

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  -Responds  appropriately |
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| **Specific Staff/Adult Responses** | | | | | | | |
| **Prevention**  -Reduce distractions  -Provide quite space  -Establish clear expectations  -Praise compliance  -Plan ahead for  transitions | **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.