

COLAISTE NAISUINTE EALAINNE IS DEARTHA
NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
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Dissertation Abstract

Student: Gerelynn Scallon

Title: The Positive Acknowledgement Of Pupils Art
Work - A Role In Which Art Teachers Should
Play.

This dissertation is concerned with the positive role in which teachers should play towards the acknowledgement of pupils work within the art room. In it I investigate the following areas:

1. A definition of the terms; (a) acknowledge, (b) praise and (c) self-esteem.
2. Secondly I explore the literature related to the topic in relation to the art teachers' role.
3. Suggest ways in which pupils confidence can be built.
4. Give results and analysis of a questionnaire I developed based on information addressed in the previous chapters.
5. Finally, I have concluded by giving examples of how pupils can benefit more when teachers play a positive role towards the acknowledgement of pupils art work.

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THE POSITIVE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PUPILS ART WORK
A ROLE IN WHICH ART TEACHERS SHOULD PLAY

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Education

in

Candidacy for the

DIPLOMA FOR ART AND DESIGN TEACHERS

by

G. SCALLON

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION:

A DEFINITION OF THE TERMS

Praising/Acknowledging

Some people would say that praising a child is character building and crucial towards developing their self-esteem. But when it relates to school, I feel that praising the pupil rather than acknowledging the work that the pupil has done can arouse jealousy, creating competition amongst peers and may result in bullying behaviour.

In this first chapter I will attempt to differentiate between acknowledging and praising as well as rewarding. I will also give a definition for self-esteem.

What is it to acknowledge?

The Oxford English Dictionary states that it is to own the knowledge of; to confess; to recognise or admit as true, and to recognise with compliment. The last definition would be the most appropriate to use in a classroom situation. According to Collins Gem - English Dictionary, to acknowledge means to recognise or to admit. For the teacher, to acknowledge is to let pupils know that their art work is appreciated. The teachers' acknowledgement in this sense is vitally important and encouraging for the pupil.

What does Praise mean?

In this case it means: the action or fact of praising, the expression in speech of estimation or honour; commendation of the worth or excellence of a person or thing. Collins Gem - English Dictionary tells us that praise means: express approval or admiration of (someone or something).

Praise

The Oxford English Dictionary has defined reward as follows: 1. To regard, heed, consider; to look at or observe; 2. To agree; to determine or decide; 3. To assign or give (to one) as a reward or recompense. And according to Collins Gem - English Dictionary, reward means: something given in return for a service. The three words: acknowledge, praise and reward all help towards building self-esteem. However, acknowledging the work that the pupil has done as opposed to praising the individual can be carried out in a very subtle manner. It can be a mere gesture and does not have to be voiced, hence building a good relationship between teacher and pupil.

Self-Esteem

Acknowledging the work carried out by the pupil also enhances their self-esteem. According to Denis Lawrence self-esteem is the individual's evaluation of the discrepancy between self-image and ideal self.

Apart from acknowledging the pupils art work, it is also very important that the art teacher makes reference to artists' work and relates that to what the pupils are doing. This will develop new interests for the pupils, giving them a much broader knowledge. Pupils will gain an appreciation of art as well as other subjects, which in turn will encourage cross curricular activity within the school as well as outside the school. The art teacher should also acknowledge the work carried out by the pupils by evaluating it before the lesson ends. In doing this no individual is excluded. By acknowledging pupils work in this way, helps to enhance both academic achievement, towards personal and social development.

CHAPTER 2

THE ART TEACHERS' ROLE

Teacher/Pupil Relationship

Although teenagers may seem unimpressed by parents and teachers, the support and good opinion of such people is still vital to them. Teachers who work well with adolescents seem aware of this fact, and are often able to create a relationship with them that the latter will one day come to regard as amongst the most formative of their lives.

Such teachers seem able to understand and sympathize with adolescents' problems, to tolerate patiently their occasional outbursts and strange mannerisms, to excite their interest and involvement in art, and perhaps above all to provide them with clear, consistent and reasonable guidelines to the kind of behaviour best suited to the adult world and to the achievement of long-term life of goals. The art teacher must not compromise personal standards in the interests of making himself or herself acceptable to the class. Where these standards concern values or opinions, the teacher makes them available to the class while insisting that in the final instance these are matters of personal choice. Where they concern school rules or regulations the teacher stands firm on them, explains the reasoning behind them (and the correct machinery for attempting to change them if this is desired), and points out that few jobs and professions are without their rule books and codes of conduct.

Where they concern the subject being taught the teacher insists on each individual aiming for the highest levels of which he or she is capable.(1)

Social Acknowledgement

Social encounters between the art teacher and his/her class is a significant factor towards positive acknowledging, e.g. acknowledging each other's presence. Very often as much social information is conveyed through gaze as through speech. Teacher and class spend a great deal of time during a theory lesson looking at each other and registering their reactions, and much of the relationship between them is mediated and monitored in this way.(2) Gesture also plays a part. So does the way in which teachers carry themselves and go about classroom duties.(3) Through watching teachers, the class picks up a great deal of information about them, and this information influences their own behaviour, which in turn feeds back into verbal and non-verbal signals to teachers.

Verbal appeals

Verbal appeals are defined as teachers' addresses to pupils with reference to their behaviour (achievement or non-achievement), without relation to a specific performance outcome on an achievement test. Studies by Dweck and her associates (Dweck and Bush, 1978; Dweck et al., 1978) showed how verbal appeals and direct reference to causality influence pupils' attributions.(4)

One educational objective should be to encourage pupils to use the adaptive pattern of causal perception of their success and failure. Within the framework of such an objective, teachers could play a major role. Their behaviour is one of the determinants of pupils' causal perception. Therefore, they can direct pupils to adaptive attributions. The primary objective should be to convince pupils that effort, as an unstable-controllable factor, is an important cause of achievement outcome. Hard trying might cause success, while lack of trying might cause failure.(5)

Positive Acknowledgement

What should be done about the student whose behaviour cannot be praised? Does the teacher risk reducing self-confidence by ignoring the pupil or risk communicating dislike through non-verbal behaviour? The answer to this question is simply, that the quality of being able to accept the student through positive acknowledgement of their work, even if not the pupils' behaviour.

Bruner likes to talk about the teacher's role as helping students approach what they are doing with a mind to "discovering something rather than 'learn about' it". The benefit of that, he continues, is that "the child is now in a position to experience success and failure not as reward and punishment, but as information." This is a critical distinction. Feedback indicating that a student "is on the right track..."

[or] the wrong one" is what produces improvement, and teachers need to make sure students get plenty of it.(6)

Setting a Good Example

The affect of teachers' behaviour on pupils' attributions:

In the classroom situations, teachers dominate the interactions with the pupils, pupils' attention is directed towards the teachers, whose verbal and non-verbal behaviour provides much information regarding not only academic content, but also regarding not only academic content, but also regarding events occurring in the classroom, the pupils themselves, etc. To a large extent, this information determines pupils' reactions, such as attitudes, self-perception, or causal perception of success or failure. With regard to pupils' causal perception, it seems that teachers sometimes communicate the causes directly and sometimes pupils infer them on the basis of teachers' behaviour (Blumenfeld et al., 1977). It is suggested that teachers' behaviours which influence pupils' causal perception, can be classified into five categories: (a) verbal appeals; (b) instructions; (c) reinforcements; (d) verbal feedback; and (e) direct references to causality.(7)

Individual teachers can often be surprised to see how much of the lesson they spent lecturing (talking at the class), or how infrequently they offered praise or encouragement. They may be heartened to see how often they asked questions or accepted feelings or stimulated the

class to initiate their own ideas.(8) And of course, children will respond to the teacher not just on the strength of what the latter says or does in the present lesson but on their memories of the social interactions that took place on the previous occasions they were being taught.(9)

Appropriate use of Language

The use of positive language is a vital role for the art teacher to play in the art room. The emphases should always be upon what we want pupils to do, rather than upon what they must refrain from doing. Thus we say 'Come in quietly' rather than 'Don't make so much noise', 'Look at your books' rather than 'stop turning around', and so on. Negative language suggests activities to pupils that previously might not have entered their heads, and thus focuses the attention of even the law-abiding class members in the wrong direction. This is what one teacher had to say when I questioned her on negative language: a pupil's art work "is part of them. You can say one thing very comfortably to one student and never dream of saying the same thing to another, because you know they wouldn't be able to take it. So you're constantly, not only assessing the work, you're assessing the personality and character of the individual you have in front of you. You're editing what you would say, dealing with that individual. But it's essential to praise. You don't get anywhere with negativity."

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 2

1. David Fontana, Psychology for Teachers (London: Macmillan Press LTD., 1995) p. 278.
2. Ibid., p. 298.
3. Ibid.
4. Myron H. Dembo, Applying Educational Psychology in the Classroom, (New York and London: Longman, 1991) p. 207.
5. Ibid, p. 211
6. Alfie Kohn, Punished by Rewards, (Boston New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993), p. 211.
7. Dembo, Applying Educationl, p. 207.
8. Fontana, Psychology, p. 304.
9. Ibid, p. 305.

CHAPTER 3

BUILDING THE PUPILS' CONFIDENCE

Creating a Positive Atmosphere

The atmosphere in the art room should never be seen as a 'test', which some pupils pass and others fail. The idea is to build confidence, not to undermine it further.(1) Behind the deceptively simple pattern of the lesson goes a great deal of teacher preparation and planning, particularly in art. The teacher needs to see to it that, unobtrusively, the socially hesitant pupils are given the less demanding tasks, and are publicly encouraged and praised in their performance.(2) No pupil should ever come out of a class feeling bad.

Teachers should also, of course, try to equip their pupils with the skills necessary for dealing competently with most of the problems they are likely to meet, and should help to build their confidence by giving them the experience of success or a sense of achievement, which is essential if pupils are to make satisfactory progress. Thus what teachers should aim to do is not so much radically to alter their pupils' personalities, but to help them cope more effectively with the kind of people they are.(3) It is also vitally important to teach art students that everyone has creative potential, and not just a few outstanding individuals.

The involvement of pupils, wherever feasible, in the classroom decisions

and in the formulation of school policy helps them to see themselves as valued members of the school community, and to practise the behaviour that goes with this valuation.(4) Indeed, together with self-exploration, self-expression, mutual respect between pupils and between pupils and adults, and a full understanding of school ethos and of necessary social restraints, they are components not only of this education but of the wider education for 'being'.

Teachers need to give pupils a realistic self-concept, not a false one, and that when the relationship is caring, trusting one, they will accept blame and criticism without the adversely affecting self-esteem (Sharp and Muller, 1978). Perhaps, more importantly, the teacher should acknowledge the effort and behaviour as opposed to praising, because this raises the issue of how far a competitive atmosphere is potentially harmful. Clearly, when the pupil is being made overanxious by the need to compete then it is harmful for the development of self-confidence.

An aspect of the teacher/pupil relationship which has received a good deal of attention in the literature is that known as 'the expectancy effect'. This refers to the phenomenon that pupils tend to behave according to the teacher's belief in their worth.

Although there are many aspects of the classroom environment which may influence the pupil's self-confidence, research shows that it is the teacher's day-to-day contacts with the pupils which have the greatest effect.

Positive Encouragement

Encouraging self-confidence in pupils is vital. Teachers can do a great deal to help the development of self-confidence and indicate firmly the regard and respect with which they view their pupils. It is also important with all pupils, to encourage them to articulate their picture of themselves. Pupils with low self-esteem can do little to subject their negative self-concepts to critical scrutiny until these concepts are defined and recognised for what they are, which in turn is not possible until children have found some way of expressing them. Once each pupil has learnt to communicate the nature of self-doubts to others, he or she can be helped to face up to them and to recognise their lack of substance. This does not mean that teachers should spend all their time in a counselling role, or be continually taking pupils to one side to get them to talk about themselves, but simply that they should be at all times alert for opportunities to ascertain how pupils themselves perceive their own successes and failures. Often pupils become quite skilled at hiding their feelings even from themselves, and teachers may be misled into thinking that low marks, or criticisms directed towards them in class, have no real effect upon their self-esteem, or their confidence in

their own abilities. Teachers may even feel rather angry about this, and redouble these criticisms in the hope that they will finally 'sink in'. The result is often to wound pupils further, or to make them defend their self-esteem by ignoring the teacher and pretending that neither the teacher's opinions nor the art that they are doing are of any value.

This does not mean that the teacher should not criticise pupils, or challenge them to greater efforts, or correct work: far from it. The teacher must always be concerned to help each pupil reach his or her potential. What it does mean, however, is that the teacher should do things in such a way that the pupil's self-esteem is protected. Pupils will differ in the extent of their needs, and the robust, high self-esteem it means giving pupils' art work that is appropriate to their competence, drawing attention to success rather than harping upon failures, giving work back personally to pupils wherever possible (particularly if the marks are rather low) with a quiet word of encouragement rather than simply handing it back in class. It also means helping pupils to understand the profit from their errors, choosing any words of criticism with care, and making sure that they are applied to the work rather than to the pupil himself or herself, and emphasizing at all times by actions as well as by words that, whatever happens, each pupil retains the teacher's concern and respect.

Self-esteem is not the same as conceit. In any discussion of self-esteem, the objection is sometimes raised that we must not give pupils inflated pictures of themselves which will only be rudely destroyed one day. This doesn't mean that teachers be dishonest towards their pupils. Self-esteem should not be equated with conceit. It seems not from an exaggerated view of oneself but from the realization that one matters to the people one loves, or those who have responsibility for one, or those with whom one works. It stems from the knowledge that one is doing the best one can with one's abilities, and that the rest of the world is not critically watching one's every move ready to pounce as soon as there is any hint of error. And, finally, it stems from the knowledge that one should extend to oneself that understanding and sympathy that one extends to others. Some low self-esteem people are full of excuses because they cannot bear the thought that something or other was their fault and is therefore further proof of their inadequacy, but many of them are quick to excuse others but never themselves.

It is true that the parent has more influence (normally) over the pupil than the teacher, but pupils tend to take over and internalize the teacher's picture of them just as they take over and internalize their parents' picture. Many teachers signal to their pupils, consciously and unconsciously, that they value them as people, that they consider them capable of developing the necessary skills to cope with their work, and

that they consider them important enough to spend time listening to their views (and advice) on most of the things that go on in the art room. They set their pupils consistent and realistic standards, encourage them to be undaunted by failure, and urge them to have the confidence to act independently and responsibly when the occasion arises. Other teachers, disappointed perhaps that progress with particular individuals and groups of pupils are not as fast as they would like, send signals of the opposite kind, and leave children with negative feelings about themselves and their abilities. Such teachers forget that they should be concerned first and foremost not with making comparisons between children, and finding some wanting, but with indicating clearly to each member of the class that he or she matters as much as does everyone else, and has qualities and abilities which can be developed and which can help towards enjoyment of the positive things in life and towards coping with its problems and difficulties.

FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 3

1. David Fontana, Psychology for Teachers, (London: Macmillan Press LTD., 1995), p. 323.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid, p. 201.
4. Ibid, p. 273.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS:

Questionnaire

The following questions are related to the information given in the previous chapters. They were answered by two qualified and experienced art teachers.

Question 1

Do you think there is a difference between acknowledging the work carried out by the pupil and praising the actual pupil? Comment.

Answer

Teacher "A"

"I think that there is a subtle difference. If you know a child has made a huge effort and you want to say to them 'yes you've done very very well', then you say 'you have done very well and I like the effort you've made'. But it's not always about the work you want to talk, it's about how they have tried. I would always say that it is very important to say to every student when you're assessing their work the positive things first and then point out what needs help."

Answer

Teacher "B"

"Well I think that there is a connection between the two. I think praise is probably the most essential thing, 'cause I think out of praise you get results and as a consequence the acknowledgement of the work is a

form of praise I suppose, but it reinforces the students own sense of how they're developing."

Question 2

Do you think it is important for art students to get recognition for their work? Comment.

Answer

Teacher "A"

"Yes, I think it's essential, I think it is very very important to acknowledge the subject as a serious subject within the school environment. I think outside the art room within the art room, every single students' work must go on the wall, good, bad and indifferent, and I think that it's very very important to put fresh work up regularly, so that people see that the work is being done and the students work can be praised from other teachers and I think it very important to name the students work and yes, if you've got it flaunt it as much as you possibly can, 'cause it's very good for the morale of students to see their work. It goes up on the art room wall and then when it goes outside it's an even greater acknowledgement, and it's nice to have open days when people can come in and come around the room and have the door open. My art room door is open more than it's closed, even when class is going on."

Answer

Teacher "B"

"I think it is vitally important that students get recognition for their work because it is the yard-stick, the only yard-stick apart from their own confidence and self-worth. But it is the only yard-stick that they would see from the expert's point of view; in other words, that if I as the art teacher say to them: 'that is really showing a great development in your use of colours'. They may begin to look more at colour, they may expand to say it's to do with texture, they may experiment more."

Question 3

What do you find are useful ways of focusing on/recognising pupils work?

Answer

Teacher "A"

"Well I think when you set a little project, I think then that you have to at the end of a class, point out pupils who have grasped what you wanted from them, so that the others can learn from that, so that others can see what it was you were looking for and throughout a class as you see people 'clicking in', then you've got to stop the class and let everyone see who has sort of copped on to what it is you want of them. And then I don't like to single out individual peoples' work to put up on the wall. I like to put everyone's work on the wall. Children get used to that but I do think that it is good to point out those students

who most quickly achieved what you're looking for, but I think it is very important for everyone to get recognition and they get used to that. It doesn't become an issue like there's no 'best' in the class anymore. There are people who are very good. But also what happens is the students find out what it is they are good at as individuals, it might be texture or colour. It's a good way of finding out what the individual is good at. I just don't like the idea of having the best in the class. So the thing is to stop the class when you see things going well and say 'this is good', and it might be a different person every week, depending on what it is your looking for."

Answer

Teacher "B"

"I think that one of the ways is evaluation and I think that's a very important tool in helping students to look at their work critically. There are other ways of course, there are tests and so on and that's another way, but I think that the evaluation on an on going basis is very very valuable tool, and infact it's the one that I would think brings the most results, and it also focuses them very much as they are actually doing their work, that it is going to be assessed and therefore they concentrate more and they put more thought into their work."

Question 4

Do you think your evaluations of students work as being important in student recognition? Comment.

Answer

Teacher "A"

"It's really important to reassure students all the time that they are going along the right path and that they are good and that you're happy with what they're doing. I do say, 'I think here needs attention', but it's very very important for them to see that they are doing well. It's a very personal thing making art work, craft work, what ever you want to call it, and they take it very very personally in a way that maybe other subjects mightn't. It's part of them, so you have to be very very careful. You can say one thing very comfortably to one student and never dream of saying the same thing to another because you know they wouldn't be able to take it. So you're constantly not only assessing the work, you're assessing the personality and character of the individual you have in front of you. You're editing what you would say dealing with that individual. But it's essential to praise. You don't get anywhere with negativity. The only time that I would really get upset is if somebody that I know is capable, isn't working. Then I let fly! And that'll be the only time that I would really get upset is I know they're capable and they're not working, they're just being lazy. And even at that if I feel that somebody isn't working there's usually a problem behind it, so you would take that individual aside and say, 'OK, what's up?'"

Answer

Teacher "B"

"I think that it is vital. It is the most helpful way that I have found over the years, the most! It's a thing that I would pin-point. Evaluation and praise and encouragement, 'cause I think they just act like magic, particularly the praise and encouragement, because in today's world there's a lot of spoonfeeding and things are fed to them, but if they are actually praised personally, I think they can really give back great results."

In this questionnaire, all four questions posed relate to researched information addressed in the previous chapters. It was interesting to discover that the overall results proved that; 'acknowledging the art work carried out by the pupils was more beneficial towards the character building of the individual pupil. This was emphasised more by teacher "A" by suggesting that:

1. a teacher should have a positive attitude towards their pupils and their work e.g., "I would always say that it is very important to say to every student when you're assessing their work, the positive things first and then point out what needs help."
2. That art as a subject should be acknowledged "as a serious subject within the school environment", and that every single student's work should be acknowledged to boost their morale, e.g. "I think that outside

the art room within the art room, every single students' work must go on the wall, good, bad and indifferent."

3. By acknowledging each and every student's work, eliminates competition amongst peers, which shows that there is no 'best' in the class. This also enhances the pupils best areas in art which in turn helps the teacher recognise "what the individual is good at."

4. That greater emphasis is placed on, always letting the student know how well they are doing, e.g. "It's really important to reassure students all the time that they are going along the right path and that they are good and that you'r happy with what they're doing."

The answers given by teacher "A" concludes that art in particular has a significant role to play in building the pupil's self-worth and developing their self-confidence.

Although teacher "B"

1. saw a "connection between the two", i.e. acknowledging and praising, teacher "B" felt that praising the pupil was more beneficial towards getting results, e.g. "I think out of praise you get results."

2. Teacher "B's" answer to question two suggests that without the teacher's recognition of pupils work, the pupil is not aware of how their work is progressing, "apart from their own confidence and self-worth."

3. In this question teacher "B's" reply indicates that evaluation of the pupils work is a contributing factor towards encouraging pupils to

"concentrate more and they put more thought into their work", hence achieving their potential result.

4. "I think they just act like magic", is how teacher "B" values praise and encouragement within the evaluation of pupils work; thus placing substantial significance upon the overall acknowledgement of pupils' art work.

CONCLUSION

The job of the teacher is in many cases to encourage what is already there, rather than to try to develop it from scratch. And here the rule is that if children are to manifest their maturity, and to lack responsibly towards themselves and towards others, they must be given the right kind of opportunities.(1)

Teacher-pupil interaction is the influence of teachers on pupils' causal perception of success or failure. Teachers have been found to have powerful influence over pupils' perceptions and attitudes regarding achievement situations (Cooper, 1979; Hargreaves, 1972). In the case attribution, Bar-Tal and Guttman (1981) found that pupils' causal perceptions of success or failure were more similar to that of their teachers than that of their parents.

It is obvious that verbal messages can either enhance or reduce self-confidence. Staines (1958) identifies the words and phrases teachers use in the classroom and finds that they could be classified into two groups: those that are encouraging, praising, valuing and generally relaxing; and those which are blaming, pushing and generally anxiety-producing. The students' self-esteem and also their levels of scholastic attainment were higher in the first group (which could be categorized as positive acknowledging). The conclusion from the

Staine's research is that there is a positive and negative way of saying the same thing and that which is used is crucial in determining its effects on self-confidence.

Encouragement by the teacher, together with a modelling of due fairness and respect for all children, and care in granting responsibilities and opportunities in accordance with their needs, are vital strategies in helping under-assertive pupils to gain confidence and self-belief.(2) No teacher should feel isolated in attempts to help pupils develop the positive self-regard that will enable them to experience their lives in a satisfying and rewarding way.(3)

Once teachers are aware of the vital role in a pupil's life played by positive self-esteem, they can so much through simple observation and classroom conversations to build up a picture of how individual pupils see themselves. Taking Coopersmith's work as a model, the teacher can note whether pupils join in or not, whether they are unduly daunted by criticism, whether they have an unusual need for attention, whether they capitulate in the face of failure or rise to the challenge, whether they have a realistic view of their own abilities and of their future goals, whether they have, in short, a proper sense of their own worth and of their basic rights as people.(4)

In Roger's view the need for positive regard is very important.(5) Children are born with a basic need for the positive regard (the acceptance and approval) of others, and it is this need, says Rogers, which is the main socializing force behind their behaviour. It is this need ultimately that makes them obedient to parents and teachers, since without other people's positive regard they cannot develop positive regard for themselves.(6)

Give students "several alternative assignments from which they can choose," and competition in the classroom will likely decline. After all, if not everyone in the room is doing the same thing, the social comparison that can degenerate into competition is less likely to occur.(7) When these two suggestions are combined - that is, when teachers use a variety of assignments that offer the right amount of challenge - pupils are given the opportunity to feel a sense of accomplishment. That feeling of having worked at something and mastered it, of being competent, is an essential ingredient of successful learning. And, as one researcher notes,

...classrooms that provide a variety of concrete activities for many ability levels do not need reward stickers or praise to encourage learning.(8)

FOOTNOTES CONCLUSION

1. David Fontana, Psychology for Teachers, (London: Macmillan Press LTD., 1995), p. 273.
2. Ibid, p. 270.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. 268.
5. Ibid., p. 255.
6. Ibid., pp. 255-256.
7. Alfie Kohn, Punished by Rewards, (Boston New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993), p. 220.
8. Ibid.

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