



3 Hidden Signs You've Lost Control Of Your Class

by Michael Linsin on May 9, 2015

Most teachers who have lost control of their class aren't even aware of it.

After all, it's not as if their students are throwing spit wads at each other.

They're not out of their seats during lessons.

They're not yelling and cursing and running up and down the aisles.

But just because your students aren't exhibiting extreme misbehavior doesn't mean your class is under control.

In fact, in a great many classrooms the students are no better off than if they really were bouncing off the walls.

Hours of instructional time is still being wasted. Motivation is still low. Learning is still suffering.

What follows are three signs you've indeed lost control of your class – even if it doesn't feel like it.

1. Talking over students.

This is one of the most common traits of struggling teachers. They teach, and go on teaching, even while their students are chatting and whispering and staring into space.

It's not that the teacher is unaware of it. It's just that their attempts to change it have failed. They've learned that if they want to get through their lessons, they have to accept it. They have to ignore it out of self-preservation.

They don't want to fall behind or draw attention to their struggles, so they continue in the same vein day after day. They continue to teach to a distracted, disrespectful, and inattentive audience.

2. Needy students.

They crowd in. They pull on the teacher's hem. They tattle and complain. They whine and implore. They share that Emily just called them a name, their sandwich got smashed in their backpack, and they have a microscopic scrape on their finger.

And they keep coming, virtually all day long. Struggling teachers tend to chalk up such behavior to the population they work with—regardless where they teach. They assume that their students seek attention because they can't get it elsewhere.

They think, and often say out loud, that they have a needy class, that it's something they have no control over. But it isn't true. The hard truth is that they have poor classroom management.

3. Students unable to get along.

Occasional [friendship drama](#) is normal. But when disrespect is a daily occurrence, when students go out of their way to show their frustration and dislike, then it's a reflection of the learning environment.

Struggling teachers often attempt to handle the problem through a strategy of avoidance. In other words, they try to keep certain students separated. They tell them that they can't work with, be around, or even stand next to each other.

Jackson can't be by Carlos. Rose can't work with Olivia. It's a strategy teachers use when they don't know another way. But separating students does nothing to improve their behavior.

It does, however, damage their social confidence and send the message that they're incapable of working with or becoming friends with those who are different than themselves.

Note: For more on this topic, see chapter 11 of [Dream Class](#).

The Inescapable Truth

There is a vast swath of teachers who have cobbled together just enough survival techniques to keep a lid on their classroom.

Many even believe that under the circumstances they're doing a fine job. But the truth is, **they're drowning**.

Although they may have extensive training in curriculum and instructional methods, they can't manage their classroom well enough to take advantage of it. (This is one of education's dirty little secrets and thorniest problems.)

Exceptional teachers, on the other hand, know where their bread is buttered.

They know that managing their classroom comes first and foremost. They know that their success, as well as that of their students, flows from this single source.

Recognizing its critical importance is the first step for any teacher desiring more than just getting by, more than accepting indifference and disrespect as part of the job.

The good news is that it isn't difficult. Armed with [a few foundational principles and a quiver of strategies](#), *anyone* can make drastic improvement in their ability to manage their classroom.

Anyone can go from hanging on by their fingertips to grasping the brass ring of peace, satisfaction, and fulfillment.

Anyone can go from just surviving . . .

To thriving.