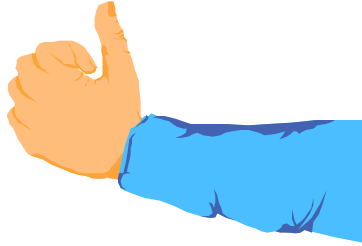


Structuring Classroom Experiences for Success

Proactive Management Strategies



Offering encouragement

Understanding the problem

Many teachers confuse praise with encouragement. Praise is something that happens at the end of a task and is targeted at the task itself (e.g., *“That was good work”*) or the students’ behaviors or efforts that produced the successful outcome (e.g., *“That was a great strategy you were using. You must have worked hard putting it to work for you.”*).

Praise only focuses on the positive aspects of performance, and thus, only occurs if *success has already happened*. Thus, *receiving praise is contingent on being successful*. The intent of praise, therefore, is to reinforce desirable “successful” behaviors in the hope that the desirable behavior will occur again either more frequently or to an even greater degree of success.

In many cases, students who are successful don’t need the praise – they were *already* successful! Less successful students are often caught in a counterproductive “catch-22” cycle – that is, those who are most in need of some form of social reinforcement because they are not being successful don’t receive praise because they were not successful!

Encouragement, on the other hand, occurs as the student is engaging the task – not after the task has been completed. Encouragement is designed to:

- Reinforce ongoing efforts, particularly *persistence in the face of difficulty*.
- Reinforce students’ use of specific strategic behaviors.

Hang in there. It will get easier as you master this.

This seems to be working well for you. Remember to check to see if ...

- Communicate understanding that the task is challenging, but also faith that the student can be successful given sufficient effort and an effective strategy for performing the task.

"I can see how difficult this is. . Keep trying that strategy you are using... it is a good one that will work for you."

When teachers do not encourage students during instruction, students' academic behavior might rapidly decline. This disrupts the instructional rhythm or pace and interferes with effective learning. As a result, both teachers and the students become frustrated and begin to play the "blaming" game - students blame the teacher for their failure and the teacher blames the students. This is a vicious cycle that promotes uncooperative classroom relationships.

A key to the solution

Encouraging students during the instructional activity is essential for ensuring continued levels of academic and behavioral success. It helps to maintain high rates of active student engagement during instruction and promotes cooperative relationships. The positive classroom climate is also strengthened by the teacher's use of genuine encouragement.

Encouragement is a form of support that can help to establish the social organization of the classroom. It can be used to prevent disruptive behaviors and facilitate academic learning. It is a user-friendly tool to positively affect the strength of students as learners.

Management Tips

Step 1 Reflect on the academic and behavioral strengths and needs of the students in your classes. Ask yourself what they seem to do well and when they appear to need help to accomplish tasks. Look for patterns in the way students seem to interact with you, one another, and the instructional demands of the classroom.

Step 2 Generate a list of the academic and behavioral successes and difficulties you have experienced with students in the past.

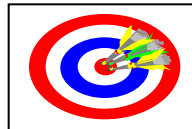
For example...



Successes	Difficulties
Cooperative learning activities	Higher Order thinking
Think Pair Share activities	Lecture/note Taking
Basic concepts	Paying attention for more than 5 minutes
Hands-on activities	Coming prepared to class

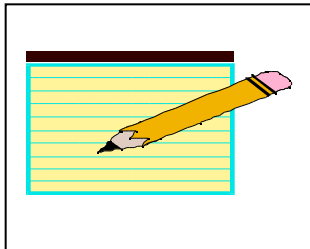
Step 3 Identify whether there are academic or behavioral difficulties that could be prevented by teacher encouragement. Using encouragement to promote desired student behaviors is less disruptive and time-consuming than attempting to get students back on track after the fact. Teacher encouragement during the lesson helps the group maintain an instructional focus.

For example ...
 If students are having difficulty paying attention in class, then teach them the Ready, Aim, Fire strategy and encourage them to use it on a consistent basis.



Ready = Actively Listen!
Aim = Stay Focused!
Fire = Participate!

Step 4 Develop a plan to use encouragement in strategic ways. Use the information from steps 1 through 3 to formulate your plan. The plan should include physical, verbal, and nonverbal forms of encouragement.



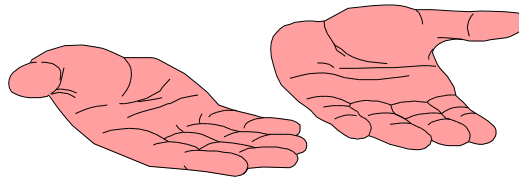
Physical encouragement involves physical communication such as a “high five”, a pat on the back, or hand shake. Physical encouragement

should never be used in a forceful manner. For example, secondary teachers should consider using a handshake rather than a placing their arm around the student's shoulders.

Verbal encouragement uses words. The teacher may state, *Hang in there! I know it's getting tough. You have the knowledge, skills and ability to do this.*

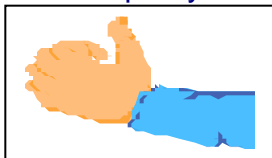
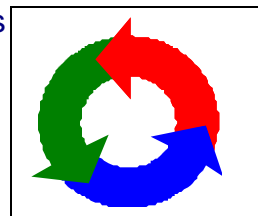
Nonverbal encouragement replaces verbal or physical forms with gestures or other silent modes of communication. For example, the teacher may smile, offer a thumb's up, or use simple sign language.

Step 5 Implement your encouragement plan during instruction. Look for students who are demonstrating academic and behavioral success and encourage them to continue to do so. For older students nonverbal signals (e.g., thumbs up) may be more effective. With younger students, verbal praise is more appropriate. When students are not meeting the instructional or social expectations, use warm encouragement to help them be success. This does not mean that you are a "dish rag." The goal is to provide students with support when they need it the most, rather than withdraw it. This demonstrates solidarity and models respect.



Jazzing It Up

1. **Make sure encouragement is reciprocal.** Typically, teachers encourage students. This leads to unbalanced interactions that leave teachers feeling depleted. To create more equitable interactions, teach students how to return encouragement. For example, if the you offer the student a thumbs up to encourage the student to continue with a difficult task, then teach the student to reciprocate with a thumbs up to you. Teaching students to share encouragement is an

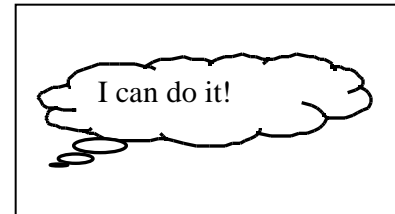


important part of promoting positive character traits and values in meaningful and naturally occurring ways.

2. **Promote behavioral literacy.** Teach students how to encourage themselves and one another. This helps to establish an *e'sprit de corps* among students. Consider using a **daily compliment box** to acknowledge students who have encouraged others. At the end of the day or a specific class period, the

teacher and students can read the “kudos” together or individual compliments can be distributed to students as they leave class or school.

3. Teach students how to use self-talk as a form of self-encouragement. For example, *This assignment is really tough. I know if I hang with it, I can do it.*



4. Use genuine encouragement. Students can sense when a teacher is half-heartedly going through the motions. Pay close attention to your speech patterns and body language. Ask yourself whether they compliment or contradict one another. Use an audio- or videotape to determine the genuine nature of your enthusiasm.



5. Vary the type of encouragement you use. Students will satiate (get “burned-out” on) if the same type of encouragement is used repeatedly.

What's Next?

Additional tactics you can use to make positive or desired student behavior(s) happen include

Warmly providing assistance

Using an appropriate instructional pace

Using proximity

Using remembering cues about expectations

Using redirection

Maintaining format flexibility

Conducting smooth sailing transitions

Management Tool Box

Tactics for use DURING a lesson