

# Session 1J: Reinforcement Grows Up: What Works with Teenagers

# Presenter Information



Mr. Josh Pierce  
Assistant Principal  
Fulton High School



Dr. Daniel Rector  
Executive Director of  
Student Services  
Fulton Public Schools

# Today's Outcomes

- Review how developmentally appropriate reinforcement can increase student buy-in and positive behavior at the high school level.
- Receive practical reinforcement strategies and systems.
- Analyze outcome data and qualitative feedback that demonstrates the impact of schoolwide reinforcement practices.





# FULTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DISTRICT & HIGH SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS | 2025-2026



DISTRICT PK-12

**2,195**  
STUDENTS



HIGH SCHOOL 9-12

**630**  
STUDENTS



**FREE & REDUCED LUNCH**  
% OF STUDENTS QUALIFYING

DISTRICT

**55.4%**

FREE 46.1%  
REDUCED 9.3%

HIGH SCHOOL

**48.4%**

FREE 38.9%  
REDUCED 9.5%



**ATTENDANCE**  
90/90 RATE

Students attending 90%  
or more of school days

DISTRICT

**80.64%**

HIGH SCHOOL

**78.12%**



**STUDENT MOBILITY RATE**  
Students entering or  
exiting during the  
school year

DISTRICT

**17.5%**

HIGH SCHOOL

**~21%**



High school FRL rates are likely  
underreported due to application trends.

## STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

WHITE MULTI-RACIAL BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN HISPANIC/LATINO ASIAN, AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE, & PACIFIC ISLANDER

**DISTRICT**  
(2,195 STUDENTS)

**70.6%**  
(1,549)

**12.7%**  
(279)

**10.3%**  
(225)

**5.8%**  
(127)

**0.5%**  
(15)

**HIGH SCHOOL**  
(630 STUDENTS)

**76.8%**  
(484)

**10.3%**  
(65)

**8.7%**  
(55)

**6.3%**  
(40)

**0.0%**  
(0)

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.



# Assumptions

about what we know and understand



## Quick Poll

- High school students are too old for PBIS.
- Teenagers shouldn't need rewards.
- We tried reinforcement and students hated it.



# Teenagers don't care about rewards.

- Teenagers care deeply about recognition, belonging, relationships, and positive attention.
- Adolescents reject infantilization, not reinforcement.



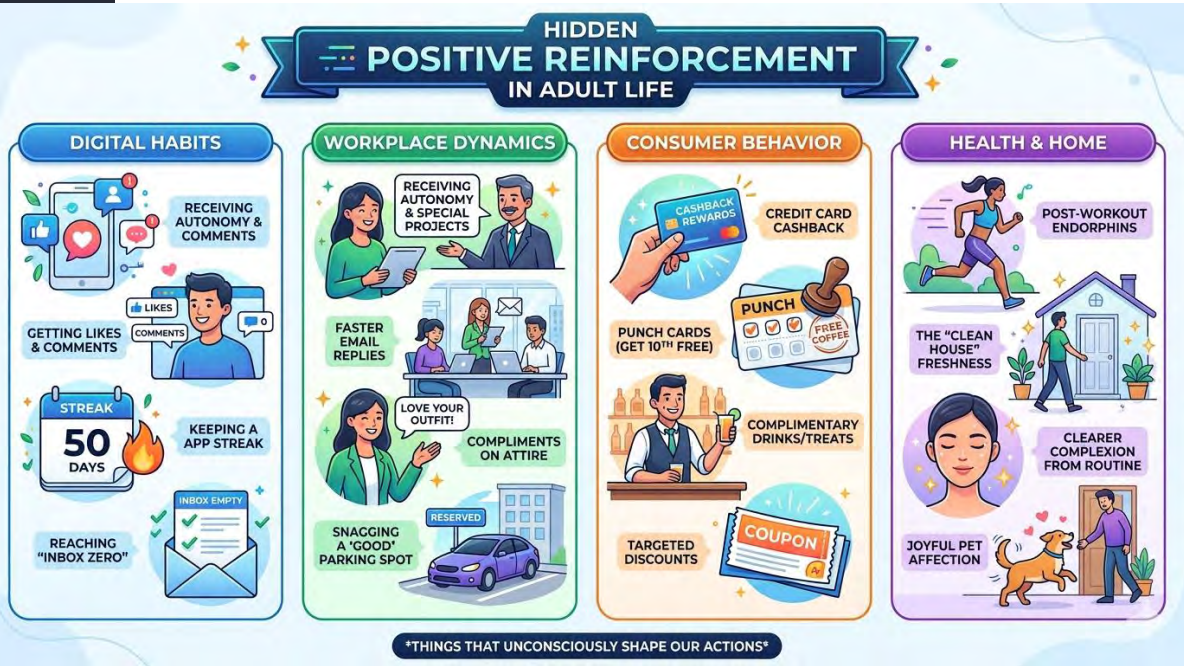
**Real Talk:** The issue is usually not whether reinforcement works; the issue is whether the reinforcement is authentic and developmentally appropriate.

# Reinforcement is Evidence-Based

- Reinforcement is one of the most extensively researched behavioral practices in education.
- It is a foundational practice within PBIS implementation, across all tiers.
- Reinforcement has been shown to increase the likelihood of desired behaviors being repeated.
- Reinforcement has been shown to improve climate, engagement, and relationships.



# Myth vs. Reality



Reinforcement is not bribery.

Adults respond to reinforcement every day.

Secondary students still value recognition.

High school students reject systems that feel childish.



# Adolescent Brain Science

- Adolescence is marked by heightened reward sensitivity.
- Peer perception and belonging become increasingly important.
- Immediate feedback is often more impactful than delayed consequences.
- Positive adult acknowledgment remains highly influential.

# Teenagers Reject Infantilization, Not Reinforcement

- Focus on authenticity and relationships.
- Use recognition and visibility.
- Design systems that respect adolescent identity.



# Why Secondary PBIS Often Struggles

- Correction often outweighs acknowledgment.
- Staff resistance/skepticism.
- Elementary systems are copied directly into high schools.
- Implementation consistency decreases in larger systems.





# What Are We Doing

Our Practices



# Daily Recognition

- Positive Referrals
- Entered into Infinite Campus
- Exported to a spreadsheet, mail-merge to “tickets”
- Student aides deliver tickets within one school day, along with a Taco Bell coupon and a Blow Pop



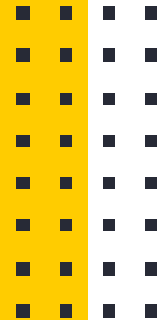
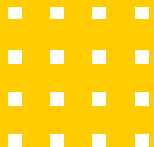
# Weekly Positive Referral Drawings



- Each positive referral earns an entry for both the student and staff member into a weekly drawing.
- Winners receive a Prize Pantry item and a Sonic drink on Monday.

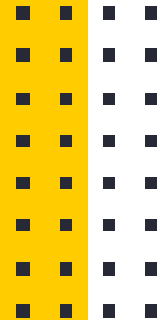
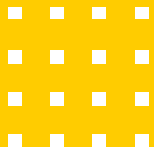
# Staff Competitions

- Twice a year, we have a staff positive referral competition.
- The goal is for 90% of staff to submit at least four referrals in a week.
- Each referral (up to four) earns an entry into a \$25 gift card drawing (donated by our building principal).
- If the goal is met, a second winner is selected.



# Motivating Staff

- Competitions are most effective at the start of the semester to reinforce the positive referral process.
- Sharing lists of students with and without referrals is highly impactful.
- Share updated referral data with teachers on a daily basis to maintain momentum and awareness.



# iSucceed

iSucceed incentivizes students who meet academic, behavior, and attendance expectations each quarter.

Each quarter, student are notified by email if they qualify for iSucceed based on the following criteria:

- 90% or better attendance.
- No grade lower than a C (70% or higher).
- No more than 3 tardies.
- No office-managed referrals.

# iSucceed

Students who qualify for iSucceed earn:

- Open seminar.
- Open lunch.
- Free admission to home games.
- Additional surprises throughout the quarter.

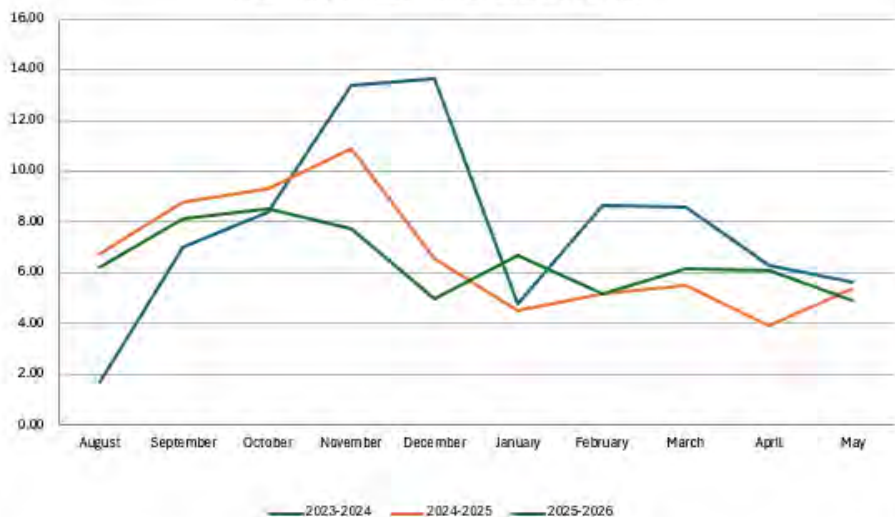


# What We Are Seeing

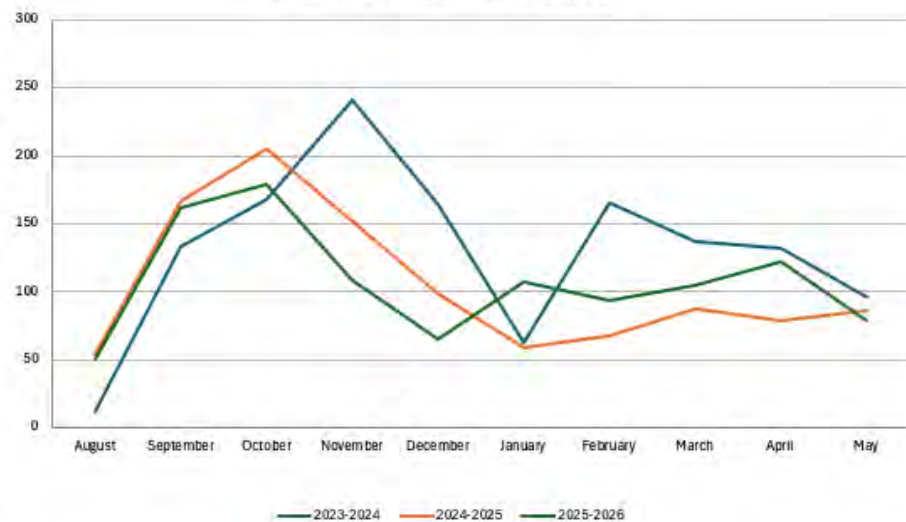
Our Data



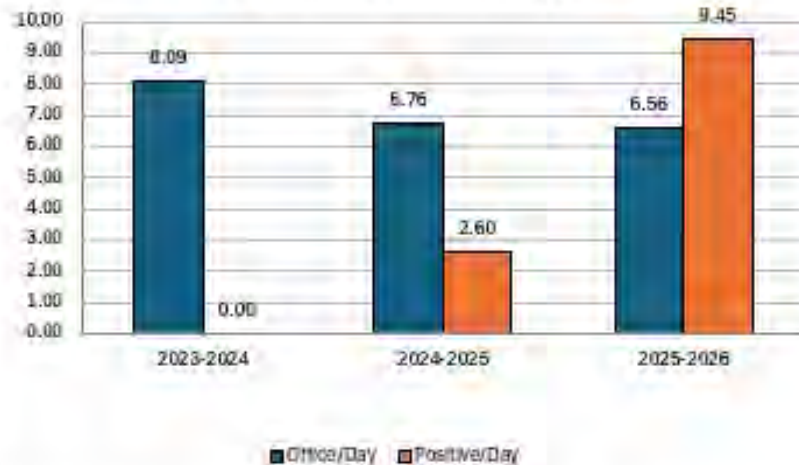
Fulton High School - Office Managed Per Day



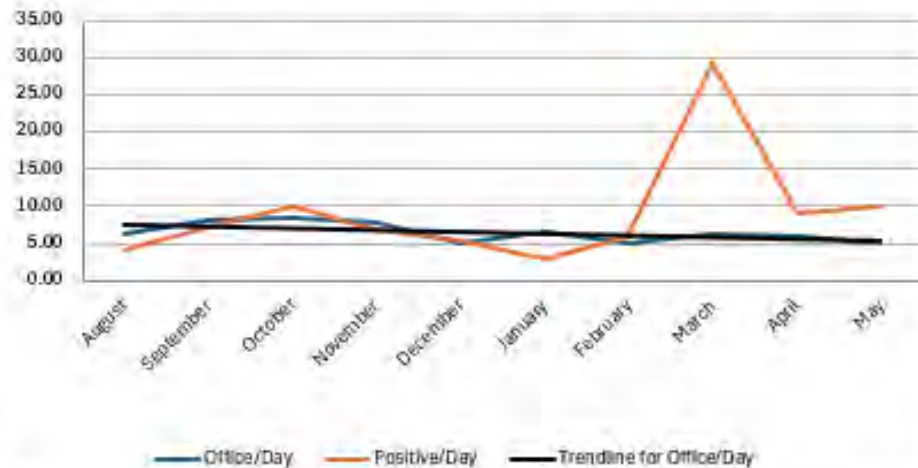
Fulton High School - Office Managed



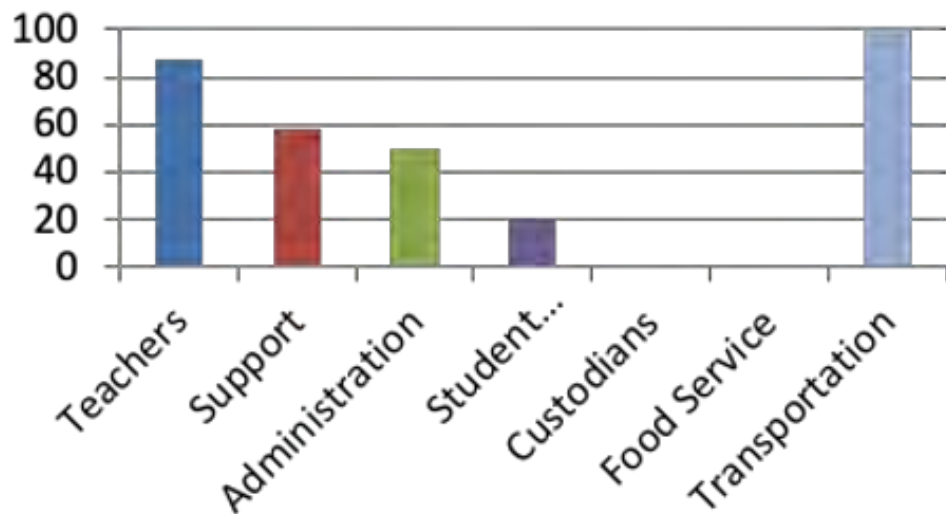
FHS - Office & Positive / Day



FHS - Office & Positive / Day by Month - 2025-2026



Staff Participation by Role (%)



65%

Staff Participation

82.37%

Student Reach

## Recommendations

### Getting Started

- Keep it simple for staff
- Define “positive behavior” together with staff input
- Share data regularly
- Highlight student impact often

### Getting Better

- Use your data to guide continuous improvement
- Make it fun for students and staff
- Student voice

# Questions



Contact Information:  
Josh Pierce: [jpierce@fulton58.org](mailto:jpierce@fulton58.org)  
Daniel Rector: [drector@fulton58.org](mailto:drector@fulton58.org)