Stages of Behavior Escalation (Colvin & Sugai, 1989)

Behavior Stage	Description of Stage	Area(s) of Focus for Staff	Intervention Tips
Calm	➢ Student is relatively calm and cooperative	➢ Focus on maintaining a clear, consistent environment and building rapport with the student	➢ Establish 3-5 behavioral expectations ➢ Give student feedback using the 4 to 1 ratio (4 positives for every 1 corrective/negative) ➢ Teach replacements for interfering behaviors ➢ Precorrect problem situations
Trigger	➢ Student experiences unresolved conflicts that trigger behavior to escalate ➢ May displace anger on "safe target" (aide, teacher, parent)	➢ Focus on prevention and redirecting the student's behavior	➢ Remove/adjust the trigger (if appropriate) ➢ Use behavioral momentum to shape behavior and reinforce small efforts ➢ Remind student of rewards (if used) ➢ Remind student to use replacement skills
Agitation	➢ Student is increasingly unfocused/upset ➢ May exhibit avoidance ➢ May challenge adult authority	➢ Focus on reducing student anxiety and increasing predictability in the student's environment	➢ Use non-confrontational non-verbal behavior ➢ Break down directions into smaller steps ➢ Use "start", instead of "stop" directions ➢ Provide reasonable options/choices ➢ Use "Speak and Retreat" prompting ➢ Set clear, reasonable, and enforceable limits
Acceleration	➢ With conflict unresolved, this becomes student's sole focus ➢ May become noncompliant ➢ May be beginning to lose rational thought	➢ Focus on maintaining a safe environment for yourself, the student in crisis and any observers	➢ Use short phrases and allow processing time ➢ Maintain calmness and detachment ➢ Use active listening, reflection and restatement to clarify student's concerns and show you understand his/her feelings ➢ Remember this is *not* a teachable moment
Peak	➢ Student is out of control and may have temporarily lost ability to think rationally ➢ Exhibits severe behavior (screaming, SIBs, aggression)	➢ Focus on crisis intervention procedures to maintain a safe environment for student in crisis, self and observers	➢ Isolate student by removing the audience ➢ Call for help/ staff witness if needed ➢ Don't threaten consequences now; discuss when the student is more rational
De-Escalation	➢ Having vented, the severity of student's behavior subsides ➢ Drop in energy level of student after a crisis	➢ Focus on removing excess attention, helping student regain composure and demonstrating cooperation with neutral requests	➢ Allow Cool-Down time ➢ Make sure the student has regained control before proceeding; look for less tense appearance, normal breathing, and willingness to comply with small requests
Recovery	➢ Students may feel shame, sorrow, fear, or regret ➢ May not be able to verbalize feelings/ details of outburst	➢ Focus on debriefing/ problem solving then transitioning student back to academics	➢ Debrief *before* following through with consequences set earlier ➢ Problem solve and develop a plan with the student for better future behavior ➢ Remember to document the incident/event