

Book Study

Prepared by the
Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) Project

Defusing Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom

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(Corwin, 2010)

Book Description:

Even if proactive positive behavior support systems are in place, teachers will still encounter problem behavior in the classroom on a frequent basis. The teacher's initial response to that behavior will determine, to a large extent, whether that behavior is defused or escalated. Interaction pathways are important for understanding the role of interaction between teacher and student responses. This book provides teachers with steps for defusing common behavior problems in the classroom by focusing on students behaving appropriately, delaying the teacher's response to the student exhibiting the problem behavior, maintaining the flow of instruction, and using other intervention strategies.

Target Audience:

- **Structuring Teams**
- **Behavior Specialists**
- **Building Leadership Teams**
- **General Staff**
- **Tier 1 Teachers**
- **Tier 2 Teachers**
- **Elementary Teams**
- **Secondary Teams**

Chapter 1 – Seven Key Behavioral Principles

Brief Overview: This chapter describes seven key principles that underline the strategies for responding to common behavior problems that are described later in the book. These seven key principles are: the goals of correction procedures; the role of teacher attention; the nature of behavior intensity, escalation, and defusion; the nature of behavior chains; the role of behavioral extinction; and establishing fluent responses.

Discussion Questions:

1. Look at the three main goals for correcting problem behavior (Box 1.1). Do you agree with the author that the first two goals would apply to academic corrections as well as behavior corrections?
2. Discuss the Becker study regarding how teacher attention can reinforce a problem behavior. Have you ever experienced a similar situation when trying to correct a problem behavior?
3. Review the key points for behavioral intensity, escalation, and defusion (Box 1.3). Does everyone agree with point #4?
4. What is an interaction pathway? Why is it preferable to change the teacher's responses early in the chain rather than trying to change the final student behavior in the chain?
5. Often when students are placed on a behavior plan, teachers are warned that the behavior will get worse before it gets better. How does the section on extinction and extinction bursts help explain this?
6. Discuss why it is so difficult not to take student misbehavior personally.
7. What is fluency? Which is the most critical response for a teacher when faced with problem behavior?

Chapter 2 – Defusing Off-Task Behavior

Brief Overview:

It is important to manage off-task behavior effectively and efficiently, both to avoid lost learning time and to avoid low-level off-task behavior from escalating into more serious behavior problems. As a prerequisite, proactive classroom practices need to be in place. Strategies for defusing off-task behavior are described, some of which are designed to enable the teacher to delay responding to those behaviors.

Discussion Questions:

1. There are seven prerequisite conditions that need to be in place for defusing off-task behavior to be effective. What are these prerequisite conditions? Do you have all of these prerequisite conditions present in your classroom?
2. Pick one of the off-task illustrations. Look at the analysis of teacher and student responses. Can you think of another teacher response early in the interaction pathway that might have led to a different student response?
3. Why is it important to maintain the flow of instruction when off-task behavior occurs?
4. Discuss each of the suggested details for redirecting student behavior. Why do you think the author made these recommendations?
5. One of the most effective instructional practices is to develop and teach a procedure or routine for typical classroom tasks (see the work of Robert Marzano, Harry Wong, or www.pbis.org). After reading this chapter, do you agree that it would be important to develop and teach a procedure/routine for how to ask for help in the classroom? If so, why?

Chapter 3 – Defusing Rule Infractions

Brief Overview:

Teachers need to develop, teach, practice, and reinforce rules and expectations to ensure they are sustained during the course of the year. A seven-step procedure is described in this chapter to defuse rule-infraction behavior, emphasizing maintaining the flow of instruction, avoiding power struggles, and putting the responsibility on the student to solve the problem.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the four prerequisite conditions for ensuring that students are fully aware of the rules that are in place in the classroom? Are these conditions present in your classroom?
2. Discuss each of the suggested steps for defusing rule infractions in the classroom. Why do you think the author made the recommendation that you request the student to take care of the problem? Why do you think the author suggests providing problem-solving options if needed?
3. Review the defusing rule infraction illustration in Box 3.2. Discuss the comments at the end. Do you agree with comment #2?
4. Complete the practice vignette on page 61. You can do this as a small group activity, or each person can complete the practice and then compare answers with each other.

Chapter 4 – Defusing Disrespectful Behavior

Brief Overview:

Two aspects of respecting each other that educators need to establish are respect between students and their peers and respect between students and their teachers. This chapter describes procedures for defusing disrespectful behavior of students toward their teachers in the classroom. Most important to the procedures is to not take the disrespectful behavior personally.

Discussion Questions:

1. Prerequisite conditions are practices teachers and schools engage in to ensure that students clearly understand what respectful behavior is. What are these prerequisite conditions? Are they in place in your school?
2. What are the eight steps recommended for managing disrespect? Which one is most important? Why do you think it is also the most challenging?
3. Discuss the illustration in Box 4.2. What teacher behaviors do you think increase the likelihood that in Step 6 the student would rejoin the group (the first-case vignette)? What teacher behaviors would increase the likelihood of the student maintaining noncompliant behavior (the second-case vignette)? Do you agree that sometimes, no matter what the teacher does, the student will continue to engage in noncompliant behavior? If so, why?
4. Complete the practice vignette on page 78. You can do this as a small group activity, or each person can complete the practice and then compare answers with each other.

Chapter 5 – Defusing Agitation

Brief Overview:

Students may display agitation in the classroom by becoming even more upset or by shutting down. Sometimes it is difficult for the teacher to recognize the signs a student is becoming agitated because he or she is instructing many different students. However, it is important to catch the signs of agitation early, before the student begins to exhibit more serious behaviors. There are many different calming strategies a teacher can use in the classroom, but the most important, and first step, is teacher empathy.

Discussion Questions:

1. Describe the ways agitation can be shown through increases in behavior.
2. Describe the ways agitation can be shown through decreases in behavior.
3. Why do you think the author describes the procedures to defuse agitation as a short-term remedy? How should recurring agitation be addressed?
4. What are the six steps for addressing agitated behavior in the classroom? Have you ever used any of the calming strategies described? How did they work?
5. Discuss the illustration in Box 5.2, especially the comments at the end.
6. Complete the practice vignette on page 94. You can do this as a small group activity, or each person can complete the practice and then compare answers with each other.

Chapter 6 – Defusing Noncompliance and Limit Testing

Brief Overview:

Noncompliance and limit testing can interfere with classroom learning. The key step is the teacher's initial response. As with other challenging behaviors, it is important to avoid engaging with the student, to delay responding, and to maintain the flow of instruction. The steps for defusing place the decision for cooperating with the teacher's request on the student.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the difference between noncompliance and limit testing?
2. What are the prerequisite conditions for addressing noncompliance and limit testing? Why are they important prerequisites?
3. What are the six steps for addressing noncompliance and limit testing?
4. What are the four parts to Step 5: providing focus on student decision making?
5. Discuss the illustration in Box 6.2, especially the comments at the end. Note comment #2, which compares this vignette to the one in Box 6.1. How are the teacher's responses different in the two vignettes?
6. Complete the practice vignette on page 112. You can do this as a small group activity, or each person can complete the practice and then compare answers with each other. Also, compare your responses to the key in Appendix M.