



Behavior-Specific Praise

Definition & Rationale:

Behavior-specific praise is a form of praise that includes a description of the behavior being praised.

Behavior-specific praise describes what students are doing correctly resulting in improvements in behavior.

Characteristics of Behavior-Specific Praise:

- **Describes desired behavior**
 - Social or academic behavior the child is doing appropriately
 - Praise effort, not ability
- **Specific to the student or class**
 - Focuses on behaviors that help students meet expectations and excel behaviorally and academically in the classroom
- **Provided in a positive way**
 - Make eye contact and maintain a positive demeanor
 - Be sincere

Examples of Behavior-Specific Praise:

Examples of Student Behavior and Corresponding Behavior-Specific Praise Statement (BSPS)

Behavior	BSPS
Megan has been listening quietly, with her eyes on the teacher.	"Megan, I like the way you are looking at me while you listen to the lesson."
Luke gives an example of how he would approach a group of children to join a game.	"Luke, that is a wonderful example of how to enter a group."
Laura and Jamie come to an agreement on which game they should play.	"I love the way you two are working together."
Chris finishes his writing practice.	"Great job completing your work today, Chris."
The class is sitting quietly, waiting for instructions.	"Wow you all are doing a super job sitting quietly while you wait."

Adapted from: 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 EBD. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 1*, 2-9.

Next Steps:

- Reflect on current use of behavior-specific praise
- Think about classroom behaviors you wish to see from students and make a list
- Use the list to practice noticing and praising those behaviors using specific language
- Set goals for your use of behavior-specific praise and monitor your progress toward those goals

Literature References:

Reinke, W. M., Herman, K. C., & Sprick, R. (2011). *Motivational Interviewing for effective classroom management, the classroom check-up*. New York, New York: Guilford Press.

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 EBD. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 1*, 2-9.

Catch Students Being Good Form

Step 1: Identify a time of day to "catch" students being good. A time of day when disruptive behavior is fairly high typically works well.

Step 2: Write down the disruptive behaviors that commonly occur at that time.

Step 3: Write down desirable behaviors that you would like to see more of.

Step 4: Write down a list of behavior-specific praise statements to use when you "catch" the students displaying the desired behaviors that you would like to see more of.

Remember that behavior-specific praise is praise that tells students exactly what they are doing correctly (e.g., "Thank you for walking in the hallway.>").

Time to "Catch" Students Being Good:

Disruptive/Problem Behavior	Desired Behavior to "Catch" <i>(Behavior you want to see more of) - This behavior is often the opposite of the problem behavior.</i>	Behavior-Specific Praise

Adapted from: Reinke, W. M., Herman, K. C., & Sprick, R. (2011). *Motivational Interviewing for effective classroom management, the classroom check-up*. New York, New York: Guilford Press.

Catch Students Being Good Form (EXAMPLE)

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Remember that behavior-specific praise is praise that tells students exactly what they are doing correctly (e.g., "Thank you for walking in the hallway.>").

Time to "Catch" Students:

After lunch during the first 30 minutes of math instruction.

Disruptive/Problem Behavior	Desired Behavior to "Catch" <i>(Behavior you want to see more of) - This behavior is often the opposite of the problem behavior.</i>	Behavior-Specific Praise
Sample: Calling out	Silently raising hand and waiting to be called on.	"Thank you for raising your hand and waiting patiently."
Leaving seat without permission to walk around the room.	Students working quietly at their desks. Student completing transition from lunch time to math small groups quickly and efficiently.	"James is doing a great job working hard at his desk." "Thank you, Ashley for getting to work quickly."
Having off-task conversations with peers.	Staying on-task during group work.	"Shout-out to group 5 in the back, they got to work right away."

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