Building a Classroom Community That Supports Students' Social/Moral Development

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Abstract

This article contains four parts. It begins with a description of the Child Development Project, a research project aimed at discovering ways to integrate a focus on students' social and moral development in elementary schools. Then we describe the project's mixed results in helping teachers successfully apply its approach to classroom management, called *Developmental Discipline*. Next, the successful use of Developmental Discipline by one teacher, Laura Ecken, is described, along with the gradual moral and academic growth of her students. Lastly, faculty from two teacher preparation programs describe their use of Laura's example to support their students' ability to manage their classrooms in ways that foster social/moral and academic growth.

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The Child Development Project

Beginning in 1979, a small group comprising educational researchers, psychologists, teacher educators, and former teachers set out to devise an elementary school program to support the development of students' social-moral growth (Battistich, 2008), called the Child Development Project (CDP). The project began in three suburban schools in San Ramon, California, and eventually culminated in a study of 24 schools serving diverse populations, 12 in California and 4 each in Florida, Kentucky, and New York (Solomon, Battistich, Watson, Schaps, & Lewis, 2000). The CDP staff decided against a stand-alone ethics curriculum, instead devising a program that could be incorporated within the mandated elementary curriculum and procedures for classroom management (Watson, Solomon, Battistich, Schaps, & Solomon, 1989). The CDP program drew from several unique but mutually consistent theories related to children's development and learning—it focused on helping classrooms become more democratic (Dewey, 1909/1975), caring (Noddings, 1992), just (Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989), and constructivist (Piaget, 1932/1965; Rogoff, Turkanis, & Bartlett, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978).

Community

Evidence of the undermining effects of extrinsic rewards and punishment on intrinsic motivation (Lepper & Green, 1978) led the project to develop pedagogical and classroom management strategies that minimized or eliminated the use of rewards and punishments. Teachers were also encouraged to foster the development of students' empathy (Hoffman, 2000) and to recognize and consciously strive to meet their students' needs for autonomy, belonging, and competence (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Teachers were also asked to realize that some students will not trust them. Some will display their mistrust by being clingy and dependent, others by being demanding and aggressive. To support the learning of these students, teachers would need to provide special help and guidance to enable the students to trust, learn, and become contributing members of the classroom community (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969). CDP was not a stand-alone social/moral curriculum; rather, it was designed to fit seamlessly into the regular activities of the school day. While the CDP program changed and developed over the years, in its mature form, three approaches were at the heart of the classroom program:

- a literature-based language arts curriculum focused on stimulating children's enjoyment of reading while helping them build empathy for others and a commitment to democratic, prosocial values
- a cooperative approach to classroom learning activities that emphasized learning to work with others in fair, caring, and responsible ways

- Developmental Discipline, an approach to classroom management that focused on building caring and trusting relationships with and among students and guiding them toward caring and responsible behavior

In its mature form, when all three components were well implemented, CDP had significant positive effects on students' academic and social/moral growth. When teachers succeeded in creating a caring classroom community, their students reported a strong sense of community and were more likely to report that they enjoyed school, trusted their teachers, and cared about academic learning. Students' sense of community was also positively associated with increases in students' social/moral values—concern for others, conflict resolution skills, and commitment to democratic and altruistic values (Battistich, 2008; Solomon et al., 2000). However, many teachers failed to adequately implement important aspects of the CDP program.

The program, in its final form, was implemented across 3 years in 2 schools in each of 6 public school districts across the country. The districts were intentionally diverse, ranging from large city to small country districts with diverse student populations, some predominantly middle class and some with a high percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch. All students and teachers in each school were part of the project, and each program school had a comparison school with a demographically similar student population. The teaching practices and student behaviors were documented by program-blind observers six times each year in both program and comparison schools. As measured by these program-blind observers, the program was well implemented in only 5 of the 12 experimental schools. In those five schools, serving both high-poverty and middle-income populations, students showed significant positive social, moral, and academic growth (Battistich, 2008). It became clear that while the CDP program positively affected students' social/moral growth, the practices that were related to building a caring community were too different from standard practice to be implemented by many teachers.

While most teachers successfully implemented CDP's cooperative learning and literature-based reading activities, many clung to traditional reward/punishment-based approaches to classroom discipline. This approach is what most teachers experienced as students and what most had been taught in their teacher education programs. Such approaches to classroom management, based in behaviorist learning theory, focused on efficient control of student behavior to enable maximum time for academic instruction. But the practices were inconsistent with Developmental Discipline, and they failed to build students' sense of community, especially for the deeply mistrusting students (Battistich, 2008).

Developmental Discipline had different goals and, based in attachment theory, a different understanding of why children misbehave. It asked teachers to assume that most students in a supportive, caring environment would willingly comply with reasonable classroom rules and expectations. They might require a reminder or a little extra guidance, but the threat of punishment or promise of reward were

unnecessary and often counterproductive. Developmental Discipline asked teachers to focus on building caring relationships with even their most difficult students, helping students understand the causes of their misbehaviors and teaching or scaffolding ways to behave better. Specifically, it asked teachers to (a) build supportive relationships with and among their students, (b) help students understand the reasons behind classroom rules and expectations, (c) teach students the skills they need to behave kindly and responsibly, (d) engage students in problem solving when they misbehave, and (e) use non-punitive ways to control student behavior when necessary. This approach to discipline took time and thus time away from academic instruction. Building a well-functioning classroom without the use of rewards and punishments was a slow process that relied on many individual and whole-class discussions about how to behave in caring and responsible ways. In an atmosphere of high demand for increased academic performance, many teachers abandoned developmental discipline as they struggled to meet the demands for improved academic performance (Solomon et al., 2000).

This was particularly true in schools serving students living in high-poverty communities where classroom misbehavior was frequent and students were struggling academically. It became clear that for teachers to successfully implement the CDP program, they would need more help trusting in and understanding how to implement Developmental Discipline. It was not enough to ask teachers to build caring relationships and abandon rewards and punishments. In many classrooms, teachers felt overwhelmed. Teachers needed help understanding how to build mutually trusting relationships with and among their students, especially their misbehaving students. They needed help with specific strategies for classroom management and more trust that their supportive, guiding approach would eventually work. It was not only students who needed to develop trust and build interpersonal skills; it was also teachers.

Trust

For Developmental Discipline to be effective in building a caring classroom community, two kinds of trust are needed—student trust and teacher trust. While many students enter school ready to trust their teachers, approximately 60% in middle-class samples, in high-poverty schools, just as many students begin school mistrusting their teachers and their classmates (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Lack of trust can take different forms, but it always interferes with learning and positive behavior. Lack of trust can lead some students to be quiet and withdrawn, limiting their participation in classroom learning activities, some to be clingy and attention seeking and others to seek self-assurance by being controlling and aggressive (Sroufe, 1983). These students may also mistrust themselves and their ability to learn, leading them to shy away from the work required to succeed at school learning.

As teachers struggled to support the learning of all their students, it was difficult for many to take the extra time needed to control the misbehaviors of their

challenging students with the slow processes of relationship building and supportive guidance that Developmental Discipline requires. It was difficult for teachers to trust that their misbehaving students really wanted a caring relationship with them and that they would begin to behave better once they learned to trust their teachers.

By elementary school, misbehaving students had many years to build their untrusting view of the world. They did not give it up easily. Teachers, too, had many years of viewing classroom discipline through the ineffective lens of behaviorist learning theory. They did not give it up easily. Many CDP teachers tried to use Developmental Discipline, but student progress was slow and maintaining trust in their students was difficult. Quite simply, it was difficult for many teachers to trust in the ultimate goodwill of their misbehaving students when those behaviors persisted and teachers were under pressure to support academic growth.

CDP decided to document one teacher's use of Developmental Discipline across an entire year in order not only to make the actions of Developmental Discipline clearer for teachers but also to build their trust that with time and effort, Developmental Discipline could work with even their challenging students. Because it was more difficult for teachers to successfully implement Developmental Discipline in schools serving poor children, we looked for a successful teacher in a school in a high-poverty neighborhood. Our plan was to document one teacher's use of Developmental Discipline strategies across a school year and to use the experiences of that teacher to help other teachers trust and better understand how to use Developmental Discipline in their classrooms.

Laura Ecken's Classroom: Year 1

Laura Ecken had succeeded in prior years using Developmental Discipline in her ungraded primary class of approximately 20 6-, 7-, and 8-year-olds in a high-poverty district. She agreed to open her class and her teaching to the CDP staff. In many ways, Laura's class was ideal for our purpose. It was multiethnic and about equally divided between White and Black students, with most students remaining in the class for two grades, thus allowing the possibility of seeing longer term effects.

We periodically videotaped Laura's class, beginning with the first week of school. I (M.W.) also talked with Laura by phone every week. In these conversations, Laura described her teaching experiences of the past week, her emerging understanding of her students, any particular problems she was struggling with, and how the class was progressing. Sometimes, when persistent problems arose, Laura and I worked together to devise ways to address them.

Laura's Students

Weekly conversations with Laura clarified the difficulty of managing a class in which many students have a history of insecure attachment. This class turned out to

be the most difficult class Laura had ever had. Of the 19 students who started the first year, 12 had serious anger and/or learning issues; 3 were overly quiet, quickly withdrawing from challenging social situations; and 4 students were friendly and cooperative. For example, Jennifer was quiet and easily upset, putting her head down and refusing to talk or work whenever she felt challenged. Tralin, on the other hand, was defiant and openly expressed her hatred for school: "You know, I hate school. I hate it because you're not allowed to beat the people up here that bother you. I can't take care of the things I want to."

Laura struggled during the first year, but she made real progress at building a caring community in her classroom. She consciously worked to show kindness and respect to all her students. She provided a daily snack to all the students, not just to those who were behaving well, and she ate lunch with a different small group of students each day. Striving to meet their need to feel autonomous, she consciously strove to offer her students choices while strongly encouraging them to strive academically. She walked a delicate balance between requiring her students to do what they needed to do to succeed and allowing them the autonomy they needed to feel personally in control. By December, Laura began to see real progress. She reported,

> The class, working in partners, was writing role-plays about the book I've been reading to them, *Keep the Lights Burning Abbey*. Tralin was partnered with Nicole. I noticed them arguing and I heard Tralin say, "It's what I put and I'm not changing it!" And Nicole said, "It doesn't sound right."
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> Tralin had misunderstood the instructions, and she was writing a summary of the story instead of a role-play. Apparently she had done quite a bit of writing before Nicole told her it didn't sound right. Tralin just kept repeating, "I'm not changing it. I've already done this and I'm not changing it."
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> I went to them and I said, "Tralin, I know you've done a lot of work on this. But, if it doesn't sound right, you might want to think about changing it. You might also want to think about how we work with partners. It doesn't always have to be your way. Just because you put it, doesn't mean that you have to stick with it." She said, "We've already done it!" I said, "I know, but you know what? Serious learners, sometimes if things aren't going well, they'll just start over and get on the right track. You've got time and you could just turn the paper over." Then I just walked away.
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> After about 10 minutes, the class came together and everybody sat and listened to the role-plays. Afterwards, we talked about the successes and rough spots. Tralin said, "I had a rough spot. I'd written this and it didn't sound right but I'd already done it. And then I turned the page over and just started again."

Laura's guidance did not always succeed, but she kept on trying, and her students began to notice. She taught her students social and moral skills and understanding through partner learning activities, in class meetings, and, perhaps most importantly, in conversations in response to their frequent misbehaviors. She engaged her students in activities to help them get to know and like one another and involved them in setting their class norms and procedures. Perhaps, most importantly, in

response to her students' many misbehaviors, Laura engaged them in conversation and provided support for them to right wrongs and make amends:

> On Thursday, this little girl Molly, who is mainstreamed into our class for about 90 minutes each afternoon, brought in a little Pilgrim doll. And it disappeared. We kept looking for it but it didn't seem to be anyplace in the room. I asked the kids a number of times, "Has anybody seen it?" And no one had. So, finally, I asked my instructional assistant to go out and see if it was in anybody's locker. And he found it in Tyrone's locker. Somehow Tyrone had managed to get that little doll out of the classroom and into his locker.
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> A little later when the class was busy with other things, I asked Tyrone to come outside. I said, "Tyrone, I know that little doll is in your locker. Can you tell me about it?" And he said, "I like it and I want it." And I said, "It's not yours." And, you know, he looked me straight in the face, and was upset that I knew he had it, but he looked me straight in the face and he goes, "I want it. It's so nice." And so, I said, "Tyrone, you can't keep it. It's not yours."
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> Now, the day before he had brought this tool in, it's like a ratchet. The other kids loved it. So, I said, "You know, you brought that in yesterday and it's been here for two days. And what if somebody in our classroom decided they really liked it and they just took it home?" He just stared at me. He didn't say anything. And I said, "What would you think about that?" He wouldn't answer. I said, "It's not theirs, is it?" He said, "No, it's mine." And I said, "Well, that's like the Pilgrim doll. It's not yours. It belongs to Molly. She brought it in to share, and you can't take it." So, finally he got it out of his locker and handed it to me.
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> And then, it was like a miracle, Molly walked out of the classroom to get a drink of water. Tyrone took the little doll from me and walked over and handed it to her. He told her, "I really wanted it. I really like it. I'm sorry I took it." She said, "That's all right, you can hold it the rest of the day if you want."
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> At this point I didn't want to take any chances. It was almost dismissal time, so I just said, "That's really nice of you, Molly, but it's time for you to go back to your other classroom, so you better take your doll with you now." And she did.

This incident took place in early November of the first year and illustrates Laura's "working with" approach to classroom management and misbehavior. It also shows how much time such an approach can take. As the year wore on, misbehaviors diminished, and Laura's disciplinary responses were less frequent and less elaborate. By the end of the year, Laura's students would surprise her with their spontaneous efforts to control themselves and to be kind and helpful. For example, one day, when Tralin was unhappy, she pulled herself out of her bad mood by asking for Laura's help:

> Tralin was in a really bad mood all morning, arguing with her partner and just looking unhappy. As the class was leaving the room for lunch, she came up to me and said, "I'm in a real bad mood. Give me a hug." So, I gave her a hug and she said, "I'll be better in the afternoon."

Sometimes the students spontaneously did one of the classroom jobs without being asked. Jennifer came into the room Monday morning and rearranged the name cards indicating who had what jobs for the week, proudly telling me, "All the jobs are set for the week and all you have to do is call out the names."

Laura's students grew socially, morally, and academically during the first year. By the second half of the year, the students themselves were consciously working to make their classroom a caring community. Equally important, the students were showing real academic growth. When Laura tested their reading levels, she was delighted to see that they had all grown considerably, some, she reported, by "leaps and bounds." Her students still had much to learn, but they were making progress. As she reflected on the year, Laura was pleased.

Laura's Classroom: Year 2

Twelve students from the first year started the second year, and they were joined by nine new students. Of the new students, four were friendly and cooperative, while five had learning and/or behavioral issues. At the start of the second year, Laura was able to rely on her returning students to more quickly create a caring classroom community. Early in the year, she paired returning students with new students for partner work and encouraged her returning students to help the new students. Laura's returning students seemed to understand that they had a special responsibility to make the class run smoothly. And perhaps most importantly, her returning students were seeing Laura as an ally. They wanted to behave well, and they trusted that Laura was in their corner ready to help them. Still, some returning students had a difficult time in the beginning of the year. For example, Tralin began the second year with fewer reading skills than she had at the end of the first year. Apparently worried about the hard work of third grade, Tralin caused problems at the beginning of the year. For example, when Laura tried to set up the classroom routines, Tralin complained and refused to follow directions. When the class went outside to play a game, Tralin refused to play, calling the game stupid. Laura asked Tralin to step aside so she could get the rest of the class organized, and then she talked with Tralin:

> I went over to Tralin and I said, "What's the problem? I just wanted people to line up so the game would be fair, and that's not stupid. So what's the problem?" And she just stood there. Then I thought about what might be the problem, and I said, "Are you nervous about school this year?"
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> She said, "My cousin said third grade's hard."
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> I said, "It is. It's really hard, Tralin, but you know what? That's what I'm here for. And, I'll be here, and I'll help you with anything that you need, but you've got to let me know that you don't know how to do something or you're not feeling good about it. I'll understand where you're coming from and I can help you."
>
> So then she said, "OK," and she seemed to relax a bit. The students returned to the classroom and began individually reading the book *The Shoe-Shine Girl*.

> Tralin was reading near my desk, and she got up and came over to me. She said, "You know what I'm doing?" I said, "No, what are you doing?" She said, "I'm saying in my mind, if you make up your mind, you can do anything." She was telling me that she wasn't going to show that attitude. That she was going to cooperate and try hard.

When she entered second grade, Tralin could barely read, but by the end of that year, she was reading at the second grade level. However, over the summer, with no reading, like a number of other students, her skills dropped significantly. Third-grade work was hard, and she was scared. But her trust in Laura, while somewhat diminished by the summer separation, still glimmered and she quickly made progress. For example, her reading skills moved from Grade 1.5 in the beginning of the year to Grade 3.7 by the end of third grade. Although the beginning of third grade was difficult for Tralin, she retained her trust in Laura and, through that trust, built trust in herself as she continued to work to build her skills.

Trust grew in the classroom and the new and returning students found themselves in a caring community and contributing to that community. They liked and worked well with each other, at least most of the time. And they trusted Laura. The following incident with Tyrone in April illustrates this newfound trust:

> We were in line getting ready to go to lunch. I saw Tyrone hit Mary's hand really hard and she jerked her hand back. I said, "Tyrone, that's not acceptable here. You're not to touch the other students." He ran out of the line and back into the classroom. He sat down in his chair and started yelling, "You're unfair. She hit me." I walked over and said, "Tyrone, I can't hear what you're saying because of how you're carrying on. If you have something to say, you can just say it."
>
> He said, "Ms. Ecken, I didn't hit her. We were both giving each other five. We were high fiving each other and that's why it made that loud sound." I said, "Well then, Tyrone, why didn't you just say that to me?" He said, "Because you said I hit her." I said, "That's what I saw. But you knew it was something different, so why didn't you just say, 'Ms. Ecken, we were both doing it?' You know, I could've heard that if you weren't yelling and saying I was unfair. It's really hard to listen to someone when they're not calm and telling me something in a respectful way." Then he said, "Well say it again." I said, "What? Say what again?" He goes, "Well tell me I hit Mary again so I can practice it." So I said, "Tyrone, stop hitting Mary. That's not acceptable here." And then he just said, "Ms. Ecken, we were doing high-fives and we were hitting each other together." I said, "Oh, well you two need to cut that out because somebody might get hurt." And he went off to lunch.

Of course, Laura sometimes needed to use strong control measures that her students did not like. She reprimanded students, asked them to move to other places in the classroom, or directed them to write about their misbehaviors, and on rare occasions, she asked students to go to another classroom with a work folder. But for the most part, Laura managed her classroom by talking with and guiding her students to better understanding and better behavior. When misbehaviors arose, she

tried to control and guide her students in the kind, fair, and caring ways she was requiring of them.

Because a number of her students were reading well below grade level, Laura began the second year with a strong focus on her students' reading skills. She decided to have her students read every day for homework and to have their morning class meetings be about their reading. At first, a number of her students refused, simply declaring that they would not comply with Laura's request. But Laura persisted, and within a week, her students were not only doing the reading but happily sharing their reading in their morning meetings.

Laura sometimes made mistakes and sometimes lost her temper, but for the most part she remained calm and tried to guide and support her students toward better behavior. Her students came to love their class, their classmates, their teacher, and learning. On the last day of school, Laura asked her students to say "one thing they really liked about being in the class." The students' comments make clear that social and moral learning was as important as academic learning in Laura's classroom. Actually, the two learnings supported one another, as the following shows:

TYRONE: Having you as a good teacher and everybody as a good friend.

TRALIN: When we do something wrong you correct us in a nice way and we got to meet new people.

TANGELLA: Doing the research because we got to learn about a whole lot of people.

MARTIN: Partner reading. Your partner's right there to help you.

JENNIFER: I really liked our phonics lessons and I liked writing in our journals, because I like writing in it and then fixing it up.

GABRIELLE: I'm reading better. . . . Can I say one more thing? Everybody needs to read all summer because last summer I never read one thing, and when I got here I was below level. [*looks up*] Waaaay below level. . . . Now I read just fine.

Learning to Trust in Teacher Education

Using Laura's Classroom Experiences to Help Other Teachers

With the help of Professor Paul Ammon from the University of California, Berkeley, I (M.W.) conducted a series of summer workshops for small groups of teacher educators from across the country. In these workshops, I shared the community building materials developed by CDP and vignettes that illustrated Laura's use of developmental discipline. Guided in part by the responses of the teacher educators, I wrote the first edition of *Learning to Trust*, chronicling the many ways that Laura built her students' trust in themselves and in her.

The book provides detailed descriptions of the concrete actions Laura took across the 2 years to manage her classroom: how she built trust with her students,

taught them to like and work with one another, and established a community spirit. It describes the many ways that Laura supported the growth of her students' ethical and academic competence while allowing them the autonomy they needed to feel in control of their lives. It describes the many supportive ways that Laura helped her students avoid common misbehaviors or guided them through situations where the temptation for misbehavior was high.

Despite Laura's guidance and efforts to lessen her students' desire to misbehave, there were many instances of serious misbehavior. The book describes how Laura responded to them focusing on empathy, restitution, and moral reflection, lessening the likelihood of their occurring again. My hope was that this book would help both teachers and student teachers better understand and have faith in the many ways to help students learn and behave well without the use of rewards and punishments.

Learning to Trust at California State University, Sacramento

Strengthening a Focus on Education for Democracy

Several faculty from California State University at Sacramento (CSUS) attended the workshops at UC Berkeley and found the overall goals of the CDP and the classroom support materials developed by the project consistent with, and supportive of their current effort to revise, their teacher preparation program. Three of these faculty (Karen Benson, Lana Daly, and Joy Pelton) believed their current program needed a stronger focus on education for democracy. They shared Dewey's (1909/1975) view of the classroom as a cauldron for building students' understanding of and commitment to the principles of democracy but realized this view wasn't receiving enough emphasis in their current program. To make Dewey's position more central would involve intentionally educating teacher candidates on how to build a democratic classroom community and how to develop in their students the skills, values, and understandings that support a democratic way of life.

At the time, at CSUS, there were five different teacher preparation programs, a 2-year internship program, and four campus-based programs that involved university coursework with two or three semesters of student teaching. Students were grouped into cohorts of approximately 25 students, and each center had a coordinator and its own faculty.

The students at all centers took the same set of core courses, for example, philosophy of education, reading and language arts, and mathematics instruction, on the university campus. However, the two-semester pedagogy course that addressed classroom management, student teaching, and assessment, among other subjects, was taught at each school-based center, and the faculty could use different texts and assignments. This semi-autonomous "center" structure allowed the faculty responsible for one center who attended the CDP workshops to incorporate the principles of CDP in unique ways.

The Teacher Preparation Program in the Folsom/Cordova District

The teacher preparation program at the Folsom/Cordova Center was a two-semester program involving student teaching and coursework. Our students were intentionally placed in diverse classrooms, and their experiences were akin to Laura's. We wanted them to see teaching not only as a way to build academic skills but, like Dewey, as a way to build students' commitment to the values that undergird our democracy. We applied several approaches to help create a learning environment for our student teachers that they could incorporate in their future classrooms.

In the two-semester pedagogy class, we modeled developmental discipline (Watson, Benson, Daly, & Pelton, 2013). Typically, student teachers were exposed to a variety of historical classroom management systems. We believed that Developmental Discipline was consistent with the Deweyan, constructivist educational theories we hoped would shape our students' eventual teaching practices. It focused on helping children control their own behavior through scaffolding, environmental support, and instruction. Its goal—to build in students the competencies and values that support a democratic way of life—was the goal we hoped our students would acquire. Many of our students expected that they would achieve classroom control through rewards and consequences—not surprising, since most went through school experiencing that kind of classroom control. We needed to begin by changing this mind-set. We immersed our teacher candidates in the same kind of social/moral learning community we hoped they would create in their future classrooms.

We engaged them in community and relationship building and in determining how our classes would be run, and we problem solved with them when things went awry. By undergoing their own concrete experience of community, we hoped they would strive to create similar learning experiences with their future students. We frequently reflected with our students on how these activities create a sense of belonging and build a community that supports learning. As the following comment indicates, the value of being part of a caring, democratic community was not lost on them: "Pedagogy class gives our cohort the chance to BE the community we're always talking about. I LOVE the way we actually experience (moral education) rather than just hear a lecture."

Providing autonomy experiences. While, like all teacher preparation programs, we had a long list of required competencies for students to master, we strove to incorporate autonomy experiences for them. For example, we developed Paravision, a process in which individual students voluntarily reflect with their cohort around a classroom incident or issue with which they are struggling. Students describe incidents or issues and invite comments, questions, and suggestions from fellow students. Each student privately decides how to use whatever ideas surface during the Paravision session. We strove to convey the message that the experience of our classes was a big part of the content of the classes. We believe this consistent

modeling and reflection built our students' understanding of these pedagogical techniques and their commitment to using them in their classrooms:

> I love that you use some of the techniques you suggest we use with our kids—on us! Seriously, it speaks to the sincerity of your message and the earnestness of your belief in these methods—and that is very important to me.

"Real-life" concrete examples. Even with careful selection, it was difficult to find classroom examples of the management and disciplinary approaches we were instructing our students to use in their future classrooms. This is where the book *Learning to Trust* was invaluable (Watson & Ecken, 2018). Our student teachers read the book over the summer and reread sections across the two semesters of formal coursework, reflecting on Laura's goals, practices, successes, and failures as well as her students' behaviors, motivations, and responses. They compared their students to Laura's and their classroom situations to those that Laura faced, reporting that they frequently asked themselves "What would Laura do?" when faced with classroom challenges. The narrative text was useful in helping them understand their students, especially challenging students, and believe in the possibility of eventually establishing in their own classrooms a caring, democratic, learning community:

> *Learning to Trust* is so relevant and important to what I am doing in my teaching right now. I feel very connected to the situation in Laura's class and have reactions to her class's actions and attitudes as if they were students in my classroom.

As our preservice teachers read about Laura's experiences, they developed a personal connection to Laura that helped them translate the theory into their own classroom experiences. They appreciated that Laura made mistakes, and her reflections on her mistakes provided a comforting model for them as they made their own inevitable mistakes. One student's reflection captures the feelings of our students: "I feel a very strong connection to Laura because she is not perfect and she makes mistakes, but she still genuinely loves her students and cares about their well-being."

Assessing our success. Based on our students' reflections, projects, and student teaching, we were confident that most students from our center graduated with the knowledge and commitment they needed to integrate social and ethical learning into their teaching. In 2009, after using *Learning to Trust* in our program for 7 years, we sent a survey to the 163 students who had been in our classes to assess how sustainable the principles and practices were. While 46 survey requests bounced, we received 40 completed surveys. We were pleased to find that the majority of these former students remained committed to social, emotional, and moral teaching goals. For example, 97% (39 students) reported that relationship building, community building, and the teaching of values and social and emotional competencies were important to their teaching.

Job satisfaction. We were heartened to learn that all 40 of the respondents found teaching satisfying, with 80% (32) reporting that teaching was very satisfying. One respondent's comment captured our goal for all our students:

> [Teaching.] Nothing like it. There are no two days that are exactly the same. To have the opportunity to learn and grow with these students is an invaluable gift. Each day I am provided with numerous opportunities to make a difference and let children know that they impact the world, make unique contribution, and have a choice in the matter of who they get to be . . . it is absolutely extraordinary.

Current Use of *Learning to Trust*

Soon after we reported the preceding results, Karen Benson and Joy Pelton retired, and the teacher preparation program was revamped into one central two-semester program in which all students attend the same lectures supplemented by small, individually led follow-up sessions. The current program is organized around teaching tolerance and a culturally sensitive, anti-bias curriculum. The main texts are *Teaching to Change the World* (Oakes, Lipton, Anderson, & Stillman, 2012) and *The New Teacher Book* from Rethinking Schools (Burant, Christensen, Dawson Salas, & Walters, 2010). Instructors of individual sections recommend supplemental reading based on the perceived needs of their students.

Presently, all 78 students are assigned *Learning to Trust* over the summer before classes begin. We view the book as providing a common observation of teaching students living in difficult circumstances. Laura's school and her students are very similar to many of the schools and classrooms in which our candidates are placed. Reading *Learning to Trust* before starting our intense program provides our students a powerful frame through which to view their students and classrooms. Each chapter is so very real in every way. We revisit the book throughout the two semesters as students reflect on their student teaching experiences.

Learning to Trust at San José State University

The most common pathway to a K–8 teaching credential at San José State University is via a post baccalaureate three-semester combined-credential/MA program. Our program is designed to support approximately 75 candidates per semester, and in the main, our candidates mirror the demographic makeup of the state's teaching force, which is approximately 63% White and 18% Latino, and overwhelmingly female (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). The program begins in the first semester with a focus on the ideas undergirding education in a caring, pluralistic, democratic society. Candidates begin their teaching practica during the second semester while taking content-area methods classes along with a course called Critical Perspectives on Schooling for a Pluralistic Democracy, which candidates call "classroom management" (referred to henceforth as CM). One of the central

ideas underpinning the CM course is that the goal of classroom management is not to apply a collection of techniques to control students but rather to teach students to control themselves, and to value their classmates and their learning. This view requires candidates to take a teaching stance not just in curriculum matters but also in classroom management. Some candidates are quick to arrive at this realization:

> Trying to "control" a bunch of littles is like trying to keep a bunch of frogs in a bowl. It ain't gonna happen! . . . but if you connect with them and explain the "whys" and welcome input . . . they learn to control themselves rather than white knuckle it every time they think you're watching.

Most, however, expect to learn a system of punishments and rewards to manage children—understandable, given that most have been immersed in such a system in their previous schooling.

To help candidates reconceptualize their thinking about the roots of children's behavior, they are introduced to attachment theory (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969), which explains how children's attitudes toward others have been shaped by their past nurturing experience, and self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017), which outlines the importance of satisfying three psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—for children's well-being. Along with attachment theory, self-determination theory is at the heart of the Developmental Discipline approach illustrated in *Learning to Trust* (Watson & Ecken, 2018). Thus we chose *Learning to Trust* as the primary textbook for our CM course. The structure of the book is particularly useful in that it provides concrete yet nuanced and complex examples of what a caring, teaching approach to classroom discipline looks like: "I already knew about attachment theory when I came into teaching, but to have it put in the context of a classroom so soundly & literally, with real world examples was so helpful to me." We believe our students' initial conceptions of classroom management are typical. They report that they plan to implement methods they experienced as elementary students or see in their cooperating teachers' classrooms. Notably, most seem more concerned about limiting disruptive behavior that would rob them of "precious instructional time" than about their students' social, moral, and emotional learning and well-being. Although the students have taken courses in which they learned about care ethics, multiculturalism, and the like, very few of these ideas emerge in their initial thoughts about classroom management. At the start of the CM course, most of our candidates view classroom management in technocratic terms, with thoughts about the moral work of teaching rarely in evidence.

The CM course is designed specifically to counter this. Our primary goal is to reorient candidates' views of classroom management, to help them see that the goal is not simply to maintain control of students to maximize academic learning; rather, it is to engage, support, and manage students as they work together to build a caring learning community. The course is designed to help candidates understand

that the moral work of teaching should lie at the heart of their management practices (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013).

The structure of the CM course is straightforward. Roughly, each week, candidates read a selection—usually a chapter—from *Learning to Trust*, and we discuss it in a seminar setting, making particular effort to connect the reading to what candidates are experiencing in their placements. These discussions inform weekly cycles of inquiry in which candidates attempt to implement Developmental Discipline approaches, returning to class the following week ready to share their insights, triumphs, frustrations, and struggles. Because of the limits of their field placements—3 days a week in someone else's classroom—most candidates are limited in what they can do to establish practices and procedures aligned with Developmental Discipline. Indeed, given that most of the mentor teachers do not practice Developmental Discipline, our candidates often face practices they come to see as anathema to the approach. In these instances, while candidates may not be in a position to change established procedures, we push them to consider ways they might tweak those procedures to be more in alignment with Developmental Discipline and more supportive of student autonomy.

For example, one candidate, Sarah, recognized that the use of a "clip chart," a commonly used CM practice, was undermining everything she was learning about Developmental Discipline. It was pitting students against one another, rewarding those who already knew how to self-discipline and shaming those who needed to learn, thereby perpetuating inequalities in the classroom. Her position as novice did not allow her to disregard the practice, so she did the next best thing: She co-opted the practice and did what she could to help students interpret it in ways that better aligned with Developmental Discipline.

In Sarah's fourth-grade classroom, the clip chart took the form of a large poster of a thermometer, with little magnets displaying all the students' names. The magnets of those who were behaving well were clustered near the bottom. The magnets of those who had run into challenges—talking out of turn, not following instructions, and the like—were scattered up the thermometer, threatening to reach the top, which was labeled "OVERHEATED." When a magnet reached the top, a "consequence" followed, such as asking the child to leave the room or calling a parent. As candidate Sarah taught her lessons, her mentor teacher insisted on monitoring the students' behavior, occasionally moving magnets up or down as she saw fit. Unwilling to let the perfect be the enemy of the good, Sarah made time to discuss the why behind the magnet moving and did her best also to carve out time for students to practice the things they thought they needed to work on. She asked questions like "How can we make this activity go well for each of us today? What are you personally working on to keep yourself cool while we're doing it?" When her students began to struggle, she often interrupted content delivery with phrases like "Let's make some plans! Here's what I'm going to do as the teacher . . ." Not surprisingly, her students wound up having their magnets move up the scale less frequently.

The Blueprint Assignment

The CM course culminates with a "blueprint assignment," designed to help students go beyond co-opting someone else's classroom management practices and structures to think about how they might use Developmental Discipline in their first year of teaching. (For details of this assignment, see Rabin & Smith, 2016.) This assignment pushed candidates to work from a Developmental Discipline perspective. These descriptions take the form of "subfolders," ostensibly written to help a substitute teacher understand not just the nuts and bolts of how his or her learning community operates but the deeper purposes behind the teacher's practices and procedures.

In their blueprint assignment, candidates often critique the use of prefabricated rules with preset consequences that many see in their practica. They plan to co-create rules with their students. Thinking carefully about how to approach school rules opens candidates' eyes to the necessity and complexity of working with students to co-construct the rules and teaching students the skills needed to follow them. Helping candidates learn to think through the details of how they plan to put Developmental Discipline in place—and to justify those plans by drawing on relevant theory—often brings them face-to-face with the limits of traditional management and, in so doing, allows them to transcend "mere" utilitarian goals:

> I saw classroom management as somehow separate from theory in my university classes, and so I would have just adopted the processes I saw in my student teaching, table points, and other rewards and punishments. But when I had to think through the larger aims, I could see limitations and had to consider new ways.

As many candidates observed, using Developmental Discipline to redesign classroom management practices provided a way to think deeply about the purposes of pedagogical choices.

Challenges and Successes

Of course, even at the completion of our program, candidates have much to learn, and plenty of challenges remain. Perhaps the most serious challenge stems from the twofold problem of limited opportunities for novice teachers to observe Developmental Discipline in practice. Approximately 70%–75% of the cooperating teachers for both our program and the one at Sacramento State use discipline systems based on extrinsic control—clip charts, table points, marbles in a jar—whether or not they also incorporate a focus on SEL.

Developmental Discipline, like teaching, is hard work. Most novice teachers will have difficulty applying it smoothly and successfully. We encourage them to begin with small steps. Even if their school mandates a reward/punishment management strategy, they can still involve their students in setting class guidelines, implement relationship and community building activities, and soften a reward/punishment-based management approach, as Sarah did with her modified use of the clip chart.

We remain hopeful that most of our students will succeed in at least softening any mandated management approach and will gradually grow to implementing more aspects of Developmental Discipline in their classrooms. Recent comments by two former students help sustain our hope:

> (Jason): You have to keep the Watson book handy. That book changed my teaching. Actually, that book changed my life! I can't imagine having to teach without those ideas.
>
> (Heidi): My dog-eared, highlighted, notated, tabbed copy is sitting on my desk right this moment. And I recommended it to a teacher just last week. She's got a handful of a class this year and is finding the whack-a-mole approach less than effective.

Here's an analogy we think is apt: None of us, if we are novice musicians, expect to be able to stroll up to a cello and make beautiful music right away. And yet none of us would blame the cello, particularly those of us who have had the pleasure of hearing Yo-Yo Ma play. Instead, we recognize that drawing beautiful music from such a complex and challenging instrument takes time, dedication, and lots of practice. Using Developmental Discipline in one's teaching is like learning the cello; we should expect it to take time to master.

Lasting Impressions

How much difference can a teacher make in a student's long-term social, emotional, and moral growth? For many students, those who arrive in our classrooms with the benefits of past secure, supportive relationships, the long-term positive effects of our efforts may be minimal. These students will have enjoyed being in our care and learning from us, and perhaps they will have learned to be a little more caring and fair as they move through life—and that is not a small thing.

However, for those students who have lived difficult lives that have undermined their ability to trust, we can make an important, even a life-changing, difference. When we expend the extra effort to build caring, trusting relationships with these students, we may change their view of themselves and their long-term ability to trust, learn, love, and work well with others. Based on high school interviews, Laura made a lasting difference in the lives of several of her challenging students (Watson & Ecken, 2018). For example, Tralin lost her anger, was succeeding in high school, and remembered Laura with fondness and gratitude:

> I loved Ms. Ecken's class 'cause we was open and honest. . . . You had that honesty there. She was like a mother . . . some kids was like struggling in homes and stuff . . . she was like our mother when we came to school. . . . And that's what's so special about her.

Anyone observing Laura's class would have noticed that she spent much more time guiding and reassuring her troubled students, such as Tralin, than with well-

behaved students like Paul. We teachers sometimes worry that we are being unfair when we spend extra time with troubled, misbehaving students, perhaps irritating or short-changing others. The high school reflections from Paul make it clear that this does not have to be the case:

> Some teachers just pass their image over you. Ms. Ecken wouldn't do it. She'd get to know you. She didn't judge. She didn't judge you by who you hang with or how you looked. She'll always be my favorite teacher.

Additional, and perhaps stronger, evidence for long-term positive effects of caring teachers can be found in the longitudinal study of children born into difficult circumstances conducted by Alan Sroufe and his colleagues (Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson, & Collins, 2005):

> At age nineteen, we asked all of the young people if they had ever had a teacher who was "special" for them, who took a particular interest in them, and whom they felt was "in their corner." A dramatically significant result was obtained. The vast majority of those who completed high school said "yes," and often were able to name more than one teacher. Most of those who dropped out said "no," and many of them looked at the interviewer as if an unfathomable question had been asked. (p. 211)

In 2016–2017, more than 233,000 students were suspended from school at least once, some more than once. Many of these students had difficult lives, and schools failed to compensate for their difficult life situations (Noguera & Bishop, 2018). Suspension and other forms of punishment represent one approach to coping with these students, but at the expense of their happiness and their moral, social, and academic development. In the past 10 or so years, others have addressed this problem by stressing the importance of integrating into school programs and teacher training a focus on students' social-emotional learning (e.g., Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). This is a necessary and positive start. Incorporating the teaching of social and emotional skills can help students as they struggle to master the more complex social world of school. However, for students who have not developed a trusting worldview, who instead have come to see others as hostile and needing to be manipulated or conquered, it is too little. Teachers must couple this teaching with the difficult task of building caring, trusting relationships with their truly angry, depressed, or frightened children—those who mistrust us, those with a history of insecure attachment (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969; Sroufe et al., 2005).

As Laura and her students demonstrate, building supportive and trusting relationships is often a slow and difficult process with these students, but with time, we can help them change their negative worldviews. The approach to classroom discipline outlined in *Learning to Trust* and advocated in our teacher preparation programs aims to do just that. It is not easy and not always successful; however, it may be the only way to set many of our struggling students on a positive life course.

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