

Escalation Cycle: Student and Staff Responses

(adapted from Bounds, 2003)

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| **Calm**-Accepts feedback-Ignores distractions-Completes tasks | **Triggers**-Conflicts-Demands-Changes in routine-Lacks social skills | **Agitation**-Argues-Refuses-Runs away-Withdraws socially-Paces | **Acceleration**-Questions authority- Argues-Whines/Cries-Threats-Verbally abusive | **Peak**-Aggressive-Destroys property-Injures self-Runs away-Screams | **De-Escalation**-Withdraws socially-Denies behavior-Avoids discussion-Sleeps | **Recovery**-Subdued-Defensive-Avoids discussion-Attempts to correct problem | **Return to Calm**--Listens-Accepts feedback-Accepts praise-Respondsappropriately |
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| **Specific Staff/Adult Responses** |
| **Prevention**-Reduce distractions-Provide quite space-Establish clear expectations-Praise compliance-Plan ahead fortransitions | **Prevention & Redirection**-Identify patterns-Teach app. response-Rehearse appropriate response-Reinforce app.response | **Reduce Anxiety**-Show empathy-Redirect and modify-Provide choices-Provide space-Offer calming strategies-Brief interactions | **Safety**-Do not engage-Remove triggers-State bottom line-Provide choices-Use calm but stern tone-Non- threatening | **Crisis Intervention**-Repeat bottom line-Repeat choices-Follow through with plan-Emergency Safety Interventions | **Remove Excess Attention**-Avoid discussion of behavior-Provide simple and concrete directions | **Re-Establish Routines**-Provide more structure and movement-Reinforce compliance-Give simple debrief | **Discussion**-Restate expectations-Discuss replacement behavior-Give encouragement |

# Appropriate Responses to the Seven Phases of the Escalation Cycle

*Managing the Cycle of Acting-Out Behavior in the Classroom (Colvin, 2004)*

# Phase 1: Calm

Classroom Structure & Quality Instruction

* Supervise, reduce distractions, and provide quiet space.
* Establish and teach CLEAR expectations and acknowledge and praise compliance.
* Establish routines to decrease downtime and disruptions.
* Plan ahead for transitions and entry and exit routines.

# Phase 2: Triggers

* Identify the situation where the behavior is likely to occur.
* Use pre-correction to teach appropriate response. Rehearse the expectations, prompt or remind students as needed, provide specific praise and reinforcement.
* Work with all staff and faculty to teach and reinforce social skills.
* Group social skills, anger management, community services.

# Phase 3: Agitation

* Show empathy: recognize the student’s problem and communicate concern.
* Redirect and help the student become engaged in activity, lesson or task (passive or movement).
* Provide choices.
* Provide space in a quiet area or allow students to disengage briefly or put their heads down.
* Use proximity or brief interactions; show acceptance.

# Phase 4: Acceleration

* Pause and Assess- “Is this an emergency situation?”
* Avoid escalating the student’s behavior.
* Pausing rather than responding immediately shows students that while they may be out of control, staff are calm and controlled.
* Use a calm but serious tone.
* If the situation escalates, withdraw and follow school procedures for emergency situations.

# Phase 5: Peak

* Focus on student and staff safety (limit interactions for safety purposes).
* Notify necessary staff of situations and provide directions for response.
* If needed, evacuate others.
* Contact appropriate assistance.

# Phase 6: De-escalation

* Once escalation is over, allow student space to calm down, under supervision.
* Provide independent work that is fairly easy to complete to help regain focus.
* Debrief and document the incident to provide data for ongoing planning for safety.

# Phase 7: Recovery

* Help student return to normal activities and engage in learning.
* Continue with planned consequence and do not discuss or negotiate.
* Acknowledge cooperative and appropriate behavior.
* Encourage and support student in changing problem behavior.

Reference:

Colvin, G. (2004). *Managing the cycle of acting-out behavior in the classroom.* Eugene, OR: Behavior Associates.