

Enhancing Student Behavior Through Positive Descriptive Feedback

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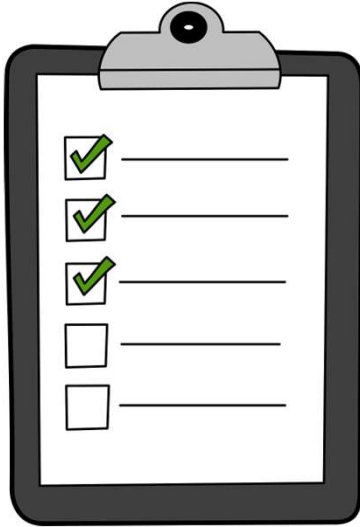
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The West Virginia Behavior/Mental Health Technical Assistance Center is proud to be a collaboration between the West Virginia Department of Education and the West Virginia Autism Training Center at Marshall University.

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Agenda



- Elements of Effective PDF
- Why PDF Matters
- Using PDF Strategies
- Examples and Practice

Positive Descriptive
Feedback
PDF

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Why PDF Matters

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What is positive descriptive feedback?

What is an example of positive
descriptive feedback?



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What is Positive Descriptive Feedback?

Specific type of feedback that goes beyond general praise to clearly describe:

- *What the child did well*
- *Why it matters or what it shows*

It helps children understand exactly which behaviors are expected, valued, and should be repeated.

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The Power of Feedback in Shaping Behavior

- Supports self-regulation and learning
- Builds confidence and intrinsic motivation
- Strengthens teacher-student relationships
- Encourages desired behaviors through reinforcement
- Helps kids make connections between actions and their impact

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Pyramid Model/ECPBIS (Preschool)



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5 to 1: Ratio



Students should experience predominately positive interactions at school. The ratio should be five positives for every negative interaction.

Positive Interactions=

Smile, nod, wink, greeting, attention, handshake, high five
Positive Descriptive Feedback

Negative Interactions=

Non-specific behavioral corrections (no, don't, stop, etc)
Ignoring student behavior (appropriate or inappropriate)



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PDF Teaches Expectations

- Expectations teach children **why** our behavior matters
- Expectations relate to the values, vision, and mission of the school
- Rules teach children **what** to do
- Rules define the expectations by sharing specific behaviors
- Focus on teaching expectations by clarifying what behaviors embody each

| EXPECTATION | RULE |
|------------------|---|
| Be respectful. → | Raise your hand before sharing an idea. |



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Reacting

can escalate situations and damage relationships.



Responding

models self-regulation, strengthens trust, and teaches students how to manage their own behavior.



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Reacting

Jill, please stop interrupting! How many times do I have to tell you to raise your hand?!

Responding

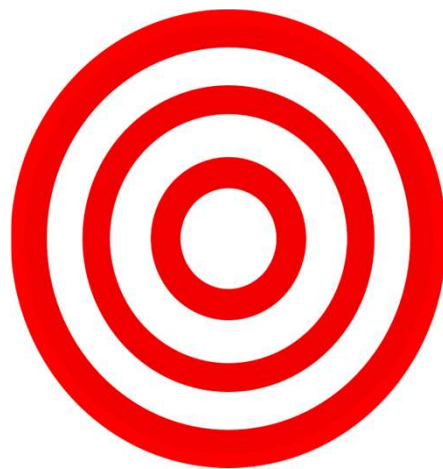
Awesome! I see Jonah waiting with his hand up—he's ready to share respectfully. That helps us all listen better.

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Shifting Adult Mindsets

- **Look for desirable behavior instead of undesirable behavior**
- Train the brain to notice behaviors that may be overlooked
- Reduces educator stress
- Improves classroom relationships
- Builds a positive classroom climate



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What you focus on grows. What
you concentrate on is what you
see more of in your life.

Robin S. Sharma

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Elements of Effective PDF

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What is NOT Positive Descriptive Feedback

- “You are not being a good listener.”
- “Good job!”
- “You’re so smart!”
- “I like how you are sitting on the carpet.”
- Thumbs-up or high-five
- Silently giving a ticket or other reward incentive
- Praising only above and beyond behavior

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Consider the Intended Effect

- To encourage and support an individual child, small group, or large group **directly**
- To encourage and support an individual child, small group, or large group **indirectly**



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Positive Descriptive Feedback Elements

Praise

Name student(s)

Describe the behavior

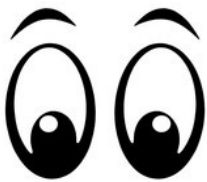
Link to expectation

Today we will be largely discussing PDF given verbally to one student while in a large group.

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Praise



Wow!

That's awesome!

Brilliant thinking!

Great job!

Amazing!

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Name student(s)



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Describe the behavior

Be as specific as possible!

Non-example:

"I like how she is sitting on the carpet."



Example:

"Ashlee is raising her hand and waiting to be called on to share her ideas."



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Link to an expectation

- “Ashlee is raising her hand and waiting to be called on to share her ideas.”
- “That shows she is ready to learn and respects others by waiting her turn.”



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Full Example

“Wow, look at Ashlee!”

“Ashlee is raising her hand and waiting to be called on to share her ideas.”

“That shows she is ready to learn and respects others by waiting her turn.”

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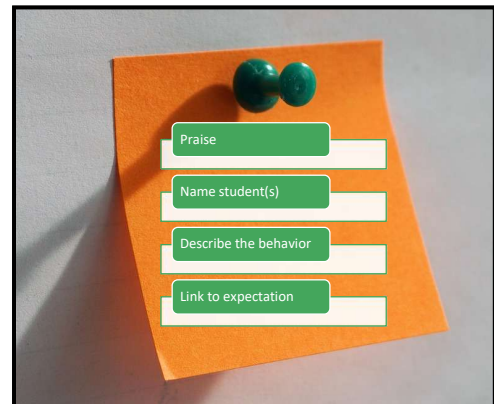
Using PDF Strategies

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Ways to Improve Your PDF

- Post the PDF elements or phrases that you want to remember to use
- Pick a specific behavior to support
- Create a checklist with all student names
- Get feedback from a peer or teaching partner
- Use video for self-reflection
- Track changes in student behavior over time



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Things to Consider When Giving Feedback

- Student's learning style and preferences
- What are the student's strengths?
- What specific areas does the student find difficult?
- What is the student's current emotional state?
- How have they responded to feedback in the past?
- Does the student come from a background where feedback may be interpreted in a specific way?

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PDF for Younger Students

- Use concrete, simple language
- Avoid long explanations
- Give immediate feedback in the moment
- Pair words with gestures or visuals
- Focus on social-emotional learning



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PDF for Older Students

- Use more specific and academic language
- Encourage self-reflection by asking questions
- Private delivery may be preferred
- Tie feedback to long-term goals



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Is Compliance the Goal?

Is our goal to foster intrinsic or extrinsic motivation?

Consider the impact of statements like...

- I love how....
- I'm so proud of...
- I'm so happy that...



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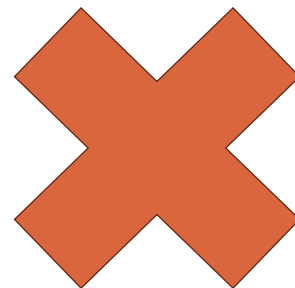
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Fixed Mindset Phrases

Try to avoid phrases that suggest success is based on innate ability rather than effort such as:

- "You're so smart!"
- "You're a natural at this!"
- "This is easy for you, isn't it?"
- "You didn't even have to try!"
- "You didn't need any help at all!"
- "You're so talented!"



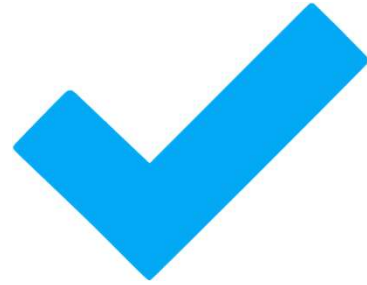
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Growth Mindset Phrases

Use phrases that suggest that success is based on effort, strategy, and learning such as:

- “I can tell you’ve been practicing this—it really shows!”
- “You stuck with it even when it got tricky—that’s impressive!”
- “Your focus helped you get through that tough part. That showed perseverance.”
- “You took your time and broke the problem down into smaller steps.”



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Examples and Practice

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Praise

Name student(s)

Describe the behavior

Link to expectation

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Praise

Name student(s)

Describe the behavior

Link to expectation

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Praise

Name student(s)

Describe the behavior

Link to expectation



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Praise

Name student(s)

Describe the behavior

Link to expectation



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Conclusion

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Summary



Praise

Name student(s)

Describe the behavior

Link to expectation

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Self-Reflect: What's happening now?

- Am I consistent in providing feedback to all students, including those who struggle and those who excel?
- Do I focus more on student effort, strategies, and progress rather than just the final result?
- How often do I give students specific, descriptive feedback rather than general praise (e.g., "Good job!")?

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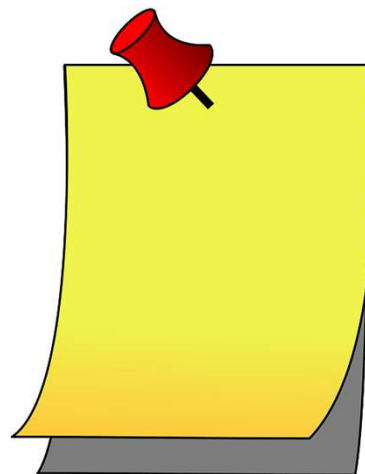


Set a Goal

What do I want to achieve and why is it important?

What specific steps will I need to take to reach this goal?

How will I know I'm making progress or have achieved it?



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Thank you!

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