

## **In Praise of the Positive Role Model**

This year on the campus of JP McCaskey High School in Lancaster, PA behavior has been turned on its head. Monthly student recognition celebrations have been hosted by the parents and school staff honoring students who exhibit exemplary behavior and attitudes regularly in their classes.

The idea for this activity came about when administrators discussing problems on the campus became disenchanted with the negative behavior and the need to curb inappropriate actions on a regular basis. The principals began to discuss strategies to improve morale among students and staff and decided a positive approach was needed. "Why are we always correcting behavior? We can never catch up with the problems. We need to cut them off at the pass." This led to the idea of positive reinforcement of good behavior. The kids doing the right thing were getting lost. Other than self satisfaction, what was the incentive to walk the line? The administrators and parents then banded together to provide a "party" celebrating the good citizens of the student body.

Teachers were asked to select one student from a specific period to honor. The criteria for selection was left fairly open. Academic qualities were weighted less and students were chosen primarily based on their social and moral strengths. Teachers were asked to write a brief statement about their student describing why they were chosen. On the designated

date and time, unbeknownst to the students, teachers gave the children a pass and were excused from class to attend a special meeting. Once all of the students arrived the principal welcomed them and spoke about why they were in attendance. Treats including fruit, cupcakes, muffins, cookies, water, juice, and much more was provided and served to the students by the parent volunteers. As the students enjoyed their treats, the anonymous snippets of praise were read aloud to reinforce why the students were selected. Much of what was read could easily apply to all of the children in attendance, while some of the quotes were more specific and applicable to one particular student.

Each month this activity is repeated for a different period. While there are some “repeat offenders” of good behavior, each month many students are new to the experience and are proud and excited to be recognized. This experience has made a shift in the mindset of the entire school, if only for one period per month. It gives everyone a chance to see that there are, in fact, good things happening at JP McCaskey. There are thoughtful and conscientious students that can and do make a difference by setting a good example for all to follow. It is refreshing for the children to be noted for their achievements and not their shortcomings. It is refreshing for teachers to see their students are excelling, not only in academia, but also in life. And it is refreshing for parents to see that others recognize the good in their children as well.

### Positive Reinforcement

Positive Reinforcement is a procedure where a student, upon performing a specific behavior, is rewarded to increase that behavior.

Positive reinforcement works because it gives students specific goals to work toward. It promotes a positive and healthy relationship between recipient and administrator(s) of the reward.

### Expectations of Participants

#### Administration:

Select and define desired behaviors.

Choose reinforcement techniques.

Deliver positive reinforcers.

#### Teachers:

Select and define desired behaviors.

Monitor student performance.

Deliver positive reinforcers.

#### Parents/Volunteers:

Choose reinforcement techniques.

Deliver positive reinforcers.

### Student Criteria for Selection

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

### Recognition Techniques

1. positive comment for each child
2. AR \$ore - buy stuff @ end year w/ points
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.