

YOU CAN HANDLE THEM ALL

STUDY GUIDE

A professional growth opportunity providing
individual or group reflection and analysis

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6 The Primary and Secondary Needs of Students

It's absolutely vital to know that a teacher can't lump all discipline problems together and treat them with the same techniques. It won't work. Determining why a student is misbehaving is the first step in changing behavior. That is why the "Action" section of *You Can Handle Them All* considers the primary and secondary needs revealed by each misbehavior. Thus, observing students' behavior in relation to their efforts to meet these needs becomes an important step in determining your professional actions in correcting discipline problems. Remember, within the primary and secondary needs lie the causes of the misbehaviors and the keys to changing the misbehaviors.

Objective: In this section, you will gain a working knowledge of both the primary and secondary needs. You will also profile your own secondary needs and relate them to the secondary needs of a student with whom you are having difficulty.

Primary Needs

The primary needs are physiological and unlearned. No matter what our age, we seek continually to meet our primary needs. Therefore, when we as educators attempt to change the behavior of a student, one of our first considerations must be an examination of primary needs not being met. These needs must be filled before the student can turn his or her attention to anything else.

Primary Needs (physiological and unlearned)

- Hunger
- Thirst
- Sex/Sexuality
- Air
- Rest
- Escape from Pain
- Elimination of Waste

1. In your experience, what are the most common primary needs that students reveal when they act inappropriately in your classroom?



2. What strategies can you use to make sure that your students' primary needs are consistently identified and met?



Secondary Needs

The secondary motives are psychological and learned. It is through the fulfillment of these needs that people reach for their goals and improve their self-concepts. The secondary needs are intensely felt by highly motivated people, and the opportunity to satisfy these needs is very important to them. Fortunately, all of these needs can be met for students in the classroom. The secondary needs are a strong motivating force in all our lives—yet they are immaterial until the primary needs have been met. For instance, if a student is hungry, the secondary needs take second place to satisfying the hunger. Students will make every effort to meet secondary needs in a positive manner in the classroom and school if possible. However, failure to meet these needs will cause many to resort to negative efforts to meet their needs.

To help children adjust their behavior, the teacher or parent must appeal to those needs held in high esteem by each child. Rather than fight those needs, we try to need to meet them via the work and activities conducted in the classroom. Too often, we think these needs are abnormal. They are not. Remember, each of these needs is within all humans. Only the intensity of the need varies from child to child—and from adult to adult. A student's effort to fill a particular need may be the reason behind appropriate and inappropriate behavior. If we fight fulfillment of a need, we can cause a student to fight us or look elsewhere to meet his or her needs.

The Profile of Your Own Secondary Needs

5. We all have all eight secondary needs. The strength of each need varies between people. Using the chart below, rank the strength of each secondary need in you.



The Eight Secondary Needs


	Low								High	
Gregariousness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Aggression	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Affiliation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Inquisitiveness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Achievement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Power	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Status	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Autonomy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10


6. Now use the chart below to rank the needs of a student with whom you are having difficulty.



The Eight Secondary Needs

	Low								High	
Gregariousness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Aggression	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Affiliation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Inquisitiveness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Achievement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Power	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Status	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Autonomy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

7. Compare the two charts. What problems between you and the student might occur because of a high or low intensity of one or more of the secondary needs? 

8. What mistakes are you likely to make with students if you fail to align your profile with theirs? 

Your Take-Aways

Through your completion of this section, you should now:

- 1. Realize how both the primary and secondary needs factor into any discipline situation and affect how you should respond.
- 2. Understand your own secondary needs as they relate to all students—and a student with whom you may be having difficulty.
- 3. Understand how not aligning your profile with those students with whom you are having difficulty can lead you to make mistakes that could compound the problem.
