

# Learning Center Helps

## Pitfalls to Avoid

Part 3 of 3

**“He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made.” Psalm 7:15**

The practice of making pitfalls has been an often-used method for trapping wild animals and has also been a strategy used against enemy soldiers in time of war. Sometimes a man having made such a pit covered it over so completely that he fell into his own trap. Sometimes a supervisor can inadvertently create pitfalls that are hidden and whose danger is not easily recognized. Here are six such pitfalls you will want to avoid.

**Pitfall #7**—Relaxing or failing to enforce scoring procedures.

**Proper procedure**—When a score strip appears, the student raises his national flag to request permission to score his work. The student goes to the scoring station with only his PACE. While at the scoring station, the student uses a red pen provided at the scoring station to make a red “X” beside the number of any incorrect answers and a red “X” in the first box of the score strip. Instruct students in correct Score Key usage and provide careful but reasonable supervision of the scoring station. Minimize the possibility for students to obtain answers from Score Keys without arousing feelings of distrust by making the student aware of the staff’s presence. It is easy for the Learning Center staff to become involved with students and not pay attention to what is going on at the scoring stations. While working with students, occasionally turn around and look. You don’t have to look at anyone or anything in particular, but students will notice that you turned around. When pastors and administrators come to the Learning Center, stop at the door for 30 seconds and look. Again, you don’t have to look at anyone or anything in particular, but students will notice that you looked. Regularly spot-check scoring for “carelessness.” Staff members should occasionally

scan students’ PACEs, looking specifically for proper scoring procedures and to detect marked answers (thumbnail marks, red dots, “strategically” placed red “Xs,” heavy pencil writing covering up red ink, pencils in ties or under fingernails, camera phones at scoring station taking pictures of score keys, etc). Scoring procedures are predicated on honesty but offer many opportunities to teach the character trait of honesty as well. Address the “heart issue” of honesty in devotions and chapels to “shut the gate before the horse gets out.” You may want to watch the use of camera cell phones and text messaging, iPods with wireless earpieces with notes read into them, PDAs, and programmable calculators, especially at the testing table.

**Pitfall #8**—Failing to quiz students before giving Self Test initials.

**Proper procedure**—Before initialing the Self Test, quiz the student on activities marked with “Xs.” Check the student’s readiness for the Test by quizzing him over important concepts and activities that he missed in the PACE, especially on Checkups. Also, quiz him on questions he did not miss to verify comprehension of concepts. A student who is not ready to take the Self Test should be given specific instructions. “Review the vocabulary,” “Memorize the formula on page 17,” “Review this list of items,” etc. You may also need to give the student some individual instruction. If the student is uncomfortable answering questions orally, have written practice exercises available so that he can show his readiness for the Self Test.

**Pitfall #9**—Failing to do a daily goal check for every student.

**Proper procedure**—The monitor should spend approximately the first 45 uninterrupted minutes each morning checking students’ goals to see that the



previous day's goals have been completed and new goals set for the current day and noting PACE subjects in which the student may need academic assistance. The goal check is the nuts and bolts of the A.C.E. system of learning. Without a daily goal check, the A.C.E. system will not achieve the intended academic results. This is a school's single greatest academic control. If this procedure is not followed, the supervisor really has no idea where each student is academically. A goal check will spot problems (in understanding, scoring, completion of goals, etc.) very early, before they mushroom or snowball. The monitor should be sure the student has accomplished a specific activity during a day for which he wrote "Review" or "Study" on his Goal Card. Make sure the student has not adjusted his goals without the supervisor's permission, initialed in green on the Goal Card. If the Goal Check Report is the school's only attendance record, make sure attendance is accurately recorded for each student each day.

**Pitfall #10**—Failing to make sure students are adequately supervised at all times.

**Proper procedure**—Learning Center staff responsibilities include supervising student scoring and testing, supervising the playground and privilege area, and supervising extracurricular activities. From the beginning until the end of daily activities, the staff is involved with students rather than with materials. No matter

how good your students are, "You get what you inspect, not what you expect." If a large Learning Center or more than one Learning Center is sent on break at one time, at least two adults need to be supervising in different places. If they stand next to each other, they will talk and not watch the children. Every school has a Tommy or a Sally who, if you give them three nanoseconds, will be

hanging from the cross on the steeple.

Additionally, some of the best character training opportunities are informal ones that arise when staff is supervising various student activities.

**Pitfall # 11**—Relying on only negative motivation to control and motivate students.

**Proper procedure**—Experienced staff learn to use positive motivation techniques as a balance to negative controls to motivate and control students. Reinforce and reward positive behavior. Do not wait for a child to achieve perfection or to score 100 percent. Look for little steps in achievement, character, or progress and build on those. Use all of the suggestions in the Procedures Manual for positive motivation (Congratulations slips, stars, stickers, Privilege Status and a Privilege Area, Honor Roll, field trips, Honor Roll trips, green dot treats). Carry merits in your pocket and immediately reward positive behavior (honesty, courtesy, kindness) whenever you see it. To garner the most motivation from the merits, have a merit store.

**Pitfall #12**—Failure to keep good lines of communication open between the Learning Center staff and the home.

**Proper procedure**—Keep the home informed through a weekly or monthly newsletter and properly use the Corrective Action Notice and Homework Assignment forms. Conduct regular parent/supervisor conferences, and agree to practice a "benefit of the doubt" policy. Provide both a monthly and yearly school calendar to avoid, "Why didn't you tell me?" The effectiveness of the school depends upon successful parent-staff communication. Address problems while they are small. Finally, make sure parents understand the benefits of an individualized curriculum, including the advantages of academic diagnosis, individualized attention, and goal setting. Informed parents are happy parents.

