

# BEFORE YOU CAN DISCIPLINE

2<sup>ND</sup> EDITION

**VITAL PROFESSIONAL  
FOUNDATIONS FOR**  
Behavior Management



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THE MASTER TEACHER®  
Publisher  
Leadership Lane • PO Box 1207  
Manhattan, Kansas 66505-1207  
[www.masterteacher.com](http://www.masterteacher.com)

ISBN: 978-1-58992-464-2

Printed in the United States of America

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***STRATEGIC ATTITUDE*****PART  
ONE****THE IMPORTANCE  
OF STRATEGIC  
ATTITUDE**

**A** professional strategic attitude is of vital importance to a teacher's success. It affects teacher efficiency with all students, including those who are discipline problems. It also offers continuous perspective in negative situations and, therefore, helps determine our happiness, satisfaction, and well-being. Our strategic attitude must include adopting a professional management stance.

Many teachers do not regard themselves as management. Rather, they think only of administrators as management. Yet, it's this precise thinking that may be the reason some teachers do not develop the correct strategic attitude and do not experience the level of success they should with discipline problems. That's because the classroom teacher is management. Whenever you manage work, you are management. Whenever you manage the people who must do that work, you are management. Whenever you teach desirable attitudes, skills, and appropriate behavior to people, you are management. As classroom teachers, we do all three for students.

**The Teacher as Management**

To gain maximum satisfaction and productivity in the classroom, a teacher simply must think and function as management. Therefore, both our strategic attitudes and our skills in the management arena need continuous developing and perfecting. In truth, all the laws of management which govern school administrators and business executives

also govern the classroom teacher. When it comes to managing the work, behavior, and achievements of students, these laws apply.

We may respond, “This is too much responsibility for any teacher to shoulder.” Yet, a close look will reveal that the laws of management are the reality for the teacher in the classroom, whether we like it or not. For example, anyone in a management position must accept total responsibility for everything that happens under his or her leadership—and for good reason. If students can’t read, do they get the blame? No, we do. If students are misbehaving or not taking the right courses to enter college or get a job, do people blame students? No, they blame us. This is the reason our strategic attitudes are so vital—to us as well as to students.

We, as classroom teachers, are management in every sense of the word. Therefore, all the management laws relative to leading people and accomplishing work are prerequisites for successful teaching. The teacher is more than a token manager. He or she is the chief executive officer in the classroom.

## **Summary**

Management laws must be a part of our strategic attitudes. These laws are aids; they serve as constant guides for operating in the classroom. In the most difficult situations, they serve as guideposts for the teacher thinking and action which give the highest probability of success.

When we violate these laws, problems are inevitable. And often, the reason for our violation is that we are not even aware of them—much less ready to think in management terms. Once we adopt strategic management attitudes, however, we are positioned to manage. Equally important, thinking of ourselves as management gives us the control and flexibility we need to take positive and constructive action in every classroom and school situation—including discipline situations—every day of the year.

## **PART TWO**

### **THE LAWS AND PRINCIPLES: AN EXPLANATION**

**P**rofessional attitudes are paramount to teacher success. In fact, there is a direct correlation between a teacher’s attitude and his or her stability

and effectiveness in discipline situations. Most of the guidelines for adopting highly successful professional attitudes lie in a teacher's knowing, understanding, and following seven laws of management. These seven laws are the foundation of a teacher's professional strategic attitude for gaining acceptable student behavior as well as handling misbehavior when it occurs.

However, I think you need to know the source of these laws before giving them weight. I wrote these laws and put a name on them. Yet, in reality, they are not my creations; rather, they are natural laws. I just brought them into an identifiable form with a practical application for teachers.

In a way, these laws are like economic laws. Nobody created them. They just describe the way things work. So it is with these laws and principles I have written. In successful classrooms, teachers are applying these laws naturally—whether they know them or not. In classrooms where teachers are failing, they are probably doing exactly the opposite of what these laws teach. Worse, they may be blaming everyone else for what's wrong insofar as discipline problems are concerned. That's why these laws need your consideration.

The laws and principles are guideposts to use in every discipline situation. They will give you automatic vision and direction. They will help in every decision-making situation. In addition, the laws have personal value to you. They ensure consistency of effort. They agree with sound educational practices and offer constant direction which is student-centered. Equally important, they provide a *conditioned response*—an immediately available and automatic course of action—in problem situations. This means the laws give you a personal and professional support system in every discipline situation.

The laws and principles also take the trial and error out of teacher action because they are objective, not subjective, and offer action which gives a teacher the highest probability of success. Finally, they reveal our human normalcy in experiencing problems as well as the normalcy of student behavior, therefore reducing our fear or need to react defensively. The laws and principles are the beginning foundation for professional strategic attitudes which facilitate success in all leadership situations, including discipline problems.