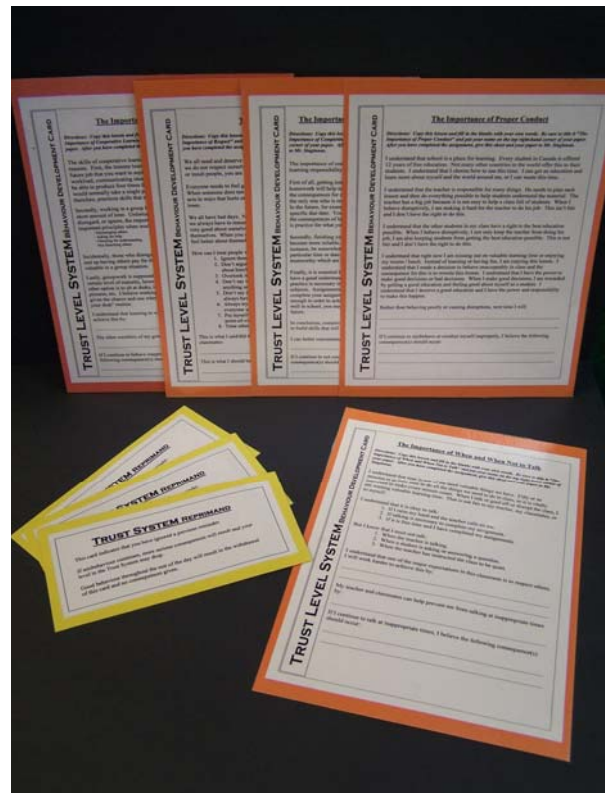


INTRODUCTION

Every classroom management system, in some shape or form, has limits. The extent to which the boundary of these limits extends varies according to each teacher. Yet arguments persist as to which limit structure, or discipline theory, balances the needs of students *and* teachers. Educators and discipline theorists alike argue about what proactive measures must be taken in order to decrease the level of inappropriate behaviours in classrooms, what kinds of intervention strategies, if any, are effective, and what approach should be taken in order to promote or develop proper behaviour in students. But no matter what the goal of an educator's philosophy of discipline may be, the importance of good management in a classroom environment cannot be understated. A discipline program that accommodates various limits would, therefore, be an asset to any teacher's "toolbox" of management strategies.

After almost ten years of teaching, my limits have progressed from being the "Machiavellian teacher", believing that it was better to be feared than it was to be loved, where rigid rules and routines with quick and severe punishments were prerequisites to establishing classroom order, to having students follow expectations that seek to parallel class values that are based on mutual trust and understanding. While the latter is more time-consuming than the dictatorial style of the Machiavellian teacher, it is, in the end, more effective in establishing the classroom environment I envision when reflecting upon my philosophy of teaching and discipline. To be loved is by no means the intent of my transformed limit structure, but it is to facilitate students' moral development as well as their academic progress.

How teachers control the limits in their classroom directly reflects their classroom management - which also determines their instructional efficiency and learning environment for students. In their meta-analysis, Marzano, Marzano, and Pickering (2003) stated that "a strong case can be made that effective instructional strategies and good classroom curriculum design are built on the foundation of effective classroom management" (p. 4). In a well-managed classroom, a teacher's discipline techniques shape the tone, pace, and expectations that can affect his relationship with and the achievement of his students. However, in a poorly managed, chaotic environment, students cannot learn (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). An organized management system, therefore, would help teachers become more effective in an area that is the basis for successful learning.



Trust Level System

Despite teachers' goals to educate students by using effective pedagogical techniques, "(they) feel that their goals are thwarted because classroom management takes so much time, energy, and patience that there is little opportunity for instruction. These teachers report feeling frustrated and dissatisfied with teaching" (Cruickshank & Associates, 1980, p. 367). While some theorists believe that a dilemma exists between simultaneously balancing the importance of providing clear consequences for unacceptable behaviour and recognizing acceptable behaviour (Stage & Quiroz, 1997), I believe there exists a conflict between allowing teachers the opportunity to put an immediate end to offensive and disruptive behaviour, while also developing a process where students can reflect on their behaviours (and make meaningful changes to meet the needs that cause their misbehaviours). The Trust Level System Intervention Method (TLSIM) introduced in this manual attempts to address both imbalances and, in doing so, relieve the stress and dissatisfaction teachers often feel towards classroom management.

ABOUT THE TLS INTERVENTION METHOD

The Trust Level System Intervention Method offers teachers a discipline program alternative that goes beyond theory, but provides concrete strategies to use in the classroom. It is flexible to each teacher's limit structure, easy to implement, incorporates current suggestions on management, and aids in the identification of causes that lead to student misbehaviour. The method seeks to promote classroom rules and beliefs as valued attributes, where the rights of learners to learn and teachers to teach are seen as the underlying premise to establish a safe, predictable environment. Once inappropriate behaviour in the classroom is identified, logical consequences are implemented according to the severity of the student's indiscretion or disregard for previous reminders to accept the pre-established values of the classroom. Teacher/student conferencing and reflection are then used as behaviour development strategies and a way to re-establish teacher/student relationships. In this way, it is possible to create a class atmosphere of learning, respect, and trust that deters students from causing daily disruptions to respecting their beliefs, and the rights and needs of others.

The Trust Level System Intervention Method provides solutions to problems associated with discipline programs and intervention strategies. First, the TLSIM provides the fairness and consistency that students expect when being disciplined, yet accounts for differences between situations and students, holding them accountable for their continued misbehavior or their gradual improvements in conduct. Second, it considers a wide range of research on existing discipline theories, management programs, and techniques, but remains simple to implement because it outlines a step-by-step approach to intervening in classroom misbehaviors, consequence implementation, and tracking. Third, the TLSIM attempts to relate the consequence or restitution to the infraction incurred by the student. Fourth, reaching and maintaining the highest trust level is in itself a personal reward and no extra incentives are necessary, which usually complicate management systems and create competition among students. Moreover, the TLSIM summarizes those classroom behaviors and values that the class deems as desirable and identifies those behaviors that

Trust Level System

are undesirable. With little time spent on paperwork, the method focuses on building relationships with students and the improvement of their behaviour (see Table 1). The intervention model also benefits those who are concerned with student behaviour in the classroom, namely the teacher, student, administration, parents, and teachers-on-call (TOCs) (see Table 2). The method allows those involved in educating students to utilize the TLSIM's advantages according to the particular needs of their role or relationship with the student.

The purpose of the Trust Level System Intervention Method, then, is to provide educators with effective strategies in order to maintain a suitable learning and teaching environment in the classroom. This is accomplished through a systematic process of intervening and recording misbehaviours when they occur. The TLSIM assists in building positive relationships based on mutual trust,

Table 1

Inconsistent	An intervention that is not applied consistently may become ineffective because teachers <i>and</i> students are unsure when and how it will be used. The TLSIM provides the fairness and consistency that students expect when being disciplined, yet accounts for differences between situations and students.
Too complicated	Interventions and discipline systems that are too complicated will confuse students and turn off teachers from using them. The TLSIM is simple to implement because it outlines a step-by-step approach to behavior intervention, consequence implementation, and in tracking behaviours.
Ineffective	Some interventions are ineffective because they may be seen as too relaxed or too severe by students and teachers. The TLSIM attempts to relate the consequence to the seriousness of the infraction. Moreover, since the TLSIM promotes those classroom behaviors and values that the class deems as desirable, students are more inclined to abide to class expectations.
“Not another reward system”	Reaching and maintaining the highest trust level in the TLSIM is in itself a personal goal for students and no extra incentives are necessary. Therefore, handing out rewards, which usually complicate management systems, are no longer necessary.
Lack of Self-Reflection	An intervention must give teachers <i>and</i> students an opportunity for self-reflection. The TLSIM encourages conferencing between both parties in order to discuss alternative behaviours and to rebuild a positive rapport between teacher and student.

Table 2

Teachers	The TLSIM offers a systematic process to intervening when misbehaviour occurs in the classroom. The intervention can be quickly recorded and tracked in order to identify potential patterns of misbehaviour and to supply parents and administration with a discipline record if required. The method focuses on maintaining a suitable environment for teaching and learning, while simultaneously giving students an opportunity to reflect on the underlying causes of their behaviours.
Students	The TLSIM requires students to take ownership of their behaviour and learn that they are responsible for the choices they make. Students come to feel empowered when they realize the amount of freedom and control they have when good choices are made. In addition, there is no guesswork involved in the expectations or discipline process when using the TLSIM, thereby allowing for a more predictable learning environment.
Administrators	Administrators understand that once a student has been sent to their office, numerous opportunities have been afforded the student to choose proper behaviour. Since the teacher has already supplied forms detailing the student's indiscretions, administration does not need a great deal of time to investigate incidences.
Parents	The TLSIM provides parents with documented accounts of their child's misbehaviour, but also the teacher's attempted strategies at improving the child's behaviour issues. Parents should recognize that even though disciplining occurs, there are repeated attempts for the teacher to build a relationship with their child.
Teachers on Call	TOC's can use the TLSIM as a mobile, quick to implement discipline plan that keeps the regular classroom teacher informed of any misbehaviour and, therefore, demonstrates the TOC's competence in dealing with problem behaviours.

Trust Level System

and seeks to help students reflect on their behaviours and values. The TLSIM manual will guide teachers through the intervention and tracking process in a step by step format, thereby offering educators a discipline program that hopes to simplify and ease tensions related to classroom management.

USING THE TLS INTERVENTION METHOD

C.M. Charles wrote in his anthology *Building Classroom Discipline*, “the best system of discipline for meeting individual teachers’ needs... (are) ones that teachers compose for themselves, ones they tailor to fit their particular personality, their philosophy of teaching, and the realities of students, school, and community where they teach” (p. 11). The TLSIM manual provides educators with *suggestions* on how the TLSIM can be used in classrooms. It is only a guide. Teachers must determine for themselves how best to accommodate the TLSIM to their philosophy of discipline. It is hoped, however, that the TLSIM will be used to help teachers maintain a learning environment in the classroom, and, in the event that a student must be disciplined for disruptive behaviour, that the consequence and how it is administered consider whether the student will learn from his mistake and develop better behavior.

The TLSIM manual will guide teachers through the intervention and tracking process in a step by step format, offering blackline masters (BLMs) for them to add to their classroom’s timetables, rules and expectations. The process that facilitates the Trust Level System Intervention Method’s implementation are further explained in Table 3.

Table 3

Purpose	An explanation of each intervention step begins by reminding teachers what the Trust Levels are intended to do – that is to provide students with the understanding that behaviour which contradicts the values, rules, and procedures established by the class, or disrupts the rights for students to learn and teachers to teach, is unacceptable.
Procedure	Each Trust Level has its own procedure because more serious misbehaviours may have been committed by the student and, as a result, needs an appropriate intervention and an increase in severity of consequences. The procedures also provide suggestions on how to approach students when inappropriate behaviour has been identified.
Monitor	For most Trust Levels it is necessary to monitor students’ behaviour after intervening in order to ensure good behaviour and choices are being practiced.
Behaviour Reflection Conferences	If a student reaches any one of the levels, the teacher may wish to review or reinforce appropriate behaviours with the student because the student has not responded to previous reminders. There are various options available to the teacher by using the Behaviour Reflection Strategies as support. Make sure any questions posed in the behaviour development conference do not serve to escalate the situation or point blame, but that a genuine attempt at understanding the trigger of the problem and reaching an amicable solution is the goal.
Tracking	The process of tracking the various Trust Levels is quick and easy. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Record what type of misbehaviour occurred, where and when it happened, and what Behaviour Reflection Strategy was used.2) Analyze the student’s previous incidences of misbehaviour – is there a pattern in time of day, school area, type of misbehaviour, etc.?3) Analyze which Behaviour Reflection Strategies have been used, which were successful and which were not.4) Next, record the student’s drop in Trust Level in order to keep a running record of the student’s behaviour over time. Knowing a student’s Trust Level will remind the teacher what freedoms and privileges the student may enjoy.