

How to praise and reinforce older kids

Older students need praise and reinforcement as much as younger kids. Heck, we all need it once in a while. However, the “older” student will not appreciate the types of reinforcement that younger kids want (high fives; hugs; effusive verbal praise, smiles and stickers). Such embarrassing displays are sure to mortify the older student and interfere greatly with the pursuit of a cool reputation. However, the older student still needs & seeks adult attention and positive feedback.

A good rule of thumb:

- Group praise can be public & continuous
- Individual praise should be private and discreet.

Group praise:

Recognition of well-done work. (Be careful, they know if it was perfect or not):

Students read a row or column of words perfectly – no errors.
Simply say, in a neutral manner:

“The group read that row perfectly.”

“Perfect row – nice.”

“That was 4 rows of no errors- the group gets 5 bonus points.”

“This is the second day that everyone was in their seats ready to start in less than 1 minute- the group gets 5 bonus points.”

“Everyone waited for my signal that time.”

“Everyone in the group answered on signal and was perfect.”

“ Everyone in the group had 90% or better on their test, I found that to be outstanding.”

The nice thing about such praise is that it serves two purposes. It reinforces desired behavior and INSTRUCTS students on what they need to do. It is much more powerful than merely saying “ Good job.”

Another way to give students positive feedback is to affirm each correct answer the group gives. These are called affirmations. Not only do they give positive feedback, they provide the necessary repetition some students may need to get to mastery. Using affirmations leads to less student errors. They are effective and efficient. They blend into the lesson presentation nicely and are easy to do.

The teacher simply affirms each correct answer by the group or an individual.

Student(s) says “ _____ ”
Teacher replies “ Yes, _____ ”

Students read a row of words:

Students: “ discovery “
Teacher: “ Yes, discovery “
Students: “ disclaimer “
Teacher : “ Yes, disclaimer”
Etc.

Group gives an answer:

Teacher: “ What is the answer ?”
Students: “ Maybe that box is in the triangle.”
Teacher: “ Yes...maybe that box is in the triangle.”
Etc.

If there is an error, the appropriate correction is used .Once the student(s) gives the correct answer, the teacher says” Yes,_____”

Bonus points

While bonus points are built into the Direct Instruction reading programs, you can expand their use. Bonus points can be used as a Tool to shape and reinforce the classroom behaviors needed for success.

“ Everyone brought a sharpened pencil to class today. That is worth 4 bonus points.”

“ We were able to get our checkouts completed without arguments today. The group earns 5 bonus points.”

“ All of the test scores were at 95% or better. The group gets 10 bonus points.”

“ Everyone answered on signal for that series of words- 3 bonus points.”

“ Appropriate language was used for the last 30 minutes – 4 bonus points.”

“ The group has been gum free for the last 3 days – 5 bonus points.”

Use points for:

- As portion of grades
- Tally up group points for a group reward- set a goal for a certain number of points. Thermometer charts work well here.