Managing the Aggression Cycle: Strategies to Deescalate the Confrontational Student

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The Aggression Cycle: How to Manage Angry Classroom Outbursts

Anger is complicated, especially in classrooms. Anger is classified as a secondary emotion, one that is most often set off by more primary emotional responses such as shame, embarrassment, frustration, powerlessness, or fright (Bartholomew & Simpson, 2005). Anger does play a potentially positive role in our emotional lives, as it can create a feeling of power that energizes the individual to take action rather than remain passive. However, anger can also be counterproductive, particularly when a student habitually responds with hostility and aggression to the face of everyday frustrations and challenges typically found in school settings.

Teachers know that, when a student experiences a significant anger episode, that anger can quickly escalate to aggression, resulting in classroom disruption and potential safety concerns. Though outbursts of anger can appear unpredictable and chaotic, however, they usually follow an identifiable pattern called the “aggression cycle” (Reilly et al., 1994; Videbeck, 2014). This cycle has five phases: (1) Trigger; (2) Escalation; (3) Crisis; (4) Recovery; and (5) Post-Crisis. How a teacher chooses to respond to an episode of significant student anger or aggression should vary, depending on what phase of the aggression cycle the student happens to be in when the instructor intervenes.

The table below describes the 5 phases of the aggression cycle and provides advice for how a teacher should respond at each phase. This handout can be a useful tool for educators as they develop behavior-intervention plans for students with serious anger or aggression issues. It is especially important to remember that the aggression cycle rewards proactive intervention: the teacher who manages to eliminate an anger trigger (Phase 1) or to successfully defuse student anger (Phase 2) can head off a major outburst or aggression episode.

### Aggression Cycle: Guide for Teachers (Reilly et al., 1994; Videbeck, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>What to Do</th>
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| PHASE 1: TRIGGER. The student has a negative experience or event to which they respond with anger. This initiates the aggression cycle. | PHASE 1: Manage or Eliminate the Trigger Event. The teacher’s primary goal during this initial phase is to address the trigger itself by:  
- responding to the event. If the trigger event or even has already occurred, the teacher moves quickly to correct the situation or address the student’s needs so that their initial primary negative emotion (e.g., embarrassment or frustration) does not spiral into anger. For example, the instructor might provide immediate help to the student struggling with an in-class assignment or reprimand and move the seat of a peer who is teasing the student.  
- eliminating the trigger: When possible, the teacher identifies in advance and takes steps to prevent those triggers that can lead to student anger. For example, if a student often responds with embarrassment and then anger when directed to read aloud in front of others, the instructor might revise reading tasks to remove this performance requirement.  |
| PHASE 2: ESCALATION. The student shows visible signs of irritation or hostility, such as looking flushed or | PHASE 2: Interrupt the Anger. The teacher interacts with the student in a calm and non-judgmental manner. The instructor takes steps to reduce the student’s level of anger, through such strategies as:  
- redirecting the student to use relaxation techniques. The teacher prompts the student to use one or more strategies to calm themselves, such as taking deep breaths and releasing slowly or counting backward from 10. |
| PHASE 3: CRISIS. The student shows visible signs of anger or hostility. | |
| PHASE 4: RECOVERY. The student shows signs of improvement or appears less angry or aggressive. | |
| PHASE 5: POST-CRISIS. The student is likely to be preoccupied with | |

Workshop materials available at: [http://www.interventioncentral.org/aggressioncycle](http://www.interventioncentral.org/aggressioncycle)
Managing the Aggression Cycle: Purpose

- This workshop reviews ideas to better manage confrontational situations with students.
- We focus on those recurring conflict situations that can arise in any classroom and lead to negative outcomes—such as interrupted instruction and even student removal.
- The training does NOT cover crisis-response techniques appropriate for more severe student behaviors.
- However, strategies shared today can be effective with students across the behavioral continuum.
From the Trenches...

Office Disciplinary Referral

“Disrespect toward teachers. Yelled at me while I was helping him with his assignment. Told him to cool down and sit in the center and he started up again. Finally, I asked him to leave. Have called home twice and spoke to grandmother about tardiness, attendance, and behavior.”
From the Trenches...

Office Disciplinary Referral

"L. was sleeping in class. I told him twice to wake up and read along with class. He did so, albeit reluctantly. The third time he fell asleep I buzzed the office to tell them he was coming down, with a referral to follow. He cursed and threw his book in the ‘book box’.
"
For some reason, R. wants to keep challenging me. Today he was being persistent that he wanted to sit on a table not in his chair. This was after I asked him to stop talking 4-5 times, that’s all. I sent him to the office again, second time.
Managing the ‘Aggression Cycle’: Agenda

1. *Behavior ‘Big Ideas’.*
   What are key behavior-management ideas that can help educators to better understand the Aggression Cycle (and other challenging student behaviors)?

2. *Aggression Cycle.*
   What are the 5 phases of the AC—and how should educators respond to each?

3. *Preventing the Aggression Cycle.*
   What are practical classroom strategies to minimize or prevent the AC from occurring?
Big Ideas in Behavior Management. What key concepts can help educators to understand and successfully manage challenging behaviors?
Big Ideas in Classroom Behavior Management

1. Teach expected behaviors. Students need to be explicitly taught expected behaviors. They should then be acknowledged and reinforced when they show positive behaviors.

   In other words, schools should treat behavior as part of the curriculum: teach it and reinforce it!

2. Check for academic problems. The connection between classroom misbehavior and poor academic skills is high.

   Educators should routinely assess a student’s academic skills as a first step when attempting to explain why a particular behavior is occurring.

   If academics contribute to problem behaviors, the student needs an academic support plan as part of his or her behavior plan.

3. Identify the underlying function of the behavior. Problem behaviors occur for a reason. Such behaviors serve a function for the student. (See the list of possible functions on the next page.)

   When an educator can identify the probable function sustaining a student’s challenging behaviors, the educator can select successful intervention strategies that match the function—and meet the student’s needs.

4. Eliminate behavioral triggers. Problem behaviors are often set off by events or conditions within the classroom.

   Sitting next to a distracting classmate or being handed an academic task that is too difficult to complete are two examples of events that might trigger student misbehavior.

   When the educator is able to identify and eliminate triggers of negative conduct, such actions tend to work quickly and—by preventing class disruptions—result in more time available for instruction.

5. Focus on factors within the school’s control. Educators recognize that students often face significant factors outside of the school setting—e.g., limited parental support—that can place them at heightened risk for academic failure and problem behaviors.

   Schools can best counteract the influence of negative outside factors and promote student resilience by focusing on what can be provided within the educational setting such as skills instruction, tutoring, mentoring, and use of positive behavior management strategies.

6. Be flexible in responding to misbehavior. Educators have greater success in managing the full spectrum of student misbehaviors when they respond flexibly—evaluating each individual case and applying strategies that logically address the likely cause(s) of that student’s problem conduct.
Understanding Student Conflict: Big Ideas

Each student confrontation/conflict situation is unique—caused and sustained by its own factors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Angela</th>
<th>Ricky</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fails to complete in-class assignments.</td>
<td>Fails to complete in-class assignments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When pressed to complete work, is verbally confrontational.</td>
<td>When pressed to complete work, is verbally confrontational.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavioral ‘Function’: Attention-Seeking</td>
<td>Behavioral ‘Function’: Escape/Avoidance</td>
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Educators can better address conflict situations when they remember key ‘big ideas’ in behavior management.
Behavior in the Classroom: A Product of...

Child Characteristics

Classroom Environment

‘Big Ideas’ in Behavior Management…

- Teach expected behaviors. Students need to be explicitly taught expected behaviors. They should then be acknowledged and reinforced when they show positive behaviors.

In other words, schools should treat behavior as part of the curriculum: teach it and reinforce it!
Classroom Data Tool: Checklist

**How to Disagree Respectfully**

- □ Remain calm.
- □ Listen actively and ask clarifying questions.
- □ Think about the other person’s point of view.
- □ Explain your viewpoint clearly.
- □ Act nonjudgmentally.
‘Big Ideas’ in Behavior Management…

- **Check for academic problems.** The connection between classroom misbehavior and poor academic skills is high.

Educators should routinely assess a student’s academic skills as a first step when attempting to explain why a particular behavior is occurring.

If academics contribute to problem behaviors, the student needs an academic support plan as part of his or her behavior plan.
‘Big Ideas’ in Behavior Management…

Identify the underlying function of the behavior.
Problem behaviors occur for a reason. Such behaviors serve a function for the student.

When an educator can identify the probable function sustaining a student’s challenging behaviors, the educator can select successful intervention strategies that match the function—and meet the student’s needs.
## Problem Behaviors: Common Reasons

- **SKILL DEFICIT.** The student lacks the skills necessary to display the desired behavior (Gable et al., 2009).

- **PERFORMANCE DEFICIT.** The student possesses the skills necessary to display the desired behavior but lacks incentive to do so (Gable et al., 2009).

- **ACCESS TO TANGIBLES/EDIBLES/ACTIVITIES.** The student seeks access to preferred objects (‘tangibles’), food, or activities (Kazdin, 2001).

- **PEER ATTENTION.** The student is seeking the attention of other students (Packenham, Shute & Reid, 2004).

- **ADULT ATTENTION.** The student is seeking the attention of adults (Packenham, Shute & Reid, 2004).

- **ESCAPE/AVOIDANCE.** The student is seeking to escape or avoid a task or situation (Witt, Daly & Noell, 2000).

- **EMOTIONAL or ATTENTIONAL BLOCKERS.** The student possesses the skills to display the desired behavior "but is unable to deal with competing forces—anger, frustration, fatigue." (Gable et al., 2009; p. 197). (This category can also include symptoms associated with anxiety or ADHD.)
‘Big Ideas’ in Behavior Management…

- Eliminate behavioral triggers. Problem behaviors are often set off by events or conditions within the classroom.

Sitting next to a distracting classmate or being handed an academic task that is too difficult to complete are two examples of events that might trigger student misbehavior.

When the educator is able to identify and eliminate triggers of negative conduct, such actions tend to work quickly and—by preventing class disruptions—result in more time available for instruction.
ABC Timeline: Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence

**Antecedents.** Stimuli, settings, and contexts that occur before and influence ('trigger') behaviors.

**Behaviors.** Observable acts carried out by individuals.

**Consequences/Outcomes.** Events that follow behavior.

**Examples.**
- Instructions
- Gestures
- Looks from others

**Examples.**
- Engaging in classwork
- Calling out
- Arguing with teacher

**Examples.**
- Student
  - avoids work.
  - gets adult attention.
  - is sent from classroom.

‘Big Ideas’ in Behavior Management…

Focus on factors within the school’s control. Educators recognize that students often face significant factors outside of the school setting—e.g., limited parental support— that can place them at heightened risk for academic failure and problem behaviors.

Schools can best counteract the influence of negative outside factors and promote student resilience by focusing on what can be provided within the educational setting such as skills instruction, tutoring, mentoring, and use of positive behavior management strategies.
‘Big Ideas’ in Behavior Management…

Be flexible in responding to misbehavior. Educators have greater success in managing the full spectrum of student misbehaviors when they respond flexibly—evaluating each individual case and applying strategies that logically address the likely cause(s) of that student's problem conduct.
ACTIVITY:
Which Big Idea Do You Find Most Useful?

- Discuss the big ideas in behavior management presented here.
- Select the 1-2 ideas that you believe would be most important for educators at your school to keep in mind when working with challenging students.

‘Big Ideas’ in Behavior Management

1. Teach expected behaviors.
2. Check for academic problems.
3. Identify the underlying function of the behavior.
4. Eliminate behavioral triggers.
5. Focus on factors within the school’s control.
6. Be flexible in responding to misbehavior.
Managing Students in Crisis. How can the Aggression Cycle help to predict the stages of student anger and guide educators in responding at each stage?
What is Anger?

Anger is classified as a secondary emotion, set off by more primary emotional responses:

- Shame
- Embarrassment
- Frustration
- Powerlessness
- Fright

What is Anger? (Cont.)

Anger plays a potentially positive role in our emotional lives: it can create a feeling of power that energizes the individual to take action rather than remain passive.

But anger can also be counterproductive, particularly when a student habitually responds with hostility and aggression in the face of the everyday frustrations and challenges typically found in school settings.

Aggression Cycle: 5 Phases

Though outbursts of anger can appear unpredictable, they usually follow an identifiable 5 phases: the “aggression cycle”

- **Phase 1:** Trigger
- **Phase 2:** Escalation
- **Phase 3:** Crisis
- **Phase 4:** Recovery
- **Phase 5:** Post-Crisis

Phase 1: Trigger

What It Is. The student has a negative experience or event to which they respond with anger. This initiates the aggression cycle.

The student may first experience an event or situation that embarrasses, shames, frustrates, or frightens them; anger then follows as a secondary emotional response.
Phase 1: Trigger

What to Do: Manage or Eliminate the Trigger Event. The teacher addresses the trigger itself by:

- **responding to the event.** If the trigger has already occurred, the teacher moves quickly to correct the situation or address the student’s needs so that their initial primary negative emotion (e.g., embarrassment or frustration) does not spiral into anger.

Examples:

- provide immediate help to the student struggling with an in-class assignment.
- reprimand and move the seat of a peer who is teasing that student.
Phase 1: Trigger

What to Do: Manage or Eliminate the Trigger Event.

The teacher addresses the trigger itself by:

- eliminating the trigger. When possible, the teacher identifies in advance and takes steps to prevent those triggers that can lead to student anger.

Example:

- For a student who responds with embarrassment and then anger when directed to read aloud in front of others, revise reading tasks to remove this performance requirement.
Phase 2: Escalation

What It Is. The student shows visible signs of irritation or hostility, such as:

- looking flushed or tense
- grumbling
- muttering under their breath.

The student’s agitation increases and may include arguing, leaving their seat, and refusing to respond to others.

While not visible to observers, the student is likely to be preoccupied with their anger at this point, reducing their ability to comply with rules and respond rationally to adult requests or directives.
Phase 2: Escalation

What to Do: Interrupt the Anger. The teacher interacts with the student in a calm and non-judgmental manner.

The instructor takes steps to reduce the student’s level of anger, through such strategies as:

• pulling the student aside for a conference. The teacher asks the student open-ended questions to determine what precipitated the anger event and then explores a solution to the problem.
Phase 2: Escalation

What to Do: Interrupt the Anger (Cont.). The instructor takes steps to reduce the student’s level of anger, through such strategies as:

- **directing the student to use relaxation techniques.** The teacher prompts the student to use one or more strategies to calm themselves, such as taking deep breaths and releasing slowly or counting backward from 10.

- **removing the student from the setting.** The teacher directs the student to take a brief (non-punitive) break from the setting (e.g., moving to a quiet part of the classroom; visiting a counselor).
Phase 3: Crisis

What It Is. The student’s behavior intensifies, posing a safety risk to self and/or others.

The student may express anger through disruptive, confrontational verbal behavior (insults, threats, arguments, confrontation). The student’s behavior may include physical aggression toward property or other people.

At this stage, the student’s anger and other strong emotions may limit or overwhelm their ability to process language accurately and respond rationally.
Phase 3: Crisis

What to Do: Maintain Safety and Defuse Anger. The teacher works toward 3 goals, to include:

- ensuring the safety of the student and others. The teacher takes immediate steps to keep the student, peers, and adults in the vicinity safe that may include summoning additional adult support or removing the student or peers from the room.

The student remains under constant adult supervision during this stage.
Phase 3: Crisis

What to Do: Maintain Safety and Defuse Anger (Cont.). The teacher works toward 3 goals, to include:

- **preventing further anger escalation.** The teacher avoids actions likely to intensify the student’s anger and aggression, such as yelling at the student, issuing threats or ultimatums, or engaging in arguments about ‘who is right’.
Phase 3: Crisis

What to Do: Maintain Safety and Defuse Anger (Cont.). The teacher works toward 3 goals, to include:

- **calming the student.** The teacher makes a conscious effort to reduce the level of the student’s anger and arousal, such as speaking in a calm voice, respecting the student’s personal space, and communicating that student and adults will work together to resolve the problem in a positive way. The teacher (and other adults) keep their statements simple and short, check for student understanding, and repeat key statements as often as needed.
Phase 4: Recovery

**What It Is.** The student regains control of their emotions and behavior.

As the student transitions from a state of anger and high arousal to normal functioning, the recovery process might include periods of crying, emotional withdrawal, expressions of remorse, or even sleeping.
Phase 4: Recovery

What to Do: Support Student Recovery. The teacher or other adults maintain a supportive environment to more rapidly help the student to regain composure and self-control.

During the recovery phase, adults refrain from attempts to analyze, assign blame, or impose disciplinary consequences for the behavioral incident—as such actions run the risk of prolonging or rekindling the anger state.
Phase 5: Post-Crisis

• **What It Is.** The student has fully recovered control of emotions and behavior.
Phase 5: Post-Crisis

What to Do: Engage in Reflection and Problem-Solving. The teacher conferences with the student to discuss the incident and develop a future response plan.

The tone of the meeting is positive and focused on preventing future incidents, not on assigning blame. The teacher-student meeting includes:

- **analysis of the behavioral incident.** The teacher and student discuss the incident, identifying what triggered the event and how the student responded.
Phase 5: Post-Crisis

What to Do: Engage in Reflection and Problem-Solving (Cont.). The teacher-student meeting includes:

- creating a plan for future incidents. The teacher and student develop and write out a plan for how that student might respond proactively when faced with future situations with similar triggers.
Phase 5: Post-Crisis

What to Do: Engage in Reflection and Problem-Solving (Cont.). The teacher-student meeting includes:

- providing student training as needed. If the teacher determines that the student needs specific training to manage emotions or respond to challenging events more appropriately, the Post-Crisis phase should include that training.

For example, an instructor who notes that a student has difficulty in identifying when they are angry may provide training in how the student can use an ‘anger meter’ to gain awareness of and self-monitor their anger levels.
The Aggression Cycle: A Predictive Tool

Advantages of the aggression cycle are that it allows educators to:

- size up a student’s situation when a crisis is impending and to match the adult response to the student’s current need.
- work to intervene as early as possible during the *trigger* or *escalation* phase when there are greater ‘degrees of freedom’ to head off or minimize problem behaviors.
- use the ‘aggression cycle’ as a planning tool to ensure that all adults respond in the same proactive manner when a student shows signs of beginning that cycle.
LAB WORK: AGGRESSION CYCLE

Discuss the aggression cycle and how you can apply this framework in working with your classroom or a particularly challenging student.

In particular, what approaches will allow you to contain this cycle to the ‘trigger’ or ‘escalation’ phases?

Stopping the Aggression Cycle: Communicate to Increase Compliance.

How can teachers communicate appropriate expectations while avoiding conflicts?
A Toolkit: 38 Classroom Ideas to Help Students to Make Better Behavioral Choices (Online)

A Toolkit: 38 Classroom Ideas to Help Students to Make Better Behavioral Choices

Behavior intervention plans are highly individualized—because every student displays a unique profile of behaviors. However, teachers will find that their chances of helping a student to engage in positive behaviors increase when they include each of these 3 elements in their classroom behavior intervention plans:

1. **Antecedents**: Strategies to promote positive behaviors and prevent misbehavior
2. **Positive consequences**: Responses that increase positive/goal behaviors
3. **Extinction procedures**: Responses that extinguish problem behaviors

Every one of these elements plays a crucial role in promoting the success of a behavior plan. Antecedent strategies prevent the student from engaging in problem behaviors in the first place. Positive consequences motivate the student to show desired behaviors, such as academic engagement. Extinction procedures remove the ‘pay-off’ to the student for engaging in problem behaviors. While any one of the elements might be inadequate to change the student’s behavior, the combination of antecedents, positive consequences, and extinction procedures can result in a strong, flexible plan and successful intervention outcome.

Teachers can use this guide to build their own behavior plans using its research-based ideas for antecedents, positive consequences, and extinction procedures.

1. **Antecedents**: Strategies to Prevent Misbehavior

   Teachers have the greatest array of options to influence a student to engage in positive behaviors when they focus on antecedents: actions they take before the student behavior occurs. Proactive antecedent actions to encourage desired behaviors are often quick-acting, can prevent misbehavior and attendant interruption of instruction, and usually require less teacher effort than providing corrective consequences after problem behaviors have occurred.

   Teacher strategies to elicit positive student behaviors include making instructional adjustments, providing student prompts and reminders, and teaching students to monitor and evaluate their work performance. Here are specific antecedent ideas that teachers can use to ‘nudge’ students to engage in desired behaviors:

   **Antecedents That Prevent Problem Behaviors**

   - **Behaviors**: Teach Expectations (Fairbanks, Sugai, Guardino, & Lathrop, 2007). Students must be explicitly taught behavioral expectations before they can be held accountable for those behaviors. The teacher should model positive behaviors, give students examples and non-examples of appropriate behaviors to clarify understanding, have students practice those behaviors with instructor feedback; and consistently acknowledge and praise students for successfully displaying positive behaviors.

   - **Instructional Match**: Ensure the Student Can Do the Work (Burns, VanDereyden, & Boice, 2008). Student misbehavior frequently arises from an inability to do the academic task. When the student lacks skills necessary for the academic task, the instructor teaches the necessary skill(s). Additional strategies include adjusting the immediate task to the student’s current skill(s) and pairing the student with a helping peer.
Aggression Cycle: Communicating Effectively

Often, student-teacher conflicts occur as a series of back-and-forth ‘micro-escalations’.

To prevent escalation, the teacher should stay calm, treat the student with respect, communicate clearly, and keep words to the required minimum.

Here are selected ideas for clear and concise communication...
Choice Statements in 2 Parts: Frame the Alternative Consequences (Walker, 1997). The teacher frames a request to an uncooperative student as a two-part 'choice' statement:

(1) The teacher presents the negative, or non-compliant, choice and its consequence (e.g., "John, you can choose to stay after school today to finish this in-class assignment.");

(2) The teacher next states the positive behavioral choice that the student is encouraged to select (e.g., "Or you can finish your work now and not stay after school. It's your choice.").

(3) If the student fails to comply, the teacher imposes the negative consequence.
Precision Requests: Make Directives and Consequences Clear (De Martini-Scully, Bray, & Kehle, 2000; Musser, Bray, Kehle, & Jenson, 2001). The precision request structures communication with the student in a concise, respectful format that preserves adult authority and increases the likelihood of student compliance. In preparation, the teacher decides on appropriate consequences for non-compliance.

Examples of suitable consequences include loss of free time, phone call to a parent, loss of a point or token, or restriction of activities at recess. When making a precision request, the teacher follows these 3 steps:
Precision Requests: Make Directives and Consequences

Clear (cont.)

1. **Make first request: "Please..."**. The teacher states a brief request that starts with the word 'Please' and – whenever possible–frames the request as a goal behavior rather than as a behavior to stop (e.g., "Rick, please open your math book and begin the assignment written on the board").

   The teacher then waits 5 seconds for the student to comply. If the student complies, the teacher praises the student (e.g., "Thank you for starting your math assignment").
2. **Make second request: "I Need..."**. If the student fails to comply with the first request within 5 seconds, the teacher repeats that request. This time, the teacher starts the request with the phrase "I need..." (e.g., "Rick, I need you to open your math book and begin the assignment written on the board").

Again, the teacher waits 5 seconds for the student to comply. If the student complies, the teacher verbally reinforces the student (e.g., "Thank you for starting your math assignment").
3. *Deliver consequence for non-compliance.* If the student fails to comply to the second request within 5 seconds, the teacher follows through in delivering the pre-determined consequence for non-compliance.
Contingent Instructions: Move from 'Stop' to 'Start' (Curran, 2006; Gable, Hester, Rock, & Hughes, 2009). When the instructor observes that a student is engaging in problem behavior requiring a response, the teacher delivers contingent instructions in a 3-part format.

1. **STOP statement.** The teacher directs the student to STOP a specific problem behavior, e.g., "Joshua, put away the magazine."; "Annabelle, return to your seat."
Contingent Instructions: Move from 'Stop' to 'Start' (Cont.)

2. **START statement.** After a brief (1-2 second) pause, the instruction describes the appropriate replacement behavior that the student should START, e.g., "Open your book to page 28 and begin the end-of-chapter questions. "; "Work with your partner to solve the math problem on the board."

3. **PRAISE for compliance.** As the student begins to engage in the desired behavior, the teacher concludes by PRAISING the student for compliance. e.g., "Thank you for starting your book assignment, Joshua.", "I see that you and your partner are solving the math problem, Annabelle. Good!!"
If/Then Statements: Set the Conditions (Majeika et al., 2011). When the student is engaging in a problem behavior, the teacher can use an 'if/then' statement to prompt that student to engage in the appropriate replacement behavior.

For example, if a student is out of seat without permission, the teacher says, "Shelly, if you return to your seat, then I will come over and answer your question." Of course, when the student responds by displaying the positive behavior, the teacher follows through with the promised action and praises that student for compliance.
Redirect the Student: Get Them Back on Track (Dhaem, 2012; Simonsen et al., 2008). When the teacher observes the student begin to engage in problem behaviors, the instructor redirects that student back to task, either verbally (e.g., "Tom, stop talking and start your assignment") or non-verbally (e.g., giving that student a significant look and negative head shake).

Redirects should be brief and calm in tone. NOTE: Teachers can also redirect without distracting the class by using 'tweets'—brief behavioral reminders written on post-it notes and placed on the student's desk.
Praise Peers: Shape Behavior Through Vicarious Reinforcement (Majeika et al., 2011). Teacher approval can be a powerful motivator.

The teacher can capitalize on this fact by publicly praising on-task peers sitting near the target (misbehaving) student. When the target student then engages in academic work, the teacher makes sure to praise that student as well.
Planned Ignoring: Turn Off the Attention (Colvin, 2009). In planned ignoring, the instructor withholds attention when the student engages in the problem behavior. Ignoring problem behavior can remove the source of its reinforcement and thus help to extinguish it.

Teachers should remember, though, that planned ignoring alone is seldom successful. Instead, planned ignoring becomes much more powerful when, at the same time, the teacher provides regular attention whenever the student engages in positive, replacement behaviors.
Scheduled Attention: Rechannel Adult Interactions (Austin & Soeda, 2008). A strategy to increase positive behaviors is to 'catch the student being good' with regular doses of 'scheduled attention': (1) The teacher decides on a fixed-interval schedule to provide attention (e.g., every 8 minutes); (2) At each interval, the teacher observes the student; (3) If the student is engaged in appropriate behaviors at that moment, the teacher provides a dose of positive attention (e.g., verbal praise; non-verbal praise such as thumbs-up; brief positive conversation; encouragement). If off-task or not behaving appropriately, the teacher briefly redirects the student to task and returns immediately to instruction until the next scheduled-attention interval.
Stopping the Aggression Cycle: Eliminate Behavioral ‘Triggers’. What are sample strategies that can prevent the triggering of student confrontation?
Aggression Cycle: Eliminating Triggers

The aggression cycle usually requires a triggering situation or event. The teacher’s goal is to locate and minimize or eliminate conflict triggers.

Here are selected ideas to address conflict triggers...
Work Break: Make It Available on Request (Majeika et al., 2011). Sometimes misbehavior is an attempt by the student to engineer a break from an academic task.

The teacher can choose an alternative method for the student to use to communicate that he or she would like a brief break, such as requesting that break verbally or pulling out a color-coded break card.

Of course, the student will also require clear guidelines on how long the requested break will last and what activities are acceptable for the student to engage in during that break.
High-Preference Requests: Build Behavioral Momentum (Kern & Clemens, 2007). Use 'behavioral momentum' to increase compliance by first directing the student or class to complete several short, simple, high-preference directives that they readily complete (e.g., "Take out a sheet of paper", "write your name on the paper", "copy the assignment from the board") before presenting the student or class with a low-preference directive that they typically balk at (e.g., "Open your books and begin the assignment").
High-Probability Request Examples.

High-probability requests: To start an assignment. The teacher identifies brief actions associated with the ‘low-probability’ assignment that the student is likely to complete. The instructor delivers a sequence (e.g., 3) of these high-probability requests and verifies compliance before delivering the low-probability request.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hi-Prob Requests: To Start Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easy</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Take out a piece of paper.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easy</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Write your name on your paper.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easy</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Copy the topic description that you see on the board.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenge</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Write an introductory paragraph on this topic.’</td>
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‘High-Probability Request’ Examples.

HIGH-PROBABILITY REQUESTS: WITHIN AN ASSIGNMENT. The teacher selects a ratio of ‘easy-to-challenge’ problems or items (e.g., 3:1). The instructor then formats the assignment or worksheet according to the ‘easy-to-challenge’ ratio.

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<th>Hi-Prob Requests: Within Assignment</th>
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Response Effort: Reduce Task Difficulty (Friman & Poling, 1995; Skinner, Pappas & Davis, 2005). The teacher increases student engagement through any method that reduces the apparent difficulty (‘response effort’) of an academic task - so long as that method does not hold the student to a lesser academic standard than classmates.

Examples of strategies that lower response effort include:

– having students pair off to start homework or assigned readings in class;

– breaking larger academic tasks into smaller, more manageable 'chunks'.
Schedule: Increase Predictability (Kern & Clemens, 2007). When students know the “content, duration, and/or consequences of future events”, their level of engagement rises and problem behaviors decline—a good definition of motivation.

To increase the predictability of events for individual students or an entire classroom, post or provide a schedule outlining the day’s activities. In simplest form, the schedule lists a title and brief description for each activity, along with start and end times for that activity. Teachers may wish to add information to the schedule, such as reminders of what work materials a student might need for each event.
Choice-Making: Allow for Student Preference (Green, Mays, & Jolivette, 2011). Students find it motivating to have opportunities to choose how they structure or carry out their academic tasks. Teachers can allow choice on any of a variety of dimensions of a classroom activity, such as:

- where the activity takes place;
- who the student works with;
- what materials to work with (e.g., choosing a book from several options);
- when to begin or end the activity;
- how long to engage in the activity.
‘No’: Substitute a Preferred Alternative (Mace, Pratt, Prager, & Pritchard, 2011). This strategy is useful if the student has a pattern of misbehaving when told that he or she cannot access a desired item or engage in a preferred activity.

The teacher makes a list of activities or items preferred by the student that are allowed during the academic situation or setting where problems arise. When the student requests an item or activity that is not allowed, the teacher (1) tells the student that he or she cannot access the desired activity or item; (2) provides a brief explanation of why the requested item or activity is off-limits; and (3) immediately offers the student one or more items or activities from the prepared list that are allowable in the current situation or setting.
Stopping the Aggression Cycle: Promote Student Connection.

What are ideas for fostering positive student-educator relationships?
Aggression Cycle: Prevention Through Connection

Because humans are highly social beings, positive teacher attention can be a very powerful motivator for students (e.g., Kazdin, 1989).

The strategy is to provide the student with increased doses of positive attention at times when the student is engaging in appropriate behavior.
Motivating Through Personal Connection

Try These Ideas to Improve the Student-Teacher Relationship:

- *Providing ‘Pre-Session’ Attention.* If a student appears to misbehave to seek adult attention during an activity such as whole-group instruction, the teacher consistently gives the student a dose (e.g., 3 minutes) of positive individual attention just before the session begins (Wood et al., 2018).

This pre-session attention can thus reduce that student’s immediate attention-seeking behaviors.
Motivating Through Personal Connection

Try These Ideas to Improve the Student-Teacher Relationship:

• *Maintaining a High Rate of Positive Interactions.* Teachers promote a positive relationship with any student by maintaining a ratio of at least three positive teacher-student interactions (e.g., greeting, positive conversation, high-five) for every negative (disciplinary) interaction (e.g., reprimand) (Sprick, Borgmeier, & Nolet, 2002).
Motivating Through Personal Connection

Try These Ideas to Improve the Student-Teacher Relationship:

• *Emphasizing the Positive in Teacher Requests* (Braithwaite, 2001). The teacher avoids using negative phrasing (e.g., "If you don't return to your seat, I can’t help you with your assignment") when making a request of a student. Instead, the teacher request is stated in positive terms (e.g., "I will be over to help you on the assignment just as soon as you return to your seat"). When a request has a positive 'spin', that teacher is less likely to trigger a power struggle and more likely to gain student compliance.
Motivating Through Personal Connection

Try These Ideas to Improve the Student-Teacher Relationship:

• *Greeting Students at the Classroom Door.* A personalized greeting at the start of a class period can boost class levels of academic engagement (Allday & Pakurar, 2007) and promote personal connections with students.

The teacher spends a few seconds greeting each student by name at the classroom door at the beginning of class.
Motivating Through Personal Connection

Try These Ideas to Improve the Student-Teacher Relationship:

• *Two by Ten: Positively Structuring Teacher-Student Interactions* (Mendler, 2000). The teacher selects a student with whom that instructor wants to build a more positive relationship. The instructor makes a commitment to spend 2 minutes per day for ten consecutive days engaging the student in a positive conversation about topics of interest to that student. NOTE: During those two-minute daily conversations, the teacher maintains a positive tone and avoids talking about the student’s problem behaviors or poor academic performance.
Managing the ‘Aggression Cycle’: Agenda

1. **Behavior ‘Big Ideas’**. What are key behavior-management ideas that can help educators to better understand the Aggression Cycle (and other challenging student behaviors)?

2. **Aggression Cycle**. What are the 5 phases of the AC—and how should educators respond to each?

3. **Preventing the Aggression Cycle**. What are practical classroom strategies to minimize or prevent the AC from occurring?
Activity: What Are Your Next Steps?

- Identify 2-3 ‘next steps’ to use key ideas and resources from today’s training to prevent or minimize student conflicts back in your classroom or school.