

Promoting Learning

by **Dr. Marvin Marshall**

Using A Discipline Approach to Promote Learning

This article first appeared in the March, 2003, issue of the Gazette on <teachers.net>.

Read how a simple discipline system is used to tap into internal motivation to promote learning.

The following is a letter sent from a teacher to another teacher who inquired about using the **Raise Responsibility System**. The approach promotes responsible behavior by using INTERNAL motivation.

The writer sent a copy of the letter to me and has given me permission to reproduce and share it.

The simple-to-implement discipline system that promotes both responsibility and learning can be found at <http://www.marvinmarshall.com/aquickstart.htm>.

Marv Marshall

Hello!

Just last year, I too, found Marvin Marshall's ***Discipline without Stress® Punishments or Rewards*** book. My teaching partner and I had been looking for YEARS for a concrete approach to teaching and discipline based on INTERNAL motivation but never ever thought we could really find such a thing. But this is it! We love it! It's a very powerful way to teach and work with people, regardless of their age--even with pre-schoolers.

Because my partner and I were already thinking along the lines of Dr. Marshall's philosophy and had done away with "external motivators" in our classroom (rewards, praise, punishment, competition, etc.), we were able immediately to implement Dr. Marshall's approach and his **Raise Responsibility System** to discipline.

To effectively use his approach, it is important to understand how people are truly motivated. (This is what chapter two of his book discusses.) We had already read a lot of research about this topic and so were in the right frame of mind to start using his hierarchy of social development in our classroom immediately.

If this is all new to you, you may want to first read chapters 1-3 of the book. We had already read the book, ***Why We Do What We Do***, by Deci and Flaste that describes the research findings relating to human motivation. We had also done a lot of thinking about what we had learned.

Motivation research clearly shows that many commonly used techniques, such as rewarding students (to behave, or work quietly, or read, etc.) or imposing consequences (when they have done something inappropriate), are simply counterproductive when it comes to truly motivating them. You can use such techniques to make short-term changes in someone's conduct, but you can never achieve long-lasting results in this way. True change must come from INSIDE an individual, and therefore a teacher must understand how to create an environment in the classroom in which children WANT to learn, WANT to behave appropriately, and WANT to achieve.

The system is proactive in that you teach about responsibility at the outset BEFORE you have discipline problems. This year, we started on the second day of school to introduce the hierarchy of social development. Last year, we began in February just after we had finished reading Marshall's book. You can start whenever you are ready.

We taught the hierarchy just as it is outlined in chapter three of Marshall's book. We had the students draw pictures illustrating each level of the hierarchy and had them come up with examples of what conduct would look like at each of the four levels. We had a number of discussions about the levels. It's very important that THEY come up with examples themselves after you have given some. You can tell from their examples whether or not they truly understand the four levels. We found that all our students picked up these concepts quite easily.

We don't think of this approach as "just a discipline plan." We think of it as a way to inspire young people to be the best possible people that they can be. The approach lends itself so well to helping them see very clearly how they can make changes in their conduct, their thinking, their choices, and their actions.

So although we use the **Raise Responsibility System** to deal with discipline problems when they arise, we also use it to show the students how they can become authentically powerful individuals who do the right or appropriate thing simply because it is the right or appropriate thing to do.

It is amazing to see how young people challenge themselves to operate at the higher levels when they understand what those levels are all about. As I said before, we love this approach!

The Letter Continues

(How using the Raise Responsibility System improves skills)

Just this week we had a discussion with our students about how they could use their understanding of the four levels of development to help themselves become better readers. We talked about our 30-minute "Whole School Read" time that we participate in each morning. We had the children come up with scenarios of what it would look like if someone were operating at each of the four levels. Students were able to clearly describe conduct at each level.

At the lowest level, A, students wouldn't be practicing reading at all. They could be deliberately misbehaving and causing a disturbance. At the next higher level, B, the students explained that the person wouldn't be doing much reading either. At this level, students might be annoying others by poking them or talking to them. They probably would flip through the pages of a book but wouldn't put in the effort to actually read. We reviewed that at Levels A and B a teacher must step in and use authority with those individuals because neither Level A nor B conduct is acceptable.

Then we discussed the higher and acceptable levels of development, C and D. Students operating on Level C would be practicing reading--but more or less only when an adult (the teacher or a parent) was directly watching or working with them. When an adult was not with them or supervising in their area, they may not disturb anyone but wouldn't put in much effort either. Their motivation for reading would be based on an external factor, and an adult is required to keep them on task.

It's also important for them to understand another aspect of Level C. At this level, students sometime simply try to impress someone else with their conduct. In other words, the reason for reading is EXTERNAL; they are trying to be noticed when reading so as to "look good" in someone else's

eyes. It's important for students to understand that at this level they are doing what is appropriate, but it is not at the highest level of development-- Level D, the level of personal power and autonomy.

At Level D, the students described that a person would be using reading time each morning to really practice reading. They wouldn't have to have an adult directly with them at all times; they would keep on task simply because they know what is expected of them. They would read and re-read sections of their book because they know that by doing so they will become better readers. The motivation would be INTERNAL. They wouldn't be wasting any time watching the teacher in hopes of being specially noticed as "someone who was reading," and they wouldn't rely on an adult to keep them on task. Instead they would be reading in an effort to become the best reader that they could be.

Having run through examples of all the levels of development in this particular situation, we then discussed the benefits of operating at the two higher levels of the hierarchy. We talked about which of those hypothetical students would learn to read. We talked about how at Levels A and B it wouldn't be likely that anyone would learn to read very well. Their choices were leading them in the opposite direction.

We discussed that students at Level C would probably learn to read all right but they probably wouldn't ever get a lot of pleasure from reading or become really proficient readers because they were ONLY reading when directly supervised. They would comply with the class expectation of reading, but their hearts wouldn't be in it 100%. With only a so-so effort at practicing, they would only get so-so results.

Then we discussed Level D--which is always the goal in Marshall's hierarchy. This is the level at which people take the initiative to do things that are truly going to pay off for them--what is right or appropriate. People at this level MOTIVATE THEMSELVES to work and achieve. The results are long lasting and powerful. These people put in the necessary effort to become good readers and therefore can get a lot of enjoyment from reading. Because they get enjoyment, they keep reading and therefore become even better readers. People at this level feel good about themselves because they experience improvement and are aware that it is a result of choices that they have consciously made.

After these discussions, it was time for prompting some inner reflection by simply asking the students to analyze their own level in the reading session that had just passed and giving them a moment to think. These reflections

are made in their heads. That's when they have time to honestly evaluate their own choices and think about whether or not their choices are leading them in a positive direction. Nothing more was said out loud by either myself or the students. They were left to simply think for a minute, and then we moved on to a poetry lesson.

It is amazing to see the results of discussions such as these. That night, without any suggestion or prompting on my part, our poorest reader in the class went home and read his reader over and over again. Although his parents are kind people, they haven't understood the importance of nightly reading for their child despite many conversations with us. That night they watched as their little boy independently read and re-read his reader. Both the parents and little boy could see the dramatic improvement in his ability to read. They experienced the powerful impact that internal desire, coupled with one night of true effort, could have on someone's skill at reading. He came back to school the next day bursting with pride and determination to practice more and more so that he could move on to a new, more difficult reader. It only took one more night of practice, and he was able to do that.

This youngster learned a powerful lesson that will no doubt influence him in the months to come. He clearly sees the connection between his own choices and the results from them. **We could never have bribed him into such a learning experience by offering a sticker for having read a certain number of pages.**

I love this approach! It allows us to really inspire our students.

Good luck!

Kerry in British Columbia, Canada

Ideas for implementing the discipline system that promotes both responsibility and learning using concepts of Stephen Covey (**proaction**), William Glasser (**noncoercion**), W. Edwards Deming (**collaboration** and **empowerment**) and Abraham Maslow (**hierarchy** and **autonomy**) is described at <http://www.MarvinMarshall.com>

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