



step four

strengthening
teaching skills

activities 

monitoring checklist 

 tools

step four



Introduction

There are many factors within a school's immediate control that can help increase children's learning capacity. Foremost amongst them is the way we teach and relate with children. At a *Good School*, the teaching methods we use and the relationships within which we use them must encourage children to acquire and develop the skills they need to learn new things and to become successful adults.

That's why a good teacher is someone who can do more than lecture. A good teacher strives to understand how children learn and finds creative ways to help them respond to the world around them. A good teacher nurtures self-expression and provokes curiosity. S/he encourages students to ask questions, to think for themselves, to try new things, and to learn from mistakes. When teachers and students work together, learning becomes easier.

Step Four



Overview of Step Four

- In Step Four, you and a core group of key stakeholders will continue a learning process that is designed to help teachers in your school explore what kind of relationships they are creating with children.
- You will explore ways of developing relationships of trust with your students.
- Your school will develop a mechanism for recognising teachers' achievements and their commitment.
- Together, as a group of teachers, you will develop a mechanism for helping each other grow as professionals.

Objectives of Step Four

- To examine your current beliefs about teaching methodology and how it influences the way students learn and compare it with the ideas proposed in the Toolkit
- To explore how the school can support teachers to perform better
- To create a process through which you can grow as a professional teacher

Reading

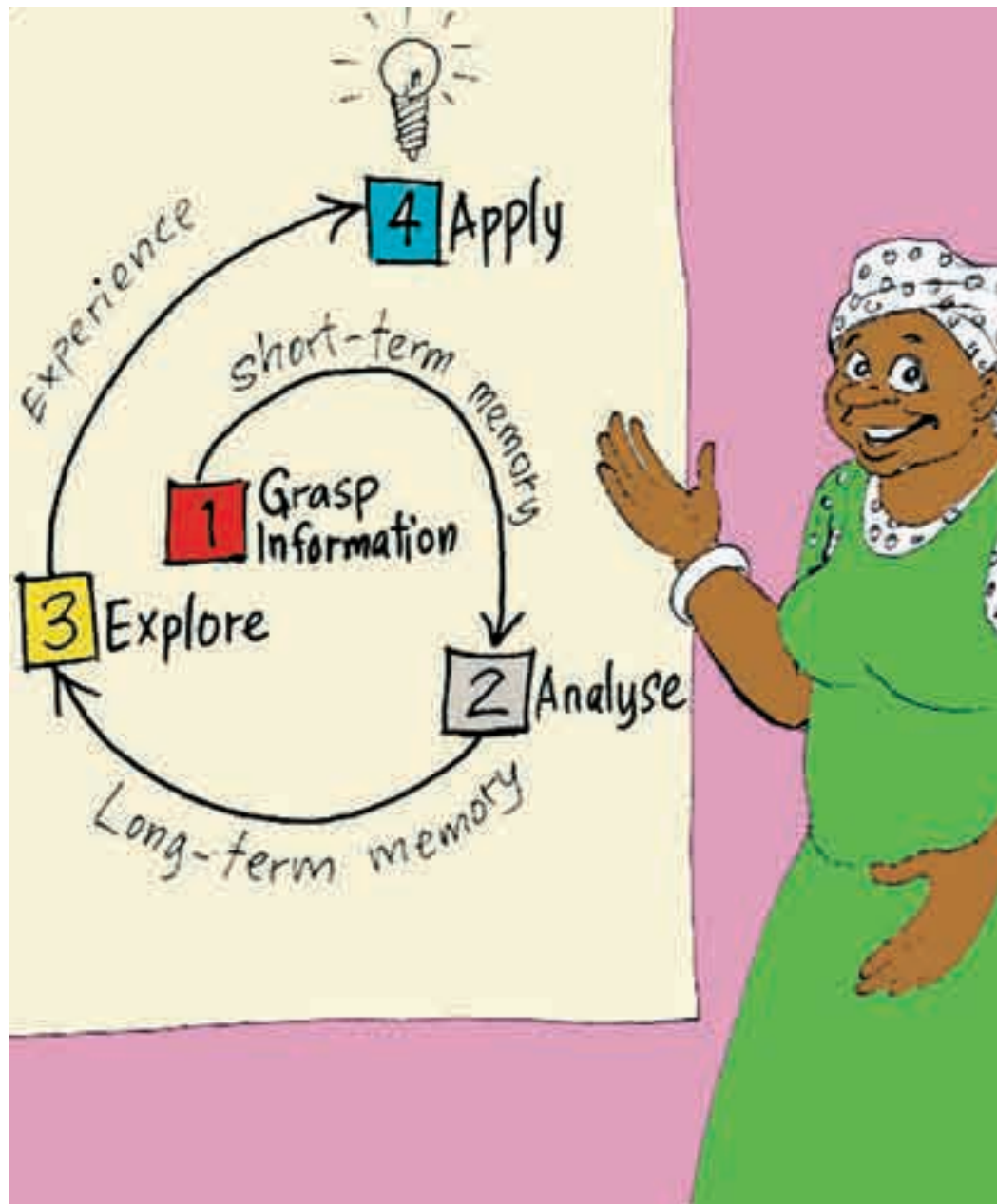
- *What is a Good School?* pages 13-19
- *What is Good Teacher?* cartoon booklet
- *What is Wrong with Corporal Punishment?* cartoon booklet

Tools

In Step Four you will find the following tools to start strengthening your teaching skills:

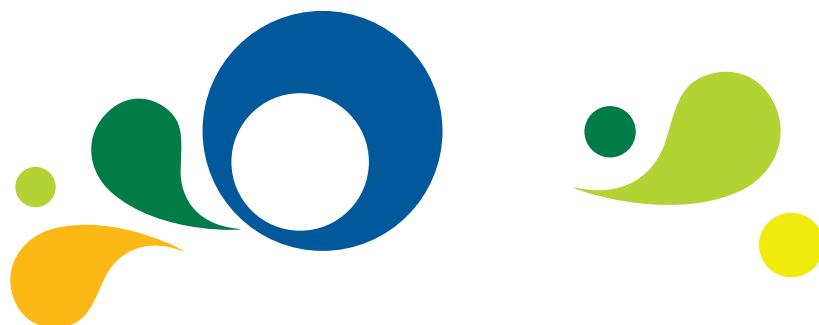
- A sample teacher appreciation certificate
- A sample teacher evaluation form
- Suggested topics for teacher reflection sessions

The four stages of learning



create it

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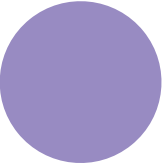
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activities




This series of activities is designed to give you practical ideas to strengthen your abilities as a teacher. It includes a learning process and suggested activities for developing relationships of trust with children. The activities also foster pride in the teaching profession by suggesting ideas for professional development and for ongoing evaluations of your growth as a teacher. The central aim is to help teachers to grow as professionals who can run a *Good School*, not to train them as teachers.

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4.1

Learning Process: Understanding the Learning Relationship



This series of training modules (see pages 116-137 of *Learning* section)) is designed to help you strengthen your teaching ability, particularly emphasizing how you listen and relate to children. The trainings will give you some basic understanding of children's rights and how to counsel children when they need your help. In addition, you will explore how children learn, how to practice creativity in your teaching and how to use some new classroom management skills.

You can use these modules in many different ways. If possible, plan to have a short one and a half or two-day training and go through all the sessions at the beginning of Step Four. Alternately, you can choose to do them over two weekends or one day per week for a month. Additionally, you can pick and choose the trainings you need based on the particular activity you are about to do. This way, you can conduct trainings during the week, for a few hours at a convenient time.

Fostering Quality Relationships with Students

4.2

A good teacher takes the time to foster quality relationships with her or his students. S/he is kind and compassionate and takes time to listen to a student's problems. A good teacher respects students and cares about their growth. Most importantly, a good teacher is a role model who demonstrates through his/her words and actions what it means to be a respectful, trustworthy and hard-working citizen.

Developing Helping Relationships

4.2 a

Building quality relationships takes time and a willingness to help.

It means:

- **Teachers offer children support when they need it.** This support could be in the form of advice, advocacy or intervention on behalf of a vulnerable child. It involves being aware of the children in their school and in their community and taking an interest in their development.
- **Counselling children.** Many times children need a trusted adult to listen to them and to help them make a decision. This requires skilled listening and helping children explore options to make an informed choice.
- **Creating access to information.** Many students may not know how to access information they need to make good decisions. For example they may not know which course to apply for after they complete their school, or they may not know how to protect themselves against sexually-transmitted infections. A good teacher notices if there are certain kinds of information children need but do not have access to and ensures that the school finds a way to provide it.

4.2 b

Holding Open Meetings

Another effective way of building trust, respect and cooperation among your students is with open meetings. They create an opportunity to share problems and concerns with everyone in the school—and for brainstorming solutions together. Students need to know that their concerns are heard and that their opinions are important. By making them a part of the process of problem-solving, relationships between students and teachers can improve dramatically.

Once a term, organise an open meeting between all students and teachers. Try to make it informal and relaxed. Perhaps you can meet outdoors under a tree or in another area outside of the classroom. If your school is very large, you may choose to do this activity one class at a time.

A week or so prior to the meeting, you may wish to place an 'agenda box' in a designated area. Let everyone know that they are free to write down on a piece of paper anything that they want to talk about at the open meeting and then place it in the agenda box. Before the meeting, empty the box and create an agenda of topics to talk about. The meetings usually take about 1-2 hours, depending on how much needs to be discussed, so be sure to set aside enough time.

Alternately, you can ask students to bring ideas with them and can open the meeting as follows:

- Teachers will talk about issues they have
- Students may then respond to the issues
- Students will talk about issues they have
- Teachers will respond to the issues

After the teachers speak, students are free to evaluate what the teachers have said. Perhaps the teachers are having a problem with latecomers after the lunch period. After students hear what the teachers say about it, they may be able to explain that there is not enough water for washing, and so it takes a long time to wait in line to clean up after lunch. The idea is that the students are allowed to respond freely and without fear, so that issues are brought out in the open.

Likewise, students may bring up their own issues. Perhaps they are having a particular problem with discipline in one of their classes. They don't know why, but they are all being distracted from learning in that class. After listening to the students, the teachers are free to respond.

Make sure you agree on ground rules for this meeting so that they are productive. For example, one person speaks at a time, listen to the speaker, respect all contributors and their contributions, do not attack individuals or make unsubstantiated allegations, etc.

At first, students may feel reluctant to say anything at all for fear of retaliation. But, if you are honest in your approach, students will start to feel more free and will look forward to the opportunity to air their ideas or to make suggestions. They will also begin to respect teachers more—after all, when you give respect, you get respect! Once students become more confident you can change the order of who speaks first.



4.3

Take Pride in your Profession



It's not only students who need recognition for a job well done, but teachers, too! All of us like to feel appreciated. Being honoured for our work goes a long way towards developing pride in our school and in our profession.

4.3 a

Recognise Contributions



A great way to celebrate extra special achievements or qualities is to recognise one teacher each month or each term who has done something above and beyond, or who has been particularly helpful to students, or helped a class improve academically. The award shouldn't only focus on their actions in school. For example, if a teacher does something wonderful for your community, you can recognise them for being a good citizen. You can choose to have different categories of recognition each month, or if you choose to select honourees by term, you can choose three or four, each to be recognised in a different category. You could even issue a certificate that is publicly awarded to demonstrate the pride your school feels (see page 26).

You can have a school-wide vote or students can nominate their teachers for a specific achievement or quality. You can even ask students to write nominations to explain why their teacher should be considered for the award. To be more impartial, you can ask parents or community members to be a part of the selection committee. Announce the winner at the assembly and present the certificate in front of the whole school. If you have a community photographer, consider asking them to take a picture and post it on the Wall of Fame.

Monitor Professional Development

4.3 b

If you are interested in improving your work, it is important to evaluate your performance. However, many schools find this difficult to do as it isn't possible for the head teacher to be constantly aware of how teachers are performing or what their particular strengths and weaknesses are.



i. Monitoring growth

Every teacher should be given an opportunity to monitor their own progress. If resources permit, provide each teacher in your school with an exercise book in which they record their progress. Some of the ways in which they could use this journal include:

- At the beginning of the process they could write a brief essay on what it means to them to be a teacher
- Write down the values they hold most important as individuals
- Express their views on what is a good teacher
- Make a list of skills they would like to develop in the next three, six and twelve months, respectively
- Outline their objectives for their teaching career over the next three years.
- Write their thoughts as they are going through the *Good School* creation process
- Describe their strengths as a teacher
- Write down their weaknesses and how they can improve in a positive way

ii. Self-evaluation

Have teachers fill out the Self-Evaluation Form included in the Toolkit (see *What is Corporal Punishment?* pages 39-40) and complete it again after six and twelve months.

iii. Student feedback

An interesting idea is to allow the students (or some students) to evaluate their teachers. After all, no one knows more about what a teacher is like in

the classroom than the students that are learning in that classroom. The evaluations can be an effective tool in learning about ourselves as teachers and as individuals.

Use the form provided on page 27 as a template for how an evaluation might look. You can conduct the evaluation once a year or more often if you prefer. Each student can be given a form and asked to fill out the strengths and weaknesses of her or his teachers. The process is not meant to be a negative experience, but rather an opportunity for students to honestly evaluate how they are being taught and how they are being treated. You can extend the form to include non-teaching staff as well. Also, you can include matrons or other adult figures in the school and an area for general remarks about improving the school.

The evaluations should be anonymous—students should be able to fill them out without fear of retaliation. And the results should be coordinated by the head teacher and then shared with each teacher. The results are not meant as a performance evaluation on the part of the administration, but rather as a way for teachers to learn what their strengths and weaknesses are and to plan together with the school on how to capitalise on their strengths and improve on their weaknesses.

Institute Reflection Sessions for Teachers

4.4



This activity is one of the most important for a successful *Good School* Project! Set aside one afternoon at least twice a month for teachers to meet and discuss issues that they are facing in the course of their work. It can be for 30 minutes or one hour, but it is important for teachers to continue reflecting on what they have learned so far and the successes and challenges they are facing. As you explore new ideas and let go of old ways of responding to situations, you will, of course, encounter challenges. There will be many times when some teachers will falter and others will feel strong. By talking about it, teachers can support each other, develop a common sense of purpose and can ask advice in a non-threatening way from their colleagues.

These meetings can simply be informal discussions about the week's challenges, or they can be topic-focused dialogues about relevant issues. The idea behind these sessions is to create time for teachers to think about and discuss issues that matter to them and help them grow as teachers.

The first step is to create a time slot for these sessions. Be sure to get a commitment from teachers that they will attend. It may be a good idea to make the sessions mandatory in the beginning to get teachers used to the idea. After a few months of sharing, many teachers will find the sessions so helpful, they will actually look forward to the opportunity to share with their colleagues.

The sessions should not be taught but led as open-ended discussions. A committee member can guide the discussion, but should not dominate it. It is important to note that many teachers are not comfortable sharing the challenges in their classrooms. Often, they may feel that admitting their struggles makes them look like they are failing or that they are not a competent teacher. Please be patient. It takes time to develop a true atmosphere of trust and cooperation in the staff room. But once it is established, teachers will begin to share freely. They learn that they are not alone with these kinds of problems and find they can seek support and advice from their fellow teachers. Therefore, it is crucial that no one criticises other staff members and that the attitude is focused on finding solutions, not on pointing out faults.

Many teachers are overworked and facing a lot of stress and pressure. It is important to explain that this process will benefit them in the long run. A

classroom built on a foundation of respect will make a teacher's job easier and will help a teacher feel proud of their profession and their students.

A possible agenda could look like this:

1. **Welcome** - Open the meeting by welcoming the teachers and asking them to share or acknowledge any achievements or positive events that happened during the week. (10 minutes)
2. **Review** - Refer back to any solutions that were offered in the previous session and follow up to see if they were effective or if other solutions need to be suggested. (10 minutes)
3. **Topic discussion** - Choose one of the *Suggested Topics for Reflection* on page 28 and lead a short discussion on the ideas and attitudes it generates. (20 minutes)
4. **Discipline issues** - Allow teachers to share specific problems they are facing in the classroom and brainstorm possible solutions together. (20 minutes)

If discussions become intense and there is a need to spend a lot of time on certain issues, you can adjust the agenda. Perhaps one week could be focused on specific discipline issues teachers are facing and the next week on a suggested topic of discussion. The idea is to keep teachers talking about and reflecting on their work. There is no need to make reports or take extensive notes. Discussions can also continue outside the meeting in informal settings.

Notes

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A decorative graphic in the top right corner consisting of several organic, teardrop-like shapes. There is a large light green shape, a smaller dark green circle below it, a light blue shape to the right, a medium green shape below that, a small yellow circle, and a large green circle at the bottom right.

monitoring checklist

step ¹⁹ four

Activity 4.1: Learning Process: Understanding the Learning Relationship

Plan for and conduct trainings

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Activity 4.2: Fostering Quality Relationships with Students

Plan for an open meeting

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Place agenda box in designated area

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Empty agenda box and create list of agenda items for meeting

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Create ground rules for open meeting

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Conduct open meeting

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Activity 4.3: Take Pride in Your Profession

Award teacher achievements

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Have teachers fill out self-evaluation form

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Have students fill out evaluation forms

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Activity 4.4: Institute Reflection Sessions for Teachers

Set up time for reflection sessions

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Create agenda for reflection sessions

Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Hold reflection sessions

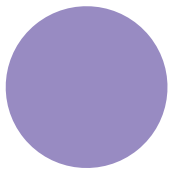
Date completed: _____

Comments: _____

Notes

step²³ four





tools

4.3 a

Sample Teacher Appreciation Certificate



_____ School

is proud to present

with this certificate for

CONGRATULATIONS!

Signed: _____

Sample Teacher Evaluation Form

4.3 b(iii)




Name of Teacher	Subject	Strengths	Weaknesses
Non-Teaching Staff	Name	Strengths	Weaknesses
Cook			
Guard			
Nurse			
Grounds keeper			
Bookkeeper			

Please write suggestions/comments for improving the school on the reverse side of this form.

4.4

Suggested Topics for Reflection

- 
1. **Review** – Spend the first few sessions reviewing the positive discipline responses. You can review a few of the training sessions, particularly those focusing on positive discipline. Hang up the Positive Discipline Responses poster from the Toolkit in the staff room. Refer to it often during your discussions.
 2. **Motivation** – It is a good idea to tackle the issue of motivation right away. Have a discussion with teachers around the question “What’s in it for me?” Identify the benefits of positive discipline and of not using corporal punishment. In the beginning, it may seem to make a teacher’s job more difficult, but in the long run, it will make it much easier. Talk about why and share ideas for staying motivated throughout the process.
 3. **Corporal punishment** – Have a discussion about what corporal punishment is and what is wrong with it. You can divide this discussion into several sessions. Refer to the training sessions for help or use the booklet “What is Wrong with Corporal Punishment” as a guide.
 4. **Defences** – What are some of the reasons adults give for using corporal punishment and how can you counter them? Use one or all of the following examples to discuss common defences for using corporal punishment. Use the booklet “What is Wrong with Corporal Punishment” as a guide.
 - “I was beaten as a child and I turned out fine.”
 - “Spare the rod, spoil the child.”
 - “Children can not learn without the threat of the stick.”
 - “I only use it as a last resort.”
 5. **Booklet club** – Use the booklets provided in the Toolkit as jumping off points for discussion. Read a portion of a book as a group during each session and discuss the ideas. The five booklets can provide enough topics for many discussions.
 6. **Strategies** – Have a discussion about some of the specific discipline strategies your school is using. These might include behaviour contracts, Student Court, class meetings, infraction slips, discipline boxes or any other method. Are these strategies effective? Can they be refined?

7. **Positive reinforcement** – Have a discussion about different techniques teachers are using to positively encourage students. Is effort recognised or only success? Is it a good discipline measure to focus on positive behaviours?
8. **The law** – Review international conventions, laws and policy documents around the issue of corporal punishment. The purpose is to demonstrate to the teachers that they are not alone in the fight against corporal punishment, but that many documents back up the right for children to learn without fear. Refer to some of the materials in the Toolkit and try to do some research about the law in your area. What does the Teachers Code of Conduct for your district say? What is the Board of Education’s stance on corporal punishment?
9. **Rebellion** – Often, when children are first learning about positive discipline, their first response will be to test the teacher’s limits. You may think they are being stubborn, but they are reacting in a normal way for young people. You have set different rules for them, and they are naturally going to test them to see if they are real. They will purposely do things to see if you will fall back and use corporal punishment. Have a discussion about what this means for teachers.
10. **Consistency** – Equally important to setting these new rules and limits is sticking to them. Sometimes, it is easy to fall back on the cane because it is right there and it produces immediate results. But every time you do, you are showing students that you are not serious about your new policy. They will stop trusting you and discipline can get even worse. Consistency is important for this program to work. No matter how hard they push, it is crucial to stick to the alternative responses. Be patient. In time, they will see you are serious and they will begin to respect the rules. Have a discussion about the importance of consistency.

Overview of Step Four

- In Step Four, you and a core group of key stakeholders will continue a learning process that is designed to help teachers in your school explore what kind of relationships they are creating with children.
- You will explore ways of developing relationships of trust with your students.
- Your school will develop a mechanism for recognising teachers' achievements and their commitment.
- Together, as a group of teachers, you will develop a mechanism for helping each other grow as professionals.



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