

An Overview and Tips for Responding to Challenging and Disruptive Behavior

Brian Cavanaugh, Ed.M.

University of Maine

Brian.cavanaugh@maine.edu

Our Assumptions

- Rules and Expectations are posted and have been taught
- Your continuum of consequences is clear and understood by students
- Almost all students are academically engaged

Addressing Disruptive Behavior: What NOT to do

- Have your intervention be more significant than the problem behavior
- Disrupt the flow of instruction (unless it is a major problem behavior/unsafe)
- Embarrass or belittle students
- Try to avoid asking, “What are we supposed to be doing” type questions

Goals When Addressing Disruptions

- Minimize attention to student
- Re-engage student to academically engaged/compliant behavior
- Acknowledge/ Reinforce expected behavior

(Colvin, 2010)

Provide a Continuum of Response

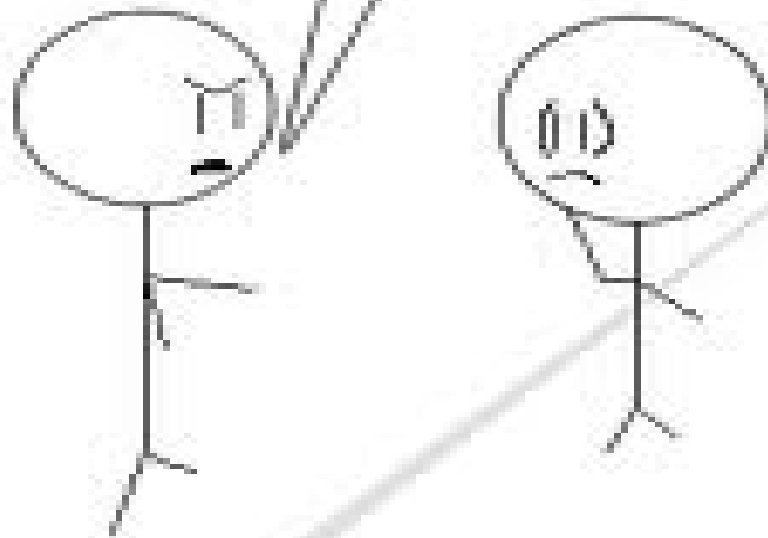
- Maintain the flow of instruction
- Praise and acknowledge on-task students
- Respond to and redirect misbehavior discreetly, respectfully, and proactively

Responding/Redirecting Misbehavior: Continue the Continuum

1. Proximity
2. Brief, quiet, calm reminders of expected behavior (“It’s time to take out our reading books”)
3. Disengage after interactions to reduce attention to student
4. Genuinely offer assistance (“We are answering the first 3 questions, I can help you get started.”)
5. Briefly, acknowledge appropriate behavior if/when it occurs (“Good job getting started”)

(Colvin, 2010)

Great! Now look what you're done!



Testing Limits

When praise, prompts and brief reminders haven't worked...

- Provide the student with a choice-calm and brief (“Sarah, you need to start your math. If you choose not to you will have to do it during morning recess. You have a few seconds to decide.”)
- Disengage and allow the student to decide
- Brief acknowledgement if they comply
- Follow-through with consequence
- Follow-up with more detailed conversation later on

Resources

- Colvin, G. (2010). *Defusing disruptive behavior in the classroom*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Colvin, G. (2009). *Managing noncompliance and defiance in the classroom*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.