



Effective Use of Specific Positive Feedback in the Classroom

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OUTCOMES

At the end of this session, you will be able to...

- Demonstrate effective Specific Positive Feedback that concretely describes behavior.



“Teacher praise has been supported as among one of the most empirically sound teacher competencies.”

John Maag

LOW RATES OF ATTENTION: SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

- Average teacher fails to take advantage of the power of attention.
- Approval statements for academic responses far outweigh those for social behavior.
- Highest rates of attention for social behavior occur in 2nd grade and decrease dramatically after that.
- Teachers respond more frequently to inappropriate social behavior than to appropriate social behavior.
- This attention inadvertently maintains or increases the misbehavior.

COMPARISON: ACADEMIC ATTENTION VS. SOCIAL ATTENTION

	Approval Statements	Disapproval Statements	Ratio of Positive to Negative
Academic	20.36 per hour	7.56 per hour	2.7:1
Social	1.52 per hour	19.20 per hour	1:12.6

ENCOURAGING EXPECTED BEHAVIOR

- Similar to encouraging academic behavior.
- Motivates students as they are *initially learning* expected behavior, and *maintains* them as students become more fluent with use.
- Essential to changing student behavior and creating a positive school environment.



SPECIFIC POSITIVE FEEDBACK

- Contingent attention.
- Essential in order to change and sustain behavior.
- Recognizes effort or successes at tasks that are difficult for the child.
- While general praise contributes to a pleasant classroom, it is insufficient to build and sustain desired behavior.
- Students need clear specific feedback on school-wide expectations as well as other behaviors that are extensions of those expectations.

BENEFITS OF SPECIFIC POSITIVE FEEDBACK

“When we focus our praise on positive actions, we support a sense of competence and autonomy that helps students develop real self-esteem.”

Davis, 2007

- Helps adults and students focus on positive social behaviors and actions.
- The most powerful behavior change tool teachers have in their repertoire.
- Increases likelihood students will use the recognized behaviors and skills in the future.
- Decreases inappropriate behavior, and reduces the need for correction.
- Enhances self-esteem and helps build internal locus of control.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE SPECIFIC POSITIVE FEEDBACK

- Contingent
- Specific
- Immediate
- Frequent (then Intermittent)
- Genuine
- Clean

EFFECTIVE SPECIFIC POSITIVE FEEDBACK

I. State the expectation

“Thank you for being responsible by following directions and getting started right away.”

EFFECTIVE SPECIFIC POSITIVE FEEDBACK

2. Specifically describe the behavior:

- Explicitly define what was done that you want to continue.
- Describe like a videotape replay.
- Use the words of your expectations.

“When I said it was time to begin, you cleared off your desk, got your materials out immediately, and began working quickly.”

EFFECTIVE SPECIFIC POSITIVE FEEDBACK

3. *Can* include a positive consequence:

- Specific Positive Feedback alone may not be sufficiently reinforcing.
- When behavior requires a great deal of effort, pairing verbal feedback with tangible or activity reinforcement may be helpful.
- When using a positive consequence, always pair with Specific Positive Feedback.
- Promote ownership; student “earns,” teachers do not “give.”

“Because you got started so quickly, you have earned a Cardinal Card.”



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

“When I said it was time to begin, you were responsible and followed directions by clearing off your desk, getting out your materials and starting work. Because you followed directions you have earned a Cardinal Card.”

MORE EXAMPLES

- “Dwayne, you disagreed with Sam, but you stopped and took some time to think, **used appropriate language** and settled the disagreement peacefully. That was very **respectful** to Sam and to the rest of our class.”
- “Hey Oscar, thanks for **using materials appropriately** by putting them away at the end of the project. That shows **respect** for our classroom. You **earned a Bee ticket** to add to our class hive!”
- “Jasmine, thanks for being **responsible** by **being on time to class**. That’s important at school and when you are on the job.”



ENCOURAGING EXPECTED BEHAVIOR POSITIVE TO NEGATIVE RATIO

- Over the past decade, scientists have explored the impact of positive-to-negative interaction ratios in our work and personal life. They have found that this ratio can be used to predict—with remarkable accuracy—everything from workplace performance to divorce.

ENCOURAGING EXPECTED BEHAVIOR POSITIVE TO NEGATIVE RATIO

This work began with noted psychologist John Gottman's exploration of positive-to-negative ratios in marriages.

Using a 5:1 positive to negative ratio, Gottman and his colleagues predicted whether 700 newlywed couples would stay together or divorce by scoring their positive and negative interactions in one 15-minute conversation between each husband and wife. Ten years later, the follow-up revealed that they had predicted divorce with 94 percent accuracy.


ENCOURAGING EXPECTED BEHAVIOR POSITIVE TO NEGATIVE RATIO

- As teacher praise to reprimand ratios improved, student on-task levels increased for all classrooms.
- After withdrawing praise from a classroom, off-task behavior increased from 8.7% to 25.5%
- When the rate of criticism was increased, off-task behavior increased from 25.5% to 31.2% with over 50% off-task behavior on some days

ENCOURAGING EXPECTED BEHAVIOR

4:1 RATIO

- Teachers should interact with students 4 times more often when they are behaving appropriately than when they are behaving inappropriately (4:1 ratio)
- Interactions with students are considered positive or negative based on the behavior in which the student is engaged at the time attention is given
- Negative interactions are not wrong and are sometimes necessary; the key is the ratio

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CONTACT INFORMATION