

Building a Culture of Recognition

PBIS Strategies That Go Deeper Than
Rewards

Lange Middle School

Session Outcomes

- Identify relational, ritual, and routine-based strategies to deepen recognition within PBIS frameworks.
- Evaluate the limitations of reward-based systems and explore transformational approaches to recognition.
- Design actionable recognition practices to strengthen school culture and morale.

Session Overview

- Moving beyond tickets and tangible rewards
- Building meaningful recognition systems for students and staff
- Practical, ready-to-implement strategies
- Focus on school climate, morale, and belonging

Quick Reflection

- What does recognition look like in your building?
- How are students recognized?
- How are staff recognized?
- What systems feel meaningful vs transactional?

The Limits of the Ticket System

- Inconsistent implementation across classrooms
- Equity concerns in who receives recognition
- Rewards may lose effectiveness over time
- Students may focus on prizes instead of growth
- Recognition can become transactional instead of transformational

Before the Shift

- Recognition heavily focused on tangible rewards
- Limited student buy-in from repeat systems
- Staff fatigue with inconsistent implementation
- Need for deeper relational practices
- Data showed limited long-term behavior impact

What Recognition Really Means

- Recognition as Relationship: Students feel seen and valued
- Recognition as Ritual: Shared moments that strengthen culture
- Recognition as Routine: Daily habits of affirmation and encouragement

Relational Practices

- Greeting students by name
- Celebrating effort and growth
- Positive referrals home
- Peer-to-peer shout-outs
- Staff praise and recognition

Rituals That Reinforce Values

- Leopard of the Week
- Classroom circles and reflection routines
- Attendance celebrations
- Student Athlete of the Week
- Character-based recognition

Routines That Sustain Recognition

- Morning announcements with student highlights
- Visual recognition boards
- Digital shout-outs
- Recognition embedded into meetings and PD
- Consistent staff appreciation practices
- Pick 6

Student Recognition Strategies

- Kickboard cart
- Weekly attendance candy walks
- Student of the Week
- Positive referrals
- Family shout-outs
- Lange gear raffles and giveaways

Staff Recognition Strategies

- Leopard of the Day
- Monthly treat cart
- Staff appreciation week activities
- Monthly attendance gifts
- Friday substitute appreciation snacks
- Birthday celebrations

Systems That Support Implementation

- Monthly PBIS team meetings
- Data review and decision making
- Professional development and PLC support
- District coaching and alignment
- Kickboard tracking systems

Fidelity and Outcome Data

- Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI)
- Behavior referral trends
- Attendance data
- School climate surveys
- Walkthrough observations
- Staff and student feedback through UpBeat and District surveys

Impact on Students and Staff

- Reduction in repeated behaviors
- Improved student engagement
- Increased sense of belonging
- Stronger peer relationships
- Positive adult culture and morale

Adult Engagement Strategies

- Quick polls and reflections
- Small group discussion
- Idea swaps and collaboration
- Case study analysis
- Action planning opportunities

Case Study: After the Shift

- Recognition embedded into daily culture
- Improved consistency across classrooms
- Students report feeling seen and valued
- Staff morale strengthened through appreciation practices
- Recognition tied to relationships and belonging

Call to Action

- What can you implement in one hour?
- What can you build over a week?
- What systems can grow over a semester?
- How can recognition become transformational in your school?

Thank You!

- Questions & Discussion
- Building a Culture of Recognition
- Lange Middle School