

# A Positive Learning Framework for Classroom Management



## LEARNER OUTCOMES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- understand the foundations of the Positive Learning Framework
- describe the need for a positive focus on student behaviour
- begin to explore a developmental or needs-based framework in working with students
- explain the need for teachers to articulate assumptions, beliefs and mental models in teaching
- appreciate the role of environment in influencing behaviour and meeting individual needs
- briefly explain the key concepts and research underpinning a strength-based approach.

## KEY TERMS

attachment  
 autonomy  
 classroom management  
 competence  
 mental models  
 psychological needs  
 quality teaching  
 resilience  
 self-esteem  
 social and emotional development  
 strength-based approach

## DEVELOPING A POSITIVE LEARNING FRAMEWORK

In Australia, classroom management and student engagement are significant issues for teachers, school leaders, system administrators and the public. They heavily affect community perception, teacher efficacy and well-being, and the standards of achievement of students including misbehaving students. As a practising or beginning teacher, I am sure student behaviour is of prime concern for you and will continue to be as you progress through your teaching career. The outcome of working through this text is for you to develop an approach that will enable you to develop a working language of discipline and to respond to student behaviour in a positive and effective manner to preserve the dignity of the young person while engaging them in learning.

Students come to school with a great diversity of backgrounds, interests and capabilities. Meeting their needs and engaging them in meaningful learning requires care and skill. One of the first tasks of teaching is to develop an orderly learning environment so that students can engage in meaningful activities that support their learning. Teachers who are able to engage students in this learning are those who have a management plan that begins before the students arrive. An orderly learning environment exists because teachers have clear ideas of the type of classroom they want and of acceptable student behaviours that assist learning. Once the class begins, effective teachers work very hard to create this quality learning environment. This book outlines a framework that includes skills and strategies to support you to create a quality learning environment.

This chapter introduces you to the Positive Learning Framework (PLF) for classroom management. We also introduce you to the key constructs that underpin this framework from a strength-based model of working with students in a school setting. The framework is based on current resilience, self-worth, and neurological research and positive psychology, which highlight the strengths that students have and how, as educators, we can draw upon these strengths in assisting all children to grow.

The benefit of a strength-based model for education is that it builds upon the personal competencies associated with healthy development that each individual has. A strength-based approach identifies the resourcefulness and resilience that exists in all students. In focusing on the positive, this approach

helps teachers to reframe how they see students and to view behaviour from a different perspective, as well as to recognise the incredible resilience of students, especially those facing immense challenges in their lives. Recent psychological research has focused on deficit, disorder and damage, and the study of what makes life worth living has receded into the background. Positive psychology ([www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu.htm](http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu.htm)) offers a revival of early youth pioneers who saw the positive in all young people. Martin Seligman is a world leader in the 'positive psychology' movement and was the president of the American Psychological Association and a leader in optimism research. Positive psychology is the 'study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups and institutions' (Gable & Haidt, 2005). For educators this is a good place from which to view behaviour as it enables motivations and needs to be addressed, rather than focusing on a deficit mentality, which views the child or family as at fault and does not recognise the environment or processes of interaction between student and teacher.

## THE THREE PHASES OF THE POSITIVE LEARNING FRAMEWORK

The PLF offers a continuum of teacher behaviours from pre-class planning to in-class teaching, incorporating how to respond to student behaviour. Often teacher education courses focus on isolated approaches to curriculum, instruction or management. It is left up to the pre-service teacher to put this all together to form a whole package of 'teaching'. The very nature or structure of these courses (and 'one-off' professional learning sessions) assists in atomising teaching skills and concepts. In developing a personal approach to teaching, pre-service and in-service teachers are required to integrate information from numerous sources, some of which may be at odds with each other and all of which may claim to have the answer! The Positive Learning Framework, on page 4, offers a thorough evidenced-based synthesis of current knowledge in effective classroom management and instruction. The three phases of the framework begin with preparing to teach, then move to actual classroom teaching and finally to correcting student

discipline in order to encourage learning. Incorporated into the approach are the practical skills and strategies used by teachers to prevent and respond to student indiscipline. Applying the PLF across a school assists in developing consistent quality learning environments throughout the school. The three phases are outlined in brief below, and the rest of the text will explain each section in detail.

Effective teaching and prevention of student indiscipline are key ingredients to successful student engagement in learning. The first phase begins with preparation before the class begins. One crucial ingredient in this prevention and preparation phase is how we not only prepare the learning environment but also how we prepare ourselves for the type of learning and classroom we are developing. How do I, as the teacher, prepare for the elements listed in this phase? I need to think about these elements before they happen! This is all before I start planning the lesson and how I will teach it.

## positive learning framework

### THREE-PHASE MODEL

PREVENTION: SELF-AWARENESS AND MANAGEMENT PLAN	PREVENTION: LESSON DESIGN	CORRECTIVE ACTIONS
<b>At the start of the year and before each class</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>self-awareness</li> <li>proactive thinking—indiscipline will happen at some stage</li> <li>caring and welcoming classroom</li> <li>classroom layout and resources</li> <li>high and specific expectations</li> <li>rules, routines and procedures</li> </ul>	<b>Beginning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>whole-class attention (Cue to Start)</li> <li>clear outcomes conveyed to students</li> <li>motivation 'hook for learning'—set induction</li> <li>advanced organiser</li> <li>recall prior learning</li> <li>level of student engagement</li> </ul>	<b>Low-level responses (minimal/no disruption to lesson flow)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use of dignity (privacy/politeness/tone of voice)</li> <li>minimal language (use succinct messages, an assertive tone with eye contact, avoid 'why' questions, redirect to lesson)</li> <li>proximity</li> <li>name and thanks</li> <li>look/eye contact</li> <li>non-verbal communication/gestures/signals</li> <li>redirection</li> <li>defer to private catch-up later</li> <li>clear desists</li> <li>tactical ignoring</li> </ul>

<b>During lessons</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>connecting</li> <li>C2S</li> <li>managing student movement</li> <li>'with-it-ness'</li> <li>acknowledgment of appropriate behaviour</li> <li>opportunities for autonomy and responsibility</li> </ul>	<b>Middle</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>teaching/learning strategy—active student involvement</li> <li>collaborative learning strategies</li> <li>group work</li> <li>student movement for distribution of resources</li> <li>questioning and responding to student answers and effort</li> <li>promoting student success</li> </ul>	<b>Moderate-level responses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>circle-time, conferencing</li> <li>identifying motivation</li> <li>identifying the 'game'</li> <li>empathetic statements</li> <li>offering escape routes</li> <li>offering choices giving student responsibility for actions</li> </ul>
	<b>Ending/closure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>check for understanding against outcome</li> <li>evaluation expectations</li> <li>lesson summary</li> <li>link learning to outside of classroom</li> <li>next lesson—what we will be doing next lesson is ...</li> <li>teacher reflection on 'impact' on all student learning</li> </ul>	<b>Escalating/crisis response</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>awareness of escalation phase</li> <li>de-escalation/defusing strategies</li> <li>crisis-response strategies</li> </ul>
		<b>Restorative responses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>skills for connecting, clarifying and restoring relationships</li> </ul>

Alongside your personal and professional preparation before class, you need to plan how you will teach. The lesson design phase of this model is deliberately simple and distils the main elements of a lesson. In a lesson, you need to get the students settled, get their attention, identify the lesson outcome/objective, engage them in meaningful and important learning, provide appropriate feedback, identify what they have learnt and link to future learning.

The third phase of the Positive Learning Framework identifies the skills and strategies that teachers use to maintain students' attention in learning, as well as re-engaging those who have gone off task. The majority of student indiscipline is low level (Scottish Executive, 2006), but some students will increase the intensity or frequency of their misbehaviour and need different levels of teacher intervention or correction to bring them back to learning.

These moderate-level strategies are included here, as well as teacher skills and strategies to manage power struggles with students or behaviour that is escalating to ‘peak’ or explosive levels.

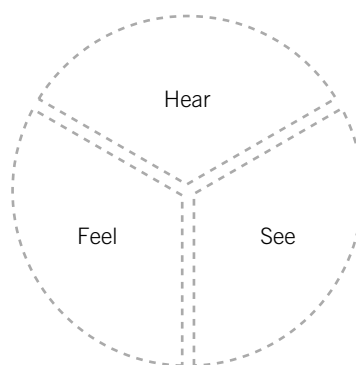
The PLF offers a continuum of teacher behaviours from pre-class planning to in-class teaching, incorporating how to respond to student behaviour. The chapters that follow explore the various elements of the framework in more detail. Importantly, specific classroom management skills are identified in the Practice activity in each chapter. In this chapter, we outline the skill of Cue to Start (C2S), which is an alerting skill, helping you get student attention to start a lesson or for whole-class instruction. The Practice activity identifies the step included in a C2S and sets out some low-level teacher responses to student indiscipline. For more complex skills, some later sections are dedicated to exploring how to de-escalate student conflict with the view that you will develop not only a language of discipline but also skills and strategies that will engage motivated as well as reluctant learners in meaningful learning.

## critical reflection

### YOUR IDEAL CLASSROOM

Before we progress too far into the text, let us explore what you think is your ideal classroom. Your management plan developed throughout the text reflects the classroom you want to develop. Using a Y-chart write down what your ideal class would *look* like, *sound* like and *feel* like. If you are stuck, think of a class that you have experienced that has been creative and had engaging content and teaching that you loved being a part of.

FIGURE 1.1 A Y-CHART



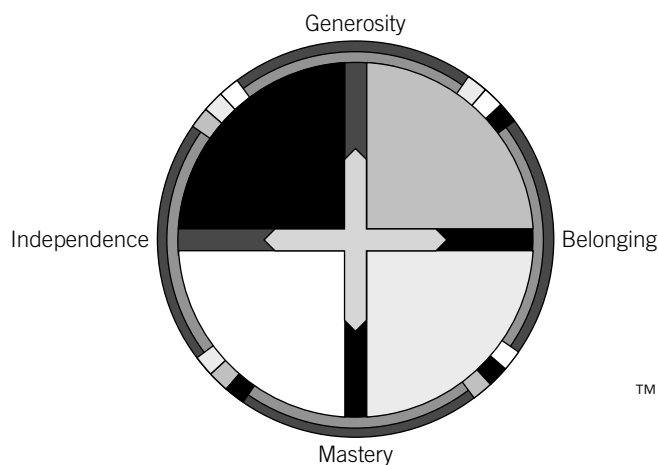
## MEETING STUDENT NEEDS

Underpinning the Positive Learning Framework is an attitude: ‘How do I use these skills and strategies to develop environments where all students feel they **belong** and can trust others? Where they get tangible experience of **mastery** so they know they have talent? Where they have opportunities to be responsible and have power and **independence**? And where they feel worthwhile in their contributions and presence so that they see a purpose in showing **generosity**?’ By learning to use our skills effectively, we will develop quality learning environments characterised by positive teacher–student relationships.

The PLF is built on the ‘Circle of Courage’®. The Circle of Courage® model is grounded in positive psychology and has been developed by Larry Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg and Steve Van Bockern (2002). The Circle of Courage identifies four universal growth needs. It identifies the ‘vital signs’ for positive health and growth. All children need opportunities to experience belonging, mastery, independence and generosity, as shown in Figure 1.2 below.

This Positive Learning Framework is supported by research on resilience and self-worth and esteem by Stanley Coopersmith, as well as epidemiological research conducted in Australia by Fiona Stanley, Sue Richardson and Margot Prior (2005).

FIGURE 1.2 THE CIRCLE OF COURAGE®



Source: Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 2002

**TABLE 1.1 Universal needs**

<b>Resilience research</b>	<b>The Circle of Courage®</b>	<b>Self-worth research</b>	<b>Stanley, Richardson and Prior (2005, p. 19)</b>
<i>Attachment</i> Motivation to affiliate and form social bonds	<i>Belonging</i> Opportunity to establish trusting connections	<i>Significance</i> The individual believes, 'I am appreciated'.	<i>Belonging</i>
<i>Achievement</i> Motivation to work hard and attain excellence	<i>Mastery</i> Opportunity to solve problems and meet goals	<i>Competence</i> The individual believes, 'I can solve problems'.	<i>Competence</i>
<i>Autonomy</i> Motivation to manage self and exert influence	<i>Independence</i> Opportunity to build self-control and responsibility	<i>Power</i> The individual believes, 'I set my life pathway'.	<i>Independence</i>
<i>Altruism</i> Motivation to help and be of service to others	<i>Generosity</i> Opportunity to show respect and concern	<i>Virtue</i> The individual believes, 'My life has a purpose'.	<i>Connectedness to the broader social environment</i>

Adapted from Brendtro &amp; du Toit, 2005a

The Circle of Courage® enables educators to shift the classroom focus from controlling problems to building strengths. The four universal needs outlined in the Circle of Courage® are simple yet powerful.

## Belonging

Humans possess a fundamental need to belong. We are social beings that need the company and attention of others. Alfred Adler (1927) believed that our fundamental socio-emotional need is to belong and to have a feeling of significance within a group. With the opportunity for attachment, we learn to trust others. From birth, humans are hardwired to read emotions on the faces of others. In indigenous cultures, being treated as kin helps to develop powerful bonds that bring people into relationships of respect. Students want to belong in our classrooms. Students are looking for relationships in the classroom. Students want to trust their teacher. For educators, the task is to create an environment where all students feel they belong and are wanted and trusted in the learning environment.



## Mastery

A big motivator in all humans is to feel they have achieved something and to be seen as competent. All of us want to be recognised as being good at something. Young learners can achieve a great deal of new knowledge, but their learning only becomes significant or crystallised with the support of adults or more skilful peers (Brendtro & du Toit, 2005a). Given the opportunity to achieve, a student learns that they have talent. Mastery is more than mere intelligence as tested in standardised tests. Often the testing regime in a school only confirms to students how dumb they think they are. Instead, children need opportunities to develop problem-solving abilities and demonstrate their level of creativity and talent. As educators, we need to structure our learning environments so that all our students receive recognition, can develop competence and have the chance to realise that they have talent.

## Independence

All young people want to control their lives and influence events in their world. Resilience research helps us to identify how resilient youth have the confidence to make life better even in adverse conditions. With the opportunity for autonomy, the young person learns that they have power. Anyone who has worked with adolescents will attest to observing how the emerging adult exhibits a heightened desire for autonomy. Adolescents risk-take and push the limits of adult control. It is as if rule breaking becomes a trial run at independence. Interestingly, youths seek autonomy while teachers and adults seek control. For some educators, it can be confronting to establish roles or positions of responsibility that assist the student in developing autonomy. In reality, as we will discuss later, it is relatively simple and, in practice, increases the power of the teacher with the students.

## Generosity

When young people feel they belong to a community, they have the potential to be exposed to the feedback that they are valued and esteemed. In working with others, we are more likely to see that our life has a purpose or, at least, that some of our efforts are appreciated. In helping others, young people discover

they have the power to influence their world in a positive way. With the opportunity to practise altruism, a young person learns, 'my life has purpose'. Schools have realised the power of working for others to improve moral development and to develop a sense of purpose through structured community service or service learning programs. In the classroom, cooperative learning opportunities also assist in providing opportunities to collaborate with other students, share opinions and attempt to see the world from other perspectives.

The Circle of Courage® is rooted in universal human needs. Belonging, mastery, independence and generosity are vital elements of positive growth. A young person who grows up in a supportive environment will attach to positive and caring adults who support the child to achieve, gain independence and contribute to the community around them. For teachers, the Circle of Courage® offers a foundation from which to view children and underpins a Positive Learning Framework that enables them to structure a safe and accountable learning environment.

## case study

### APPLYING THE UNIVERSAL NEEDS

A number of writers have researched and identified the major needs that influence student behaviour. In this chapter, we have referred to the Circle of Courage®'s four universal needs as a basis for working with students. Other prominent theorists include Alfred Adler (1930), Rudolf Dreikurs (1957), William Glasser (1990), Stanley Coopersmith (1967) and Alfie Kohn (1993). (A description of the major theorists is provided in Table 3.5 on page 93.)

Read the following scenarios and identify the universal need that the student has to develop.

#### SCENARIO 1

Ahmed is in upper primary at the local school. He is a shy boy who craves friendship with peers. He is easily misled and would do almost anything to get other students to like him and involve him in their games. He has just been sent to the office for turning the tap on in the classroom that is used for Art and Science. The water has flowed over the sink and the floor is flooded. Ahmed did this because his friends told him to do it. Sitting in the office, he feels very guilty and not happy about himself because he doesn't have friends. He is the only one at the office, as the others left the scene just as the teacher arrived.

This student needs to develop \_\_\_\_\_

(Hint: NOT belonging).

## SCENARIO 2

Mikayla is a teenage bully. She intimidates students she perceives as weaker than her. Mikayla is in the principal's office for hitting another student because she thought she heard him say something about her to another student. She doesn't recall what was said, but it sounded as if he was saying something about her. Mikayla interprets the other student's behaviour as a lack of respect. Respect for Mikayla means power. She believes that no one messes with her, and if they do she responds with aggression and no remorse. Mikayla usually gets what she wants when she wants it and is not afraid to step over others to get things. She is very self-centred, and does not feel guilty as she thinks the other student deserved it.

This student needs to develop \_\_\_\_\_

## SCENARIO 3

Chantelle is in primary school and has no friends and terrible self-esteem. Nobody wants to play with her or include her in any activities outside of class. Chantelle is lonely at school and does not know how to make friends. When teachers or other students show Chantelle some attention or kindness she believes they want to be her friend so she hugs them or clings to them around the school grounds. This puts students off and they pull away or say things to get her to leave them alone, which makes Chantelle cry.

This student needs to develop \_\_\_\_\_

(Hint: yes, she needs to belong, but she will not belong until she works on another need first.)

## SCENARIO 4

Mark is an Indigenous student in a predominantly white school. He is extremely conscious of how people look at him and greet him. Mark has been watching which teachers smile and welcome him and he has only found two who do this all year. He conveys an image of toughness and is wary of adults. Mark's brother is in prison and people are scared of his family. He does not trust adults or other students for fear they will 'stab him in the back'.

This student needs to develop \_\_\_\_\_

Adapted from Brendtro & du Toit, 2005b

## critical reflection

### REFLECTING ON MY UNIVERSAL NEEDS

Being an effective teacher means being a life-long learner. In working through this text, you will acquire skills and strategies to develop a quality learning environment. However, the 'glue' that will bind these individual skills together into a potent force is your capacity to understand your personal beliefs about teaching, student learning and discipline. Classroom management is more than the individual skills and strategies of 'getting kids to work and behave'. Developing this reflective capacity is another component in developing as an effective teacher.

Thinking back to your family or to your school days, who were the people that assisted you in developing as a valued individual? Can you identify examples when this happened and how you felt?

List some examples from your life where someone assisted you to have:

- belonging—you felt you counted, were valued and you could trust
- mastery—you believed you had talent
- independence—you believed you had power and responsibility
- generosity—you felt your life had a purpose and direction.

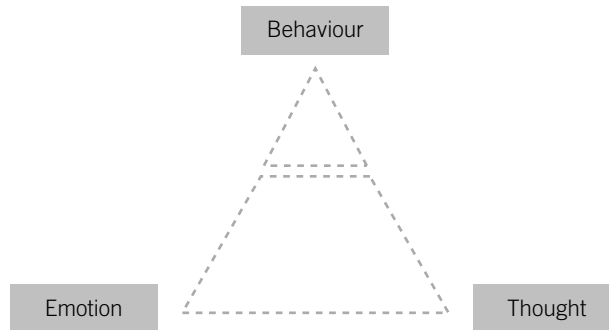
## WHY USE A POSITIVE LEARNING FRAMEWORK?

There are many models with which to approach student behaviour and learning. You only need to pick up a text on classroom management to see the plethora of theories available. The strength of the Positive Learning Framework, based on the Circle of Courage®, is that it:

- 1 is simple to understand and implement
- 2 is focused on prevention and instruction to develop quality learning environments
- 3 includes strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour and vulnerable students
- 4 can be applied to a whole-school setting.

The PLF encompasses the assumptions that underpin the majority of models of classroom management currently available. (Table 3.5 on page 93 outlines the major theorists and the assumptions that underpin their theories.) These assumptions sit under the banner of ‘psycho-educational approaches’, an umbrella term for a group of theories that affirm that all students have needs and that positive learning environments will attempt to meet these needs. These models, which we will explore further in Chapter 3, are based on Alfred Adler’s work in Germany (1930s), before he moved to the USA. Psycho-educational theories are concerned with the private logic or beliefs that students have of themselves that will influence how they solve their problems or behave to meet their social needs. This approach enables teachers to view the needs (Circle of Courage®) of the student and understand the motivations for behaviour that take into account the link between the student’s beliefs, thinking and emotions. Brendtro and du Toit (2005b) use a triangle (see Figure 1.3) to illustrate this point in their Response Ability Pathways training. The triangle is similar to an iceberg that is protruding above the waterline. The exposed part is the behaviour that is visible to the teacher and peers. Often teachers and schools respond to the behaviour and do not pay attention to the huge iceberg below the surface, which is the student’s thinking and emotions that contribute to the behaviour. The PLF incorporates the abilities of teachers to respond to the ‘inside’ student and not just react to the ‘outside’ behaviour.

FIGURE 1.3 THE INFLUENCE OF THINKING AND EMOTIONS ON BEHAVIOUR



Source: Brendtro &amp; du Toit, 2005b

## Experiences with the positive learning framework

The PLF has been developed around the Circle of Courage® based on my experience in mainstream primary and secondary education, my work with students excluded from school, my time as a teacher educator at university, and through being involved with teachers in professional learning programs in schools. I am like many teachers who graduated from university or teachers college and did not know my style or plan on which I was going to base my teaching. All I knew was that I was hoping to teach well and that I would definitely start out very strict because I feared that I would not be able to control the students. I had in my mind a picture of a good teacher as one that was very strict, had unobtainable academic expectations and set lots of busy work so that the students knew that in my class it was about work and no ‘mucking around’. In my teacher training, I was not given the opportunity to challenge this thinking, nor to think about what sort of teacher I wanted to be and on what basis I made this decision. I had no plan for managing my learning environment, nor did I have any insight into how I had developed the beliefs or assumptions on which I was basing my teaching. As you read this text, you have the opportunity to plan how to engage students in learning and can answer questions aimed at helping you reflect on your beliefs and assumptions about students, learning and the role of teachers and schools.

In my teaching journey, I was exposed to a range of the mainstream theories such as Canter’s Assertive Discipline approach, Gordon’s Teacher

Effectiveness Training and Glasser's Reality Therapy (see Table 3.5 on page 93 for a brief description of these and other theorists), as well as an amalgam of quick-fix approaches to student behaviour, gathered from numerous days spent in school-based professional development. I remember one of the sessions offered to staff was from a presenter who advertised the session to the theme song of Bob the Builder, spruiking that if you came to his session with a problem he could fix it: 'Can we fix it? Yes we can'. The assumption was that all I needed to 'fix' my students or classroom was to go to a half-day course. Instinctively, teachers know that student behaviour and learning are very complex and they cannot be fixed in a few hours. As a teacher, my expertise is in teaching and engaging students—not in fixing them. In practice, I should not attempt to fix them. We will explore this urge to fix students in later chapters. Yet student misbehaviour can be difficult to deal with and teachers often look for solutions in an attempt to control the disruptive students so that the rest of the class can learn and to make teaching easier. The PLF offers pre-service and in-service teachers a framework in which to engage students in meaningful learning and develop respectful, caring classrooms.

It wasn't until I had the chance to work with students who were referred to an alternative education program that I was made to reflect on an approach that was positive, understood children and was not 'faddish' or based on pop psychology but rather had a solid evidence base to support it. More importantly for busy teachers, the Circle of Courage® was simple to understand. I could easily use the four universal needs in my classroom in a way that was practical and resulted in significant learning engagement, even for the students who had a history of failure, resentment of schools or those that hated teachers.

I also found that the four universal needs provided me with a language to speak with other teachers that was not negative and did not dwell on the deficits of the students but was more about how to assist students to re-engage in learning. The learning focus was paramount for me. I am neither a psychologist nor a social worker, but I am concerned about how to facilitate learning for the students I have in my class. I knew that I couldn't fix vulnerable students (this is the job of other professionals such as psychologists), but I could engage them in learning for the time I had them. The labels others had for students were not important to me.

The conversations with other staff were natural when speaking about how to make classrooms welcoming environments, places where we can connect with students and develop relationships over the year (belonging). It is possible to share teaching strategies and assessment structures that assist all students to gain some achievement (mastery) and to create opportunities in the classroom where students can develop responsibility, autonomy and insight into feelings and emotions (independence). In addition, we can create opportunities within the class or school where children can have a sense of purpose, care for others, develop empathy and have a sense of being a productive person within the school and broader community (generosity). Nothing in the language used or concepts employed in these conversations are alien, or alienating, to teachers. The Circle of Courage® underpins the PLF and offers a positive lens through which to view working with students and engaging them in learning. In the chapters that follow, the text will explore the PLF through establishing positive learning environments, preventing student misbehaviour, correcting student behaviour and providing thorough instruction.

## critical reflection

**WHAT DO  
EFFECTIVE  
TEACHERS DO  
TO CREATE  
QUALITY  
LEARNING  
ENVIRONMENTS?**

### INEFFECTIVE TEACHERS

Think back to your school years and remember a teacher you thought was ineffective, one that you would not want to spend another day with. Picture the room and the other students. What did this teacher do as students or students misbehaved in his or her class? Write down ten things they said and did. If you are with other members of your class or workplace share your responses.

### EFFECTIVE TEACHERS

Think back to your school years and remember a teacher you thought was effective, one that you would want to spend another year with; a teacher that you would walk across broken glass to get to his or her class.

What did this teacher do when someone misbehaved in his or her class? Write down ten things they said and did. If you are with other members of your class or workplace share your responses.

- 1 For which of these teachers was it easier to think of things they said and did?
- 2 Can you explain why this is the case?



- 3 All classes have students who misbehave in them, so what was different about the effective teacher?
- 4 Can you identify techniques that the effective teacher did to enhance learning in the class by preventing and correcting misbehaviour?

As you begin this text and, possibly, your teaching journey, this exercise gives a clear direction of development. No one wants to start a course and be ineffective or be a teacher that students remember as ineffective. The task is to incorporate the effective teacher behaviours into your teaching and to lessen the frequency of ineffective behaviours.

## THE NEED FOR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND INSTRUCTIONAL KNOWLEDGE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

It is only recently that classroom management has been viewed as a distinct body of knowledge (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Classroom management was often seen as something gained from experience and there was little classroom management knowledge available to teachers and students in universities. As a result, teachers had to rely on intuition or popular myths such as, ‘don’t smile until Easter’! Research on the amount of time given over to classroom management in universities also highlights the lack of education on the fundamentals that underpin effective classroom management (Farkas & Johnson, 1997).

Often, university lecturers and tutors saw the benefit of teaching classroom management; however, little time was given over to teaching it. This might have been because educators could not come to a consensus on what needed to be included in a course on classroom management. This indecision is also reflected currently in the range of styles and content in texts on classroom management. Most texts on the market are compilations of other people’s theories and do not offer a coherent, simple model or framework that incorporates skills and strategies for engaging students in learning. If my experience is common, a course offered on classroom management at

university often consists of a range of different models and the students are expected to select a model that best suits them. These courses ‘fail to provide students with a comprehensive, coherent study of the basic principles and skills of classroom management’ (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006, p. 4). The PLF presented in this text is aimed at addressing this imbalance.

Another factor that contributes to the absence of classroom-management education in teacher education courses is that the term ‘classroom management’ is often associated with authoritarian teacher behaviours, which are coercive or punitive. This is seen to be in opposition to education in curriculum and instruction that promotes problem solving, independence, negotiation, active participation and personal accountability. From this perspective, classroom management is more what a teacher does to the students to achieve compliance and less to do with positive learning environments built on positive student–teacher relationships.

I would also suspect that the lack of identity or place that classroom management education had in teacher education courses is because early research into student behaviour was undertaken by distinct fields of inquiry such as psychology, sociology, anthropology or special education. This is evident in the range of journals that publish articles on student behaviour. Little had been done under a unified banner of classroom management. This discipline-based inquiry could probably have contributed to the thinking that classroom management was more about a ‘bag of tricks’ than a field of inquiry that includes evidence-based principles, concepts and knowledge. Teacher educators would come across information from a range of sources and pick strategies and skills on an ad hoc basis, rather than see them as part of a whole field.

The structure of teacher education courses in universities may also assist in classroom-management education going under the radar. In discipline-based structures it is hard to see where classroom management ‘fits’. Often it is relegated to a few lectures in an educational psychology class or in a curriculum methods unit. Rarely is it offered as a distinct unit and one that incorporates skills and strategies rather than theoretical models. If it is embedded into subject-specific units it is more often than not relegated to

the end of the course, behind material or content that the lecturer is more knowledgeable about and more comfortable teaching.

Classroom management is also one of those subjects that nearly all teacher educators (and classroom teachers) feel they ‘know’ because they already have teaching experience. This is similar to some parents’ belief that they know schools, learning and teaching because they have been to school. If a unit is offered on learning environments or guiding behaviour that has a classroom management component, it can be difficult to staff—as staff will naturally align themselves with an area like maths, literacy and language, social sciences, sciences, educational psychology or child development. It could be that whoever has time left over or needs to pick up some hours will be given the ‘classroom management’ unit. To view how inappropriate this is, take the example of literacy teaching. Would a person who speaks English and has read a book, but has done no further study or reading in language or literacy, be qualified to teach literacy, and language to early childhood and primary pre-service teachers? The answer would be a loud NO! Similarly, we should not let an unqualified person teach classroom management. We need experienced practitioners who have done further learning in this area, who have demonstrated a positive outlook on student behaviour and who have credibility in the field.

## DEFINING CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN THE POSITIVE LEARNING FRAMEWORK

This brief overview highlights the need for a PLF in teacher education and teacher professional learning. There is a range of education interest groups who all espouse their own term or meaning to classroom management, which reflects their approach to learning environments and student learning (for example, special education, early childhood, primary secondary and alternative education programs). The Positive Learning Framework attempts to broaden the understanding of the term ‘classroom management’ and, at the same time, assist in clarifying it. Drawing on the field of positive psychology, resilience research, positive youth development work and the recent

classroom management research, this book's approach is that: *classroom management involves teacher actions and instructional techniques to create a learning environment that facilitates and supports active engagement in both academic and social and emotional learning*. This definition incorporates a number of tasks:

- 1 connecting and developing caring relationships with students with high and explicit expectations
- 2 organising and structuring instruction that facilitates deep learning in an environment clearly focused on meaningful learning that is important to students
- 3 assisting students to clarify challenges and problems and respond to their needs
- 4 promoting abilities for internal self-regulation and positive social skills
- 5 developing strength-based interventions for vulnerable students with challenging behaviours.

The first task above only confirms what indigenous cultures have known for centuries: that relationships and a sense of belonging and connectedness are crucial for healthy development. The Circle of Courage® encapsulates these needs as vital elements that help children to flourish. In the following chapters, we will discuss the centrality of relationships in engaging students in learning in more depth. The importance of relationships in the Circle of Courage® is obvious, as Pinata states:

In analysis of classroom management, child-teacher relationships are a key unit of analysis. A focus on relationships rather than discrete behaviors, or interpreting such behavior in light of their meaning for relationships, is an important conceptual advance in the classroom literature, and may be particularly important for teacher training (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006, p. 704).

As an introduction, it is obvious that classroom management is a complex issue and consists of far more than establishing and imposing rules, rewards and behavioural incentives to control behaviour.

## GETTING STUDENTS' ATTENTION

Let us start practising some of the techniques identified in the Critical reflection activity on page 16. Effective teachers respond to off-task behaviour with minimal or no disruption to lesson flow and student learning (refer to Kounin, 1970 for more information on this). In reality, they are using very skilled techniques to keep students engaged. Some of these skills and techniques include the following (we will build on the number of skills as we progress through the text).

Connecting	To be discussed in Chapter 2.
Cue to Start (C2S)	What you say and do to begin a lesson or to gain whole-class attention.
Proximity	Moving towards or standing next to students.
Look/eye contact	The look has gradations, from 'hello' to 'stop that behaviour', which you will need to practise: 'I know you are listening when you are looking at me'.
Name, pause, thanks	In this sequence, student name, pause while looking at them and then say thank you when they give you their attention.
Non-verbal gestures	Hand up to stop or be silent, finger over lips for quiet, tap head to signal 'hat off', big smile or thumbs up signal for well done and so on.

Before we start practising these skills, write down individually what you think you will use or have used as your C2S. Share this with peers, give feedback and amend if needed. Your C2S should be short, succinct and said with a confident assertive tone.

The 'flow' of a C2S goes something like this. The teacher:

- stands in the centre of the room (proximity)
- says their short verbal statement such as, 'Good morning/afternoon everyone, can I have your attention please'. During the lesson it may be, 'Good work people, can I have your pens down and eyes to me please'. (See early years examples below.)
- the teacher pauses, makes eye contact with the entire class (scan the group)
- says the name for any student not ready, pauses, and thanks them when they give their attention

- finishes their C2S with 'Thank you' (always complete instructions with politeness)
- begins teacher instruction.

This example is more for middle primary to secondary. This will differ if teachers and schools use the universal signal for silence (you raise your arm and hold it in the air while students raise their hands and stop talking, then when everyone has their hand up and is quiet, you begin). Early years may use clapping or signing as a C2S.

### PRACTISE STARTING A CLASS (LINK UP WITH PEERS OR DO IN A TUTORIAL)

Practise an effective C2S incorporating the other skills of proximity, look/eye contact, name, pause, thanks and non-verbal gestures. Have someone be the 'teacher' and leave the room. His or her task is to begin teaching something (it doesn't matter what as long as they can sustain it for five minutes or so). If it is early on in a teacher education course 'teachers' could be forewarned and have a mini lesson prepared as part of their subject area or curriculum class. Assign 'misbehaviours' to class members. The misbehaviours are low level and no matter what the teacher says and does, the behaviour must stop. We will escalate student behaviour later in the text.

Suggested behaviours:

- two students talking when the teacher starts the class
- one student looking out the window
- one student rummaging through their bag for a pen
- one student fiddling or tapping their pen.

Make the activity age-specific according to the group of students you will be teaching.

Begin! This activity should not go on for more than five minutes. Try to space out the behaviours. Offer feedback to the teacher on how they performed: the words spoken, tone, non-verbals and ability to continue teaching. This activity is about maintaining the flow of the lesson and engaging students in meaningful learning.

## C2S IN THE EARLY YEARS

Gaining students' attention for whole-class instruction or as students move (transition) from one activity to another is crucial for an orderly room. Some examples of how to do this include the following.

- 1 Used when getting students to move to the mat or the floor (sung to the tune of 'If you're happy and you know it')

Teacher	'Put your bottom on the floor on the floor'
Students	Clap twice
Teacher	'Put your bottom on the floor on the floor'
Students	Clap twice
Teacher	'Put your bottom on the floor not the ceiling or the door, put your bottom on the floor on the floor'
Students	Clap twice

- 2 Used to get class attention at start of seated work or a written activity

Teacher	'1, 2, 3, 4'
Students	'Are your feet on the floor?'
Teacher	'5, 6, 7, 8'
Students	'Chair in, back straight'
Teacher	'9, 10, 11, 12'
Students (holding up pencils)	'Show me how your pencil's held'

- 3 Used when students are moving from one activity to another and when students are involved in different activity centres around the room with considerable noise. A few examples include:
  - Teacher claps in a sequence and the students need to follow the sequence, stop talking and look at the teacher for instructions.
  - Make up a C2S based on the theme or topic being taught. One I have seen was done when the class was doing a 'Pirate' theme for a term. The teacher would say, 'Arrr, me hearties!' and the students would say, 'Arrr, me Captain!' If some were still distracted or not looking, the teacher would say, 'Arrr, me hearties, I don't think I have everyone on board!', to which the students would repeat the cue, 'Arrr, me Captain!'

## ASSUMPTIONS AND BELIEFS IN THIS TEXT

The theory and research evidence that underpins the Positive Learning Framework are encompassed in the Circle of Courage® and the universal needs. The tasks emanating from our definition of classroom management also highlight beliefs about teaching and student behaviour. However, to assist you in the task of identifying what your approach or philosophy is to teaching, we will articulate early on and transparently the assumptions that underpin this text. This text is based on the following assumptions of school, children and teachers:

- All youth have positive potential, even those who exhibit challenging behaviour, and there are no ‘disposable’ children.
- Problems of children and youth are not the sole domain of impoverished communities but exist in all communities and, therefore, it is a community’s responsibility to work on these problems.
- Children need concerned adults who respond to their needs if they are to succeed in the face of risk.
- The goal of classroom management is to promote quality learning environments that foster self-discipline and personal responsibility.
- Most behaviour problems can be avoided if teachers use good preventative strategies and recognise that the way they think about management strongly influences what they do.
- How teachers manage positive learning environments will vary across different classrooms, ages and ability levels of students.
- Classroom management and instructional techniques are inseparable.
- Becoming an effective teacher requires professional and personal knowledge, reflection, continued optimism and time.

The content and reflections, as well as the activities, in this text will reflect these assumptions.



## WHY EXAMINING YOUR CORE BELIEFS AND MENTAL MODELS IS IMPORTANT

A lot can be learned from other disciplines that can help us in education. In Chapter 3 we use the term ‘consilience’, meaning the integration of knowledge from a range of different sources. One source of knowledge that is helpful for us in the classroom is from the business world; specifically, leadership and management literature.

Reading this literature, strong parallels are evident between what makes an effective leader in business and what good teachers do every day. Good business leaders have a clear vision, are able to engage others in this vision, are agile and adaptive to change, and believe that all people can learn and that there is a need to build on people’s strengths—a good recipe for a positive learning environment!

Peter Senge is one of the most influential thinkers on what makes a good business and how businesses adapt to changing circumstances. In 1990 he wrote *The Fifth Discipline*, a book that popularised the concept of the ‘learning organisation’. The *Harvard Business Review* identified it as one of the most influential management books of the past 75 years. Senge outlines a number of dimensions to learning organisations that distinguish them from traditional businesses. One of these dimensions is what he calls ‘mental models’.

According to Senge, how we see the world will influence how we act towards it. Mental models are ‘deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures and images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action’ (Senge, 1990, p. 8). As you develop your management plan, you will need to look at how you see the world. What is your thinking towards students as people, or their behaviour, learning and cultural diversity? What about parents and school leaders? What do you see as *your* role? You will need to bring these to the surface for scrutiny. It is not only a personal challenge to continue this level of reflection but also a challenge at school, where you will need to transcend the staffroom politics and game playing in which disgruntled staff often engage.

The importance of mental models and identifying personal beliefs is becoming common in the thinking on effective school improvement and quality teaching. In his 2009 book *Becoming a Great High School: 6 Strategies and 1 Attitude That Make a Difference*, Tim Westerberg identified the foremost requirements for instructional improvement as the explicit belief that all students can succeed, and the expectation of success. Schools should actively work towards this expectation and all teaching and learning should be viewed from this perspective. This explicit understanding that all children can succeed in learning is a powerful starting point in developing a positive learning environment.

John Hattie (2012), a world leader in educational research and school improvement, is another influential thinker. His mantra throughout *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning* is ‘Know thy impact’. Hattie challenges teachers, and all involved in schools, to know their impact on student learning and to provide quality, evidence-based teaching. He concludes this book with a chapter on ‘Mind frames of teachers, school leaders and systems’. Here he claims that it is a positive mind frame

that is a precursor to success in schools, these mind frames that need to be developed in teacher education programs. These mind frames require nurturance and resourcing, and these mind frames are the professional being of those we call ‘effective’ teachers and school leaders (p. viii).

The key for you is to determine the assumptions that underpin your teaching. The Critical reflection below is aimed at supporting the reflection process and assisting you to develop the philosophy section of your management plan. In relation to teacher education courses and the publishing of guiding principles, it is worthwhile having a look at the six principles that underlie the Teachers for Tomorrow’s Schools Teacher Education Program at Mills College in the USA. The program’s six principles present a practical vision for teacher education that emphasises social justice. The six principles are outlined in Kroll et al.’s *Teaching as Principled Practice* (2005), which is referenced in the Further Reading section at the end of this chapter.

Another source that clearly outlines a philosophy supported with overt assumptions is the Melbourne Declaration. The Declaration, released in 2008 by the then Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, sets the direction for Australian schooling for the next 10 years. In the Declaration the thinking and research behind the two goals are discussed. The two goals in the Melbourne Declaration are:

Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence

Goal 2: All young Australians become:

- successful learners
- confident and creative individuals
- active and informed citizens (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008, p. 7).

This is a wonderful document that puts children at the heart of the learning experience.

### 1 What are my core beliefs and assumptions?

Write a brief statement on what you believe about:

- ▶ human nature
- ▶ role of schools
- ▶ role of teachers
- ▶ how students grow
- ▶ how students learn
- ▶ the importance of teacher control versus student autonomy
- ▶ to what degree children are self-managing or controlled by the environment
- ▶ to what degree motives affect student behaviour.

### 2 Does my classroom practice reflect my core beliefs?

Take one of your statements above (for example, on human nature) and try to identify the principles that underlie this belief. What are the theories of human nature and human development that appeal to you? Identify and list specific ways that your classroom practice reflects this belief.

critical  
reflection

THINKING  
ABOUT YOUR  
CLASSROOM  
MANAGEMENT  
PLAN

## case study

**TEACHER  
ASSUMPTIONS  
AND BELIEFS  
ABOUT  
LEARNING**

Miss Tonellini, Mr Roper and Mrs Gowland worked together as middle primary teachers in a suburban school. Although they worked together and shared some classes, they had very different styles of teaching and, in reality, as a team they were nearly dysfunctional. Read the brief description of these teachers and answer the questions that follow.

Miss Tonellini is a recent graduate who is a strict disciplinarian and expects that students should obey every rule or teacher instruction. She has set her classroom up in single rows and often gives her class work that frustrates them or fails to capture their attention or interest. When students misbehave she often uses sarcasm or ridicule to control them. When the assistant principal walks by the room, he is impressed with how quiet the class is.

Mr Roper has set his class up on a competition basis. His teaching methods rely heavily on competition with active (physical) games woven into the class. The competition extends to students earning token money for winning. Students are allowed to 'spend' their money on a Friday at the shop he has set up on his desk. Students can buy games, comics or toys. When students misbehave, he deducts money from their account that he has displayed on the wall.

Mrs Gowland uses teaching techniques that rely on students working in groups and collaborating with each other to solve problems. The class is colourful with student work hanging from the ceiling and on the walls. Mrs Gowland has worked hard at providing a classroom environment where the students feel safe and have the confidence to risk a wrong answer or opinion in the group work. During work time, Mrs Gowland is always walking around encouraging students and bringing students who are off task back on task before they misbehave. When students do misbehave, she attempts to re-engage them quickly, quietly and in private.

- 1 What do you think the assumptions and beliefs were for each of the teachers regarding:
  - (a) student learning?
  - (b) role of the teacher?
  - (c) cause of misbehaviour?
  - (d) instructional activities that are engaging?

(e) potential for the students to be self-managing?

(f) aim or outcome of discipline?

Answer for each teacher.

- 2 Which one of the teachers or elements of their approach most closely aligns with some of your early thoughts on teaching?
- 3 What approaches or teacher behaviours do you like least and why?

## ■ Developing my classroom management plan

Effective teachers have a plan that is developed out of knowledge, experience, professional learning, reflection and time. The development of quality learning environments does not just happen. Quality learning environments are developed because of purposeful construction by the teacher based on a plan that includes their philosophy of education, support from current theorists, teacher strategies and skills.

The need for supportive and caring relationships will depend on the teacher and his or her beliefs as to the necessity or prominence of these in the teaching and learning process. This will depend on your assumptions and beliefs about teaching, students, behaviour and the role of schools. These assumptions need to be addressed because ‘as we think, so we act’. As pre-service or in-service teachers, we need to be aware of our thinking and reactions to student behaviour. One of the outcomes of this text is that you will develop a plan of

how you are going to teach and work with students in a positive way. In order to do this, you need to be aware of your starting point and what you bring to the teaching profession.

The management plan you are encouraged to develop as you read this text consists of three parts—philosophy, theory and practice. Your philosophy has to do with how you view the nature of students. In your opinion, do they have a will and the capacity to be self-regulating or do they primarily respond to needs, satisfying stimuli in their immediate environment? How do you understand how students learn and why they behave the way they do? When you correct student behaviour, what is your intention or intended outcome? Is it compliance or obedience, or more long-term development of the student’s capacity to make better choices? How you teach and speak with students should be a reflection of your philosophy of education. The theory



section is for you to support your educational philosophy with reference to what seminal writers have said over the years about student behaviour, learning and strategies for correcting misbehaviour. The combination of the philosophy and selected elements from supportive theories guides teachers in responding authentically

to the complexity of the classroom. In practice, your classroom is a reflection of your philosophy. A key to translating your philosophy to practice is a sound understanding of your beliefs and assumptions on student learning, behaviour and your role as a teacher. The broad outline of your plan is set out in Table 1.2 below.

**TABLE 1.2** My management plan

Philosophy	<p>My beliefs and assumptions on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▮ the nature of children</li> <li>▮ how children learn</li> <li>▮ causes of behaviour</li> <li>▮ outcome and intention of discipline interventions</li> <li>▮ degree of control or coercion that is desirable</li> <li>▮ potential for students to be self-managing</li> <li>▮ role of the teacher</li> <li>▮ place of instruction.</li> </ul>
Theory	<p>In relation to your philosophy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▮ What broad grouping of theories best suits you (laissez-faire, interventionist, leadership and so on)? Refer to Table 3.5 on page 93.</li> <li>▮ What key elements of existing classroom management theories support your philosophy?</li> </ul>
Practice	<p>What does your philosophy look like in the classroom?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▮ What practical steps will you use that reflect your philosophy (rules, code of conduct, responsibility rosters, class motto, seating plan, student work, procedures and routines, classroom layout and so on)?</li> </ul>

## summary

Classroom management is a complex and multifaceted issue confronting all teachers, in-service and pre-service, in every classroom around the world. The Positive Learning Framework addresses the issue of student behaviour

and academic achievement in a model that promotes quality learning environments.

The first phase of the Positive Learning Framework starts outside the classroom with teacher awareness and the skills and strategies to prevent student indiscipline. The second phase of the model identifies the centrality of instruction in classroom management and focuses on lesson design and instructional techniques. The third phase explores the skills used to re-engage students in learning following indiscipline and strategies to use when de-escalating conflict or working with students who continually exhibit challenging behaviour. A strength of this model is the capacity to work with these high-end behaviours with a view to re-engaging them in meaningful learning.

Effective classroom management is more than quick-fix strategies or a bag of tricks. It is a purposeful philosophical, ethical and theoretical code of conduct. In this chapter, we addressed how the Positive Learning Framework provides a basis for teachers to develop a management plan that assists them to develop quality learning environments that are welcoming and caring.

In the next chapter, we will explore not only the importance of connecting with students as a preventative strategy but also the first step in developing relationships with students as the central element of effective teaching.

## FURTHER READING

- |  |  |
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## WEBSITES

### **www.reclaiming.com**

Website for Reclaiming Youth International, the home of the Circle of Courage® and Response Ability Pathways training.

### **www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu**

Positive psychology resources from the Positive Psychology Centre based at the University of Pennsylvania.

### **www.search-institute.org**

The Search Institute researched young people and came up with forty developmental assets associated with healthy personal development.

### **www.alfiekohn.org**

Alfie Kohn's website has articles that critique approaches to classroom management. This is a good site to be aware of as you begin to reflect on your assumptions and outcomes of education.

### **www.teachermatters.com**

This website is full of resources for teachers. It also has excellent access to a range of classroom management theorists and a quiz to take to see what style or type of management you have in your classroom.



## ■ Theorist in focus

### *HAIM GINOTT (1922–73): DISCIPLINE WITH DIGNITY AND COMPASSION*

Haim Ginott was a professor of psychology who developed a model of discipline that advocates dignity, compassion, and clear and respectful communication. Ginott was very aware of his beliefs and assumptions about children, the role of the teacher, the importance of emotional well-being and the need to develop empathy. He made his belief in the power of the teacher very clear in his oft-quoted philosophy on the teacher's role in developing a positive classroom climate (see page 40, where Ginott's idea of 'Congruent Communication' is discussed).

Ginott realised that all parents and teachers face challenges. Situations arise where we feel at a loss as to what to do. Ginott focused on teaching parents and teachers new ways to deal with conflict and to understand a child's behaviour. He promoted a combination of compassion and clear boundaries, and asserted that the interaction between a parent and a teacher needs to be congruent with the child's emotions and surroundings. He aimed to assist teachers and parents in cultivating children's emotional well-being. In working with vulnerable students Ginott realised the need to develop a child's emotional intelligence. By raising our children to be emotionally intelligent, he believed, we build their capacity for empathy.

By focusing on acknowledging people's feelings, Ginott made his view of children

clear: they are human, and worthy of dignity and respect in all interactions. The way we act towards them should reflect this, including when they challenge us in the classroom—it is the behaviour that is unacceptable, not the student. In Chapter 6 we will explore practical ways to positively respond to challenging behaviours. These incorporate some of Ginott's approaches and include offering choices, acknowledging feelings, focusing on the behaviour not the child, encouraging independence and the effective use of 'I' statements.

#### Questions

- 1 To what degree does Ginott's belief about the child and the importance of respectful communication align with your 'mental models' of students and your role as the teacher?
- 2 Do you believe that part of your teaching responsibilities is to develop students' emotional well-being as an important aspect of teaching and engaging students in learning?
- 3 As you begin to develop your management approach, to what degree do you think that elements of Ginott's thinking will be incorporated into your plan? What would you leave out?

