



8 Things Teachers Do To Cause Boredom

When students get bored their minds drift.

And while some settle on daydreaming, tile-counting, and general inattentiveness, other students are drawn to more...ahem...destructive pursuits.

For **where there is boredom, there is misbehavior** percolating just under the surface, ready to pounce.

Although there is a lot you can do to counter the onset of boredom, understanding what not to do is the first step to avoiding its negative effects.

What follows is a list of the most common things teachers do to cause boredom. By steering clear of these eight attention killers, your students will spend more time on task and be far better behaved.

And you'll be a more effective teacher.

1. Sitting too long.

Although it's important to increase your students' stamina for both paying attention during lessons and focusing during independent work, if they're made to sit too long, you're asking for trouble. Good teachers are observant

and thus learn to know precisely when to switch gears and **get their students up and moving**.

2. Talking too much.

Students need room to breathe or they'll form an unspoken mutiny and turn your classroom upside down. **Talking too much** is especially smothering. It communicates that you don't trust them, teaches them to tune you out, and causes their eyes to glaze over. The more economical and concise you are with your words, however, the more attentive your students will be.

3. Making the simple, complex.

Many teachers misunderstand the oft-heard mandate for more rigor. They take it to mean that they need to make their instruction more complex, more involved, more verbose – which is a major reason why students *don't* progress. Our job, if we are to do it well, is to do the opposite. The most effective teachers simplify, break down, and cut away the non-essentials – making content easier for students to grasp.

4. Making the interesting, uninteresting.

Most standard grade-level subject matter *is* interesting, but your students don't know that. In fact, many assume, based on their learning experiences in the past, that it's boring. It's your job to show them otherwise. It's your job to give them a reason to care about what you're teaching. So many teachers just talk at their students, forgetting the most critical element: *selling* it.

5. Talking about behavior instead of doing something about it.

Teachers who struggle with classroom management tend to talk endlessly about behavior. They hold class meetings. They hash things out. They revisit the same tired topic over and over, much to their students' eye-rolling chagrin. Effective classroom management is about action. It's about doing and following through and holding students accountable. It isn't about talking.

6. Directing too much, observing too less.

Most teachers are in constant motion – directing, guiding, handholding, and micromanaging students from one moment to the next. This is not only remarkably inefficient, but it dampens enthusiasm for school. Instead, rely on sharp, well-taught routines to keep your students awake, alive, and responsible through every transition and repeatable moment of your day – while you observe calmly from a distance.

7. Leading a slow, sloppy, slipshod pace.

Good teaching strives for a focus and efficiency of time, movement, and energy. The day crackles and glides cleanly from one lesson or activity to the next. As soon as one objective is met, it's on to the next without delay. Moving sharply and purposefully forces students to stay on their toes, their minds engaged. Boredom never enters the picture.

8. Failing to adjust.

Regardless of what you're trying to squeeze in by the end of the day, or how important it seems, the moment you notice heads wilting, you must make an adjustment. It's never worth it to plow through. Sometimes all your students need is a moment to stretch their legs or **say hello to a friend**. Other times, you'll simply move on to something else.

Learning In The Spotlight

The ability to concentrate over time is a critical and often-overlooked aspect of learning, and so pushing the time-on-task envelop is a good thing.

But there is a fine line.

And when students cross that line and into boredom, misbehavior is sure to follow. The good news is that by avoiding the common mistakes listed above, you can keep boredom at bay...

And inspired learning in the spotlight.

Note: I wrote an article last week for Jessica Balsley's excellent blog, **The Art of Education**. If you're an art teacher, or you just want to improve art in your classroom, I recommend checking it out.

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