



## Literacy at Hartford Public High School

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### Providing Recognition

from Classroom Instruction that Works  
by Robert Marzano, et al.

Providing recognition to students is sometimes seen as praise or rewards. Research provides three generalizations that are relevant to the issue.

1. **Rewards do not necessarily have a negative effect on intrinsic motivation.** Rewards can have either an undermining effect or an enhancing effect—depending on circumstances. Rewards have a negative effect on intrinsic motivation “only when intrinsic motivation is operationalized as task behavior during a free time measure.”
2. **Reward is most effective when it is contingent on the attainment of some standard of performance.** Rewarding students for simply performing a task does not enhance intrinsic motivation and might even decrease it. This is probably so because it conveys the message that students must be “paid off” to engage in the activity. Providing rewards for the successful attainment of specific performance goals, however, enhances intrinsic motivation.
3. **Abstract symbolic recognition is more effective than tangible rewards.** Many of the studies that produced negative results for the use of rewards, used tangible rewards such as money and candy. However, these tangible rewards can have a positive effect on intrinsic motivation when they are used in accordance with generalization number two: as contingent on the completion of some performance standard. However, verbal rewards seem to work no matter how one measures intrinsic motivation. Thus, giving praise for accomplishing specific performance goals can be a powerful motivator for students.

### Effective Praise

- Is delivered contingently
- Specifies the particulars of the accomplishment
- Suggests clear attention to the student’s work
- Provides information about the students’ competence or the value of their accomplishments
- Uses students’ own prior accomplishments as the context for describing present accomplishments
- Is given in recognition of noteworthy effort or success at difficult—for this student—tasks
- Attributes success to effort and ability, implying that similar successes can be expected in the future
- Focuses students’ attention on their own task-relevant behavior

### Ineffective Praise

- Is delivered randomly or unsystematically
- Is restricted to global positive reactions
- Shows bland uniformity that suggest a conditional response made with minimal attention
- Rewards mere participation without consideration of performance, processes, or outcomes
- Provides no information at all or gives students no information about their status
- Orients students toward comparing themselves with others and thinking about competing
- Uses the accomplishments of peers as the context for describing students’ present accomplishments
- Is given without regard for the effort expended or the meaning of the accomplishment
- Focuses students’ attention on the teacher