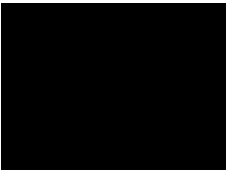


What Every Administrator Needs to Know About...


Conflict De-escalation Strategies

MSLBD Administrators' Conference, 2008

“Nothing shocks me. I'm a scientist.”
Harrison Ford -as Indiana Jones



“Nothing shocks me. I'm a scientist.”
Harrison Ford -as Indiana Jones



An ounce of prevention...

Proactive Interaction
Ways to interact with people so interactions remain interactions and do not escalate into incidents.

- David Mandt & Associates

Develop Effective Rules and Expectations

- Define rules and expectations in clear, specific, behavioral terms.
- State rules and expectations in positive terms.
- Expectations should be communicated in such a way that students can memorize them.
- Create student buy-in by including students in the expectation/rule development process.
- To be effective, rules and expectations need to be stated and reinforced consistently beginning the first day of school.

Other preventive techniques

- Arrangement of the environment
- Active supervision
- Respect for personal space
- Alertness to student's emotional state

Other preventive techniques

- Don't ignore signs of trouble.
- Examine your school's climate.
- Provide forums/opportunities for discussion.
- Be dispassionately fair and consistent in upholding the policies and procedures that the school has put in place.
- Bridge divisions in the school.
- Expect school staff to make more positive comments to students and each other than negative comments/reprimands.

Tips for de-escalating a crisis

- Remain calm and in control.
- Listen to the student and respond empathetically.
- Avoid talking too much.
 - Behavior-specific dialogue

Behavior specific dialogue

When a directive/request is given to student, use positive language – state what you want the student to do, not what you *don't* want the student to do.

- Compliance: *Reinforce!*
- Non-compliance – “I need you to...”

Wait 5 seconds.

- Compliance: *Reinforce!*
- No compliance: “I need you to...” Remind the student of the consequence for noncompliance.

Wait 5 seconds.

- Compliance: *Reinforce!*
- No compliance: Apply consequence

Tips for de-escalating a crisis

- Calmly and deliberately lower your voice
- Slow your rate of speech
- Be aware of your tone of voice
- Never, *ever*, argue with the student
- Keep the conversation private
- Use the student's name
- Use appropriate eye contact
- Set clear limits

Tips for de-escalating a crisis

- Watch your body language
- Respect personal space
- Maintain an open stance
- Acknowledge that the student is in control.
- Offer the student a face-saving path out of a potential conflict.

Tips for de-escalating a crisis

- Remove the student from the setting.
- Allow the student to verbally vent.
- Use non-verbal techniques to lower the tension.

If attacked...

- Use the least force necessary to protect yourself and keep the student from being hurt.
- Call for help.
- Dodge or deflect blows if possible.
- If grabbed, release by twisting away abruptly.
- Use physical restraint only as a last resort and only when there is danger of physical harm. If physical restraint is necessary, use the minimum force necessary for the briefest amount of time possible.
- If physical restraint is necessary, get training!

Look at the incident as a teaching and learning opportunity.

- Process the incident *only when you and the student are calm*.
- Use good nonverbal and verbal skills. Be an active and non-judgmental listener.
- Convey caring and concern for the student.
- Guide the student in reflecting on his/her behavior. Try to determine the root of the problem. Avoid exploring the "whys" of the incident. Use "who, what, where, when" questions instead. Help the student identify the personal benefit of responding differently in the future.
- Help the student problem solve as needed.
- End the session with an expression of confidence in the student's ability to handle similar situations more appropriately in the future.

Linda Geier
PBS Coordinator, Special Education Services
Kansas State Department of Education
lgeier@ksde.org