



## Why Intimidation Is A Terrible Classroom Management Strategy

Glaring, threatening, yelling, scolding, browbeating, pressuring, overbearing . . . few teachers would admit to using intimidation as a classroom management method, even to themselves.

But many do.

Perhaps not all the time, mind you. Perhaps only in weak moments or in short bursts of frustration.

Maybe it's only once in an azure moon.

Or maybe, just maybe, it's only reserved for certain students. But regardless of who, why, or how often, any amount of intimidation is too much.

Any amount crosses the line.

Here's why:

### **It's hurtful.**

Whenever fear enters the equation, to any degree, it's hurtful to students. Yes, you can argue that students are resilient. You can argue that they

deserve your fire-breathing lectures. But that doesn't make it right. It doesn't change the fact that when you use intimidation, the goal is to scare students into behaving.

### **It's unnecessary.**

Most teachers don't *choose* hurtful methods. They fall into them because they don't know a better way. Without the right skills, it's natural to feel cornered with no other recourse. The good news is that you never have to feel this way. **With a bit of reading** and some practice, calm and effective classroom management isn't difficult to learn.

### **It's stressful.**

Using intimidation is remarkably stressful – filling you with apprehension, weighing you down with often-unrecognized guilt, and causing you to be in a state of perpetual conflict with your students. It also pollutes your mind with negativity and distracts you from presenting great lessons, building joyful relationships with students, and really loving your job.

### **It creates classroom tension.**

Yelling, scolding, and the like will fill your classroom with knife-cutting tension and disharmony. As a visitor, you can feel it the moment you walk through the door. The students are battle weary, excitable, and unsettled. The teacher is a ball of nerves, at his or her wits' end, reacting to every act of disobedience with inward stress and outward frustration.

### **It ruins trust and rapport.**

Most teachers who resort to hurtful methods like intimidation do so in lieu of **following their classroom management plan** – which amounts to going back on their word. This is particularly galling to students, causing resentment and distrust and making the teacher's ability to build rapport and influence virtually impossible.

### **It sabotages healthy accountability.**

The use of intimidation doesn't allow students to reflect on their misbehavior because they're too busy boiling with anger at their teacher. Effective accountability is a private affair between the misbehaving student and him or herself. Intimidation and the student's subsequent hurt and resentment interfere with this healthy process.

### **It leads to parent complaints.**

Intimidation is not only ineffective, but it's the surest path to **parent complaints**. Using it will give you a poor reputation at your school and put your principal in the awkward position of having to defend you. The truth is, parents play a critical role in your success, and you need them on your side.

### **It crushes intrinsic motivation.**

Creating a classroom your students look forward to coming to every day is one of the keys to igniting their intrinsic motivation. Chastising, badgering, and other forms of intimidation make this goal unattainable. It's a simple truth that unhappy students who don't like their teacher have far less motivation than those who love being in school.

## By Any Other Name

Although in the long run using intimidation makes classroom management much more difficult, in the short term it *can* provide relief from chaos and misbehavior. It can result in immediate – though temporary – compliance.

It takes no special skill and it's always at your disposal – ready to frighten, cut down to size, or humiliate.

However . . .

Although we all make mistakes, there is a name for those who purposely use their position of power or authority to force others to do what they want:

Bully.