It is possible this is still developmental. Many children, especially boys, don’t develop full bowel and bladder control until age 7 or 8.

I know this sounds crazy, but I am a middle school counselor, and for the last couple of years, we have had to deal with this issue.

I did some research, and for some kids, it was a constipation issue.  He really needs to get checked out/x-rayed through his doctor to rule out a medical concern.  If it is not medical, we have found out that it is a control/lack there of in a child’s life.  Our one student got much better when his dad changed jobs and was at home more.  I would bet there is something more to his background…I bet the parent isn’t telling you everything, but I am also not an elementary counselor.

When you say “no medical explanation”, did that come from a doctor?  If it’s a chronic problem, I would encourage your school nurse to tell the parent you need medical support for this issue.

Otherwise, can you track if it’s at the same time of day?  Then you can set up a time for him to go every day.

Is it the public bathroom?  Maybe he can use the nurse’s restroom.

Scheduling more bathroom breaks has helped some of our students.  Allowing some students to use the private clinic restroom helps some other students.

Has he been to the doctor or are parents just saying there’s no medical explanation? Most times if we’re sure there’s no abuse the biggest trigger I’ve seen is constipation. In any event the best strategy is planned restroom breaks, preferably with a step stool under his feet so he can get used to using it on the toilet. If he’s constipated sometimes the gravity of standing or squatting signals the urge and they get used to going that way. The step stool mimics squatting and can help.

If necessary you can go the positive reinforcement route, for however many days he goes without an accident. But I’d make that the second strategy and not the first.

Does he do this at home?

This could mean that he feels relaxed at school which is a good thing, but may also mean he feels a lot of anxiety at home.  Is it at the same time of day each day?  Is there a restroom in the classroom?

My daughter had similar issues, hers was caused by constipation. She would become so backed up that it would leak out (sorry TMI) and she couldn’t feel it. Our dr said it was encoperisis. She wasn’t refusing to go she just couldn’t. Could this possibly be what is going on with him?

Have the Parents talked to his doctor?  Also, is there a pattern with regards to time?  We have one who would do this and we just had to send them into the bathroom on a regular basis.  We also had the school nurse work with him.

With your student, I would try to keep a log of times this happens each day and ask parents to do so at home so you might be able to spot a pattern and be pro-active each day.  If you see it is happening around a certain time, call the student out of his class prior to that time and do some relaxing activities and work with him on starting to go on the toilet, then to recognize physical feelings associated with the BM.  Of course lot of praise and encouragement instead of shame. I made a reward chart.  We would sit and read books, talk, etc.  That will be tough since he is a boy and you are female, but at least recognizing a pattern or starting to form a BM pattern would help. It will be important that parents follow this at home on the weekends too. Does he have this same issue at home? It not that will give you some clues too!

Check with the parents.  There could be a medical reason for this, but many people are not aware.  There is a congenital condition that could cause this.  It is a colorectal malformation that affects about 5% of the population, especially boys.  It causes a lot of distress and embarrassment for parents and children.

You may already be doing these things, but I would suggest:

A signal for the student to use with the teacher to have a bathroom pass at any time.

Bathroom break every hour.

Make sure the student is capable of unbuttoning pants on his own.

Talk with the student about the issue, find out if the bathroom or any other aspect of the school is bothering him/impeding his ability to use the bathroom. Make sure he knows it's ok to take bathroom breaks/won't miss class/fun/etc...Is he seeking attention? Has a need going unfulfilled?

Consider wearing a pull up to school if the issue does not get resolved.

Further investigate if there is food allergy/irritation going on or side effects of a medicine given.

I know you say there isn't a medical explanation, but I wonder if he has been to a doctor recently to look into this? Nearly all the kids I have worked with with this problem have constipation and/or related issues. Is he going around the same time every day? Has he ever had a BM in the toilet or is this a new thing? Does he have a BM in the toilet at home? Sometimes kids will have a hard poop and it scares them because it hurts, so they hold it in then the situation gets worse because they are holding it and it gets harder to pass. That can lead to more issues. If that's the case, I would want a doctor to weigh in and look at possibly stool softeners. If he's missing his body's cues I would think about maybe a scheduled time (especially if he's going around the same time every day) for him to sit on a private toilet (nurse's office, maybe?) and try to go. If it's a fear of the toilet, or of pooping in general, I would think about social stories or other ways to address his fear and practice relaxation strategies (in addition to making sure nothing physical is going on). In any case, making sure he's not shamed and remembering that this is one of the few areas that kids can exert their control (not in a bad way, but when it comes down to it, kids will either hold it in or not and we can't make them poop!)

These cases are so hard.  I think I'd put him on a bathroom schedule where he has to sit for five minutes at times of day he might likely need to go (20-30 minutes after lunch or around 1:30) and then put a reward system in place for days he made it without an accident.  I suspect he just doesn't want to stop what he's doing to go to the bathroom or he's afraid of the toilet:/