

BREAKING ALL THE RULES: Radically reinventing moral education through compassionate discipline

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Abstract:

Disciplinary structures are premised on creating and enforcing ethical boundaries rather than fostering moral responses. As such, a critical examination is warranted to examine the possibility of transforming discipline into a moral act. While awareness, dialogue, and listening are factors to consider related to discipline in schools, alone they are insufficient to reinvent discipline. However, compassion offers the hope of radically transforming discipline from an oppressive system of rule imposition into a system of compassionate, emotionally connected, and fundamentally moral responses.

Keywords: compassion, discipline, education, ethics, morality

In discipline, power is exercised to regulate the behavior of individuals. Imposed on individuals within a variety of social settings, including schools, through “regulating the organization of space (architecture etc.), time (timetables) and people’s activity and behavior (drills, posture, movement),” discipline is enforced through surveillance (O’Farrell, 2007, n.p.). It exerts power by categorizing and organizing people and behaviors around definitions of normality (Ransom, 1997). This process of normalization creates and enforces the expectation that individuals conform and thereby become more useful and docile (Ransom, 1997, p. 47).

On the basis of this definition, we contend that discipline is an act of oppression. Narrowing our focus to the context of schools, the central question posed in this paper is: Can discipline in schools be moral?

To address this matter, the following article examines the current limitations of disciplinary practices in school through the lens of critical theory. Examining discipline as an ethical act, without a corresponding focus on morality, we find that mere enforced conformity does not create moral individuals. To re-vision discipline as a part of broader education—in the sense of drawing out and shaping—in moral action, requires that discipline itself become a moral act. Drawing from conceptualizations of “radical love,” we contend that responses fostered through compassion offer the greatest opportunity to transform disciplinary actions into morally concerned community actions. Our next task is a critical examination of the current trends in school discipline, particularly the practice of Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS). PBIS is growing and gaining popularity among school systems (Technical Assistance Center on PBIS, n.d.) and reflects an ethics-based approach to discipline. This development attempts to address the continuing problem of discipline in schools by refocusing on training people to function within a system of rules rather than relying on simple domination of authority. While this demonstrates awareness of the oppressive danger of discipline, this is not enough to move discipline toward fostering a moral community. We examine the ways in which this ethical approach remains essentially devoid of moral concern for others, as it remains overly focused on rules rather than on individual understanding and decision-making. In our final section, we offer a way forward, an approach to discipline that fills the gap left by even this forward-thinking disciplinary practice. The practices we advocate are radically and morally grounded in love and compassion. More than a simple survey of issues challenging our schools, this article calls on you, the reader, to consider whether awareness is enough to break the rules of conventional discipline.

Ethics and Morality

In both school and life, issues of great significance demand our response daily. To assist in this decision-making, communities have created sets of rules designed to direct people’s responses to circumstances. These rules arise as part of the culture itself, and include expectations of behavior such as helping a lost child or not stealing another’s property (in our own culture). These are automatic responses for most people in our culture, ingrained by long habit. Schools have likewise adopted this structure in their disciplinary practices, setting forth codes that define right and wrong behavior in all situations encountered in school life. While this structure has its place and can be tremendously helpful, it becomes problematic when it takes the form of normative domination. In schools, these rules are imposed by administrators and others in positions of authority, and it becomes the

task of students to learn the acceptable and unacceptable behaviors as defined by these codes. Such sets of rules are referred to as ethics, as they define what is ethical; that is, not following a school's codes for conduct is considered unethical on the part of the student. As Bauman (1995) states, ethics form

a code of rules for everyone in every life occasion; rules ubiquitous, reaching every nook and cranny of the dominated space, steering or arresting, as the case may require, every move of whoever inhabits that space. Nothing and nobody could be left alone, to itself, to chance (p. 39).

Bauman's definition hints at the controlling normativity of these rules; in school, as in life, codes of behavior impose themselves on the individual's rationality, replacing individual decision-making with easy, even robotic conformity. These codes reduce or remove the necessity to think through a moral dilemma for oneself, undermining the moral nature of the resultant action.

Rules (i.e. behavior structures) appear to empower the individual's ability to choose for him/herself, since he/she can choose to follow them or not. However, the situation in schools is made more complex by the inherent power differential facing the student. Rather than facing the moral dilemma him or herself, the student is faced with a simpler dilemma—merely to conform or not. Likewise, rather than facing real consequences of a moral violation, the student faces punishment for disobedience. This undermines the morality of the student's behavior and treatment of others, making rule-abiding behavior a mere parody of morality, as it is forced on the student by the dominance of the rules. As Bauman (1995) attests, "In a rule-governed encounter, the actor is not confronted with another person, but with a 'spoken demand'; the true relationship is between the actor and the rule, while the other person, the cause or the target of action, is but a pawn moved around the chessboard of rights and duties" (pp. 55-56). That is, the student bows to the rule, rather than acknowledging the rights of another. Rather than being themselves, students are playing a role, their lines scripted by an enforced rationality, a structure created and imposed by others. Students and teachers/administrators do not regard one another as individuals, for they have surrendered their individual rationality to the collective authority of rules. They do not (and, without their own rationality active, cannot) treat one another as Kantian ends-in-themselves, but rather as means to a further end. Indeed, for Kant (1987), the fundamental respect for the self and the other as a rational agent is the very basis for a moral action at all, and that morality is indeed in place to protect the autonomy of the self and other, providing as it does the necessary context for the exercise of reason.

The loss of moral context and action essentially fragments social unity, debasing human interaction. In the context of school, encounters between students and teachers/administrators are locked in what Bauman describes as a process of being-with, rather than being-for. Whereas being-with is concerned with efficacy,

with ends, with justification, being-for “breaks decisively that endemic separation” (Bauman, 1995, p. 51). The very subordination of self and other to the rules of ethics described above implies the instrumentalization inherent in being-with. The individual surrenders his/her own moral decision-making power over to the rule, and considers the other only as the raw material upon which the rule must be enacted. Being-for, on the other hand, regards the Other not as a tool with which to effect a goal, or a stimulus to effect a response, but rather the individual is seen for him/herself. This not only honors the rationality of the other, but in doing so, affirms our own rationality and individuality. As Freire (1998) explains, “our being in the world is far more than just being. It is a presence, a presence that is relational to the world and to others. A presence that, in recognizing another presence as not I, recognizes its own self” (pp. 25-26). The recognition of the Other as a moral being and the affirmation of one’s own moral status, are inextricable. It is with this emergence of renewed respect for the individual’s position as an acting Self that ethics gives way to morality. Thus, to say that our current dilemma in schools is an ethical matter sells short the situation. It is more than an ethical matter—it is a moral matter.

Moving the discussion of discipline in schools into the realm of morality, the context in which individuals recognize, respect, and act to preserve the rationality of self and other opens a space where the student must choose. Gone is the mechanistic rule-following in which an individual yields to a hegemonic order or protocol, where students are relieved of the responsibility to understand, to think, to choose, and to be responsible for that choice. Without this protocol, students must employ reason to grasp why they “ought” to act in a given manner. There must be a compelling primary principle to support the obligation to act morally. The very reason we must move away from rule-based discipline provides this principle. The recognition of one’s own humanity—encompassing the capacity to reason, to choose, and to suffer—is inextricably linked with the recognition of the humanity of the Other. Thus, we believe that the principle that retains the utmost potential for addressing behavioral matters in schools is an embodied compassion, for unlike rules, it recognizes the need for others and creates the context in which self and other can interact with their humanity left intact.

Bauman (1995) states, “The birth of the moral person is the self-command; s/he is my responsibility, and my responsibility alone. And this means that I, and I alone, am responsible for her/his integrity and welfare” (p. 60). And yet this moral person requires a context, made up of others, to act within and among. Accordingly, students must ask what it means for them to live as one among others. Instead of school being a rule-governed, mechanical structure concerned with commanding students toward ways of acting (ethics), schools ought to become a space where students become a question onto themselves (morality). After all, this is the reality of life—we encounter others not as members of our same struc-

ture, but as autonomous human agents unto themselves. Now that we understand why schools are faced with a moral, rather than an ethical predicament, we must consider the ways in which morality calls for love to be radically infused within educational and pedagogical practices.

Moral Discipline and Radical Love

In a forward to Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Richard Shaull asserts, "There is no such thing as a neutral educational process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes 'the process of freedom'" (Shaull, 2010, p. 34). Educating students about social behavior under the guise of narrowly prescribed behavioral traits would correspond to the former, while teaching students about compassion as an overarching principle to turn to as a guide for actions would be more closely related to the "process of freedom" (Freire, 1970, p.15). "Freire exposed how even well-meaning teachers, through their lack of critical moral leadership, actually participate in disabling the hearts, minds, and bodies of their students" (Darder, 2002, p. 35). Thus, the attempts of teachers to remain "morally neutral" might inadvertently diminish positive outcomes for students.

According to Freire, moral education is not silent submission to authority—it requires dialogue and conscious awareness. Freire "believed that only through the love and trust that generates and is generated by dialogue could students recover for themselves 'the power to create and transform'" (as cited in Darder, 2002, p. 66). Freire contended that dialogue is critical for engaging students in the process of "conscientization" or "the process of becoming conscious—and the transformation of life in schools and society" (Darder, 2002, p. 103). This describes the deliberate cultivation of a conscience, the essence of which lies in "being with the world," allowing for reflection and recognition of oppression (Freire, 2008, p. 69). The approach to critically and morally accessing and engaging the conscience is through love.

Teaching, according to Paulo Freire, is "an act of love" (Darder, 2002, p. 91). It requires courage, persistence, innovativeness, and motivation. A passionate love of teaching and a sincere love of people are vital to Freire's vision of liberation pedagogy. Rebellion, too, can be an act of love. Within oppressive social relationships, Freire (2008) asserts that the active rebellious response of the oppressed, by allowing the oppressors the opportunity to restore their lost humanity, is an act of love (p. 56). Rebellion in the context of schools might reflect the behavioral challenges demonstrated by students. Thus, the rebellious behavior potentially offers the opportunity to restore the lost humanity of teachers, who attempt to control rather than "be for" students.

In order to enact an alternative approach to discipline, dialogue must be both the process and the objective. Freire (2008) claims that dialogue is the shared experience of “nam[ing] the world” and does not exist in a “situation where some name on behalf of others” (p.89). Freire’s approach to humanizing pedagogy is only possible through the “permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed” (p. 68). Dialogic engagement is also an act of love. According to Freire, “Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself” (p. 89).

Dialogue is more than the act of speaking; it also implies active reciprocal listening. Fiumara (1990) asserts, “When a chance to listen arises, there is always a suspicion we might submit to a ‘warlike’ phenomenon of benumbment or of violence, in which ‘listening’ becomes an anti-philosophical acceptance of an invasive message” (p. 23). In addition, listening can result in feeling “helplessness and disorientation” as we are dislodged from rational understanding (p. 43). This helpless, disorienting effect seems counter to the perception of teacher as an all-knowing, omnipotent giver of knowledge. Listening in classrooms seems to require vulnerability, uncertainty, and a letting-go of idealized images of what it means to be a teacher. It means letting go of knowing and allowing oneself to dangle precariously from the words of the other. This risk is necessary, though, to re-humanize education for both teachers and students.

In order to “restore our humanity” and overcome oppression, we must recognize that it is a “changing historical reality constructed by human beings” (Darder, 2002, p. 54). If oppression in this case is the moral miseducation of students, then we can construct a new future crafted less on oppression and more on teaching the benefits of compassion. Thus, we have the capability of “transformation” and change necessary to construct a new reality, but this requires that we “risk an act of love” (Darder, 2002, p. 54).

These aforementioned insights offer the opportunity to further critically examine discipline as a moral or ethical act. Is awareness, dialogue, and listening enough? Or is love of significant importance? If conscious awareness and dialogue about challenges posed by existing disciplinary structures were sufficient, then the mere act of reading this article might foster change. We contend that this is not the case. Instead, change, manifested as a movement toward a moral response, necessarily requires an emotional connection resulting from the recognition of the impact of our behavioral choices on the lived experiences of ourselves and others.

Compassion

A balanced emotional awareness of the well-being of self and others, compassion opens up the constrictiveness of ethical frameworks and is well-suited to deal with the ever-changing, ever-challenging demands of school discipline. A system of ethics, conceived as a set of rules, has inevitable limitations, as the set is finite and cannot capture all possible situations, with all possible circumstances. It is essen-

tial to promote a framework that is capable of adapting to any disciplinary matter. Education and behavior are far from stationary measures; thus, they should not have to follow in the shadow of practices that are not adaptable to their needs. Yet, as it stands, ethical frameworks (based on unwavering rules of no tolerance designed to modify behavior) lock discipline into positions that force individuals to act without explaining why the action is useful and necessary. Compassion represents an attitude toward the self and other, a touchstone by which to judge actions in any situation and useful by its very lack of defined rules. Compassion offers a way to foster awareness, dialogue, listening, and most importantly, an emotional connection to others. That is not to say that the content of the rules is faulty or baseless; indeed, many of these rules were established because they are important and just. The problem is that rule-following for its own sake bypasses the very process that makes an action moral or not, whereas a standpoint like compassion provides the openness to preserve this morality by making the action an *interaction*.

Compassion's potential for pragmatic effect is noted by Nhat Hanh (1991) in his simple and concise description: "compassion is a mind that removes the suffering that is present in the other" (p. 81). Nhat Hanh suggests that compassion is a state of mind that acts on what it observes to be the challenges set before another. Building on this, Kornfield (1993) claims that "compassion exhibits the flexibility of a bamboo bending with the changing circumstances, setting limits when necessary and being flexible at the same time" (p. 224). Nhat Hanh's description and Kornfield's metaphor remove any concern that compassion is strictly a mental abstraction. These descriptions also show how useful compassion can be in disciplinary settings, for they characterize it as a fundamental attitude of respect for the humanity of self and other.

Although compassion takes into account the repercussions of thoughts, decisions, and actions on another, it does not do so at the expense of one's own well-being. Compassion is a practice that mutually seeks the well-being of others while being ever-mindful of one's own self-care (Chodron, 1997, p. 78; Kornfield, 1993, p. 225). In an ethical system of rules, the behavior that is a result of negative emotions is punished, but the emotions themselves remain. Compassion provides a benefit here in that it helps the individual to deal with those emotions while also encouraging moral behavior. Batchelor (1997) reminds us that "a compassionate heart still feels anger, greed, jealousy, and other such emotions. But it accepts them for what they are with equanimity, and cultivates the strength of mind to let them arise and pass without identifying with or acting upon them" (p. 89). Positioning compassion as a guiding beacon invites students to work with and through their emotions without their emotions working them. Although compassion works with the emotional character of an individual, it is more than an emotional state; compassion is deeply connected to the establishment of consciousness

and the action of critical reflection. Matthew Fox (1999) connects compassion with both emotion and reason, saying “compassion implies passion, pathos and deep caring arising from the bowel and guts; it also implies an intellectual life” (p. 24). Fox also contends that compassion “requires a critical consciousness” as it is so “closely allied with justice making” (p. 24). Thus, compassion unites rational understanding and emotional connection.

In a school environment, compassion has the unique ability to connect a student’s actions to his/her emotions by way of critical reflection. When applied, this connection steers a student toward moral actions that minimize the suffering of both self and other and protect the status of self and other as rational agents. Fusing a student’s actions to an embodied sense of compassion creates a soundboard by which students can guide their actions. Rather than employ compassion as an exercise that surfaces after the fact, embodied compassion acts as a proactive measure that a student can utilize before acting. Embodied compassion thus provides a direction for school discipline, as a measure that not only draws a line between acceptable and unacceptable behavior (as the rule structures in place do), but also equips students to judge this line for themselves, and strengthens their ability to do the right thing even in challenging situations (as the current rule structures do not).

As it exists currently in schools, compassion is typically aligned with regret rather than care for self and others. Let us consider the following example. A student runs down the hall, turns a corner, and knocks violently into a younger, smaller student. Let us assume that the runner feels sorry for knocking down the other student. His/Her regret may develop into further regret when considering that he/she will likely be punished for violating a rule (do not run in the halls). On the other hand, given the same scenario, if a student based his/her future actions on a framework of compassion, the student would determine, even before beginning, that running in the hall is neither wise nor useful behavior—not because a rule dictates it—but because of the potential hazard his/her action would create for all the parties involved. Additionally, a student who embodies compassion turns to foresight to ground his/her reason. In turn, compassion also rouses empathy for others (“I don’t want to hurt anyone”) and empathy for oneself (“I’d feel terrible if I was responsible for hurting someone”). When reason and compassion are coupled, a space to create a compassionate discipline is formed, and it is when such a space is created that respect for self and others can flourish.

Currently, student suspensions and other disciplinary practices are not designed to build respectful relationships in school; rather, they are meant to inculcate obedience. This is made clear if we consider that they are punitive consequences with little or no connection to the infractions they follow. Infractions are judged by their seriousness, and blanket punishments attend each level. Whether a student threatens bodily harm or skips class, the result is often the same—sus-

pension. And yet these two offenses are radically different in nature, if not in magnitude. This divorces the act from the consequence, teaching a student that problematic behaviors are individual errors in reasoning rather than behaviors that have ramifications on his/her social environment. By connecting the student emotionally and rationally to the negative consequences of immoral acts for both self and other, compassion can fundamentally transform students from rebellious or obedient members of a disciplinary system into morally engaged individuals in unified communities.

With the recognition that teaching, rebellion, and dialogue can be acts of love, we argue that discipline can and must also be an act of love (in the form of compassion). First, let us introduce and critically examine current disciplinary practices for schools implementing Positive Behavior Intervention & Support (PBIS). Then, we will expand by re-visioning the current practices with compassion.

Current Trends in Discipline

Currently, as schools embark on the effort of addressing disciplinary issues, an increasing number of schools are attempting to implement a process that teaches students specific behavioral expectations in school settings. This process is known as Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS). PBIS is a problem-solving model that schools use to create a continuum of behavioral supports necessary to address student behavioral challenges. (For a more in-depth account, refer to www.pbis.org). Positive Behavior Supports is not new; in fact it has been a thriving field of study for the past two decades (Johnston, Fogg, Jacobson, Green, & Mulick, 2006). Based on data reported to the National Technical Assistance Center for PBIS, as of October 2010, approximately 13,000 schools across the nation are implementing PBIS (www.pbis.org, n.d.). It includes several key components for consideration. The National Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports website explains:

School-wide Positive Behavior Support (SW-PBS) is a systems approach to establishing the social culture and behavioral supports needed for all children in a school to achieve both social and academic success. SW-PBS is not a packaged curriculum, but an approach that defines core elements that can be achieved through a variety of strategies. (Retrieved from www.pbis.org October 25, 2010)

Results from a variety of research studies demonstrate the effectiveness of PBIS for increasing consistency among staff, increasing positive interactions, and decreasing office discipline referrals (Netzel & Eber, 2003; Safran & Oswald, 2003; Turnbull et al., 2002). Data collected from schools implementing PBIS in North Carolina indicated schools typically experience decreased discipline referrals, decreased office referrals, increased instructional time saved, and often increased

academic performance (as measured by the End Of Grade test performance) (Reynolds et al., 2009).

One of the primary tenets of PBIS is directed specifically at the school's whole environment. The staff is to identify 3-5 broadly-stated behavioral expectations to apply throughout the entire school setting. Examples include, "be respectful, be responsible, and be safe." These expectations are further defined by clarifying what each expectation looks like in various settings of the school. For instance, respect in the hallway means remaining silent; or, being safe in the cafeteria means walking.

The most frequently cited expectation for PBIS schools is respect. Enormous variation can be found in definitions of respect, touching upon student voice level, bodily movement, and interactions with others (Lynass, Tsai, Richman, & Cheney, 2009). With the multiplicity of meanings latent in terms such as respect, coupled with a precise action expected by the students (respect in the hallway means remaining silent), students are given conflicting messages. This point strikes right to the heart of our concern; we need to offer students a term like respect (although we will show that compassion is more useful and broader reaching than respect) to frame all their subsequent actions. We need to create an atmosphere where students can judge for themselves the proper action to be taken. In this way, students feel more invested in the process, feel greater (supposed) independence and worth, and feel the process of useful action is co-created between themselves and the school's staff, rather than forced upon them.

Critical Reflection of PBIS

While PBIS is an attempt to teach students ways to successfully interact in school settings, it seems not to address the greater implication of teaching students to be connected and aware of their interactions with others. Currently, the emphasis on PBIS might be offering students an ethical educational experience in which "respect" might be veiling *obedience*, offering students little opportunity to explore compassion for others. The emphasis on respect functions as a "domesticating" force, just as oppression does (Freire, 2008, p. 51). Understood this way, PBIS is a movement away from compassion and might essentially undermine the need to explore love and compassion for others as the basis for behavioral actions. We contend that educators must transition from the expectation of respect, which could be broadly understood as general "obedience" (in the sense that it is often broadly defined as "follow adult directions"), and truly embrace compassion, with full acknowledgement that any approach to addressing student discipline is undeniably moral and requires not just awareness or teaching, but emotional connection.

The movement away from punishing the body to normalizing the body (Foucault, 1977) likewise shows the potentially oppressive nature of PBIS, which

asserts control over students' bodies by defining norms, emphasizing obedience, and utilizing surveillance for enforcement. It defines for students what behaviors are expected in particular settings and then reinforces those behaviors or provides consequences. It also creates a discourse that enforces silence and restricted bodily movements (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, n.d.). This programmatic enforcement of conformity and diminished discourse can contribute to a "culture of silence" (Freire, 2008, p. 33) rather than a culture of moral engagement strengthened through dialogue. Further, the attempt at objective exploitation and hindrance of an individual and his or her "pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression" (Freire, 2008, p. 55). Therefore, PBIS practices could be considered as potentially oppressive actions that disengage students from dialogue.

Carr (2007, p.4), "acknowledge(s), forcefully, that PBIS does not purport to have a list of correct versus incorrect values upon which decisions are made." Further, he asserts "that to say that PBIS is values-based is simply to acknowledge that we need to consider that people with behavior challenges and their families do have values, and if we do not recognize these values in selecting goals, we will develop strategies that will be ignored and will ultimately fail" (Carr, 2007, p.4). Yet, dictating bodily movements and creating invisible systems of social control are not values held by students and families; rather, they are methods of social control, valued by the system which is interested in maintaining that control. Beyond that, any systemic approach to discipline which is not founded and enacted through dialogue is in no way designed to represent the values of everyone.

One way to reexamine PBIS would be to ask, is it possible to teach morality without embodying it? PBIS has advanced a positivist approach to gathering information and data about listing and enforcing the observation of these behavioral characteristics in schools (Johnston et al., 2006). However, if one agrees that the broad expectations in the teaching matrix (Appendix) are moral in nature, then how can those traits truly be embodied by PBIS? As such, how can students' morality be increased by a system that prescribes expected behaviors instead of helping students develop their own moral compass? Further adding to this problem, there seems to be no way to remove the ambiguity of morality and capture it neatly in one true definition. Are there not infinite ways to "behave" that show respect or responsibility? Thus, PBIS is actually limiting moral behavior of students by "substituting a monologue" (Freire, 2008, p. 65) about proper behaviors in the place of a dialogue.

Moral engagement requires cognition, not passive conformity and acceptance of a one-sided ethical list of behaviors (Freire, 2008). When students from PBIS schools graduate into different environments they will be confronted with Bauman's inescapable notion of morality, or how to respond to the other. The question is: How have we prepared them? Will they struggle because of their rigid

exposure to pseudo-moral behavioral lists within the system of PBIS or will they be free to create and demonstrate new ways of being moral?

How can we assist PBIS in becoming more useful in its aim? This is where we suggest an alteration in the course of PBIS from impersonal, prescriptive rules to a deferrable standard whereby all actions can be judged by the acting agents. This should be the foremost responsibility of the school and others vested in the development of students and society. Because compassion replaces specific rules with an overarching principle, it empowers students to develop and embody their own morality, rather than deferring to and depending on external control.

Reinventing Discipline

Grounding a compassionate vision of discipline in critical pedagogy necessarily includes the development of pedagogical practices “in which teachers and students become critical agents actively questioning and negotiating the relationship between theory and practice, critical analysis and common sense, and learning and social change” (Giroux, 2006, pp. 185-186). This grounding also implies more than encouraging the development of skills and knowledge; it includes the need for teachers and students to “take responsibility for intervening in the world” (Giroux, 2006, p. 186).

In response to these critical ideas about education, we propose the following alternatives to our existing approach to discipline: compassion as the central theme; open-ended questions and discussion rather than rules; and support for staff as they embrace these new approaches. Rather than subscribing to the traditional “ethical” approach to discipline by outlining rules and expectations, schools could initiate a dialogue by posing critical questions. By opening a space for a variety of moral responses and behavioral choices, schools in essence allow students to become conscientious moral agents. In addition, this moral response prevents the restriction of human interactions to a narrowly described list of rules, and recognizes the value and impact of behavior on others. Compassion is fundamental to this, for it provides the perspective of valuing self and others, which in turn creates the context for moral action as action that respects the humanity of self and other.

In order to facilitate a dialogue and create a living archive to represent the conversations between students and staff about behavioral expectations, the traditional PBIS matrix would be completed through a collaborative effort. Starting by looking at behaviors across the school’s setting through the lens of compassion, teachers would engage students by posing questions that not only offer socially acceptable answers, but also give students the opportunity to develop a conscience about social behavior. For instance, the dialogue might begin with questions about what compassion is and transition to discuss specifically how it can be demonstrated across school settings. This approach is reminiscent of So-

cratic dialogue. Such an approach urges all participants to consider and reconsider the ways that they interact with one another, and to recognize that new forms of acting are available and possible. In this way, staff and students critique the current school culture and work to co-create an atmosphere where each feels invested and responsible for one another. As West (2004) describes it, “The Socratic commitment to questioning requires a relentless self-examination and critique of institutions of authority, motivated by an endless quest for intellectual integrity and moral consistency” (p. 16).

In order to prevent this approach from becoming yet another ethical list of rules, teachers must radically open a space in which approaches to discipline can be collaborative. This can only be accomplished when all parties recognize that change is possible, each stakeholder has a responsibility, and the space of possibility is continually left open. One such approach is the practice of “co-intentional education” in which teachers and students critically engage in learning about “reality” and in the process come to recognize “themselves as its permanent re-creators” (Freire, 2008, p. 69). Further, adaptation of Freire’s “problem-posing education” would allow teachers and students to engage jointly in critical exploration of disciplinary dialogue in the absence of authority, as teachers themselves become students and vice-versa (Freire, 2008, p. 80). More than mere “transmitters of information,” teachers must be taught the ways in which they are also “cultural producers” (Giroux, 2006, p. 115). With awareness of this, teachers can create a space in which they can collaboratively create and re-create new ways of envisioning compassionate discipline. Consequently, students’ moral awareness and subsequent behavioral responses would reflect a greater capacity to “be for” others, as teachers are modeling “being for” them.

Teachers must “abandon authoritarian structures and relationships that silence students and condition their uncritical acceptance and conformity to the status quo” (Darder, 2002, p. 102). It is essential that the relational dynamic and behavioral interactions of teachers move toward an embodied space of moral engagement with students, rather than in opposition to them. Transitioning away from traditional approaches to discipline and embracing a new ideology of compassion will likely be challenging for educators. Darder contends, “Living a pedagogy of love in our classroom and our communities defies the prescriptive formulas and models of the past, calling for the ‘reinvention’ of our radical vision...” (Darder, 2002, pp. 30-31). We must seek “to be passionate and to love in the midst of all our fears, anxieties, and imperfections,” knowing that education is a moral act fraught with uncertainty (Darder, 2002, p. 34). We must seek ways to foster compassionate responses for educators, who would likely have difficulty teaching compassion if they have neither learned nor experienced it themselves.

Final Thoughts

We have found that the limits of rule-governed, ethical frameworks are counterproductive to the disciplined environment schools aim to construct. These ends, we argue, can be achieved through compassionate, moral frameworks. As it is, disciplinary measures limit the student's capability to act and to know why he/she acts. Rules also force specific actions in specific directions, stifling a child's critical thinking skills. To address these issues, we have suggested that schools minimize the use of ethical frameworks while popularizing the construction of a compassionate framework. Taking this step moves discipline from a remote, esoteric scheme to an embodied moral action.

While dialogue, listening, critical engagement and awareness have been explored as essential components to fostering compassionate disciplinary responses, compassion cannot be enforced. It cannot become a rigid, ethical rule-structure used to further dictate a specific behavioral response. Because compassion is a moral response influenced by personal emotions and interpretations, neither teachers nor students can be regulated on the basis of their expression or lack of expression of compassion. To do so would undeniably negate the fundamental meaning of compassion. Thus, for schools, educating students about moral ways of engaging with others in the world must stem from more than simple awareness and dialogue; it must remove the oppressive restraints of traditional disciplinary practices to open a space in which embodied compassion can thrive.

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Positive Behavior Intervention and Support Expectation Matrix

Settings							
Expectation	All Settings	Hallway	Play-ground	Cafeteria	Library	Assembly	Bus
Respect ourselves	Be on task. Give your best effort. Be prepared.	Walk	Have a plan.	Eat all your food. Select healthy foods.	Study, read.	Sit in one spot.	Watch for your stop.
Respect Others	Be kind. Hands/feet to self. Help/ share with others.	Use normal voice volume. Walk to right.	Play safe. Include others. Share equipment.	Practice good table manners	Whisper. Return books.	Listen/ watch.	Use a quiet voice. Stay in your seat.
Respect Property	Recycle. Clean up after self.	Pick up litter. Maintain physical space.	Use equipment properly. Put litter in garbage can.	Replace trays & utensils. Clean up eating area.	Push in chairs. Treat books carefully.	Pick up. Treat chairs appropriately.	Wipe your feet. Sit appropriately.