What is an acknowledgement system?

An acknowledgement system is an organized and consistent way to recognize students who meet your school's behavioral expectations. The purpose of an acknowledgement system is to prompt adults to respond positively when a student engages in the behavioral expectations.

Reinforcing students' appropriate behavior increases the likelihood that it will happen again, and it allows staff to connect with more students. Highlighting what students are doing well helps build relationships as adults and students positively interact. Handing out tickets to students who display the expected behavior is one example of an acknowledgement system, but there are multiple options for acknowledging behavior.

Why should we use an acknowledgement system?

Behavior can be taught. Acknowledging the behaviors you want to see repeated teaches students to engage in that behavior. Acknowledgement systems are a structured way to use behavior-specific praise to help students understand exactly what they did that was appropriate. When using behavior-specific praise, it is important to name the specific behavior that was observed along with the expectation that was displayed so students know exactly what they did well. Using praise to acknowledge appropriate behavior can lead to more frequent appropriate behavior in classrooms (Spilt, Leflot, Onghena, & Coplin, 2016; Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008).

How can we use an acknowledgement system?

Acknowledgement systems serve as a prompt to praise students. Schools should implement an acknowledgement system that meets the needs of its students and staff. Student populations who need more frequent and individualized reinforcement benefit from individual systems such as tickets or points. Other student populations may need to focus on teamwork and building a sense of unity, so class-wide or grade level systems that emphasize students working together to achieve a goal could be more effective. Acknowledgement systems should be used across all settings in the school. All staff should be aware of the acknowledgement system and how they can use it with students. As an example, Bramble Elementary created "Bramble Bucks" for all teachers, administrators, cafeteria workers, and janitorial staff to distribute to students when they engage in expected behaviors. Motivating incentives are a critical part of the acknowledgement system. The RTI[2]-B team can gather input from students on potential school-wide or classroom rewards though a brief survey or classroom discussions.

Types of Acknowledgement Systems and Strategies	
Tickets	Many schools develop a school-wide acknowledgement system using tickets (as well as a lottery or school-wide store). School staff (e.g., administrators, teachers, custodians, food services, bus drivers, paraprofessionals) give tickets to students who engage in expected behaviors. Students can turn in those tickets to receive rewards.
Points	Similar to tickets, a point system can be used to reward students who engage in expected behaviors. Once students earn a pre-determined amount of points, they can redeem them for special items or activities.

Types of Rewards	
Classroom Incentives	Students can earn rewards as a group. The teacher can choose a behavior as a focus for the entire class. The students then work together toward that goal. When they meet their goal, they can celebrate together (e.g., popcorn party). Students can also earn group rewards with their classmates for engaging in expected behavior in specific settings (e.g., earning the silver spoon for their table in the cafeteria).
Classroom Store	Students can redeem tickets or points within the classroom. The teacher can have a selection of small tangible items (e.g., stickers or erasers) or privileges (e.g., 10 minutes of quiet reading or lunch with a preferred staff member).
School Store	Students can redeem their tickets or points at the school store to purchase rewards. Schools should start the "prices" of items low so students become familiar with the system. Once students learn the value of the tickets, school staff can increase the "prices" so that students are motivated to work for a higher number of tickets. It is important to have a variety of exciting, age-appropriate items in the school store as well as non-tangible certificates that represent something desirable. Students can redeem certificates for something special (e.g., sit in teacher's chair for a day).
Raffle	Students can enter their tickets into a drawing for the chance to win a desired item (e.g., donated gift card, desired parking spot, ticket to a school event).
Classroom Party	Teachers can track the amount of tickets or points earned by students in their class. When they reach a predetermined number, they can have a classroom party.
Grade level Celebration	Grade levels of students can be rewarded for appropriate behavior by tracking ticket or point goals. Appropriate behavior can be rewarded by having a celebration such as a dance party, lunch outside, or a kickball game.
Privileges	Privileges can be used as incentives across any setting of the school. Students can earn a privilege such as lunch with a favorite teacher, being a helper in the classroom (e.g., line leader, bringing materials to the office, board eraser), or getting recognized as student of the week.

Bramble Elementary - Bramble Behavior Ticket

Name:_____

Teacher:_____

Expectation Met:
- ❑ Respect
- ❑ Responsibility
- ❑ Safety

What is a staff acknowledgement system?

In addition to reinforcing student behavior, schools can create a staff acknowledgement system. This can be used to (a) recognize staff members who are performing their jobs well, (b) boost morale, and (c) acknowledge staff for following the school's RTI[2]-B plan. For example, school staff can earn tickets for teaching expectations and acknowledging students. They can be given tickets by administrators, the RTI[2]-B team members, or other staff. For schools who have a raffle for students, the teacher's name on the winning student ticket can also earn a reward. Raffling student tickets and acknowledging the teacher who gave that student the ticket is a way to reward staff for handing out tickets. For schools who track the number of points or tickets earned by students, the teacher or grade level of teachers who give out the most points or tickets can earn a reward. Staff members deserve recognition, so RTI[2]-B teams should develop a system that would be meaningful to everyone in their building. As a way to ensure the system has value, the RTI[2]-B team can gather input from staff on potential rewards though a brief survey or votes during a staff meeting.

Example staff acknowledgment incentives:

- Extra planning period
- Relief of daily duties (e.g., cafeteria duty, bus duty)
- A pass to wear jeans to work
- Recognition on morning announcements, the school website, or school bulletin boards
- Raffle or drawings
- Cart that travels to teachers' classrooms to distribute treats
- Special parking spot
- Teacher's lounge named after honored teacher for a month
- Teacher of the Month and Staff Member of the Month
- Donated gift cards
- "Shout-Out Board" with compliments displayed for all to see
- Family tailgate for all staff at a high school football game

For Further Reading
Dewhirst, M. & Zingsheim, A. (2011). *The why and how of acknowledgement* [PDF document]. Retrieved from wisconsinpbisnetwork.org

Missouri Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support (2017). Encouraging expected behavior. In *MO SW-PBS tier I team workbook* (Chapter 5). Retrieved from pbismissouri.org

Tennessee Behavior Supports Project (2016). *Lessons from the field: Planning effective school-wide student and staff acknowledgement systems*. [PDF document]. Retrieved from tennesseebsp.org

Tennessee Behavior Supports Project (2016). *Behavior specific praise in the classroom*. [PDF document]. Retrieved from tennesseebsp.org

U.S. Office of Special Education Populations (n.d.). *Supporting and responding to behavior: Evidence-based classroom strategies for teachers*. Retrieved from pbis.org

References
Spilt, J.L., Leflot, G., Oneghena, P., & Coplin, H. (2016). Use of praise and reprimands as critical ingredients of teacher behavior management: Effects on children's development in the context of a teacher-mediated classroom intervention. *Prevention Science, 17*(6), 732-742.

Simonsen, B., Fairbanks, S., Briesch, A., Myers, D., & Sugai, G. (2008). Evidence-based practices in classroom management: Considerations for research to practice. *Education & Treatment of Children, 31*, 351-380.