



DEFUSING ANGER & AGGRESSION

Safe Strategies for Secondary School Teachers

MODULE 3: RESPONDING TO DISRESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR

How can a teacher respond to disrespectful behavior and continue with instruction?

- First and most important, by responding in a calm and controlled manner
- Acknowledging students who are on-task
- Addressing the disrespectful student
- Continuing with instruction

You'll notice that in the first instance, the teacher takes John's disrespectful behavior personally and responds angrily, setting off a chain reaction that is heading for a serious confrontation.



In the second case, the teacher acts in a controlled manner by pausing before he responds. He speaks calmly, acknowledges cooperative students first, then asks to speak to John later. When he follows through with John later, he should point out that John's behavior was disruptive and disrespectful, and that there will be consequences if it happens again. The teacher should also acknowledge that John did settle down and cooperate. If John continues disrupting the class, the teacher should give the class a small, independent task to work on (e.g., silent reading), and then approach John privately, giving him a warning or consequence for disrupting the class.

Here are some guidelines for approaching a disrespectful student:

- Move slowly and deliberately toward the problem situation
- Speak privately
- Speak calmly
- Speak respectfully
- Minimize body language
- Keep a reasonable distance
- Establish eye level position if possible
- Be brief
- Focus on expected behavior
- Withdraw if the problem escalates
- Acknowledge cooperation

In general, managing disrespectful behavior is largely governed by the way we respond to it. If we are calm, controlled and respectful, we are more likely to defuse the situation and avoid escalation.