



### PRACTICE 3:

## Encouraging expected classroom behaviour

### Effective classrooms encourage expected behaviour

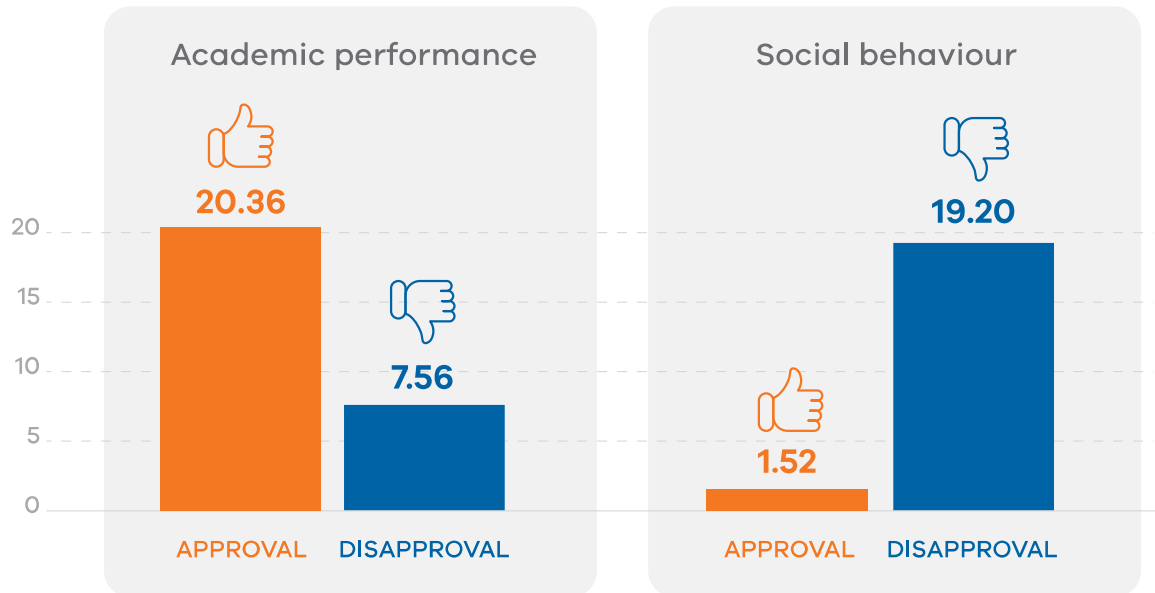
Effective classroom settings promote expected behaviour through:

- explicitly teaching expected behaviours, procedures, and routines
- preventative prompts or pre-correction
- explicit feedback on behaviour, including high rates of behaviour-specific praise
- tangible reinforcers and classroom acknowledgement systems

### Feedback and praise

Specific, timely, and constructive feedback about academic learning is a well-established feature of good teaching practice (HATTIE, 2012). Feedback promotes learning and supports engagement and motivation. Feedback helps students to know what they are doing well, establish their next learning steps, and select the strategies that will help them to solve problems and achieve goals.

For most students, constructive feedback and acknowledgements serve as positive consequences. Positive consequences reinforce behaviour, making it more likely to occur in the future. However, decades of research have found that while students' academic behaviour often attracts positive teacher attention, appropriate social behaviour frequently goes unrecognised. Additionally, teachers tend to respond more frequently to inappropriate social behaviour than to appropriate behaviour.



NUMBER OF TYPICAL TEACHER STATEMENTS PER HOUR (WHITE 1975)

The result of teachers giving more attention to misbehaviour is that they may be unknowingly maintaining or increasing the misbehaviour. Increasing the use of specific positive feedback when students display expected behaviour helps to focus attention on the desired behaviour, provide performance feedback and strengthen teacher-student relationships (MAAG, 2001).

## Getting started

### Step 1: Teach behaviour expectations and routines

Ensure that you have taught the behaviour expectations and routines, providing sufficient time for all students to understand and practice the necessary skills.

### Step 2: Preventative prompts/pre-correction

Anticipate times and situations where inappropriate behaviour is likely to occur. Remind students of the correct behaviour, procedures, or routines to increase the likelihood they will demonstrate the necessary skills.



#### TIPS

### Pre-correction

- Pre-correction is a technique to prevent challenging behaviours from occurring. First, identify the context in which a problem behaviour is likely to occur. Then, provide prompts and reinforcement for expected social and academic behaviours.
- Inappropriate behaviour is more likely during transitions between activities and locations, or when undertaking unfamiliar tasks.

### Step 3: Non-contingent positive attention

There are two types of positive attention; both positively impact school interactions:

- **Non-contingent attention** is attention we provide regardless of performance and includes such things as greetings, proximity, smiles, and conversations.
- **Contingent attention** is attention we provide based on student performance of an identified expectation or behaviour. Attention is contingent on the student performing a specific desirable behaviour. The most common example of this is providing specific positive feedback, also known as behaviour-specific praise.

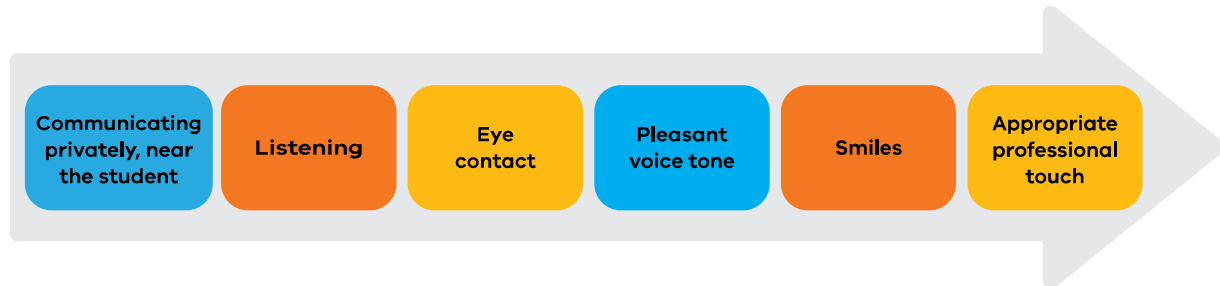
When you regularly demonstrate interest and concern for your students, it tends to improve the quality of your relationship and increases the likelihood students will accept your positive and corrective feedback.

### Examples of non-contingent positive attention

- Saying 'hello' students as they enter the classroom (verbal greeting, handshake, welcome gesture)
- Showing an interest students' progress during independent work periods
- Engaging in a brief conversation with a student
- Planning to greet or talk to a student soon after you have interacted with them about inappropriate behaviour, this shows what has happened is in the past
- Friendly gestures such as smiles, providing a "thumbs up" or "high-five"
- Friendly comments like "Cool new shoes!"

## Step 4: Preferred adult behaviours

Research indicates that academic achievement and students' behaviour are influenced by the quality of teacher-student relationships (ALGOZZINE, ET AL., 2011). The diagram below outlines some adult behaviours that strengthen relationships:



These behaviours share common traits: they express warmth, care, and concern for students while communicating respect. Such behaviours increase the likelihood that students will say they like school or their teacher, comply with requests, and enhance their learning experience (MISSOURI SCHOOLWIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT, 2019).

## Step 5: Specific positive feedback

Specific positive feedback is the process of recognising when students demonstrate the required skills or behaviour to complete difficult tasks. This is contingent attention – it is contingent on the demonstration of a skill. General praise or commonly used phrases such as 'good job', though important for a pleasant classroom, may not be enough to build and sustain expected behaviour.

Students benefit from clear, specific feedback on their use of appropriate school behaviours. To be effective, your feedback should include a clear description of the observed behaviour and a clear rationale for its value or importance.

### Guidelines for providing specific positive feedback

- Be clear and specific by only describing the behaviour you have observed. In your description, use the language from the behaviour matrix and classroom procedures and routines. Provide a rationale or reason why the behaviour is important.
- Keep your words appropriate to the individual and the situation. For example, know your students well enough to be able to differentiate whether public or private recognition is more reinforcing for them.
- Be genuine by finding your own style to communicate sincere acknowledgment, especially when working with older students.

Students will also need corrective feedback. The key is to ensure that they don't have to wait until they make a mistake to receive feedback.

### When to acknowledge:

- **Give feedback immediately** after the expected behaviour, rather than using it as a general motivator.
- **Give feedback frequently** during acquisition of the expected behaviour, that is, at a high enough rate to change or maintain behaviours.

### What to acknowledge:

- **Expected behaviours** from your school-wide/class-wide expectations matrix and within identified school routines.

#### Example

- **Description:** 'When I said it was time to begin your assignment, you cleared off your desk, got your materials out immediately, and began working quickly.'
- **Rationale:** 'Getting started right away like that shows cooperation and will help you avoid having homework.'



TIPS

### Not all students like public praise

- Public acknowledgement is not reinforcing for all students.
- Use your knowledge of student preferences to determine when it is appropriate to acknowledge them publicly or if the feedback would be better received discreetly.



TIPS

### > 4:1 ratio

- When building positive classroom environments make sure expected behaviour receives much more attention (at a higher ratio) than inappropriate behaviour. We want students to experience mostly positive interactions across all school settings to support their sense of connection. Providing high rates of positive feedback aims to increase the student's ability to demonstrate expected behaviours.
- As a general guide, researchers recommend maintaining a ratio of at least 4:1 positive to negative/ corrective interactions. The exact ratio may differ for individual students and their learning histories. Some students may need less while others may need more.

(MISSOURI SCHOOLWIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT, 2019)

## Step 6: Consider implementing a classroom acknowledgment system

Consequences that strengthen behaviour are known as reinforcement. Tangible reinforcers are items that can be paired with specific positive feedback, for example, providing a ticket, card, or token. When used alongside specific positive feedback, tangible reinforcers can help motivate students to learn and practice valued behaviours.

While a ticket or tangible system for encouraging expected behaviour will cover many reinforcement needs, it is important to remember the following:

- Not all students are encouraged by the same things or in the same ways.
- As students are learning new skills, they benefit from immediate and frequent reinforcement.
- As students demonstrate mastery, they will respond to intermittent and long-term reinforcement to maintain their behavioural efforts.
- Many students seek social attention; others try to avoid it.
- Students who avoid social attention may be reinforced by solitary activities, privileges, or tangibles items.
- Many young students are motivated by adult attention while older students are typically more motivated by peer attention, activities, privileges or freedom.

Below are some examples of frequent, intermittent and occasional reinforcers.

Frequent	Intermittent	Occasional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific positive feedback</li> <li>• Ticket/tangible item</li> <li>• Positive notes home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive phone calls home</li> <li>• Post cards home</li> <li>• Special privileges</li> <li>• Extra time doing a preferred activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special projects</li> <li>• Recognition from the principal</li> <li>• Student of the week</li> </ul>



TIPS

### Addressing staff concerns about tangible reinforcers

- Some staff may be concerned that offering a tangible item amounts to “bribing” students to behave. However, a bribe is offered to persuade an individual to act in one’s favour, typically illegally or dishonestly, and is given before the expected behaviour occurs. In contrast, tangible reinforcers are offered as a consequence after the expected behaviour is demonstrated.
- Teachers sometimes worry that offering tangibles will negatively impacts students’ internal motivation. Many studies, including Pierce and Cameron (2002), have shown no evidence of detrimental effects on intrinsic motivation.

## Self-assessment: Encouraging Expected Classroom Behaviour

Self-assessment feature	Yes	No	In progress
I give specific positive feedback that explicitly describes the behaviour and provides a rationale.			
I regularly monitor my rate of response to positive student behaviour, working toward the goal of >4:1.			
I provide a variety of social attention, activities and tangible reinforcers.			
Students receive high rates of specific positive feedback when they follow classroom procedures.			
My students know why they receive acknowledgement for expected behaviour.			
All my students state they have received social attention, activities or tangible acknowledgement for following the classroom expectations, rules and procedures.			
I know how my students like to receive feedback (i.e., public or private).			
I ask my students for feedback on the acknowledgments and reinforcers offered in my classroom to make sure they are motivating.			