



Why Your Students Need Breathing Room

Walk into a typical classroom and you'll find the teacher in perpetual motion.

In an effort to be the best teacher they can be, most teachers *over* teach. That is, they **talk too much**, help too much, and are seen too much.

They become so preoccupied with giving of themselves, with providing, nurturing, guiding, reminding, directing, and advising, that they don't leave room for their students to learn.

They don't allow for their students to do for themselves, think for themselves, or create for themselves.

What you do and say is important, of course, but equally important is **what you don't do** and say.

The fact is, there are many moments and stretches throughout the school day when it's best to hold your tongue, ease into the background, and give your students some breathing room.

Here's why.

Too much of you creates needy, dependent students.

When you over-teach, your students become so accustomed to your input and guidance that they stop relying on themselves and their own abilities. They lose confidence in what they're able to do and begin thinking less for and of themselves.

Thus, they look outside for what they can readily find within. They become frustratingly and helplessly dependent – hand up, sitting idly, expecting you lean down and personally reteach what you taught the whole class minutes before.

Too much of you causes boredom, low motivation, and misbehavior.

With you front and center – and everywhere in between – your students will get comfortably cozy being passive participants. Unless challenged and trusted to do the work you give them, they'll grow listless, bored, and prone to cause trouble.

They'll sink low in their seats. They'll appear not to care. They'll be quick to judge and complain. They'll become **unmotivated, reluctant students** unwilling to take responsibility for themselves, their behavior, or their schoolwork.

Too much of you affects your ability to influence behavior and build rapport.

If your classroom is you-centered, if you're in the habit of doing for your students instead of letting them do for themselves, then they'll quickly grow tired of you. They'll resent your hovering, smothering teaching style and repel your efforts to build rapport.

Rapport comes easy when students like you and feel that you respect their talents and abilities. Knowing when to back off and leave your students to the challenges you've placed before them is an important key to building trust and behavior-influencing rapport.

Restoring The Balance

Effective teaching is a 50/50 proposition.

You give your best for your students. You create great lessons. You manage your classroom and protect their right to learn. You provide inspiration. You give them the tools they need to succeed.

But then they must take it from there.

They must noodle the conundrums. They must find the missing pieces. They must practice the skill. Write the paragraph. Conduct the experiment. Build the project. Solve for x . . .

With very little, very skeptical, and very reluctant additional help from you.

Let your students do what you prepared them to do. Set them up for success. Check thoroughly for understanding. And then step back and observe.

You'll be amazed at what you see.

When you restore the balance in your classroom, when you allow your students the time and space to learn and grow and stand on their own two feet . . .

You'll create a classroom of tenacious, independent students who love being part of your class.