

Conditions of teaching and learning

Work file 5: Rethinking discipline and order from a democratic point of view

- Order is necessary under all circumstances. A group without order and basic rules cannot be democratic.
- Limits are necessary. Rules may be wrong or inappropriate. But as long as they have not been replaced they must be respected. It must, however, be possible to change them.
- From the very beginning, children should participate in setting up and enforcing rules. Only in this way is it possible for them to identify with the rules.
- A classroom community cannot function without mutual trust and respect. In some cases it may prove difficult to create such an atmosphere.
- Team spirit must replace competition in the classroom.
- A friendly classroom atmosphere is of vital importance.
- The social skills of the teacher have an essential contribution to make (democratic leadership, developing a feeling of belonging to the group, building up relationships, etc.).
- Group communication is a permanent reality in a democratically led class.
- Students, both boys and girls, must be encouraged to explore something new and to learn from mistakes.
- Within the limits set, it must be possible to exercise liberties. Only in this way is it possible for individual responsibility to develop.
- Discipline and order will be accepted and complied with most willingly if they help each individual to express himself or herself, and if they support the group in developing satisfying relationships and working conditions.