

Behavior:	Student is non-compliant or defiant and attempts to engage in a power struggle with an adult.
Goal:	The adult uses tactics to interrupt the student's escalating anger and to deescalate the potential confrontation.
Objectives:	The student will <u>de-escalate</u> when the adult uses <u>disengaging strategies</u> on <u> </u> out of <u> </u> occasions.
Reminder:	When a student is trying to engage an adult, the thought is that I have a 50/50 chance to get my way. Many of these interventions are designed to help the adult stay calm. Remember: any conflict requires at least two people. A power struggle can be avoided if the adult does not choose to take part.
Interventions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a brief, simple stress-reduction technique before responding to a provocative remark or behavior (Braithwaite, 2001). For example, a teacher may relax in a stressful situation by taking a deeper-than-normal breath and releasing it slowly. As an added benefit, this technique allows the educator an additional moment to plan an appropriate response--rather than simply reacting to the student's behavior. • Respond to the student in a 'neutral', business-like, calm voice (Mayer, 2000). Surprisingly, people often interpret their emotional states from their own behavioral cues. If a person speaks calmly, that individual is more likely to believe that he or she really is calm-even when dealing with a stressful situation. • Keep responses brief when addressing the non-compliant student (Sprick, et al., 2002). Teachers frequently make the mistake of showering defiant students with irrelevant comments (e.g., nagging or reprimanding them, asking unhelpful questions such as 'Why do you always interrupt my math lessons?'). Unfortunately, these educators may then become even more frustrated when the student gives a disrespectful answer or refuses to respond. Short teacher responses give the defiant student less control over the interaction and can also prevent adults from inadvertently 'rewarding' misbehaving students with lots of negative adult attention. Remember that there really is not a statement or question you can ask that will stop the student from responding back. • Avoid reacting in a confrontational manner to 'baiting' student remarks that are deliberately intended to draw you into a power struggle (Walker, 1997). If a student comment is merely mildly annoying, ignore it. If the negative comment is serious enough to require that you respond (e.g., insult, challenge to authority), briefly state in a neutral manner why the student's remark was inappropriate and impose a pre-selected consequence. Then move on. • Divert the student's attention from the conflict. If the student is showing only low-level defiant or non-compliant behavior, the teacher may be able to redirect that student's attention to a more positive topic. The adult may, for example, engage the student in reading a high-interest book or allow that student to play an educational computer game. • Remove the student briefly from the setting. If the teacher notices that a student is becoming argumentative with classroom peers or acting defiantly toward adults, the educator may want to briefly remove the student from the room ('antiseptic bounce') to prevent the student's

behavior from escalating into a full-fledged confrontation (Long, Morse, & Newman, 1980). One strategy to remove the student is to send him/her to the office on an errand, with the expectation that-by the time the student returns to the classroom-he or she will have calmed down.

- Replace negative words in teacher requests with positive words (Braithwaite, 2001). When an adult's request has a positive 'spin', that teacher is more likely to have students comply. Notice, for instance, how the sentence "If you don't return to your seat, I won't help you with your assignment" (negative phrasing) seems much friendlier when stated as "I can give you some help on the assignment just as soon as you return to your seat" (positive phrasing). Yet these two sentences otherwise convey exactly the same information!
- Use non-verbal strategies to defuse the confrontation. When people get into arguments, they often unconsciously mirror the emotional posturing of the other (Braithwaite, 2001; Long, et al., 1980)--for example, pointing when the other points, standing when the other person stands, etc. The teacher can use non-verbal techniques to lower the tension when confronted by a student. For example, if a student is visibly agitated, the teacher may decide to sit down next to the student (a less threatening posture) rather than standing over that student. Or the teacher may insert a very brief 'wait time' before each response to the student, as these micro-pauses tend to slow a conversation down and can help to prevent it from escalating into an argument.
- A note of caution: The non-verbal defusing strategies discussed here are not appropriate if the teacher feels that he or she may be in imminent danger of attack or assault. Instead, that adult should immediately take those steps necessary to preserve his or her physical safety (Braithwaite, 2001).
- Acknowledge that the student is in control and must make his or her own behavioral choices. Sometimes students defy adult requests because they want to demonstrate their own autonomy and independence. When a student's confrontational behavior appears to be driven by a need for control, the teacher can frankly acknowledge that the student is free to choose whether or not to comply with the adult's request. Of course, the teacher also presents to the student the likely consequences for non-compliance (e.g., poor grades, office disciplinary referral, etc.). Walker (1997) recommends framing choices for uncooperative students in a two-part statement. The teacher first states the negative, or non-compliant, choice and its consequences (e.g., the student loses free time at the end of the day if a seatwork assignment is not completed). The teacher then states the positive behavioral choice that he or she would like the student to select (e.g., the student can complete the seatwork assignment within the allotted work time and not lose free time).
- Offer the student a face-saving path out of a potential conflict. Students sometimes blunder into confrontations with their teachers and then are unwilling or unable to back down from those show-down situations. In such instances, the teacher may want to engineer a way out for the student that allows that student to avoid a full-blown conflict while saving face.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Here is one example of a face-saving de-escalation tactic: When a teacher finds that he or she is in a tense standoff with a student and is running out of options, the adult may want to ask the student, "Is there anything that we can work out at this time to earn your cooperation?" (adapted from Thompson & Jenkins, 1993). Such a statement treats the student with dignity, models negotiation as a positive means for resolving conflict, and demonstrates that the adult wants to keep the student in the classroom. It also provides the student with a final chance to resolve the conflict with the teacher and avoid other, more serious disciplinary consequences. Teachers who use this verbal tactic should be prepared for the possibility that the student will initially give a sarcastic or unrealistic response (e.g., "Yeah, you can leave me alone and stop trying to get me to do classwork!"). The teacher ignores this student attempt to hook the adult into a power struggle and simply asks again whether there is any reasonable way to engage the student's cooperation. When asked a second time, students will often not be again disrespectful because the adult is using a respectful approach.• Consider the 'communicative function' of the confrontational behavior. Students may not feel comfortable telling the teacher that they don't like a class assignment, have forgotten their study materials for the fourth time this week, or do not know how to do the math problem that they have been asked to solve on the board. So they convey the message instead through disruptive and defiant behavior. When the adult is able to 'read' the message that the defiant student is trying to send through his or her behavior, that teacher can sometimes restructure the assignment or otherwise modify the activity or classroom setting to defuse the confrontation with the student. For example, a teacher who calls on a student to solve a math problem on the board may interpret that student's resulting disruptive behavior as sending the message, "I don't want to show my ignorance on this math problem with all of my friends watching". This adult decide to skip over that student and instead meet with him individually later to check his mastery of the math item. When teachers make instructional modifications to reduce problem behaviors, they should of course continue to hold the student accountable for all classwork, even as they allow flexibility in how that work is done.
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