INTERVENTION
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RTI Toolkit: A Practical Guide for Schools

Tier 3: Tools to Manage Challenging Behaviors

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The Savvy Teacher's Guide: Creating Behavior Plans for Individual Students: Antecedents & Consequences

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.

ADHD:ODD (Oppositional Defiant Disorder):GAD (Generalized Anxiety Disorder)

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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

☐ ADHD:ODD:GAD: **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.
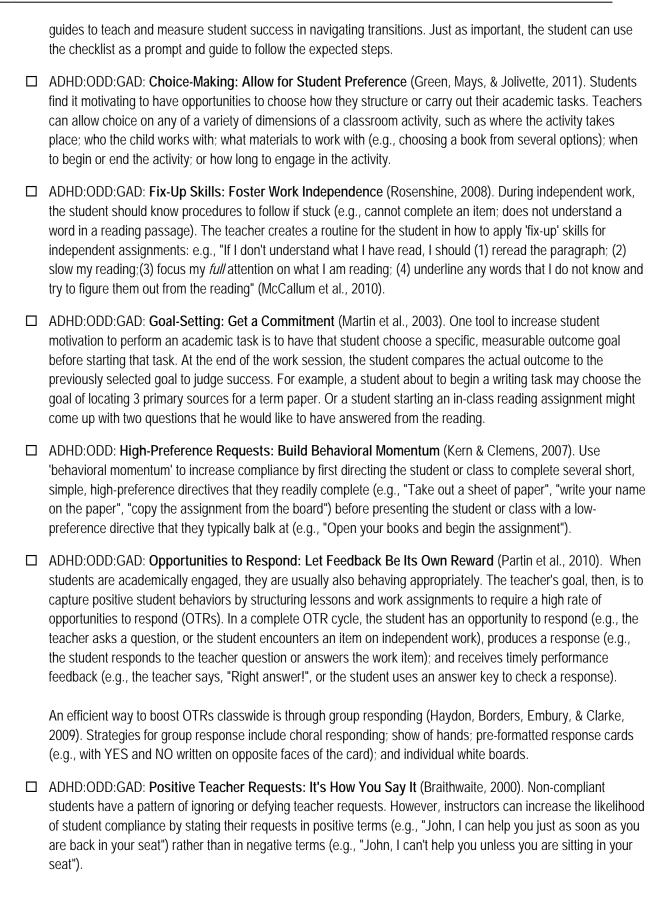
☐ ADHD:ODD:GAD: **Instructional Match: Ensure the Student Can Do the Work** (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008). Student misbehavior frequently arises from an inability to do the academic task. When the student

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.

☐ ODD: **No: Substitute a Preferred Alternative** (Mace, Pratt, Prager, & Pritchard, 2011). 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 can use the 'no with preferred alternative' strategy. The teacher prepares by making a list of activities or items preferred by the student that are allowed during the academic situation or setting where problems arise. Then, whenever 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.

☐ ADHD:ODD: **Relocate the Student: Remove From Temptation** (US Department of Education, 2004). When the student's problem behaviors are triggered or supported by factors in the environment--such as a talkative peer or difficulty hearing or seeing the instructor--the teacher may choose to move the student to another, less-distracting location in the classroom. A good option is to seat the student within the teacher's 'action zone', close to the instructor and in the region of the room toward which that educator directs most instruction.

☐ ADHD:ODD:GAD: **Schedule: Increase Predictability** (Kern & Clemens, 2007). When students know the "content, duration, and/or consequences of future events" (Kern & Clemens, 2007; p. 67), their level of engagement rises and problem behaviors decline—a good definition of motivation. A strategy to increase the predictability of events for individual students or an entire classroom is to post or otherwise provide a schedule outlining the day's classroom activities. In simplest form, such a schedule lists a title and brief description for each scheduled activity, along with the start and end times for that activity. Teachers may wish to add information to the schedule, such as helpful reminders of what work materials a student might need for each event. Students who have difficulty interpreting a written schedule may benefit from having their schedules read aloud and/or from having pictorial equivalents included in their schedules.

☐ ODD:GAD: **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.

Antecedents That Encourage Goal Behaviors

☐ ADHD:ODD:GAD: **Checklist for Academic Skills: Make the Complicated Simple** (Alter, Wyrick, Brown, & Lingo, 2008). When the student must apply several steps to complete a complex academic task, the teacher can give the student a checklist detailing each step and instructions for completing it. Before the activity, the student is prompted to preview the checklist; after the activity, the student uses the checklist to review the work.

☐ ADHD:ODD:GAD: **Checklist for Challenging Situations: Script Transition Times** (McCoy, Mathur, & Czoka, 2010). Students often struggle with the complexity of managing multi-step routines such as transitioning between classroom activities or moving to different locations within the school. Teachers can assist by making up step-by-step checklists that 'walk' the student incrementally through the routine. Instructors can use these checklists as

guides to teach and measure student success in navigating transitions. Just as important, the student can use the checklist as a prompt and guide to follow the expected steps.

☐ ADHD:ODD:GAD: **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 child works with; what materials to work with (e.g., choosing a book from several options); when to begin or end the activity; or how long to engage in the activity.

☐ ADHD:ODD:GAD: **Fix-Up Skills: Foster Work Independence** (Rosenshine, 2008). During independent work, the student should know procedures to follow if stuck (e.g., cannot complete an item; does not understand a word in a reading passage). The teacher creates a routine for the student in how to apply 'fix-up' skills for independent assignments: e.g., "If I don't understand what I have read, I should (1) reread the paragraph; (2) slow my reading;(3) focus my *full* attention on what I am reading; (4) underline any words that I do not know and try to figure them out from the reading" (McCallum et al., 2010).

☐ ADHD:ODD:GAD: **Goal-Setting: Get a Commitment** (Martin et al., 2003). One tool to increase student motivation to perform an academic task is to have that student choose a specific, measurable outcome goal before starting that task. At the end of the work session, the student compares the actual outcome to the previously selected goal to judge success. For example, a student about to begin a writing task may choose the goal of locating 3 primary sources for a term paper. Or a student starting an in-class reading assignment might come up with two questions that he would like to have answered from the reading.

☐ ADHD:ODD: **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").

☐ ADHD:ODD:GAD: **Opportunities to Respond: Let Feedback Be Its Own Reward** (Partin et al., 2010). When students are academically engaged, they are usually also behaving appropriately. The teacher's goal, then, is to capture positive student behaviors by structuring lessons and work assignments to require a high rate of opportunities to respond (OTRs). In a complete OTR cycle, the student has an opportunity to respond (e.g., the teacher asks a question, or the student encounters an item on independent work), produces a response (e.g., the student responds to the teacher question or answers the work item); and receives timely performance feedback (e.g., the teacher says, "Right answer!", or the student uses an answer key to check a response).

An efficient way to boost OTRs classwide is through group responding (Haydon, Borders, Embury, & Clarke, 2009). Strategies for group response include choral responding; show of hands; pre-formatted response cards (e.g., with YES and NO written on opposite faces of the card); and individual white boards.

☐ ADHD:ODD:GAD: **Positive Teacher Requests: It's How You Say It** (Braithwaite, 2000). Non-compliant students have a pattern of ignoring or defying teacher requests. However, instructors can increase the likelihood of student compliance by stating their requests in positive terms (e.g., "John, I can help you just as soon as you are back in your seat") rather than in negative terms (e.g., "John, I can't help you unless you are sitting in your seat").

☐ ADHD:ODD: **Pre-Correction: Plant a Positive Thought** (De Pry & Sugai, 2002). Some students need a timely reminder of expected behaviors just before they transition into situations or settings in which problem behaviors tend to occur. At this 'point of performance', the teacher gives the student a timely reminder of goal behaviors, using such prompting strategies as stating goal behaviors, having the student preview a checklist of goal behaviors, asking the student to describe goal behaviors; or praising another student for demonstrating goal behaviors.

☐ ADHD:ODD:GAD: **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 in class and breaking larger academic tasks into smaller, more manageable 'chunks'.

☐ ADHD:ODD: **Rewards: Choose Them in Advance** (De Pry & Sugai, 2002). Just as the student is about to enter a challenging situation or setting in which he or she will need to show appropriate behaviors, the instructor reminds the student of the behavioral expectations and has the student select a possible reward from a menu. The student is later given that reward if behaviors were appropriate.

☐ ADHD:ODD: **Verbal Commands: Keep Them Brief and Powerful** (Matheson & Shriver, 2005; Walker & Walker, 1991). Teacher commands are most likely to elicit student compliance when they (1) are delivered calmly, (2) are brief, (3) are stated when possible as DO statements rather than as DON'T statements, (4) use clear, simple language, and (5) are delivered one command at a time and appropriately paced to avoid confusing or overloading students. Effective teacher commands avoid both sarcasm or hostility and over-lengthy explanations that can distract or confuse students.

2. Positive Consequences: Responses That Increase Positive/Goal Behaviors

Consequences are those events following a student behavior that make it more or less likely that the behavior will occur in the future. This section looks at positive consequences, ideas that teachers can use to reinforce the student for being on-task and showing appropriate behaviors. Among strategies that promote behaviors are providing timely feedback ,praise, and teacher attention; as well as allowing students to take temporary work breaks. To foster specific behaviors, the teacher can use any of the following strategies:

☐ ADHD:ODD:GAD: **Performance Feedback: Information is Rewarding** (Conroy et al., 2009). When students receive timely feedback about their academic performance, this information can reinforce academic behavior and reduce misbehavior. Instructional feedback comes in many forms: e.g., teacher oral or written feedback; class discussion and review of an assignment; oral feedback from class peers; student self-directed completion of a rubric or problem-solving checklist during an independent assignment.

☐ ADHD:ODD:GAD: **Praise: Catch Them Being Good** (Kern & Clemens, 2007). Research suggests that teacher praise is one of the most powerful--yet underused-- of classroom management tools. When a student, group, or class displays an appropriate pro-social or pro-academic behavior, the teacher reinforces that behavior with a targeted praise statement containing two elements: (1) a specific description of the praiseworthy behavior, and (2) an expression of teacher approval (e.g., "You worked for the full independent-work period. Nice job!"; "I really appreciate the way that our student groups stayed on-task and completed their entire assignment.").

☐ ADHD:ODD: **Scheduled Attention: Rechannel Adult Interactions** (Austin & Soeda, 2008). As every educator knows, teacher attention can be a potent motivator for student behavior. One 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 the student is 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.

3. Extinction Procedures: Responses That Reduce or Eliminate Problem Behaviors

Extinction means discontinuing the reinforcing consequences of behaviors to erase an individual's motivation to engage in those behaviors. In effect, extinction procedures 'cut off the oxygen' to problem behaviors. That is, explicit directions should be written into a behavior intervention plan to guide those working with the student to alter their responses to problem behaviors in a manner designed to remove reinforcement for the misbehavior.

An explicit plan to extinguish problem behaviors is an *essential* part of most student behavior plans (Hester et al., 2009). Without extinction procedures, educators are far too likely accidentally to continue reinforcing the very behaviors they are trying to eliminate. The teacher wishing to extinguish specific behaviors can try one or more of the following strategies:.

☐ ODD:GAD: **Escape Breaks: Put Escape on a Schedule (**Waller & Higbee, 2010). The teacher can manage a student who uses disruptive behavior to escape or avoid academic work by scheduling 'non-contingent escape breaks'. First the teacher selects a reasonable work interval for the student-- this should be an interval slightly shorter than the average amount of time that student *currently* will work before misbehaving (e.g. 5 minutes). Next, the teacher decides how long the brief 'escape break' will last (e.g., two minutes). Finally, the teacher identifies motivating activities that the student can engage in during escape breaks (e.g., coloring; playing a math application on a computer tablet). When the intervention is in effect, the teacher directs the student to begin work and starts a timer. When the student's work interval is done, the teacher directs that student to take a break and again starts the timer. When the break is up, the student is directed to resume work. This process repeats until the work period is over. As the student's behaviors improve, the teacher can gradually lengthen the work periods until the student is able to remain academically engaged for as long as typical peers; at this point, the intervention is discontinued.

☐ ADHD:ODD: **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."). If the student fails to comply within a reasonable time (e.g. 1 minute), the teacher imposes the disciplinary consequence.

ADHD:ODD: **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."

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!"

☐ ADHD:ODD:**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.

☐ ADHD:ODD: **Planned Ignoring: Turn Off the Attention** (Colvin, 2009). When the student engages in minor misbehavior to attract teacher attention, planned ignoring is a useful strategy. 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. In fact, the tandem efforts of (1) removing teacher attention from misbehavior while (2) rechanneling that attention toward positive behaviors is one of the most effective behavior management combinations available.

☐ ADHD:ODD: **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.

☐ ADHD:ODD: **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 steps:

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 praises 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.

☐ ADHD:ODD:**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.

☐ ADHD:ODD:**Response Cost: Deduct for Misbehavior** (DuPaul & Stoner, 2002). Response cost is a strategy in which the teacher assigns an incentive (e.g., points, tokens, or classroom privileges such as free time) to the student at the start of the session. Each time that the student misbehaves during the session, that student loses a point, token, or increment of privilege (e.g., losing 5 minutes of free time). At the end of the session, the student is awarded any points, tokens, or privileges that remain. In preparation for response cost, the teacher must establish incentives that the student(s) would value--either setting up a classwide or individual point/token system tied to rewards or making available classroom privileges. The student(s) must also be trained in how the response cost system operates, including a clear understanding of what problem behaviors will result in response-cost deductions and what positive, replacement behaviors they are expected to display.

Response cost, like all punishment strategies, should be used only when it is clear that the problem behavior is fully under the student's control. Before using response cost, the teacher should ensure that the student has the required skills, training, and self-control to avoid the problem behavior and to engage in a positive, replacement behavior.

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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 in the face of the 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 that 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)	
Phase	What to Do
PHASE 1: TRIGGER. 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: 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 experience or event 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 that 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 tense, grumbling, or muttering under their breath. The student's level of agitation increases and may include arguing, leaving their seat, and refusing to respond to peers or adults. While not visible to observers, the student is likely to be preoccupied with	**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: • *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. • *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.

their anger at this point, interfering with their ability to comply with rules and respond rationally to adult requests or directives.	• *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. The student's behavior intensifies, posing a potential risk of safety to self and/or others. The student may express anger through disruptive, confrontational verbal behavior such as insults, threats, arguments, or confrontation. Or 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: 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. • *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'. • *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. Because the student's heightened emotional state may reduce their ability to engage in and comprehend dialog, 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. 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: 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. The student has fully recovered control of emotions and behavior.	**PHASE 5: 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 meeting includes: • *analysis of the behavioral incident.* The teacher and student discuss the incident, identifying what triggered the event and how the student responded. • *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. • *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.

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Analyzing Student Behavior: A Step-by-Step Guide

Behavioral problem-solving is detective work. Teachers must carefully collect evidence of student problem behaviors, look for links connecting those behaviors to other events unfolding in the complex classroom environment, apply analytic tools to rule out or confirm explanations for the challenging behaviors, and interpret the evidence collected to identify research-based strategies that will help to improve those behaviors.

This guide provides an overview of the essential steps in behavior analysis--moving from the first broad definition of the problem behavior through a progression of inquiries that define the behavior in specific terms, examine contributing factors that support it, identify likely reason(s) the student engages in the behavior, and reframe the original problem as a pro-social or pro-academic 'replacement behavior'. While teachers can use this guide directly, its primary purpose is to train behavioral consultants who wish to help teachers to engage in 'functional behavioral thinking' (Hershfeldt et al., 2010) and develop more effective classroom intervention plans.

The remainder of this guide presents the stages of behavior analysis, a specialized form of problem-solving.

Step 1: Define the Behavior. The first step in analyzing a behavior is to simply put it into words. The teacher defines the problem behavior in observable, measurable terms (Batsche et al., 2008; Upah, 2008), writing a clear description of the problem behavior. The instructor also avoids vague problem identification statements such as "The student is disruptive."

Also, as much as possible, the description depicts the observed behavior in an objective manner--and does not attempt to interpret that behavior. For example, the statement "John does not respect authority" presents the student's purpose as seeking to resist those in authority. When first defining the behavior, however, it is too early to select a hypothesis about *why* that behavior occurs. So the teacher simply states what is observed: "John makes belligerent statements when directed by an adult to put away his cell phone."

A good method for judging whether the problem has been adequately defined is to apply the "stranger test" (Upah, 2008): Can a stranger read the problem definition statement, then observe the student, and be able to judge reliably when the behavior occurs and when it does not? A useful self-prompt to come up with a more detailed description of the problem is to ask, "What does <problem behavior> look like in the classroom?"

Step 2: Expand the Behavior Definition to a 3-Part Statement. A well-written problem definition includes 3 parts:

- Conditions. The condition(s) under which the problem is likely to occur
- Problem Description. A specific description of the problem behavior
- Contextual information. Information about the frequency, intensity, duration, or other dimension(s) of the behavior that provide a context for estimating the degree to which the behavior presents a problem in the setting(s) in which it occurs.

Problem Behaviors: Sample Definitions		
Conditions. The condition(s) under which the problem is likely	*Problem Description. A specific description of the*	*Contextual Information. Information about the frequency,*

to occur	*problem behavior*	*intensity, duration, or other dimension(s) of the behavior*
During 20-minute independent seatwork literacy tasks,…	…John talks with peers about non-instructional topics…	…an average of three times.
In school settings such as the playground or gymnasium, when unsupervised by adults,…	…Angela is reported by peers to use physically threatening language…	…at least once per week.
When given a verbal teacher request…	…Jay fails to comply with that request within 3 minutes…	… an average of 50% of the time.

Step 3: Develop Examples and Non-Examples. Writing both examples and non-examples of the problem behavior helps to resolve uncertainty about when the student's conduct should be classified as a problem behavior. Examples should include the most frequent or typical instances of the student problem behavior. Non-examples should include any behaviors that are acceptable conduct but might possibly be confused with the problem behavior.

Problem Behaviors: Examples and Non-Examples		
Problem Behavior	Examples	Non-Examples
During 20-minute independent seatwork literacy tasks, John talks with peers about non-instructional topics	• John chats with another student that he encounters at the pencil sharpener. • John whispers to a neighboring student about a comic book in his desk.	• At the direction of the teacher, John pairs up with another student to complete an assignment.. • John verbally interacts with students in an appropriate manner while handing out work materials as requested by the teacher.
When given a verbal teacher request, Jay fails to comply with that request.	• Jay does not comply when directed by the teacher to open his math book and begin work. • Jay is verbally defiant and uncooperative when requested by an adult to stop running in the hall.	• Jay does not comply with a teacher request because he does not hear that request. • Jay asks the teacher to explain directions that he does not understand.

Step 4: Antecedents: Identify Triggers to the Behavior. Antecedents are events or conditions that can influence or even trigger the occurrence of problem behaviors (Kern, Choutka, & Sokol, 2002). When the instructor is

able to identify and eliminate triggers of negative conduct, such actions tend to work quickly and--by preventing class disruptions--can result in more time available for instruction (Kern & Clemens, 2007). So in analyzing student behaviors, the teacher will want to consider what--if any--antecedent factors may contribute to the behavior problem.

Antecedents can be divided into two groups: remote and immediate.

Remote Antecedents. Remote antecedents (sometimes called 'establishing operations') are those influencing events that precede the behavior but are removed substantially in time and/or location from the setting(s) where the problem behavior actually appears (Horner, Day, & Day, 1997). Schools address remote-antecedent factors through 'neutralizing routines' (Horner, Day, & Day, 1997; Sprague & Thomas,1997). These are plans that attempt to get the student back to a normal level of functioning for that school day. Examples of remote antecedents and matching normalizing routines appear below.

Problem Behaviors: Remote Antecedents	
Examples	Neutralizing Routines
• Angela appears unmotivated to do classwork on days when she fails to eat breakfast.	Angela is allowed to visit the cafeteria to get a snack when she misses breakfast.
• Whenever Brian spends the weekend with his father and away from his mother, he returns to school anxious about how his mother is doing and cannot concentrate on school work.	In agreement with his mother and the school, Brian can choose to call her at the start of the academic day when needed to reassure himself that she is well.
• Andre becomes non-compliant and belligerent in math class when he has stayed up too late the night before playing video games.	Andre is allowed to take a short nap if needed. [The school also follows up with Andre's parents to work on a plan to improve his sleep habits.]

Immediate Antecedents. Those events or situations that precede problem behaviors, contribute to their appearance, and are in close proximity in time and location to them are immediate antecedents. Here are examples:

Problem Behaviors: Immediate Antecedents
Examples
• When handed a challenging worksheet, Ricky tears up his paper.
• When seated next to her best friend , Zoe engages in off-task conversations in large-group instruction.
• When publicly reprimanded by her teacher, Emily stops participating in class.

Whether remote or immediate, antecedents that trigger or contribute to problem behaviors should be identified and steps included in the behavior intervention plan to prevent or neutralize them.

Step 5: Consequences: Identify Outcomes That Reinforce the Behavior. The consequences that result from a student's behavior have the potential to increase or decrease the probability that the behavior will be repeated (Upah, 2008). Consequences that *increase* the display of a behavior are known as reinforcers. Usually problem behaviors continue because they are being regularly reinforced in the classroom. However, it is impossible to know in advance what consequences will increase a particular student's behavior, because people's responses to potential reinforcers are idiosyncratic --that is, unique to each individual (Kazdin, 1989). Here are examples of consequences for problem behaviors that can serve as reinforcers and sustain or accelerate behaviors.

Problem Behaviors: Outcomes That May Provide (Positive or Negative) Reinforcement
- The student fails to complete the assigned work.   - The teacher reprimands the student.   - The teacher conferences with the student.   - The student receives positive or negative peer attention.   - The student is timed-out within or outside of the classroom.   - The student is sent from the classroom to the office or to in-school suspension (disciplinary referral).

Step 6: Write a Behavior Hypothesis Statement. The next step in problem-solving is to develop a hypothesis--or best guess--about why the student is engaging in an undesirable behavior or not engaging in a desired behavior (Batsche et al., 2008; Upah, 2008). Teachers can gain information to develop a hypothesis through direct observation, student interview, review of student work products, and other sources. The behavior hypothesis statement is important because (a) it can be tested, and (b) it provides guidance on the type(s) of interventions that might benefit the student.

The table below lists the *most common* reasons why a problem behavior is occurring:

Problem Behaviors: Common Reasons	
Hypothesis	Considerations
• SKILL DEFICIT. The student lacks the skills necessary to display the desired behavior (Gable et al., 2009).	If the student has never explicitly been taught the desired behaviors, there is a strong likelihood that behavior-skill deficit is a contributing factor.
• PERFORMANCE DEFICIT. The student possesses the skills necessary to display the desired behavior but lacks sufficient incentive to do so (Gable et al., 2009).	Poor motivation is a real and frequent cause of behavior problems. However, schools should first carefully rule out other explanations (e.g., skill deficit; escape/avoidance) before selecting this explanation.
• PEER ATTENTION. The student is seeking the attention of other students	The student may be motivated by general attention from the entire

(Packenham, Shute & Reid, 2004).	classroom or may only seek the attention of select peers.
• ADULT ATTENTION. The student is seeking the attention of adults (Packenham, Shute & Reid, 2004).	The student may be motivated by general attention from all adults or may only seek the attention of select educators.
• ESCAPE/AVOIDANCE. The student is seeking to escape or avoid a task or situation (Witt, Daly & Noell, 2000).	If the student demonstrates academic ability (e.g., via grades or observed work) close to or at grade level, behavior problems may be tied to motivation issues or attention-seeking. Students with delayed academic abilities are more likely to be driven by escape/avoidance.
• 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.)	Students fitting this profile typically have difficulty managing their emotions (e.g., anxiety, anger) across settings and situations. However, if evidence suggests that emotional outbursts are linked to *specific* settings, situations, or tasks, the student may instead be attempting to escape or avoid those particular situations-- suggesting poor academic skills or interpersonal difficulties.

The structure of a behavior hypothesis statement is simple: the teacher writes a description of the problem behavior (developed in an earlier step) and selects a hypothesis that best explains the behavior based on available evidence (Batsche et al., 2008). The table below shows how these statements are formatted and offers several examples:

Behavior Hypothesis Statements: Examples		
Problem Behavior	<Because>	Hypothesis
During 20-minute independent seatwork literacy tasks, John talks with peers about non-instructional topics…	…because…	…he is avoiding academic work.
When given a verbal teacher request, Jay fails to comply with that request…	…because…	…he is reinforced by the negative adult attention that results from his noncompliance.

Step 7: Select a Replacement Behavior. When the problem behavior has been adequately described and its function identified, the teacher will want to choose an alternative behavior intended to *replace* it (Batsche et al., 2008; Scott & Kamps, 2007). Behavior plans tend to be more successful when educators and students look beyond negative behaviors to be eliminated ('STOP' behaviors) toward those pro-social and pro-academic behaviors that should replace them ('START' behaviors). That is, by selecting a positive behavioral goal that is an appropriate

replacement for the student's original problem behavior, the teacher reframes the student concern in a manner that allows for more effective intervention planning.

Replacement behaviors fall into 2 categories: replacement based on function and replacement based on incompatibility.

Replacement by Function. In replacement by function, the replacement behavior is one that is positive and at the same time fulfills the *same* behavioral function now supporting the student's current negative behavior. For example, a student may be loudly confrontational toward a teacher because this behavior serves the function of allowing the student to escape an aversive academic task. A suitable replacement behavior in this instance is to train the student to request a brief work-break when needed. Thus, the replacement behavior allows the student to exercise the same function (escape from a frustrating task) in a manner that no longer disrupts instruction. When possible, replacement behaviors should be selected to match the function of the problem behavior.

Replacement by Incompatibility. In many situations, the teacher may not be able easily to choose replacement behaviors that preserve the same function as the problem behavior. For example, it may be difficult for the instructor with a student who clowns to attract peer attention to match that student to a positive replacement behavior that will supply the same jolt of attention. After all, classwork cannot always focus on high rates of social interaction. The solution here, then, is to choose a replacement behavior that is *incompatible* with the problem behavior. For the class clown, for example, the teacher may choose as a replacement behavior that the student will engage in "active, accurate responding" (Skinner, Pappas, & Davis, 2005). In this scenario, the instructor chooses a pro-academic replacement behavior that may not match the *function* of the clowning behavior but is *incompatible* with it.

Problem Behaviors & Corresponding Replacement Behaviors: Examples	
Replacement Behavior by Function	
Problem Behavior	Replacement Behavior
When given challenging independent reading assignments, Jay verbally refuses to begin the task.	When given challenging independent reading assignments, Jay will request a 5-minute break when needed. *[This replacement behavior gives the student an alternative means to fulfill the function of temporary escape from an aversive task.]*
Replacement Behavior by Incompatibility	
Problem Behavior	Replacement Behavior
During 20-minute independent seatwork literacy tasks, John talks with peers about non-instructional topics.	During 20-minute independent seatwork literacy tasks, John is engaged in active accurate academic responding. . *[This replacement behavior does not support the attention-seeking function of the student's off-task behavior. Because academic engagement is incompatible with off-task socializing, however, it is a useful focus for the intervention*

	plan.]

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Working With Defiant Kids: Communication Tools for Teachers

Why do classroom conflicts between teachers and students seem to occur so frequently?

Conflicts are social power struggles and must always involve at least two parties. As conflicts between students and teachers appear to be so widespread, it might help to examine what factors tend to push each party into these power struggles.

- Students who are prone to conflict often do poorly in school. They may act out in part to mask their embarrassment about their limited academic skills. These students may also lack basic prosocial strategies that would help them to work through everyday school difficulties. For example, students may become confrontational because they do not know how to ask for help on a difficult assignment, lack the ability to sit down with a peer and calmly talk through a problem, or are unable to negotiate politely with a teacher to get an extension on an assignment.
  Students can also sometimes adopt defiance toward teachers as a deliberate strategy--because, in the past, this confrontational behavior seems to have 'paid off' for them in the form of reduced expectations for schoolwork or improved social standing with peers. The longer that a student has engaged in habitual confrontational behavior, the more time and energy a teacher will probably need to invest in specific strategies to turn that behavior around.
- Teachers who get pulled into power struggles with students may not realize that they are often simply reacting to student provocation. For each step that the student escalates the conflict (e.g., raising his or her voice, assuming a threatening posture), the teacher matches the step (e.g., speaking more loudly, moving into the student's personal space). In other words, a teacher allows the student to control the interaction.
  Furthermore, if an instructor has already decided that a student is generally defiant, the teacher may be overly quick to jump to conclusions, interpreting any ambiguous behavior on the part of the student (e.g., muttering in frustration during a test) as intended to be deliberately confrontational (Fisher et al., 1991). The instructor may then reprimand or criticize the student, triggering a confrontation.

What is the most important point to keep in mind when working with a defiant or noncompliant student?

The cardinal rule to keep in mind in managing conflicts with students is to stay outwardly calm and to maintain a professional perspective. For example, it is certainly OK to experience anger when a student deliberately attempts to insult or confront you in front of the entire classroom. If you react with an angry outburst, though, the student will control the interaction, perhaps escalating the conflict until the student engineers his or her desired outcome. If you instead approach the student in a business-like, neutral manner, and impose consistent, fair consequences for misbehavior, you will model the important lesson that you cannot be pulled into a power struggle at the whim of a student.

Instructors who successfully stay calm in the face of student provocation often see two additional benefits:

1. Over time, students may become less defiant, because they no longer experience the 'reward' of watching you react in anger;

2. Because you now deal with student misbehavior impartially, efficiently and quickly, you will have more instructional time available that used to be consumed in epic power struggles.

How do I deliver a teacher command in a way that will minimize the chance of a power struggle?

You can increase the odds that a student will follow a teacher command by:

- approaching the student privately and using a quiet voice
- establishing eye contact and calling the student by name before giving the command
- stating the command as a positive (do) statement, rather than a negative (don't) statement.
- phrasing the command in clear and descriptive terms (using simple language that is easily understood) so the student knows exactly what he or she is expected to do (Walker & Walker, 1991).

There are several ways that you might use to deliver a teacher command. The table below presents two sequences for teacher commands, one brief and one extended (Thompson, 1993; Walker & Walker, 1991). Your choice of which to use will depend on your own personal preference and your judgment about how a particular student will respond to each:

Teacher Command Sequence (Brief)	Teacher Command Sequence (Extended)
1. Make the request. Use simple, clear language that the student understands. If possible, phrase the request as a positive (do) statement, rather than a negative (don't) statement. (E.g., "John, please start your math assignment now.") Wait a reasonable time for the student to comply (e.g., 5-20 seconds)	**1. Make the request**. Use simple, clear language that the student understands. If possible, phrase the request as a positive (do) statement, rather than a negative (don't) statement. (E.g., "John, please start your math assignment now.") Wait a reasonable time for the student to comply (e.g., 5-20 seconds)
2. [If the student fails to comply] **Repeat the request.** Say to the student, "You need to…" and restate the request. (E.g., "John, you need to start your math assignment now.") Take no other action. Wait a reasonable time for the student to comply (e.g., 5-20 seconds)	**2.** [If the student fails to comply] **Repeat the request as a 2-part choice.** Give the student two clear choices with clear consequences. Order the choices so that the student hears a pre-selected negative consequence as the first choice and the teacher request as the second choice. (E.g., "John, you can refuse to participate in the math assignment and receive a referral to the principal's office, or you can start the math assignment now and not be written up. It's your choice.") Take no other action. Wait a reasonable time for the student to comply (e.g., 5-20 seconds)
3. [If the student fails to comply] **Impose a pre-selected negative consequence.** As you impose the consequence, ignore student questions or complaints that appear intended to entangle you in a power struggle.	**3.** [Optional-If the student fails to comply] **Offer a face-saving out**. Say to the student, "Is there anything that I can say or do at this time to earn your cooperation?" (Thompson, 1993).
	4. [If the student fails to comply] **Impose the pre-selected negative consequence.** As you impose the consequence, ignore student questions or complaints that appear intended to entangle you in a power struggle.

Are there other effective communication strategies that I can use with defiant students?

There are a number of supportive techniques that teachers can use to establish rapport and convey their behavioral expectations clearly to students, including:

- Active listening. Active listening, or paraphrasing, is the act of summarizing another person's ideas, opinions, or point of view in your own words. Students who are chronically hostile and confrontational often believe that nobody truly listens to them. When upset, they frequently interrupt the teacher because they believe that the instructor does not understand their point of view. Active listening is powerful because it demonstrates beyond a doubt that you have not only heard the student's comments but that you have grasped his or her opinions so clearly that you can repeat them back to the satisfaction of the speaker. Note, though, that active listening does not imply that you necessarily agree with the student's point of view. Rather, it shows that you fully comprehend that viewpoint. Students tend to view teachers who practice active listening as being empathic, respectful, and caring individuals. ,br/> Here are some statements you can use when paraphrasing student comments:
  - "Let me be sure that I understand you correctly…"
  - "I want to summarize the points that you made, so that I know that I heard you right…"
  - "So from your point of view, the situation looks like this…"

  Once you have finished summarizing the student's point of view, give that student the opportunity to let you know how accurately he or she thinks you paraphrased those views: "Does what I just said sound like your point of view?" And don't be surprised if the student clarifies his or her position at this point. ("Well, teacher, I don't think that you really meant to pick on me when I walked into class late, but when you called me by name and drew attention to me, I got really embarrassed!") Though a simple communication technique, active listening can transform a potential classroom conflict into a productive student/teacher conversation.

- I-centered statements. When we tell oppositional students that they are engaging in inappropriate behaviors, we run the risk of having them challenge the truth of our statements or of taking offense at being criticized for their conduct. An instructor's use of I-centered statements can reduce the potential that teacher criticism will lead to student confrontation. Because I-centered statements reflect only the instructor's opinions and viewpoints, they are less incendiary and open to challenge than more global statements that pin blame for misbehavior on the student.
  For example, rather than telling a student, "You are always disrupting class with your jokes and fooling around!," you may say, "Zeke, I find it difficult to keep everybody's attention when there are other conversations going on in the classroom. That's why I need you to open your book and focus on today's lesson."
- Pairing of criticism with praise (adapted from Thompson, 1993). Sometimes you have no choice but to let a student know directly and bluntly that his or her classroom behaviors are not acceptable. Many oppositional students, though, have experienced a painful history of rejection in personal relationships and lack close ties with adults
  No matter how supportively you present behavioral criticism to these students, they may assume that you are in fact rejecting them as individuals and react strongly to this perceived rejection. One strategy to reassure the student that you continue to value him or her as a person is to (a) describe the problem behavior that you would like to see changed, (b) clearly outline appropriate behavioral

alternatives (b) praise the student about some other aspect of his or her behavior or accomplishments, and finally (c) state that you value having the student as a part of the classroom community.

Here is a demonstration of this communication strategy:

- o 1. Description of problem behavior: "Trina, you said disrespectful things about other students during our class meeting this morning. You continued to do so even after I asked you to stop."
- o 2. Appropriate behavioral alternative(s): "It's OK to disagree with another person's ideas. But you need to make sure that your comments do not insult or hurt the feelings of others."
- o 3. Specific praise: "I am talking to you about this behavior because know that you can do better. In fact, I have really come to value your classroom comments. You have great ideas and express yourself very well."
- o 4. Affirmation statement: "You are an important member of this class!"

What are some conflict 'pitfalls' that I should watch out for?

Communication is never easy, especially when you work with students who can be defiant. You can maximize your chances for successful communication, though, if you:

- Avoid a mismatch between your words and nonverbal signals. Students are quick to sense when a speaker's body language and tone of voice convey a different message than his or her words. If the student reads your nonverbal signals as being disrespectful or confrontational, conflict may result. If a teacher speaks politely to a student, for example, but has his fists clenched and uses a sarcastic tone, that student is likely to discount the instructor's words and focus instead on his nonverbal signals. Be sure that you convey sincerity by matching your verbal message with your nonverbal cues.
- Take time to plan your response before reacting to provocative student behavior or remarks. It is easy to react without thinking when a student makes comments or engages in behavior that offends or upsets you. If you let anger take over, however, and blurt out the first thing that comes to mind, you may end up making "the greatest speech that you'll ever live to regret" (Thompson, 1993, p. 32). A teacher's angry response can escalate student misbehavior, resulting in a power struggle that spirals out of control. When provoked, take several seconds to collect your thoughts and to think through an appropriate, professional response before you take action.
- Do not become entangled in a discussion or argument with a confrontational student (Walker & Walker, 1991). Some students are very skilled at dragging teachers into discussions or arguments that turn into power struggles. When you must deliver a command to, confront, or discipline a student who is defiant or confrontational, be careful not to get 'hooked' into a discussion or argument with that student. If you find yourself being drawn into an exchange with the student (e.g., raising your voice, reprimanding the student), immediately use strategies to disengage yourself (e.g., by moving away from the student, repeating your request in a business-like tone of voice, imposing a pre-determined consequence for noncompliance).
- Do not try to coerce or force the student to comply. It is a mistake to use social pressure (e.g., reprimands, attempting to stare down students, standing watch over them) or physical force to make a confrontational student comply with a request (Walker & Walker, 1991). The student will usually resist and a power struggle will result. In particular, adults should not lay hands on a student to force compliance--as the student will almost certainly view this act as a serious physical threat and respond in kind.

What are proactive steps that I can take to head off or minimize conflict with students?

The best way to handle a student conflict is to prevent it from occurring altogether: Some ideas to accomplish this are to:

- Offer the student face-saving exit strategies. According to Fisher, et al. (1993), "face-saving reflects a person's need to reconcile the stand he takes in a negotiation or agreement with his principles and with his past words and deeds" (p. 29). When a potential confrontation looms, you can give a student a face-saving way out by phrasing your request in a way that lets the student preserve his or her self-image even as the student complies.

   A teacher, for example, who says to a student, "Rashid, take out your book now and pay attention-- or I will send you to the office!" backs the student into a corner. The student cannot comply without appearing to have done so merely to avoid the threatened disciplinary consequence (that is, prompt compliance would probably result in Rashid's losing face with his peers). The teacher might instead use this face-saving alternative: "Rashid, please take out your book now and pay attention. We need to make sure that you do well on the upcoming test so that you continue to be eligible to play on the lacrosse team. They need your talent!"

- Act in positive ways that are inconsistent with the student's expectations (Fisher, et al., 1991). Because they have experienced so many disappointments in school, confrontational students may believe that teachers do not take a personal interest in them or value their classroom contributions. You can surprise these students and begin to forge more positive relationships by showing through your actions that you do indeed value them. You might, for example, occasionally bring in articles from popular magazines on topics that you know will interest the student, set aside time for weekly individual conferences to be sure that the student understands and is making progress on all assignments, or take a couple of minutes each day to engage the student in social conversation. Each ach small 'random act of kindness' will probably not instantly change a teacher-student relationship. Over time, however, such acts will demonstrate your empathy and caring--and are likely to have a cumulative, powerful, and positive impact on the student.
- Select fair behavioral consequences in advance (Walker & Walker, 1991). When you are face-to-face with a confrontational student, it can be a challenge to remain impartial and fair in choosing appropriate consequences for misbehavior. Instead, take time in advance to set up a classwide menu of positive consequences for good behaviors and negative consequences for misbehavior. Be sure that all students understand what those consequences are. Then be consistent in applying those consequences to individual cases of student misbehavior.
- Avoid making task demands of students when they are upset. Students will be much more likely to become confrontational if you approach them with a task demand at a time when they are already frustrated or upset. When possible, give agitated students a little breathing room to collect themselves and calm down before giving them commands (Walker & Walker, 1993).

Hints for Using...
Working With Defiant Kids: Communication Tools for Teachers

- How to Use Active Listening to Interrupt an Upset Student Without Confrontation. Here is a useful tip for using active listening. When a student is quite upset and talking very quickly, you can safely

interrupt him or her, take control of the conversation, and still seem supportive by using an active listening phrase (Thompson, 1993).
- For example, you might interrupt a student by saying, "Whoa, just a minute! You've covered a lot of ground. Let me just try to sum up what you said so that I know that I am understanding you!."
- Teachers cite conflicts with defiant and noncompliant students as being a primary cause of classroom disruption. In many schools, staff believe that student misbehavior is so pervasive that it seriously interferes with effective instruction. This article outlines important communication tools that teachers can use to defuse (or even prevent!) confrontations with students.

References

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