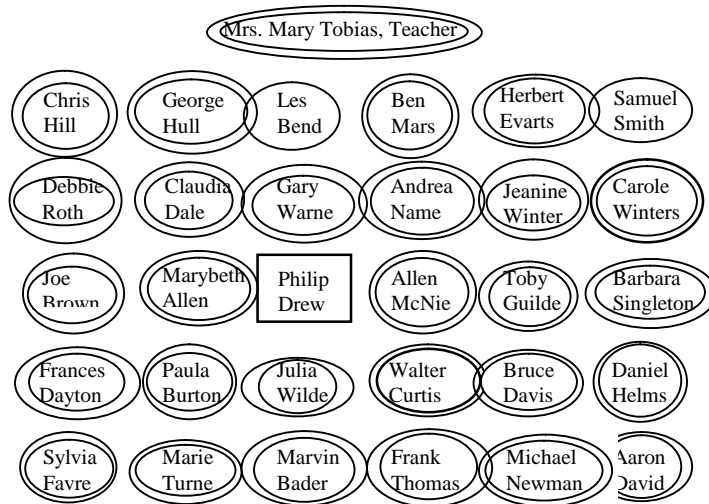


# Organized Pandemonium

by

Franklin H. Ernst Jr., M.D.



**A Seating Diagram of named hellos exchanged.**

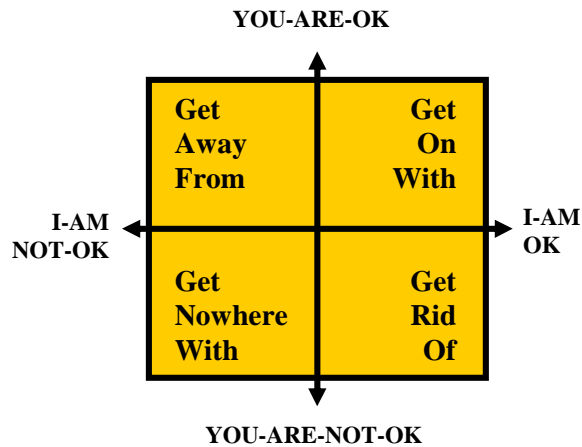
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## OK Corral: Grid for What's Happening

[www.ListeningActivity.com](http://www.ListeningActivity.com)

## **Organized Pandemonium**

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Franklin H. Ernst Jr., M.D.

### **COURSE ON “SCHOOL RIOT CONTROL”, TAUGHT IN 1971**

In the fall of 1971, with the sanction of school administration, this writer taught an eight-week course to 12 members of the faculty of 100 of a local high school. The reason for the course was to prevent the expected annual spring campus riot. Titled “Transactional Analysis for Classroom Teachers” the cornerstone of the course was for those who met together in classrooms to know each others’ first and last name and give each other a “Hello (Hi)” with name “a named hello.” This named hello exchange and classroom seating diagram exercise was the opening activity of the first and each of the following classes. To demonstrate this procedure, it was carried out starting with the first class session and each subsequent of all eight class sessions among the 12 teachers being taught. Writer (as the teacher of the 12 faculty members) participated in this exercise each week in this class given in his offices.

The named hello exercise had two parts. The first was the exchange of a named hello by each person with each other person in that particular room. This included each student (teacher) exchanging a named hello with the course teacher. The second part (the reading and writing part) instructed each person in the room to write down the first and last name of each person he exchanged this named hello with and designate (tally) in writing the exchange of the named

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hellos. It was recommended this writing part of the exercise be done in the form of a seating diagram. This diagram approximates the location of each person's chair in the room. Then drawing a circle around that person's name for his own giving of a named hello to the particular person; a second (concentric) circle was made around that same person's name to denote receiving a named hello back.



In this class of 12 teachers, it turned out three of the teachers did not know either the first or last name of some of their fellow faculty members, that is, until after the first time this exercise was carried out in the first TACT class for them.

In this first class session of the eight week course the teachers, as expected, became “noisy”, smiling, laughing with each other as they exchanged their named hellos with each other, for the most part extended this greeting well beyond the simple, verbal, named hello exchange.

Teacher-students in this TACT course were given “homework assignments” after each class. The homework assignment from the first of the eight classes was to teach and carry out this same exercise daily for the next five school days in at least one of their respective classes at school. Teacher-students were cautioned that, similar to what they experienced in author's class they had just attended, it would take a large portion of the class hour's time, if not all of it, the first few times it was carried out by the students in their own classrooms before the students in the classes “settled down.”

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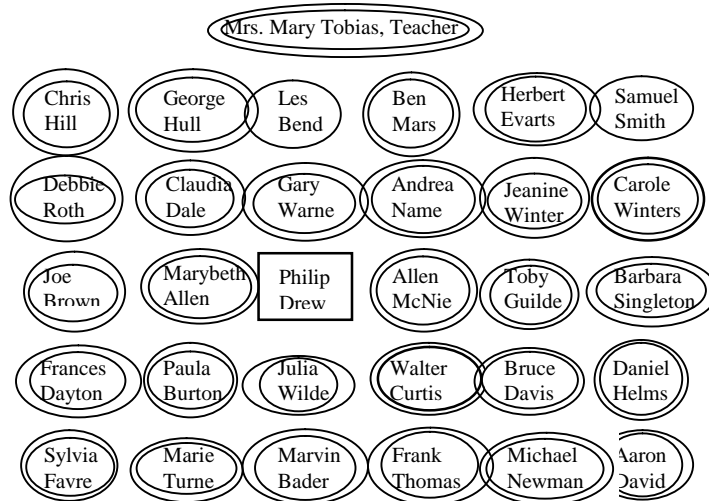
In author's class the following week, each faculty member student reported his experience with this named hello exchange and each of the students making a seating diagram of his personal classroom with first and last names of the people in his classroom. About thirty students and one teacher per class, each teacher had started each session of the self-selected, same class period with this exercise daily for the preceding five days of classes. Most of the teachers did ask the students to turn in their seating diagrams and charted exchange of hellos to check off that the classroom student had done it. Faculty members did return the seating diagram hello charts to their class members the same class period. One teacher, in big smiling awe, referred to these first sessions of named hello exchanges in his classroom as "ORGANIZED PANDEMONIUM!"

Yes it was! Organized! None of the students asked to leave the classroom that particular class period. Disorderly behavior was at a minimum, if at all. Boisterous? Perhaps! Disorderly? No! Taunting by student to student was minimal if present. Students kept track of where their seats were and at the request of the teacher, before the end of the class period, returned to their seats before end of the hour. No other class instruction took place in the initial session after the start of this classroom exercise. No homework assignments were made that day and for a few more days after the initial "Named Hello" day. Students obviously extended the time of this class activity the first few days it took place as a legitimate way to postpone class instruction and assignment of homework. But. – when, after somewhere between four and ten days of students and teacher spending the entire class hour solely on getting (better) acquainted and onto friendly terms with each other, classes began to readily settle down at teacher's request eventually after the initial 10 or so minutes.

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Some of the teachers, noting the improved morale and orderliness in the one selected class, began to extend this daily opening class activity to the remainder of their class teaching periods. By the end of the second week most of the teachers had begun to limit the interval for these exchanges and name writings to the first 15 to 20 minutes and without student complaint. Tardiness stopped. Ridiculing, jeering, sneering and put downs of one student to another in the classroom came way down. Absenteeism was reduced to one fifth or less what it had been. By reports several of the teachers continued this exercise at least through the balance of that school year. No disorderly pandemonium (riots) broke out on that school campus that year or in any succeeding year through 1999 since. **THIS COURSE WAS A SUCCESS.**

**It PREVENTED a school riot.**



**A Seating Diagram of named hellos exchanged.**

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One of the teachers later volunteered “Now my chemistry class seem to teach themselves” referring to her improved pleasure and ease in teaching her high school chemistry class, the accelerated rate at which her students “caught on” to what there was to learn. Another high school teacher in the group of 12 quickly volunteered a smiling “Yeah, me too.”

### **PERMISSION AND PROTECTION**

When it was decided in 1971 to teach the course to the faculty at the local high school we knew more had to be done than just pass out flyers to some school teachers to “Come learn riot prevention.”

Not only did the teachers need to be taught what to do (and given permission to do it) they needed effective (potent) protection within the school administration to do it. Classrooms would become noisy compared to the one next door. The next door teacher would be sure to talk about the differences of noise level next door in the faculty room and ask about them at faculty meetings. Students would come out of the particular classrooms saying and doing unexpected and different things than previously exhibited. Other teachers and students would be sure to report these to each other and parents.

SO! We secured the OK of the school principal and the school district Superintendent of Education to give a graded course to the attending teachers after which we were in a position to award those who passed the course some college credit toward their annual requirement. Both the principal and the school superintendent were notified of the probable increased classroom noise levels in the classrooms of the teachers being taught by author.

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NOW, the teachers were protected when carrying out their “homework assignments” which I gave them in the course to carry out in their classrooms as part of the course they took. The homework assignments carried out by these teachers in their own classrooms were the riot control measures for the school. This protection for the classroom “noise” coming from the class exercises, this protection came from the office of the Superintendent of Education of the School District. The fact that “only” 12% (12 out of 100 faculty) took the course proved the power of social contagion in a closed setting (classrooms of the high school) of a well-taught social tool with personal rewards. At sometime in the day 50% of the student body did attend at least one of the five periods taught by these teachers. Subjects these teachers nominally taught in high school included biology, chemistry, physical education, history, geometry, English and social studies.

## **CLASSROOM EFFICIENCY**

The teacher of a class has to learn and know the 60 names of his 30 students. Each student can learn and know names of each of the other 29 students (58 names) plus teacher’s 2 names. Therefore, there are 30 “other” people in a classroom (60 other names) each person can learn and know. And there were 31 people in that room. This means there is a possible combined (perfect) awareness of 1,860 names in that classroom (31 persons times 2 names per person) for a 100% score.

In fact the combined name awareness in a public school classroom is usually less than 30%. This means the efficiency in these “usual” classes is less than 30%. It is much harder to learn in a class if you do not know who those are you are with, what to expect from them, let alone expect some manner of goodwill from them. Who knows? The public school classroom

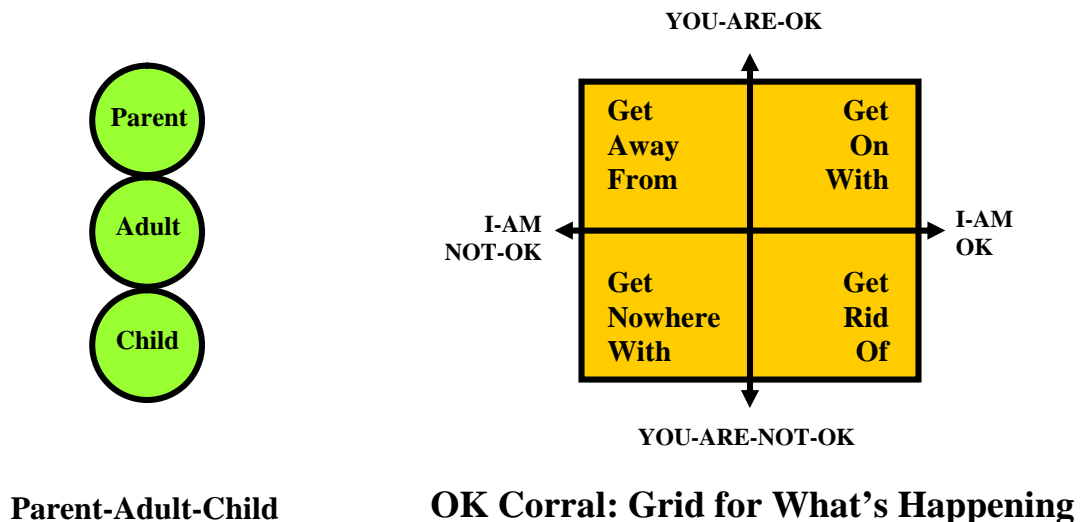


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student doesn't. There may be more ill will against you than goodwill in the particular classroom settings, where you don't know their names.

Once a student had attended two sessions of this particular style of classroom experience he/she kept on coming and both in the near term and longer term also began to mobilize some others of his acquaintances into awareness of this class activity. Enthusiasm for school attendance came up as a result of the mutual exchanges of named hellos.

Of particular interest to author was the student body fascination with being able 1) to become acquainted by name with so very many more people on their own campus of 2000, 2) to gain some basic understanding of how the behaviors of each other could become more understandable (the PAC diagram), and 3) how each individual found he could better regulate his own behavior to more often achieve a desired outcome with another person while the particular event was going on, how the **OK Corral diagram** really works.



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Some teachers and students began to call an occasional other to “get your head on straight” if the other student in the classroom was getting argumentative or rowdy in class.

Author knew from the outset that writing (the names down) would of itself lead to Adult behavior. There was this to keep in mind, a person is unlikely to be simultaneously angry or tearful (“Child behavior” as defined by these students) and to also be writing (“Adult behavior”) at the same time.

This event of teaching classroom teachers in eight sessions (no more than 12 hours total time) the basics leading to (1) good school morale and (2) quality educational achievement by **teachers and students** was a singularly outstanding experience which demonstrated both an efficient, an effective method of teaching teachers AND High School campus Riot Control.

Quite obviously, at least to the author, those who might lose a job if this method became relatively standard in schools would be opposed by the institution of such a program by the campus unions in their school district. Lose a job? There would be far fewer teaching assistants required in a school district, what with 30 students and one teacher per classroom voluntarily each managing their own behaviors and learning of teaching the instructional material without appreciable problem. Thirty pupils per classroom teacher is a desirable ratio. Fewer students per teacher in order to give each student more “attention.” This is not necessarily a good idea. It readily lends itself to increasing the “dependency needs” of a student, slow down his rate of learning to promote the time with the assistant assigned to him.

The National Education Association is the biggest and richest union in the USA. The author never was invited to come back to this particular school district or repeat the course he gave about 40 years ago. This was so even though his office remained within seven blocks of the school and he did not charge the school district for his services. Expulsions of students for

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conduct not tolerated in schools has resumed and climbed back to where it was before. The education level of the student as a whole had gone back to being bemoaned by the newspaper of the community. Some of the teachers who took that course are still in touch with the author.

Author has no doubt the school district has readily plausible reasons for not wanting author back for a repeat of the course taught to faculty members.

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