

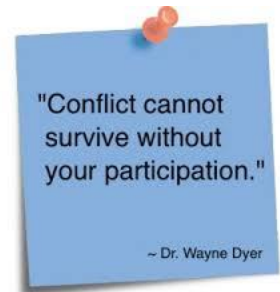
# PBIS QUESTION

## What are proactive steps that can be taken to minimize conflicts with defiant students?

The bulk of the information provided below is acquired from, *Working With Defiant Kids: Communication Tools for Teachers* | *Intervention Central*, <https://www.interventioncentral.org/behavioral-interventions/communication-tools/working-defiant-kids-communication-tools-teachers>. I recommend that you take a few moments and read the full article as well as explore this website, it is highly informative.

## What are important points to keep in mind when working with a defiant or noncompliant student?

- Conflicts are social power struggles and must always involve at least two parties.
- Teachers who get pulled into power struggles with students may not realize that they are often simply reacting to student provocation.
- **A student gains control over a conflict if** the teacher matches a student's escalation (the student raises his/her voice – the teacher raises his/her voice, the student assumes a threatening posture – the teacher moves into the student's personal space) etc.
- The cardinal rule to keep in mind while managing student conflicts is to stay outwardly calm and to **maintain a professional perspective**.
- It is okay for a staff member to experience anger when a student deliberately attempts to insult or confront them in front of the entire classroom. **However**, if the staff member reacts with anger the student will control the interaction, **maintain a professional perspective and attitude**.



## Are there communication strategies/techniques that I can use with defiant students?

- Approach the student privately and use a quiet voice
- Establish eye contact and call the student by name before conveying a request
- State the request as a positive (do) statement, rather than a negative (don't) statement.
- Phrase the request 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
- Employ 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 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.
- Pair criticism with praise - 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.
- Utilize I-centered statements - 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."

- Use an effective request sequence
  - 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)
  - 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)
  - If the student fails to comply, impose a pre-selected consequence. As you impose the consequence, ignore student questions or complaints that appear intended to entangle you in a power struggle.

### What are some conflict 'pitfalls' that I should watch out for?

- Avoid a mismatch between your words and nonverbal signals.
- Take time to plan your response before reacting to provocative student behavior or remarks.
- Do not become entangled in a discussion or argument with a confrontational student
- **Do not try to coerce or force the student to comply.** It is a mistake to use social pressure or physical force to make a confrontational student comply with a request. 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?

- Offer the student face-saving exit strategies. 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. For example, a teacher 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. 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.
- Select fair behavioral consequences in advance. 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.

- Avoid making task demands of a student when they are upset. When possible, give an agitated student a little breathing room to collect themselves and calm down before giving them a command or stating a request.