

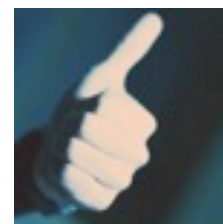
Strategies for Acknowledging Positive Behaviors

Children with positive behaviors, that's what you want in your classroom! Did you know that you can change the climate in your classroom by simply focusing on the positive behaviors of children? By noticing and acknowledging children's appropriate behaviors, you motivate children to continue to use those behaviors. It's a win-win situation: teachers want children to exhibit positive behaviors and young children want their teacher's approval.

Verbal Acknowledgement: To increase the likelihood that positive behavior will continue, your comments to children should be:

- **Descriptive:** Rather than just saying 'good job' or 'thanks,' you should provide a brief description of the behavior that you observed. This feedback helps children know which behavior you would like to see repeated. 'Latesha, I noticed you put all the blocks away without a reminder.'
 - **Conveyed with enthusiasm:** Tone of voice, facial expressions, and being down on a child's level all affect the spirit in which positive feedback is accepted. Our enthusiasm when we deliver feedback conveys to young children that we are paying attention to them, that their behavior matters to us and that we celebrate their accomplishments. 'Wow, Jesse! I noticed you put all the blocks away without a reminder.'
 - **Dependent on effort:** Children need to be encouraged for their efforts as well as their successes. It's important to know each child well enough to be able to recognize small accomplishments and individualize your responses. 'Wow, Debbie! I noticed you put some of the blocks away without a reminder.'
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Non-Verbal Acknowledgement: When you notice a behavior you would like to see a child continue, give him/her a smile or a wink accompanied by a thumbs-up or high-five to let him/her know that you noticed and appreciate the behavior. The wonderful thing about thumbs-up and smiles is that they are messages that can be sent and received across the room or playground. Research shows that the average toddler returns between 60 – 80% of his caregiver's smiles, so a genuine smile can make a real difference in your classroom. The hard part is consistently implementing those smiles, thumbs and fives for EACH child, for every positive behavior you see or hear. Sometimes it takes a concentrated effort to find a positive behavior for every child in your class, but the pay-off is worth the effort.



Compliment Garden, Bucket Fillers, and Butterfly Catchers: Encourage everyone in the classroom, other adults and children, to acknowledge and celebrate positive behaviors by using this strategy. Select a theme that fits your classroom and, using that theme, post acknowledgments visually. One example is to use a small bucket for each child and fill the buckets with written descriptions of acts of kindness or other positive behaviors, 'Delia used her words to ask for a turn and waited patiently' or 'Melissa helped Deidre when she fell'. Children love to watch their buckets fill with compliments.

Super Friend Award: Introduce the concept of being a Super Friend at group time including a discussion of super friend behaviors: How does a Super Friend treat his/her classmates or his/her classroom? Acknowledge a child's positive behaviors by presenting him/her with a decorated cape, vest or crown. Your presentation of a Super Friend Certificate at group time combined with discussion of why the child is a Super Friend helps children acknowledge each other's successes.



Books: Teachers can also use children's books as a way to promote and acknowledge positive behaviors. Reading and re-reading books can help children understand the desired behaviors. Books that help acknowledge positive behaviors include:

- *26 Big Things Small Hands Can Do*, by Coleen Paratore
 - *I Show Respect!*, by David Parker
 - *Excuse Me!: A Little Book of Manners*, by Karen Katz
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Compiled by *Promoting Healthy Social Behaviors in Child Care Centers*, 2011
Additional strategies can be found at <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/>