

What is Teacher Praise?

Teacher praise is a form of social attention typically communicated through positive verbal feedback. When implemented correctly, contingent, behavior-specific praise is a research-based strategy to increase appropriate behaviors and decrease inappropriate behaviors. In other words, increasing the positive attention you provide for behaviors you want, and decreasing the negative attention you provide for behaviors you do not want, leads students to have more appropriate behavior and less inappropriate behavior. Teacher praise is particularly effective for students with attention-seeking problem behaviors.

Characteristic	Example	Non-Example
<p>Positive verbal feedback: Describes to the child what he/she is doing well in a positive way. Use an <u>encouraging</u> tone & <u>constructive</u> words.</p>	<p><i>Great job waiting for me to come help you! You raised your hand then waited quietly and patiently until I could come to your desk.</i></p>	<p><i>Please try raising your hand again. Yes, you raised it, but you were already talking by the time I could come to your desk.</i></p>
<p>Behavior specific: Specify <u>exactly</u> which desired behavior you are recognizing. Praise the behaviors you want to see more often!</p>	<p><i>Nice work getting to your seat and preparing materials before the bell rang! You heard the warning bell, went to your seat and got your folder before the final bell.</i></p>	<p><i>Nice work following the classroom rules. You aced this rule and I am so proud of your efforts with the bell.</i></p>
<p>Contingent on expected behavior: Praise occurs automatically and <u>immediately</u> based on the child performing the desired behavior.</p>	<p><i>You're a rock star at putting away materials. I noticed that you collected all the papers at your group table and put them back in the materials bin.</i></p>	<p><i>If you want to earn a star for materials, please gather all the papers at your group table and put them back in the materials bin.</i></p>
<p>Growth-minded: Support individual growth by praising an <u>approximation</u> or <u>near-example</u> of the desired behavior. Follow by specifying to the child what the behavior looks and sounds like.</p>	<p><i>You did an excellent job completing the first 3 problems on your work sheet. Now, show me what a great job you can do on the next 3, and I will come back to check your progress in 5 minutes.</i></p>	<p><i>You completed the first 3 problems, but then started talking to your neighbor. The assignment is to complete the whole worksheet.</i></p>

RTI²-B and Teacher Praise

Teacher praise is an easy and effective positive practice that should be used in all levels of RTI²-B. At the Tier I level of prevention, all students are provided with contingent, behavior-specific praise to reinforce behavioral expectations, promote appropriate behaviors, prevent problem behaviors, and foster a positive classroom environment. At the Tier II and III levels, teacher praise is used to increase attention for the behaviors we want to see and decrease attention for the behaviors we want to decrease.

Mastering Teacher Praise

- Clearly communicate the behaviors you expect students to demonstrate by explicitly teaching and practicing behavioral expectations and replacement behaviors.
- Provide immediate, contingent, positive verbal feedback frequently to create momentum for good behaviors.
- Use specific feedback so students know what they are doing right.
- Set students up for success by providing opportunities for them to demonstrate appropriate behavior. Purposefully attend to appropriate behavior.
- Provide more positive than negative feedback to all students.
- Implementing contingent, behavior-specific praise effectively requires practice. Practice praise statements to make sure they seem genuine and natural. Incorporate procedures to remind you to provide praise (e.g., timed audio, tactile prompting devices).

Evaluate Your Praise!

- Self-monitor your use of praise by recording the number of praise statements you provide to your class or to specific students. You can use tally marks or counters to record praise as you go, or review recordings of your instruction to evaluate your performance. Set goals for improvement and monitor your continued use of praise over time.
- Ask others (peers or instructional leaders/coaches) to observe you and provide feedback on your use of effective praise.

Online Resources

- The IRIS Center for Training Enhancements. (2012). Classroom management (Part 1): Learning the components of a comprehensive behavior management plan. <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/beh1/chalcycle.htm>
- The IRIS Center for Training Enhancements. (2012). Classroom management (Part 2): Developing your own comprehensive behavior management plan. <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/beh2/chalcycle.htm>
- The IRIS Center for Training Enhancements: Addressing disruptive and noncompliant behaviors (Part 1): Understanding the acting-out cycle. <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/bi1/cresource.htm>
- The IRIS Center for Training Enhancements: Addressing disruptive and noncompliant behaviors (Part 1): Behavioral interventions. <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/bi2/chalcycle.htm>

Select Research and Resources

- Kirby, F.D., & Shields, F. (1972). Modification of arithmetic response rate and attending behavior in a seventh-grade student. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 5, 79-84.
- Luiselli, J.K., & Downing, J.M. (1980). Improving a student's arithmetic performance using feedback and reinforcement procedures. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 3, 45-49.
- Sutherland, K.S. (2000). Promoting positive interactions between teachers and students with emotional/behavioral disorders. *Preventing School Failure*, 44, 110-115.
- Sutherland, K.S., & Wehby, J.H. (2001). The effect of self evaluation on teaching behavior in classrooms for students with emotional or behavioral disorders. *Journal of Special Education*, 35, 161-171.
- Sutherland, K.S., Wehby, J.H., & Copeland, S.R. (2000). Effect of varying rates of behavior-specific praise on the on-task behavior of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 8, 2-8.
- Thomas, D.A., Nielsen, L.J., Kuypers, D.S., & Becker, W.C. (1968). Social reinforcement and remedial instruction in the elimination of a classroom behavior problem. *Journal of Special Education*, 2, 297-302.

For Further Reading

- Conroy, M.A., Sutherland, K.S., Snyder, A.L., & Marsh, S. (2008). Classwide Interventions: Effective Instruction Makes a Difference. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 40(6), 24-30.
- Epstein, M., Atkins, M., Cullinan, D., Kutash, K. & Weaver, R. (2008). Reducing Behavior Problems in the Elementary School Classroom: A Practice Guide (NCEE #2008-012). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides>
- Moore Partin, T.C., Robertson, R.E., Maggin, D. M., Oliver, R. M., & Wehby, J.H. (2010). Using teacher praise and opportunities to respond to promote appropriate student behavior. *Preventing School Failure*, 54, 172-178.