



## Boosting Positive Classroom Culture: Best Practices for Increasing Praise

Creating a supportive and engaging classroom starts with recognizing and reinforcing positive student behaviors. Praise, when used effectively, enhances classroom management, increases student motivation, and fosters a positive learning environment (Reinke, Herman, & Sprick, 2011; The IRIS Center, Vanderbilt University).

CW-FIT consists of four key components, with Component 3 - Goal, Points and Praise, focusing on the use of behavior specific praise to encourage positive behavior. Research on CW-FIT has shown significant increases in student on-task behavior and reductions in disruptive behavior, demonstrating its effectiveness in promoting a well-managed, positive classroom environment (Liu et al., 2021)



### 4 Key Strategies to Maximize the Impact of Praise in Your Classroom

#### 1. Maintain an Optimal Praise-to-Reprimand Ratio

Research suggests that a 4:1 or greater ratio of praise to reprimand is ideal for fostering a positive classroom environment. For every corrective statement, strive to give at least four instances of praise to reinforce desired behaviors. This approach encourages students to stay on task and feel valued for their efforts.

To support teachers in implementing this strategy, CW-FIT incorporates a timer that prompts behavior-specific praise at regular intervals, typically ranging from 2 to 5 minutes. This consistent reminder helps teachers focus on what is going well in the classroom, increasing their praise-to-reprimand ratio and reinforcing positive behavior.

By following this approach, you correct the behavior without focusing solely on the negative. Instead, you highlight and reinforce the positive behaviors you want to see more of, making it more likely that students will engage in those behaviors.

#### 2. Use Behavior-Specific Praise

Generic praise, such as “Good job,” can be uplifting but lacks clarity. Instead, use behavior-specific praise to reinforce the exact actions you want to see more of. For example:

✗ "Good job!"

✓ "Great job showing that you're ready to learn by having your materials out and your eyes on me!"  
By making praise specific, students understand what they did well and are more likely to repeat the behavior.

### 3. Understand the Impact of Praise on Classroom Management

Consistent, meaningful praise helps create a structured and positive learning environment. Students who receive praise feel more engaged and motivated to participate. Effective praise can also reduce disruptive behaviors by shifting the focus toward positive reinforcement rather than constant correction.

### 4. Tips for Effective Implementation

#### Be Timely

Provide praise immediately after the desired behavior to strengthen the connection.

#### Be Genuine

Students recognize insincerity. Offer praise that is authentic and meaningful.

#### Vary Your Delivery

Use verbal praise, written notes, or even gestures like thumbs up to keep engagement fresh.

#### Encourage Peer Praise

Foster a supportive classroom by teaching students to recognize and praise each other's efforts.

Liu, C., Wang, Z., & Li, J. (2021). The role of teacher feedback in fostering student engagement: A study in K-12 classrooms. *Frontiers in Education*, 6, 661736. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2021.661736>

### In the Spotlight



**Thomas Hanken**

PBIS Coach - Olathe School District, KS

#### What behavioral challenges were your teachers having?

Teachers were encountering student behaviors such as disengagement, disrespect, apathy, defiance, emotional dysregulation, difficulty understanding others' perspectives, and challenges accepting 'no' as an answer.

#### Why did you choose CW-FIT?

CW-FIT is functional, clear and concise and easy to implement. It helps us see what students are doing well rather than what they are not doing. It helps us show students what we want them to keep doing going forward while learning how to correct their behavior. CW-FIT helps shape and change behavior over time.

## In the Spotlight

### What improvements did you see in your teachers' practice and/or students' success?

Teachers started noticing prosocial behaviors being exhibited by their students. Rather than only seeing what they weren't doing, they saw what they were doing. Often a class of 23 students can feel challenging when 3 are having behavior challenges, but we miss that 20 of them are doing the right things most of the time. After using CW-FIT teachers felt less frustrated with their class seeing that 20 were on task and generally meeting expectations, then were able to have a positive focus and level head while supporting the 3 students displaying challenging behavior.

### Is CW-FIT a tool you would recommend to other schools? If yes, why?

Yes, I would recommend CW-FIT for all of the reasons mentioned above. It is an instructional tool around behavior that is easy to implement and is a tool that can be pulled out of their toolbox when the need some positive momentum. CW-FIT allowed us to help teachers learn a strategy that helped support individual behaviors but to also shape and change the behavior and culture of their class as a whole.



## Upcoming CW-FIT Presentations

CW-FIT will be at the following conferences

### August

[Maine Department of Education Annual Summit](#)  
[Waterville, ME. August 5- 6, 2025](#)

Follow us on Social Media for presentation dates and times