Addressing Disruptive and Non-compliant Behaviors

**Challenge:**

Ms. Rollison has a comprehensive behavior management plan in place. Why isn't it working for all of her students?

Different students react differently to different situations. For example, Patrick may be hard to deal with some days because something happens at home that triggers him to misbehave all day. For Tameka, she probably is unsuccessful at writing, and doesn’t want to embarrass herself by completing the assignments. Each student has different motives for acting out; the teacher simply must find a way for them to deal with their emotions in a positive or undisruptive way.

How can Ms. Rollison determine what behaviors she should address and when she should address them?

If the students are not disrupting in a way that is prohibiting other students from learning or hurting other students, the behavior is less serious and can be addressed when the student calms down and is able to reflect on his or her actions. On the other hand, if the student is a threat to others or is disrupting the entire class, then that student should leave that atmosphere, cool down, and allow the other students to get back on task.

**Assessment:**

1. List three reasons why some students still cause problems, even when there is a good classroom management plan in place?

   Some students still cause problems because they have stressors in their lives. The case may be that their home life is not great or that there is a death or divorce in the family. Other factors that cause problems are if the student is considered “at-risk” due to their background or poverty level. Finally, the student may have a disability that is impairing their ability to control their emotions or behavior.

2. Discuss at least one benefit and one challenge of intervening early in the acting-out cycle to prevent problem behaviors from escalating.

   Intervening early in most cases is the best way to deal with a behavior problem because the student is still able to manage their aggression. The teacher should address the problem as soon as he or she starts noticing simple signs of agitation. It is much easier to deal with students who are still in the agitation stage before they accelerate because they can be put back on track. As soon as the student starts to
accelerate, it is much harder to help the student and consequences become much more serious. One challenge of intervening early is for the teacher to recognize the warning signs, which can be different for each student.

3. Think back to the Challenge at the beginning of this module. Ms. Rollison is having trouble with Patrick, who is a "model" student on some days, and on others is rude, disruptive, and refuses to work. Unfortunately, she probably does not have enough information to figure out what Patrick's triggers are. Name three methods by which Ms. Rollison can determine his triggers.

   One method would be to identify any patterns. For example, if Patrick only gets frustrated on days that there is an assembly or a field trip, then alteration is the daily schedule is probably an issue for Patrick. Another method would be to simply ask Patrick about his actions. “I’ve noticed you are having problems with this worksheet, why is this worksheet irritating you?” Finally, if Patrick can’t communicate what triggers him, the parents could be called. Patrick’s parents will probably know all of his triggers because they see the most of him and they know how he will react to different stimuli. His parents could also give you some tips on how to deal with his behavior, or what works on him at home.

4. Ms. Rollison is also having trouble with Tameka, who refuses to do any written work. In this case, you do have enough information to figure out what Tameka's trigger is. What is it?

   Tameka’s trigger is definitely written assignments. This student probably has below average skills in writing, and doesn’t want to embarrass herself by completing the assignment. Another possibility is that she had some bad experience with writing where her teacher or parents criticized her creative work. At this point, I would suggest talking with Tameka about the trigger and try working out the problem together with understanding and acknowledgement of her angry feelings towards writing.

5. Once either Patrick or Tameka enters the Agitation phase, what would you recommend that Ms. Rollison do? If she doesn't recognize the Agitation phase, what would you recommend differently for the Acceleration phase?

   Once a student reaches the Agitation phase, it is typically time for a change. Ms. Rollison could tell the students that she recognizes that there is a problem and ask if she can help. For example, “It looks like you are having some trouble, is there anything I can help with.” Also, it might be beneficial to move the student or give the student a break. For example “Why don’t you move to this space? It is more comfortable,” or “Would you like to take a break and come back to this?” Sometimes the students do not even realize that they are having a problem; therefore, just identifying it can refocus them.
If the student gets to the Acceleration phase, Ms. Rollison should take another approach. She should offer a prompt to the student that redirects the student, and then the teacher should leave the student so that he or she has time to make a decision. As soon as you see them engage in the prompt, give them reinforcement. The teacher must remember that even though she last the battle, she might have won the war.

6. What is the primary reason that teachers are often reluctant to engage in debriefing during the Recovery phase? Why is it important to debrief in spite of this reluctance?

Debriefing is a very important stage in the cycle but is sometimes skipped because teachers often think that it will re-trigger the misbehavior. The system works just the opposite. If the teacher does not debrief, he or she is sending the message that the student got away with acting in an inappropriate manor. It is also hard for teachers to debrief because it means that the teacher must also deal with the emotions of the class. The teacher must also critique his or her own actions to prevent mistakes if the action was to happen again.

Wrap-Up

This module is a great resource for teachers who are trying to understand the complex behaviors of their students. I have dealt with behavior problems before, but after reading this module, I realize that there are better ways to deal with disruptive behaviors. By researching and understanding the act-out cycle, I can now better understand how to identify triggers, when the appropriate stage to address the student’s emotions, and how to react after the peak of the cycle is reached. Overall, it has taught me more effective way to deal with behavior management in the classroom.