

Dealing with Difficult Behaviors

Difficult, inappropriate and/or disruptive behaviors, are to be expected at times and can arise from many sources – students, visitors, parents, or other staff members. Learning some key factors about such behaviors can be helpful when encountering these situations.

- All behavior has a purpose and serves as a form of communication. It can be a means of seeking attention or a sign of frustration when a person is unable to communicate his/her needs in other ways, and is often an indication of an underlying issue. It is important to understand the communicative intent in order to manage behavior effectively and safely.
- When the purpose of the behavior is understood, difficult behavior becomes more predictable, and the activities and/or situations that trigger the behavior can be identified. This allows effective and pro-active measures to be implemented leading to early intervention and the reduction of uncooperative behaviors.
- Exhibiting appropriate behaviors and related skills and intentional teaching are very important. Appropriate behavior should be acknowledged and reinforced with positive consequences.
- When inappropriate behavior leads to the disruptive individual's desired outcome, it is likely that same behavior will occur again, and again! Remember, some students require more time, attention, and structure than others in order to learn and maintain appropriate behaviors on campus.
- When possible, provide structure, such as, clearly stated rules, behavioral expectations, routines, boundaries, and inter-relational guidelines.
- Share positive information regarding behavioral interventions with families, other affected staff, and those assisting students, so that all important adults are working together with the same goals and strategies.
- All staff should be familiar with nonverbal de-escalation strategies and techniques to keep students and staff safe at all times.
- **Some important tips:** a) Listen; b) Be aware of personal space zones; c) Exhibit appropriate body language; and d) Stay in control of your own emotions.



See ASCIP [Safety Spotlight – “Keeping Everyone Safe”](#) on our website for de-escalation ideas.