* lesson positively; no retrospective recriminations. Eg: “Right! Before we start I hope none of you are going to behave like you did yesterday! Alright?! I went home with a bad headache and the five Valium and six Aspirin and ... did nothing to help and it’s all your fault – do you hear?! I don’t know why I went into teaching to end up with people like you ...!”
- With the more ‘catalytic’ students *personal* follow-up is essential to see if such behaviour is more than ‘bad-day’ syndrome. (See question 9 and question 11.)

Whole-class detentions

Whole-class detentions almost always backfire. They are unfair; they target all (when only 4 – 6 students, at most, are ‘accountable’ ...); worse they alienate the 60 – 70% of (potentially) supportive and co-operative students.

Detention (as a consequence) has its place in whole-school behaviour policy but not whole-class detentions. There are rare / exceptional occasions when we will need to keep a whole class back at the close of a class period (significant theft, injury ...) but detaining the whole class will ‘boomerang’ on the very group whose support is crucial in building class cohesion.

Question 4

You emphasise the issue of ‘calmness’ a lot – there are times, though, when – surely – we have a right to be angry?

Calmness is not the same as being unemotional, ‘passive’ or quietistic in manner. Calmness is more about being in control of self in relation to others – even when we have to be assertive and when we communicate anger.

I have noticed countless times in my years as a teacher that the calmness we bring to a class group – particularly a restless, attentional group – can have a significant effect on their ‘calmness’ as a group.

When we begin a lesson (for example); in that first few minutes when we establish and maintain attention, and focus – our calmness is crucial. The way we stand (with relaxed confidence – not cocky or cavalier!); the way we scan the group; the way we engage even brief, transitory, eye-contact with each student; the way we smile (relaxedly, confidently, non-sycophantically); the tactical pausing (...), our general relaxed, and confident, bearing; knowing what we will say to *cue* for whole-class attention; how we will address those distracting or disruptive students; how we will engage the class (*that* lesson, *that* day) beyond our initial attention ... All these factors, these behaviours, in us – communicate our ‘calmness’. These behaviours communicate we are confident in what we are doing *now* and that confident calmness has a reciprocal effect on our students (particularly the 60 - 70%).

These ‘factors’ are not *mere* personality, there are skills here that one can consciously develop and build into our *normative* teaching practice.

See particularly *Classroom Behaviour* (Paul Chapman Publishing) chs 3 and 4.

Anger

- We need to distinguish ANGER from concern, irritation, annoyance, frustration, *high* frustration or *on-going* frustration. All these emotional ‘expressions’ are in

the same, broad, area of stressful 'arousal', as it were, but ANGER is different in degree.

For example I've heard some teachers say to students, "I'm angry that you haven't done your homework!" Angry? Concerned yes, annoyed (perhaps) and willing to offer support or work with the student on a homework plan – *but angry?* When we say to students, "I am angry about / because ...!?" there ought to be some 'moral weight' in our anger relative to the issue, episode, behaviour.

- It is important to distinguish between our angry *feelings* and our angry *behaviour*. We cannot stop feeling frustrated or angry (or such) about others' behaviour we can *learn* to communicate our anger in a fairer, more just, more appropriate way.
- It is also important to *learn to get angry on issues that matter*, (it is not always a natural trait!). On occasions when I have been angry (very angry) with a whole class (or a significant group within the class) they really *feel* it and hopefully *know where* the morality or justice of the anger is directed (!) When one of my classes had given a supply teacher a really hard time and had behaved disturbingly (a few disgustingly) I recall saying (to a hushed class group): "I am really angry with our class today in fact with some of you I am disgusted by the way you behaved yesterday to Ms _____. I can't believe that members of our class – OUR CLASS (!) – could have said and done the things I've had to read about in this report for the principal (!)" I could have heard a pin drop. The furrowed eyes, folded arms, the 'hang-dog' looks ... I sensed they were saying to themselves: "We are in serious manure here ..." I rarely speak like that to a class. Obviously I brought the degree of emotional arousal 'down' and we then discussed how we could communicate an appropriate apology to the said teacher and how this class (any class in fact) ought to fairly behave with any relief / supply teacher. Of course if we were to express our anger in *similar* ways over inappropriate jewellery, uniform, lateness, homework, students without equipment we would easily and quickly lose *any* 'moral weight' of anger we express.

- When we communicate *our* anger to a student, or a group, of students it is important to remember to:-
 - ~ get angry on issues that matter.
 - ~ keep the communicate of such anger *brief* (where possible, particularly when addressing an individual); avoid the temptation to go on and on and on ...
 - ~ address the *behaviour, or issue, without attacking the person*. Easier said than done. The skill of assertion is the ability to communicate our needs and rights, to others (especially when angry), or to protect others' needs and rights without being overly hostile or aggressive. Assertion is a skill not merely an attribute to temperament. It is also a skill that can be learned.
 - ~ *de-escalate the arousal* naturally created by our expression of our anger (directed at another's behaviour ...). Speak in a calmer voice (now) after having made one's point clearly, briefly, (and with passion at times).
 - ~ If the anger context involves a very challenging / oppositional student it will be necessary, and appropriate, to direct an individual student to a supervised time-out situation *away* from the class group and then follow-up with the student at a later stage when both student(s) and teacher are calmer.

- **Always take time to repair and rebuild with those we have been angry with** (whether individual or group). Mostly our anger will have been justified; even so it is the adult (the teacher) who will need to take the initiative to effect repairing and rebuilding (and appropriate consequences or restitution where necessary). Even when a student has faced a temporary exclusion from the class group our willingness to effect repairing and rebuilding will go a long way to re-establishing a workable relationship beyond the due consequential process.

- Of course if we are at fault and our anger has been poorly, badly, unfairly expressed then it is the right and proper thing for us to apologise to the individual or group.

- Of course if we are at fault and our anger has been poorly, or unfairly, expressed it is the right and proper thing for us to apologise to the individual or group.

It is worth recalling the words of St Paul (in Ephesians, in the New Testament)
“ ... Don't let the sun go down on your anger.”

Bad-day syndrome

We get tired, we get annoyed, we get frustrated – even jaded at times – with attentional behaviour, with laziness in our students, with cavalier, insouciant and rude behaviour. We get angry at times.

Sometimes our anger is justified, sometimes it is a result of ‘the straw that broke ...’. We all have ‘off’ days as well as days when things just do not go right. We bring to our daily teaching, our struggles, concerns over health, money, relationships. We cannot escape this; it is our humanity.

Our thoughts sometimes race with issues and concerns well outside our Maths, English or History class responsibilities. Our students too have the same ‘racing minds’ on some days.

There we are in that classroom – yet again – teaching directed numbers, percentages, the Tudor dynasty, the tragedy of Hamlet, Lear or MacBeth or helping students to embrace culinary arts or South-East Asian geography. We are teachers. Yet on those days when other thoughts race and other concerns seem to dominate, we may ‘snap’, ‘miscue’, wrongly ‘target’ a student, ‘shout’, act unfairly – our students understand this; they too are human, they too come to school (at times) from stressful environments.

In the balance ‘of it all’, what students *always remember* is the characteristic way we treat them : our respect, our humanity, the way we apologise and repair and rebuild, move on without grudges and start each day afresh.

*How would our students describe our **characteristic** behaviour as a teacher/leader? – beyond our ‘bad-day syndrome(?)* That is what matters as much as our ability to ‘know our subjects’, teach well and ‘get results’. The fourth ‘R’ of relationships is what stays in the memory alongside any education that hopefully comes with the schooling journey.

Question 5

You put great store on the way teachers establish their classes:- should this be made a whole-school approach?

As noted earlier, there are many reasons why some classes become hard to manage and challenging. This can range from:- poor grouping options; it can be the lousy physical environment (I've taught in corridors, staffrooms, annexes – my first grade, when I taught primary, was in a converted bike shed!). I've taught English in woodwork classes on some occasions.

It may also be unfair matching of teacher to class as when a young newly qualified teacher is given the class 'no-one really wants' ("Welcome to the school. You've got 9X for 5 periods after lunch in the demountable (portable) classroom, 5 light years away from the front office and the toilets are a long way away and ...).

Beyond the 'local', and at times temporary reasons why a class becomes hard to manage, the more common reasons centre on the way the class teacher establishes themselves as a leader in their critical first meetings with the class group. The way a teacher/leader develops the establishment phase is crucial to the on-going workable relationship that the teacher will have with that class as individuals *and as a group*.

Students at this time of the school year (first meeting(s) term one) are psychologically and developmentally ready for us (as the teacher/leader) to clarify expectations, routines, rights and responsibilities, consequences, and –most of all – how we will support them as the term progresses.

Effective teachers never assume students merely 'know' how they ought to reasonably, fairly, enter a small space called a classroom; how they will relaxedly take their seats without spending several minutes play-punching, wandering, having several loud chats ...; how they will settle and face the front of the room ready to listen, ask questions without calling out or playing loudly with *objects d'art* ...; how 25 or more students will work with a fair and reasonable level of noise (in that small room); how they will *fairly* get teacher assistance (among 25 students) ...

These routines (and more importantly) and these expected *behaviours* will not occur ‘naturally’ with a challenging class. Effective teachers know that they need to *establish fair and sensible routines, rules to underpin* the right to learn, the right to basic respect and the right to feel psychologically and physically safe in schools. There are three basic ‘phases’ in the life of a classroom group as they interact with teacher and each other.

The establishment phase: Those crucial first meetings with the group often the students engage teachers in ‘defining moments’ (many of which are modelled in the first video). These defining moments can involve more clarification of what the rules and routines are, the fair / reasonable limits of acceptable behaviour through to attentional and provocative challenges. It is also important to firmly, fairly address distracting and disruptive behaviours in this first meeting whether it is pushing in during class entry, calling out, fiddling loudly with objects or talking *while* the teacher is establishing the lesson ... The teacher’s skill of corrective leadership, at this time, also needs to be balanced with encouragement. In the first meetings with the class – those first lessons – the teacher will also follow-up with students *one-to-one* where necessary to clarify expected behaviours and engage in appropriate consequences where necessary.

The ‘maintenance’ phase: Effective teachers always maintain, consolidate and ‘habituate’ what they establish. It is pointless having a class rule (for example) that outlines a fair routine of hands-up-without-calling-out (and waiting one’s turn and not talking over others while they are involved in class questions / discussion) *if we, then, do not address calling out when it occurs*. I’ve seen teachers list a few rules, even on a published poster, then accept the loudest student voices who call out (with hands up to indicate they are doing the ‘right thing’ even though they are calling out).

The cohesive phase: This is that phase in the life of a class group where teachers have established well with their classes and a progressive ‘habituation’, has developed regarding behaviour and learning. There is an element of ‘training’ here by the teacher/leader regarding positive behaviours.

It takes time. Also the teacher has *built* a workable, positive, relationship with the class from day one. It is the quality of those relationships and the ability to lead and engage the class that *builds* that kind of cohesion.

See the discussion 'paper' at the end of the questions section:
'The Establishment Phase of the Year : Core Practices and skills.'

In establishing a class group, core routines are essential:-

- Teachers will establish core routines on an age-related, subject-focused, way with their grade / faculty team. These common / core routines will address behaviour issues such as:-
 - *Corridor settling / calming* (clarify with students, briefly and positively, the distinction between social time (and the entrails of play time) and classroom learning time.
 - *Entry to the class and appropriate seating plan* (where necessary). Seating plans will also need to include who sits with whom. Students will need to know and appreciate that they do not *have* to be sitting with their best friend in class time. They need to learn to sit and work with a range of others (toleration, even gender toleration! And co-operation with others). It hardly helps if the students with ADHD behaviour patterns are sitting together in class time.
A considerate entry does not include serious wrestling, pushing, shoving, friendly strangling and loud shouting etc.
 - *Settling in one's seating / desk / table / table group area*:- settling, relaxing, quiet, facing the front ready to begin another teaching / learning period. Of course such a routine (indeed *any* routine) needs positive teacher leadership, clarification and encouragement.
 - *Communicating cues for class discussion during whole-class teaching / learning time*. Eg: 'hands up without calling out or butting in'; 'If we disagree with others in class discussion we do so respectfully'; 'We take our fair turn so there's a fair go for all'; 'When

others (other students) share / contribute / ask / answer questions that sharing is for all therefore we all listen as we would expect if we were the one who was sharing / contributing / asking ...'

As with all basic cues / routines it is important teachers clarify these with their class both in tutor / form-groups, and in their first meetings with their regular classes.

It can help in middle-school years to publish these core routines on a couple of large, positively worded, posters in the classroom as a visual reference: an *aide memoire*.

- *Communicating cues and routines for transition, time between instructional / whole-class teaching and on-task learning time:*
 - Clarify appropriate, reasonable, *noise levels* (of 25+ students in a small room);
 - Clarify how to get *teacher assistance* fairly, reasonably, in a busy on-task time ...;
 - *Appropriate and reasonable movement around the classroom* (this will – naturally – vary across subject areas);
 - Addressing students without equipment (*always have a box of spare pens, rulers, pencils A4 lined and plain*); (See question 7.)
 - Work options for early finishers.

- *Plan for lesson closure:*
 - Cue the class regarding time to complete class work 'before the bell' (this may need the group suggestion 'what they need to have covered by now' (notwithstanding the students with special needs));
 - Calm, settle, the class group before 'the bell' (particularly re: pack up materials / tools etc. Class routines / monitors for this routine are essential.);

- Cue for homework (a small visual reminder will help) / notices etc;
- Remind the class to 'do the next class a favour thanks':
straighten the furniture (chairs on tables a day's close); pick up any residual litter (*en route* to the door and bin); and leave the class row-by-row (or table-group by table-group ...). It saves the Darwinian rush of the more kinaesthetic students to the door!
Some students will whinge (day one, two, three) but it will become a fair routine after several lessons.

I find it helpful to have the following (explained) acronyms on the board:-

DTNCAFT (do the next class a favour thanks)

(1) SF (COTP6)	(straighten furniture) (chairs on tables period 6)
(2) RL B	(residual litter : bin)
(3) RBR	(row by row)
(4) TTFN	(ta-ta for now)

On some occasions (in the first meetings) it will be necessary to direct a student (or two) to 'stay back briefly after class' (for a chat about behaviour concerns).

It can help to have a small notebook to record such names so that before lesson closure we can briefly, positively, say "I'd like to see _____ after class for a few moments." The notebook adds a 'quasi-legal authenticity' to this process (it also aids memory!)

Whenever we follow-up we will need to keep it brief (unless it is class break time).

Any follow-up with a student, whether it is a *brief* after-class chat; a subject teacher chat at lunchtime (a behaviour interview); a subject teacher or formal year level

detention will need to bear in mind basic protocols of follow-up – not the least our respectful treatment and ethical probity.

A suggested framework for follow-up is developed in the discussion paper at the end of the questions section. (See ESTABLISHMENT PHASE : Core practices and skills.)

Nb.

All routines / responsibilities of students all cues depend on the core rights and responsibilities being discussed by tutor teachers in their first meetings with their tutor groups. These *core, non-negotiable* rights and responsibilities centre on:-

- *The right to learn here* (without undue, unfair, distraction and disruption).
- *The right to respect and fair treatment* (of property, place, personal space, one's feelings).
- *The right to safety: to feel safe here in our school* (not just physical safety but psychological safety).

- These rights *imply*, indeed *entail*, responsibilities. The routines and cues we establish are a way of *enhancing* those rights.
- It can help to publish these core rights on a large, laminated, poster in each classroom and corridor as a visual reference and *aide memoire*. They are, in effect, a summary of the school's 'code of conduct'. More importantly they highlight 'the fair expectations of our school'.
- Any work we do on clarifying, and discussing, rights and responsibilities and rules is of little use unless each teacher, in each class (and in non-class settings) encourages and disciplines, *within* these rights and responsibilities. Effective teachers *encourage* these rights and responsibilities and create learning environments that enhance their likelihood. They also correct, and assert – to *protect* those rights wherever necessary. They also bring

appropriate consequences to bear on behaviour where necessary (see later question 9).

- Most of all :- what we establish with a class group we need to *maintain*, *consolidate* and *habituate*.

Trust between a teacher leader and a group of students takes time to develop. From the start – from these first meetings – we seek to promote a classroom environment where students feel valued; where they feel they belong; where they feel safe (psychologically as well as physically); *where their dignity and respect are never taken for granted*.

This never happens by chance.

That kind of trust takes time to develop.

It is always developed from the way we establish the class group in those first meeting and from the kind of leadership we exercise.

It is how we lead our students – from day one; the *characteristic* quality of leadership (we are always forgiven the bad-day! See question 4.)

Question 6

Do the skills that you advocate – at the end of the day – really depend on personality – take ‘tactical ignoring’ as an example ...?

I once had a teacher say to me – an ‘older’ teacher – “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.” (The age I am now – 57 I thought in my late thirties that 57 was quite a bit old!)

We were discussing professional development and the ‘skills’ of classroom discipline. In response to her comment (“ ... can’t teach an old dog new tricks.”) I replied (with I hope a positive smile), “You’re not a dog. You’re a teacher. We can always reflect, refine, fine-tune, adapt, develop even change ...” We had a robust, spirited and positive discussion about the difference between ‘tricks’ and ‘skills’.

What we are discussing in these videos (and this supporting, written, material) is not a ‘bag of tricks’ or some ‘neat formula’ – there are no simple (or simplistic) formulas when addressing distracting, disruptive or challenging behaviour in our students; we are discussing core *practices and skills*.

There are practices and skills we can learn that do not depend *merely* on personality. Of course a personality redolent of: liking to work with young people; wanting to assist their learning and development; having good humour; an even temper (bad-day notwithstanding); being fair, just, reasonable (as distinct from ‘petty’, ‘bossy’ or non-assertive when assertion is needed); the ability to engage students in the learning journey with some enthusiasm (without being a ‘tap-dancer’ – and we can’t always make everything ‘meaningful’) ... The personality and behaviour traits noted here *all help – of course*. There are *skills*, however, that support these teacher traits; skills that enable us to be *relaxedly* vigilant in our behaviour leadership as contrasted with teachers who are overly vigilant (characteristically) or non-vigilant (characteristically).

It is not the ‘bad-day syndrome’ – the occasional ill-tempered comment, or rebuke, or ‘sarcastic slip’ – this is not what students remember; it is how ‘we are’ in the long haul. That is what our students respond to and remember.

- What is our characteristic behaviour leadership like? How would our students describe our leadership of 'our class'?
- Do we use our power (as a teacher/leader) *for* and *with* our students, instead of using our power *over* them. Do we seek to control them rather than lead, guide, motivate, challenge and encourage them?
- When we discipline our students there are skills of *language* that can enable us to engage student co-operation instead of unnecessary resistance. There are many examples of these language skills noted in the classroom vignettes in the first video.

Tactical ignoring

Tactical ignoring was noted in this question as an example of a 'skill'. I have highlighted the word because we *never* merely ignore distracting, disruptive or confronting behaviour. There are occasions, however, when it is appropriate to *tactically* ignore.

Take the example in the first video of a student coming late to class. When the sulky student enters the class late (quite late) with a swagger, a scowl, eyes-to-ceiling or grinning to his mates (as in the vignette in the first video). What we say is important. *How* we say it, and what aspects of his behaviour we *tactically* ignore are all important.

We do not ignore the grand entrance. In respect of the lateness itself it will help to pause in our teaching – to the class (as a whole) – turn to face the lad and welcome him (instead of asking him *why* he is late). When he sighs and twists his mouth into a wry, whingeing, moan our focus needs to be on the primary issue; his lateness and directing him to his seat ... A pleasant, respectful, confident :-

"Welcome Jason; you're late. (It is important to briefly acknowledge his lateness; important for him and the students 'observing' his lateness ...) I'll have a chat later. Take your seat. Thanks." That is enough, *at this point*. We *tactically* ignore the sigh, the mutter, the swagger as he takes his seat. These aspects of his behaviour are 'secondary' to the 'main' or 'primary' behaviour / issue *at that point*. If we argue with him *and* lecture him about his sighing etc., "Why can't you once come

into this class without making a song and dance about it?! I'm sick and tired of you coming late and ... and don't you smirk at me! It's not funny alright?!"

Of course it is tempting to focus on the 'sigh', the 'raised eyes', the 'insouciant look', the 'swagger' ... it is easy to get 'drawn-in'. Skilful teachers not only *tactically* ignore such behaviour they give the student take-up-time by reclaiming *whole class focus* (turning 'away' from the student as he takes his seat) : "As I was saying folks ..." thus resuming core teaching *at that point*. It also avoids over-servicing the student's attentional goals in front of the rest of the class.

These skills are not easy *but they are skills*; they are particularly effective with the discipline of challenging behaviour issues as we have sought to portray them in the first video.

The key to *tactical* ignoring, as a skill, is to remember that :-

- It is *tactical*; it is a context dependent skill relevant mostly for the sorts of non-verbal behaviours that students exhibit on receipt of teacher correction;
- We should *never* ignore (even tactically) any hostile, aggressive, or potentially dangerous behaviours (verbal or physical in expression); If a student kicks a chair *en route* to his seat (as in the late-to-class example) we need to address *that* behaviour as well as the lateness ... "Jayson, we take our seats without kicking the chair." Brief, clear and follow-up with the student – later – away from the peer-audience (one-to-one).
- We also do not ignore unremitting, *repeatedly* distracting or disruptive behaviour. I have (on many, many, occasions) *tactically* ignored (say) a student who calls out (with, or without, hand up) several times – sighing "Gees I'm talking to you!" and *then* observed (out of the 'corner of my eye') the student 'give up' as it were. A little later I will go over and *then* give assistance. If they say "I was calling you before!" I will quietly remind them that *when* they have their hand up *without* calling out *then* I am more than happy to come and help. I will also quietly remind them of the fair-rule that gives a *fair-go-for-all*.

Where a student's behaviour is unremitting, or very loudly distracting (to other students, let alone the teacher) then we need to intervene with a clear, firm, reminder or direction.

- If a student is verbally rude (as in the example in the first video of the female student who says, "What do you want to know my name for!") we should not ignore the rudeness. A brief, firm, 'I' statement is enough, "I'm not speaking to you in a rude tone of voice." Then refocus to the main issue :- "What's your name thanks?" – we can *tactically* ignore the sigh as she gives her name. (Oh dramatis personae!) It is not easy to describe this skill in print, it is clearly observed when we see it in a teacher's leadership behaviour.
- Avoid 'enjoying' tactical ignoring of some student behaviour; we do not *tactically* ignore insouciant or 'cocky', 'smart-alecky' or 'attentional' behaviour to 'score' or 'prove a point'. We *tactically* ignore *within* our overall leadership, to send the message to the student (and their audience) that we are keeping the focus on the main issue or behaviour necessary *now*. We will not get drawn into their 'sighs', 'whines', 'moans' or ...
- Any skill of behaviour leadership depends on, and should develop from, our core values rather than mere expediency or utility. It is not easy – in the heat of the moment – to think how we can better respond to challenging behaviour (particularly rude, or hostile, or confronting behaviour). Having a *discipline plan* will help us frame reasonable responses to typical distracting, and disruptive, behaviours. This is not a formula but a *framework* plan. There are no 'formulas' for effective behaviour leadership. There are values, practices, skills we can make our own; it is these that inform, and shape, our 'plan'.
 - Our core values also enable and inform even *evaluate* our professional practice. When we review school-wide discipline practice I believe it behoves us to think professionally, and collegially, about our characteristic discipline language, even specific 'forms' of *language* and *tone* and *manner*. No discipline practices are 'value free'. This is particularly important when we need to be assertive; assertive language requires some prior thought and skill

(at least for most of us! – see the discussion paper on hostile, aggressive and threatening behaviours.)

There is, for example, an important difference even when using a simple direction – say – to two students chatting while the teacher is engaged in whole-class teaching. To say, “*Why* are you two talking?” or “You shouldn’t be talking *should you?*” or “*Are you* talking?” are all really unhelpful questions. Do we really want to have a discussion with the students about ‘why’ they are talking **at this point** in a whole-class lesson? A better option is to briefly *describe* the students’ behaviour, or *direct* the students to the appropriate behaviour. Eg : “Melissa (...) Katrina(...) You’re talking. It’s whole-class teaching time.” This briefly *describes* the students’ behaviour and also acts as an *incidental* reminder or direction, about what they should be doing during whole-class teaching time.

Sometimes we need to *describe and direct* eg : “Melissa (...) Katrina (...) You’re talking. Facing this way and listening thanks.” Thanks is also more ‘expectational’ than please.

It is always difficult to talk about corrective language by listing the *words* as such. It is *always* more than words. Our intent will carry the meaning of the words : our respect, our confidence, our communication of expectant co-operation ...

This is difficult to describe *in print*. One can quickly, and easily, see it in teacher behaviour as they interact with their students.

It is important to stress – again – that even the non-verbal aspects of our behaviour have some conscious element of ‘skill’ – we can learn to communicate (as behaviour leaders) more effectively; it is not merely personality.

A discipline plan

A discipline plan is our reasonable attempt to think ahead about how we can (indeed should) reasonably respond to *typical* distracting, disruptive and even confronting behaviours.

Whether it is calling out , attentional lateness, task-avoidance, loudness, rudeness or swearing – there are key principles and skills that will better address such behaviours in terms of whether the student is more likely to :-

- co-operate with the teacher (and the fair rights / rules / responsibilities at stake:
- take some awareness and even ‘ownership; of their behaviour;
- respect others’ rights.

These key principles and skills also assist the building of a workable relationship with the student, as well as modelling (to the class as a whole) the fundamental respect we hope to see in them!

The key principles in a discipline plan

- A common, year-level focus on *core rights / responsibilities and rules* for all classes. Even a *published class poster* can act as a visual ‘*aide memoire*’.
- *Core routines* for the class group (see discussion paper on the Establishment Phase). Even deceptively basic ones such as considerate classroom entry / ‘settling down’ and thoughtful seating plans ... how to contribute (fairly) in a whole-class discussion or asking questions in whole-class teaching time ...
- A *conscious* framework – in the teacher’s discipline engagement – that enables us to be *least intrusive (whenever possible)* when addressing distracting / disruptive behaviour.
If we need to be *more intrusive* (as circumstance necessitates) we become more assertive not more hostile or verbally aggressive.
- A *conscious focus in discipline on positive corrective language* wherever possible. There is a difference between saying, “*Don’t* call out” or “*Don’t* lean back in your chair” (etc) and, “Craig (...) hands up (without calling out) thanks” or “Halid (...) sitting up relaxed, but sitting up. Ta.” or “Four on the floor Halid. Better. Thanks.”

Even brief '*tactical pausing*' (...) when we give a direction, or reminder, allows for some conscious attentional focus and 'registration' by the student about what the teacher is saying.

When we give a direction, *take-up-time* is also important as when we give a '*directed choice*' to a student (eg :- in the vignette episode where a student has a toy, or Walkman, or other *object d'art* that is distracting ...)

Take-up-time communicates that we both trust the student to at least comply (if not co-operate) with the teacher reminder or direction and it reduces attentional focus on the student. It is unprofessional, disrespectful and unnecessary when a teacher merely marches over to a student and takes the distracting object off them.

We are using our 'power' *for* and *with* the student by the way we lead them in such discipline transactions

- *Avoid unnecessary confrontation* (this includes pettiness, sarcasm, cheap-shots, 'scoring' over a student ...)

Working as a mentor (in an English school) I was on my way to a registration class – walking down the corridor – when I heard (then saw) a teacher yell down the corridor to a student not wearing a tie. (Oh crime despair!)

"Over here! Yes over here – you know I'm speaking to you!"

The boy trotted over (minus a tie). The teacher (a 'very senior' teacher carrying his status-bearing to the hilt) then said – loudly –

"Why aren't you wearing a tie?!"

- He didn't even say good morning,

- ... or ask the student his name ... ,

- ... or quietly usher him to the side of the corridor to minimise *unnecessary confrontation*, and keep it *least intrusive*.

I could still hear him 'rabbiting on' like this (holding up 'through traffic' on their way to classes) as I walked past him on my way to class.

I think he wanted to put on ‘the show’. ‘I’ve got power, status and reputation (and) people are going to know it – particularly this boy.’ I mean, who speaks to young people like that? – on a piddling issue of a tie?

I am not saying that we should not address dress code / uniform code; I am saying we do so least intrusively, respectfully; even with more difficult or ‘reputation’ students.

- *Keep the fundament respect intact* (even when we need to convey appropriate and necessary anger on occasion ...). Obviously this is not easy at times – by respect I mean at least civility, basic courtesy, manners and fair treatment. We do not have to like *all* our students (anyway ‘liking’ is not an emotive behaviour we can simply ‘manufacture’); we can (however) make it hard for a student to dislike us – by the way we behave towards them. We can, at least, *build* a workable relationship with our most challenging students. We can start each day afresh. We can make sure we do not ‘nurse the grudge(!)’ We can make sure we make a conscious effort to communicate care and respect; who knows – in time we might even grow to like them as well!
- The hardest discipline practice / skill is that of *keeping the focus on the main, necessary, primary issue or behaviour* in a discipline transaction. It is so easy to get drawn-in to ‘secondary issues’ and ‘secondary behaviours’ (such as sighing, pouting, tongue-clicking, eyes-to-the-ceiling, the insouciant shoulder shrug, ‘the gait’ ...),
When a student sighs, rolls their eyes and says, “Other teachers don’t care if we chew gum ...” (or ‘wear hats in class’ or ‘sit wherever we want’, or ‘play Walkmans in class as long as we get our work done’ or ...) it is easy to become defensive; to want to argue the point! Other teachers start ‘meaningful discussions’ about ‘fairness’, ‘the rules’ or ‘other teachers’. These are not the *primary issue at this point in a busy lesson*.
One of the skills noted in the vignettes (in the first video) is that of *partial agreement*. When a student says, “Other teachers don’t care if ...” we can respond with, “Even if some teachers do (I can check that) what’s our school

rule for chewing gum?” (or whatever). “But the other day ... Miss Snod said we could ...” “I can check that; what’s our school rule?” If the student chooses not to respond and continues arguing, a calm, clear *deferred consequence* can be given. “If you choose not to put the Walkman (or toy or ...) away (in your bag or on my desk) I’ll have to follow it up with you at break time.” (See question 9.)

At this point it is helpful to give *take-up-time* and ‘walk away’; *tactically ignoring* the sigh, the muttered student comment of “... if it makes you happy.”

If the student refuses to put the *object d’art* away it is important that we do follow-up with the earlier stated consequence (of following up with the student at break time).

It is the *fair, reasonable, certainty of a consequence* that will convince the student that when we say ‘if – then’ we mean it.

Partial agreement (as a skill in our discipline language) in part says, ‘Yes I’m hearing you’, ‘Yes I’m dignifying what you say – now let’s get back to the main issue *at this point* :- the fair, clear, reason(able) rule, or right *as it relates to the behaviour at hand now*. *Partial agreement* is a skill that enables us to avoid unnecessary argument, or defence of the rule, or overly ‘reasoning’, or bargaining ...

It is also important that these skills (in our discipline language) are never an end in themselves. We are always seeking to build a *workable relationship* with all our students. It is within a positive working relationship that effective learning (and teaching) can take place.

- In the busy, short-term, engagement of a lesson we need to keep our corrective discipline :-
 - as brief as we can,
 - as positive as we can in our language, tone and manner (wherever possible),
 - as least intrusive as we can (again where possible),
 - where we need to be more intrusive – in our discipline – we are more *assertive*; a skill we can develop.

- *Follow-up and follow-through.* This is crucial in any discipline plan. on occasion when student behaviour is repeatedly distracting or disruptive or potentially dangerous we will need to calmly, firmly, exercise the time-out option. This, too, is a crucial feature of our plan. Directing a student with challenging (or dangerous) behaviour to leave the classroom to go to a 'time-out place' is a very intrusive 'step' to take for a teacher. We do not do it lightly and its usage, and options, need to be planned on a whole-school basis. (See question 12.)
Later – after any discipline of a student in a public setting (in front of the audience of their peers) – we will need to spend some time following up and following through with the student(s) one-to-one. This is time consuming, requires some planning (say for a behaviour interview or detention) but *it is always worth it.* (See the discussion paper : Establishment Phase ...).

Follow-up and follow-through (even an 'after class chat') :-

- draws the distinction between what we can address 'publicly' in a busy lesson and what we can address 'longer term' – later – away from the peer audience.
- shows we care enough to make the effort to communicate, connect and share our concern and offer support as well as due consequences where necessary.
- When we need to follow-up with a consequence (even an after-class 'chat' has a consequential element) it emphasises the '*fair certainty*' that the 'consequential chickens do come home to roost' as it were.
- The key is to follow-up respectfully.

Summary

There are many skills we can develop within our characteristic behaviour leadership. These skills *enable us* (in the emotional moments) to keep our focus on teaching and learning as well as on rights-enhancing behaviours in our students. We also keep some potential humanity alongside the natural creative tension with the essential need to discipline.

While this is no mean feat, it is our professional responsibility.

Question 7

In one of the scenes (in the first video) you deal with a student without pens and paper (etc). Shouldn't they bring the right equipment in the first place?

Yes. The reality is, though, some students do not (mostly in the establishment phase of the year).

The issue of 'non-equipment' should not become one of argument, threat or vilification. Again the management principle of :- avoiding unnecessary confrontation, and keeping corrective transaction least intrusive are important in this case, (see question 6).

The management issue is : 'how can I address this as a teacher in a way that avoids fanfare, yet enables the student to engage in the learning task / activity *for that period?*'

Of course students 'should' bring pens (etc), a small percentage of students do not; that is reality. And, yes, it is 'wearing' (with some students). *How* we address that reality is the important issue, as well as enabling the student's personal responsibility. We do not enable their responsibility (about not bringing 'x', 'y', 'z') when we get drawn into a power struggle or a blame exercise.

- Avoid arguing or asking students '*why* they haven't got a pen' or comparing them to the responsible students ... "Other students bring equipment, why can't you eh?!"
- I have had students sent to me (when I was a full-time teacher) with the student arriving on my 'classroom doorstep' with the words, "I was sent to you because I didn't have a pen." I felt like say, "You're winding me up Troy – surely?" They were almost, always, *sent* because their class teacher was engaged in an argument about *why* they did not / would not bring a pen (or whatever).

Sometimes the resulting argument about "Why ... " was more stressful, attentional, that the fact the student did not have the necessary equipment (!).

- Always have a box of spare pens (red and blue), rulers, even erasers and lined / plain A4 paper. (We have modelled this in a vignette on the first video.) Personally, I call it the 'yellow box'; each item in it – apart from the paper – has a band of yellow electrical tape around it to track the pens (etc.) back to the box. I don't lose many.
- My rule of thumb about not-bringing-pens (etc) is that if a student does not bring the equipment on three times (in close succession in the first week or so) then we have a one-to-one meeting to discuss the issue and look for ways to come up with a plan for the student to get his responsibility 'into gear'. In some schools we have found that a 'school-based' table-pencil-case (containing only the key writing implements) can help that small percentage of students with learning / behaviour disorders.
- Ideally we should develop a *collegial response* so there is *reasonable consistency* across colleague responses to the issue of students not bringing appropriate / necessary equipment.

The issue of equipment and dress code / uniform needs whole-school responses that are sensible, considered, consistent with a *relaxedly* vigilant response that balances appropriate correction and support.

Question 8

In the first video you speak – after class – to two female students who had been involved in a ‘play-fight’ in the classroom. You had a female colleague present while you followed up with the students – how important is this?

In my view it is essential that a male teacher have a female colleague present in any extended after-class chat, behaviour interview, mediation session or detention.

Ethical probity is crucial for all colleagues, perhaps more so in these litigation-conscious times (and stories in the press) for male teachers in one-to-one meetings with female students.

The female colleague does not need to engage with the student and the male teacher (in their role of one-to-one follow-up). Their presence is enough (abstractly working on marking nearby – whatever).

The female colleague is part witness, part emotional support. Sometimes (of course) they will be directly involved particularly when the context, circumstance, or issue is particularly sensitive or emotionally sensitive.

It is worth having a school-wide protocol addressing this aspect of our professional responsibility.

Question 9

You spoke in the first video about *deferred* consequences – could you develop that a bit more?

You also advocate the crucial importance of the *class teacher* following up (with a disruptive student) – what if they don't stay back (after class)?

A framework for behaviour consequences :-

When it comes to any behaviour consequences in a school it is essential to have a whole-school framework, and protocols, for how we responsibly exercise this aspect of behaviour leadership and policy

- Some consequences (for example) will be 'negotiable' – perhaps most. By 'negotiable' I mean that the teacher who initiates the consequence will ask the student questions such as :

“What happened (re : your behaviour) that caused you to be in detention?”

“What rule or right was affected by your behaviour?”

“What is your side of the account?” “How do you see what happened?”

(Students deserve a right-of-reply in a calmer, follow-up, time-away from the emotion of the original behaviour ...)

“What can you do to fix things up, makes things better?”

These questions can also be expressed in a written form (as during detentions). (See the example in the discussion paper : The Establishment Phase.) 'Empty detentions' are pointless – in an educational sense (i.e. just sitting in a room for thirty minutes after school).

Teachers need professional discretion (and trust) in carrying out 'negotiable' consequences. It will also help to have some guidelines for the sorts of issues/ behaviours for which 'negotiable' consequences are appropriate.

- *Some consequences have to be non-negotiable*; set in 'policy concrete' as it were : drugs, weapons, violence, harassment, bullying. These behaviours will involve some *immediate* consequence ranging from immediate time-out for the student from the classroom (or playground) through to temporary exclusion from the school.

With any non-negotiable consequences, however, there should be some possibility of accountability-mediation at some later stage with the student before coming back to the school, and back to regular class(es).

Those in the school trained, or skilled, in mediation and behaviour support will need to work with the student and the aggrieved teacher as soon as possible on the student's return to school.

- The 3Rs principle is important when framing consequences :
 - Is the consequence *related* in some way to the behaviour at issue? (How does picking up papers – as a consequence – relate to talking in class?)
 - Is the consequence reasonable (*reasonable*)? Is there an appropriate *degree of seriousness* in our use / application of consequences? I have seen students put on detention for homework not done, uniform, lateness as well as more serious issues such as harassment. Where does the student perceive detention (in terms of a consequence) when it is used for minor issues as well as very serious behaviour issues? Using detention for homework / uniform issues devalues a serious consequence such as detention.
 - *Is the consequence applied respectfully?* Do we keep the *respect* of the student intact when we apply the consequence? I have seen teachers rail, shout, berate, harangue a student (replete with pointed finger) even in an after-class 'chat'. This is unnecessary, unacceptable and unprofessional.

We can convey concern, annoyance – even appropriate anger – in a professional way.

- It is worth having a detention policy that outlines the sorts of behaviour we (collegially) believe relate to a consequence that involves *time-detaining* as its key feature. We also need to ask, however, what we ought to expect of the student *and* teacher during detention. What should the student do? If it is a 'time-trade consequence' then we build in some *relatedness* (eg. picking up litter because they were seen dropping it, or chewing gum cleaning duty because they are repeated 'chewing gummers' ...)

- Most consequences should be carried out by the initiating teacher, or at least (as in faculty detentions) the initiating teacher will follow-up with the student *beyond* the detention, with some repairing and rebuilding. This is particularly important when we exercise time-out as a consequence.
- In some follow-up consequences a senior teacher should be there to support the teacher who initiates the consequence in the first instance. **This is crucial with behaviours of serious concern.**
- It is also worth discussing with colleagues *what are the reasonable consequences* for say :- repeated lateness (three times in class succession); homework; students without equipment; uniform; repeated toilet usage in class time ... (etc).

Nb. With lateness and uniform issues we also need to be sensitive as to home-related issues that impinge on student behaviour at school. Consequences can and should be supportive not *merely* punitive.

- In applying consequences we need to emphasise the *fair, reasonable, known certainty* rather than emphasise the severity. We are back to the issue of respect here. Some teachers apply the consequence in a climate of emotional pay-back (probably out of frustration). Of course some consequences are 'severe' because of the nature of the student's behaviour – even here we convey our displeasure, even anger, in respectful ways. Villifying, screaming and threatening students, are behaviours that demean us and do not help in the consequential process (nor do they help when an audience of student peers are observing a teacher villifying a student ...). I am not saying it is not tempting! We all get annoyed, disgruntled, even angry with some students and their behaviour (it is hard to separate the two at times!) We can learn to communicate our anger firmly, with assertive passion (briefly if possible. See question 4.)

Students who do not stay back after class

If we direct a student to stay back after class and they 'do a runner' it is pointless to chase them. It looks ludicrous; most students are entertained by the spectacle and (if we are not fit) it can be dangerous to our health! It is the *certainty* of the consequences, (even twenty-four hours later on occasion) that will carry any 'learning' in the mind of the student. We convey the message that the 'consequential chickens do come home to roost'. It is also not about winning; it is about the *fair* certainty of any consequence *as related to behaviour, as related to the right affected or abused by that behaviour.*

Deferred consequences

As contrasted to immediate consequences for repeated disruptive or safety issues, a *deferred* consequence is communicated to the student as a 'directed choice'. The example in the first video of a student with a Walkman who refuses to put it away ... The teacher says, "If you choose not to put it away I'll have to follow it up with you at break time." If the student mutters, "I don't care" it is enough to say, "I care" and leave the student with *their* choice (within the fair school rules). It is pointless saying, "You will care!! I'll report you to the head teacher, and to your mother; and ... (!)"

If a student complains that 'other teachers let them have personal stereos in class' or 'chewing gum' or ' ... ' it is important that we do not make our colleagues look inefficient, or ineffective or not as competent or consistent as we are (!)

It is enough to say, "I can check that with Mr _____. What's our school rule for Walkmans in class ..." (This *partial agreement* and refocusing to the fair rule keeps the student focussed on the primary issue *at that point* in the lesson.)

It is pointless trying to simply snatch the object – particularly with challenging students. We can hardly *make* the student hand over ear-rings, mobile phones or Walkmans.

If their behaviour is *too* distracting or *repeatedly* distracting, we may have to consider a time-out consequence.

Most students on receipt of a *directed choice* (“David ... I know it’s enjoyable to listen to ... You know the rule. In your bag or on my desk till break time. Thanks.”) Most students will put the object away when given take-up-time with the directed choice. Take-up-time is important following a directed choice. The teacher does not need to ‘stand over’ the student (as it were) until they put the object away. Take-up-time can convey our trust and confidence in the student’s willingness to co-operate (or at least comply!)

If they persist the *deferred* consequence clarifies the student’s responsibility *at that point*. We leave the responsibility with the student and engage in certain follow-up.

Question 10

In some of our classes students put each other down and swear – how should we respond to this?

I once heard a speaker say (not a teacher) that teachers get too uptight about what he termed ‘street language’ where students say things like dickhead, a__hole, w__ker, ‘poofter’, ‘gay-boy’ etc. He suggested, strongly, that this language is mostly used in fun. ‘Street banter’. I agree. My response, though, is that the classroom is not merely ‘a street’.

When a student calls a classmate a poofter (in fun, non-homophobically) we still need (in my view) to give the student a quiet reminder about considered language *in our school*.

With some students it can become a ‘conversational habit’ if we allow it.

- Have a school-wide approach to addressing inappropriate language. This needs to include an initial discussion the tutor group about put-downs, *considered* language, as part of our establishment process. ‘No put-down zone’ is both an aim and an expectation, and requires our *relaxed* vigilance to protect rights of students who are overly teased, made fun of, or verbally abused.
- Distinguish between :-
 - frustration swearing (loud or ‘quiet’)
 - *sotto voce* swearing or inappropriate language eg : the muttered ‘shit!’ – I sometimes reply, “Where?” (Humour is only appropriate when the situation is not tense and the humour *defuses* the tension and is not sarcastic or seeking to ‘score’.)
 - ‘conversational swearing’ (“See the great f__ing game with Man. U. on TV?”)
 - Abusive swearing to a student or teacher.

Each of these expressions of inappropriate language, put-downs or swearing needs to be addressed differently. Clearly not *all* swearing is the same in degree or intent.

The principles and skills discussed earlier in question 6 are relevant here.

(See, also, the discussion paper *Addressing Hostile and Aggressive Behaviour*.

This paper discusses issues such as aggressive behaviour, fighting, swearing and crisis situations in behaviour management.)

- With any abusive swearing it is essential to firmly and assertively – address the student with direct eye-contact. “I don’t swear at you I don’t expect you to swear at me.” / “That language is unacceptable)or totally unacceptable) in *our* classroom.”

If the student retorts that it was the other student’s fault :- “He started it, the f___ing idiot.” (Even if it is true) a firm, calm assertive ‘blocking’ is enough. A blocking hand gesture and, “We can talk about that later, I’m reminding you, now, that language is not acceptable here.” It will also help if we can address the student aside from his peers (if possible) to avoid any overt confrontation and to minimise peer-audience focus.

If the student is too angry or distraught and cannot, will not, settle down we will need to use time-out options. Some students get angrily embarrassed in front of their class peers; some want to prove a point, “that no-one can tell me what to do and what I can or can’t f___ing say!”

On some occasions, with students with emotional behaviour disorder, it will help to preface any correction with :- “I know you’re upset, angry, that language is unacceptable here. How can I help you to ...”

The context is important.

- If there is a recurring pattern of put-down language in the classroom it will be crucial to have a classroom meeting (at a calmer, prepared, time) and discuss with students the issue of put-downs, what they are and what they do, and discuss *perspective-taking* : How do people feel when ...? Why do some

people feel that they have to put others down? What are they trying to do?

What response should we make? Why?

The classroom meeting should re-emphasise *our right* to a safe place here in our classroom; a no put-down zone.

Such a meeting is best conducted with a colleague who has had some experience of conducting whole-class meetings (see *Cracking the Hard Class* chapter 2).

Question 11

How important is a time-out policy and plan in addressing and managing disruptive and challenging behaviour?

It is an essential option *within* a whole-school approach.

It allows cool-off-time for the student and the teacher.

It allows the rest of the class to calm, settle and refocus.

It is never an end in itself, it is a short-term, necessary, consequence.

- The *school-wide policy on time-out* needs to have least-to-more intrusive options
 - in class options,
 - colleague assisted (a teacher nearby, where we are able to direct a student to *that* classroom),
 - directing a student to a *supervised time-out room or area*. This is the most difficult policy / practice of time-out. It should be a considered option in a secondary school setting. It needs to be well-planned, staffed at all times and have a clear policy and practice of what should happen when / while the student is in the 'time-out room'.

- When framing the policy / practice we will need to have answered such questions as :-
 - What behaviour reasonably necessitates time-out?
 - Where do we direct the student *to* (for time-out) what are the *practical* options?
 - If we direct a student to leave the classroom to go to time-out and he refuses to go ... what are the realistic / practical options?
Do we send a trusted student to get a senior Teacher? How can we implement that as a working policy?
 - How long should a student normally *be* in time-out? For *just* that class period? For the rest of the day? (Some serious behaviours may necessitate this option).

- On what basis does the student go back to his class?
 - What is the follow-up role of the initiating teacher (the teacher who directed the student *to* time-out)?
 - What is the role of the supervising teacher *during* time-out?
- There need to be clear ‘cues’, and even considered teacher language *when* we direct a student to a time-out setting. We should never call it a ‘sin-bin’ (that is bad theology and bad psychology) nor should we make it a ‘slanging match’ with the student : “Get out!! I’m sick of you and your stupid antics!! Now get out ...!” This is unnecessary and unprofessional – what we need with *any* time-out plan is colleague clarity (in its purpose and application) and no-blame colleague support in its usage. ‘Time-out’, ‘thinking / calming time’, ‘cool-off-time’ describes what the process seeks to enable for the student.
 - Time-out, of itself, does not change a student’ behaviour. It is also crucial that the teacher who initiates the time-out process also be involved in follow-up later that day and certainly before the student comes back into the classroom next period.
 - If a student has been in time-out three times in close succession – across several classes – it will be crucial to set up an *individual behaviour management plan* (for that student). This plan will need to be supported by all the teachers who teach that student.
The purpose of such a plan is to teach the student strategies to cope with their behaviour and learning expectations in a school environment. (See question 11).

Question 12

You have worked extensively with students with emotional and behavioural disorders. How can we realistically support students with EBD? – and their teachers?

Teachers are used to *behaviour disorders* such as *attention deficit disorder* or ADDH (with hyperactivity). This disorder is prevalent among a small, but significant, percentage of our students. We are also increasingly aware of children who present with *autistic spectrum behaviours*. We have also been familiar, for many years, with the general term EBD – *Emotional Behavioural Disorder*. This term can also be inclusive of behaviours that result from ADDH and Autism Spectrum.

Increasingly, too, students are prescribed medication related to their behaviour disorder (the most common being Ritalin or dexamphetamine). These amphetamine-based medications can often help stimulate that part of the brain that engages attention / focus / concentration (it targets the attention *deficit* aspect of that part of the brain).

No medication can *teach* behaviour – this is obvious. Medication can aid brain function; it cannot teach *what to do with increased attention and focus*. When a student says, “I’ve got ADDH”, we need to help him focus on his behaviour / learning skills (whether he is on medication or not).

Causative Pathology

Some children come from home backgrounds that create, or contribute, to stressful and disturbing behaviours in school settings : substance abuse of parents; serious family dysfunction; poor / inadequate dietary intake; structural poverty; long-term unemployment; family housing ... even a lack of *some* reasonable, stable, male influence in their extended family dynamics.

Most of these factors are not ‘new’ to the challenges of teachers and schools.

What is different, in our present time, is our commitment to inclusive schooling

(and education), a commitment to achieve support of students with special needs, and a non-punitive approach to behaviour management (at least in principle!) This has put a lot of pressure on schools (natural pressure) to be supportively inclusive to children with special needs and to meet the overall demands of a National Curriculum.

What we can / cannot control

It is important to remember we cannot control the 'causative pathology' of our students' behaviour from home to school setting noted here (substance abuse, family dysfunction ...). We can control what we seek to do to support these students *within our schools* and to work as constructively as possible with their parents. Without minimising or disregarding a child's diagnosed behaviour disorder, or any 'causative pathology', it is important to remember that one cannot control many of the factors outside our schools that affect the behaviour of some of our most disturbed and disruptive students.

When addressing any recurrent challenging behaviours, whether EBD or not, a whole-school approach is crucial. It is not a simplistic, "Oh well he's your kid on your class (or lesson) ..." The emphasis needs to be, "He is 'our' student, in our school. What can we do to *practically, realistically*, help the student *and* the teachers who have the responsibility to teach, encourage and support him?"

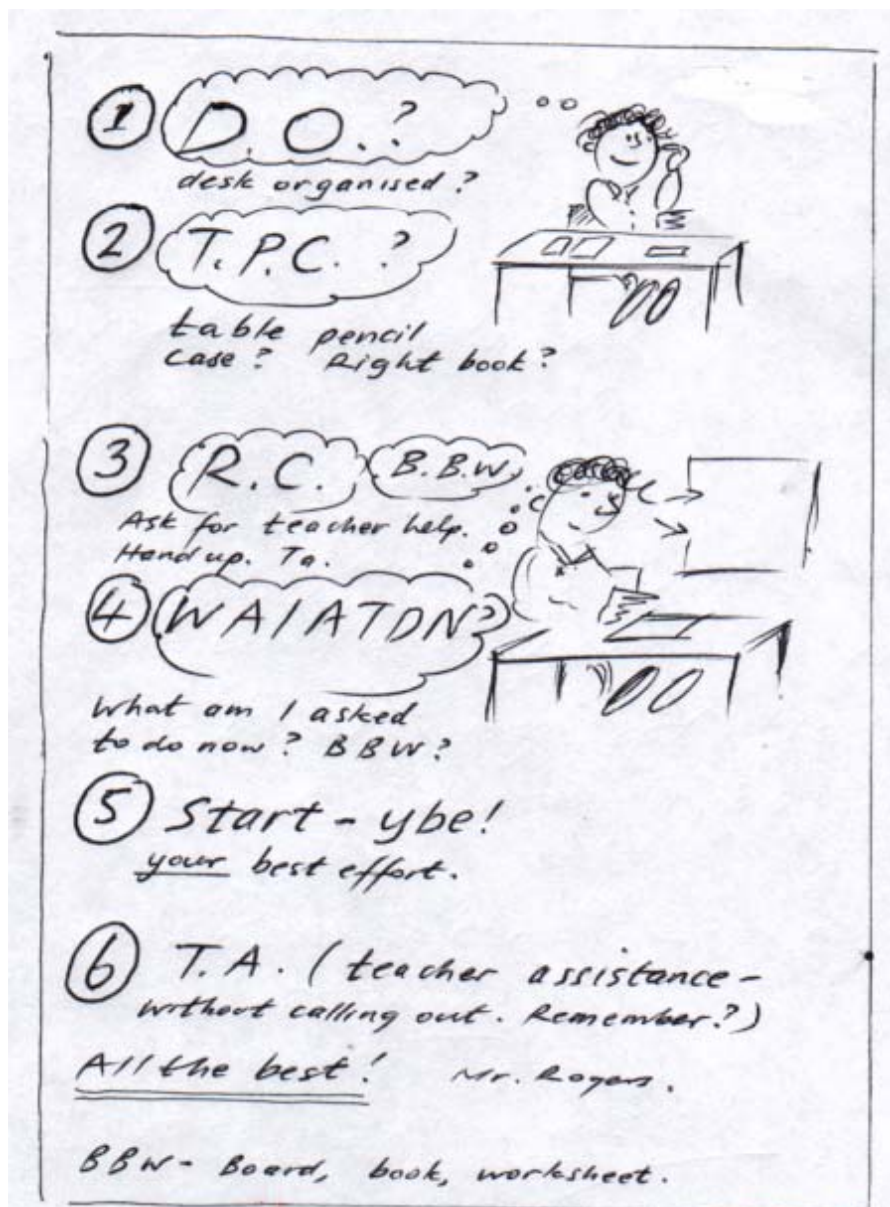
- Whatever the child's circumstances we also need to remember that behaviour is not only (or merely) conditioned (by causative pathology) it is also *learned*; it is also *learned in context*. If it is learned (poorly, badly) in other contexts behaviours can be re-learned in the schooling context. This is a crucial stance to take; it avoids us (as teachers) re-victimising the child relative to their background, 'causative pathology' or behaviour disorder.
- A common *behaviour profile* : early in term one, the first few weeks is a crucial step in supporting students and teachers alike.
We need to ask questions such as :

- how *frequent* is distracting disruptive behaviour of this student? How frequently – each lesson – does the student call out?; push in line?; seat wander?; task-avoid / refuse?; exhibit inappropriate loudness?; attentional clowning?; obstructive, challenging and defiant behaviour?:
 - how *durable* are such behaviours? More than ‘bad-day syndrome’? Or several times each lesson, each day?
 - How *general* are such behaviours? Do these students exhibit such behaviours across *all* class with *all* teachers or are they selectively disruptive depending on which subject, which teacher?
Students who are selectively disruptive (only in *some* classes, with *some* teachers) can hardly be term ‘EBD’.
 - The other crucial aspect of any behaviour profile is the *intensity* of any distracting / disruptive behaviour; intensity of behaviour is normally more ‘occasional’ than is ‘frequency’ of behaviour.
- If a student ‘presents’ with frequent, durable and general behaviours that distract / disrupt learning and safety it is crucial that an *individual behaviour management plan* is developed for the student. All behaviour plans, such as these, are our best attempt to assist a student to be self-aware about their behaviour and to self-monitor and regulate their behaviour (without ‘constant’ teacher direction, reminder or discipline).
 - A ‘case-supervisor’ (acting on behalf of all the teachers who work with the student) will develop the plan, one-to-one, with the student in question. This process is labour-intensive but often has positive outcomes for the student (and his teachers alike).
 - In developing such a plan the ‘case-supervisor’ (or ‘behaviour-tutor’ / or ‘adult teacher-mentor’ – titles vary across schools) will help the student to focus on the academic / or social-survival skills he needs *at school*. The emphasis is educational not (primarily) a counselling approach. For example in the first video an example is given of a student with ADD who engages in task-

avoidance and distracting behaviours. He has a huge pencil case (with pens that do not work, toys, old food etc). His desk is overly cluttered. He cannot seem to find the right book. He is disorganised. These behaviours are not uncommon in students who present with ADDH spectrum behaviours.

In developing an individual plan with any student the 'case-supervisor' works with the student across several 'phases' :

- *discussing their current, frequent, pattern of behaviour and how it affects others* in class time. In discussing such behaviour the 'supervising teacher' will often use picture cue (drawings) or role-play. Any 'role-play' is an attempt to illustrate behaviour; to raise self-awareness. It should never be used to embarrass or humiliate the student (always in one-to-one sessions). We should also ask the student if they mind us 'showing them what it look or sounds like in class when they ...'
- *Explaining the need to work, together, on a plan* to help the student with his behaviour and learning in class time.
- *Identifying the specific behaviours and even modelling them to the student* (often this creates good-humoured laughter).
- *Encouraging the student to practise the plan* with the case-supervisor (the behaviours he needs to work on in class).
- *Explaining how each teacher will support him with his plan* (this support should be given quietly, unobtrusively, so as not to unnecessarily embarrass or 'single' out the student!)
- It is also important to teach the student *how* to fairly and reasonable get teacher assistance during busy on-task learning time.



In the student's plan (in the video vignette) the case-supervisor discusses and teaches a student several 'academic survival skills' (obviously he does not use that term) :-

- how to have an organised desk (and why);
- have a 'table pencil case' (a small pencil case with a small ruler, one red and blue pen, an eraser, no sharpener, a couple of pencils);
- colour band his workbooks (a band of colour, or small coloured disks, across the bottom of each book to easily, quickly, identify the subject

class book). Some students have half a dozen class books on their class table along with the large, weighty, cluttered pencil case.

- *How to come to any task, and focus, and begin ...*
The student is also taught to *read carefully* (board, book, or worksheet). If they struggle with their reading they are encouraged to ask for teacher (or fellow student *if comfortable*) to quietly support their reading of the set task. (This is discussed and practised; all *the elements of any plan need to be understood in one-to-one rehearsal time.*)
- The student is taught to ask themselves the question, “*What am I asked to do now?*” (with this set task : board, book or worksheet). This is a question some students easily, even habitually, forget to ask themselves. It needs to follow a *careful reading* of the set task.

These skills are *practised* (in the one-to-one setting) and set out on a small reminder card (postcard sized or smaller). When I have developed such plans with students I often add small cartoons alongside the key elements of their plan (see example earlier).

The key to any such plan is that the case-supervisor develops a supportive, teaching, relationship with the student in developing the behaviour skills in question.

It will also be important to discuss with the student :-

- who they can sit with (in class), who can really be helpful (in terms of not hassling but helping – quietly particularly in reading, clarify ...). It is important that the student is comfortable about the choice / suggestion of who they sit with.
- who will *know about*, and *see*, and have a copy of the student’s plan,
- how they will get feedback (from their regular class teacher(s) *and their ‘case supervisor’*),
- and that there will be a daily (or in some cases a twice-weekly) review meeting with their ‘case-supervisor’ about ‘how their plan is going ... the difference it is making ... any concerns? Any modifications, changes, we need to make ...?’

It is also crucial that each teacher in the teaching team understands the student's plan (and why this student needs such a plan need it ...), and supports the plan as developed by the case-supervisor. Such plans will only be effective with on-going teacher encouragement and support *across the teaching team*.

Of course some students do not respond to any supportive interventions, options, plans, counselling. If a student continues to behave in *repeatedly* distracting, disruptive or dysfunctional ways – day-after-day - the school has a right to permanent exclusion options. It is always a difficult step but no student (or their parent(s) at times(!)) have a right to 'hold a school to ransom' by on-going, daily, hourly, behaviour that creates unsafe environments or effectively block any whole-class teaching and learning. The most common example of this is extreme oppositional defiance 'disorder' behaviours that evidence in extreme hostility, bullying and aggression. *Any* exclusion options for such students need to be based in collegial review, as well as head teacher decision.

Thankfully most students in the 'EBD range' do respond to such support options as outlined here (see also *Behaviour Recovery* Paul Chapman, London – 2004).

For *some* students school is the sanest, most secure, part of their day.
For *all* students school should be a safe, sane, secure place – after all, they spend a third of their waking day there – so do we! We need to create – collegially – safety margins to support one another in managing challenging students.

Question 13

Is there a place for using rewards as a way of motivating a challenging class?

My colleagues and I prefer to use the term *behaviour enhancement outcomes* (B.E.O.s) – it sounds less like a 'reward' and more of a celebration / acknowledgement of effort. It also helps 'confuse' those educators who say we should never use 'rewards' (i.e. : stickers, stamps, charts, pens, reward cards to trade ... etc).

I have used the '3 Bs' (biscuits, board games even BBQs) with hard classes. I have used 'raffle systems' with whole groups. Group rewards (or B.E.O.s) are often more effective than individual B.E.O.s with challenging *groups* of students.

Yes, it is a form of 'behaviour modification' but it is all out in the open. We let the students know – in advance – that when we reach 50 points on our class chart we will have a 'celebration' (a B.E.O.) . Points can range from 20 points equal to a five minute free chat time (towards the close of the lesson) 'when we keep within our class plan for partner-voices during class work time ... (see the example of the class 'noise' graph in vignette 13 in the first video).

I have had a number of very challenging classes where I have used B.E.O.s as a *part of* an overall 'feature' of a fresh-start and always found it successful. Some of these case examples of those classes are noted in the book : *Cracking the Hard Class* Paul Chapman, London. See also the book : *How To Manage Children's Challenging Behaviour* : chs. 3 and 4. (See suggested reading.)

Encouragement

What is crucial to any support we give to students is the way we characteristically use encouragement. Encouragement is the most effective and *normative* 'B.E.O.'

When we encourage our students we consider the difference between praise and encouragement, particularly for students whose self-esteem and learning are often reflected in their disruptive behaviours.

I have seen students who have written one or two sentences, or a few Maths algorithms, or a few answers on a worksheet and heard teachers say, “That’s brilliant!”, “That’s wonderful ... fantastic ... great! ...”.

Is it?

Encouragement is crucial to a child’s self-esteem; some sense of affirmation, accomplishment, confidence, progress and development. When we *globally* praise, however, students do not often believe that those few sentences they have written are actually ‘brilliant’ (and what does it say about our use of such as an intensely, evaluative word?)

Some students will only make *any* effort if we keep saying their work (or behaviour) is ‘brilliant’.

When encouraging our students we find it more effective, honest, fair and appropriate to :-

- *focus on the student’s effort, energy, time, thought* (in his learning application or behaviour) eg “You started quickly Oliver ... Your table is organised and you’re into it.” Of course tone, manner, a smile and some quiet *joie de vivre* will carry the genuineness of the *descriptive* comment and feedback.
- *use descriptive feedback*. I recall teaching in a Science class (some years back) and I quietly explained to a lad (year 9) that it was so much easier for me to follow how he had done the experiment by the way he had set out his table and in pictorial cues (particularly as I am not a science teacher). He smiled and said, “Ta” and the lad next to him said, “Can you see my work too?”
“Sure.” I had not said (or needed to say) his work was ‘great’, ‘marvellous’ or ‘brilliant’. Or, if we do use these terms, at least explain what we mean by them.

I have seen these positive sorts of responses from students countless times when giving verbal feedback. The principle is the same in written encouragement : not merely ‘8 out of 10 great work!’. Explain, descriptively, (as briefly as is appropriate) what ‘8 out of 10-ness’ means.

- Keep the encouragement when given in class time 'quiet', 'private' – not a loud comment, “Oh look how wonderful Craig’s story is!” (In my view we should never hold up a child’s work without their permission, or *force* them to read aloud, or do work on the board in front of the class.)

The quiet, descriptive, positive feedback alongside the student is much more appreciated than the global, overly ebullient, praise.

- Avoid qualifying the 'praise', encouragement or feedback. Eg : “You’ve written half a page here Paul ...” (this to a student who has been struggling with his writing). “ ... you’ve got some really interesting words for sea mammals here ... The way you described that dolphin for example ...”

All this is *descriptive* and positive. We do not need to add the qualifier :-

- “*Why* can’t you do that *all* the time?”
- “*If* only you ... then ...”
- “*But* you could have done better if ...”

Yes we need to remind the student to check for date, spelling etc; we do not need – though – to qualify the encouragement itself.

One of the most powerful ‘encouragers’ is a positive note home to a student’s parent(s). Its effectiveness, though, depends (as all encouragement) on whether the teacher has a workable relationship with the student and there is mutual respect.

Question 14

You mentioned (in the first video) that harassment of teachers is a factor in some challenging classes – could you develop that point?

This is the most difficult and disturbing issue of all to address relative to the challenging class.

Bullying, harassment, does exist in schools. Some students do harass, and bully, some teachers. They are also able to gutlessly garner collusive peer ‘support’ for their power games (“I was *only* joking!”)

The harassment of teachers is an issue in our schools that we must take seriously whenever, however, it expresses itself. It may be hard for some teachers to believe this happens in schools (some schools) – it does. It is *always* unwanted, *always* unacceptable, and should never be taken lightly, or tolerated (at all).

Like any bullying the bully is seeking to exercise some psychological and social power; to gain some self / ‘peer kudos’.

Almost all bullying / harassment of teachers is psychological in expression : comments about the way the teacher is teaching, their clothes, sexuality, voice, and speech (particularly for teachers from non-English speaking backgrounds).

Sometimes the bullying is expressed non-verbally (in suggestive poses or simulated gestures about a teacher’s sexuality ...). It is often expressed in repeated innuendo, rumours, or written forms.

It happens in schools because some teachers tolerate it, or ignore the sexist comment. Some teachers genuinely do not know what to do when students make derogatory comments, or wind other students up in collusive derogation, or make sexist comments; some teachers (sadly) are anxious about asking for colleague support for fear they will be seen as weak, ineffective or incompetent. Teachers (in some schools) are not supported; there is a tacit message of, “Well if you can’t manage a class it’s down to you ...” so any bullying of the teacher is effectively excused or rationalised as a teacher’s weak discipline!

The bullying I am talking about here is not the occasional silly or ill-considered comment, or even the one-off ill-thought, silly 'larking around' ... derogatory or sexist remark; it is the *intentional, purposeful, selective, repeated* psychological harassment of a teacher that we have to address early, decisively and unambiguously.

Of course we need to address any one-off comments with confident assertion too – before the student(s) get the impression that this teacher is an 'easy target'. (See the discussion paper *Dealing With Hostile and Aggressive Behaviours*.)

When addressing the issue of harassment we need to assure the teacher (as with *any* victim of *any* bullying) that they are right to report and seek support. As in any bullying, of any kind, (whether student or teacher) early intervention is crucial.

Bullying will rarely stop 'of itself'; it needs to be confronted. Bullies 'trade' in secrecy from adults (not from their peers – they need peer approval of their 'status'). It is essential to expose the bullying behaviour early, and intervene to support the teacher in an 'accountability process' with the students concerned. This gives the teacher their *supported* opportunity to directly speak with the student and call the student to account for their behaviour.

An 'accountability conference' with a bullying perpetrator needs to be planned and supported by a senior teacher.

The student is called into a meeting with the teacher he / she has been harassing. It is crucial that the senior teacher works with the teacher (who is victim to the harassment) :-

- Get the facts clear, written down, specifically before the meeting. The student's harassing *behaviour* has to be clearly understood before the meeting; both the verbal and non-verbal aspects of the harassing behaviour.
- Plan with the teacher *what* they will say when they directly face their perpetrator. It is also important to remember this young person is not *defined* merely as 'the bully'; this is a student – one of our students we are seeking to

engage with, explain, and bring accountability and restitution to – that is our aim, our purpose, in this meeting. It is not merely a confrontation exercise.

- The facilitator will clarify to the student why this meeting has been called (the tone is serious; formal) “I want to talk to you about what has been happening in 8D ... You’ll have your say later ...” The student is given a right of reply later in the meeting. The senior teacher the sets out, describes, the bullying *behaviour* (without attacking the student – tempting as that may be!)
- The teacher who has been the victim of this harassment then faces their perpetrator and briefly, clearly, specifically, (without hostility or verbal aggression) :
 - *describes what the bully has done, said, or suggested* (even non-bullying ...); “This is what you have been doing, (saying, suggesting ...) in 8D”. It is important to be *specific* about the student’s harassing behaviour. This is why it is helpful to have the behaviours recorded beforehand.
 - *explains how such behaviour affects the teacher’s right to respect, fair treatment, and how it is affecting the teaching and learning in the classroom.*
 - *Explains why this behaviour has to stop and what they –rightfully – expect of the student in the future.* It is also important that the tone of this meeting is formal yet respectful.
- The student perpetrator is given a right of reply. Most students will ‘discount’ or ‘defend’ their behaviour : “I was just joking when I said Mr _____ was a pooffer!” “It’s no big deal I was only mucking around – anyway I wasn’t the only one!” “Others were doing it too ...”
It is essential that the facilitator refocuses these discounting comments ...
“You might think it is a joke but in our school it is *not* a joke ... because ...”
“Even if others were doing it (be brief and specific) *you* are responsible for what you do and say ...”

Some students will immediately apologise. What has to be clarified at this point in the meeting is that this behaviour *is* bullying; why it is wrong and totally unacceptable and that it must stop.

- The student is then 'asked' what he / she will do – specifically – to make this *behaviour* stop (the emphasis is always on the student's behaviour and how it attacks / abuses the teacher's rights ...)
- Some students will fold their arms and say nothing. In this case the facilitator slowly, firmly, calmly says, "Perhaps you're saying it's only a joke (because you're not speaking to us) ... it's not a joke *because* ..." In other words the facilitator reframes (aloud) what the student is *probably* (internally) saying to themselves.
- It is also important to reframe basic rights / responsibilities of the student as related to the incidents recorded.
- Lastly the facilitator will point out that there will be a review meeting in a week's time to see 'how things are going' in 8D (in terms of the student's behaviour ...) This puts the student on notice – properly. It is not a threat it is a call to change.
- It is also crucial that the teacher and student conclude the meeting as amicably as possible. The role of the facilitating colleague is crucial here (and this aspect will have been discussed *prior* to the meeting).
This student is *not* our enemy; we are addressing their *behaviour* in light of the rights and responsibilities of all the members of our school community.
- Where there are several collusive students who collude with the 'instigating perpetrator' it is normally advisable to address the 'collusive students' one-to-one. A similar approach is pursued as before, though in these cases the dialogue begins with ... "This is what has been happening in 8D. What do you

know about this ... how has your behaviour made it easy for bullying to occur to Mr _____ Mrs _____ ...?"

Collusive bullies 'clap', 'whistle', 'laugh along', or tactically collude. They also need to be clearly (respectfully) confronted with their behaviour. A *review meeting* may also be necessary with these collusive students.

- Senior staff will need to keep a running review going with any harassment by students, and if necessary formal due processes (including a parent meeting) will need to be pursued within the school's harassment policy. Where necessary this will occasion a temporary, or full, exclusion from the school.

The earlier the accountability process is engaged the more successful the outcome (for all concerned).

Longer term some teachers may benefit from some professional development in the area of assertion skills and confident behaviour leadership. (See question 17.)

Within a supportive colleague culture staff will have an attitude of *colleague watchfulness* about potential harassment behaviours in challenging classes. If a teacher (for some reason) does not come forward to seek understanding and support then others should approach their colleague to share their concerns and offer support.

The issue of harassment affects *fundamental* rights to feel safe, to basic respect and the right to engage one's professional role as a teacher.

Question 15

Supply teachers can get a hard time with challenging classes – how should we support them?

Put yourself in the position of a supply teacher – just for a few moments. They arrive (hopefully early), they go to the front office to ask where / what class they have that day etc. In some schools nobody seems to know which class (or where) this teacher is supposed to be. They go to the staff room; nobody says hello (though they are obviously a ‘new face’ – a new teacher ...). They reach for a cup to make a drink and someone says, “Hey – that’s my cup!” Another says, “Are you *the supply?*” (Rather than the basic, civil, human :- “Hello, welcome ... my name is ...”). “You’ve probably got the lunatic class 9E!”

Not a great start to a supply teacher’s day! It can feel as if one is a bit of a ‘lost sheep’, or treated as merely a ‘baby sitter’ for the day.

What a difference it would make if the supply teacher had :

- a friendly, warm welcome;
- was introduced at the staff briefing;
- a ‘teaching buddy’ for the day (not to ‘hold their hand’ but to be available for the normal queries ...);
- was given a decent, *readable*, map with the classroom marked (even better, a walk through the school to get a sense of where one is ...);
- was made clear how the school’s time-out plan operates (even the specific language one uses and who / where to direct a student to etc ...).
- If there are any really challenging students who are ‘catalytic’ (given half a chance) there should be the *option* of ‘enrolling these students in other class(es) for the day. It can be really difficult for a supply teacher who does not know this ‘challenging’ individual to have to cope with the challenge of leading the class for the day let alone supporting and managing some of the most challenging students in the school.
- Any essential routines and essential features of the school’s behaviour policy should be communicated clearly to the supply colleague;

- Some schools have a user-friendly 'supply teacher kit' handed to their colleague on arrival to the school. For example the supply teacher should be aware of basic routines such as bell times / whether students line-up' before they go into class, toilet cues ...
- It will always help for a senior colleague to introduce their supply teacher colleague to the class group (positively) – even at secondary level. What should not happen is the patronising introduction where the senior staff member says, "This is Mr Smith, he'll look after you while your teacher is away. And if there's any problems Mr Smith you know where to send them to!"
- The supply colleague should also be made aware of 'colleague safety-valve options' (see question one).

If a class group has given a supply teacher a really hard, nasty, experience there should be immediate follow-up by a senior teacher with the whole class and an apology process engaged and passed on to the supply teacher.

Students also need to be reminded that we treat *all* visiting teachers with respect, courtesy and manners.

See also the book *Effective Supply Teaching* (Rogers) 2002. Paul Chapman : London (A Sage Publishing Company) [Chapter 7, particularly, outlines the ways in which we can support our supply teaching colleagues within our schools].

Question 16

Is it ever too late to turn around, or 'change', a challenging class?

Sometimes – on some occasions – the behaviour of many students within a class group is so fractious, divisive, attentionally distracting (on a frequent basis); the catalysts have so entrenched their cliques and factions that the class might need to be 'divided-up'. The 'catalytic' students are given a clear, unambiguous, choice (with support offered) to change their behaviour or to be 're-enrolled' in another class group.

On rare occasions the class teacher may need to be 'taken off' that class and given a fresh start. This is obviously the least elegant solution of all and can be very unsettling to a teacher's professional self-esteem.

It also needs to be remembered that on *some* occasions the teacher's characteristic behaviour is so unreasonable, even untenable, that the best solution *is* to take the teacher off the class. This is always a difficult issue and requires very clear evidence (over time); a due process; (even union involvement on occasions) and should always be conducted with professional probity.

The fresh-start approach

In the first video we have a strong emphasis on colleague teaming together to work with the class on a 'fresh-start'; this is clearly the ideal.

A teacher knows when they are – in a sense – 'losing' their class :- when the behaviour of a significant group of students is affecting peer-behaviour and learning in negative ways. When early follow-up of individual students has not seen a positive change in attitude and behaviour then a 'fresh-start' is often an effective (and creative) means for change in attitude and behaviour (of the class and their teacher).

This fresh-start option essentially gives the students – as a class group – a shared voice about common concerns about 'how the class is going'. The aim is to build up that 'silent majority' (the 50% to 60%) engaging their 'silent' (sometimes active)

disapproval into active opportunity to share their concerns and work on shared solutions for change.

The vehicle for this process is normally a classroom-meeting process built around several questions :-

- *what is working well (at the moment) in our class and why?;*
- *what is not working well and why?*
- *what can we do to improve things here and now?*
(what do we need to do to change things and how?)

These questions can be explained through a formal writing process or through an 'open' classroom meeting approach. We have sought to model this in the first video in several vignettes.

The classroom meeting process is often quite revealing; the issues of concern in a challenging class are rarely one-sided. Students know what is happening (and often why) and they have a keen sense of what is fair, what is reasonable and what is 'right'.

The meeting process will need planning and some guided rules (if it is an 'open' meeting). Even issues like seating (in the round) need to be carefully considered beforehand.

Some published rules for the discussion will need to be made clear eg :-
one at a time; (a speaking symbol will help – a class member can only speak / contribute when holding 'the contribution symbol'. In the vignette in the first video we used a small box. Such 'symbols' are surprisingly effective. The other rules are obvious :-

we share respectfully (no put-downs, slanging-off at anyone);
we disagree respectfully.

It will help to set a time limit and have student 'recorders' to note down concerns, issues, and suggestions,(two students, one male, one female).

The classroom meeting process is not only a 'vehicle for giving students an active voice it also re-enlists and re-engages the students' goodwill.

Beginning the process

Students are informed that there will be a specific classroom meeting (in the next week) to address issues of concern about behaviour and learning in our class. This is best communicated to the class with a support colleague (as we have modelled in the classroom vignette in the first video) eg :-

“ ... Mr Smith and I are really concerned about the behaviour of a number of students in our class – and the effect of that behaviour on teaching and learning. We’re talking about more than occasional ‘mucking around’. I’m not going to give you a lecture because you know better than anyone what it’s been like these last several weeks in our class. You know how concerned Mr Rogers and I are about how things are going. We’re having a special meeting where we can raise, share and discuss our concerns. We want you to think about this between now and next _____ when we’ll have our class meeting ...”

On the day of the classroom meeting itself we begin by explaining to the class group that, “This is your opportunity to raise your concerns (as we said last week ...). At the close of the meeting we’ll take your concerns, ideas suggestions and report back on ... We’ll use your feedback to develop a whole-class opportunity to make a fresh-start as a class ...”

On the day that we give the feedback to the class, the class teacher (and their support colleague) will record the *common* concerns / issues / suggestions on large charts for sharing the feedback.

“You remember last ... we had a class meeting where you raised *your* concerns about our class (as we did with you as teachers). Your concerns are also our concerns; we – too – are members of our class group.

“We want to share with you now your concerns and positive ideas and suggestions ...”

The students’ concerns and suggestions always revolve around how we can have a safe class, a class where we can learn well (without unfair distraction /

disruption) and a class where we respect and treat one another fairly. Of course these are ideals – *but the right ideals*. It is then worth translating those ideals into some core, reasonable, expressed rights / responsibilities / rules with a strong emphasis on *our class*. Eg : WE ALL HAVE A RIGHT TO FEEL SAFE IN OUR CLASS : To feel safe here we remember to ... (we then list the key responsibilities that support that aim). An example of such a ‘plan’ is noted in the discussion paper *A Fresh Start :- a re-establishment plan for a classroom group*.

“Every student here makes a difference. Every student’s behaviour here affects *every other student* in ways that help or hurt.

We all share the same place, space, and reason for being here. *We all* share the same basic feelings and needs in our classroom community ...”

When students and teachers can see and believe that they have needs in common they can then be encouraged (even expected) to work together and support one another.

The fresh-start process re-affirms those shared values, common needs and rights and responsibilities essential for a learning community in a school.

The fresh-start process also works to change the spiral of negative feelings, experiences, behaviours the class has known up to this point.

As goodwill is re-affirmed and modelled and extended through this fresh-start process, the class (as a group) begins to experience what it can mean to be a class that works together with each other and their teacher.

There is no single, simple, strategy that can change challenging behaviour in a challenging class just as there is no single reason why a class *is* challenging (or becomes challenging).

Whatever approach we take to the hard / challenging class *it is essential that we work collegially to :-*

- listen to our colleagues’ concerns and anxieties without easy judgement or blame;
- harness the *conscious, active* goodwill of teachers;
- give the students a *guided* voice for, and about their concerns;

- re-address the essential rights and responsibilities of all members of the classroom community;
- and work with the class, and their teacher, to *realise* their potential.

Question 17

You are a strong advocate of colleague mentoring – how do we realistically develop such an approach?

The colleague mentoring my colleagues and I engage in is an elective process based in professional trust. No-one is ever forced into mentorship; colleagues are invited into a professionally supportive journey.

The aims of such mentoring are :-

- to give moral support to our colleagues;
- to engage in meaningful professional self-awareness and reflection;
- to work with a trusted colleague (over time) on professional development with special reference to behaviour-leadership skills.

It is important to stress that this is not an evaluative approach, or linked to assessment review in any way. Its primary aim is moral support and professional development. Think of it as the opposite of OFSTED (no offence you understand).*

All colleague support needs to be set in a safe, trusting, environment. Yes, there is a risk with that trust (there always is when you invite a colleague into your class to work – directly – with you).

This kind of mentoring should never be set within a 'superior' / 'inferior' context. The mentor / 'mentee' work together, in challenging classes; the mentor experiencing first hand the struggle and challenge of 'hard classes' and the struggle of their 'mentee' colleague.

* OFSTED involves *formal*, Government, inspection / evaluation of teachers – and schools. (This is not normative practice in Australia.)

This shared teaching also allows the mentor to both model and observe; this becomes a basis for collegial discussion and feedback.

When giving feedback (from mentor to 'mentee') it is always descriptive never judgemental or personal.

Eg : "Did you notice ...?", "Were you aware of ...?", "Did you hear yourself say ...?"
These questions raise professional self-awareness.

I have seen teachers pace up and down in front of a class to try and settle them; I have seen them use characteristically loud voices, seemingly unaware that these teacher behaviours actually *over-stimulate* the class group.

One of the areas we often focus on is one's *characteristic* use of corrective language and the effect that can have on how students co-operate with teacher expectations (within rights, rules, responsibilities) – see also question 6.

All of us – at times – can become habituated in ineffective or unhelpful behaviours (as a class teacher). We may be unaware of both what is it we *do* that is ineffective but also unaware of *the effect* that some of our characteristic behaviours have on our students.

Mentoring, as a professional development option, needs to be :

- *effective and invitational*. It should never be implied that mentor-coaching is only for ineffective, inadequate or struggling teachers. Of course 'struggling teachers' do benefit enormously from this kind of mentoring. Any success, however, depends on the colleague seeing a need, and purpose, in such a shared, professional, journey.
- *seen as purposeful* in a professional development sense; colleagues often engage in mentoring within a 'challenging class context' but the benefits also involve

- *based in shared aims* about how the ‘mentor’ / ‘mentee’ relationship will work together in the classroom.

Questions like :“How will the mentor-colleague be introduced to the class by the regular children teacher? How will they team-teach? (Even careful thought about where each teacher will stand in relation to one another during whole-class teaching time). Should the mentor colleague intervene in discipline settings *within the class* if the regular colleague (the ‘mentee’) is facing a challenging discipline situation that is getting out of hand? – and How should the mentor address such situations? All these issues need to be discussed *beforehand* and ‘cues’ planned for how a mentor colleague might ‘intervene’.

- *Based in a shared-purpose about practices and skills.* No practices and skills are value free. It does matter what we do, and say, as teacher/leaders. In mentor-coaching colleagues work together on discipline practice in terms of core practices and the sorts of skills that support those practices. For example, I have worked with many colleagues who struggle with settling, calming, focusing a class during the corridor-to-classroom entry, and then the first few minutes as students settle to their seats. There are practices and skills that can enable a ‘calmer’ more ‘purposeful’ establishing (of a class lesson).

If a teacher is very loud, overly physically active (pacing, gesticulating) it often correlates with restlessness in students. If the management language is too interrogative, or questioning, in form it will often send the wrong message to students : eg : “*Why* are you pushing and shoving?”, “*Would* you all please face the front and listen?”, “*Can you* please face the front and be quiet?” We do not need to ask questions framed in ‘why’ or ‘would’, it is not a ‘request’ we need to communicate in these contexts it is at the very least a whole class reminder or (more commonly) a direction to ‘settle’, ‘face the front’ (etc).

When we need to remind or direct a class group for whole-class focus, we encourage a calm, confident, positional place at the front of the classroom; scanning the faces of our students as we wait for the residual noise to settle; then we verbally cue with directional language : “*Settling down* everyone (...)” “Eyes and ears this way (...).” “Thanks” – stepping the voice down with each brief direction.

Even the use of ‘thanks’ is more expectational than ‘please’ in this context.

Tactical pausing (...) gives brief attentional ‘take-up-time’ for students , and allows us to scan (smile) and make transitional eye-contact. It can also convey our expectation of co-operation.

These *skills* involve confident tone, manner, and an ‘emotionally-intelligent’ awareness in the teacher. These skills can be meaningfully and practically taught within a mentor-coaching approach.

Shared feedback is always linked to the practices and skills.

Feedback is essential to professional *awareness* and *development* and *growth*. Much of the feedback in our professional is ‘incidental’ (apart from those stressful formal processes from government inspectors!) In mentor-coaching we seek to *descriptively* focus the feedback on a colleague’s behaviour (as a teacher/leader). The place and purpose of feedback is discussed in the early planning meeting between mentor – ‘mentee’. Our ‘mentee’ colleague knows that they will receive, and give, feedback; both positive and *behaviourally- descriptive* in areas where fine-tuning, or change, of behaviour will be of benefit to our ‘mentee’ colleague. At all times the shared aims, common practices and skills of discipline and management are our reference point.

In most professions, mentoring involves feedback; because of the structural / physical isolation that is a feature of day-to-day teaching we often miss out opportunities for non-judgemental peer feedback. The feedback is shared (over tea / coffee) after a teaching session. The feedback focuses on :-

- the *behaviour* of the teacher relative to their leadership in the classroom (their verbal, non-verbal behaviour);

- *it is always non-judgemental* and consciously respectful of our colleague and their feelings;
- it is *descriptive* : “Did you notice what you said when you ...?”, “Were you aware of ...?”
- *It is incremental* (it does not overwhelm our colleague with too much, too quickly);
- *The feedback is the basis for shared growth as professionals.*

Feedback is, naturally, risky but without it we may not be aware (or aware *enough*) of what our *characteristic* language; tone; manner may be like (or its effect on our students’ behaviour, attitude, learning).

Mentor-coaching is time-consuming, labour-intensive, but often very beneficial to one’s professional growth. Getting shared timetable slots is a challenge but often when mentor-coaching is an integral (and valued) aspect of our school’s professional development options it is worth it.

In some larger schools we often have a colleague support group where mentors and ‘mentee’ meet over afternoon tea to discuss / share / laugh at our shared fallibility and encouraging progress(es).

George Eliot (Mary Anne Evans 1819 – 1880) was once asked this question
 “Are you an optimist or a pessimist?”
 “Neither,” came the reply, “I am a *meliorist*.”

A ‘meliorist’ is someone who believes that we can *change things for the better – by persistent, practical effort ...*

When we support our colleagues (and our schools) with a ‘fresh-start’
 ‘*meliorism*’ is back at work.