Last Issue

In the last issue, we highlighted some of the unique challenges inherent in implementing school-wide positive behaviour support (PBS) in secondary schools, including how school-wide PBS looks different in secondary schools, involving students on the PBS committee, and how to identify and reach at-risk secondary school students.

This Issue

In this issue, our focus will be on monitoring and acknowledging prosocial behaviour, both of which are important to the successful implementation of school-wide PBS, although the specific strategies used will vary from school to school. We will present effective practices and real-school examples to guide and support your efforts in implementing school-wide PBS, including research surrounding the use of rewards to reinforce prosocial behaviour.

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Want to know how to maximize student motivation? See page 6 for a sample Reinforcement Preference Survey!

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A substantial amount of problem behaviour occurs outside of the classroom, such as in hallways, playgrounds, and cafeterias. Transitions, such as moving from the playground to the classroom, can be hot spots for problem behaviour. “Active supervision” and “precorrection” are two research–validated strategies that can effectively reduce student problem behaviour, teach self–regulation and improve student–staff relationships.

ACTIVE SUPERVISION refers to well–defined and overt supervisory behaviours.

- **Scan**: Look around in immediate and distant areas.
- **Move**: Move around, making sure not to stay in just one place.
- **Interact**: Briefly greet and chat with students, let them know when they are showing prosocial skills and provide corrective instruction when needed.

Don’t underestimate the positive effect of even your brief interactions with students! Allday and Pakudar (2007) found that when teachers greeted their students briefly, positively and sincerely when they walked into the classroom (e.g., “I like your shoes,” “I am glad you’re here today”), students’ on–task behaviour during class (e.g., active listening, following teacher instruction) nearly doubled!

PRECORRECTION refers to brief reminders to use expected behaviours before particularly challenging situations. They can prevent problem behaviour and facilitate self–regulation.

- **Give verbal reminders**: Transitions to hallways: “Show me what being responsible in the hallways looks like” or to free time: “Remember to use inside voices”
- **Demonstrate appropriate behaviour**: Model how to take turns or ask to borrow materials.
- **Practice appropriate behaviour**: Practice and role play the desired behaviour with you or a peer (e.g., raising hand and waiting for permission to speak).
REWARDS DEBATE: To Use or Not to Use?
Based on research by Akin-Little, Eckert, Lovett, and Little (2004); Cameron, Banko and Pierce (2001); Maag (1999, 2001)

WHY REWARDS ARE SOMETIMES AVOIDED

Q: If we reward a student for something they should already be doing, will this decrease his or her intrinsic motivation in the future?

A: When rewards are used ineffectively, there is a risk that the student might start engaging in the behaviour for the reward, and the desired behaviour might stop when the reward is taken away. But when used effectively, rewards have been shown to increase intrinsic motivation, so the positive behaviour continues even without rewards.

USES OF REWARDS THAT MAY HINDER INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

1) **Participation only.** Rewards should be tied to specific effort or performance (e.g., completion of the assignment, quality of answers), and not given for participation only (unless, of course, participation itself is an accomplishment for that student!).

2) **One time only.** It is more effective to provide rewards repeatedly and unpredictably.

3) **Tasks the student enjoys.** It is better to use praise instead of tangible rewards for tasks that the specific student in question already enjoys doing.

USES OF REWARDS THAT MAY ENHANCE INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

1) **Motivation for less interesting tasks.** Introducing rewards can increase the amount of time students spend persevering on tasks they do not enjoy, and they can also help improve their performance.

2) **Helping students build skills.** Using rewards can help students persist with learning to use prosocial skills, especially before they are skilled enough to access natural reinforcement (e.g., peer social invitations) for their prosocial behaviour. For instance, students can be rewarded for taking turns during recess, and as they become better at the skill, they will learn that other kids will invite them to play with them more often.

USING REWARDS EFFECTIVELY

Rewards are most effective when they are used intermittently (i.e., not predictably), paired with specific praise about an aspect of their performance and an explanation about how continued use can lead to natural reinforcement. Page 4 will explain how to use praise effectively—many of the strategies apply to using rewards too!
Praise comes naturally to teachers, and it may be difficult to see how it could ever produce any negative effects. However, even the most well-intentioned praise could be detrimental. Here we provide some guidelines to help know how and when to use praise effectively.

**HOW TO USE PRAISE MOST EFFECTIVELY**

**Make it Honest and Earned**

Telling students “good job” when they did not meet expectations will not help motivate them to do their best work. Instead, praise something they actually did well, such as an aspect of their effort, like “I appreciate that you handed in your homework on time!”

**Make it Non-Controlling**

When praising a student, keep the focus on what they did as opposed to what they should do. Saying, “Nice work listening during the math lesson today. You were very focused!” is more effective than saying, “Nice work listening during the math lesson today. I’d like to see you do that every day.”

**Direct the Praise toward Process over Ability**

Directing the praise at something related to their process (e.g., effort, organization, attention to detail) helps keep the focus on things the student can control, instead of his or her overall ability. To encourage internal motivation, saying, “Nice job showing all your work on the math test. It was easy to follow and shows you were working hard!” is more effective than saying, “Wow! You aced the test. You’re really smart!”

**WHEN TO USE PRAISE**

**Make it Immediate**

Praising students immediately after their action helps ensure they know exactly what they are receiving praise for.

**Make it Unexpected**

Making sure that the praise is not predictable helps preserve the effectiveness of praise and minimizes the risk that students may start working for the praise instead of their own intrinsic motivation.

*Effective praise is a sincere congratulation for a student that is immediate, unexpected, and directed towards process over ability.*
One goal for interacting with students is to strive for a 5:1 ratio of positive to negative contacts. This can be difficult in busy schools and classrooms, but these simple and effective strategies are used in BC schools to help staff increase their rates of praise.

**Pocket Transfers**

Set a goal for each period of how many praise statements you want to make, and place that many small objects (e.g., coins, paperclips) in one pocket. Each time you make a praise statement, pass one object to the other pocket.

**Reminder Symbols**

Place a bright sticker next to a spot in the room where you are likely to frequently look (e.g., the clock). Every time you see it, look for a positive behaviour to acknowledge.

**Ticket Systems**

- Many schools in BC use a ticket system as a tangible strategy for the adults in the building to increase their rates of acknowledgement. The tickets have the school wide expectations written on them, so the staff member can circle the expectation that the student was seen following and provide the student with specific feedback (e.g., “You showed responsibility by cleaning up the mess at lunch!”).
- The school may also use a lottery, in which students can enter their tickets for a chance to win small prizes, like school supplies or a special privilege. However, some students like to keep them as a reminder or bring them home to show their parents.
- Just don’t forget that the real way that the tickets work is to have conversations with students about their positive behaviour and recognize their successes. Leaving out the student–teacher interaction won’t be too effective!
MAKING ACKNOWLEDGMENT MATTER:
Assessing Student Preferences

For reinforcers to be optimally effective, they need to be developmentally appropriate and relevant to students. For example, students in Grade 10 may not be as interested in the same rewards as students in Grade 3. One way to understand what may enhance student motivation is to create and use a Reinforcement Preference Survey. The following is a sample survey adapted from Northup (2000) and Riffel (2008).

REINFORCEMENT PREFERENCE SURVEY

Here is a list of things that kids sometimes get in school when they do a good job or follow school rules. Circle if you like it “a lot,” “a little,” or “not at all.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>a lot</th>
<th>a little</th>
<th>not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extra recess time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do morning announcements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be a helper for a day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read to a younger student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class party</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ONE SCHOOL’S STORY

Bernard Elementary school (Chilliwack, BC) uses passports to reinforce and acknowledge the positive behaviour of their students. They are called "SPARK Passports" and are linked with each of the school’s positive behaviour expectations: Safety, Peace, Attitude, Respect, and Kindness. The passports are created to be age- and grade-appropriate, and they are completed by school personnel when they notice students behaving according to the school’s positive behaviour expectations. Once a student’s passport is filled, it is displayed in a designated and central area of the school where everyone can see his or her accomplishments!
Tips for Tomorrow

Tips for Tomorrow is a section for teachers that provides simple, practical and low-cost resources to use ... as soon as tomorrow!

Positive Peer Acknowledgements

Tootling or positive peer reports is the “opposite of tattling” and involves students submitting positive acknowledgements of each other. Encourage students to notice one another’s positive and prosocial behaviours to help increase positive peer interactions.

Step 1  Show students with examples and non-examples about how to fill out a Peer Praise Note (PPN; e.g., “Thanks for loaning me a pencil!”)

Step 2  • Give each student 2 PPNs at the start of every day and encourage him or her to choose a recipient for their tootles, or

       • Give each student the class list and have them tootle on at least 2 students per day until s/he has tootled on each of his or her classmates

Step 3  Set a goal. If there are 30 students in a class, a weekly goal of 2 genuine tootles per student per day would be 60 tootles. If the class meets this weekly goal, then they can celebrate with a shared social activity (e.g., pizza party or an outdoor game).

Nelson (2008)
How can we move from a punitive to an instructive approach to discipline? We will share research-based, instructional approaches for addressing problem behaviour, especially for bullying in schools.