Record: 1

Title:	Applications of Adlerian Principles in School Settings.
Authors:	Pryor, Deborah B. Tollerud, Toni R.
Source:	Professional School Counseling; Apr99, Vol. 2 Issue 4, p299, 6p
Document Type:	Article
Subject Terms:	ADLERIAN psychology EDUCATIONAL counseling
Abstract:	Explores some applications of Adlerian principles that counselors can use or adapt in their work with students and teachers in the classroom. Fundamental social nature of people; Effects of choices people make to satisfy their needs on personality; Adler's model of humanity; Four goals of misbehavior; Misbehaviors and corrective responses.
Full Text Word Count:	4449
ISSN:	1096-2409
Accession Number:	1786614
Database:	Professional Development Collection

APPLICATIONS OF ADLERIAN PRINCIPLES IN SCHOOL SETTINGS

As counselors approach the 21st Century, they must learn and use applications in the school that assist in meeting student needs and developing student potential. Adlerian principles have served as a basis for working in schools since Alfred Adler first introduced them in the early 1900s, and they still have useful applications today. This article explores some applications of Adlerian principles that counselors can use or adapt in their work with students and teachers in the classroom.

Overview

Adler was the first theorist to emphasize the fundamental social nature of people. According to Adler (1927,1930,1931/1980), people are inherently motivated to engage in social activities, relate to other people, and acquire a style of life that is fundamentally social in nature. Each person is born with the capacity to develop his or her social interest. Social interest is a person's ability to interact in a cooperative way with people that leads to a healthy society. In this way people develop a sense of belonging and tend to contribute to others in the society. While a person is born with social interest, it must be nurtured and developed along the way. How an individual engages and develops this social interest shapes his or her personality. The school then, becomes a primary setting. Counselors and teachers take on the roles of assisting children to acquire and develop a healthy social interest. Based on Adlerian principles, this includes helping children to belong, feel valued, develop positive self-worth, and not feel discouraged.

Personality is also shaped by the choices people make to satisfy their needs. These needs effect a person's behavior because, according to Adlerian principles, all behavior is purposive and goal-directed (Thompson & Rudolph, 1996). Therefore, people act in ways that meet their needs and develop their perception of social interest.

Adler's Model of Humanity

Before elaborating on effective democratic methods and the implications involved, it is necessary to understand Alfred Adler's model of humanity (Adler, 1931/1980; Dreikurs Grunwald, & Pepper, 1982). Each educator's approach to the educational process is based on a concept of human nature. As theorized by Adler and applied by Dreikurs, all behavior is viewed as goal-directed. Some key concepts are defined and summarized as follows:

1. Human beings are social beings and have an insatiable goal to belong, to find a place in society. Children's behavior is a sign of the ways and means by which they strive to be important, although they themselves may be unaware of the purpose of their behavior.
2. Children's choices and actions taken may be based on faulty assumptions about themselves and life. Their behavior may appear inappropriate as they attempt to find significance.
3. Behavior is purposeful. Recommended methods for dealing with children's behavior make sense only if we can understand and/or recognize the purpose of that behavior. Viewing a child through labels such as hyperactive, learning disabled, or mentally retarded is of no use in helping discover more feasible alternatives.
4. Human beings are biased in their perceptions of the world and will follow what may be called private logic or unique reasoning, which determines the course of action one takes.
5. Children are sensitive to the social atmosphere they are engaged in and will perform early experiments with it, seeking what they want. Through this process of experimentation and growth, they integrate early experiences and develop goals accordingly (Dreikurs et al., 1982).
6. By the age of five, a child's lifestyle is formed and he or she has drawn general conclusions about the "best way to face the situations/problems that life has to offer." (Thompson & Rudolph, 1988, p. 196).
7. Children strive for superiority in order to overcompensate for feelings of inferiority. By observation, trial, and error, children overcompensate and in doing so, draw their own conclusions about their life and where they fit in.

Encouraging Maximum Potential

An Adlerian-based goal for school counselors is to help children to develop a positive lifestyle and social interest. Whether in the classroom or in the counselor's office, the goal of establishing a positive sense of self-esteem is germane when implementing Adlerian techniques. Adler's original ideas, as elaborated on by Dinkmeyer and Dinkmeyer (1976), have been used by counselors and teachers in helping children maximize their potential. Adler believed that children make choices and are self-determiners of their own style of life. Thus, the behavior of children is based on their choices, and inappropriate behavior results from making the wrong choices (Dreikurs et al., 1982).

According to Dreikurs et al. (1982) and Dreikurs and Soltz (1990), traditional teaching methods do not allow children to learn effectively and grow intellectually. Autocratic traditions may be effective for well-behaved children who want to learn, but serve little purpose during moments of conflict or with defiant or unmotivated children. Teachers and counselors may inadvertently tell children they are not good enough (Dreikurs & Soltz, 1990). Punishment results in fear. Children cannot develop a healthy sense of self-esteem if they feel afraid and misunderstood. In the view of Dreikurs et al. (1982), a child's potential for learning is enhanced when he or she feels a sense of responsibility for being a collaborator in the educational process. In such a democratic environment, children, as self-determiners, make their own choices and behave accordingly. Children can learn advanced social skills while belonging to a group, especially in an environment where individual communication is valued and acknowledged. By promoting social interest and a democratic environment, Adlerian methods encourage children to develop optimally both intellectually and socially.

Four Goals of Misbehavior

Concepts such as social interest or lifestyle may appear ambiguous when discussing Adlerian methods and their usefulness in schools. For this reason Dreikurs and Soltz (1990) formulated four goals of children's misbehavior to assist counselors and educators in recognizing, understanding, and correcting significant self-defeating behavior. Self-defeating behavior is a typology of behavior patterns of which there are four goals: (1) attention getting, (2) power, (3) revenge, and (4) compensation for inadequacy experienced by the student. Misbehaving children select one of these ways to act in order to fulfill their needs and in their interactions with others. Dreikurs suggests that school counselors and teachers intervene by modifying the child's motivation rather than the child's behavior (Thompson & Rudolph, 1988). Changing motivation will allow constructive behavior to occur automatically. Thompson and Rudolph (1996) point out that when identifying children's goals, one's immediate response to their behavior should correspond directly to that behavior. In other words, if Tommy's behavior appears to be exhibited in order to draw attention, an appropriate response might be: "Could it be you want others to notice you?"

Dreikurs et al. (1982) point out there are two types of behavior children engage in within a group--useful and useless movement. Useful behavior is viewed as cooperative action for the common good. A well-adjusted child would move toward social acceptance by showing concern for the group or school. Useless movement, described as concern only with individual achievement, is demonstrated by the tendency to promote oneself by moving away from others. The child would have the tendency to degrade oneself and be critical of others. Children who display misbehaviors often have lost their belief that they can find desired recognition. Such children falsely believe they will find acceptance by engaging in problem behavior in pursuit of their mistaken goals (Ansbacher, 1988).

Misbehaviors and Corrective Responses

Dreikurs and Cassel (1996) offer a brief description of children's misbehaviors and how to correct them. Their approach is bruit upon the concept that the counselor or teacher identifies the misbehavior by observing the child. It is important to acknowledge that the child's behavior may vary with circumstances. The counselor or teacher can observe the expressed feelings and overt behaviors of the child to ascertain which goal they are exhibiting. Dreikurs and Cassel (1996) present specific ways to react to the four goals of misbehavior identified earlier. For example, if a child is showing off, or acting out in a silly or noticeable way resulting in being a nuisance, the goal of the misbehavior is attention. Dreikurs and Cassel (1996) suggest that the corrective response for this behavior would be for the counselor or teacher to attempt to withhold paying attention to the child, since the child is demanding it. The adult might avoid or ignore the misbehaving child, and then pay attention to the child when his or her behavior is more appropriate.

For a child who is seeking power, the behavior becomes more defiant and may include disobedience, talking back, or overt resistance. With this child, the counselor or teacher needs to avoid entering into the power struggle since that will just reinforce the behavior. Dreikurs and Cassel (1996) propose that the adult can suggest situations that the child can productively use his or power in appropriate ways.

Children who are focused on the goal of revenge become more vicious and outwardly hostile. Their behaviors may include stealing, kicking, and behavior that intentionally hurts others. These children are operating on the principle that they need to get even with others. In reacting to these children, the counselor or teacher needs to set fair and clear rules and impose natural consequences when appropriate. Additionally, these children need to know that they are liked by the adult as well as by others, and as such, they require plenty of encouragement and persuasion (Dreikurs & Cassel, 1996).

Finally, when children demonstrate feelings of hopelessness and inferiority, they may be focused on the goal of inadequacy. These children may have given up and just want to avoid others or be left alone. Dreikurs and Cassel (1996) suggest that these children need much encouragement and support both from the adults and peers in school. They need to experience a world that values them for the individuals that they may be.

To assist in the effectiveness of using this "four-goal technique," Thompson and Rudolph (1996) suggest five points to keep in mind.

1. Observe the child's behavior in detail.
2. Be psychologically sensitive to your own reaction.
3. Confront the child with the goal of behavior.
4. Note the recognition of reflex.
5. Apply appropriate corrective procedure (p. 264).

Encouragement and Logical Consequences

Another important application of Adlerian theory that has direct implications in the school setting is how to respond to the misbehavior. Since Dreikurs believes that children's' behavior is motivated by discouragement or inability to succeed, counselors and teachers can begin the corrective procedure by encouraging the child. Encouragement is given to assist in the motivation of the child. Additionally, it sends the message that the counselor accepts the child where he or she is and removes the focus on the outcome alone.

Adlerian techniques tend to reject a rewards-and-punishment approach since this may have a negative impact on a child's development. Instead, natural and logical consequences are seen as concepts that allow the child to experience the actual consequence of his or her behavior. Natural consequences are unplanned outcomes that a child experiences as a result of his or her behavior. Therefore, if you oversleep in the morning, you may miss the school bus and have to walk to school. Logical consequences, which are used more intentionally in school settings, are established through rules or policies. These rules are fair, clear, and consistent statements of outcomes that will occur as a result of a child's behavior.

Nelsen (1985) suggests a Three R guideline to establishing logical consequences in schools. Teacher and counselor consequences must be related, respectful, and reasonable.

Related

The consequence must be related to what the child has done. For example, having a child stand in a comer for writing on the desk is a poor consequence that does not fit the behavior (Nelsen, 1985). A logical consequence would be to have the child clean the desk(s). According to Nelsen, while isolation may be used appropriately with a behavior such as bothering others in the classroom, it is not a logical consequence for every misbehavior.

Respectful

If a consequence is not respectful it creates an atmosphere of defeat, which may further inspire the misbehavior one is attempting to correct. Punishment may increase anger within children toward the teacher/parent. According to Nelsen (1985), punishment is not usually an effective means of discipline because it tends to drive the undesirable behavior underground, resulting in the child becoming aggressive, passive, resentful or uncooperative.

Reasonable

Children learn more appropriate behavior and take responsibility for their actions when the consequences and requests are logical and reasonable. Allowing them to come in the classroom when they have stopped misbehaving or allowing them to meet with a group of their peers for a

special activity conducted by the school counselor outside the classroom is reasonable. Although some children enjoy the individual attention given by the counselor, it is important that the child learns the benefits that can accompany the good behavior. Children learn to seek the positive feeling that can accompany good behavior.

Often the school counselor is called upon to assist in working one-on-one with a child who is misbehaving. These same concepts of respect, reasonableness, and relatedness are necessary in the applications the school counselor may use. Nelsen (1985) suggests six steps to consider in encouraging and understanding children.

1. Guess how the child might be feeling. Check with the child to make sure if your guess is correct.
2. Let the child know you understand. You don't have to agree or condone the child's behavior in order to understand.
3. Ask if the child is willing to hear your feelings.
4. Share your feelings in a nonaccusing manner.
5. Work with the child on a solution to the conflict.
6. Work on these ideas to avoid problems in the future or to correct a present problem through logical consequences. (p. 163)

Creating Democratic Classrooms
School counselors have many opportunities to apply Adlerian techniques in their work with children. However, they can also play an important role in assisting teachers and others in the school to utilize Adlerian techniques by providing in-service training that explains the goals of misbehavior technique, natural and logical consequences, and the importance of social learning. Counselors can also promote a democratic environment in the school by helping teachers create what Dreikurs et al. (1982) called democratic classrooms. School counselors can utilize these principles when they go into a classroom to do a guidance lesson and can also help teachers establish and maintain this approach. Children are found to be more self-motivated and more willing learners when they can participate in the development of democratic guidelines and when their cooperation and input are acknowledged as extremely important. A sense of equality empowers students to take responsibility and make choices about what they learn. Counselors and teachers understand that they cannot force a child to learn. This model attempts to share the responsibility of learning with children by allowing them the opportunity to contribute equally in their learning (Thompson & Rudolph, 1996).

Dreikurs et al. (1982) list guidelines for creating a democratic environment that may be given to teachers at an in-service workshop at the beginning of the school year. School counselors take on the role of consultant as they present the list of principles and suggested guidelines to the classroom teachers. Dreikurs et al. (1982) suggest the following guidelines:

1. The classroom needs to have order and limits under all circumstances. A group cannot be run democratically without order and rules.
2. Children should participate in establishing and maintaining any rules necessary for functioning in an orderly group. School rules may need revision, but as long as they exist, they must be followed.
3. The teacher as well as the school counselor needs to know how to exert democratic leadership.
4. Without trust and faith in each other and a spirit of cooperation, an educational environment cannot function democratically.
5. Win children's cooperation. Ask students what they want to learn and encourage active participation. Direct involvement in the learning process allows the material presented to

be more meaningful. Counselors and other faculty members who convey to students that they are interested in the learning process will be more effective than those who are interested solely in the material. A spirit of cooperation has to replace competitiveness.

6. Utilize the group for further individual learning. The basic need to belong is especially true for younger students who are just beginning to experience their own independence.

7. The teacher needs the skills necessary to integrate the class for a common purpose. Additionally, the teacher needs to learn not only teaching methods but also principles of motivation. Teachers should not be concerned with their own personal prestige.

8. The teacher must know how to elicit the help of students through the use of encouragement.

9. Finally, have the courage to be imperfect. Wheeler (1988) advocates the need for students to take risks and share their thoughts. Educators need to be socially approved role models and be able to stand in front of their classes and acknowledge their mistakes or shortcomings. Educators who accomplish this are ultimately respected and admired by their students and their colleagues.

Individual Education

Individual education (IE) was developed by Corsini in 1972 and has been implemented in schools as an alternative means of learning within the school environment (Corsini, 1981; Corsini & Miller, 1990). The basic premise of IE is that education is not an obligation but a privilege (Elkins, 1985). Simpkins (1985) opined that, paradoxically, children in IE schools tend to learn more academics than children in traditional schools because IE treats children holistically as individuals. Similar to the principles of the democratic classroom, individual education attempts to maximize what Adlerians recognize as the four R's of responsibility, respect, resourcefulness, and responsiveness (Mastroianni, 1984).

Responsibility refers to the development of character that leads to becoming good neighbors and good citizens. Respect refers to the development of mutual respect. The IE model fosters no competition and comparison of students. In a noncompetitive environment, students are more likely to help others. The child's right to accept studying is respected. A strong belief of IE is that learning cannot be forced, and children, when given the freedom to choose, will eventually choose to learn. Resourcefulness refers to the development of student potential. Because children are ultimately in charge of their own education, they participate actively in maximizing their mental and physical resources in order to achieve objective and subjective success in life (Simpkins, 1985). Responsiveness refers to the development of one's social interest by participating in an atmosphere that encourages and supports one another while pursuing personal growth (Elkins, 1985).

Individual education strives to educate the whole child intellectually and socially rather than focusing solely on academic learning. Simpkins (1985) recognizes that the task of educators is not simply providing books, desks, teachers, school counselor(s), and classrooms. The task is to help show students the importance of what is taught so they feel motivated to learn what is offered. The goal of educators involved in IE is to: "Direct and motivate children as well as to instruct them" (Simpkins, 1985, p. 5).

The curriculum in an individual education school includes socialization, academics, and creative courses. Socialization involves every faculty member and student. All students can petition each faculty member for the purpose of becoming their teacher/advisor (TA). An advisor does not have to accept a student, but upon acceptance the student will meet each morning in the TA's home room or school guidance office, meet once a week for small group discussion, and at least once a month meet privately for academic progress feedback and private discussion. Children in each TA's group are viewed as that TA's responsibility.

The creative curriculum component in an IE school may be anything the child wants to learn and is offered to foster resourcefulness by helping children develop talents and special interests. Courses are submitted by counselors, teachers, and students and approved by the principal. This is directly congruent to the hands-on approach being offered as a relatively new concept in many subject areas. Opportunities for self-discovery encourage the student to interact with the materials or resources that may be used in the learning process (e.g., making a home video using a different language to name objects in the home). The creative courses are believed to motivate and reinforce learning in the academic subjects--to make a cake or build a model car, one must be able to read and measure (Elkins, 1985).

The academic program of an IE school is similar to a traditional school curriculum, including language arts, math, science, and social science. There are weekly examinations, and the TA and the student keep progress charts. TAs are present to advise and guide the children; the children are asked to share a copy of their progress chart with their parents. Again, decisions are left up to the child as far as what, when, and how to learn. Class attendance is not as important as learning that is measured by passing examinations in the various units of the curriculum (Simpkins, 1985).

There have been some studies of IE schools. Poch (1985) reported findings at Hufford Junior High School that included better attendance and 80% of IE students showing at least one academic year of growth since its implementation. After several years of operation, only four IE students were formally suspended from school. In contrast to some traditional schools, the IE school atmosphere is friendly and relaxed, enabling faculty members and children to create an educational environment that encourages learning. In short, the IE school emphasizes interpersonal communication, empowerment, and a simple logical system of instruction and discipline (Simpkins, 1985). Although IE can be superior to a traditional educational environment, it may not be a system that everyone would receive well and everyone should choose (Dubrovich, 1985). It must be noted that IE programs require a deep commitment from faculty, parents, and the children themselves. Only if all people involved are willing to make that commitment to a better system can the social and academic advantages for children be realized.

Children with Special Needs
In their discussion of cooperative educational systems, Dreikurs et al. (1982) address the topic of the learning disabled child. Many children, because of psychological factors and organic deficiencies, have difficulties in learning. These children are convinced that they will fail and often sabotage any efforts to instruct them. Dreikurs et al. (1982) suggest that deficits in a child's learning be viewed as an educator's teaching disability rather than the physical aspects of the child's failure to learn, because all children possess the innate potential to learn and achieve. The educational system must become accountable for the success or the failure of students and provide them with a staff who finds the appropriate methods and techniques to promote learning.

Adlerian educators do not believe in comparison or competition, inside or outside of the classroom. When children are not measured and compared, a major contention follows that one can stimulate them in their development and allow them to become social beings in their home and school (Thompson & Rudolph, 1996). Regardless of how much children can do, they must be provided with an environment in which they feel secure enough to be themselves.

Restoring a special-need child's sense of adequacy and self-esteem is not easily accomplished. The teacher or counselor must provide an atmosphere of optimism and encouragement, where each child feels a sense of belonging and self-respect. Special instruction is important, but a child should spend as much time as possible in the regular classroom (Thompson & Rudolph,

1996). Children with special needs should be included in counseling groups with children who do not receive special instruction.

Conclusions

Adlerian principles have been finely tuned and applied to education by Dreikurs and Corsini, although many advocates of democratic school environments have implemented their techniques without being aware of the Adlerian connection. This article highlights specific applications and concrete skills that properly trained school counselors and teachers can utilize in working effectively with school children. These include reacting concretely to misbehaviors, learning to give encouragement, implementing natural and logical consequences and handling special need students with sensitivity. School counselors can also apply these techniques with teachers in the classroom to create democratic classrooms and individual education models.

What counselors and teachers do in the school setting can make a difference in how children grow and develop their potential. Applying Adlerian principles of mutual respect, choice, responsibility, consequences, and belonging may offer the school counselor as well as all educators some good ideas to improve these areas and benefit children.

References

Adler, A. (1927). Practice and theory of individual psychology. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.

Adler, A. (1930). The education of children. New York: Vail-Ballou Press.

Adler, A. (1980). What life should mean to you. (A. Porter, Ed.). New York: Perigee Books. (Original work published 1931)

Ansbacher, H. (1988). Dreikurs' four goals of children's disturbing behavior and Adler's social interest. Individual Psychology, 44, 282-289.

Corsini, R. (1981). Individual education. Journal of International Association of Pupil Personnel Workers, 25, 190-200.

Corsini, R., & Miller, R. (1990). What is holism in education? Individual Psychology, 46, 3-19.

Dinkmeyer, D., & Dinkmeyer, D., Jr. (1976). Logical consequences: A key to the reduction of disciplinary problems. Phi Delta Kappa, 57, 663-666.

Dreikurs, R., Grunwald, B., & Pepper, F. (1982). Maintaining sanity in the classroom. New York: Harper & Row.

Dreikurs, R., & Cassel. (1996). Discipline without tears. (2nd ed.). New York: Penguin Group.

Dreikurs, R., & Soltz, V. (1990). Children: The challenge. New York: Plume.

Dubrovich, M. (1985). Individual education from the point of view of a principal. Individual Psychology, 42, 83-86.

Elkins, P. (1985). Individual education: A critical review. Individual Psychology, 423, 30-37.

Mastroianni, M. (1984). Introducing an individual education school into the community. Individual Psychology, 40, 168-176.

Nelsen, J. (1985). The three R's of logical consequences, the three R's of punishment, and six steps for winning children over. Individual Psychology, 42, 161-165.

Poch, J. (1985). The Hufford Junior High School-a school with a school. Individual Psychology, 42, 74-76.

Simpkins. A. (1985). Introduction to individual education. Individual Psychology, 42, 3-7.

Thompson, C., & Rudolph, L. (1988). Counseling children (3rd ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Thompson, C., & Rudolph, L. (1996). Counseling children (4th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Wheeler, M. (1988). Using individual psychology in the college class-room. Individual Psychology, 44, 150-157.

~~~~~~~~

By Deborah B. Pryor, Ed.D., LCPC, NCC, Previously an elementary school teacher and middle school guidance counselor, currently is counseling in a private practice in Algonquin, IL and Toni R. Tollerud, Ph.D., LCPC, NCC, NCSC, ACS, An associate professor, Department of Educational Psychology, Counseling, and Special Education, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb.

Adapted by Ed.D., LCPC, NCC and Ph.D., LCPC, NCC, NCSC, ACS

Back