

Creating Environments to Support Positive Behavior

Nurturing and Responsive Relationships



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Adapted from the technical assistance packet:
Environmental Support for Positive Behavior Management (1998).

Kansas Inservice Training System (1998)
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Nurturing and Responsive Relationships

The bottom tier of the Pyramid Model identifies nurturing and responsive relationships between children and their caregivers and teachers as a foundation to positive social/emotional development. When adults and children are connected through a strong relationship, they are more likely to develop and maintain positive interactions and foster trust. In addition, children are more likely to develop a sense of self-confidence and safety that will reduce the likelihood of problem behavior (Fox, Dunlap, Hemmeter, Joseph & Strain, 2003).

For most young children, adult attention is one of the most influential reinforcers available. Young children will often go to great lengths to get adult attention, in whatever form they can obtain. The *proactive* approach is to provide positive attention to children on a regular basis, rather than to *react* when they misbehave by providing negative attention.

Positive adult attention can affect child behaviors in a number of ways. It can increase child engagement, increase the amount of positive teacher-child interactions, and decrease the frequency of child disruptive behaviors. Positive attention can be in the form of pleasant teacher-child interactions, physical contact, and physical proximity between teacher and child.



One simple way to provide positive attention is to use verbal praise when children engage in appropriate behavior. Verbal praise is one of the most important techniques of teaching and can be a powerful reinforcer for child behavior. But praise needs to be something more than the same few phrases repeated over and over. Praise should be given freely, sincerely, and accompanying other reinforcers. It should also be used to support effort and improvement. There are several advantages to using verbal praise: 1) it is transportable - it can be given most any place and at most times, 2) it is economical - it requires small effort on behalf of the teacher, 3) it can be trained - anyone can be taught to use praise effectively, and 4) it can gain power over time when paired with other types of reinforcers. With these considerations in mind, the use of verbal praise can be a valuable tool in establishing and maintaining positive behavior in the classroom. See the following table to find *50 Ways to Praise and Encourage a Child*.

Another way to use positive adult attention is with adult proximity and teacher movement in the classroom. By rotating attention among children on a regular basis, teachers and aides can influence children's interactions with others, improve their attention to tasks, and decrease the likelihood that children will misbehave. The first step in planning a movement strategy is to determine the current movement patterns by the adults in the classroom. This could be accomplished by videotaping segments of classroom activity, or asking a peer or

supervisor to observe and monitor movement patterns. It could also be assessed by placing pieces of paper about the classroom and having the teacher or aide mark the papers each time they pass.

Once a typical movement pattern is assessed, one could make modifications as appropriate or needed. Modifications could be made by drawing a map of the current layout of the classroom and noting areas that would hinder movement. The next step would be



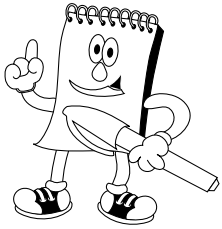
rearranging classroom layout to make movement easier and provide access to individual children, and dividing classroom into zones with paraprofessionals to cover all areas of the classroom effectively. Planned physical movement and the use of adult proximity is a simple strategy to use for managing child behavior. It involves developing a systematic plan for adults to move about the classroom and to be aware of how adult proximity can have influence over child behavior without additional prompting or engaging the child in any way.

The *Adult Attention and Proximity Checklist* in this section can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the way adult attention and proximity is used in the classroom. For each item, answer “yes” or “no”; consider a “no” answer as an indication that there could be room for improvement. Use the Action column to write down some ways you could make these improvements or areas in which you need further assistance.

50+ Ways to Praise and Encourage a Child

Wow! • Way to Go • Super • You're Special
• Outstanding • Excellent • Great! • Good
for You • Well Done • Remarkable • I Knew You
Could! • I'm Proud of You • Fantastic • Nice Work
• Looking Good • Now You've Got it • You're
Incredible • Bravo • You're Catching On • Hurray for
You • You're on Target • You're Smart • Good Job
• Hot Dog • Dynamite • You're Beautiful • You're
Unique • Nothing Can Stop You Now • Much Better
• I Like You • I Like What You Do • I'm Impressed
• You're Clever • You're a Winner • Spectacular
• You're Precious • You're Terrific • Atta Boy
• Atta Girl • Congratulations • Hip, Hip, Hooray!
• I Appreciate Your Help • You're Getting Better
• I Trust You • You're Very Creative • You Are Fun
• You Did Good • I Like How You're Growing • I Enjoy
You • You Tried Hard • You Are So Thoughtful • You're
Important • You're a Treasure • You Are Wonderful
• Awesome • You Made My Day • I'm Glad You're
My Kid • Thanks for Being You • I Love You!
ALSO: A Pat on the Back • A Big Hug • A Kiss
• A Thumbs Up Sign • A Warm Smile

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Adult Attention and Proximity Checklist

Do you use adult attention and proximity effectively?	Yes	No	Plan of Action/ Resources Needed:
1. Do you provide positive attention to children on a regular basis?			
2. Do you have a systematic classwide reinforcement system?			
3. Do you use some form of tokens (e.g., stickers, points, checks) in your reinforcement system?			
4. Do you use a variety of precise statements throughout the day?			
5. Do you have a planned way of moving about your classroom?			
6. Do you place students close to you to aid in your ability to control their behavior?			
7. Have you designed a plan for movement with your assistant or paraprofessional?			
8. Do you have zones in the classroom that you and your assistant cover?			
9. Do you monitor your movement patterns?			