

Positive Reinforcement Systems

Once the Code of Conduct has been modeled, taught and rehearsed, systems must be in place to ensure compliance. These systems include consequences and rewards. The consequences are outlined in the SHCPS Code of Behavior and Respect and should be directly aligned with troubling or target behaviors. Remember, some consequences such as color changes, time outs or suspensions STOP behaviors temporarily but, in order to CHANGE behaviors, consequences must include learning opportunities. For example, review the articles on Apologies of Action and take advantage of natural consequences (positive and negative) that accompany behaviors.

Positive Behavior Reinforcement

Tangible Reinforcements – Tangible rewards (i.e. stickers, prize boxes, etc.) may be used with the goal in mind of helping students develop positive habits so that the tangible reward can be phased out. Once student habits change, the student will most likely receive natural positive feedback (i.e. improved peer relations, positive teacher recognitions, improved grades, etc.) so that the tangible rewards become secondary to just “feeling good.” Remember, tangible reinforcements should be used carefully so as to not promote the “what are you going to give me” attitude.

Other “tangible” reinforcements that are more appropriate (and cost effective) than those listed below include relationship based reinforcements (i.e. shooting hoops together, lunch with a friend, etc.). These types of reinforcements not only focus on relationships but also give the student an opportunity for a change of pace.

Earning Tangible Reinforcements – Remember, effort should be recognized cumulatively, not consecutively. If consecutive successes are necessary for recognition, then a student may “give up” as soon as they miss a mark. With cumulative success recognition, the student remains working toward an ultimate goal.

Individual and Group Recognitions – It is important that students experience both personal and group recognition and accountability. Individual efforts should be rewarded, as should positive contributions to a group. Here are a few ways to do this:

Individual Recognitions – Each time a student is “caught” doing the right thing (this may be generically defined by the class as a whole or it may be individualized for specific student goals), the student may be given “core cash” or some collectable to use toward a greater reward opportunity. Another option is to have the student put their name in a box to participate in an hourly, daily, weekly or monthly raffle (the length of time may differ based on the level of student success). These individual recognitions can be classroom based or be part of a bigger, school wide program or event (i.e. core cash, panther pride raffles, etc.)

Individual student recognitions do not always need to come from the teacher. Students can be “peer coaches” to give each other feedback about personal goals or they can share positive messages about

one another by announcing them at morning meetings, posting them on a compliment board or passing on a trinket signifying a positive message (i.e. the Core Value Ambassador bracelet, the IALAC beads).

Group Recognitions – There are many ways to encourage students to be positive contributors to a group. The group can be defined as a “team” by using things such as team points for readiness, etc. or as a “class” by class wide goal setting. When setting class wide goals, work as a group to define the signifiers of positive participation (class listening look, ready stance, etc.) and develop a system of recognizing when everyone in the room is exhibiting those signifiers. For example, each time the whole class is “ready,” put a scoop of rice in a jar. When the jar is full, host the agreed upon celebratory event. (You may draw lines on the jar to recognize “steps” toward the goal.) Other ways to do this include spelling a word or building a chain of a certain length using paper links signifying “good deeds.” Before beginning the collection (i.e. links, rice), be sure to involve the class in a reinforcement survey type activity to get their input in the selection of the celebratory event.

General Note – Recognition systems should all be used as ways to help students develop positive habits, not to substitute actual modeling and instruction in how our words and actions impact ourselves and others. Remember to use your morning meeting and core value curriculum protocols to teach positive behavior, decision making and interaction strategies and to help students become reflective learners.