



Missions of Hope International

Teaching with Love and Logic

Teaching with Love and Logic is an approach to working with students that: Puts teachers in control, Teaches kids to think for themselves, Raises the level of student responsibility, Prepares kids to function effectively in a society filled with temptations, decisions, and consequences.

Teaching with Love and Logic includes sharing control and decision-making, using empathy with consequences, and enhancing the self-concept of children. Using these methods leads to improved student behavior and achievement.

The Love and Logic philosophy states the importance of adults providing limits in a caring way. It involves building students up so they feel more capable, even after being disciplined. When interacting with students, educators need to stay calm and avoid provoking, threatening, moralizing or lecturing. Educators should use polite statements that are enforceable and offer children choices within limits, thus avoiding power struggles. Discipline is maintained with compassion and understanding. Childhood misbehavior is an opportunity for helping children grow through their mistakes. These methods help children learn to be responsible and gain self-confidence.

All children have value and should be treated with respect and dignity. Successful teachers know that they must build a positive relationship with their students because they cannot make children do their best by being angry with them. Sharing control and stopping undesirable behaviors early are most effective, and getting to know students on a personal basis can have many benefits.

One Love and Logic suggestion for working with a troublesome student is to try an experiment. For six times over a period of three weeks, say something like, "I noticed ... that you like animals (football, rocks, etc.)" or "I noticed that you enjoy running, (spelling, helping others, etc.)" Do not include praise or judgment in the statement. Use the "I noticed..." prefix. The teacher may want to ask, "Will you try that just for me?" if a child has an especially low feeling of self-worth.

The best way to gain student cooperation is to provide many choices throughout the day, thus building up a bank account of shared power. But, when discipline is needed, offering two choices, one you like and one you do not like, is not effective because the student will most often pick the one you don't want. Instead, teachers should only offer two acceptable choices, and if the child does not choose one within ten seconds, the educator chooses for him or her. Students soon realize that the consequence of not choosing an option is that the teacher will make the choice. They recommend saying something like:

- "Would you rather sit and read or work on your project?"
- "What would be best for you to play kick ball or to watch the others?"

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- "Feel free to sit in the chair by me or remain quiet in your seat."

Teachers should use "enforceable statements" rather than angry, negative comments. For example:

- "I will begin when everyone is quiet" instead of saying "I'm not going to start until you are quiet."
- "I know you have something important to say, and I listen to students who raise their hand and are called on to participate" rather than, "Raise your hand if you want to talk and wait to be called on."
- "You may join us outside as soon as you complete your work" rather than, "Do your work or you can't go outside!"

The Love and Logic thinking requires children to experience consequences for their mistakes. When a problem occurs, the adult should start with an empathetic comment and end with the logical consequence. The absence of adult anger causes children to think and learn from their mistakes, helps them accept responsibility for their behavior, and decreases the "it's not my fault" attitude. Do not argue with students or give in to their protests, but simply state your concern and the consequence again if necessary. This way, by providing a choice, the students feel some control over the outcome for their behavior. Use empathy with consequences. In that way, children learn more from their choices when an adult does not scold or moralize, but expresses sincere understanding. When the child chooses not to do his or her homework, the teacher could say with sincerity...

- "That's too bad. That zero will have to be averaged with your other grades."

Or, if the a child does not do his or her work, the teacher could say,

- "I'm so sorry you chose to play instead of doing your work. I'm sad that you have to lose part of your recess."

Delaying a consequence rather than providing an immediate one can bring more satisfactory results. Dealing with a problem on the teacher's terms, with short, kind interactions works best. For example, if a child swears in class, the teacher might calmly say, "That language is unacceptable in my room. I will have to do something about it, but I am not sure what I will do. Right now I am busy teaching so I will let you know tomorrow." Saying, "Don't worry about it," can have the opposite effect on the student.

Teachers should help children become responsible and guide them to solve their own problems. "You can solve your problem anyway you want as long as your solution does not cause a problem for anyone else." The "anyone else" includes the teacher. The Love and Logic principles work best if an entire school staff studies and supports the concepts.