Increasing the Effectiveness of School-Wide Recognition Systems

The current recognition system:

- Allows opportunities for rewards and recognition on a monthly and/or quarterly basis
- Rewards students who have not received an office referral, have not been marked tardy in the previous time period, and/or have earned A’s or B’s on their report cards
- Smaller rewards (i.e., privileges) are available for students to earn
- Is not set up to enable token economy-based rewards.

The current challenges are:

- A group of students generates a high number of office discipline referrals
- Many or most of these students are not earning school-wide recognition or rewards. Students will exhibit appropriate behavior for two weeks or more, but will miss out on the monthly/quarterly reinforcement after engaging in behavior that disqualifies them from these rewards.
- Teachers are not using the reward/recognition procedures in a systematic manner

Strategies:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Rationale/Guidelines</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Develop a systematic hierarchy of rewards</td>
<td>Allows staff to recognize small as well as significant examples of appropriate behavior. Students with high rates of problem behavior initially require greater amounts of positive feedback delivered on a more frequent basis than do students with little or no problem behavior. Having a planned hierarchy of rewards available will increase staff's opportunities to provide this. Staff should be given guidelines for using these rewards. Provide examples of behaviors that would warrant each reward, and give guidance on which students should be targeted for reinforcement (e.g., those that exhibit inappropriate behavior most frequently). Always tell the student what behavior earned the reward. Don't forget to reward other students for appropriate behavior, as well as those students who have been identified for higher rates of reinforcement, so that all students have the opportunity to earn. Finally, build in opportunities for students to choose their reward/recognition, as this will help to ensure your school's rewards are actually reinforcing for the students. Schools can consider allowing students to trade in several &quot;smaller&quot; rewards for bigger incentives, such as admittance to a school party, lunchtime movie, etc…). If schools allow for this option, a tracking</td>
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• Field day, Movie day
• Student recognized during announcements/morning show
• School-wide ceremony with parents
• Guest speaker
• School fair, School dance

Reward programs should require students to display a minimum amount of appropriate behavior.

Examples:
• Teachers verbally recognize students when they demonstrate a school-wide expectation, and keep track of these recognitions in a notebook. After a student has been recognized three times, s/he receives a certificate that can be used to gain admission to the preferred seating area in the cafeteria.

• Teachers recognize students for minor demonstrations of a school-wide expectation with an “Opt-out” coupon for a question during lecture. The student doesn’t cash this in, and asks the teacher to “bank it” for him for the monthly Field Day event.

• Classroom contingency: Teachers keep a tally of the number of times a school-wide expectation is demonstrated during the course of their class. When the class total reaches a predetermined point, everyone in the class receives a reward. This can be adapted for targeted-group students, such that any time the target student displays an expectation, the class earns 2, 3, or 4, etc...points (instead of only one point). Alternate versions of this idea include requiring each student in the class to earn a certain number of points, or dividing the class into

Reward programs that offer a special privilege to students who have not received office referrals during a given time period place adults’ and students’ focus on the absence of bad behavior, rather than on the presence of appropriate behavior. In essence, programs that are designed this way reward students for “not messing up,” and do not ensure that the students have acted in ways that are consistent with the school’s expectations.

Students can not engage in problem behaviors and appropriate behaviors at the same time. By requiring students to display appropriate behavior before earning a reward, schools increase the probability that a student will refrain from acting inappropriately.

A school also changes its culture when it requires students to display appropriate behavior. Staff become more positive throughout the day, and students enjoy the positive attention. By setting guidelines for the number of times each staff member should positively acknowledge students every day, schools make it easier to ensure all deserving students earn the (monthly, quarterly) reward.

These reward programs (No Tardy parties, No Referral parties) can be effective when they are used in conjunction with other methods of recognizing appropriate behavior. However, when used as the...
small groups and requiring each group to earn a certain number of points.

- **Grade-level contingency:** The number of days a fight does not occur is tracked by grade level on a large display in a central location. At random intervals, the grade level with the highest number of days without a fight is rewarded. Sometimes the reward is small (such as popsicles for every student in the grade as the reward for a short period of time without fighting), and sometimes it is large (such as a dance for all students in that grade level as the reward for several weeks without fighting). Some schools have set intervals at which the nonviolence count is examined, and the reward delivered at those intervals varies in value according to the number of days the winning grade level has gone without a fight.

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<th>3. <strong>Staff should ensure that students who display high amounts of problem behavior also access school-wide rewards/recognition.</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Examples:</strong></td>
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<td>• <strong>Have staff members who regularly interact with a student each take a different day of the week to recognize him/her engaging in appropriate behavior, even if it’s only a minor behavior for a short period of time.</strong> Have the student report back to each staff member what the other staff members recognized.</td>
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<td>• <strong>Give staff members who regularly interact with a student a weekly guideline for the number of times they will recognize positive behavior in that student.</strong> Ask the staff members to report back to you what they recognized and when/how they recognized it.</td>
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<td>• <strong>Recruit a student support person to seek out a particular student and “catch ‘em being good.”</strong></td>
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<td>• <strong>Have a staff member meet with the student first thing in the morning to say hello, see how s/he is doing, and remind him/her about the school expectations.</strong> The staff member should be liked by the student, and able to communicate this information to the student without sounding punitive. <strong>Keep the meeting short (3-5 minutes) and positive.</strong></td>
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<td>sole reward system, many students will fall through the cracks, and school culture will be minimally impacted. Recognizing specific instances of appropriate behavior is a vital part of any school-wide reward system.</td>
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<td>Many times, students who are frequently sent to the office do not have the opportunity to earn rewards/recognition for appropriate behavior. Staff feel these students don’t exhibit appropriate behavior for long enough periods of time to be recognized for it. Sometimes, these students’ rewards are taken away as punishment for bad behavior. Philosophical differences also come into play when staff feel that students who are constantly in trouble for bad behavior don’t deserve to have the same rewards/recognition as students who have behaved themselves for long periods of time.</td>
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<td>These philosophical differences can be addressed by stressing how the point of rewarding and recognizing appropriate behavior is to help students <strong>learn</strong> how to behave at school. If a student is never recognized for appropriate behavior, how will s/he learn that appropriate behavior is a “good thing” to engage in at school? If a student is never recognized for following expectations (or when the rewards are taken away from the student), why would s/he be motivated to follow the expectations in the future? This is especially true when the inappropriate behavior is an efficient way of accessing other reinforcers, such as peer or teacher attention. In fact, if faculty members stop to think about how effective problem behavior is at getting reinforcement, it should become clear to them what an achievement it is when students choose to engage in appropriate behavior. When a student who is frequently in trouble for misbehavior makes a good choice, it needs to be celebrated.</td>
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Finally, having a hierarchy of rewards/ways of recognizing students is an important step in addressing philosophical differences among staff members. If a person feels that one student shouldn’t receive the same amount of recognition as another student, then options are available for providing other forms of recognition.

When making staff aware of students who need to be recognized for appropriate behavior, be sure to follow confidentiality guidelines. Chances are that staff members will already be aware of who these students are and what kinds of problem behaviors they engage in. Still, steps should be taken to ensure that staff members are aware of differences between the exchange of necessary information and “office gossip.”

| 4. Incorporate more teaching of school-wide expectations into school events and daily lessons. | When reward programs are set up without a token economy system, many times the school-wide expectations (and the social skills lessons that go with them) get lost in the shuffle of daily activities. Actively teaching the expectations on a daily basis helps to remind students and staff what behavior is expected of them, while at the same time providing instruction as to how to carry them out.

Teaching school-wide expectations does not have to be a separate part of the curriculum. Taking a few moments to discuss how a current lesson relates to the expectations can provide powerful opportunities for the students to see how the expectations are important guidelines for all behavior – both in and out of the classroom. You can plan for this in advance by looking through your lesson plans to find creative places to embed an expectation into the curriculum you’re already using.

Repetition (with opportunity for feedback) is the key to learning. When several students repeatedly engage in problem behavior, they need repeated opportunities to learn what is expected of them. Continually teaching the school-wide expectations will help to provide this opportunity. Teaching should include the opportunity for students to practice the expected behaviors, in such a way that each student performs the behavior correctly at least once. Also, be sure that your teachers and staff always model the expected behaviors. |

- Choose an “Expectation of the Week” and use morning announcements/video shows/newsletters to promote the behaviors. Add a twist by letting students present examples to their peers with these formats.

- Capitalize on literature classes by discussing how characters’ actions fit into the school-wide expectations.

- Videotape students in the cafeteria, hallways, bus, etc… as they display the school-wide expectations. The next day at lunch, play the tape in the cafeteria. This can also serve as a strong reinforcer for some students.

- Look for ways the school-wide expectations can be incorporated into other classes, such as science, math, social studies, and art. Develop lesson plans and share/exchange them with other staff members.

- Set aside time to bring students into problem locations to review and practice the expectations. Booster trainings are a necessary part of learning.

- Develop a staff incentive basket, and hold a contest for lesson plans that focus on different expectations. Staff members who donate a lesson plan are entered into a drawing for the incentive basket.

- Develop an essay writing, rap, poem, or art contest |
5. Give increased attention to expectations that address your school’s top problem behaviors.

**Examples:**
- **Non-Violence Days count**
- **Expectation of the Week**
- **School marquee advertisement**

- **Identify a target expectation, and when a student is observed demonstrating that expectation, the value of his/her reward/recognition is increased.** For example, if a student would normally receive preferred seating for demonstrating “Respectful” behavior, the student and his/her friend would be able to choose where they sat.

- **Select a mystery day of the week and a time during that day, and call a random student’s name.** If that student has met pre-determined criteria (on-time to all classes, meets dress code, his/her peers can report an instance that week where he/she acted according to the school’s expectations, etc…) then the student receives a special reward/recognition/privilege.

6. Provide incentives to faculty for consistently following the reward/recognition program.

**Examples:**
- **When a student earns a positive phone call home or a certificate for positive behavior, make a copy of the award, write the staff person’s name on it, and enter the paper in a lottery for a special privilege, prize, or recognition.** The more a staff member recognizes students, the more chances that individual will have to win the lottery.

- **At random times during the school day, have an Administrator do “spot-checks” to catch staff members in the act of recognizing students.** At the next faculty meeting, those teachers can be recognized in front of their peers.

By emphasizing expectations that are incompatible with your school’s most frequent problem behaviors, you increase the likelihood of decreasing the instances of the problem behavior. The more students know that an expectation is highly valued by your school, the more likely they are to act in ways that are consistent with it. The best ways for students to understand that an expectation is important is to highlight the expectation throughout the school in posters and decorations, during academic and social skills lessons (e.g., teach the expectation repeatedly), and through targeted reinforcement/recognition for behaviors that reflect it. This can be particularly valuable for students with lots of problem behavior, as they become increasingly aware of how their misbehavior does not fit into their school’s culture.

Schools who share the PBS philosophy recognize that behaviors are more likely to occur if they have been reinforced in the past. This applies to adult behavior, as well as to student behavior. Therefore, to increase the likelihood that staff consistently use PBS practices in their daily routines, the school-wide PBS team should plan for ways of reinforcing their faculty and staff for making these changes in their behavior. If individual staff members are still reluctant to use the school-wide system, the PBS team or an administrator may need to talk with them about the importance of using the school-wide reward/recognition program.
- Have staff members nominate each other for a monthly award program. Staff members describe how another employee consistently recognizes students, and the winning staff member is selected by drawing, vote, or discretion of the PBS team. The winning staff member receives an award (a symbolic item, certificate, or parking space) that is given from one staff member to the next as different people earn the award. Consider creating a theme around the award, such as the Kudos Award, Survivor of the Month, etc…

- Designate a central location where staff members can post their behavioral “success stories,” giving other staff members a place to look for ideas and encouragement. Be sure to follow confidentiality guidelines when revealing aspects of student behavior.

- Have students, parents, support staff, and teachers fill out “Faculty Grams” to recognize someone who has gone above and beyond in demonstrating the school-wide expectations. Be sure to post these on your school’s website, newsletter, bulletin board, etc…

7. **Consider a targeted group intervention.**

   **Examples:**
   - Behavior Education Plan
   - Anger Management
   - Social Skills Training
   - Anti-Bullying programs

   Once you’ve reviewed this document and made any necessary adjustments to your school-wide system, it may be time to take further steps to reduce problem behavior by implementing targeted group interventions. Before implementing targeted group interventions, your school-wide system of PBS should be in place and running smoothly. Your Benchmarks of Quality score is one indicator of this, and schools should achieve a minimum score of 70 before moving on to another level of PBS. Talk to your District Coordinator about accessing targeted group intervention training.