Beyond Discipline: Kohn Module

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Education 360 A
Professor Eastman
October 20, 2009
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Beyond discipline is an idea created by Alfie Kohn. This theory is based on the idea that students have the ability to be responsible for their own behavior and are able to control it. This discipline module is a student-management plan and places much less focus on the teacher than other plans. Rewards and punishments are not used in this type of discipline, but rather students will experience natural consequences for their actions. The hope of this plan is to create a positive classroom community.

Kohn does have some valid and interesting points in his approach to managing student behavior. Personally, I agree with the goal of creating a classroom community that is safe and inclusive. Kohn mentions in his critique of schools' focus on standardized tests and how little they have to do with students learning. This view is one that I hold true to my beliefs as a teacher because I think schools today bombard teachers and students with the stress of a test instead of real life learning. Although Kohn does mention some creative concepts in his view, I disagree with many things that he has to say.

In Kohn's theory, teachers should neither reward nor give consequences to students. He believes that praising students on a job well done with only encourage them to be "praise junkies." I do not agree with this. If a student does an excellent job on his work, he should be told so. This is motivating and a sign of appreciation for working hard. Society today does this all the time, if you do a good job, you get rewarded. Sometimes the reward is a promotion, a good grade, or a pat on the back. If no one received any praise or reward, why would we do things? Sometimes people would do things for others just because they have high morals, but after certain point I don't believe they would. Our society strives to do well so we can live
comfortably, buy nice things and work at a job of choice. Not only is Kohn trying to change school beliefs but he does not appreciate societies either.

The law punishes drug addicts, thieves and people who speed. Why? The law is in place to keep the criminals under control so they do not harm others that are in their way. Teachers want everyone in their classroom to learn, but what about the one student who constantly interrupts the class? Kohn says that eventually, there will be a natural consequence for that child. No one knows when this will be, and in the mean time, the other students will learn little because of this student. I believe one aspect of a teacher's job is to create an atmosphere that is safe and promotes learning and if one child has to be removed or be given a consequence then that is what needs to be done.

Kohn's view of classroom discipline; or lack thereof, is an idealist view. This view however is unattainable in our society. Implementing this idea is not practical and in my belief cannot be done. If a teacher tried to implement this idea into their classroom they would have to modify it drastically and unfortunately, test scores are important to society, so if the teacher fails to bring students up to the appropriate level, they may be out of a job.