

Why Micromanagers Make Bad Teachers

There is a pervasive fear in teaching that if you're not on top of your students every moment—coaxing, guiding, advising, directing—you'll lose control of your classroom.

If left unchecked, this fear turns otherwise easygoing men and women into micromanagers, hovering over their students like a nervous driver's education instructor.

Skittering like water bugs from one desk to the next, they burst through bubbles of personal space, kneel down hot-breath close, and force their unwanted and unnecessary help upon their students.

They comment, advise, opine, and counsel. They warn and praise and interfere. They fret over every this and every that. They recommend and over-assist. They interrupt with yet another itsy-bit of guidance.

"One more thing . . . And one more thing. . . Oh, and one more thing . . ."

No wonder micromanagers feel so stressed, overworked, and exhausted—freefalling into bed at night, backhand across forehead, with a great sigh.

"Ahhhhhscoobitydoobitydoobitymeemeemeemeeme."

Yet in spite of all the busyness, the helicoptering, and the hyper-attentiveness, micromanagers struggle mightily with classroom management and stifle academic progress.

Here's why:

They cause excitability.

Excitability is a major cause of misbehavior. And because **it's directly related to the way a teacher carries herself**, it's completely avoidable. All the movement and tension and excessive talk micromanagers bring with them to the classroom causes nervous energy that manifests itself in poor listening, poor concentration, and misbehavior.

They're not well liked.

Micromanagement is smothering to students and causes them to view their teacher as an annoyance – as someone to be avoided. They roll their eyes and sigh and grow tired of the unending guidance and over-direction. This places the teacher at odds with her students and in **the unenviable position of being disliked**, which makes building rapport and influence an impossibility.

They show a lack of confidence in their students.

Somewhere deep down, perhaps just beyond conscious awareness, micromanagers **don't believe in their students**. They don't believe in their students' ability or potential to listen, learn, and follow directions – which

is why they give constant input. Sadly, this belief comes across loud and clear to students, who are quick to fulfill their teacher's prophecy.

They suffocate academic and social growth.

No one thrives in a classroom run by a micromanager. The truth is, students need space to learn. They need room to breathe and grow and mature and stand on their own two feet. There are many moments throughout a typical school day when it's best to back off and let students wrestle with their academic work, reflect on their mistakes, and fight their own battles.

They think for students.

Micromanagers tend to give away answers, solutions, and hints that are far better discovered by their fully capable students – even telling them how to respond in ways that leave nothing to imaginative, creative, or critical thinking. They also frequently paraphrase for students in a manner that suits their own needs and expectations rather than reflecting actual student thought.

They discourage independence.

Micromanagers help students far too much and too often. They're quick to lean down beside individual students to offer endless guidance, interfering with a critical part of the learning process. This causes students to look outside themselves for solutions rather than first attempting to figure them out on their own.

They interrupt learning.

Micromanaging your classroom convinces students that they need more help than they actually do. The fact is, most teachers help too much, **talk too much**, and are seen too much. After presenting a first-class lesson, and then checking thoroughly for understanding, it's best to fade into the background, allowing your students to noodle through the challenges you place before them without your added input.

Note: For more on creating a classroom of confident, independent students, see chapters 5, 6, and 10 of *Dream Class*.

Powerful Forces At Work

Knowing when to back off, observe quietly, and let students think through and apply the tools you've given them to succeed is a little appreciated and often-overlooked aspect of great teaching.

It's an art form, to be sure, learned over time by those aware of the powerful forces at work when students are made to realize that, in the end, success and failure resides with them.

Micromanagers steal this wonderful gift from students. By doing too much, by thinking, speaking, and stepping in for their students, they take from them this life-changing realization.

They take away the deeply satisfying desire lying – sometimes dormant – within each of us to pull ourselves up by the bootstraps and make something of our often disadvantages circumstances.

You see, as a result of being micromanaged, students begin to view their school progress and classroom behavior as chiefly someone else's responsibility.

But by knowing when to recede into the background and allow students to do *their* job, exceptional teachers are able to deliver the best educational experience for their students while receiving the best from their students in return.

For they know that when you micromanage students, when you step in, take on, and interfere with what are *their* responsibilities . . .

You rip the heart and soul out of motivation, suppress real, inspired learning, and unleash a backlash of misbehavior.

Thanks for reading. If you like this article, I'd appreciate you sharing it with your friends, followers, and colleagues.

-Michael

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