Be A Thermostat ....Not a Thermometer!! Brain Friendly Ways to De-escalate Students
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Teachers and educators at all levels can benefit greatly by learning the skills to de-escalate students. We can begin to do this by rethinking behavioral escalation.

Think of escalating behaviors as a person's STRESS being kept alive by the reactions of others. We can use these crisis moments to teach rather than punish.

If crises are to become teaching opportunities, adults must disentangle themselves from angry, adversarial conflicts with youth. Rather than be drawn into Tit for Tat reactions, adults must treat problem behavior as errors in responding rather than purposeful defiance (Ducharme, Atkinson, & Poulton, 2000).

Defusing conflict begins with a personal choice not to fight with a youth. This does not mean becoming weak or permissive. Instead, as Nick Long (2000) observes, one decides to act like a thermostat rather than a thermometer.

A thermometer goes up or down depending on the surrounding climate. If we allow ourselves to become overheated — or turned off — by a youth’s behavior, we become like thermometers under control of the youth.

But a thermostat is a more sophisticated instrument. It registers temperature like a thermometer, but then makes the necessary adjustment to keep the climate in balance. When a student’s emotions kindle, we can calm them down. When a youth is down, we can help bring him or her back up.

Skillfully handling conflict is a “double struggle” of managing one’s own private logic and emotions while trying to calm a youth. (LARRY BRENDTRO and MARY SHAHBAZIAN)
These are LEARNED skills. When student behavior escalates their brains are literally downshifting before our eyes. Emotions are very contagious and if we do not learn the skills necessary to intervene in a positive manner these incidents can quickly escalate into major school crisis events.

Those skills include:
1. The ability to intervene and DRAIN OFF student emotions. This includes the learned skill of providing "emotional first aide".

Remember for a positive outcome when dealing with escalating students it is first necessary to take the time and make sure all are settled and working from our neo-cortex. If not minor incidents quickly escalate into all out power struggles that no one wins and everyone loses. If you would like some more information about this topic feel free to reach out to me.

Thanks for reading!!