



Are You Blaming Difficult Students For Poor Classroom Management?

by Michael Linsin on May 30, 2015

When I began this blog more than six years ago, I made a commitment to telling the whole truth about classroom management.

The good and bad. The harmful and transformational.

What really works and what doesn't.

Along the way we've dispelled myths, exposed misconceptions, and perhaps even ruffled some feathers.

We continue to pursue this approach because reality is an unparalleled teacher.

Although it can hurt initially, it's only when we know the truth that we're able to take steps toward improvement.

It's an essential ingredient of success regardless of the endeavor, but is particularly important for teachers.

The truth sweeps away mental clutter, stress, and second-guessing. It simplifies, empowers, and fills with hope. It offers a fresh start on the *right* path.

It also helps shed the justifications that hold so many teachers back.

One such justification, common among those struggling with classroom management, is to point the finger at difficult students as the reason their class is the way it is.

It manifests itself most prominently toward the end of a long day.

The students are [excitable](#) and bouncing off the walls. They're spinning and arguing. They're pushing and tattling and ignoring the teacher's calls for attention.

The teacher, wrung out, exhausted, and counting the minutes to dismissal, sighs and thinks:

If it just weren't for those few students . . .

Now, before we go any further it's important to point out that under the circumstances it's perfectly understandable to feel this way.

In fact, to a struggling teacher it isn't a justification. It's a viable reason. It's a barrier they feel helpless against.

They see their most challenging students riling everyone else up and draw the most reasonable conclusion: The chaos starts with a few and then spreads to everyone else.

But the truth is, **this is a sign of poor classroom management, not the cause of it.**

The class is misbehaving because they can. They're misbehaving because of inconsistent accountability, movable boundaries of behavior, and a misunderstanding of effective classroom management.

They're misbehaving because [they're bored](#) and dissatisfied, because there isn't a compelling reason not to, because the teacher has no leverage.

A Comprehensive Approach

If you were to take an exceptional classroom manager and drop them into a class like the one above, they wouldn't focus on the most difficult students.

Other than faithfully holding them accountable, they would pay them little mind. Instead, they would focus on everyone.

They would focus on improving classroom management *class-wide*, from the physical environment to how to sit and listen to how to walk in line and all points in between.

It is this comprehensive approach, of consistently applying proven and effective methods, that has the power to transform any classroom, no matter how far gone, from chaotic to peaceful.

Minute by minute, as the teacher gains more trust and influence, more and more students come on board. More and more buy in. More and more begin liking – loving – being part of the class.

And those few students the struggling teacher insisted were causing all the trouble, insisted be tested for this and that and observed by this expert and that one, gently and unceremoniously fall in line.

They look around and see everyone else behaving and no one to laugh at their silliness. They look around and realize that their behavior is absurd, out of place, and no longer fun and enticing.

They shrug their shoulders and begin doing what everyone else is doing.

They see the pride. They see the purpose. They see the evidence of something better and far more alluring.

And they want to be part of it too. They want to be part of something special. They want to be part of something bigger than themselves.

We all do.

It's the most powerful motivator in the universe.

And you must take advantage of it.