Responding to Crisis

Navigating the Acting-Out Cycle

Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network
Emotional Support Teachers Networking Series ✧ January 7, 2026

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Ci3T | Comprehensive, Integrated, Three-Tiered Model of Prevention

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Ci3T

Session materials are available at ci3t.org/enhance

Register your email (demographic information optional) using the QR code ↑ or clicking the first time module users link

First time module users view informational letter and register here!

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Agenda

- Comprehensive, Integrated, Three-Tiered (Ci3T) Model of Prevention
  - A respectful approach to preventing and responding to challenging behavior
- A look at acting-out behavior: Timing is everything!
- Managing acting-out behavior: Seven phases
- Pathways to success: Defusing various behaviors
- Tier 3: Building an individualized de-escalation support plan
- Wrapping up: Resources

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Comprehensive, Integrated, Three-Tiered (Ci3T) Model of Prevention

A respectful approach to preventing and responding to challenging behavior

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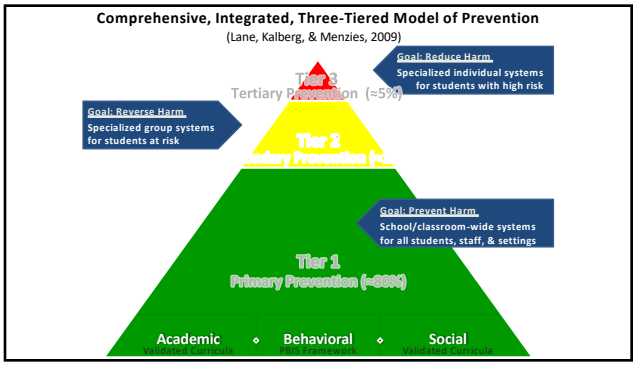

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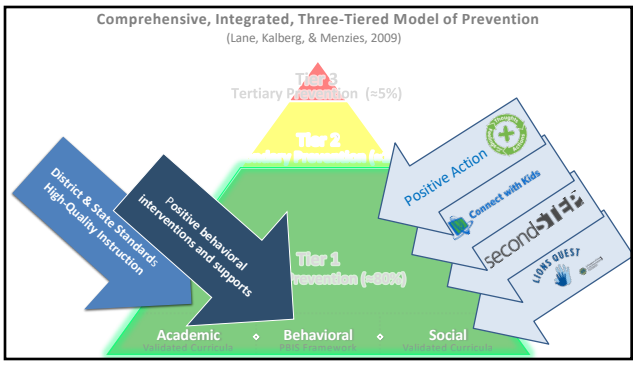

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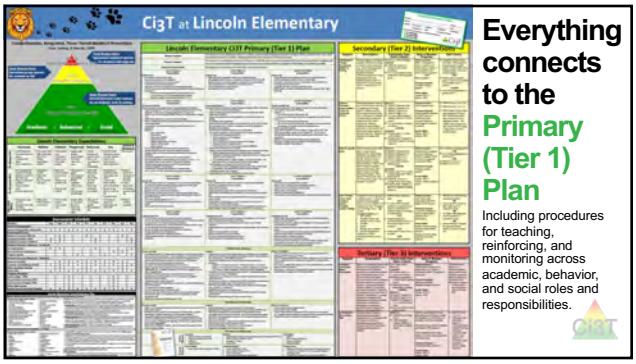
Ci3T at Lincoln Elementary
Everything connects to the Primary (Tier 1) Plan
Including procedures for teaching, reinforcing, and monitoring across academic, behavior, and social roles and responsibilities.

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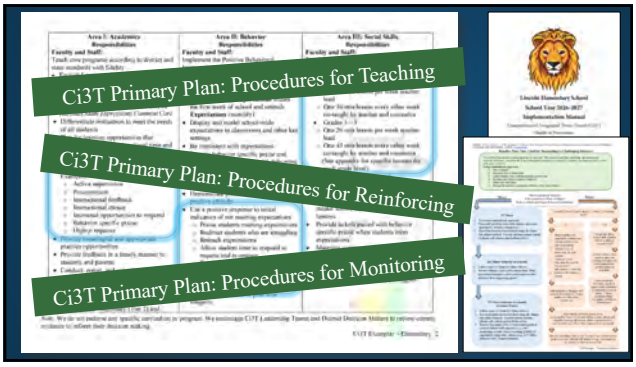
Ci3T Primary Plan: Procedures for Teaching
Ci3T Primary Plan: Procedures for Reinforcing
Ci3T Primary Plan: Procedures for Monitoring

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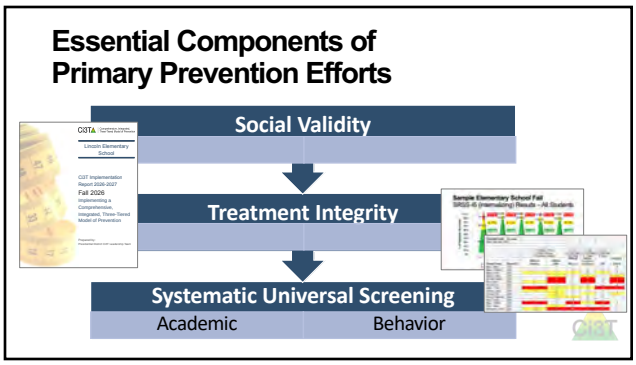
Essential Components of Primary Prevention Efforts
Social Validity
Treatment Integrity
Systematic Universal Screening
Academic
Behavior

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Middle School
Behavior & Academic Characteristics of SRSS Risk Groups

Variable	Risk			
	Low (*n* = 422) *M (SD)*	Moderate (*n* = 51) *M (SD)*	High (*n* = 12) *M (SD)*	Significance Testing
ODR	1.50 (2.85)	5.02 (5.32)	8.42 (7.01)	L<M<H
In-School Suspensions	0.08 (0.38)	0.35 (1.04)	1.71 (2.26)	L<M<H
GPA	3.35 (0.52)	2.63 (0.65)	2.32 (0.59)	L>M, H M=H
Course Failures	0.68 (1.50)	2.78 (3.46)	4.17 (3.49)	L<M, H M=H

(Lane, Parks, Kalberg, & Carter, 2007)

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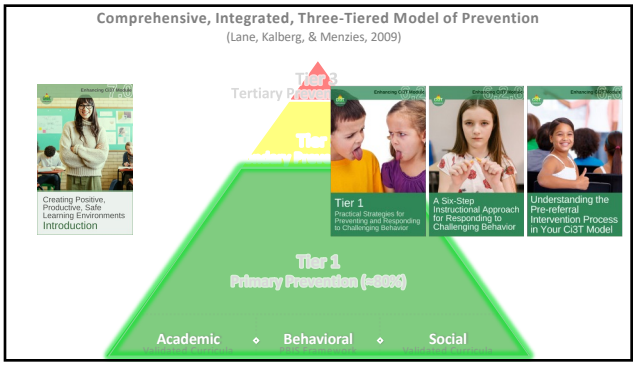

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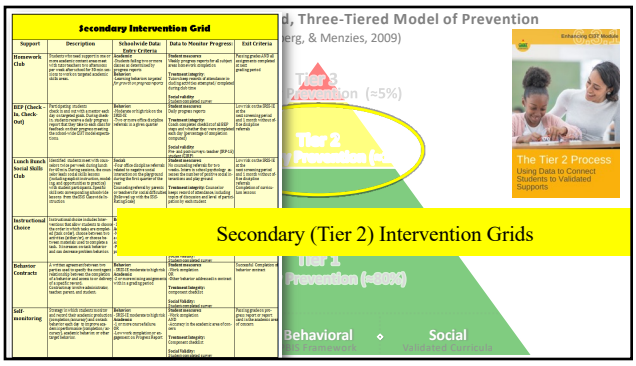

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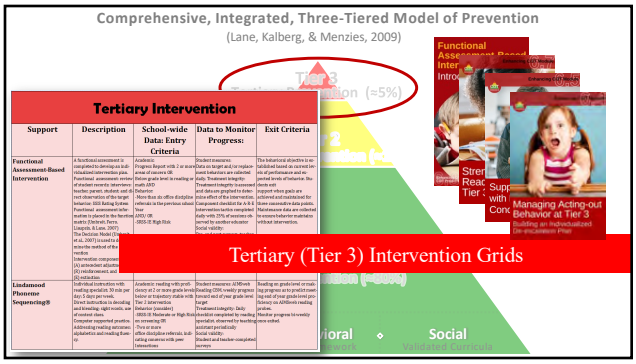
Comprehensive, Integrated, Three-Tiered Model of Prevention
(Lane, Kalberg, & Menzies, 2009)
Tertiary Intervention
Support
Description
School-wide Data: Entry Criteria
Data to Monitor Progress:
Exit Criteria
Functional Assessment-Based Intervention
Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing®
Tertiary (Tier 3) Intervention Grids
Social
Managing Acting-out Behavior at Tier 3

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Consider tiered models of prevention like Ci3T.
In the chat, please share:
What MTSS components are currently in place at your school?

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Ci3T
A Look at Acting-Out Behavior
Timing is everything!
Managing Acting-out Behavior at Tier 3

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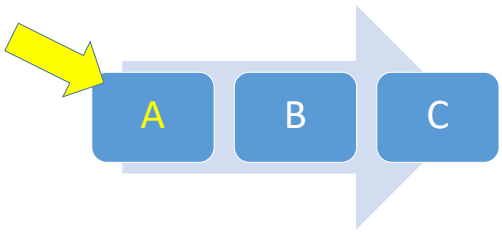
Antecedents - Behavior - Consequences



Precorrection: Identifies predictable contexts that often result in problem behavior and provides students with supports, prompts, and reinforcement for engaging in appropriate behavior

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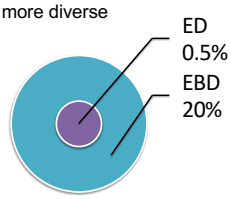
Managing Acting-Out Behaviors

- Classrooms are becoming increasingly more diverse
  - Culturally
  - Academically
  - Behaviorally
  - Social skill sets

  (Lane, Wehby, & Robertson, 2008)

- Students with exceptionalities are accommodated in inclusive settings

  (MacMillian, Gresham, & Forness, 1996)



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Whether the problem behavior is managed safely or not or is defused in a large measure depends on **YOUR INITIAL RESPONSE**

-Dr. Geoff Colvin

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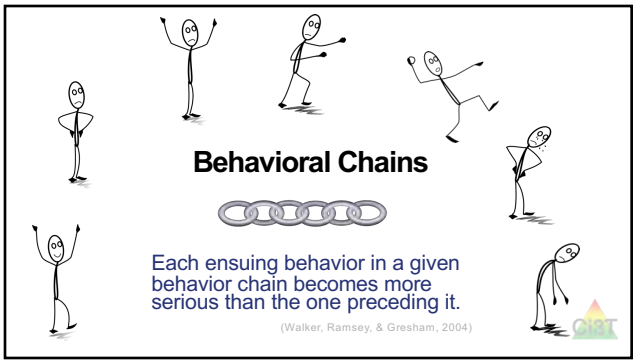
Behavioral Chains
Each ensuing behavior in a given behavior chain becomes more serious than the one preceding it.
(Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004)

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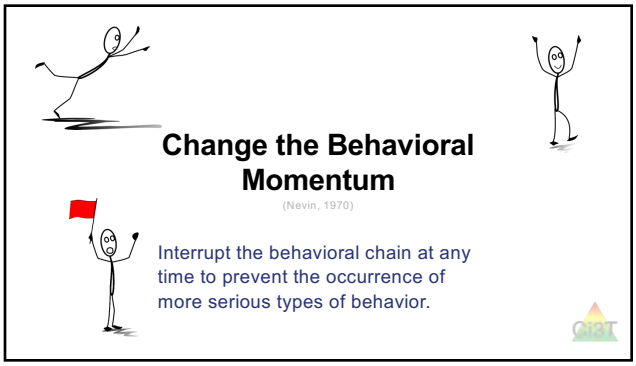
Change the Behavioral Momentum
(Nevin, 1970)
Interrupt the behavioral chain at any time to prevent the occurrence of more serious types of behavior.

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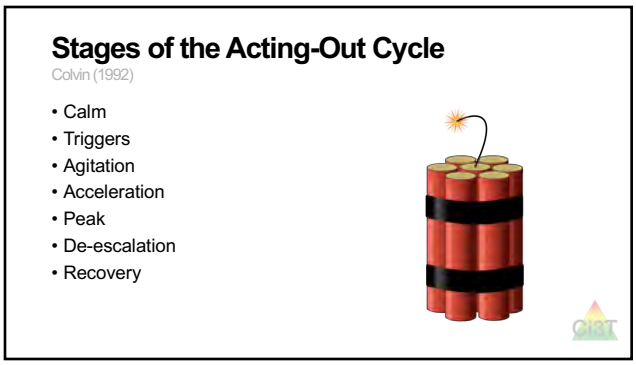
Stages of the Acting-Out Cycle
Colvin (1992)
• Calm
• Triggers
• Agitation
• Acceleration
• Peak
• De-escalation
• Recovery

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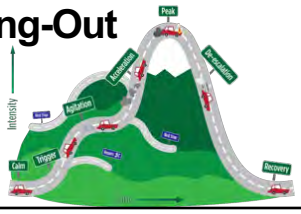
Managing Acting-Out Behavior

Seven Phases



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Phase 1: Calm

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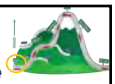
Phase 1: Calm



Overall behavior is cooperative, compliant, and desirable

- Academically engaged
- Follows rules & expectations
- Responsive to praise and feedback
- Initiates interactions
- Goal-directed behaviors

Strategies:

Intervention is focused on proactive strategies. Focus on **instruction** and **positive behavior support**.

- Implement the schoolwide Ci3T plan
- Vary instructional delivery
- Provide high rates of behavior-specific praise
- Implement low-intensity teacher-delivered strategies (e.g., precorrection, instructional choice, active supervision, OTR)
- Carefully plan instruction with integrated lesson planning and differentiation
- Re-teach expectations
- Implement clear routines and procedures
- Attend to the physical environment

Colvin, G., & Scott, T. (2015). *Managing the cycle of acting-out behavior in the classroom* (2nd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

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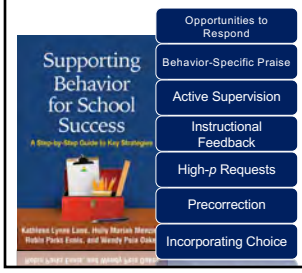
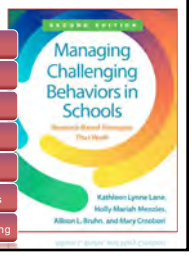
Low-Intensity Strategies



- Opportunities to Respond
- Behavior-Specific Praise
- Active Supervision
- Instructional Feedback
- High-*p* Requests
- Precorrection
- Incorporating Choice



- Proximity
- Overlappingness
- With-it-ness
- Pacing
- Self-Monitoring
- Behavior Contracts
- Direct Behavior Rating

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Low-Intensity Strategies

ci3t.org/enhance

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Phase 2: Trigger

Overall behaviors involve a series of unresolved problems

School-based triggers

- Conflicts
- Changes in routine
- Provoked by peers
- Pressure or stress
- Ineffective problem solving
- Facing errors in instruction
- Facing correction procedures
- Denial of something needed

Strategies:
Intervention is focused on **prevention** and **redirection**.

- Identify situations where the behavior is likely to occur
- Use low-intensity teacher-delivered strategies to prevent triggers and help students manage triggers effectively
- Rehearse the expectations, prompt or remind students as needed, provide behavior-specific praise / reinforcement
- Consider Tier 2 supports to build academic skills, social skills, and other self-regulation skills
- Work with families for outside supports of non-school-based triggers

Colvin, G., & Scott, T. (2015). *Managing the cycle of acting-out behavior in the classroom* (2nd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

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Phase 3: Agitation

Overall behavior is unfocused and off-task

Increases in behavior

- Darting eyes
- Busy hands
- Joining and leaving groups
- Rapidly moving between being on and off task

Strategies:
Intervention is focused on **reducing anxiety, tensions,** and **stress.**

- Follow the *6-Step Instructional Approach for Responding to Challenging Behavior*

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Colvin, G., & Scott, T. (2015). *Managing the cycle of acting-out behavior in the classroom* (2nd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

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6-Step Instructional Approach for Responding to Challenging Behavior

CI3T ENHANCE

In a CI3T model, Tier 1 supports include a six-step instructional approach for responding respectfully to minor and major challenging behaviors, based on lessons learned from supporting students with acting out behavior.

1. Show empathy
2. Maintain flow of instruction
3. Acknowledge other students meeting expectations
4. Redirect and reteach expected behavior — Remember, the direction is to pick even or odd problems!
5. Allow time and space
6. Recognize and reinforce appropriate behavior when demonstrated

How we *first* respond is likely to influence whether the student's behavior escalates toward a crisis, or de-escalates toward a calm state conducive to learning!

References: Colvin, G. (2004). Managing the cycle of serious acting out behavior. Behavior Associates
Colvin, G., & Scott, T. M. (2015). Managing the cycle of acting-out behavior in the classroom (2nd ed.). Corwin Press.

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Phase 4: Acceleration

Overall behavior is teacher-engaging

- Compliance with accompanying inappropriate behaviors (e.g., writing bad words on worksheets)
- Criterion problems (getting starting, marking "IDK" on all items)
- Argumentative
- Non-compliant and defiant
- Un-engaged
- Provoking peers and/or teachers
- Minor destruction of property

Strategies:
Intervention is focused on **safety**.
- Eliminate triggers
- Approach the student in a non-threatening manner
- Prompt and walk away
  - Acknowledge compliance and desired behavior
- Maintain calmness, respect, and detachment
- Utilize non-confrontational limit-setting procedures

Colvin, G., & Scott, T. (2015). *Managing the cycle of acting-out behavior in the classroom* (2nd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

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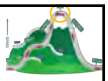
Phase 5: Peak



Overall behavior is out of control

- Physical aggression
- Hyperventilating
- Running away (elopement)
- Self-injurious behavior
- Major destruction of property
- Severe tantrums

Strategies:
Focus on **safety**
- Remain calm
- Implement your school's safety plan
  - Room clear; evacuate remaining students, call designated person to help
- Learn from it (e.g., FBA, BIP, mental health assessment)
  - Prevent unintentionally reinforcing peak behavior (what is reinforcing the student?)

Colvin, G., & Scott, T. (2015). *Managing the cycle of acting-out behavior in the classroom* (2nd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

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Phase 6: De-Escalation

Overall behavior displays confusion

- Confusion, disorientation
- Denial of what just happened
- Blaming others
- Eager to make amends
- Responsive to directions
- Responsive to manipulative or
- Social withdrawal
  - Avoidance of discussion
  - Avoidance of debriefing

Strategies:
Intervention is focused on **monitoring** for re-escalation of behavior and helping the student **reengage** in a constructive manner.
- Allow cool-down time and space away from other students but not punitive
- Engage student in an independent task they can easily accomplish (e.g., simple worksheet, concrete task)
- Monitor for health / safety of all involved

Colvin, G., & Scott, T. (2015). *Managing the cycle of acting-out behavior in the classroom* (2nd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

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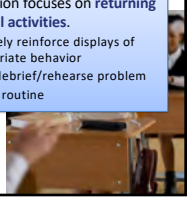
Phase 7: Recovery

Overall behavior shows eagerness to move past the incident

- Seeks independent work or activity
- Reluctant to interact
- Subdued behavior
- Defensiveness and avoidance of discussing what happened

Strategies:
Intervention focuses on **returning to normal activities.**
- Positively reinforce displays of appropriate behavior
- Later, debrief/rehearse problem solving routine



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Debriefing Session

1. Facilitates transition back to task/activity
   ...not further negative consequence
2. Goal is to increase appropriate behavior
3. Focus on problem solving
4. Pinpoint events that contributed to the incident
5. Teach replacement behaviors
6. Debriefing activities and forms

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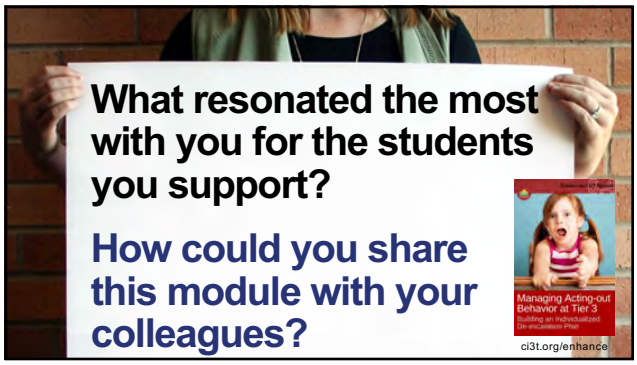

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Pathways to Success

Understanding educator-student interactions

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Four Key Strategies

1. Take an instructional approach to behavior schoolwide
2. Intervene early in the acting-out cycle
3. Learn strategies to intervene at each stage in the acting-out cycle
4. Be respectful at all times

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Defusing Off-Task Behavior

Assess the situation: determine "can't do" or "won't do"

- Is it an emergency situation? If so, follow crisis procedures. If not, follow off-task defusing steps.

1. Maintain the flow of instruction
2. Recognize on-task students, making no response to off-task students
3. **Show empathy**
4. Redirect (focus on task, brief language/gestures, prompt procedures for asking for help)
5. Give time and space
6. Acknowledge compliance

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Defusing Non-Compliance and Limit Testing

- Provide one clear direction
  - "Alright everyone, return to your desks, get out your book and paper, and begin work." Kāwika does not comply.
  - "Hey Kāwika, time to return to your desk."
    - "But I can't sit at my desk because I don't have A, B, C and I need to…"
  - "I'd be happy to help you with all those things as soon as you are sitting at your desk."
- Be neutral but direct and stay with the direction
- All student requests are contingent on compliance with first step
- Follow-up with student quietly
- Continue to acknowledge other on-task students
- Acknowledge cooperation or implement consequence in a neutral manner

Consider offering choices

Scott, 2018

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Defusing Disrespectful Behavior

- Indicate in a neutral manner the action was disrespectful and continue with instruction
  - "That's what we call disrespectful, let's talk about it later."
    - "I don't see how that was disrespectful!"
  - "Which is why we should discuss it after everyone masters these 2-step equations by using…"
- Do not allow disrespectful behavior to escalate your emotions or interrupt the lesson
- Personal and genuine apologies are sometimes effective for peer disrespect (e.g., restorative practice)
- If student refuses to comply, follow through with bottom line consequence

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Defusing Disruptive Behavior

- Recognize and respond quickly to student agitation
- Redirect
  - Clearly state the expected task first step: focus on behaviors taught
- Communicate concern privately
  - Present options – not an ultimatum
  - Allow student space and time – do not hover
  - Assist student to begin task: remind to use appropriate behavior
- Attend to other students and prepare for the worst
- Acknowledge compliance or institute standard consequence in neutral manner

Scott, 2014

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Defusing Provocative Behaviors

- **Privately** identify the behavior as a problem *for the student*, not you
  - "Hey, I personally don't mind that shirt, but it pretty clearly violates dress code expectations. Here are options for how to fix it, but it's up to you, you know the consequences."
    - "But my mom bought this for me!"
  - "All the more reason I'd hate for you to lose it, so which of those options…"
- Don't argue, don't show shock or offense – it's simply a violation of expectations and you are there to help
- Acknowledge cooperation
- If student refuses to comply with a solution, follow through with bottom line consequence
  - Delivered in a matter-of-fact manner as a choice the student made

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Defusing Aggressive Behavior

- Recognize conditions under which conflict is likely and attempt to avoid by using
  - Assigned seats
  - Independent activities
  - Teacher proximity – stay between as long as there is no physicality
  - Space, options, preferred activities
  - Relaxation activities
- Verbal altercation = verbal intervention
  - Provide specific and concrete directions
  - Redirect / distract – get attention away from altercation
  - Separate as much as possible without placing hands on students
- Physical altercation = initiate crisis procedures
  - Call office or send runner
  - Provide clear, loud, and concrete directions to both students
  - Clear other students away to keep safe
  - Wait for assistance

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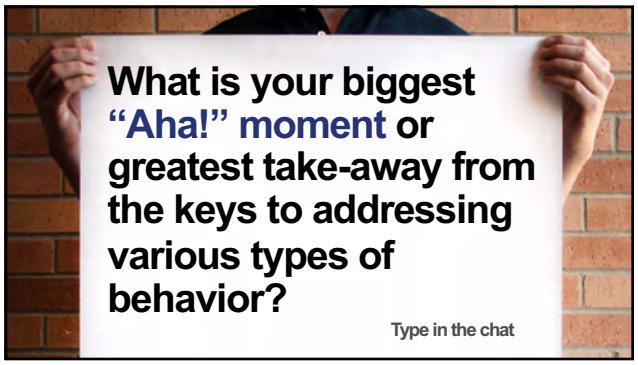

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Tier 3

Building an individualized de-escalation plan

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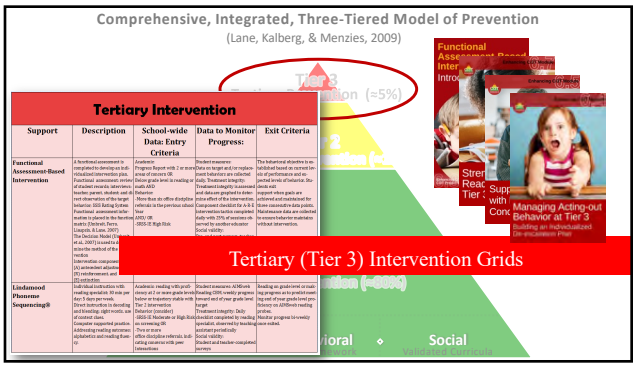
Comprehensive, Integrated, Three-Tiered Model of Prevention

(Lane, Kalberg, & Menzies, 2009)



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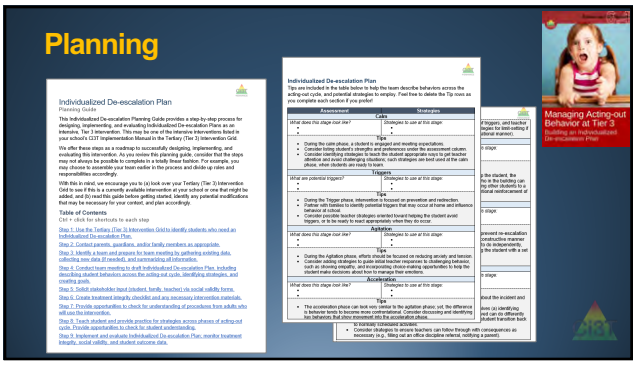

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How do I create an individualized de-escalation plan?

- Step 1: Use the Tertiary (Tier 3) Intervention Grid to identify students who need an Individualized De-escalation Plan
- Step 2: Contact parents, guardians, and/or family members as appropriate
- Step 3: Identify a team and prepare for team meeting by gathering existing data, collecting new data (if needed), and summarizing all information
- Step 4: Conduct team meeting to draft Individualized De-escalation Plan, including describing student behaviors across the acting-out cycle, identifying strategies, and creating goals

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How do I create an individualized de-escalation plan?

- Step 5: Solicit stakeholder input (student, family, teacher) via social validity forms
- Step 6: Create treatment integrity checklist and any necessary intervention materials
- Step 7: Provide opportunities to check for understanding of procedures from adults who will use the intervention
- Step 8: Teach student and provide practice for strategies across phases of acting-out cycle. Provide opportunities to check for student understanding
- Step 9: Implement and evaluate Individualized De-escalation Plan; monitor treatment integrity, social validity, and student outcome data

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Sample Tier 3 Intervention Grid

Support	Description	School-wide Data Entry Criteria	Data to Monitor Progress	Exit Criteria
Individualized De-escalation Plan	Individualized De-escalation Plans are intensive intervention plans identifying specific student characteristics for each phase of the de-escalation cycles and implementing appropriate and evidence-based adult responses to managing student acting out behavior. Plans consist of specific evidence-based strategies for supporting students at each stage of the acting out cycle, with the intent of (a) preventing escalated behaviors and (b) ensuring all stakeholders – including the student themself – know what to expect at each stage and can help prevent crises from occurring.	One or more of the following: ☐SRSS-E7: High ☐2 or more Major Office Discipline Referrals (e.g., major disruptive behavior, elopement) OR ☐SRSS-E7: High ☐6 or more Minor Office Discipline Referrals (e.g., argumentative or disruptive behavior, non-compliance)	**Student performance:** Identify and operationally define target student behavior. Determine method for measuring target behavior. Set behavioral goal based on baseline (pre-intervention) performance. Graph progress monitoring data and use to inform intervention decisions. **Treatment integrity:** Individualized treatment integrity checklist. **Social Validity:** Teacher: IRP-15 Student: CIRP All data sources can be collected and analyzed using the Tiered Intervention Data Manager (accessible Google Sheets | Excel download)	Two or more of the following: ☐Meet goal criteria according to progress monitoring data ☐SRSS-E7: Low ☐No Major or Minor Office Discipline Referrals (e.g., disruptive behavior, elopement) for most recent grading period ☐Observation data demonstrate behavior is consistently within expected level (per goal; three consecutive data points) – then transition to maintenance plan and monitor behavior during transition.

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Planning

"It is much like a map to the behavior train the student takes us on."

"The teachers appreciated the strategies column the most."

"I enjoyed creating this plan by using the "Acting Out Cycle" as it provides a clear and structured guide for any adult who may be implementing this with a student."

"I am more likely to implement this type of de-escalation plan compared to others because it was so easy to follow."

"I feel I have added another tool to my kit!"

"It is an 'active' plan!"

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Ci3T

Wrapping Up

Resources

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Resources

ci3t.org/enhance

Enhancing Ci3T Modules including Managing Acting-out Behavior at Tier 3

iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/bi1

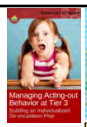
Addressing Disruptive and Noncompliant Behaviors: Understanding the Acting-Out Cycle

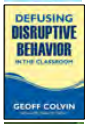
ksdetasn.org

Kansas DOE Technical Assistance System Network. Search "de-escalation" for videos and more

cibrs.com

Center for Instructional and Behavioral Research in Schools: Video modules on behavior





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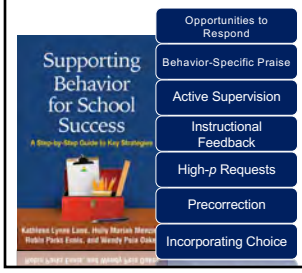
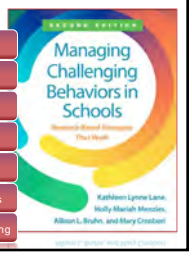
Low-Intensity Strategies



- Opportunities to Respond
- Behavior-Specific Praise
- Active Supervision
- Instructional Feedback
- High-*p* Requests
- Precorrection
- Incorporating Choice



- Proximity
- Overlappingness
- With-it-ness
- Pacing
- Self-Monitoring
- Behavior Contracts
- Direct Behavior Rating

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Low-Intensity Strategies

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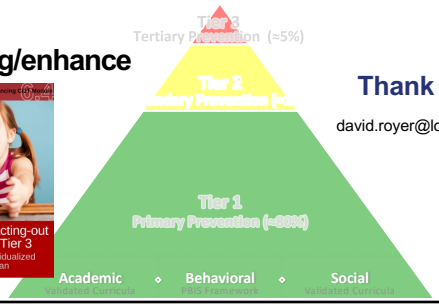
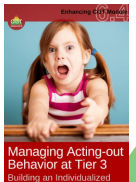
Comprehensive, Integrated, Three-Tiered Model of Prevention

(Lane, Kalberg, & Menzies, 2009)



ci3t.org/enhance



Thank you!

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