

RESPONDING TO A STUDENT TRIGGERED BY A DIFFICULT TOPIC

OVERVIEW

This page serves to help teachers in the event that a student is triggered during a difficult lesson or activity. This guide has been included with the Elevate lessons that were predicted to have the highest chance of triggering difficult emotions in students, but this should be used during ANY lesson or activity which becomes difficult for a student.

ELEVATE OBJECTIVES

The object is to foster open communication, collaboration between student and teacher, and between teachers to work together for the best possible outcome for the student(s).

HOW TO RESPOND

What to do if you notice that a student is having an emotionally difficult time with the content of a lesson.

{IMPORTANT} If any form of abuse comes up in conversation, teachers are mandated by law to report. Check with school administration for proper PROCESS AND paperwork in this situation. State laws require teachers to report concerns of child abuse and neglect without delay (please consult your policy for Mandatory Reporting.) Your Elevate organization should have a guideline and process on how to properly respond that has been built with your school, district and state requirements in mind. 1.800.4.A.CHILD (1.800.422.4453.)

- At the beginning of tough lesson units, and at the beginning of each semester, it is important that staff remind the students that, “Our Elevate staff wants to know you, and we want you to be real with us, so please remember that we have a confidentiality agreement with you that we will not share what you tell us, because we have a mutual respect and trust between us. Along with that, remember that we care about you, and if anything that you share with us relates to abuse or neglect, we do have to share that through the proper channels, by law.
- The Lead Teacher should continue with the lesson to ensure that the student who is having difficulty does not attract unwanted attention from the entire class.
- An A Teacher (ideally the same gender as the student who is struggling) should discreetly, calmly and quietly kneel by the student’s desk and ask if he/she would like to talk in the hallway. This can also be done with a discreet nod towards the door when eye contact is made.
 - All teachers in the classroom should always have paper, a writing utensil, and clipboard or something to write on, to take notes on in any situation.
 - The A Teacher can get support from the other A Teacher, if needed, and if the situation warrants more support, the school counselor should be brought in.
- Once the A Teacher and student are in the hallway, the teacher should remind the student that the discussion will be kept a secret, if the student wishes, but that if topics such as harm, neglect, abuse or injury (past or current) come up that the teacher is mandated to report those.
 - See “Information for Documentation” for questions the teacher can ask
- If the student tells the teacher about an incident that today’s lesson triggered, ask if the student has told anyone else about the incident, or if anyone was there when it occurred.
- In all cases, the student should be reminded with words and actions that emotions are an indicator that there are healing needs, even if that just means having the opportunity to talk about the feelings.
- Use empathy with statements like “I don’t know exactly how you feel, but I’m here to listen.” If timing and situation is appropriate, staff can share their own story to connect with the student.

INFORMATION FOR DOCUMENTATION

Interviewer/Teacher Name _____ Today's date _____

Name and age of student _____ Class period _____

What was happening in class when the student was triggered? _____
_____Does the student want to talk about why the incident in class triggered emotions? ☐Yes ☐No**Possible Questions to ask:**

1. What caused these emotions to the surface for you?
2. Where did the event occur that has you upset? What did you see or hear? Who else was there?
3. Has anything like this happened before?
4. How do you feel this will affect you and those close to you in the future? How is your life different now?
5. Do you think anyone could have done anything to prevent it? If so, who?
6. What changes have there been in your life because of what happened? What are some new problems?
7. What is your most pressing problem right now?
8. Do you think someone should be punished for what happened? If so, who?
9. Is this a matter of seeking revenge? If so, who should do the punishing?
10. What do you usually do when you need help with a personal problem?
11. Which friends and who at home can you talk to about this?
12. What are you going to do when you leave school today? If you're uncertain, let's talk about it.

If an abuse/neglect report needs to be made, be sure to have this information:

Name of the student	Name of the parent
Name of the alleged abuser	Where can the child can be located?
Is the child in a life-threatening situation now?	How do you know about the abuse/neglect?
Did you witness the abuse/neglect?	Were there other witnesses? How can they be contacted?