**Columbia Public Schools** **Positive Behavior Support**

**Essential Feature Tip Sheet**

Giving Specific, Positive Performance Feedback

**What is Positive Performance Feedback?**

Students and staff are given specific, positive, frequent acknowledgement of desired social skills.

**A Schoolwide Positive Performance Feedback System Must Be:**

* Contingent: Must immediately follow desired behaviors rather than be applied as a general motivator.
* Specific: Should describe the skill observed.
* Credible: Appropriate for the situation and the individual
* Frequent: At a high enough rate to change/maintain skills.

**Why Is It Important to Have A System for All Staff to Give Positive Performance Feedback to All Students?**

Most teachers agree it is important to give students descriptive feedback about academic work. Most teachers also know giving descriptive feedback about what the student did well and what they need to improve will help them learn reading, math and other academic skills. Giving positive performance feedback is equally important to help students learn the social skills expected at school. Although there are no universal reinforcers that will increase the likelihood that all students will repeat the social skill in the future, adult attention is reinforcing for most students. Positive reinforcement (e.g., positive performance feedback for most students) increases the probability that the behavior it follows will recurs (Maag, 2001).

A schoolwide focus on all staff giving students high rates of positive performance feedback can improve the interactions between students and staff and therefore improve the school climate. In addition, a schoolwide system gives all adults in the building the language to use when interacting with students. Although most schools adopt tangible items to encourage students to use prosocial skills and help staff to give performance feedback the emphasis must be on pairing student behavior with predictable social language.

**What Does Specific Positive Verbal Feedback Sound Like?**

When staff give specific positive verbal feedback it is important to use the language of the schoolwide expectations. Following are some examples:

*Elementary Example 1:* You see students **playing together nicely,** you say “Hey, Tammy, you are being so **SAFE** as you play! Awesome! Here’s a loop to take to your class.”

*Elementary Example 2*: “Sam and Tyler, I saw how you **worked out your conflict** with your words. That was so **RESPONSIBLE**! Way to go!” And give a ticket to each student.

*Secondary Example 1:* “Thanks for being **RESPECTFUL** and **walking quietly** in the hall.” Give Fred a Kudo Card to take back to his team to contribute toward his team goal.

*Secondary Example 2:* “Ethel, thanks for **remembering to push in your chair** and being **RESPONSIBLE** in our cafeteria. Here’s a Wolf Pack Card. Sign your name and put in the bucket in the office.”

**How Much Performance Feedback Do Teachers Give?**

Teachers are more likely to praise good work or answers than give criticism to poor work or answers, but are more likely to give criticism to poor behavior and less likely to give praise to appropriate behaviors (Brophy, 1980). What is important to note is that students in the primary grades receive a disproportionately greater amount of the positive feedback, on average 1.21 affirmations per minute in first grade compared to 1 affirmation per hour in grades 9 through 12 White (1975).

**What level of Positive Performance Feedback has proven effective?**

Most research on the subject of performance feedback indicates that a ratio of four positives to every one negative is the most effective (Brophy, 1980)

**Why are schools encouraged to tie a tangible item with giving students positive verbal performance feedback?**

* Tangible items such as tickets, Compliment Cards, ribbons, string, etc. are A REMINDER for adults to give positive, specific verbal feedback to students.
* The tangibles help us BE ACCOUNTABLE for giving positive, specific verbal feedback.
* Tangibles provide ALL STAFF with an efficient system for giving positive verbal performance feedback to any and all students. Tangibles give faculty and support staff a tool to engage in a positive way with any student in the school. This can create a more positive culture in the school where we are “all in this together”.
* Tangible give us a GROSS MEASURE of positive performance feedback statements given. When classes, teams, or grade levels reach their goals, students get to celebrate the success of staff giving positive feedback!
* Tangibles are a UNIVERSAL SIGNAL to students that they have performed the expected social skill.

**But isn’t giving tangible items a form of bribery?**

Using a reward system is not the same as bribing a student to behave appropriately. A bribe is something offered or given to a person in a position of trust to influence or corrupt that person's views or conduct. PBS acknowledges and rewards students for following school-wide expectations and rules. Appropriate behavior is acknowledged after it occurs. Rewards are earned, not offered as payoff in exchange for good behavior. (Florida Positive Behavior Support Website Nov 14 2006)

**Don’t we want our students to be intrinsically motivated?**

Of course, our ultimate goal is for students to be naturally motivated. The reality is that schools give many tangible items for success in academics, sports, music, theater, etc. in the form of grades, trophies, medals, etc. Yet we continue to struggle with the idea of giving tangible items or verbal praise or feedback for success in social skills.

**What are some things for the PBS Team to consider when creating a schoolwide performance feedback system?**

* What tangible to give students to help staff remember to give high rates of positive, specific performance feedback.
* Some basic rules:
  + What students do with the “tickets” (take back to classroom, put in fish bowl in office)
  + How to respond if students ask for “tickets”.
  + NEVER, NEVER, NEVER take “tickets” away! Why? Once we have given verbal performance feedback and a “ticket”, we cannot take the interaction back.
* Set goals:
  + Will individual classes or teams set “ticket” goals?
  + Will the entire school set a “ticket” goal?
* Celebrations:
  + Who determines what the celebrations will be?
  + Let students help suggest celebrations.
  + Class celebration examples:
    - Hat day \*Extra recess
    - Free time in class \*Computer time
    - Pajama day \*Free homework pass
  + Schoolwide celebration examples:
    - School dance \*Silent movie
    - Jazz band concert \*Popsicles at lunch

**What are some terms that will help me understand positive performance feedback?**

**Positive Reinforcement** = something that increases the frequency of the behavior it follows, must be given contingent to display of the behavior that is desired to be increased is observed

**Negative Reinforcement** = any behavior (e.g. student is sent out of the classroom) results in the removal of an aversive (e.g. a student having to do work). The behavior that terminated an version (e.g. being sent out of the classroom) is more likely to be performed in the future.

**Rewards** = stimuli that area assumed to be positive events, but they have not been shown to strengthen behavior, as such it is not defined by its effects on behavior.

**Incentive system** = a system based on either rewards or positive reinforcement and are designed to increase motivation.

**Intrinsic motivation** = behavior for which the appropriate controlling stimuli has yet to be specified. Meaning the benefits are expected in the future (Bandura, 1977) or the reinforcement is intermittent (Dickinson, 1989).

**Praise** = to commend worth or to express approval or admiration, a stronger emotion than mere feedback or affirmation of a correct response. Praise ***can*** be reinforcing, but that does mean that it ***always or even sometimes does***.