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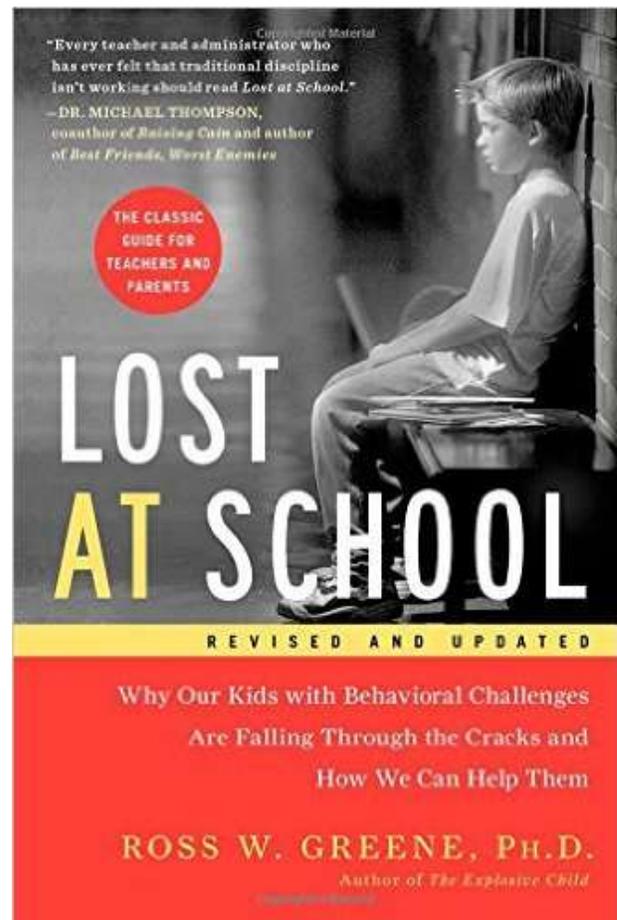
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Many K-12 educators struggle with effective classroom management relying on systems of punishments and rewards rather than fostering relationships with students. In an era of tremendous pressure surrounding accountability and state testing, the social and emotional wellbeing of students often falls by the wayside. Teachers must find a way to connect with students who demonstrate challenging behaviors. Dr. Ross Greene's book, *Lost at School: Why Our Kids with Behavioral Challenges are Falling Through the Cracks and How We Can Help Them* offers teachers like me effective strategies to form valuable connections with learners and prevent problem behaviors before they occur in the classroom. His approach, coined Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS), offers students a voice and empowers teachers to make individualized decisions.

Throughout *Lost At School*, Greene weaves a fictional story about Joey and other students with behavior issues into his explanation of how to correctly implement CPS. Joey's teacher, Mrs. Woods, makes great strides in meeting his needs once she embraces



the methods introduced by the school psychologist, Dr. Bridgman. After sitting down with Joey, Mrs. Woods realizes that many of his problematic behaviors stem from his embarrassment to ask for help and his desire to seek approval from his peers. The stories helped to bring many of the CPS strategies to life.

Some chapters contain question and answer sections that successfully point out potential pitfalls for implementing the system as well as misperceptions about behavior management. Greene excellently highlights potential resistance to the strategies that he outlines. His narrative includes a couple of educators, initially reluctant to this method, who eventually come around when they realize its value in helping students solve important behavior related problems. According to Greene, CPS could successfully be implemented in a home or school environment, though the book focuses predominately on behavior issues that students may exhibit at school. It is important for educators to understand the value of including students in the problem solving process rather than handing out arbitrary consequences.

In my classroom I have found that preventing problem behaviors through honest and in-depth conversations with my fifth-grade students incredibly effective. However, prior to this book I didn't have a tangible way of describing the process, and while my intuition told me it was the best way to approach the situation, it felt more like trial and error than anything replicable. Greene has married the notion of individualized accountability with a solution-oriented approach that educators across the field can implement in their classrooms.

The author provides tools in order to help with the proper execution of CPS. The Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems (ALSUP) helps teachers and parents to generate a discussion guide, eventually enabling them to identify which lagging skills and unsolved problems the child may possess. He delineates three plans teachers can use in

order to improve a child's behavior. These plans are called Plan A, Plan B, and Plan C. Teachers who resort to Plan A react to undesired behaviors through punishment, while those who espouse Plan C often set aside the conflict until a later time.

When teachers choose Plan B, they meet with the child and follow steps in order to come to a mutually agreeable solution after the lagging skills and unsolved problems are identified. Rather than a unilateral consequence or decision made by the teacher, Plan B involves more shared responsibility and collaborative decision-making. The author also mentions that there can be an emergency Plan B, wherein a teacher may have to help a student or class solve a problem that is already in progress. Emergency Plan B is better than no Plan B; however, it has some reactive elements that are not as effective as a truly solution oriented approach.

The first step of Plan B is called "empathy". During this step, the teacher tells the student that they've noticed something general related to the issue at hand and then usually asks something like, "What's up?" With specific prompts, Dr. Greene asserts teachers will be able to offer empathy to the student. It is important not to rush through this step as it allows the child to connect with the teacher and let his or her guard down so that appropriate solutions can be devised. After the empathy step, the teacher must define adult concerns and then the adult invites the child to help create a plan of action to effectively solve the problem. The key component to Plan B in contrast to other plans is that it is very proactive in nature and attempts to prevent challenging behavior rather than punish it.

Initially covering individual concerns, Greene also explains how CPS can be utilized to mitigate peer and group conflicts. He models how to implement the strategies during class meetings in order to address classroom issues like bullying or unkindness. He also stresses how educators and parents can work together and create consistency

between home and school. When teachers and parents partner up to create consistent messages and supports for children, the results can be very beneficial. This mutual effort lets the child know that multiple people care about his or her academic and socio-emotional wellbeing. Teachers may feel that using class meetings and other such tools wastes instructional time; however, Greene argues that spending some time on the front end addressing issues and creating a positive culture, will actually save time down the road and prevent teachers from constantly having to put out fires and create consequences. When teachers take the time to get to the root cause of issues in the classroom, everyone benefits.

In my experience as an educator, when students feel that their teacher genuinely cares, positive results are much more likely. I have often sat down with my students to problem solve and come up with a plan to address a behavior together. Intuitively, I began meetings with the empathy step, but I never thought to look at the lagging skills and unsolved problems, which may be the root cause for the problem behavior. I appreciate that CPS does not follow a linear trajectory and Greene makes it clear that educators should fine-tune their Plan B's until they get to the core of the problem with each student.

I have found that when teachers take a proactive approach to classroom management, students respond positively to the warmth and compassion. As described in *Lost at School*, in a classroom of 30 students there are 30 unique needs, and a one size fits all behavior management approach is not realistic. Greene argues that every child does not have to be treated exactly the same way in order to be fair and I couldn't agree more. Over the years, I've debated this with colleagues who believed it's doing a disservice to a child to make exceptions to rules based on individual issues; however, I've always felt that the true injustice lies in forcing all children to conform to a single set of expectations regardless of circumstance. Fairness involves meeting the

needs of children and creating a safe classroom space wherein students feel that they are able to share their talents and challenges with their peers.

Throughout the book, I found myself wishing that Greene had interviewed actual teachers or given specific examples of successful execution of the CPS model within participating schools in this new edition of the text. At times, Greene overly imposes his terminology for CPS on the reader. It would be beneficial for the author to address how to integrate CPS into existing behavior plan structures such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in greater detail.

I disagree with Dr. Greene's assertion that reward systems are ineffective, as I have found that they can be very motivating for some kids. For example, my students with Autism Spectrum Disorder seem to really benefit from a chart with specific rewards attached to the attainment of goal behaviors. Reward charts help them to self-regulate and the rewards reinforce desired behavior. There has to be a way to marry these two models in order to combine solution based meetings with systems that encourage students to put their best foot forward on a daily basis. A skilled teacher could successfully carry out Plan B while simultaneously creating a more tangible plan for the child.

Upon reading this book, I feel reinvigorated to tackle the needs of my students. While it may seem overwhelming to realize that each child in my classroom has unique needs that may require my assistance from time to time, it is also liberating to read a book that advocates viewing each child through an individual lens. It won't be perfect every day, but this approach fits my teaching philosophy much more aptly than other behavior systems which overly reward the kids who are already motivated to succeed while failing students who need our help most.

The CPS model does not attempt to solve every issue that educators face in the classroom, nor does it provide a universal

plan. Instead, Greene emphasizes the importance of teachers nurturing the individual needs of students and cultivating areas of concern into strengths. Teachers looking for a fast solution to managing problem behaviors may feel frustrated after reading this book. *Lost at School* doesn't offer a quick remedy but rather, strategies for a

complete paradigm shift pertaining to problem behavior. Greene's philosophy encourages teachers to embrace all of their students and get to know them as individuals. With care and consideration as well as a cooperative problem solving philosophy, positive results seem extremely likely under the CPS model.

About the Reviewer

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Sarah Weaver is an elementary school teacher who has taught fourth and fifth grade in Colorado and California. She is passionate about meeting the needs of her students while challenging them and helping them to thrive in a caring and safe classroom environment. Sarah is currently pursuing her Doctorate of Education in Leadership for Educational Equity at the University of Colorado at Denver with a concentration in early childhood education and early childhood special education.



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