

Document 2.2 C) **“Give me a good grade, or else!”**

– Students who use a focus on getting good grades to justify behavior that does not support a positive learning environment for all.

This is a Classic Disruptive Student cul-de-sac. It starts off seeming like a legitimate way of looking at school but it neglects some essential elements. By itself it is not too much of a problem, it just gives us stressed-out students. It is mainly a problem when it is used as a justification for disruptive behavior.

As with all disruptive behavior it is easiest to address this at the start of the semester when you and your class establish “Class Rules”. But you can do it PRN too.

At any rate, **I have found more than one student say something like:** “I’m here to get good grades and to do whatever it takes to get good grades (Unspoken: including scream, whine, and manipulate, as well as study and write papers). I’m *driven* regarding this. *I can’t help it. I have* to get good grades. I know this is right because that’s what schools do, they give grades. And there is more praise the better the grade. Plainly, this is the ‘agreement’ that we all have at school.”

My goal as a teacher is to address the collateral behavior, e.g., whining, excessive questioning, crying dramatically in class because of a “bad” grade (often that is anything less than an “A”!). And this is a case when I will need to explicitly state my sense of the “agreement” (see step #1 of the DSB General Template) we have about what we are all doing together at school.

As a teacher you might possibly respond with Reflective listening... affirming the truth in what the student has said... affirming the work that the student has done... and then responding with your sense of the “agreement” you have with this class, and finally addressing the behavior you need to address. It all might look something like this:

E.g., “I know that you are serious about school. And grades are often talked about as if high grades were synonymous with academic excellence. I am positively impressed with your schoolwork. But I teach this class from a different view of what school is all about.

“I admit you have brought up a little bit of a paradox at the heart of college. – Yes, we do treat grades as if they were a type of reward and we attach praise and recognition to the highest grades. However, in truth, grades are simply a short-hand assessment of student performance. What is assessed is spelled out in most every syllabus.

“We assess:

- 1) Knowledge about and competence in the subject matter of the course.
- 2) Participation in and contribution to the process of learning the material in class.
- 3) Finally, we assess a sense of the 'emotional intelligence' or professional demeanor that will help the person succeed in the world outside of school. (This is truer in some curricula than others.)

"I could add that it is in this 'emotional intelligence' territory, where we see how the student interacts with others in and out of class, that we may recommend a student to an honor society. The honor societies require not just a high GPA, they also require leadership and amiability!

"It is competence, participation, positive contribution, and 'professional demeanor' that we care about. Each class at SCC is about developing all those qualities. What is clear is that if any student wants good grades they need to keep learning how to get better regarding knowledge, competence, participation, positive contribution, and 'emotional intelligence'. It is my job to support you and all my students in a class environment that will help us all exercise these qualities.

"At any rate, how you behaved in class today does not help with the positive learning environment I try to create and maintain in my class. I need to have you not moan and sigh (or whatever the student did) in the class again. --- If you need to do that, please remove yourself from the class without any disturbance. Please come back when you are ready to get back to work."

The **DSB General Template** with its "**Broken Record Technique**" may be indicated at this point.

Peter Buck 3/12/07