

# Classroom Discipline, Why Teachers are Leaving, Because of Their Failure to Understand Methods of Discipline?

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**Abstract:** Classroom discipline for secondary education is an indispensable way of creating inclusive learning environments. It encompasses theoretical perspectives, ranging from encouraging student engagement to minimizing disruptive behaviours to promoting academic growth. This paper reviews the literature related to the following popular classroom management theories: behaviourist, social learning theory, humanistic, cognitive, and sociocultural; the models of discipline include assertive discipline, restorative practices, Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM). Such a comparison of analyses has shown both strengths and limitations of different approaches; hence, the effectiveness in various educational settings. A critical discussion has underlined the need for adaptive, evidence-based strategies and has identified some areas for further research beyond current limitations. A five-point plan is suggested for accomplishing effective classroom management.

**Keywords:** Classroom Management, Student Autonomy, Inclusive Teaching, Behavioural Interventions, Cultural Responsiveness, Five-Point Plan, Cultural Responsiveness, Five-Point Plan

## Introduction

Effective classroom management is pivotal in achieving student success and teacher satisfaction (Hepburn and Beamish, 2020). In secondary education, students navigate significant social and emotional developmental transitions (Adsız and Dinçer, 2025; Allen *et al.*, 2018). Evidence-based classroom management strategies are linked to enhanced academic achievement, reduced misbehaviour, and increased teacher efficacy (Jaywardena, 2021; NSW Department of Education, 2020). Structured classroom environments contribute to students feeling secure and better equipped to engage academically (Cuzzolino, 2022; Mitchell *et al.*, 2017).

Over time, approaches to classroom discipline have evolved from rigid, authoritarian models to those emphasizing students' emotional intelligence and intrinsic motivation. Initially, discipline strategies focused on punishment and external reinforcement, as proposed in behavioural theories (Bear *et al.*, 2022; Skinner, 1983). However, the rise of inclusive education and student-centred learning has introduced models addressing not only behaviour modification but also the social, cultural, and psychological factors influencing behaviour (Gregory *et al.*, 2020). Contemporary methods integrate principles from psychology, sociology, and

neuroscience, offering a holistic perspective on discipline that supports students' intellectual and emotional development (Bear *et al.*, 2022; CASEL, 2020; Ganaban, 2023; The Education Hub, 2019).

This paper examines the major theoretical underpinnings of classroom management in secondary education, exploring various models and their effectiveness in engaging students and minimizing behavioural disruptions. Traditional approaches, such as assertive discipline and behavioural theory, will be studied alongside more recent models, including Choice Theory, Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS), restorative practices, and culturally responsive classroom management. For example, PBIS has demonstrated consistent success in reducing disruptive behaviours and improving school climate (Centre on PBIS, 2024), while restorative practices foster stronger teacher-student relationships and accountability (PB4L, n.d.; Gregory *et al.*, 2020). Likewise, culturally responsive strategies emphasise relational trust and relevance in instruction, particularly for marginalised student populations (Education Counts, n.d.; The Education Hub, 2019). Finally, emerging concerns about digital surveillance in classrooms underscore the need for ethical, student-focused approaches to classroom discipline (Reeves and Sahlberg, 2023).

Through comparative and critical analyses, this paper highlights the necessity for flexible, evidence-based strategies tailored to the diverse needs of high school students. The research discussion will focus on: (i) foundational theories of classroom management; (ii) the effectiveness of varied classroom management approaches based on research evidence; and (iii) challenges in applying management theories in diverse settings, offering key takeaways for teaching staff.

### *Background - Classroom Discipline-Management*

Theoretical frameworks guide the development and implementation of classroom management strategies, each offering unique insights into student behaviour.

Behaviourist theories, notably Skinner's operant conditioning, emphasize reinforcement and punishment as primary drivers of behaviour (Skinner, 1983). Positive reinforcement strengthens desirable behaviours through rewards, while negative reinforcement or punishment aims to reduce undesirable actions. Recent studies affirm the effectiveness of these methods, particularly in primary and secondary education, for fostering positive behaviour and reducing classroom disruptions (Drew 2024; Simonsen *et al.*, 2008; Sutherland *et al.*, 2008). However, over-reliance on extrinsic rewards may undermine intrinsic motivation, with students becoming dependent on external stimuli for behavioural guidance (Deci *et al.*, 1999). Integrating Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) into behaviour interventions enhances student self-management and intrinsic motivation alongside external reinforcements (Collie *et al.*, 2012; Durlak *et al.*, 2022).

Bandura's social learning theory posits that individuals learn behaviours through observation, imitation, and modelling (Bandura, 1977). This framework underscores the importance of students learning from their social environment, particularly by observing peers and teachers. Empirical research supports this theory, revealing that when teachers model prosocial behaviours - such as empathy, cooperation, and respect—students are more likely to emulate these behaviours, contributing to a more positive classroom climate (Wentzel, 2003a, b). Furthermore, collaborative and inclusive learning environments based on social learning principles promote the development of interpersonal skills while reducing behavioural issues (Hattie & Yates, 2013; Hattie, 2023).

Humanistic theories, primarily advanced by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, emphasise the role of emotional and psychological needs in student development. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, learning and self-actualisation occur only when basic needs - such as safety, belonging, and esteem - are met. Rogers (1969) advocated for "unconditional positive regard," where educators foster empathetic, non-judgemental relationships with students. Research shows

that when teachers address students' emotional well-being, classroom behaviour improves and engagement increases (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Rimm-Kaufman *et al.*, 2006). Additionally, supportive teacher-student relationships are linked to fewer behavioural problems and enhanced academic outcomes (Pianta *et al.*, 2008). Recent studies reinforce these findings, demonstrating that humanistic, emotionally responsive teaching methods significantly improve student motivation, engagement, and resilience (Reeves & Sahlberg, 2023; Cozzolino, 2022).

Cognitive and constructivist theories view students as active agents in their own learning, emphasising autonomy and internal motivation. Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development and Piaget's stages of cognitive development highlight the need for appropriate scaffolding in developing students' thinking and self-regulation. Zimmerman *et al.* (2022) and Zimmerman (2022) emphasises that fostering students' self-regulatory abilities enhances not only academic success but also behavioural responsibility. Schunk (1989) and Pintrich (2000) have long supported the integration of Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) strategies in the classroom, which promote students' ability to manage both cognitive and behavioural processes (Zimmerman, 2023). More recent meta-analyses confirm that embedding SRL and metacognitive training within classroom management significantly boosts academic outcomes and student discipline (Johnson *et al.*, 2023).

From an ecological systems perspective, Bronfenbrenner (1979) asserted that student behaviour is shaped by multiple, interacting systems—such as family, school, and cultural environment. This perspective calls for classroom discipline strategies that are contextually aware and culturally sensitive. Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM) responds to this need by aligning disciplinary practices with students' cultural values and experiences (Gregory *et al.*, 2010; Gay, 2010). These practices foster inclusivity, respect, and a sense of belonging among diverse student populations. Earlier research links CRCM with increased engagement and reduced achievement gaps (Rimm-Kaufman *et al.*, 2006), while recent findings underscore its effectiveness in decreasing disciplinary referrals and promoting positive behavioural outcomes (Banks *et al.*, 2023b; Hammond & Lindsey, 2023). Hammond (2015) further stresses the importance of educators understanding students' cultural frameworks to design discipline strategies that resonate with their lived experiences.

Various theoretical frameworks offer complementary insights into classroom discipline (Evertson & Weinstein, 2015). Behavioural theories stress reinforcement and consequences; social learning highlights modelling; humanistic approaches prioritise emotional wellbeing and relationships; cognitive theories focus on self-regulation and intrinsic motivation; and ecological

systems theory emphasises cultural and environmental influences. Together, they form a holistic foundation for effective, inclusive discipline strategies.

## Methodology

This paper employs a qualitative, critically comparative analysis of five prominent classroom discipline models: Assertive Discipline, Restorative Practices, Choice Theory, Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM). The analysis draws from a comprehensive review of peer-reviewed literature, theoretical texts, and recent empirical studies published between 2000 and 2024. Sources were identified through academic databases such as ERIC, JSTOR, and Google Scholar, using relevant keywords, including the authors' long-term experiences in "classroom management," "discipline models," "secondary and tertiary education," and "inclusive practices" over time. Each model was evaluated based on five key dimensions:

1. Philosophical foundation
2. Implementation requirements
3. Behavioural outcomes
4. Support for emotional and cultural development
5. Scalability and adaptability across diverse educational settings

Comparative findings were synthesised to develop a practical five-point integrated framework aimed at supporting teachers in classrooms. The inclusion criteria prioritised research with demonstrated relevance to secondary education and multicultural or inclusive contexts. This method allowed for a robust comparison of the theoretical effectiveness, practical feasibility, and long-term implications of each model.

## Models for Classroom Discipline

Effective classroom discipline is pivotal for fostering a conducive learning environment. Various models have been developed to guide educators in managing student behaviour, each grounded in distinct theoretical frameworks.

Lee and Marlene Canter's Assertive Discipline model underscores the importance of teacher authority and the consistent enforcement of rules. This behaviourist approach posits that clear expectations and predictable consequences can mitigate classroom disruptions (Canter & Canter, 2001). Marzano *et al.* (2003) support this perspective, indicating that assertive discipline effectively reduces disruptions in large secondary classrooms. Similarly, Evertson and Weinstein (2015) observed fewer classroom problems and heightened student engagement in settings employing assertive discipline strategies. However, critiques suggest that this model may prioritize compliance over genuine engagement, potentially undermining student autonomy.

Simonsen *et al.* (2008) found that while assertive discipline strategies reduce disruptions, they often foster surface-level compliance rather than intrinsic motivation.

In contrast, William Glasser's Choice Theory emphasizes intrinsic motivation by encouraging students to take responsibility for their actions (Glasser, 1998). This theory aligns with adolescents' developmental need for autonomy. Shindler and Erwin *et al.* (2016) found that students who perceived control over their behaviour exhibited greater self-regulation and responsibility. Kohn (1993) expanded on these findings, demonstrating that when students are given choices, they become more engaged and less reliant on external rewards. Dwyer *et al.* (2008) confirmed the effectiveness of Choice Theory in promoting better discipline and a more effective classroom environment.

The Responsive Classroom (RC) approach integrates Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) with academic instruction, fostering mutual respect within the classroom. This method has been shown to enhance student engagement and reduce behavioural issues, particularly in secondary classrooms where social dynamics are influential. Battistich *et al.* (2003) support the efficacy of SEL in promoting cooperative behaviour and reducing conflicts. Rimm-Kaufman *et al.* (2014) found that implementing the Responsive Classroom approach reduced behavioural problems and improved students' social skills. Jones *et al.* (2013; 2023) demonstrated that the close connection between SEL and academic success in Responsive Classroom settings led to higher academic achievement.

## Restorative Practices

Restorative Practices (RP) focus on repairing relationships and building community without relying on punitive measures. Amstutz and Mullet (2015) and Gregory *et al.* (2016) found that restorative approaches reduce suspensions and improve student behaviour by increasing empathy and accountability. Additionally, Payne and Welch (2018) provided evidence that restorative justice practices help students take responsibility for their actions and repair harm caused to others. McCluskey *et al.* (2008) observed that schools employing restorative practices experienced a significant reduction in disciplinary referrals and an improved school climate.

## Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a multi-tiered framework designed to promote positive behaviour across the school community. Horner *et al.* (2010) found that PBIS significantly reduces office referrals and suspensions, enhancing the school climate. Bradshaw *et al.* (2009a) support PBIS's effectiveness in improving both school climate and academic

performance. A meta-analysis by Horner *et al.* (2010) further confirmed that PBIS leads to lower rates of problem behaviour and better academic outcomes. Reinke *et al.* (2013) demonstrated that PBIS provides effective support for students with challenging behaviours, fostering a positive learning environment.

### *Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM)*

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM) tailors' disciplinary practices to the cultural backgrounds of students, promoting inclusivity and equity (Bennett, 2017). Gay (2010) and Ladson-Billings (1995) show that CRCM enhances student engagement and discipline, particularly for students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Weinstein *et al.* (2004) argue that culturally responsive practices are crucial for creating inclusive classrooms, especially in multicultural urban settings. Gorski (2009) emphasized that classroom management should consider students' cultural backgrounds. Harris and Goodall (2008) found that CRCM reduces disciplinary inequities and improves the overall classroom climate, promoting student achievement.

### *Analysis*

The relevant models have been studied by various authors in recent times, and these are further analysed in the following list:

#### *Assertive Discipline*

Assertive Discipline is built on the principle that teachers must establish and maintain firm, clear boundaries to create an environment where teaching and learning can occur without interruptions (Canter & Canter, 2001; Letuma, 2024). The model encourages teachers to assert their authority calmly and consistently, applying rules fairly to all students. This structure aims to minimize disruptions by making expectations and consequences explicit. Recent studies confirm that when teachers use assertive discipline, classroom order improves, particularly in large or challenging classrooms. However, the approach has been critiqued for emphasizing external control and compliance, potentially limiting students' development of intrinsic motivation and autonomy. While effective in reducing misbehaviour, it may lead to surface-level adherence rather than fostering internal self-discipline (Simonsen *et al.*, 2008).

Recent studies have explored the application and effectiveness of assertive discipline in contemporary educational settings. For instance, a study conducted in South African secondary schools examined the implementation of assertive discipline strategies to manage learner behaviour (Letuma, 2024). The findings suggested that proactive behaviour management strategies, rooted in assertive discipline theory, can offer

alternative solutions for managing learners' behavioural issues, emphasizing the articulation of expectations, establishment of classroom rules, and reinforcement of desired behaviour (Minahan & Rappaport, 2012).

However, the approach has been critiqued for emphasizing external control and compliance, potentially limiting students' development of intrinsic motivation and autonomy. A systematic review highlighted concerns that punitive disciplinary approaches, such as strict rule enforcement without student involvement, may negatively impact students' psychosocial outcomes, including their sense of autonomy and well-being (Ijaz *et al.*, 2024). While assertive discipline can be effective in reducing misbehaviour and establishing classroom order, educators are encouraged to balance this approach with strategies that promote student engagement and intrinsic motivation, fostering a more holistic and supportive learning environment.

### *Choice Theory*

Choice Theory shifts the focus from external control to internal motivation. It holds that individuals act to satisfy five basic psychological needs: survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun (Glasser, 1998). In a classroom setting, this theory empowers students to take responsibility for their behaviour by making conscious choices. The teacher's role becomes one of facilitating student autonomy and helping students understand the consequences of their decisions. Recent research supports the effectiveness of this approach. For example, Gabriel and Matthews (2011) argues that Choice Theory provides a practical framework for fostering respectful student-teacher relationships and reducing behavioural issues. In higher education, the application of Choice Theory in online learning environments has been shown to enhance student engagement and satisfaction when students are allowed to select tasks that match their learning styles (Matthews, 2011; ISCAP, 2021).

This model also aligns closely with Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which asserts that students are more motivated when their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled (Núñez & León, 2019). A recent meta-analysis by Wang *et al.* (2024) confirmed that autonomy-supportive classroom strategies - central to both Choice Theory and SDT - lead to greater intrinsic motivation, improved classroom engagement, and better academic performance.

By fostering a democratic and respectful classroom climate, Choice Theory supports students' intrinsic motivation, which is especially important for adolescents who value autonomy. This focus on internal drivers reduces reliance on external rewards or punishments and promotes long-term behavioural and academic success.

### *Responsive Classroom (RC)*

The Responsive Classroom model integrates Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) with academic instruction to

foster a classroom environment where students feel respected, valued, and supported. Key practices such as morning meetings, interactive modelling, positive teacher language, and collaborative rule-setting cultivate mutual respect, social skills, and emotional regulation. Recent research confirms that these practices significantly enhance students' social competence, emotional well-being, and academic outcomes (Jones *et al.*, 2023; Rimm-Kaufman *et al.*, 2014). By addressing not only behavioural challenges but also the underlying social and emotional needs, the Responsive Classroom promotes a positive school climate that supports inclusivity and sustained student engagement (Dusenbury *et al.*, 2021). This holistic approach contributes to improved peer relationships and reduces behavioural disruptions, thereby creating a foundation for long-term academic and social success.

### *Restorative Practices (RP)*

Restorative Practices (RP) prioritize repairing harm and restoring relationships rather than punishing misbehaviour. Through structured conversations, mediations, and circles, RP encourages students to take responsibility for their actions and understand the impact on others. This approach cultivates empathy and accountability, helping to build a supportive and connected school community. Recent studies have shown that schools implementing RP report decreases in suspensions and disciplinary referrals, as well as improvements in student attitudes and feelings of safety (Augustine *et al.*, 2018; Sean, 2023). RP is seen as a more equitable alternative to traditional punitive discipline, which disproportionately affects marginalized students and can exacerbate behavioural problems (Losen *et al.*, 2015).

### *Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS)*

PBIS is a proactive, evidence-based framework designed to improve school-wide behaviour and climate through clear expectations, consistent teaching of positive behaviours, and data-driven decision-making. The framework operates at multiple tiers to support students with varying needs, from universal supports to targeted and intensive interventions. Bradshaw *et al.* (2009b) found that schools implementing PBIS experienced significant reductions in office discipline referrals and suspensions, accompanied by improved academic outcomes. Horner *et al.* (2010) reinforce that PBIS creates a positive school environment that promotes learning and reduces problem behaviours long-term, highlighting its scalability and adaptability to diverse school contexts (Banks *et al.*, 2023a-b). Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a proactive, evidence-based framework designed to enhance school-wide behaviour and climate through clear expectations, consistent teaching of positive behaviours, and data-driven decision-making. Operating

across multiple tiers, PBIS provides universal supports as well as targeted and intensive interventions to meet diverse student needs.

Recent studies have reinforced the effectiveness of PBIS. A 2023 systematic review by Santiago-Rosario *et al.* concluded that PBIS is an evidence-based practice that significantly reduces exclusionary discipline and improves social, emotional, and behavioural outcomes across various educational settings. Additionally, a 2023 qualitative study by Fortune-Wilson found that teachers perceive PBIS as effective in reducing negative behaviours and increasing positive behaviours among students with Behaviour Intervention Plans (Fortune-Wilson, 2023).

Furthermore, the Centre on PBIS has compiled an extensive database of research studies demonstrating the framework's effectiveness in improving student outcomes, educator practices, and overall school systems.

### *Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM)*

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM) emphasizes the importance of cultural competence in classroom management by aligning disciplinary practices with the cultural values, communication styles, and lived experiences of students (Banks *et al.*, 2023a, b). Ladson-Billings (1995) introduced the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy, advocating for teaching that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Saleem and Byrd, 2021). Gay (2010) further elaborated on this by highlighting the necessity of integrating students' cultural experiences into classroom instruction to enhance learning outcomes. This approach challenges the one-size-fits-all discipline methods that often marginalize students from diverse backgrounds (Banks *et al.*, 2023a). Recent research supports the efficacy of CRCM in improving student behaviour and promoting equity. For instance, Svajda-Hardy (2024) emphasises that CRCM fosters inclusive learning environments by recognising and affirming diverse cultural norms, thereby reducing disciplinary disparities and creating a more supportive classroom climate.

### *Trauma-Informed Practices*

Trauma-informed approaches recognize that Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) - including abuse, neglect, and exposure to violence - have profound effects on students' behaviour, emotional regulation, and academic learning (Anda *et al.*, 2020). This model emphasizes creating a safe, predictable, and supportive classroom environment where students' emotional and psychological needs are explicitly addressed (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2014). Educators trained in trauma-

informed practices implement strategies such as consistent routines, emotional regulation supports, trauma-sensitive communication, and relationship-building to foster a sense of safety and trust (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016).

Recent research from Monash University underscores that trauma-informed classrooms significantly reduce behavioural disruptions linked to trauma triggers and promote resilience, enabling students to overcome adversity and improve academic outcomes (Monash University, 2022). Complementing this, a systematic review by Sutherland *et al.* (2008) highlights that trauma-informed educational practices correlate with reductions in suspensions, improvements in emotional well-being, and increased student engagement. These findings emphasize the critical role of trauma-informed care as part of holistic efforts to support vulnerable learners in diverse educational settings. Trauma-informed approaches recognize that Adverse Childhood

Experiences (ACEs), such as abuse, neglect, and exposure to violence, profoundly influence students' behaviour and learning. This approach emphasizes creating a safe, predictable, and supportive classroom environment that attends to students' emotional and psychological needs. Educators trained in trauma-informed methods employ consistent routines, emotional regulation supports, and relationship-building strategies to foster a secure atmosphere. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2014), trauma-informed classrooms can reduce behavioural disruptions related to trauma triggers and promote academic resilience. Overstreet and Chafouleas (2016) stress the importance of trauma-sensitive policies in schools to enhance social-emotional development and prevent re-traumatization. Additionally, Blodgett and Lanigan (2018) highlight the negative impact of ACE exposure on school success, underscoring the need for trauma-responsive educational practices to support vulnerable students effectively.

**Table 1:** Classroom Discipline Models Summary

Model	Core Focus	Key Features	Benefits	Critiques / Challenges
Assertive Discipline	Teacher authority, clear rules	Consistent enforcement, clear consequences	Reduces disruptions, improves classroom order	May promote compliance over intrinsic motivation
Choice Theory	Intrinsic motivation, student choice	Meeting psychological needs, responsibility	Increases self-regulation and engagement	Implementation can be challenging in some settings
Responsive Classroom (RC)	Social-emotional learning + academics	Morning meetings, positive language, respect	Improves behaviour, social skills, academic outcomes	Requires teacher training and time investment
Restorative Practices (RP)	Relationship repair, empathy	Restorative circles, accountability	Reduces suspensions, fosters empathy and community	Needs consistent school-wide implementation
Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS)	School-wide positive behaviour	Tiered interventions, data-driven decisions	Reduces problem behaviour, improves climate and academics	Can be resource-intensive to implement fully
Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM)	Cultural competence, inclusivity	Culturally tailored practices	Enhances engagement, reduces disparities	Requires cultural knowledge and flexibility
Trauma-Informed Practices	Understanding trauma impact	Safe environments, emotional regulation support	Reduces trauma-related disruptions, builds resilience	Needs specialized training, ongoing support

The classroom discipline models highlight several key approaches that have gained traction in addressing student behaviour effectively while fostering positive outcomes.

### Classroom Discipline Models

#### Restorative Practices (RP)

Restorative Practices have gained prominence as a compassionate and effective alternative to traditional punitive discipline methods. RP focuses on building positive relationships, fostering socio-emotional learning, and encouraging conflict resolution through empathy and self-reflection. Research indicates significant reductions in behavioural problems and improvements in school climate after RP implementation. For example, Chicago Public Schools documented an 18% decrease in student arrests and fewer violent conflicts, alongside improved student perceptions of safety (Bartanen, 2016; Chicago Public

Schools, 2016). Gregory *et al.* (2016) also found restorative approaches increase empathy and accountability, leading to fewer suspensions and a more inclusive school environment. Overall, RP not only addresses misbehaviour but promotes healing and community cohesion (Gonzalez *et al.*, 2021).

#### Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Models

Integrating Social-Emotional Learning within classroom management strategies has shown to effectively foster positive student-teacher relationships and reduce conflicts. The Responsive Classroom approach, a leading SEL framework, embeds social-emotional skill-building into academic instruction through practices such as morning meetings and community-building activities. Rimm-Kaufman *et al.* (2014) found that students exposed to Responsive Classroom practices demonstrated better social skills, higher engagement, and improved academic performance. Additionally, the Collaborative for

Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) emphasizes that SEL supports long-term competencies like empathy, self-regulation, and communication skills, which contribute to both behavioural and academic success (CASEL, 2020).

#### *Trauma-Informed Practices*

With growing awareness of the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on student behaviour, trauma-informed teaching models have become increasingly important. These approaches prioritize creating safe, supportive, and predictable environments where students feel understood and emotionally secure. SAMHSA (2014) highlights trauma-informed care as essential for addressing behavioural issues linked to trauma. Practices include training educators to recognize trauma signs, establishing consistent routines, and building trusting relationships, all of which help reduce behaviour disruptions and support resilience (Chafouleas *et al.*, 2016). Trauma-informed models are especially vital in fostering equity and inclusiveness in diverse classrooms.

#### *Comparative Analysis - Classroom Discipline Approaches*

Lee and Marlene Canter's Assertive Discipline model emphasizes teacher authority through the establishment of clear, consistent rules to reduce classroom disruptions and maximize instructional time. This structured approach has been shown to create predictability that decreases behavioural issues and supports instructional flow. Sprick *et al.* (2021) found that classrooms with well-enforced rules experience fewer disruptions, while Marzano *et al.* (2003) highlighted how predictable consequences lead to a reduction in problematic behaviours. Similarly, Simonsen *et al.* (2008) noted that consistency in rule enforcement fosters orderly conduct. Despite these benefits, critics argue that such strict discipline systems can limit students' independence and suppress essential social-emotional skills like empathy (Kohn, 1993). More recent perspectives suggest balancing firm structure with autonomy-supportive strategies, allowing students opportunities for self-expression, which encourages intrinsic motivation and empathy (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Reeve, 2016).

In contrast, restorative practices emphasize repairing harm and rebuilding relationships rather than imposing punishment. This approach promotes community-building and conflict resolution through empathy and accountability. Research indicates that restorative practices reduce suspensions and disciplinary referrals while improving school climate and decreasing racial disparities in discipline (Gregory *et al.*, 2016; Augustine *et al.*, 2018). González *et al.* (2021) and Armour (2016) provide recent evidence showing that these practices enhance classroom environments by fostering mutual respect and personal accountability. However, restorative methods require significant time and training

investments, which can pose implementation challenges, especially in resource-limited schools. Nonetheless, restorative practices offer long-term social-emotional benefits and promote stronger school communities (Zehr, 2019).

Glasser's Choice Theory presents a different philosophy, positing that students are most motivated when granted responsibility and freedom to make behavioural choices. This model aligns well with adolescent developmental needs for independence. Research by Shindler and Erwin (2016) demonstrates that choice-based approaches foster student self-regulation and accountability. Jones *et al.* (2013) found that such autonomy-supportive strategies correlate with increased engagement and intrinsic motivation. Lewis *et al.* (2008) also observed that choice-based discipline improves behaviour by promoting autonomy and responsible decision-making. However, maintaining classroom order requires balancing student freedom with clear expectations.

Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS) offers a multi-tiered framework designed to address a broad spectrum of student needs through proactive, data-driven strategies. PBIS is particularly effective in high-need schools and has been shown to reduce office discipline referrals and suspensions, thereby improving overall school climate (Freeman *et al.*, 2015; Bradshaw *et al.*, 2009a). McIntosh and Goodman (2016) emphasize that PBIS's success hinges on consistent implementation across classrooms and grade levels. Thus, PBIS complements models like Choice Theory by providing structured, school-wide support systems tailored to diverse learners.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM) incorporates students' cultural identities into discipline practices, promoting engagement and reducing behavioural issues by fostering inclusivity and respect (Banks *et al.*, 2023a). Gay (2010) and Ladson-Billings (1995) highlight that culturally relevant pedagogy enhances student motivation and narrows achievement gaps. Weinstein *et al.* (2004) found that culturally responsive strategies strengthen student-teacher relationships and promote positive behaviour, while Bryan and Browder (2013) report significant reductions in suspensions among marginalized groups using CRCM. Gregory *et al.* (2020) advocate combining culturally responsive approaches with behaviourist principles for a more respectful and effective discipline system. This integration addresses critiques of traditional behaviourist models (Skinner, 1983), which may lack cultural sensitivity necessary for diverse classrooms (Lewis *et al.*, 2008).

Overall, Lee and Marlene Canter's Assertive Discipline prioritizes teacher authority and consistent rules to reduce disruptions, yet it risks undermining student autonomy. In contrast, Choice Theory focuses on intrinsic motivation and responsibility by empowering students to make behavioural choices that enhance self-

regulation. Restorative practices repair relationships and build community to manage behaviour and reduce suspensions, emphasizing empathy over punishment. PBIS provides a structured, tiered framework for proactive behavioural support, effectively reducing problematic behaviours across diverse student populations. Finally, CRCM tailors discipline to cultural backgrounds, improving participation and reducing disciplinary disparities among vulnerable students. Together, these models illustrate a spectrum from strict rule enforcement to autonomy and relationship-centred approaches, highlighting the importance of balancing structure, motivation, cultural responsiveness, and emotional support to optimize classroom management.

## Results

Assertive Discipline presents a clear, rule-based, authoritative framework effective in classrooms that benefit from structure and predictability (Canter & Canter, 2001). The approach's strength lies in reducing disruptions through consistent routines, as supported by Marzano *et al.* (2003). Yet, contemporary research suggests such rigidity can stifle essential developmental domains like autonomy and empathy, crucial for social-emotional learning (Greenberg *et al.*, 2022). Critics caution that although Assertive Discipline curbs behavioural problems effectively, it may hinder self-regulation and critical thinking, particularly in settings transitioning to more open or flexible learning environments (McIntyre, 2005; Bowman & O'Connor, 2021).

In contrast, Restorative Practices focus on relationship repair and student accountability through reflection and dialogue. This relational approach has demonstrated reductions in suspensions and improvements in behavioural outcomes (Gregory *et al.*, 2016; Augustine *et al.*, 2018). Early works by Amstutz and Mullet (2015) and Payne and Welch (2018) documented these positive shifts, with more recent studies underscoring their role in enhancing school climate by fostering empathy and community connection. However, restorative methods require substantial training and ongoing resources, posing challenges for under-resourced schools (Zehr, 2019). While they promote inclusivity and long-term relational development, they may struggle to provide the immediate structure some high-need environments demand.

Choice Theory emphasizes empowering students by granting autonomy and encouraging responsibility for their actions. Glasser's foundational work (1998) linked choice with increased intrinsic motivation and engagement. Subsequent research by Shindler and Erwin (2016) confirms that choice-based methods elevate student engagement, a finding echoed by Jones *et al.* (2019), who highlight its effectiveness among older students. Nonetheless, younger learners may require

scaffolding, as excessive choice can overwhelm those less developmentally ready (Ryan & Deci, 2020). While fostering self-management, Choice Theory may be less compatible with classrooms requiring firm, immediate behavioural control.

Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS) offers a structured, tiered framework proven to improve school climate and reduce suspensions, particularly in secondary schools (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). Bradshaw *et al.* (2009a) emphasize that fidelity of schoolwide implementation is critical for PBIS's success. However, PBIS's standardized protocols may lack sufficient cultural flexibility to meet the needs of increasingly diverse student bodies (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). Thus, while PBIS excels in consistency and data-driven management, incorporating greater cultural responsiveness could enhance its effectiveness.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM) foregrounds students' cultural backgrounds, fostering inclusivity and improving engagement (Gay, 2010). Evidence shows CRCM reduces behavioural issues and strengthens teacher-student relationships in multicultural settings (Weinstein *et al.*, 2004). Recent scholarship by Sleeter (2017) and Byrd (2021) extends these findings, highlighting CRCM's role in supporting identity formation and academic motivation. This approach aligns with Ladson-Billings' (1995) culturally relevant pedagogy, instrumental in addressing achievement gaps among diverse populations.

By contrast, Traditional Behavioural Theory, grounded in reinforcement and punishment, effectively modifies behaviour but often neglects cultural contexts (Skinner, 1983). Critics argue that rigid behaviourist models can marginalize culturally diverse students by overlooking their unique motivational and cultural factors (Gregory *et al.*, 2020). Integrating CRCM principles within behaviourist frameworks may yield more culturally sensitive and effective disciplinary practices.

Overall, the analysis reveals that no single model suffices universally. Assertive Discipline delivers immediate order but may limit autonomy and empathy development. Restorative Practices cultivate relational empathy but require resources not always available. Choice Theory empowers self-regulation but suits more mature learners and less restrictive settings. PBIS provides broad, data-informed supports but needs greater cultural adaptation. CRCM effectively promotes inclusion and identity affirmation but demands ongoing educator development. Combining these strengths - structured support from Assertive Discipline and PBIS, relational focus from Restorative Practices, autonomy encouragement from Choice Theory, and cultural sensitivity from CRCM - offers a promising, flexible framework for managing diverse classrooms (Greenberg, 2023; Milner & Tenore, 2010). As schools become more

diverse, disciplinary approaches must evolve beyond rigidity to embrace cultural responsiveness and holistic student growth.

This analysis further compares key classroom management models: Assertive Discipline, Restorative Practices, Choice Theory, Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM).

Assertive Discipline, centred on teacher authority and consistent rules, reliably reduces classroom disruptions and improves instructional time management (Marzano *et al.*, 2003). However, it faces criticism for potentially limiting student autonomy and empathy, both vital for social-emotional learning (McIntyre, 2005; Greenberg, 2023). Overly rigid discipline may undermine students' capacity for self-regulation and critical thinking (Zimmerman, 2023).

In contrast, Restorative Practices emphasize repairing relationships and fostering student accountability. Substantial evidence links these practices to significant decreases in suspensions and disciplinary incidents, while improving school climate and empathy among students (Gregory *et al.*, 2016; Amstutz & Mullet, 2015; Payne & Welch, 2018). Yet, effective implementation demands substantial training and ongoing resources, which can be challenging for many schools (Zehr, 2019).

Choice Theory advocates for student autonomy and intrinsic motivation, showing promising outcomes particularly with older students in promoting engagement and self-regulation (Glasser, 1998; Jones *et al.*, 2013; 2023). However, it can be difficult to apply consistently

across all age groups and settings, and younger students often require more guidance (Shindler & Erwin, 2016).

PBIS offers a well-established tiered system to support positive behaviour, especially effective in high-need or diverse educational settings (Bradshaw *et al.*, 2009b; Freeman *et al.*, 2015). However, its structured, standardized protocols may inadequately address cultural responsiveness, limiting its effectiveness with culturally diverse students (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012; McIntosh & Goodman, 2016).

Finally, Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM) integrates students' cultural backgrounds into discipline strategies, improving inclusivity, engagement, and teacher-student relationships (Gay, 2010). Emerging studies confirm CRCM's role in reducing behavioural issues and closing achievement gaps in diverse classrooms (Sleeter, 2017; Saleem and Byrd, 2021). Challenges remain, however, related to educator training, systemic support, and consistent implementation (Bryan *et al.*, 2020).

Overall, no single model provides a comprehensive solution. Combining strengths - Assertive Discipline's structure, Restorative Practices' relational focus, Choice Theory's autonomy support, PBIS's tiered interventions, and CRCM's cultural inclusivity - may yield a more effective, balanced framework suited to diverse modern classrooms (Table 2). This integrated approach aligns with calls for culturally responsive, flexible discipline systems that promote both academic success and social-emotional growth (Weinstein *et al.*, 2004).

**Table 2:** Comparative Summary Table for Classroom Management Models

Model	Core Focus	Strengths	Limitations	Recent Supporting References
Assertive Discipline	Teacher authority, clear rules	Reduces disruptions, predictable routines	Limits autonomy, empathy, critical thinking	Marzano <i>et al.</i> (2003); Greenberg (2023)
Restorative Practices	Relationship repair, accountability	Reduces suspensions, builds empathy and community	Resource-intensive, training required	Gregory <i>et al.</i> (2016); Payne & Welch (2018)
Choice Theory	Student autonomy, intrinsic motivation	Enhances engagement, self-regulation	Challenging for younger students, less structure	Glasser (1998); Jones <i>et al.</i> (2013; 2023)
PBIS	Tiered behaviour support	Effective in high-need settings, reduces suspensions	Lacks cultural adaptability	Bradshaw <i>et al.</i> (2009b); Sugai & Simonsen (2012)
Culturally Responsive CM	Cultural inclusivity, identity affirmation	Improves engagement, reduces disparities	Requires ongoing training and systemic support	Gay (2010); Bryan <i>et al.</i> (2020); Sleeter (2017)

## Discussion and Conclusion

Discipline in secondary classrooms is inherently complex and dynamic, reflecting the multifaceted nature of adolescent development and diverse learning environments. This paper's comparative analysis of prominent classroom management models - Assertive Discipline, Choice Theory, Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS), the Responsive Classroom approach, and Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM) - reveals that no single model suffices for all contexts. Rather, the most effective approach is a flexible integration of strategies, tailored to

the unique and evolving demands of contemporary classrooms.

As classrooms increasingly reflect multicultural and inclusive realities, educators must recognize and respond to the diverse cultural backgrounds and lived experiences of their students. CRCM, grounded in this recognition, has demonstrated significant success in reducing behavioural issues and fostering positive learning environments by affirming students' identities and cultural contexts. This necessitates robust teacher training - not only in CRCM techniques but also in cultural competence - to support equitable and respectful discipline.

Equally important is the growing emphasis on embedding Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) within discipline frameworks. Models like PBIS and the Responsive Classroom illustrate that fostering students' social skills and emotional awareness enhances engagement and reduces disruptions, promoting holistic student development beyond mere behavioural compliance (Bradshaw *et al.*, 2009a; Rimm-Kaufman & Chiu, 2007). Schools must therefore prioritize SEL-focused professional development to cultivate supportive environments conducive to both academic success and emotional well-being.

Restorative Practices further complement this by prioritizing relationship-building and conflict resolution over punitive measures. By fostering empathy and accountability, restorative approaches have proven effective in improving school climate and reducing disciplinary incidents. However, their success depends on adequate resources, training, and a cultural shift towards viewing discipline as relational rather than solely corrective.

These findings carry profound implications for educational policy and leadership. Traditional, punitive disciplinary measures have been shown to disproportionately impact marginalized students, contributing to inequities such as higher dropout rates. Thus, discipline frameworks must explicitly integrate equity-oriented practices that nurture inclusion and fairness, ensuring all students can thrive.

In sum, effective secondary classroom discipline requires an informed, nuanced, and adaptive approach—one that balances the structure of Assertive Discipline and PBIS, the empathy of Restorative Practices, the autonomy promoted by Choice Theory, and the cultural responsiveness of CRCM. By synthesizing these models, educators can create learning environments that are safe, respectful, and stimulating, empowering students to take responsibility for their actions in school and beyond.

Looking ahead, further research on the long-term effectiveness of blended discipline strategies is crucial, especially as social and technological landscapes continue to evolve. As education itself transforms, so too must disciplinary approaches remain relevant, inclusive, and attuned to the needs of all learners (Knoster, 2010).

### *Five-Point Discipline Framework*

From this synthesis, we propose a five-point framework that combines core elements from the examined models. This framework is designed to support secondary teachers in cultivating classrooms where discipline not only improves behavioural outcomes but also nurtures the emotional and cultural development of every student.

#### *Clearly Define Boundaries and Maintain Consistency*

Implement Assertive Discipline by establishing clear, well-defined rules and consistent consequences for

misbehaviour from the first day. Communicate these expectations transparently so students understand what constitutes acceptable behaviour and what behaviours are rewarded. Consistency in applying rules creates a predictable and fair environment, reducing confusion and anxiety, and providing the stability essential for effective learning (Canter & Canter, 2001; Marzano *et al.*, 2003). Such clarity helps students internalize behavioural norms while fostering a sense of security.

#### *Foster a Community Through Restorative Practices*

Create opportunities for students to take responsibility and understand the impact of their actions on others through Restorative Practices. Use restorative circles or structured dialogues to encourage accountability, empathy, and relationship repair after conflicts (Gregory *et al.*, 2016; Amstutz, 2015). Teaching reflection cultivates a classroom culture rooted in mutual respect and collaboration, helping students develop social-emotional skills critical to long-term success (González *et al.*, 2021). Although resource-intensive, these practices promote positive school climate and reduce repeat behavioural incidents.

#### *Empower Students With Choice and Autonomy*

Incorporate Choice Theory principles by providing students with meaningful choices regarding their learning and conduct. This might include selecting project topics, group partners, or ways to demonstrate mastery. By encouraging self-management and responsibility, students learn to regulate their behaviour and understand how their decisions affect themselves and others (Glasser, 1998). This autonomy supports intrinsic motivation and engagement, particularly for older students, though adaptations may be necessary for younger learners (Deci *et al.*, 1999).

#### *Provide Tiered Support for Diverse Behavioural Needs*

Utilize the PBIS multi-tiered framework to address student behaviour through progressively intensive interventions. Tier 1 involves universal strategies such as positive reinforcement to promote good behaviour. Tier 2 and Tier 3 provide targeted and individualized support for students with greater needs. Crucially, this framework requires ongoing monitoring and flexibility, allowing educators to adapt interventions responsively to each student's progress and context (Horner *et al.*, 2010; Sugai & Simonsen, 2012; Bradshaw *et al.*, 200b). Such fluidity ensures that support is neither static nor one-size-fits-all.

#### *Honor and Embrace Cultural Diversity*

Adopt Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM) by integrating students' cultural backgrounds into disciplinary approaches and curricula (Gay, 2010; Bryan & Browder, 2013). This practice fosters inclusive relationships, validating students' identities and improving motivation and behaviour. Recognizing and respecting cultural perspectives not

only reduces behavioural problems but also helps close achievement gaps in diverse classrooms (Weinstein *et al.*, 2004; Sleeter, 2017). Effective implementation demands professional development and institutional commitment to cultural competence and equity.

Only by thoughtfully blending these strategies can educators create a balanced discipline system that offers structure alongside empathy, autonomy alongside support, and inclusivity alongside accountability. This integrated approach not only improves behaviour management but also cultivates a positive, engaging learning environment in which every student can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. As classrooms grow increasingly diverse, such flexible, culturally sensitive, and developmentally appropriate frameworks are essential to meet the evolving needs of all learners.

The above Five-Point Discipline Framework can be briefly summarised as:

#### *Establish Clear, Consistent Expectations and Structure (Assertive Discipline & PBIS)*

- Define explicit behavioural rules and routines that provide predictability and safety for all students.
- Use a tiered support system (as in PBIS) to address varying behavioural needs proactively.
- Ensure consistency in enforcing rules to maintain fairness and clarity while allowing for flexibility where appropriate.
- Communicate expectations transparently to students, parents, and staff.
- Use positive reinforcement to acknowledge compliance and effort.

#### *Embed Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Promote Emotional Awareness (PBIS & Responsive Classroom)*

- Integrate SEL into daily classroom activities to develop students' emotional regulation, empathy, and social skills.
- Provide explicit teaching and modelling of emotional and social competencies.
- Use SEL to prevent disruptions by addressing underlying emotional or social challenges.
- Foster a classroom culture where feelings and relationships are openly discussed and respected.

#### *Foster Student Autonomy and Responsibility (Choice Theory)*

- Encourage students to take ownership of their behaviour by involving them in setting personal goals and classroom agreements.
- Provide opportunities for meaningful choices within clear boundaries to support intrinsic motivation.
- Tailor autonomy-supportive strategies to students' developmental levels, offering more guidance for

younger learners.

- Promote reflection and self-assessment practices that help students understand the consequences of their actions.

#### *Build and Sustain Positive Relationships Through Restorative Practices*

- Prioritize relationship-building and conflict resolution over punitive responses to behavioural incidents.
- Facilitate restorative circles, peer mediation, and dialogue that encourage accountability and empathy.
- Train educators in restorative techniques and allocate resources to ensure sustainable implementation.
- Use restorative methods to repair harm and strengthen the classroom community, promoting mutual respect.

**Table 3:** Summary of the Framework

Framework Point	Key Features	Supporting Models
Clear Structure & Consistency	Explicit rules, predictable routines, tiered supports, positive reinforcement	Assertive Discipline, PBIS
Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)	Emotional regulation, social skills, emotional awareness, prevention-focused	PBIS, Responsive Classroom
Student Autonomy & Responsibility	Choice within boundaries, self-regulation, reflection, developmental tailoring	Choice Theory
Relationship Building & Conflict Resolution	Restorative circles, accountability, empathy, community-building, resource investment	Restorative Practices
Culturally Responsive Management	Cultural affirmation, bias awareness, inclusive policies, family/community engagement	CRCM

#### *Integrate Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM) to Support Diversity and Inclusion*

- Recognize and affirm students' cultural identities within classroom management strategies.
- Adapt disciplinary approaches to be culturally sensitive and avoid marginalizing students from diverse backgrounds.
- Provide ongoing professional development for educators on cultural competence and implicit bias.
- Collaborate with families and communities to understand and respect students' cultural contexts.
- Review and revise school discipline policies to ensure equity and inclusiveness are prioritized.

This blended framework encourages educators to balance order and flexibility, structure and empathy, individual autonomy and community responsibility,

while centring cultural inclusivity and equity (Tables 3 and 4). Such an approach aligns with recent research emphasizing adaptable, socially and culturally aware discipline models that foster both academic achievement and holistic development in diverse secondary classrooms.

**Table 4:** Theoretical Basis

Focus Area	Core Strategies
Clear Expectations & Structure ( <i>Assertive Discipline &amp; PBIS</i> )	Define clear rules and routines• Enforce consistently and fairly• Use tiered supports for behaviour (PBIS)• Communicate expectations transparently• Apply positive reinforcement for compliance
Embed SEL & Emotional Awareness ( <i>PBIS &amp; Responsive Classroom</i> )	Integrate SEL into daily practice• Model emotional and social skills• Address emotional/social root causes• Build a respectful and open classroom culture
Foster Autonomy & Responsibility ( <i>Choice Theory</i> )	Support student ownership of behaviour• Involve students in goal setting and rules• Provide meaningful, developmentally appropriate choices• Encourage reflection and self-assessment
Restorative Relationships ( <i>Restorative Practices</i> )	Build relationships over punishment• Use circles, dialogue, and peer mediation• Train staff in restorative practices• Focus on repairing harm and community building
Culturally Responsive Management ( <i>CRCM</i> )	Affirm students' cultural identities• Tailor strategies to diverse backgrounds• Train educators in cultural competence• Partner with families and revise policies for equity

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