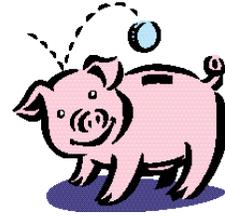# Strategies for Working With Emotionally Unpredictable & Defiant Kids

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Creating Reward Menus That Motivate: Tips for Teachers

Rewards are often central to effective school interventions. As possible incentives that students can earn for appropriate school performance or conduct, these reinforcers (or 'rewards') often serve as the motivational 'engine' that drives successful interventions.

Choosing rewards to use as incentives for a student intervention may seem simple and straightforward. A reinforcer, however, probably will not be successful unless it passes three important tests:

- **Acceptability Test.** Does the *teacher* approve of using the reinforcer with this child? Are *parent(s)* likely to approve the use of the reinforcer with their child?
- **Availability Test.** Is the reinforcer typically *available* in a school setting? If not, can it be obtained with little inconvenience and at a cost affordable to staff or parents?
- **Motivation Test.** Does the *child* find the reinforcer to be motivating?

Reward systems are usually *most* powerful when a student can select from a range of reward choices ('reward menu'). Offering students a menu of possible rewards is effective because it both gives students a meaningful *choice* of reinforcers and reduces the likelihood that the child will eventually tire of any specific reward.

However, some children (e.g., those with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) may lose interest in specific reward choices more quickly than do their typical peers. Teachers will want to regularly update and refresh reward menus for such children to ensure these reinforcers retain their power to positively shape those students' behaviors.

Creating a 'Reward Deck.' A Reward Deck is an idea that can help teachers to quickly select and regularly update student reward menus. This strategy involves 5 steps:

1. The teacher reviews a list of reward choices typically available in school settings. (Instructors can use the comprehensive sampling of possible school rewards that appears in the next section: *Jackpot! Ideas for Classroom Rewards.*). From this larger list, the teacher selects only those rewards that she or he approves of using, believes would be acceptable to other members of the school community (e.g., administration, parents), and finds feasible and affordable.

2. The teacher writes out acceptable reward choices on index cards-- to create a master 'Reward Deck'

3. Whenever the teacher wants to create a reward menu for a particular student, he or she first 'screens' reward choices that appear in the master Reward Deck and temporarily removes any that seem inappropriate for that specific case. (For

example, the teacher may screen out the reward 'pizza party' because it is too expensive to offer to a student who has only minor difficulties with homework completion.)

4. The teacher then sits with the child and presents each of the reward choices remaining in the Reward Deck. For each reward option, the child indicates whether he or she (a) likes the reward *a lot*, (b) likes the reward *a little*, or (c) doesn't care for the reward. The teacher sorts the reward options into three piles that match these rating categories.

   The teacher can then assemble that child's Reward Menu using the student's top choices ("like a lot"). If the instructor needs additional choices to fill out the rest of the menu, he or she can pull items from the student's "like a little" category as well.

5. (Optional but recommended) Periodically, the instructor can meet with the student and repeat the above procedure to 'refresh' the Reward Menu quickly and easily.

Jackpot!: Ideas for Classroom Rewards

Read through this list for reward ideas that will motivate your students.

Academic Activities

- ❑ Go to the library to select a book
- ❑ Help a classmate with an academic assignment
- ❑ Help the teacher to present a lesson (e.g., by completing sample math problem on blackboard, reading a section of text aloud, assisting cooperative learning groups on an activity)
- ❑ Invite an adult "reading buddy" of student's choice to classroom to read with student
- ❑ Listen to books-on-tape
- ❑ Play academic computer games
- ❑ Read a book of his/her choice
- ❑ Read a story aloud to younger children
- ❑ Read aloud to the class
- ❑ Select a class learning activity from a list of choices
- ❑ Select a friend as a "study buddy" on an in-class work assignment
- ❑ Select friends to sit with to complete a cooperative learning activity
- ❑ Spend time (with appropriate supervision) on the Internet at academic sites

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Helping Roles

- ❑ 'Adopt' a younger student and earn (through good behavior) daily visits to check in with that student as an older mentor
- ❑ Be appointed timekeeper for an activity: announce a 5-minute warning near end of activity and announce when activity is over
- ❑ Be given responsibility for assigning other students in the class to helping roles, chores, or tasks
- ❑ Complete chores or helpful activities around the classroom
- ❑ Deliver school-wide announcements
- ❑ Help the custodian
- ❑ Help the library media specialist
- ❑ Help a specials teacher (e.g., art, music, gym)
- ❑ Take a note to the main office
- ❑ Work at the school store

Praise/Recognition

- ❑ Be awarded a trophy, medal, or other honor for good behavior/caring attitude

- ❑ Be praised on school-wide announcements for good behavior or caring attitude
- ❑ Be praised privately by the teacher or other adult
- ❑ Design--or post work on--a class or hall bulletin board
- ❑ Get a silent "thumbs up" or other sign from teacher indicating praise and approval
- ❑ Have the teacher call the student's parent/guardian to give positive feedback about the student
- ❑ Have the teacher write a positive note to the student's parent/guardian
- ❑ Post drawings or other artwork in a public place
- ❑ Post writings in a public place
- ❑ Receive a "good job" note from the teacher

Prizes/Privileges/Rewards

- ❑ Allow student to call parent(s)
- ❑ Be allowed to sit, stand, or lie down anywhere in the classroom (short of distracting other children) during story time or independent seat work
- ❑ Be dismissed from school 2 minutes early
- ❑ Be given a 'raffle ticket' that the student writes name on and throws into a fishbowl for prize drawings
- ❑ Be permitted to sit in a reserved section of the lunchroom
- ❑ Be sent to recess 2 minutes earlier than the rest of the class
- ❑ Draw a prize from the class 'prize box'
- ❑ Earn behavior-points or -tokens to be redeemed for prizes or privileges
- ❑ Have first choice in selecting work materials (e.g., scissors, crayons, paper) and/or seating assignments
- ❑ Have lunch in the classroom with the teacher
- ❑ IOU redeemable for credit on one wrong item on a future in-class quiz or homework assignment
- ❑ Receive a coupon to be redeemed at a later time for a preferred activity
- ❑ Receive a sticker
- ❑ Receive candy, gum, or other edible treats
- ❑ Receive pass to "Get out of one homework assignment of your choice"
- ❑ Select a class fun activity from a list of choices
- ❑ Select the pizza toppings for a class pizza party
- ❑ Sit near the teacher
- ❑ Take the lead position in line
- ❑ Tell a joke or riddle to the class

Recreation

- ❑ Be selected by the teacher to accompany another student to a fun activity
- ❑ Get extra gym time with another class
- ❑ Get extra recess time with another class
- ❑ Listen to music
- ❑ Play a game with a friend
- ❑ Play non-academic computer games

- ❑ Select fun activity from "Activity Shelf" (stocked with play materials, games)
- ❑ Spend time (with appropriate supervision) on the Internet at recreational sites
- ❑ Watch part or all of a video (preselected by the teacher and cleared with the student's parent)
- ❑ Work on a jigsaw or other puzzle
- ❑ Write or draw on blackboard/whiteboard/easel paper

Troubleshooting Reward Programs: A Teacher's Guide

My reward program worked for a while but now it doesn't seem to be very effective.	There are several possible reasons why a reward program might begin to lose its effectiveness. You may want to experiment with changing aspects of the program until you find what is effective: • **The student has lost interest in the current rewards.** Some students need to be given new reward choices more frequently than do typical children. Every so often, make a point to readminister the 'reward deck' or a reward inventory to the student to update his or her list of preferred rewards. • **You have become inconsistent in administering the reward program.** Classrooms are busy places—so it is natural for the person who runs a reward program occasionally to forget to assign a point or give a reward. If the program is administered *too* inconsistently, though, it can stop working. Remember: a reward program is like a contract: its power depends entirely on how reliably it is enforced. Reflect on your actions and decide whether you may have inadvertently begun to 'drift' from the program. Common problems that crop up include the adult being inconsistent in assigning points for positive behaviors or deducting points for negative behaviors, failing to record assigned points on a chart or graph, neglecting to give the student a chance to redeem points for rewards, and not having agreed-upon rewards available for the student.
I can't seem to find rewards that the student actually finds reinforcing.	Students vary a great deal in what kinds of activities, events, or opportunities they might find rewarding. No single reward choice appeals to every student. Here are some ideas to help you to figure out rewards that are likely to appeal even to picky students: • **Ask the student to write down or tell you some activities that he or she likes to do.** Use this list as a starting point to generate ideas for possible rewards. • **Observe the activities the student picks out during free or unstructured time.** Those

	activities that people typically do in their free time are those that they probably find appealing. If the student spends most of his or her free time 'hanging out' with other kids, for instance, you can probably think up socially oriented rewards for that student. • **Ask the student's previous teachers, parent, or other significant adult what activities or rewards the student likes.** Other people who have known the student for a significant length of time may have useful insights into what rewards the student will find motivating.
My student argues with me every time I use the reward program.	Sometimes students will verbally challenge you—insisting, for example, that you should award a point that you believe they did not earn. Here are a couple of suggestions to reduce or eliminate such arguing: • **Build a negative consequence for "arguing" into the reward program.** Explain to the student that you will impose a consequence whenever the student argues or verbally challenges your decisions about the reward program. You might choose, for example, to deduct a point from the student's total whenever he or she argues or suspend the reward program for 15 minutes (so that the student cannot earn points) whenever the student argues with you. • **Avoid becoming an active participant in the argument.** It takes two to argue. As the adult, you can control student interactions by refusing to get pulled into arguments. If possible, keep your responses brief and your emotional state neutral. • **Examine the quality of your own interactions with the student.** Students are most likely to argue with adults when they feel that they have been treated unfairly or ignored. Analyze your interactions with the student to be sure that you are not expressing anger or annoyance and that you do not use sarcasm. Consider offering the student positive opportunities to share his or her feelings or opinions with you (e.g., writing a letter, participating in a class meeting). Be sure that you are enforcing the terms of the reward program fairly--in particular, giving the student appropriate credit for good behaviors.
Other school staff or parents sometimes disagree with the rewards that I choose.	A complicating factor in setting up reward programs is that other adults may disapprove of those rewards that you have selected. For instance, a principal may be unhappy with a teacher who rewards a student with gum for good behavior, because the school has a "no gum

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chewing" policy.

- **Preview potentially controversial rewards with fellow staff, school administrators, and/or the student's parents.** When in doubt, check with the school principal, other teaching staff and the student's parent about the acceptability of a specific reward idea.
- **Try to use pro-social and pro-educational reward choices whenever possible.** No one objects to student rewards that build social or academic skills. If a student were motivated to play an educational math game on the computer as a reward, for example, this academic reward would usually be preferable to offering the student a food treat. In short, if you know that non-controversial rewards work for a student, use them.
- **Document past reward efforts.** While most students can be motivated using traditional, education-friendly rewards, you will occasionally come across students who will strive only for rewards that others might regard as less acceptable (e.g., candy, coupons to skip homework). Sometimes these 'intervention-resistant' students have special needs and simply do not respond to those more typical rewards that normally shape kids' behavior. If you wish to make the case to other adults about the need to use controversial rewards with 'intervention-resistant' children, it may help to document that your previous attempts to use more typical rewards had been unsuccessful.
- **Educate staff about special-needs students**. You may also need to educate school staff about how a child's special needs may cause him or her to react to rewards in a manner different from more typical students. A teacher may observe, for example, that a child with substantial cognitive deficits is motivated only by a chance to earn snacks—even though his more typical age-peers regularly select social activities as rewards. The target student's intellectual deficits and relative emotional immaturity can help to explain why he is drawn to rewards more typical of a younger child.

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<td>I am going broke trying to buy rewards for students!</td>
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It can be costly to provide motivating rewards for individual students, let alone a whole classroom! Some suggestions:
- **Use a raffle-ticket reward system**. One cost-saving idea for group rewards that can make your prizes go farther is to design an attractive paper raffle ticket, which has a space for the student's name. Whenever the student earns a point for good behavior, have the
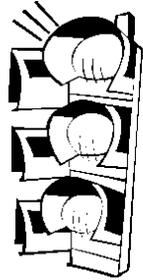
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student write his or her name on the ticket and toss it into a fishbowl or other container. Hold regular drawings, awarding prizes to those students whose tickets are selected.

- **Give 'Activity Coupons'.** Many of the most effective student rewards are activities that are readily obtainable in a school setting. Make a list of all of the rewarding opportunities that you or your fellow teachers and administrators can make available as prizes. For instance, one school may identify "Reading to kindergarten students during their Story Time" or "Delivering morning announcements" as potentially motivating activities. For each activity, create an 'Activity Coupon' that describes the activity and the number of points required to earn it. Students can redeem good-behavior points that they have collected for any Activity Coupon that they can afford.

- **Build a reward program around a 'prize box'.** Like most of us, students find novelty itself to be a motivating experience. You can use a prize box to build some excitement into a reward program, without having to purchase big-ticket items. First, decorate a large sturdy box. Fill the box with inexpensive prizes that students might find motivating (e.g., small toys, stickers). (You can even supplement the contents of the prize box with fun promotional items such as key chains or pencils.) When students earn a pre-determined number of points, they can draw the prize of choice from the box.

Effective Teacher Commands: Establishing Classroom Control

As classroom managers, teachers regularly use commands to direct students to start and stop activities. Instructors find commands to be a crucial tool for classroom management, serving as instructional signals that help students to conform to the teacher's expectations for appropriate behaviors.

Teachers frequently dilute the power of their classroom commands, however, by:

> *Effective Teacher Commands…*
> - Are brief
> - Are delivered one at a time
> - Use specific language so that the student clearly understands the request
> - Avoid an authoritative, "Do it my way or else!" tone of voice
> - Avoid strong negative emotion or sarcasm
> - Are stated as directives rather than as questions
> - Avoid long explanations or justifications (and present any explanation *before* the command rather than *after* it).
> - Allow the student a short but reasonable amount of time to comply without additional teacher comments or directives

- **presenting commands as questions or polite requests.** Commands have less impact when stated as questions or requests, because the student may believe that he or she has the option to decline. The teacher who attempts, for example, to quiet a talkative student by saying, *"Tanya, could you mind keeping your voice down so that other students can study?"* should not be surprised if the student replies, *"No, thank you. I would prefer to talk!"*

- **stating commands in vague terms.** A student may ignore a command such as *"Get your work done!"* because it does not state specifically what behaviors the teacher expects of the student.

- **following up commands with excessive justifications or explanations.**   Because teachers want to be viewed as fair, they may offer long, drawn-out explanations for why they are requiring the class or an individual student to undertake or to stop a behavior. Unfortunately, students can quickly lose the thread the explanation and even forget the command that preceded it!

Using Effective Commands
Teachers can reduce problems with student compliance and make their commands more forceful by following research-based guidelines (Walker & Walker, 1992):

Effective commands:

- **are brief.** Students can process only so much information. Students tend to comply best with brief commands because they are easy to understand and hard to misinterpret.
- **are delivered one task or objective at a time.** When a command contains multi-step directions, students can mishear, misinterpret, or forget key steps. A student who appears to be noncompliant may simply be confused about which step in a multi-step directive to do first!
- **are delivered in a matter-of-fact, businesslike tone.** Students may feel coerced when given a command in an authoritarian, sarcastic, or angry tone of voice. For that reason alone, they may resist the teacher's directive. Teachers will often see greater student compliance simply by giving commands in a neutral or positive manner.
- **are stated as directives rather than questions.** Perhaps to be polite, teachers may phrase commands as questions (e.g., "Could we all take out our math books now?"). A danger in using 'question-commands' is that the student may believe that he or she has the option to decline! Teachers should state commands as directives, saving questions for those situations in which the student exercises true choice.
- **avoid long explanations or justifications.** When teachers deliver commands and then tack lengthy explanations onto them, they diminish the force of the directive. If the instructor believes that students should know why they are being told to do something, the teacher should deliver a brief explanation *prior* to the command.
- **give the student a reasonable amount of time to comply.** Once the teacher has given a command, he or she should give the student a reasonable timespan (e.g., 5-15 seconds) to comply. During that waiting period, the instructor should resist the temptation to nag the student, elaborate on the request, or other wise distract the student.

References:

Walker, H.M. & Walker, J.E. (1991). *Coping with noncompliance in the classroom: A positive approach for teachers.* Austin, TX:: Pro-Ed, Inc.

Effective Teacher Commands: Establishing Classroom Control Workshop Activity

Directions: A series of 6 teacher commands and requests appears below. For each example, note any flaws in the teacher response. (Use the table on the right to review the elements of effective teacher commands.) Then rewrite the teacher verbal response (or describe an alternative way the teacher could have acted to head off or handle the situation more effectively).

1. *Thaddeus, I know that you finished the quiz early, but it is important that you not distract the other students while they are trying to work. You wouldn't want them to do poorly on the quiz, would you?*

2. *Maria, how many times do I have to tell you to stop being so disruptive! Every time that I have to talk to you, you take my attention away from the other students! Please try to be more considerate!*

3. *OK, class. Pull out the writing assignment that you had for homework last night. Pair off with a neighbor. Each one of you should read the others' assignment. Then you should edit your partner's work, using our peer-editing worksheet. Finally, review your editing comments with your partner. You have 20 minutes. Begin!*

4. *Jason, could you please put away that comic book and get started on your homework assignment?*

5. *Anna, I want you to be sure to go straight home from school today! Yesterday afternoon after school dismissal, I was in my car and noticed that you and your friends were utilizing the snowbanks along Henry Street, where there is a lot of traffic. I want you to go straight home today and not dawdle!*

6. *Carl, why don't you speak up so that you can distract the* entire *class with your talking?*

Effective Teacher Commands…

- Are brief
- Are delivered one at a time
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- Avoid an authoritative, "Do it my way or else!" tone of voice
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- Are stated as directives rather than as questions
- Avoid long explanations or justifications (and present any explanation *before* the command rather than *after* it).
- Allow the student a short but reasonable amount of time to comply without additional teacher comments or directives

Teacher Commands: Self-Monitoring Sheet

Teacher: _____   Date: _____

Room/Subject: _____   Activity: _____

Start Time: _____ End Time: _____ Number/Mins: _____

Teacher Directions: Select a time period when you think that you typically give a significant number of commands and/or requests to your students.   Record (a) the number of commands/requests that you give, whether to your whole class or to specific students, and (b) the number of those requests that students *fail* to follow (according to the definition for compliance below). As soon as possible after your self-monitoring, complete the items on the front and back of this sheet:

Definition for student compliance: **The student(s) complied with a teacher directive to the instructor's satisfaction within** **_____ seconds of the command or request being given.**

1. How many commands and requests did you deliver to the entire class and/or individual students during the observation period?……………....	
2. How many minutes long was your observation period?…...……………	Mins
3. On average, how many commands and requests did you deliver per *minute* during the observation period? (Item 1/Item 2)………………...	Per Min
4. Of your commands and requests, what *number* did the class or individual students *not* comply with to your satisfaction?………………………..	
5. Of your commands and requests, what *percentage* did the class or individual students *not* comply with to your satisfaction? (Item 4/Item 3)…	%

During the monitoring period, did I…

- ensure that I have students' full attention (e.g., establishing eye contact with the class) before delivering a command?

Never/Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Most/All of the Time
0-25%	*26-50%*	*51-75%*	*76-100%*

- deliver only one command at a time and wait for students to comply before delivering another?

Never/Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Most/All of the Time
0-25%	*26-50%*	*51-75%*	*76-100%*

During the monitoring period, did I…

- present the command in a matter-of-fact, businesslike way rather than as a 'bossy teacher'?

Never/Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Most/All of the Time
0-25%	*26-50%*	*51-75%*	*76-100%*

- state the command in clear, precise, specific terms that are easy to understand?

Never/Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Most/All of the Time
0-25%	*26-50%*	*51-75%*	*76-100%*

- avoid stating my commands as questions or requests that students have the right to refuse?

Never/Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Most/All of the Time
0-25%	*26-50%*	*51-75%*	*76-100%*

- avoid confusing the student with long verbalizations, justifications, or explanations of why I am giving the command?

Never/Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Most/All of the Time
0-25%	*26-50%*	*51-75%*	*76-100%*

- wait a consistent amount of time after the command (e.g., five to fifteen seconds) without giving further directions to permit the student(s) to comply?

Never/Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Most/All of the Time
0-25%	*26-50%*	*51-75%*	*76-100%*

- repeat the command to those students who initially failed to comply, firmly restating the command as *"I need you to…"*?

Never/Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Most/All of the Time
0-25%	*26-50%*	*51-75%*	*76-100%*

- provide consistent and appropriate follow-up consequences for those students who continued to fail to comply with my commands?

Never/Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Most/All of the Time
0-25%	*26-50%*	*51-75%*	*76-100%*

Behavior Contracts

The behavior contract is a simple positive-reinforcement intervention that is widely used by teachers to change student behavior. The behavior contract spells out in detail the expectations of student and teacher (and sometimes parents) in carrying out the intervention plan, making it a useful planning document. Also, because the student usually has input into the conditions that are established within the contract for earning rewards, the student is more likely to be motivated to abide by the terms of the behavior contract than if those terms had been imposed by someone else.

Jim's Hints for Using...
Behavior Contracts

Behavior contracts can be useful when the student has behavioral problems in school locations *other* than the classroom (e.g., art room, cafeteria). Once a behavior contract has proven effective in the classroom, the instructor can meet with the student to extend the terms of the contract across multiple settings. Adults in these other school locations would then be responsible for rating the student's behaviors during the time that the student is with them.

For example, a goal may be stated in the contract that a student "will participate in class activities, raising his hand, and being recognized by the classroom or specials teacher before offering an answer or comment." Art, gym, or library instructors would then rate the student's behaviors in these out-of-class settings and share these ratings with the classroom teacher.

Steps in Implementing This Intervention

The teacher decides which specific behaviors to select for the behavior contract. When possible, teachers should define behavior targets for the contract in the form of positive, pro-academic or pro-social behaviors. For example, an instructor may be concerned that a student frequently calls out answers during lecture periods without first getting permission from the teacher to speak. For the contract, the teacher's concern that the student talks out may be restated positively as "The student will participate in class lecture and discussion, raising his hand and being recognized by the teacher before offering an answer or comment." In many instances, the student can take part in selecting positive goals to increase the child's involvement in, and motivation toward, the behavioral contract.

The teacher meets with the student to draw up a behavior contract. (If appropriate, other school staff members and perhaps the student's parent(s) are invited to participate as well.) The teacher next meets with the student to draw up a behavior contract. The contract should include:

a listing of student behaviors that are to be reduced or increased. As stated above, the student's behavioral goals should usually be stated in positive, goal-oriented terms. Also, behavioral definitions should be described in sufficient detail to prevent disagreement about student compliance. The teacher should also select target behaviors that are easy to observe and verify. For instance completion of class assignments is a behavioral goal that can be readily evaluated. If the teacher selects the goal that a child "will not steal pens from other students", though, this goal will be very difficult to observe and confirm.

- a statement or section that explains the minimum conditions under which the student will

earn a point, sticker, or other token for showing appropriate behaviors. For example, a contract may state that "Johnny will add a point to his Good Behavior Chart each time he arrives at school on time and hands in his completed homework assignment to the teacher."

- the conditions under which the student will be able to redeem collected stickers, points, or other tokens to redeem for specific rewards. A contract may state, for instance, that "When Johnny has earned 5 points on his Good Behavior Chart, he may select a friend, choose a game from the play-materials shelf, and spend 10 minutes during free time at the end of the day playing the game."

- bonus and penalty clauses (optional). Although not required, bonus and penalty clauses can provide extra incentives for the student to follow the contract. A bonus clause usually offers the student some type of additional 'pay-off' for consistently reaching behavioral targets. A penalty clause may prescribe a penalty for serious problem behaviors; e.g., the student disrupts the class or endanger the safety of self or of others.

- areas for signature. The behavior contract should include spaces for both teacher and student signatures, as a sign that both parties agree to adhere to their responsibilities in the contract. Additionally, the instructor may want to include signature blocks for other staff members (e.g., a school administrator) and/or the student's parent(s).

▲

Troubleshooting: How to Deal With Common Problems in Using Behavior Contracts

Q: *What do I do if I find that the behavior contract fails to work?*

There may be several possible explanations why a behavior contract is ineffective:

- Students may not be invested in abiding by the terms of the contract because they did not have a significant role in its creation. If this is the case, students should be consulted and their input should be incorporated into a revised contract.

- The rewards that can be earned through the contract may not sufficiently motivate students to cause them to change their behavior. The teacher should review the list of rewards with students, note those rewards that students indicate they would find most appealing, and revise the reward list to include choices selected by the students.

- Points and rewards may not be awarded frequently enough to motivate the student. Each person reacts in his or her own way to reward systems such as behavior contracts; some must have rewards delivered at a frequent rate in order for those rewards to have power sufficient to shape these students' behavior. The instructor can try altering the contract to increase the rate at which points and rewards are given to see if these changes increase student motivation to follow the behavior contract. (NOTE: Once the behavior contract proves effective, the teacher can gradually cut back the rate of rewards to a level that is

more easily managed.)

Q: *How do I respond if the student starts to argue with me about the terms of the contract?*

It is not unusual--especially when a behavior contract is first introduced--for the teacher and student to have honest disagreements about the interpretation of its terms. If this occurs, the teacher will probably want to have a conference with the student to clarify the contract's language and meaning. Occasionally, though, students may continue to argue with the instructor about alleged unfairness in how the teacher enforces the contract--even after the teacher has attempted to clarify the contract's terms. If the student becomes overly antagonistic, the teacher may simply decide to suspend the contract because it is not improving the student's behavior. Or the instructor may instead add a behavioral goal or penalty clause to the contract that the student will not argue with the teacher about the terms or enforcement of the contract.
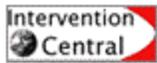
Response Effort

The amount of effort that a person must put forth to successfully complete a specific behavior has a direct impact on the frequency that the person will engage in that behavior. As the 'response effort' required to carry out a behavior increases, a person is generally less likely to show that behavior; conversely, as the response effort decreases, a person will be more likely to engage in that behavior. To use one example, a student will probably read more frequently if a book is stored in his or her school desk than if the child must walk to a different floor of the school building and get access to a locked cabinet whenever the student wants to read a book.

As a behavior-management tool, response effort seems like simple common sense: We engage less in behaviors that we find hard to accomplish. Teachers often forget, however, that response effort can be a useful part of a larger intervention plan. To put it simply, teachers can boost the chances that a student will take part in desired behaviors (e.g., completing homework or interacting appropriately with peers) by making these behaviors easy and convenient to take part in. However, if teachers want to *reduce* the frequency of a behavior (e.g., a child's running from the classroom), they can accomplish this by making the behavior more difficult to achieve (e.g., seating the child at the rear of the room, far from the classroom door).

Jim's Hints for Using...
Response Effort

In order for students to be successful in academics, it is crucial that they be placed in instructional material that challenges them to achieve but does not leave them floundering with work too difficult to complete. *Instructional match* can be thought of as an example of response effort.

Teachers are the managers of their students' learning. By assessing their children's academic capabilities and work-styles, instructors can often make modest adjustments in the student's academic program (e.g., reading group level, amount of homework assigned, etc.) that can positively affect the student's school performance.

Steps in Implementing This Intervention

The teacher selects either an undesirable behavior to decrease or a desirable behavior to increase. By varying response effort required to complete a behavior, the teacher can influence the frequency of a child's targeted behavior, making it likely to appear more often or less often. First, however, the teacher must select a behavioral target to increase or decrease.

(Optional) If necessary, the teacher breaks the behavioral target into more manageable sub-steps. Some school behavioral goals are global and consist of many sub-steps. For instance, a goal that "the student will complete all school assignments during seatwork time" could be further sub-divided into: (1) The student will organized her work materials prior to starting seatwork, (2) If she encounters a work item that she does not understand, the student will use independent problem-solving skills prior to approaching the teacher for help; and

several other key sub-steps. Breaking larger behavior goals into smaller steps will make it easier for the teacher to decide how to manipulate the response effort required to carry out each sub-step.

The teacher chooses ways to alter the response effort required to complete each selected behavior or behavior sub-step. This final step is best demonstrated through examples:

- *Increasing response effort to reduce the rate of an undesirable behavior.* Putting a physical barrier between a student and an activity, imposing a wait-time before a student can take part in an activity are examples of an *increase* in response effort.

  Example: A teacher finds that one of her students sits down at a computer in her room whenever he can find an opportunity to use a spelling-word program that presents lessons in a game-like format. While the teacher is happy to see that the student enjoys using the academic software, she finds that his frequent use of the computer interferes with his completion of other important school work. She has already broken down the student's behavior, "using the computer", into two sub-steps, "sitting down at the computer" and "starting the spelling software program". While observing the student, though, the teacher notes that the computer is left on in the classroom during the entire school day, making it very convenient for the student to use it at inappropriate times. The teacher decides to *increase* the response effort needed to use the computer by leaving it turned off when not in use. The student must now switch on the computer and wait for it to boot up before he can use it, a procedure that takes about 2 minutes. Several days later, the teacher notes that the student's rate of unauthorized computer use has dropped significantly because the 'effort' (increased wait-time) to use the computer has increased.

- *Reducing response effort to increase the rate of a desirable behavior.* Putting instructional supplies within convenient reach and having an older peer help a child to organize study materials are examples of a *decrease* in response effort.

  Example: The instructor wants to encourage children in his classroom to read more. After analyzing the current opportunities that children have for getting and reading books in school, the instructor realizes both that students do not have comfortable places to read in the classroom and that, with the current schedule they can get the the school library only once per week. The teacher creates a reading corner in his room, with an old but serviceable couch, reading lamps, and a shelf with paperback titles popular with his class. The teacher also arranges with the school's library media specialist to allow his students to drop by daily to check out books. By creating both a more comfortable reading location and easier access to books, the teacher is able to lower the threshold of effort needed to read. As a result, his students read more in the classroom.

Troubleshooting: How to Deal With Common Problems in Using Response Effort

Q: *I like the concept of response effort as a behavior management approach, but I am not sure just how it would fit into my classroom routine. Is response effort only used alone or can it be combined with other intervention ideas?*

Creative teachers will probably find many uses for response effort, both alone and in combination with other interventions. Here is one idea: A teacher might identify an activity that she wants to *reduce* (e.g., student playing with small toys stored in his desk). If the teacher already has a token/reward system in place for this student, she may forbid the student from playing with toys during the school day but allow the student to redeem a certain number of points or tokens to buy opportunities to play with his toys during free periods. By redefining the undesirable activity to the status of a reward that must be purchased, the teacher has increased the response effort needed for the student to access the activity. It is likely that the student's frequency of playing with toys will drop as a result.

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Strategies for Working With Emotionally Unpredictable Students

Stage 1: Frustration

Warning Signs: The student may…

- bite nails or lips
- grimace
- mutter or grumble
- appear flushed or tense
- seem 'stuck' on a topic or issue

Strategies to prevent or reduce the intensity of student frustration:

- Antiseptic bounce: Send the student from the room on an errand or task.
- Permit student to go to quiet spot within or outside of classroom on 'respite break' (brief cool-down period).
- Teach the student appropriate ways to seek help when stuck on academic assignment.
- Spend 5 minutes talking through issue with student (or send student to another caring adult)
- Give student an 'IOU' to meet with adult to talk over issue at more convenient time.
- Teach student to recognize signs of emotional upset and to use 'self-calming' strategies.
- Teach the student how to negotiate with instructors about assignments or work expectations.
- Use motivation strategies to make learning more inviting (see *Finding the Spark* handout)

Stage 2: Defensiveness

Warning Signs: The student may…

- lash out verbally at others.
- withdraw (emotionally or physically).
- challenge the authority of the instructor or other adult.
- refuse to comply with adult requests or to follow classroom routines.
- project blame onto others.

Strategies to prevent or reduce the intensity of student defensiveness:

- Avoid discussions of "who is right" or "who is in control".
- Approach the student privately, make eye contact, address the student in a quiet voice about his or her behavior.
- Use humor to 'defuse' conflict situation.
- Consider an apology if you have inadvertently wronged or offended the student.
- Impose appropriate consequences on peers if they are provoking the student through teasing, taunts, verbal challenges, or physical horseplay.
- Help the student to identify appropriate range of responses for the situation and to select one.
- Permit student some 'leeway' on assignment or classroom expectations (as an acknowledgement of the life- or situational stress that they might be experiencing).
- Teach the student non-stigmatizing ways to get academic help, support in the classroom.
- Direct the student to write down the main points of his or her concerns. Promise that you will read through the student's account and meet individually to discuss the problem.

- Use effective 'teacher commands' to direct the student: (1) keep each command brief, (2) state command directly rather than in "Could you please…" format, (3) use businesslike tone, avoiding anger and sarcasm, (4) avoid lengthy explanations for *why* you are making the request, (4) repeat command once if student fails to comply, then follow up with pre-determined consequences.
- Use planned ignoring (NOTE: This strategy works best when the student *lacks an audience*).

Stage 3: Aggression

Warning Signs: The student may…
- make verbal threats
- use abusive language
- assume threatening posture (e.g., with fists raised)
- physically strike out at peers or adults

Strategies to react to, prepare for or respond to student verbal or physical aggression:
- Remove other students or adults from the immediate vicinity of student (to protect their safety, eliminate an audience)
- Adopt a 'supportive stance': step slightly to the side of the student and orient your body so that you face the student obliquely at a 45- to 90-degree angle.
- Respect the student's 'personal space.' Most people interpret the distance extending outward from their body to a distance of 2-1/2 to 3 feet as a bubble of 'personal space.' To both ensure your physical safety and reduce the student's sense of threat, always stand at least a leg's length away from the student.
- Use supportive 'paraverbal' and non-verbal communication. Children are adept at 'reading' our moods and feelings through non-verbal signals such as facial expressions, and body language. Maintain a calm tone of voice and body posture to project acceptance and support for the student.
- Do not block the door. Unless you have a compelling reason to do so (e.g., with very young children), try not to block the upset child's access to the door as you approach the student. The student may interpret a blocked exit as a threat and attempt to go *around* or even *through* you to escape.
- Deliver a clear statement of choices. Here is a 3-step approach for making requests to upset students:

    1. Give the student two clear choices with clear consequences. Order the choices so that the student hears the *teacher-preferred choice* last e.g., "John, you can refuse to participate in the math assignment and be written up for detention or you can start the math assignment now and not be written up." <u>Make sure above all that you can enforce any consequences that you present to the student.</u>

    2. If the student fails to comply in a reasonable amount of time to Step 1, state clearly and firmly what you want the student to do. Include a time limit for student compliance and specify a location if necessary. For example, a teacher may tell the student, "John, I want you to return to *your desk* [location] *now* [time-frame] and *begin your math assignment* [requested behavior]."

3. If the student still fails to comply with your request, enforce alternative consequences that you have selected in advance.

- Put together a classroom crisis plan. Instructors who *plan* their responses to possible crisis situations are much more able to respond quickly and appropriately if and when such events occur. You can take charge of crisis planning by becoming familiar with your school's crisis plan, talking with staff whose rooms are near yours about how you can mutually help one another out in the event of a crisis, and teaching your students how *they* should respond (e.g., by evacuating the classroom in an orderly fashion) if a crisis situation occurs.
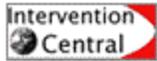
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Teacher Behavioral Strategies: A Menu

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Here is a sampling of strategies that teachers can use either to head off or to provide consequences for low- to medium-level student misbehavior:

Jim's Hints for Using...
Teacher Behavioral Strategies: A Menu

Teachers are always looking for additional ideas for managing challenging student behaviors. I developed this listing of classroom behavioral strategies based on feedback that I received from teachers in my workshops who told me what behavioral approaches *they* typically use.

This menu contains strategies that teachers can use *proactively* to head off behaviors *before* they occur.

It also provides a range of *consequences* that teachers can select from *after* a student misbehaves.

Prior to Occurrence of Behavior(s):

Break student tasks into manageable 'chunks':
Students may misbehave to escape activities that they find too hard or tedious. Consider breaking a larger task into smaller or easier 'chunks' that the student will more willingly undertake. If the student must complete a large number of subtasks, include an occasional 'fun break'.

Increase adult supervision/surveillance:
When the student's misbehavior is 'covert' (hidden), increase the adult supervision in the area. Be sure that all adults supervising a particular school setting agree on what behaviors to single out for positive or negative consequences and know how to get additional assistance if student behaviors get out of hand.

Increase 'reinforcement' quality of classroom: If a student is acting out to be ejected from a classroom, it may be that student does not find the classroom setting and/or routine to be very rewarding. The teacher can make the classroom environment more attractive in a number of ways, including by posting interesting instructional materials (e.g., bulletin board displays), boosting the pace of (and degree of student interaction in) class lecture or discussion, and including additional instructional activities of high interest to students.

Offer choice: When students are offered opportunities to make simple but meaningful choices in their classroom routine, their behaviors can improve. Examples of choice include permitting students to select who they work with on a project, negotiate when an assignment will be due, and choose what book to read for an assignment.

Offer help strategies: Misbehavior may occur when students are stuck on a work assignment and do not know how to quickly and appropriately request help without drawing undue attention to themselves. Teachers can address this problem by teaching the entire class how to request assistance in a non-disruptive way. A teacher may, for example, instruct students with questions during seatwork to post a help-signal and continue working on other assignments or approach a peer-helper for assistance.

Preview rules/behavioral expectations: Some students misbehave because they are impulsive and do not always think through the consequences of their misbehavior before they act. These students can benefit from having the teacher briefly review rules and/or behavioral expectations just before the students go into a potentially challenging situation or setting (e.g., passing through the halls; going to an assembly). If the instructor has a classroom reward system in place, he or she can strengthen the rules preview by reminding students that the class can win points for good behavior.

Preview schedule: Having the teacher preview a student's schedule daily (or even more frequently) can help those children who seem to misbehave because they do not respond well to unexpected changes in schedule or cannot remember what their schedule is.

Provide skills instruction: If the teacher determines that a child engages in inappropriate behaviors because the student lacks alternative, 'replacement' skills, the instructor should set up a plan to provide the child with the necessary skills. Any skills instruction should include plenty of examples to illustrate the skill-set being taught, demonstration (e.g., modeling, role-play) and a 'checkup' (e.g., student demonstration and verbal 'walk-through' of steps to skill) to confirm to the teacher's satisfaction that the student has acquired the skill.

Rearrange student seating or classroom setup: If elements of the classroom setting appear to contribute to the student's behavior problems, consider changing the student's seating or the classroom setup to reduce these problems. For example a student who is distracted by peers may benefit from having his or her seat moved to a more private corner of the room.

Teach student to take 'calm-down' break: Students who frequently become angry at peers or who may be set off by the excitement of large groups may be taught to (1) identify when they are getting too tense, excited, or angry, and (2) take a short break away from the setting or situation until they have calmed down sufficiently.

During and After Occurrence of Behavior(s):

Apology: Apologies are one way that humans repair the social fabric after a conflict. The student may be asked to apologize to the offended party (e.g., teacher, student, principal) in writing or in person. It is important, though, that the offending student accept blame for the incident and demonstrate authentic regret in offering the apology, or neither party will be satisfied with the outcome.

Behavioral contract: The student and teacher hammer out a written agreement that outlines: specific positive behaviors that the student is to engage in (or specific negative behaviors that he or she is to avoid), the privileges or rewards that the student will earn for complying with the

behavioral contract, and the terms by which the student is to earn the rewards (e.g., staying in his or her seat during independent reading period for three consecutive days).

Ignoring: When the student displays a problem behavior, the teacher 'ignores' the behavior (that is, the teacher does not give the student attention for the behavior).

Loss of privileges: The child is informed in advance that he or she can access a series of privileges (e.g., access to games to play, the opportunity to have 5 minutes of free time) if his or her behavior remains appropriate. The instructor instructs the student about what kind and intensity of problem behavior may result in the loss of privileges, and for how long. After this introductory phase, the instructor withdraws privileges as agreed upon whenever the student misbehaves.

Modeling (Vicarious Learning): While the target child is observing, the teacher gives specific public praise to children other than the target student when they show appropriate behaviors. When praising these behaviors, the teacher clearly describes the praiseworthy behaviors. When the target child 'imitates' the same or similar appropriate behaviors, the teacher immediately praises him or her.

Office referral: The instructor writes up a referral documenting the student's misbehavior and sends both the referral and student to the principal's office for intervention.

Over-correction: The student is required repetitively to practice a skill that will 'replace' or improve upon an inappropriate or problem behavior. For example, a student who wanders the halls without permission when taking an unsupervised bathroom break may have to stay after school one afternoon and take multiple 'practice' trips to the school bathroom. In this example, the instructor might accompany the student to monitor how promptly the student walked to, and returned from, the bathroom and to give the student feedback about how much this target behavior has improved.

Parent contact: The teacher calls, sends a note home to, or e-mails the student's parent(s) regarding the behavioral problems. The parent may be asked for advice on how the teacher can better reach and teach the child at school. The teacher may offer suggestions for appropriate parent involvement (e.g., "You may want to talk with your child about this incident, which we view as serious.").

Peer Consequences: If the teacher finds that classmates play (or could play) an important role in influencing a target child's behavior(s), the teacher may try to influence the target child's behaviors indirectly by providing consequences for selected peer behaviors.

For example, if classmates encourage the target student to make inappropriate comments by giving positive social attention (e.g., laughing), the teacher may start a group response-cost program and deduct points from the class total whenever a peer laughs at inappropriate comments. Or a teacher who wants to increase the social interactions that a socially isolated child has with her peers may reward selected peers with praise each time that they approach the isolated child in a positive manner.

Praise: When the student engages in a positive behavior that the teacher has selected to increase, the teacher praises the student for that behavior. Along with positive comments (e.g., "Great job!"), the praise statement should give specifics about the behavior the child

demonstrated that is being singled our for praise (e.g., "You really kept your attention focused on me during that last question, even when kids around you were talking!").

Private approach to student: The instructor quietly approaches the student, points out the problem behavior and how it is interfering with classwork or interrupting instruction. The instructor reminds the student of the academic task in which he or she should be engaged. The student is given an opportunity to explain his or her actions. The student is politely offered the choice to improve behavior or accept a negative consequence. Privately approaching a student can help him or her to save face and reduce the likelihood that the student will become defensive or defiant.

Promise: The instructor approaches the misbehaving student and informs him or her that the student has behaved inappropriately. The teacher asks the student to state an appropriate alternative behavior that he or she should have followed. The teacher then requests that the student promise the instructor (verbally or in writing) that he or she will not engage in this misbehavior again.

Redirection: The teacher interrupts problem behavior by calling on the student to answer a question, assigning him or her a task to carry out, or otherwise refocusing the child's attention.

Reflective Essay: The student is required to write and submit to the teacher a brief composition after displaying behaviors. At minimum, the composition would state: (1) what problem behavior the student displayed, (2) how the student could have acted in an alternative, more acceptable manner, and (3) a promise from the student to show appropriate behaviors in similar situations in the future. NOTE: Some teachers use a pre-printed structured questionnaire containing these 3 items for the student to complete.

Reprimand: In the typical reprimand, the instructor approaches the student, states that the student is misbehaving, and instructs the student to stop the misbehavior immediately. Reprimands should be used sparingly, as students may become defiant if confronted by an angry teacher in a public manner. When used, reprimands should be kept short, to avoid arguments with the student.

Response Cost: Usually, response cost programs first award a student a certain number of tokens with no conditions attached. Throughout the monitoring period, the student has a token withdrawn whenever he or she displays a behavior that is inappropriate. (These behaviors would usually have been agreed upon in advance.) The student is permitted to 'cash in' any points that he or she still retains at the end of the monitoring period or may be allowed to 'bank' the points toward a future reward or privilege.

Restitution: The student engages in an activity that actually or symbolically restores the environment, setting, or social situation that his or her misbehavior had damaged. For example, a student who marks up a wall with graffiti may be required to work afterschool under supervision of custodial staff to wash the wall and removing the offending markings.

Rewarding alternative (positive) behaviors: The instructor calls on the student or provides other positive attention or incentives only during those times that the student is showing appropriate social and academic behaviors. The same positive attention or consequences are withheld during times when the student misbehaves or does not engage in academics.

Rules review: The teacher approaches the misbehaving student and (a) has him or her read off the posted class rules, (b) asks the student which of those rules his or her current behavior is violating, and (c) has the student state what positive behavior he or she will engage in instead.

Timeout/Detention/Inschool suspension: The student is removed from the classroom because of a behavioral infraction. In timeout, the student's exclusion from the classroom may be very short (3-5 minutes). With in-school suspension, the student may be removed from instruction for longer periods (e.g., half a day). Detention may require that the student spend time in a non-rewarding setting but that consequence may be deferred until after school to prevent loss of learning.

Extending Learning Across Time & Space: The Power of Generalization

Teachers have every right to celebrate when they finally succeed in teaching struggling students to use academic or behavioral strategies in their classrooms. Despite this encouraging start, though, teachers often still face an important challenge with their interventions. A frequent stumbling block to an effective intervention outcome is that the student fails to transfer academic or behavioral strategies to other settings or situations where those strategies would be most useful. That is, students may not *generalize* their positive behavior changes, which can greatly reduce the overall positive impact of classroom interventions.

To appreciate the importance of generalization, consider these examples:

- Sarah, a 4th grade student, has a one-year reading delay and needs lots of practice in reading to increase her rate of decoding. However, she never picks up a book outside of school.

- Jack, an 8th-grader, gets into fights frequently and has poor relationships with peers. He participates in a social-skills group. When interacting with other students under the watchful eye of the school counselor, Jack shows that he is able both to identify when he becomes angry and employ several strategies to calm himself down. In unstructured settings such as the lunchroom or hallway, though, Jack continues to get into arguments and shoving matches with other students.

- Thomas has learned terrific study skills in his 7th-grade social studies class. His class notes were once a shambles—but now are neatly written and thorough. In science class, however, Thomas' notes continue to be messy and incomplete, and his science test grades suffer as a result.

While the student scenarios presented here vary, they share a single characteristic: The student has failed to transfer, or generalize, learned behaviors to new settings or situations.

When developing school-based interventions, most educators simply 'treat and hope' (Rutherford & Nelson, 1988). That is, they put together research-based strategies to improve student behaviors or academic performance—and then *hope* that the student will generalize the successful strategies rather than explicitly train the student to apply these new, more adaptive strategies to other situations in which they would be useful.

There are several explanations for why a student may fail to generalize a skill to a new setting or situation.

- One barrier to generalization is that the student may not be able to identify relevant cues in the new setting that would trigger that student's use of the target skill. For example, our 4th-grade

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student Sarah is not likely to read at home if there are few books available there to remind her that she can choose to read as a leisure activity.

- A second barrier to generalization may be that the student is not reinforced for using a target skill in the new setting or situation. Thomas, the 7th-grader, takes polished notes in social studies because the teacher praises and encourages him for his effort—but he does not put effort into writing his science notes because the science teacher pays little attention to note-taking

- As yet another generalization barrier, a student's newly learned behaviors may be suppressed in specific setting because the student's *inappropriate* behaviors continue to be unintentionally rewarded, or reinforced, in that setting. So Jack, the 8th-grade student, shows appropriate social skills in a group but does not transfer those same skills to the hallway or lunchroom because he is powerfully reinforced with plenty of peer attention when he gets into arguments and shoving matches with other students. Jack is unlikely to try out new, socially appropriate ways of interacting with peers in natural settings until his reinforcement for engaging in the new behaviors outweighs the payoff he receives for the old, maladaptive behavior.

The following are some ideas that teachers can try when programming for generalization (McConnell, 1987; Rutherford & Nelson, 1988; Stokes & Baer 1977; Stokes & Osnes, 1988). While there are many more strategies for promoting generalization than are contained in this handout, the tips outlined here do address challenges that teachers commonly face in getting students to transfer skills to the settings or situations in which they are most needed.

The student has learned a skill or strategy well in one setting. The goal now is to have the student transfer that skill or strategy to other appropriate settings. ('Generalization to other settings')

- *Prepare Strategy Sheets.* Once the student has mastered a skill or strategy in one setting, assist the student in creating a 'strategy sheet' that captures in checklist format the key steps that make up the strategy. Starting in the setting in which the student already successfully uses the strategy, train the student to use the checklist as an independent self-check to verify that he or she is implementing the strategy correctly. (If the targeted strategy is 'note-taking', for example, a strategy checklist might include items such as 'Brought paper and writing materials to class', 'Sat near the teacher', 'Wrote down all key points', 'Highlighted unfamiliar vocabulary', etc.) Once the student has demonstrated reliably that he or she can use the checklist correctly, meet with the student and identify other settings where the student would benefit from using the strategy. Make a list of those settings. Establish the goal for the student that he or she will use the strategy in the new settings whenever appropriate. Have the student log the times when he or she actually uses the strategy in those new settings. Reward (and praise) the student for instances in which the student successfully employs the skill or strategy under the appropriate circumstances in the new setting.

- *Encourage Other Teachers to 'Coach' the Strategy.* Talk with other educators in your school who work with your student. Describe for them the skill or strategy that your student is able to use reliably in your classroom and that you would like to see generalized to other settings.

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Encourage these educators to prompt the student to use the strategy when appropriate in their classrooms. Request that your colleagues keep you informed—and be sure to reward and praise the student whenever teachers outside of your room report that the student has successfully used the strategy!

- *Identify the 'Look-Fors' That Trigger Use of the Strategy.* 'Help your student to identify key characteristics--or 'look-fors'--of settings in which he or she should use the selected skill or strategy. A student attempting to generalize note-taking skills, for example, may identify 'The teacher lectures to the whole class' as a signal that he should use his note-taking skills. Another student may have learned to take a short discretionary time-out whenever she becomes overly upset with difficult classwork. This student might define 'I try to do schoolwork and I feel a knot in my stomach' as a physical indicator that she should use the time-out strategy, no matter what class she is attending. As an additional support for generalization, inform other educators about the particular strategy the student needs to use in other settings and the key indicators the student has identified that should trigger his or her use of the strategy. If these staff members notice that the student has overlooked an opportunity to employ the strategy in their classrooms, they can approach and prompt that student to use the strategy.

- *Use a Skill Diary.* For *academic* skills or strategies, ask the student to keep a skill diary in which the student records those situations or settings when he or she has successfully used the strategy. Meet with the student periodically to review entries and reinforce the student's efforts. When conferencing with the student, ask to see examples of those student work products that were created using the skill (e.g., copies of class notes, essays, completed math problems)—both to verify that the student actually used the target strategy as claimed and to check that the strategy is indeed helping the student to improve performance.

- *Standardize Routines Across Classrooms.* Collaborate with other teachers with whom you share students to develop a single, standardized set of general behavior and academic management techniques across all of your classrooms. Students often discover that teacher expectations vary dramatically depending on the classroom they happened to be sitting in. In fact, when faced with differing expectations across classrooms, students are likely to view each room as a separate kingdom governed by its own set of unfathomable rules. We should not be surprised, then, if students who move among highly variable classroom environments fail to generalize skills learned in one of these settings to others. In contrast, when a student encounters uniform academic routines and behavioral expectations in each classroom, that student is more likely independently to generalize adaptive academic and behavioral skills and strategies from one setting to all settings.

The student has responded well to an intervention that includes reinforcement for appropriate behaviors. Now the teacher wants to fade the reinforcement or make the program easier to manage while maintaining the positive behavioral effects. ('Generalization to other reinforcers')

- *Wean the Student From Rewards to Privileges.* Create a set of privileges that you believe the student is likely to find motivating. Sample privileges might be: 'The student is allowed to walk

independently through hallways without adult supervision.' 'The student may be selected by the teacher to run errands' etc. When the student displays a stable period (e.g., several weeks) of behavior improvement under the individualized reinforcement program, meet with the student to praise the improvement. Let the student know that you plan to discontinue the reward program because the student has shown that he or she can now be trusted to transition to higher-level privileges. Review those privileges with the student. Let the student know that he or she can continue to access the classroom privileges so long as the student continues to show good behaviors.

- *Pair Rewards With Naturally Occurring Classroom Reinforcement.* Identify opportunities that naturally occur in your classroom to positively reinforce the student. Examples include teacher or peer praise, social interactions, exposure to interesting learning opportunities, and improved grades. As the student earns rewards under his or her individualized reinforcement program, pair those 'artificial' rewards with natural reinforcers that also appear to motivate the student.

  For example, a teacher finds that a behaviorally challenging boy in her class responds very well to praise—but only when that praise is delivered in a private conversation rather than publicly. So whenever the teacher pulls the student aside to give him an earned reward, she uses that opportunity to quietly praise his effort. Eventually, the teacher lets the student know that his behavior has improved to the point where the reward program can be discontinued. However, she continues to meet with him for brief, private 'pep talks', during which she continues to praise his sustained behavioral gains. In this example, praise—a reinforcer naturally available in the classroom--is now maintaining the student's behavioral improvements, having replaced the more artificial set of rewards previously needed to shape the student's behavior.

- *Transition from Individual to Classwide Rewards.* Create a menu of classwide incentives for appropriate behavior that can be accessed by any student. (For example, any student in the class who displays good behaviors through an entire day may be allowed to spend the last 10 minutes of class in a supervised activity at the gym.)

  Your eventual goal is to replace a target student's individualized rewards with the class menu of rewards. Once a target student is able to bring his or her behaviors into line through the use of individualized incentives, the student can be weaned off those individual rewards and instead join peers in selecting earned reinforcers from the classwide reward menu. This approach has two advantages: First, a classwide reward system is often highly motivating and may well bring about substantial improvements in the entire group's behaviors. Second, the target student becomes more fully integrated with 'typical' peers when he or she is able to share in their rewards.

- *Give the Student Responsibility for Monitoring Behaviors and Earned Rewards.* As the target student demonstrates behavioral success, train that student to monitor his or her own behaviors (e.g., using a daily self-monitoring chart). Inform the student that he or she is responsible for (1) tracking those self-ratings, (2) noting when a reinforcer has been earned, and (3) approaching the teacher to receive a reward. Of course, the teacher should

occasionally 'spot-check' the student's self-ratings to ensure that the student is accurately rating his or her behaviors.

Changes in the classroom environment are required to fully support the student's behavior changes. ('Modifying the setting to support target behavior')

- *Teach the Student to Recruit Reinforcement.* Train the target student to seek reinforcement from others in appropriate ways that support his or her behavioral targets. For example, a student whose attention often wanders during independent seatwork may be trained to politely and quietly ask a peer for help in understanding directions or finding his place in a group assignment. Or a student who often fails to complete classwork but finds teacher attention to be very motivating may be taught to 'recruit' teacher praise by reliably turning in completed assignments that demonstrate her best effort.

- *Train Peers to Be Helpers.* Teach classmates routines for providing friendly assistance to one another. Training peers as helpers can foster a positive learning environment, one in which your target student is more likely to be reinforced for taking risks and trying out new, positive behaviors.

  For example, you might train students to assist peers who lose their place in assignments, politely redirect neighboring students whenever they engage in distracting off-task behaviors during learning activities, or check in with 'peer buddies' at the end of the day to make sure that they have written down their homework assignments correctly and have the necessary materials to complete their homework.. Reward these peer helping behaviors with praise. Also consider the option of assigning 'prize-points' to student helpers that can be redeemed for rewards or privileges.

- *Institute a Classwide Reward System.* Put a classwide reward system in place to suppress group negative behaviors that can disrupt the learning environment and undermine a target student's attempts to try out new, appropriate behaviors in the class setting. A teacher might set up a simple group reward program, for example, in which the entire class is awarded 20 'good behavior' points for each morning and 20 points for each afternoon in which they show consistently positive behavior. The class is promised a pizza party when they have accumulated 1200 points. However, the group will fail to earn points in a given morning or afternoon if they persist in negative behaviors after two teacher warnings. Negative behaviors might include talking during teacher-directed lessons, laughing at another student's misbehavior, or engaging in teasing or putdowns. A group behavior plan can help to improve the learning environment and also prevent a target student from being picked on by peers or being encouraged to misbehave.

Other generalization challenges:

- *Diversify Student Responses.* Your student may have successfully learned a very narrowly focused behavior but not yet learned how to generalize that behavior to a larger 'response-class' (group of functionally equivalent behaviors). For example, a teacher may have a child with cognitive delays who has learned to greet people by saying "hi" but has not yet learned to

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generalize his response by accessing a larger pool of possible greetings (e.g., "Good morning", "Hello", "How are you?"). In this situation, that instructor might first explicitly teach the student a range of acceptable variations on the learned behavior, next reinforce the student for appropriate use of varied examples from the larger response class in a controlled setting, and finally reinforce the student for using generalized behaviors in real-world settings.

You may also want to teach the student to distinguish between examples and non-examples of a response class so that the student can eventually judge independently whether a particular behavior is appropriate for use within the context of a specific setting or situation. To return to our example, the teacher might train the student to hear a word or phrase and be able to indicate whether it is or is not typically used as a social greeting.

- *Help the Student to Retain Skills Over Time.* Your student appears to have mastered a strategy or skill during one class session but seems to have forgotten that skill by the next class session ('generalization across time').

  Here are some ideas to try:

  Create a checklist for the student that contains the essential steps of the skill or strategy. Have the student adopt a routine of previewing the steps of the checklist just prior to the class or activity in which the student will need to use the strategy. (An eventual goal may be to have the student *memorize* the key steps of the strategy—perhaps by condensing those steps into an acronym or other memory technique.)

  A group instructional strategy that strengthens skill retention is for the teacher to open a class lesson with a brief review of a previously taught skill or concept. Kicking off the lesson with a quick review of previous content will prime your target student with the essential steps of the strategy precisely when he or she will need the information to apply to the current lesson. And your whole class will be more likely to retain past instructional material through this review.

  If your student has difficulty in recalling a strategy, don't be too quick to jump in with the answer. Instead, consider using 'partial prompts'. Partial prompts give your student hints about how to proceed in his or her problem solving without simply supplying the answer: They are instructional questions or directives that offer the student just enough information to recall the next step in the strategy or skill. Then the student is encouraged to continue with the assignment independently if possible. If a student is stuck on a long-division math computation problem, fir instance, the teacher may say, "Point to the number that you will be dividing....Now point to the number that you will divide by...Tell me what the next step is that you will follow." Partial prompts require students to remain *active participants* in academic work, rather than allowing them to assume a posture of learned helplessness.

  And, finally, don't overlook this simple tip: Ask the struggling student to 'think aloud' by stating what he or she remembers of the skill or strategy that should be used. You may be surprised to discover that the student is able to accurately recall most of the strategy and needs only minor teacher assistance to solve the problem or complete the assignment.

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Working With Defiant Kids: Communication Tools for Teachers

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.

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.

  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*.

One final tip about 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!"*

■ *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 (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:

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."
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."
3. Spe*cific 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."
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).

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Dodging the Power-Struggle Trap: Ideas for Teachers

Here is a scenario that commonly unfolds in many schools: A student behaves in a way that disrupts the class. The teacher publicly reprimands the student for misbehaving. The student makes a disrespectful comment in return. The teacher approaches the student and in a loud voice tells the student that he *"had better shape up"* or *"be kicked out of the class."* The student responds by standing up and verbally abusing the teacher. The instructor calls for an administrator, who comes to the room and escorts the angry student to the office to be disciplined.

In this power-struggle, neither the teacher nor the student wins. While the teacher may get some short-term relief by ejecting the student from the room, she has lost valuable teaching time because of the confrontation. The student may be happy to escape the class---but he is certainly not learning anything while sitting in the principal's office.

Teachers who want to dodge the 'power-struggle' trap can use several sets of techniques to avert confrontations with students and still maintain classroom discipline. The instructor first makes sure to *disengage* from the power struggle and then uses tactics to *interrupt* the student's escalating anger and to *deescalate* the potential confrontation.

Disengaging Tactics. The teacher's most important objective when faced with a defiant or non-compliant student is to remain outwardly calm. Educators who react to defiant behavior by becoming visibly angry, raising their voices, or attempting to intimidate the student may actually succeed only in making the *student's* oppositional behavior worse! While the strategies listed here may calm an oppositional student, their main purpose is to help the *teacher* to keep his or her cool. Remember: any conflict requires at least two people. A power struggle can be avoided if the instructor *does not choose* to take part in that struggle.

Disengaging tactics are those that allow the teacher to keep his or her cool in order to manage the conflict situation in a professional manner. However, these tactics are *not* an excuse for educators to look the other way and refuse to get involved when students are misbehaving.

To disengage from potential power struggles, the teacher can:

- 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.

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- 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 instructors from inadvertently 'rewarding' misbehaving students with lots of negative adult attention.

- 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.

Interrupting Tactics. When students become upset, they may not be able to control the headlong rush of their own anger. In such situations, the teacher can use interrupting tactics--well-timed, supportive techniques that 'interrupt' the escalation of student anger. These 'interrupters' sometimes have the potential to rechannel a potential teacher-student *confrontation* into a productive *conversation*. As described here, interrupting tactics are *positive* and *respectful* in nature: a teacher who tries to shout down or talk over a defiant student is more likely to inflame the confrontation than to calm it.
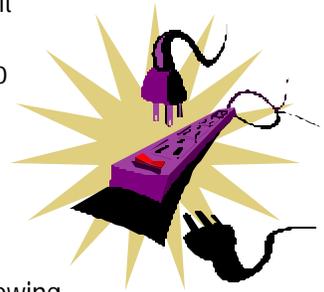
To interrupt the escalation of student anger, the teacher can:

- 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 instructor 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 or her to the office on an errand, with the expectation that—by the time the child returns to the classroom—he or she will have calmed down.

- Allow the student a 'cool down' break. Select a corner of the room (or area outside the classroom with adult supervision) where the target student can take a brief 'respite break' whenever he or she feels angry or upset. Be sure to make cool-down breaks available to *all* students in the classroom, to avoid singling out only those children with anger-control issues. Whenever a student becomes upset and defiant, the teacher offers to talk the situation over with that student once he or she has calmed down and then directs the student to the cool-down corner. (E.g., *"Angelo, I want to talk with you about what is upsetting you, but first you need to calm down. Take five minutes in the cool-down corner and then come over to my desk so we can talk."*) Teachers sometimes find success in having the student engage in a reflective exercise while taking a cool-down break. For example, one instructor likes to give students the option of writing or tape-recording a private message to the teacher to explain the incident that made them angry.

- Paraphrase the essential points of the student's concerns (Lanceley, 1999). Many students lack effective negotiation skills in dealing with adults. As a result, these students may become angry and defensive when they try to express a complaint to the teacher—even when that complaint is well founded. The instructor can show that he or she wants to understand the student's concern by summing up the crucial points of that concern (paraphrasing) in his or her own words. Examples of paraphrase comments include *'Let me be sure that I understand you correctly…', 'Are you telling me that…?', 'It sounds to me like these are your concerns:…'* When teachers engage in 'active listening' by using paraphrasing, they demonstrate a respect for the student's point of view and can also improve their own understanding of the student's problem.

- Ask open-ended questions to better understand the problem situation and find possible solutions (Lanceley, 2001). The instructor may pose *who, what, where, when,* and *how* questions. Some sample questions are *"What do you think made you angry when you were talking with Billy?"* and *"Where were you when you realized that you had misplaced your science book?"* One caution: Avoid asking "why" questions (Lanceley, 2001) because they can imply that you are blaming the student (e.g., *"Why did you get into that fight with Jerry?"*). Also, the student may become even more frustrated when asked a 'why' question, because he or she may not be able to answer it!

Deescalating Tactics. When a person is very angry or upset, that individual frequently will demonstrate poor judgment and make impulsive decisions (Lanceley, 1999). One important objective for the teacher is to know strategies to help a confrontational student to reduce his or her anger level and reestablish self-control. Deescalating tactics are those that reduce the sense of acute threat or defensiveness that the student may be experiencing and lower the emotional tension in the interaction between teacher and student. Teachers who use these calming tactics, however, do not allow students to escape appropriate disciplinary consequences for their behavior. An instructor might decide, for example, to postpone disciplining an aggressive or confrontational student until he or she manages to lower that student's level of anger. After the behavioral outburst is over, though, that teacher should arrange a conference with the student to debrief about the incident and impose any disciplinary steps that seem warranted.

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To reduce the student's anger level and calm him or her, the teacher can:

- Replace negative words in teacher requests with positive words (Braithwaite, 2001). When an instructor'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 instructor 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 instructor'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.

   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 instructor 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 instructor 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 come up with good ideas for resolving the problem.

- Use humor to defuse a confrontation. By responding with humor to a defiant student, the teacher signals to that student in a face-saving manner that his or her behavior is not yet so disruptive or confrontational as to be a violation of the behavior code. The student can join the teacher in laughing off the event and return to participation in class activities. Instructors should exercise caution, though, when using humor to defuse confrontations. First, teachers should never use humor in a sarcastic or teasing manner, as the student is quite likely to feel disrespected and become even angrier as a result (Walker, 1997). Second, if an instructor employs humor successfully to defuse a tense situation with a student, the adult should still make it a point to meet with the student privately later to talk about the incident and to ensure that the student understands the inappropriateness of his or her confrontational behavior (Braithwaite, 2001). Above all, the teacher does not want the student to feel 'rewarded' with humor for confronting the adult, as this response may actually make the student more likely to react aggressively toward the teacher in the future.

- Label the emotion that the student's behavior appears to convey. A teacher, for example, who observes a student slamming her books down on her desk and muttering to herself after returning from gym class might say, *"Angelina, you seem angry. Could you tell me what is wrong?"* 'Emotion labeling' (Lanceley, 1999) can be a helpful tactic in deescalating classroom confrontations because it prompts the student to acknowledge his or her current feeling-state directly rather than broadcasting it indirectly through acting-out behavior. Once a powerful emotion such as anger is labeled, the teacher and student can then talk about it, figure out what may have triggered it, and jointly find solutions that will mitigate it. Emotion labeling should generally be done in a tentative manner (*"John, you sound nervous…"*, *"Alice, you appear frustrated…"*), since one can never know with complete certainty what feelings another person is experiencing.

- 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 instructor 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*

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watching". This instructor may 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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The Behavior Reporter
On-Line Behavior Report Card Generator
A service of www.interventioncentral.org

Behavior Report Card

Student: _____

Teacher: _____ Classroom: _____

Directions: Review each of the Behavior Report Card items below. For each item, rate the degree to which the student showed the behavior or met the behavior goal.

Date	__ / __ / __	__ / __ / __	__ / __ / __	__ / __ / __	__ / __ / __
Behavioral Target	**M**	**T**	**W**	**Th**	**F**
The student focused his or her attention on teacher instructions, classroom lessons and assigned work. Select the degree to which the goal was met: 1...2...3..|.4....5...6.|.7...8....9 Never/Seldom Sometimes Usually/Always	_____ Pts	_____ Pts	_____ Pts	_____ Pts	_____ Pts
The student sat in class without fidgeting or squirming more than most peers. Select the degree to which the goal was met: 1...2...3..|.4....5...6.|.7...8....9 Never/Seldom Sometimes Usually/Always	_____ Pts	_____ Pts	_____ Pts	_____ Pts	_____ Pts
The student remembered academic instructions and directions without needing extra reminders. Select the degree to which the goal was met: 1...2...3..|.4....5...6.|.7...8....9 Never/Seldom Sometimes Usually/Always	_____ Pts	_____ Pts	_____ Pts	_____ Pts	_____ Pts
The student refrained from repetitive motor behaviors (e.g., table-tapping) and did not play with objects during academic or work time. Select the degree to which the goal was met: 1...2...3..|.4....5...6.|.7...8....9 Never/Seldom Sometimes Usually/Always	_____ Pts	_____ Pts	_____ Pts	_____ Pts	_____ Pts

Reinforcer Survey

Directions: Review each of the items below with your student. For each item, mark whether the student finds it to be a preferred reinforcer or reward.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot
The student will be appointed timekeeper for an activity, announcing a 5-minute warning near end of the activity, and informing the group when the activity is over.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot
The student will spend time (with appropriate supervision) on the Internet at academic sites.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot
The student will read aloud to the class.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot
The student will select a class learning activity from a list of choices.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot
The student will read a story aloud to younger children.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot
The student will play academic computer games.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot
The student will read a book of his or her choice.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot
The student will listen to books-on-tape.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot
The student will go to the library to select a book.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot
The student will help to design a class or hall bulletin board.

The student will sit at a place of his or her choosing during

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot

story time or independent seat work.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot

The student will have first choice in his or her seating assignments.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot

The student will receive an IOU redeemable for credit on one wrong item on a future in-class quiz or homework assignment.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot

The student will choose a story for the teacher to read to the class.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot

The student will help the teacher to prepare or present a lesson.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot

The student will invite an adult "reading buddy" of his or her choice to the classroom to read with him or her.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot

The student will help the custodian.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot

The student will help the library media specialist.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot

The student will help a specials teacher (e.g., art, music, gym).

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot

The student will take a note to the main office.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot

The student will be awarded a trophy, medal, or other honor for good behavior or a caring attitude.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot

The student will receive praise during school-wide announcements for good behavior or a caring attitude.

The student likes the item:
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot

The student will be praised privately by the teacher or another adult.

The student likes the item:	
_Not at All _A Little _A Lot	***The student will receive a silent "thumbs up" or other sign from teacher indicating praise and approval.***
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	***The student will have the teacher call the student's parent or guardian to give positive feedback about him or her.***
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	***The student will have the teacher write a positive note to the student's parent or guardian.***
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	***The student will receive a "good job" note from the teacher.***
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	***The student will be allowed to call his or her parents.***
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	***The student will have lunch in the classroom with the teacher.***
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	***The student will sit near the teacher.***
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	***The student will have lunch with the teacher and can bring a friend of his or her choosing.***
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	***The student will receive candy, gum, or other edible treats.***
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	***The student will select the pizza toppings for a class pizza party.***
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	***The student will receive a pass to "Get out of one homework assignment item of your choice".***
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	***The student will complete chores or helpful activities around his or her classroom.***

The student will deliver school-wide announcements.

The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will work at the school store.**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will be dismissed to go to a favorite activity such as recess 2 minutes early.**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will receive a coupon to be redeemed at a later time for a preferred activity.**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will be selected by the teacher to accompany another student to a fun activity.**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will get extra gym time with another class.**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will get extra recess time with another class.**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will choose and listen to a music selection.**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will play non-academic computer games.**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will select a fun activity from the "Activity Shelf" (stocked with play materials, games).**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will watch part or all of a video (pre-selected by the teacher and cleared with the student's parent).**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will work on a jigsaw or other puzzle.**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will write or draw, using a blackboard/whiteboard/easel paper.**

The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will spend time (with appropriate supervision) on the Internet at recreational sites.**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will be able to take one turn in an ongoing board game with a staff member (e.g., chess). The staff member will then take their turn at a convenient time.**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will 'adopt' a younger student and be allowed to check in with that student as an older mentor.**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will select friends to sit with to complete a cooperative learning activity.**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will select a friend as a "study buddy" to work with on an in-class assignment.**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will help a classmate with an academic assignment.**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will be given responsibility for assigning other students in the class to helping roles, chores, or tasks.**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will be allowed to post artwork or school work on a class or hall bulletin board.**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will post drawings or other artwork in a public place such as on a hall bulletin board.**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will post a written composition or other writing assignment in a public place such as on a hall bulletin board.**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will be permitted to sit at a reserved table in the lunchroom.**
The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will select a fun activity for the class from a list of choices.**

The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will take the lead position in line.**

The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will tell a joke or riddle to the class.**

The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will play a game with a friend.**

The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will be given a 'raffle ticket' on which the student writes his or her name and drops into a fishbowl for later prize drawings.**

The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will draw a prize from the class 'prize box'.**

The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will earn behavior points or tokens to be redeemed for prizes or privileges.**

The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will have first choice in selecting work materials (e.g., scissors, crayons, paper).**

The student likes the item: _Not at All _A Little _A Lot	**The student will receive a sticker.**