

What Is It?

Acknowledging children's positive behavior is both a universal and individual antecedent strategy. It is a planned approach in which an adult intentionally increases their positive interactions with children in order to promote children's socially appropriate behavior. This is accomplished by providing frequent, positive descriptive feedback to children.

When to Use It

- To prevent attention-seeking challenging behavior.
- To teach children what they are doing well and increase the likelihood that children will engage in the same behavior(s) in the future.

Steps to Implementation / How to Do It

<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Identify appropriate behaviors you would like to promote in the classroom (e.g., walking inside, sharing toys, helping others).
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Brainstorm opportunities and develop a plan in which you can provide positive descriptive feedback to children across the day.
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Observe children during routines with the purpose of noticing positive behavior.
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Comment on and thank children for their positive behavior.
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Move around the room to ensure that every child hears positive acknowledgement at natural moments throughout the day.

Example

Alvaro works hard to ensure his classroom of preschoolers understand the daily routines and classroom expectations. One of his primary goals is to build a strong relationship with each child. His classroom teaching team follows the adage, "You get more of what you pay attention to," and for them this means they focus on noticing children's positive behaviors in the classroom. During free choice time, each adult takes turns joining children's play and moving around the room to engage in conversations. The classroom assistant, Becks, makes a point of noticing the ways the children in the block area are working together on a structure. She comments, "That tower is 7 blocks tall. You are really working together!" Later, she notices a child comforting another child who is upset when the tower falls. She comments, "Thanks for helping your friend, Carson." During the transition to large group time, Alvaro focuses on noticing the ways children are ready to start the activity. He says, "I see all our areas are cleaned up, and Tish, Miles, and James are ready on the carpet. Thank you!" As the group begins, he comments, "Look at these quiet listeners, Becks! I see their eyes on me and their hands on their laps." Becks agrees and provides a quiet thumbs up. While reading a story, a child begins to grab the book. Alvaro gently redirects the child to sit on their square; as soon the child is seated, Alvaro says, "Thanks for sitting. What do you want to share?" Whenever Alvaro and Becks introduce the children to new routines or skills, they make a point of encouraging effort and commenting on positive behaviors.

How to Increase Effectiveness

- Strive for a ratio of 4 positive messages for every 1 correction or redirection.
- For complex skills or behaviors, look for opportunities to encourage effort and progress toward the skill ("You got this started all by yourself! I can help with the rest," or "I see you working hard").
- Model positive acknowledgment of adults, too! Name the nice things other adults do to support the classroom and thank them.
- If a child engages in challenging behavior, minimize attention to the behavior but acknowledge positive behavior as soon as the child begins to engage in any part of a positive interaction.
- For information about how to individualize this strategy for a child that would benefit from more support, see the "Individualized Positive Descriptive Feedback" intervention guide.

Resources

Timm, M., & Doubet, S. (2007). [Acknowledging children's positive behaviors.](#)

Fullerton, E. K., Conroy, M A., Correa, V. I. (2009). [Early childhood teachers' use of specific praise statements with young children at risk for behavioral disorders.](#) *Behavioral Disorders*, 34(3), 118-135.

Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (2019). [Relationships with adults: Know.](#)

National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations. (2020). [Recommendations and considerations for positive descriptive feedback.](#)