



Guiding Principles

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In the context of a therapeutic Type III orientation, the following are some basic principles to guide program planning and delivery. These principles are familiar and can be applied to all educational settings, but are particularly useful in dealing with hard-to-serve students.

1. Set high standards. Low expectations can create a self-fulfilling prophesy. So can high expectations, with respect to both academic learning and character development. The program can be a setting in which students are required to do their best work and be on their best behavior all the time.
2. Stress rewards not punishments. The deterrent effect of punishment works most effectively with well-behaved students. Badly behaved students usually have an extensive experience of various punishments, and this approach has obviously not worked with them before. A program based on punitive measures is likely to fail by provoking resentment, shame, or anger, and will only serve to make the students worse. Rather than fear of punishment, learning is often better motivated by encouragement and praise. It is important to acknowledge success with these students, especially when they are beginning to make their first incremental gains.
3. Increase student motivation. This is not a new idea: Socrates told us that what pleases teaches. Effective programming is intrinsically appealing, relevant, and self-motivating. There can be frequent, structured opportunities to play and to “blow off steam” (as in physical education), to express creatively (as in art), and to give voice to feelings (as in drama or music). Field trips to movies, plays, and cultural experiences can increase the students’ social capital and bring the classroom into the community. To bring the community into the classroom, speakers can be invited or students can stage special events to present their achievements to their parents and guests.
4. Make students the priority. A student-centered approach must be spelled out in job descriptions and reflected in staff roles and attitudes. Within any organizational structure, there may be complex and even conflicting priorities. This is especially true in cases where the program is jointly sponsored by partnering organizations with different mandates. Staff members need to move beyond their traditional job descriptions and territorial issues to unite in their shared mission of serving the students.