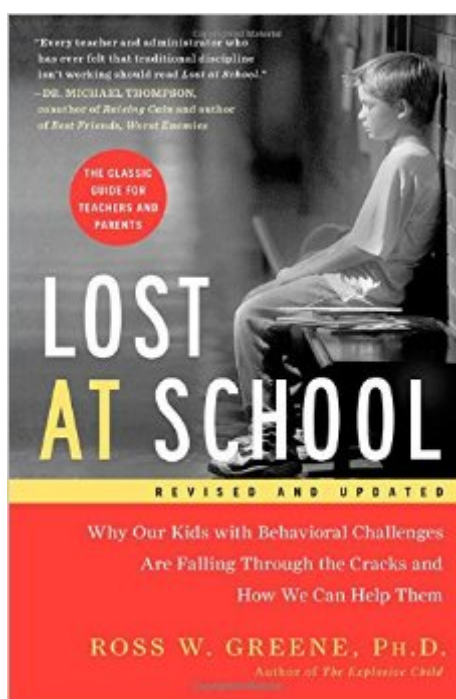


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# Lost At School: Why Our Kids With Behavioral Challenges Are Falling Through The Cracks And How We Can Help Them



## Synopsis

From the renowned authority on education and parenting, a new in-depth approach to aid parents and teachers to work together with behaviorally challenging students • (>) now revised and updated. School discipline is broken. Too often, the kids who need our help the most are viewed as disrespectful, out of control, and beyond help, and are often the recipients of our most ineffective, most punitive interventions. These students and their parents, teachers, and administrators are frustrated and desperate for answers. Dr. Ross W. Greene, author of the acclaimed book *The Explosive Child*, offers educators and parents a different framework for understanding challenging behavior. Dr. Greene's Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) approach helps adults focus on the true factors contributing to challenging classroom behaviors, empowering educators to address these factors and create helping relationships with their most at-risk kids. This revised and updated edition of *Lost at School* contains the latest refinements to Dr. Greene's CPS model, including enhanced methods for solving problems collaboratively, improving communication, and building relationships with kids. Dr. Greene's lively, compelling narrative includes:

- Tools to identify the problems and lagging skills causing challenging behavior
- Explicit guidance on how to radically improve interactions with challenging kids and reduce challenging episodes along with many examples showing how it's done
- Practical guidance for successful planning and collaboration among educators, parents, and kids

Backed by years of experience and research and written with a powerful sense of hope and achievable change, *Lost at School* gives teachers and parents the realistic strategies and information to impact the classroom experience of every challenging kid (and their classmates).

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

If you are a real teacher (or principal or dean) in a real school, this humane and engaging book will surprise you with its combination of practicality and idealism. It will inspire you to change things and to believe in the possibility of change. After teaching for eight years, I have spent the last three as "the discipline guy", Dean of Students, in a small, rural middle school. As both teacher and now as dean I have developed a deep suspicion of a certain sort of books. You know the ones: written by theoreticians or one-on-one therapists who have never had to juggle a roomful of 25 actual young human beings with not enough time, not enough resources and far too much of paperwork, testing, and ringing bells; and more and more deeply-troubled youngsters. These are the books that anxious or angry and frustrated parents bring to meetings that tell them how you should be meeting the needs of their unsuccessful or disruptive child. These books make things far worse for everyone involved. "Lost at School" is different; and that's clear from the beginning. After a brief introduction which pulls no punches in saying "school discipline is broken" the book launches into a story! Every teacher I know likes a good story - and this one feels so much like real (school)-life from the beginning that it sets the hook for the rest of the book. The different thing about this story is not the characterization of the troubled and challenging kids, but of its inclusion of the realistic range of adult personalities that combine to make education what it is - and sometimes isn't. The book sets out to follow the path of a handful of youngsters and another handful of fictional teachers and administrators who are struggling with the limitations of their own range of personalities and world-views as well as the real constraints of what schools can and cannot do. It is quite eye-opening and, in my opinion, dead-on accurate. Now don't let me give the impression that this book is just another entertaining "Up the Down Staircase" or "Room 222" or even merely another inspirational "Stand and Deliver". "Lost at School" is ultimately focused on a suite of methods for understanding children who exhibit challenging behaviors in school and for working with them to help them change. The "storyline" serves as an opportunity to view those methods in action as used by some fictionalized but well-drawn characters. The core assumptions of Greene's approach are that behaviorally challenging youngsters (a) "know how we want them to behave" and (b) "want to behave the right way". They don't need us to keep depriving them of privileges or offering them rewards to learn these two bits. The basic premise of the book is that these youngsters lack specific thinking skills which make it difficult or impossible for them to behave in circumstances that come up

too-frequently in their school lives. Much as education has come-around in the past 20 years to acknowledge that cognitive deficits, learning disabilities, must be acknowledged as part of a youngster's learning of reading or mathematics, we need to move to a similar approach with behavioral difficulties. The goal, then, for educators, parents and the students, is to identify these missing or lagging cognitive skills and help students develop them - as central parts of their education. Greene provides an inventory which will remind educators of the sorts of rubrics we use frequently, for instance, in assessing students for attention or hyperactivity disorders. Some of these skills may well have come up in your conversations about a difficult student, e.g. "difficulty handling transitions". Some of them have probably been parts of conversations about students without the notion that they ought to be taught, e.g. "difficulty considering likely outcomes or consequences of actions". And some of them might just not have occurred to you as loci of behavioral challenges, e.g. "difficulty taking into account situational factors that would suggest the need to adjust a plan of action". Rarely, though, have you or I managed to systematically think about what to do with these anecdotal observations. Having worked through the assessment of lagging skills, the next task is to "teach" these skills. In this regard Greene shifts gears and does not provide a "curriculum". Instead he provides an approach - a way of communicating with behaviorally challenging youngsters that he terms "Collaborative Problem Solving" or CPS. Some might find this unsatisfying. I did, at first; hoping for a "methods" approach to teaching this as any other group of skills. But I found Greene's system ultimately satisfying and revealing instead. He gives us CPS and weaves his ongoing story of sixth-grader Joey into its explication. The CPS approach is interesting because it sounds so simple. Greene calls it simply "Plan B"; distinguishing from "Plan A" - wherein the teacher or institution imposes its will on the student, and from "Plan C" in which we "drop an expectation completely, at least temporarily". I have to compliment Green on boldly sticking to such a simple naming scheme instead of coming up with typical ed-psych jargon to describe his schema or its alternatives. But the real power of such a simply-named approach is that describing it reveals how much we are all rooted in bouncing between poorly-implemented versions of plans A and C as part of school discipline. The "Plan B" or CPS approach assumes and requires listening to and the meaningful participation of the student -- and that is revealed to be a deeply-buried skill of even the well-intentioned educators in the storyline. But it can be learned and is the key to making things work. Greene is very open to all the ways things can go awry in dealing with real kids in real school environments. He peppers the book with "Q&A" sections, and sample dialogues. But central to his acknowledgement of the "real world" is his fictional one! He weaves in, throughout, the ongoing tale of Joey and Mrs. Woods; of the Assistant Principal who got knocked in the jaw by Joey back in

chapter one; of Joey's anguished mom and even of Mr. Armstrong, the "these kids just have to learn how to behave" guy, whom seems so familiar to any educator. This side-story becomes in many ways a central one as all of these people move through a year of struggle and transformation. I won't tell you how it ends but will reassure you that it does end, as most school years do, not with a bang of disaster or triumph but with a deep breath and a look ahead as all the good but flawed folks involved anticipate the next year's labors. In this Greene manages to honor the motives and efforts of everyone who chooses to work in the often thankless business of education while he deftly reminds us of how much better we could and should be doing with these youngsters.

I am a clinical psychologist specializing in pediatric neuropsychology. I was introduced to Dr. Greene's Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) approach during my post-doctoral training at a multidisciplinary center for children/adolescents with dyslexia, AD/HD and other learning and behavior disorders. CPS is powerful and effective but takes lots of patience on the part of adults. It is a long-overdue as an approach that is needed in our schools. I have worked with so many teachers who cite "motivation" as the reason for a child's behavior problems. I have seen functional behavior analysis forms with checkboxes for "low motivation." What, in fact, is "motivation"? It is one of the those terms that SOUNDS like it explains something, but it doesn't really explain anything at all. No child WANTS to fail, WANTS to be embarrassed in front of his/her peers, WANTS to go to the principal's office, or WANTS to be suspended. As Dr. Greene makes plain: "Children do well if they can." If they can't, it is up to the adults to figure out the skill deficit and teach them the skills they needed. The education community now realizes that the "wait-to-fail" model does not serve children, but many are confused about how to implement "response to intervention" approaches, especially for behavior problems. The diagnosis doesn't matter; identifying the skill deficits that cause behavior problems does. The skill deficits are similar across diagnostic labels -- oppositional defiant disorder, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, or a learning disability. This approach is not a cure-all. It is somewhat language-intensive and may or may not be as effective for children with language deficits. I don't believe that children fail school; I believe our schools are failing our children. This approach can go a long way toward helping schools help the most vulnerable children in our communities.

Please Read this Book! I couldn't put it down. It encouraged me and helped me step back so that I could get a fresh outlook with my children's motivations and struggles. If you are struggling with behavioral issues in your classroom or at home and have ADHD students or students with other

behavioral issues, I believe this book will encourage you. This book is geared toward educators, but I believe it would also be very valuable and helpful for parents who have children with behavioral challenges to understand why their children are struggling in school and what can be done to help them. The premise of this book is that traditional methods of rewards and consequences are not effective with students with behavioral problems. So, we are faced with the question, "What do we do now?" The author's answer is that we need to discard the labels of things like Bipolar and ADHD and look more deeply at the skills students are lacking--emotional and intellectually. We, as parents and teachers, need to equip students so that they can cope. There is an inventory/questionnaire at the back of the book called the ALSUP which is a great tool to help you pinpoint your child/student's struggles. The book focuses on the philosophy behind this list of skills and then how to implement strategies to address the student's/child's needs. The author does a great job of giving examples that illustrate his points. I highly recommend this book! Many books written for educators are very dry and hard to get through. On the other hand, this book is interesting and thought provoking throughout!

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