

SUPPORTING POSITIVE STUDENT BEHAVIOR
A Guide for School Personnel

Trainer Guide

Table of Contents

Using this Guide

Introduction and Ice Breaker

Section 1: Understanding Adolescents

Key Concepts/Goals	3
Lesson 1- Characteristics of Adolescents	4

Section 2: Understanding Behavior Change

Key Concepts/ Goals	7
Lesson 2 – How Behavior is Learned	8
Lesson 3 – Reinforcement and Positive Reinforcement	11
Lesson 4 – How Adults Can Help By Using Positive Reinforcement	13

Section 3: The Triggers of School Violence and the Role of School Safety Personnel

Key Concepts/Goals	16
Lesson 5 – Research on Students and The “Opening Moves” that Lead to Violence	17
Lesson 6 – Opening Moves and the Peak	19
Lesson 7 – Reactive and Proactive	20
Role Play Exercise	21

Section 4: Positive Reinforcement Techniques

Key Concepts/Goals	22
Lesson 8- Becoming a Skilled Observer	23
Lesson 9 – Reframing	24
Lesson 10 – Positive Reinforcement Techniques	26

Section 5: Additional Strategies and Putting Them Into Practice

Key Concepts/Goals	30
Lesson 11 - Additional Ways to be an Effective Reinforcer	31
Lesson 12 – Concluding Remarks And Putting it Into Practice	32

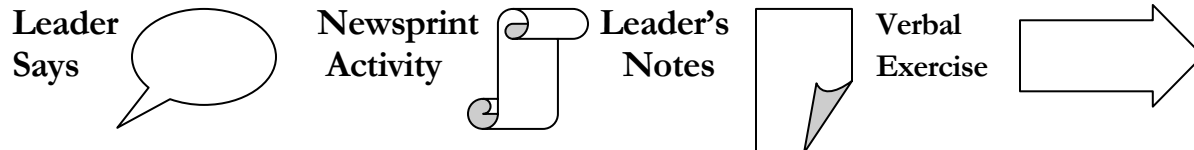
A p p e n d i c e s

Appendix A- When I Was Fifteen/ Scenarios/30 ways/Positive Adjectives	35
Appendix B- Parent Letter	41
Appendix C- Poem	43

Using This Guide

At the beginning of each lesson, there are key concepts and goals.

In the Trainer Guide, text in *Italic Print* is instruction or background information for the trainer. You will also see the following four icons to help guide you through the training:



When possible, you should set up your room in a semi circular position. This allows trainees to not only see you but to see each other. Additionally, as you complete newsprint activities, hang the newsprint around the room. It makes for a print-rich environment and allows trainees to see their collective thoughts and ideas. Try using different color markers and choosing a specific color for sheets you may need to come back to. For example, anything that's in red you will, a) be able to spot very quickly and b) know by the color that its contents will come up again in the training. Try to move around the room as much as possible. Moving forces your audience to focus more on you and less on their manuals; it also helps keep your audience more engaged. Remember to give your trainees breaks, even if it's a two-minute stretch break where you give them something silly to do (i.e., a Simon says activity). Your audience is a group of individuals that is used to moving constantly throughout the day. They may find it difficult to sit for such long periods of time. Tell your group that you will be giving them both stretch breaks and extended breaks and that you would prefer if they didn't leave the room during a stretch break.

Finally, a specific aim of this training is to engage the trainees in the learning process by asking them to provide examples from their own experiences. We recommend that you instruct agents to write additional examples in their guides for future reference. Be creative! Have fun! Good Luck!

Introduction & Ice Breaker

Hi, my name is _____ and I'm from Affirm, a project of the Vera Institute of Justice in partnership with the New York City Police Department and the New York City Department of Education. The Vera Institute of Justice is a New York City-based nonprofit organization that works with government agencies to develop and implement innovative programs. For several years, Vera has been working with the Department of Education and the Police Department on school safety issues. Since April of last year, we have been working together to test a new program for in-service SSAs that helps them to use positive reinforcement techniques as a means of supporting positive behavior and preventing school violence.

We implement Affirm in two phases. First, we give a classroom workshop on positive reinforcement. You will receive that today. Second, field trainers from Affirm go into schools to work with School Safety Personnel one-on-one to help them transfer the skills from the classroom to the field. You will learn more about the second phase at the end of the day today. Before we begin, I want you to consider two important facts about yourselves:

1. Of all school personnel, you make contact with almost every single student in your school on any given day.
2. Although you have the responsibility of enforcing school codes, you are in a unique position to find the positive in a string of negative events.

This training is designed to give you tools to make your interactions with students the most effective they can be. Our three main goals for this workshop are to:

1. Understand the definition of positive reinforcement and become skilled at seeing positive student behavior around us.
2. Understand the different verbal, nonverbal communication and tangible reinforcement strategies we can use to reinforce positive student behavior.
3. Understand the importance of giving positive reinforcement at least one time for every one time you correct a behavior. In other words, we will achieve a 1:1 ratio of positive to corrective interactions

We hope that these additional skills will benefit you, your colleagues, your school, and most importantly, your students.

Trainer: Present Community Practices

Before we begin I'd like to do a brief exercise that will hopefully get us focused and put us in the right frame of mind for the task at hand. This exercise came from Safe Horizon's Project S.T.O.P. (Schools Teaching Options for Peace) and has been used by other trainers in the area of youth development.

I want you to think back with me to when you were 15 and in high school. What was it like? If you close your eyes, can you see yourself and your friends walking through the halls? What are you wearing? Bell bottoms, dashikis, mini skirts, Jordache jeans, straight leg jeans. Is your hair style a beehive, crew-cut, bouffant, mullet, afro or teased hair. What's the word of the day? Jive, cool, groovy, fresh, word-up, don't believe the hype, phat-P-H-A-T, slammin, dope, awesome, chill, crib, def. Who are you listening to? The Temptations, Madonna, Little Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, Stevie Nicks, The mommas and the papas, Earth Wind and Fire, George Clinton & P-Funk, New Edition, Menudo, Run -D MC, Cyndi Lauper, LL Cool J, Dougie Fresh, Whitney Houston, Sugar Hill Gang, Lisa Lisa & cult jam, Tito Puente, Celia Cruz, The Beatles, George Michaels, Lionel Richie, Michael Jackson. Who are you watching and who's watching you?

Trainer: Ask the trainees to turn to page 34 in Appendix A of their guide. There they will find an exercise entitled "When I Was Fifteen". Ask participants to take five minutes to answer the questions. Read the questions aloud before they begin. When everyone is finished, ask volunteers to share their answers and write out the responses for questions 8, 9, 10 & 11 on newsprint. Divide the newsprint into four sections. Then read the letter from a teenager today and lead a discussion about the similarities.

Today our young people are faced with the constant threat of war as well as pressure from their peers and the media to carry weapons, use drugs and join gangs. Many of our kids live in very low-income neighborhoods and sometimes their only meals are at school. Instead of this being a time of discovery, a time for them to nurture and nourish their thoughts, ideas and talents, many of them are forced to take on the adult responsibilities of helping to raise younger siblings or work to help support their families. In short, our young people today are all too familiar with the struggles that have traditionally been reserved for adulthood. Yet in the midst of all of this, they still have to, like the generations before them and those to come, navigate the very difficult process of becoming an adult. They need role-models to help them navigate this journey. You can be those role models, and positive reinforcement can help you undertake that enormous task.

Understanding Adolescents

Key Concept

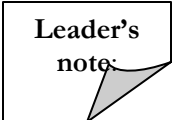


- Generally, adolescents are in a phase of development that includes more rapid and profound personal changes than at any other period in life.

Goal

1. To review the key developmental characteristics of adolescents.

Characteristics of Adolescents



Leader's
note

Reviewing the main characteristics of young adolescents will help school safety personnel be more effective in their roles. It will give them a more realistic foundation on which to base their expectations.

Young people go through many rapid and profound personal changes in their lives. These changes, while natural and necessary, can create some real challenges for the youngsters themselves, as well as for you, their parents, teachers, and others entrusted with responsibility for their care. It is important to remember that there is much variability in how and when youngsters experience these changes. It can be smooth sailing for some and stormy seas for others.



News-
print
activity

Have trainees brainstorm characteristics of adolescence that they see daily in students. List them on newsprint. Match points from the group-created list to the pre-existing lists in the curriculum. Be sure to highlight any of the major points the group didn't come up with on their own. Review each of the following areas of development. As you go through this process, point out that agents have a good sense of what students are dealing with on a daily basis. (Ask trainees to focus their attention on the newsprint, in an effort to keep them from moving forward in the curriculum.) You might open by saying, "Let's focus for a moment on listing the characteristics of adolescence".

Intellectual Development

Young adolescents...

- have a strong need for approval.
- are inquisitive about adults, often challenging their authority.
- are preoccupied with themselves.
- are transitioning from concrete to abstract thinking.
- are intensely curious and have a wide range of interests.
- prefer active over passive learning experiences.
- are developing a higher level sense of humor.

Moral Development

Young adolescents...

- **greatly need and are influenced by adult role models who will listen to them and affirm them.**
- **rely on parents or significant adults for advice when facing major decisions.**
- are impatient with the pace of change.
- often show compassion for those who are suffering.
- at times are quick to see flaws in others but slow to acknowledge their own faults.
- are forming their own personal values.

Physical Development

Young adolescents...

- **undergo bodily changes that may cause awkward, uncoordinated movements.**
- **experience rapid, irregular growth.**
- develop sexual awareness.
- experience restlessness and fatigue due to hormonal changes.
- need daily physical activity because of increased energy.

Emotional/Psychological Development

Young adolescents...

- **seek to become increasingly independent, searching for adult identity and acceptance.**
- **want desperately to be treated as adults, yet have a need for nurturing, structure and limits to feel safe.**
- tend to be self-conscious, lacking in self-esteem, and very sensitive to personal criticism.
- experience mood swings often with peaks of intensity and unpredictability.
- believe that their personal problems, feelings, and experiences are unique.

Social Development

Young adolescents...

- **model their behavior after older, respected peers or non-parent adults.**
- **have a strong need to belong to a group, with peer approval becoming more important.**
- often overreact to ridicule, embarrassment, and rejection.
- experiment with new slang and behaviors as they search for social position within their group.
- like fads, especially those shunned by adults.

Understanding Behavior Change

Key Concepts



- Behavior can change.
- Reinforcement is the most effective means to change behavior.

Goals

1. To understand the basic principles of how behavior is learned.
2. To understand punishment and corrective actions and how they differ from positive reinforcement.
3. To understand the basic principles of reinforcement and positive reinforcement.

How Behavior is Learned

Leader
says

How is behavior learned?

Behavior is learned through responses and consequences. Depending on the type of response or consequence, a behavior will either be repeated or avoided.

Some techniques often used to change behavior are punishment and corrective action. Even though our goal is to learn to use positive reinforcement effectively, it will be helpful to learn a little bit about punishment and corrective action so that you can understand how they are different from positive reinforcement.

Punishment = to impose a consequence that DECREASES the probability that a given behavior will occur.

Leader's
note:

Leader: Paraphrase Marcus' story and then read the 'leader says' note.

Marcus often forgot to bring his homework to school. His teacher warned him that three times without homework would mean detention. Marcus continued to forget his homework and, therefore, got detention. The day of Marcus' detention was the same day of an important basketball game in his neighborhood. Marcus had to miss the game because he was in detention. After that Marcus remembered to bring in his homework everyday. Marcus learned to remember to bring in his homework in order to avoid getting detention. He associated a certain behavior (remembering to bring in his homework) with the avoidance of being punished (getting detention and missing his basketball game).

Leader
says

In Marcus' case, the punishment worked because it discouraged him from forgetting his homework. Punishment is punishment only if it decreases the unwanted behavior.

There are many ways that people learn how to behave or learn to change their behavior. One way is by trying to avoid something unpleasant like punishment; another way is by being corrected.

Corrective Action = an action that seeks to adjust behavior so that it meets with required standards or codes.

A SSA is trying to clear the hallways as quickly as possible between periods. He might say, “Ladies and gentleman, you can’t stand here. Please go to class.”

Two male students are coming down the hall; one is wearing a baseball cap. The dean says “Sean, please take that cap off” and smiles at him. Sean smiles back and takes his cap off.

Although during both of the interactions above, the SSA and dean spoke in a non-confrontational tone, they were still correcting actions.

Often adults advise students or give them breaks as a way to build connections. These techniques can be very ineffective. Let us discuss what they are and why they are ineffective. **Advising** is the act of suggesting a particular decision or course of action. It can be an ineffective technique for two reasons:

1. Advising often takes place when students are at their peak, which is an unproductive time to try to change behavior because people are too emotional.
2. When students are “lectured”, they tend to stop listening.

Example: A student asks to leave the cafeteria before the bell rings. Mr. Francois, a school aide, tells the student he can’t leave the cafeteria before the bell rings. The student sneaks out of the cafeteria anyway and is immediately picked up by Dean Richards. Mr. Francois sees the student later and says, “Now you know you’re not supposed to leave before the bell. I told you that. I wish you students listened more. We want the best for you. All of this could have been avoided had you just listened when I told you to wait until the bell rings.”

Do you think this student is listening to what Mr. Francois is saying? Probably not.

Sometimes adults give students **breaks** as a way to build a good connection. This practice of giving kids breaks creates an environment of inconsistency that, in the long run, makes the job of school safety personnel more difficult. If everyone enforces the rules in the same way, all the time, there is less room for students to become upset when you can’t give them breaks.

Experts agree when you allow a certain kind of behavior one day and then not allow it the next, young people become confused. Additionally, your mixed messages will only encourage more testing of the limits to find out where the boundaries really are.

Therefore, be consistent with your enforcement of the rules. For example:

Consistent: Sean arrives at the cafeteria when it's not his lunch period. He begs you to let him in so he can get something from the vending machine. You tell him he can't come in if this isn't his lunch period. He comes to the cafeteria the same time the next day and asks you again to let him in so he can get something from the vending machine. Once again you tell him he can't come in if this isn't his lunch. On the third day he comes to the cafeteria, sees you there, turns around and walks away.

Inconsistent: Sean arrives at the cafeteria when it's not his lunch period. He begs you to let him in so he can get something from the vending machine. You tell him "okay, but don't make a habit of it." He comes to the cafeteria the same time the next day, and asks you to let him in again. You tell him "no." He gets very angry and stomps off.

Punishment, corrective actions, and the practice of giving kids breaks are presented here in order for you to have a more complete understanding of how behavior is learned. Punishment tells individuals what they are doing wrong but does not always give direction for what they should do instead. Some punishments might *temporarily* stop the unwanted behavior but will not end it permanently. Often punishment makes people fearful and defensive. Secondly, corrective actions, while sometimes necessary and well intentioned, do not support students for positive behavior. Using unpleasant events to motivate students may be effective in some situations, but it does not encourage a positive, cooperative, and respectful relationship with students. Thirdly, when adults give students breaks or are inconsistent with their enforcement of the rules it is confusing to young people, often encouraging further testing of limits. The most effective way to build a positive relationship with students is through the use of **positive reinforcement**. We will discuss specific techniques later in the training. For now, let's define positive reinforcement.

Reinforcement and Positive Reinforcement

Leader
says

Reinforcement

Reinforcement = anything that occurs after a behavior that INCREASES the likelihood the behavior will occur again.

In a store, a young child sees a candy bar he wants and screams angrily at his mother to get him the candy. This is the first time he has tried to get something by screaming angrily. What is going to determine if he *learns* this behavior and tries it again?

If the mother's response is to get him the candy, what do you think the little boy is likely to do the next time he is in a store and sees something he wants? Giving the candy to the boy is increasing the likelihood the boy will scream again when he wants something. That behavior has been **reinforced**.

If the mother does not get him the candy, and consistently doesn't give him things when he screams for them, what will he learn? The mother's response teaches him that this behavior doesn't work and he won't keep trying it. The behavior has not been reinforced.

Positive Reinforcement = Presenting a positive or pleasant stimulus to increase the likelihood that a behavior will occur. In turn, a behavior is repeated in order to get something desirable.

Asante is 12 years old. His parents tell him that they expect him to go to school, to get good grades, and stay out of trouble. On the contrary, Asante's friends try to convince him to cut school, get high, and break his curfew. Asante resists and does well on his report card. Asante's parents extend his curfew by an hour and tell him how proud they are of him.

Asante is associating getting good grades and following his parents' rules with the pleasant response of getting his curfew extended by an hour and getting his parents' approval. Asante's parents are giving him **positive reinforcement**.

Most people would agree that kids like to get attention from adults. We can see that if adults fall into the habit of only paying attention to kids when they are doing something wrong, then they are actually reinforcing the wrong things kids are doing. Positive reinforcement has been shown to be an effective way to encourage students to be more positive and cooperative and, consequently, avoid problems. By paying attention to positive behavior, even the smallest things, at a higher rate than we pay attention to negative behavior, we can change the climate of a school. **Giving at least one positive reinforcer for every one corrective action can help change the climate of a school from conflict to cooperation.** More than one is even better! The more positive reinforcement you give for a behavior, the higher the chances that students will learn the behavior and repeat it.

How Adults Can Help By Using Positive Reinforcement

Leader says

As adolescents go through their developmental phases, SSAs, deans, and school aides can be a source of support. For example, in the area of “Moral Development” we learned that adolescents “greatly need and are influenced by adult role models who will listen to them and affirm them.” You, as members of the school community, can be those role models who affirm them.

Additionally we know that adolescents:

- “have a strong need for approval” - Positive reinforcement can be used to provide that approval.
- “desire recognition for their efforts and achievements” - Positive reinforcement is designed to do just that.
- “want desperately to be treated as adults, yet have a need for nurturing, structure and limits to feel safe” - As an adult figure you can both provide that nurturing through positive reinforcement, as well as supply those much needed limits by consistently enforcing the rules.
- “greatly need and are influenced by adult role models who will listen to them and affirm them.” - As non-parent adult figures, you can influence adolescents to value and affirm themselves and their peers by giving them positive reinforcement.
- “model their behavior after older, respected peers or non-parent adults” - By behaving towards students, faculty, and other staff in the same way you want the student to behave, you provide an example from which the student can learn. You model what appropriate behavior looks like. Students respect adults who “walk the talk” and behave in the same manner expected from students.

Leader says

The remainder of this training will focus on developing your ability to use positive reinforcement to shape and support student behavior.

Leader
says

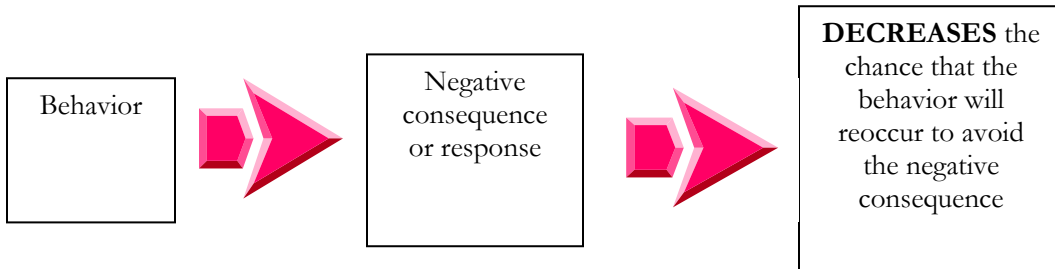
Most children learn basic social skills like saying “please” and “thank you” by having many trials, or teaching episodes, during which adults teach them the social skill and then positively reinforce them after they effectively demonstrate the skill. For example, by the time a child is 8 or 9, he or she has had an average of 250,000 trials of saying “please” and “thank you.” Each time they say “please” or “thank you,” parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and family friends positively reinforce them. These adults might smile or say things like “good boy” or “good girl” and show concern. However, in families stressed by extreme poverty, drug, and alcohol abuse or where parenting is disrupted by foster care, incarceration, or death, children may get only 50,000 trials by the time they are 8 or 9. Furthermore, the children who receive the 50,000 trials are not reinforced by smiles or other positive affirmations.

Then we—school safety agents, deans, school aides, assistant principals, social service people, and other caring adults—encounter these two young people and because they are the same age and about the same size we have the same expectation of them. The expectation is that when we give them something they will both say “thank you.” When the child with the 50,000 trials does not say “thank you,” we are displeased. But because we are caring adults, we decide to give him or her 10 to 20 more trials. During these trials we usually remind them to say “thank you” (for example, “Sean, what do you say?”), but often forget to positively reinforce them by smiling or using other positive affirmations. It is then our expectation that the child who now has 50,020 trials is “fixed” and should mirror the child with 250,000 trials. Many of us then throw our proverbial hands up in despair because we have tried to help but believe that the child “just doesn't want to” perform the way we think is best.

Leader
says

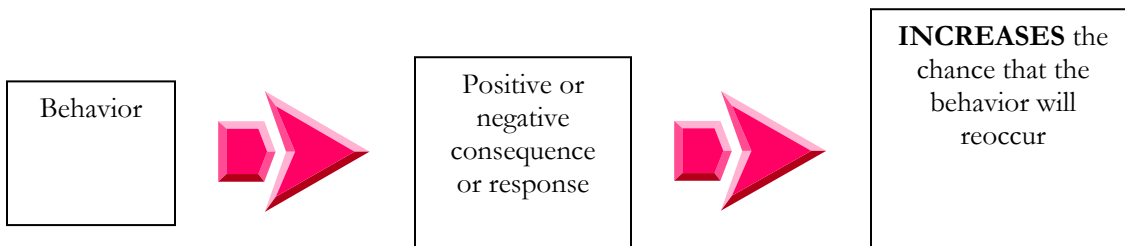
The point is that when you work with young people who may be working from a deficit in terms of having learned appropriate behavior, we have to remember to be patient. The changes we are looking for them to make are not going to come overnight. They will take time, lots of practice, patience and—if we want a lasting result—consistent positive reinforcement of the desired behavior.

Punishment

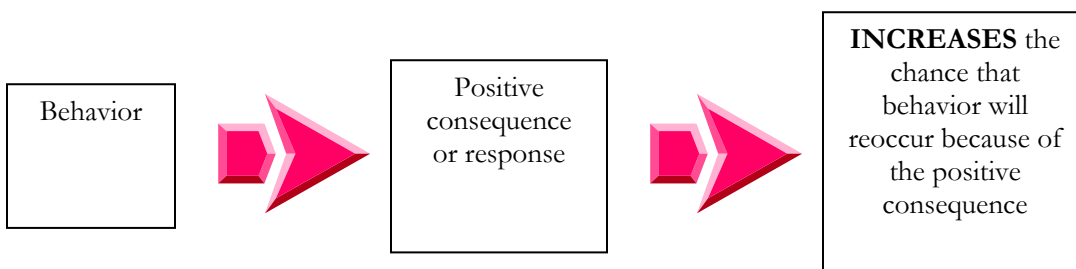


- Tells people what they are doing wrong but gives no clear direction for what they should do instead
- Cultivates fear and defensiveness
- Might stop a negative behavior temporarily, but often does not stop it forever

Reinforcement



Positive Reinforcement



- Boosts self-worth
- Gives clear direction for which behaviors to continue
- Motivates people to seek positive consequences

The Triggers of School Violence and the Role of School Safety Personnel

Key Concepts



- Supporting positive behavior deters negative behavior.
- Reinforcing positive behavior reduces negative student actions that can escalate into violence.
- Paying attention to students when they are behaving well “protects” them from engaging in violence

Goals

1. To understand the research on student behavior and the triggers that lead to violence.
2. To associate reinforcing positive behavior as a means to prevent violence.
3. To understand your roles in terms of reactive and proactive actions.
4. To associate reinforcing positive behavior as proactive action.

Research on Students and the “Opening Moves” that Lead to Violence

Now that we have looked at how behavior is learned and the basic principles of reinforcement, we are going to look at the behavior patterns of the students in your school and compare them to some of the national research on students.

Leader says

- How many students in your school have persistent behavior problems?

(Ask the trainees to think very specifically about the students who require the most of their attention and write that number down.)

Leader says

- How many students are in your school?

(Write this number down too. Help trainees see that the number of students who are causing problems in relation to the total number of students is relatively small.)

Much of the research that has been done about how students behave at school suggests that:

- About **85%** of students do not have serious behavior problems.
- **15%** of students who do have serious behavior problems are behaving appropriately **80%** of the time.

Yet, who stands out in schools and gets the most attention? It is not the 85% of the students doing what they are supposed to be doing but rather the 15% of students who have serious behavior problems.

The research also shows that:

- Many adolescents do not receive recognition for their achievements or approval from adults outside of the school setting. Research has shown that achievement and recognition in school can “protect” kids from getting involved in violence.

- Violent incidents are often a result of some “opening move” that happened earlier. The opening move later escalated into a highly emotional situation. The most common opening moves that lead to violent events are:
 - Unprovoked offensive touching
 - Someone interfering with possessions
 - Being asked to do something
 - Backbiting (someone says something bad about a person to someone else and it gets back to that person)
 - Teasing or rough physical play that goes too far
 - Insults

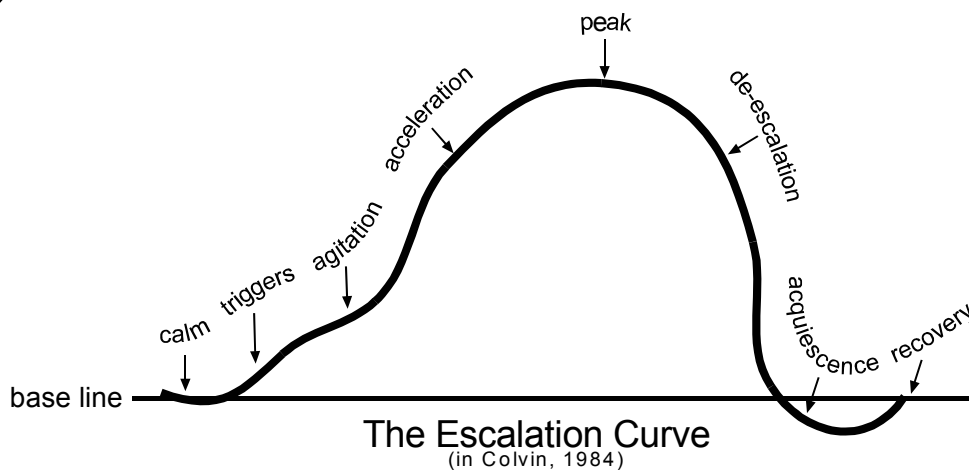
The majority of these opening moves take place in the hallways, stairs, gym, locker room, playing fields, or cafeteria.

Opening Moves & The Peak

As school safety personnel you have to react to highly emotional situations. Studies show the pattern of those highly emotional situations looks like this.

Leader's note

Trainer: Give example of a student going from base line to recovery. Try to represent all groups in the audience into your story.



As you can see from this illustration, problems begin with some triggers early in the process. Those triggers make a person agitated, which can accelerate into a full-blown outburst. After the outburst, the person usually de-escalates or calms down and actually moves into a state of remorse about their actions – they feel bad and are sorry for what they did. Then, they bounce back to where they were before the outburst started.

Many situations that you deal with are up in the peak of the episode. When you break up a fight, you are being reactive; you are working at the peak of this curve. However, studies show that it does not work to try to teach people at the peak because they are too emotional.

We know that it's more effective to intervene in this process at the very early stages. There are many opportunities for school safety personnel to contribute to the success of their school's mission working down on the "trigger" side of the curve. By working on the left side of the curve, you can teach people a different way to deal with the "triggers" that keeps them from getting agitated and accelerating.

Reactive and Proactive

In your role as school safety personnel you often have to react to problem situations. That is, you have to respond **AFTER** an incident has occurred. For example:

Two students are fighting in a hallway. A school aide posted at a nearby exit calls to the deans' office to report it. An agent and a dean respond, separate the students, and escort them to the deans' office to be processed.

At each step in this process the adults involved are being reactive, that is, they are reacting to a problem. Dealing with this situation and many others like this have made you well prepared to handle problem situations. You know how to **react** to and deal with problems, which is critical towards achieving your school's mission.

In contrast, when you do something to **prevent a problem**, you are acting **proactively** – you are taking action *before* there is a problem. For example:

All schools are required to have mandatory 'fire drills'. During these fire drills staff and students are directed on where to go and what to do in the event of a real fire. By instructing staff and students on how to respond in an emergency, the school is being proactive. Instead of waiting for a real emergency to arise before setting a plan, the school is prepared should an emergency ever occur.

Working *proactively* can be an equally effective strategy for achieving your school's mission.

Positive reinforcement is a proactive action. It is designed to help prevent problems before they occur. By using positive reinforcement, you decrease the likelihood that negative behaviors will occur.

Leader's
note

*Refer back to the escalation curve and point out that working on the left side of the curve is working **proactively** and working on the right side of the curve is working **reactively**.*

Role-Play Exercise

Conduct the following role-play exercise before starting the next section.

Instructions: *Solicit 5-8 volunteers, depending on the size of the group, to act out the following scenario. If space permits, take the “actors” out in the hall so that they can prepare for 2-3 minutes before presenting to the group.*

Setting: A high school hallway during passing.

Instruct the “actors” to play the part of different students and the behaviors that those students may exhibit during a typical passing in the hall. Ask that at least one of the trainees act out a student wearing a hat but going directly to class. The remaining “actors” can choose their parts. If they have a difficult time thinking of the role that they want to play, offer the following roles:

- *Two students walking and talking quietly and arriving to class before the bell rings.*
- *Two students walking and rough-housing and slowly moving towards their class.*
- *Several students standing along the wall talking, not moving towards class.*

Bring the “actors” back into the room and ask them to present the role-play. Ask the audience to observe. When the role-play has ended, invite comments from the audience as to what they observed; what behaviors did they notice?

Positive Reinforcement Techniques

Key Concepts



- Before behavior can be changed, it has to be noticed.
- There are many techniques to reinforce positive student behavior.

Goals

1. To understand the importance of becoming skilled observers.
2. To learn different positive reinforcement techniques.

Becoming a Skilled Observer

*Leader
says*

Before behavior can be reinforced, it has to be noticed. It is surprisingly difficult to “see” appropriate behavior. Many of you have become skilled at looking for and reacting to negative behaviors. You can also become skilled observers in another way. You can learn to notice when students are behaving well. It is important for you as adults in the school community to notice the things students are doing right in order for you to be effective “reinforcers.” In many situations, students are doing something that you can reinforce – the trick is to be able to see it.

Below are some of the behaviors that we have guided school safety personnel to reinforce when they are scanning students or patrolling hallways between classes.

1. Behaviors to reinforce when scanning students or monitoring the school entrance:
 - ✓ Waiting in line without pushing, shoving, etc.
 - ✓ Greeting other students and adults in a friendly manner
 - ✓ Not talking back when adults give direction
 - ✓ Moving on to where they are supposed to be without dawdling

2. Behaviors to reinforce when patrolling between classes:
 - ✓ Moving through halls in an orderly manner
 - ✓ Having friendly conversation with peers
 - ✓ Getting to next class on time
 - ✓ Greeting you in a friendly and respectful manner
 - ✓ Not blocking the way of others

“Reframing”

In order to become skilled observers and effectively reinforce good behavior, we need to learn how to “reframe” situations. Have you ever been in the position of framing a photograph or picture and noticed that different frames make the picture look better or worse? It may be helpful to think of this process as putting a new frame on a situation that changes the way the situation looks.

Trainer’s Note: Give the trainees a personal example of reframing.

The following are some tips for reframing a situation:

- **Shift the emphasis from the negative aspects of students’ behavior to the positive aspects.**

Example: You notice a student with a hat on and tell him to take it off. The student replies, “OK” and takes it off. Instead of only focusing on the fact that the student was breaking a rule by wearing the hat, shift the focus so that you also notice that the student listened to you and complied.

- **Find the positive exceptions in a string of not-so-positive behaviors and focus on them.**

Example: A student is sent to the dean’s office for being disruptive in class. After having a discussion with the student regarding appropriate classroom behavior, the dean sends the student back to class and the teacher, not knowing that the dean has already spoken to the student, refuses to let the student back into class. He sends the student back to the dean’s office. The student immediately returns to the dean’s office and requests that the dean call the teacher and let him know he can return to class. Even though the student misbehaved in class, you could comment on how good it was that he came straight back to the deans’ office rather than roam the hallways.

- **Find positive intent in negative behavior and label it.**

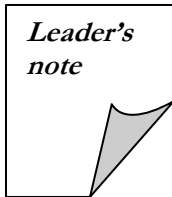
Example: You encounter a girl yelling at a group of students in the hallway. While dealing with that inappropriate behavior you find out she was mad at the other students because they were planning to go and retaliate against a group of students from another school because they

beat up one of their friends. You could compliment her for trying to guide her friends to not fight.

In situations such as these it is useful to use the “sandwich technique”. The sandwich technique works as follows:

1. You notice and comment on the positive behavior.
2. You comment on the negative behavior.
3. You end on a positive note.

You might say to the young girl who was yelling in the hallway: “I think it’s great that you’re trying to keep your friends from fighting (this is noticing the positive behavior), and you know that yelling in the hallways is inappropriate and disruptive (this is reacting to the negative behavior). Good try, though. I hope you were able to get through to them (this is ending on a positive note).”



Ask the group to do the role play again. Ask the audience to identify the positive behaviors that they can notice now that they are skilled observers of positive behavior. For the behaviors in the role play that they notice need correcting, ask the group to come up with ‘sandwiches’ to correct those behaviors. Remind them that the sandwich technique uses positive-corrective-positive.

Positive Reinforcement Techniques

Leader
says

Being positive does not have to interfere with school safety personnel's ability to take action when needed. Students can understand that adults can both support their positive behavior and correct their negative behavior.

Take for example a basketball coach. If he only focuses on what the players are doing wrong, they will become anxious, be fearful of making mistakes, and have no new skills to apply towards improvement. If that were all the coach did, the team would never make progress. The coach has to teach them new skills and let them know when they are performing them correctly. You can do that too!

A. Verbal Reinforcement

Of all the skills, this is the easiest skill to use as it is always at your disposal. There are endless ways to verbally reinforce behavior. (See Appendix A for more details.) Use words that fit your personality. What works well for one person may not work well for another, and what works with some students may not work with others. Younger students respond differently than older students. It can be a challenge to find out what older students respond to. Be yourself, but be positive. And whenever possible, use the student's name.

There are two keys to effectively giving verbal positive reinforcement. The first key is being specific about what you notice. General statements about good behavior don't tell students exactly what they did and therefore reduces the likelihood that they will do it again. By being specific, students know exactly what they've done right.

Unspecific reinforcement: I see you've been improving.

Specific reinforcement: I noticed that you've been going to class.

The second key to effectively giving verbal positive reinforcement is not just noticing the positive behavior and acknowledging it, but stating how you feel about it as well. As we noted earlier, adolescents *"greatly need and are influenced by adult role models who will listen to them and affirm them."* You affirm by stating how you feel about what you see.

Incomplete reinforcement:	I see you've been working hard at trying to get to school on time.
Complete reinforcement:	I'm really impressed at how hard you've been working on getting to school on time.
Incomplete reinforcement:	I saw the way you avoided that fight the other day.
Complete reinforcement:	I saw the way you avoided that fight the other day, and I think that's a real sign of maturity.

B. Non-verbal Reinforcement

Many times you don't even have to use words for a student to know you noticed them or something they did. Most of you probably do this without even thinking about it. Direct eye contact, a nod, a smile, thumbs up, and your proximity can be reinforcement.

- You nod, give a thumbs up, or some other approving sign to a student who you saw pick up something that another student dropped.
- You make eye contact and smile at a student who is known to act out, when he/she isn't doing anything wrong at all.

C. Incentives or Contingent Rewards

Incentives or contingent rewards are anything tangible you use to encourage a desired behavior. It motivates the students to do something you want them to do. They can be given out randomly, or as a part of a specific program. They can be used on an individual or group level. An example of this type of reward is the fake "money" that some schools use for good behavior. Students can then redeem the money at the school store for supplies, materials, etc.

Unless your school has a system in place for you to reward students with some kind of token for good behavior, this may be difficult for school safety personnel to incorporate into their daily routines. If your school uses coupons, tokens, etc., you could use them in a couple of ways. You could use them in the same manner as you would use verbal reinforcement – simply give the token when you see desired behavior. Or you could let students know in advance what behavior you are going to reward. For example, you could tell a student who is habitually late that if he/she gets to class on time he/she will get the incentive.

Another example of a tangible reward or tangible reinforcer is the parent letter. You will receive training on how to distribute the parent-letter we will be

implementing during session 3 of the field training component. You will find a copy of the letter in Appendix B. The letter serves two purposes: to give agents a tangible means of reinforcing positive student behavior and to help strengthen the home-school partnership.

Facilitate the Scenarios Exercise, Part I (Appendix A)

News-
print
activity

D. Shaping

Shaping is a technique used to start up or increase a behavior that the person isn't really using much at all. It may be too much to expect that you can make a big change in the way a person behaves all at once. You may have to break it down into smaller parts and "shape" it into what you want it to be as the person makes tiny steps in the right direction. When shaping behavior, look for something that the person is already doing that resembles the thing you want them to do, and reinforce even slight changes that come closer and closer to what your goal is. Reinforce changes in the right direction. This requires a lot of patience, diligence, and consistency, but it can have more lasting effects than punishment.

Example: Frequently, Shauna shows up at school in the morning and goes through scanning without emptying her pockets. You remind students every morning to empty their pockets before coming through the walk-through scanners. Your school requires that when students set off the scanners they have to be hand-scanned. She almost always gets mad that she has to wait on line to be hand-scanned, she argues with you about it, and is generally not very cooperative. You've told her before to remember to empty her pockets, but it just never happens. Your school doesn't have a system to offer her an incentive to remember, so you decide to take "baby steps" and work on first getting her to accept that she has to wait in line to be hand-scanned without a hassle. You could start noticing when she is less argumentative, let her know you appreciate it and reinforce her for it. This interaction might look something like this:

- Day 1: "Good morning." (You smile.)
- Day 2: "Thank you for being so cooperative today and waiting patiently. I really appreciate that."
- Day 3: "Good morning, glad to see you."
- Day 4: When you notice her on a day that she doesn't have to come through the hand scan line, you might give her a thumbs up.

Shaping requires time, patience and consistency. You might not see results right away but keep at it. Think back to the example of the student who had received 250,000 trials compared to the student who had received only 50,000 trials. All students are not coming to the table with the same tools.

A graphic of a rolled-up scroll with the text "Newsprint activity" written on it.

Newsprint activity

Facilitate the Scenarios Exercise, Part 2 (Appendix A)

List the following examples of positive reinforcement and corrective action and have trainees tell you which is positive reinforcement and which is corrective.

A graphic of a right-pointing arrow with the text "Verbal Exercise" written inside it.

Verbal Exercise

- "Take off your cap"
- "I saw your art work on the bulletin board yesterday. Good work"
- "When are you going to get it through your heads to empty your pockets? I say the same thing everyday."
- "I see you're on time to school today. That's great. Keep it up."
- "Keep moving."
- "Great job getting to class on time."
- "Walk and talk people, walk and talk!"
- "I saw how you handled yourself yesterday that took guts. I'm impressed."
- "15 points, very impressive but you should have scored 25."
- "Can you please go to class?"

Use positive reinforcement techniques to reinforce even the smallest behaviors. Here are examples of behaviors you can reinforce:

- A student who often hangs around in the hallway and teases fellow students before going to her next class, walks directly to her class.
- A student defends another student who is being picked on.
- A student who is usually disruptive during scanning cooperates with you.
- A student refuses to fight with another student.
- A student who usually wears a cap or other head gear is not wearing it.
- A student holds the door open for someone.
- A chronically late student arrives at school on time or earlier than usual.
- A student participates in the school play or her artwork is displayed on a bulletin board.
- A student picks up garbage in the hallway.

Additional Strategies and Putting Them Into Practice



Key Concepts

- There are multiple applications of positive reinforcement techniques.
- There are many ways to be an effective reinforcer.

Goals

1. To explore additional applications of these techniques in the roles of school safety personnel.
2. To understand how these techniques will be used in your day-to-day work.
3. To understand the role of the field trainer.

Additional Ways to be an Effective Reinforcer...

Leader says

In addition to positively reinforcing good behavior, school safety personnel can positively affect students in other ways. Let's look at some effective and ineffective ways to positively affect students.

- Frame your directions in terms of what TO do rather than what not to do. If you tell students what TO do, they know exactly what is expected.

Effective: Stay in your seats at the table until the bell rings.

Ineffective: Don't stand in the doorway waiting for the bell.

- Always be professional. In addition to the obvious benefits, conducting yourself in a professional manner also models for students what appropriate behavior looks like. It gives them a guideline on how they should present themselves to other adults and each other.

Effective: Compliment students on their behavior or abilities. "Nice job in the game yesterday" or "That was very mature of you, the way you handled yourself in that situation yesterday" or "Did I hear that you passed your math test? That's great!"

Ineffective: Complimenting students on personal appearance. "You look beautiful today" or "That dress looks great on you."

Concluding Remarks and Putting it Into Practice

As we have learned, positive reinforcement is a proactive action. It is designed to help prevent problems before they occur. By using positive reinforcement, you can decrease the likelihood negative behaviors will occur.

Positive reinforcement can have more lasting effects on behavior than punishment. Positive reinforcement can:

- Encourage students to continue behaving well
- Give them a clear direction for what they should do
- Boost their self-worth
- Motivate them to seek more positive consequences

It will take time to apply the techniques we have learned today. As you learned at the beginning of this training, a Field Trainer from Affirm will be assigned to your school for the next month to guide and support you as you apply and sharpen these techniques. With the Field Trainer's help, you will master the following four skills:

1. You will effectively notice positive student behavior.
2. You will reinforce positive student behavior using a combination of tangible reinforcers, verbal communication, and non-verbal communication.
3. You will give positive reinforcement at least one time for every one time you correct a behavior. In other words, you will achieve a 1:1 ratio of positive to corrective interactions.
4. You will use positive reinforcement techniques to shape behavior and change problem behaviors.

Here's how the Field Trainer will help you:

- The Field Trainer will work with you to identify appropriate behaviors to reinforce. To do this effectively, s/he will be present at arrival and dismissal times and will walk the hallways, stairwells, and other school areas you are in charge of patrolling. The Field Trainer will not get in the way of your work.
- The Field Trainer will meet with you, on average, twice per week for approximately 45 minutes per session.
- During each one-on-one session the Field Trainer will lead you through different exercises to help you master the four skills we listed above. S/he will begin each session by enumerating the four skills. The sessions will proceed as follows:
 - *Session 1: How to Notice and Count Positive Behaviors*
 - *Session 2: How to Reinforce Positive Behavior Using Verbal Reinforcement and Nonverbal Reinforcement*
 - *Session 3: How to Use a Tangible Reinforcer (Please refer to Appendix B)*
 - *Session 4: How to Measure Your Ratio of Positive Reinforcement to Corrective Interactions- Part I*
 - *Session 5: How to Measure Your Ratio of Positive Reinforcement to Corrective Interactions- Part II*
 - *Session 6: How to Use Positive Reinforcement to Help Shape Individual Students' Behavior*
 - *Session 7: How to Continue Using Positive Reinforcement to Help Shape Individual Students' Behavior AND Ratio Exercise 2*
 - *Session 8: How to Compare Ratio 1 to Ratio 2 AND Conclusion of Field Coaching*
- After identifying the behaviors we want to reinforce, the Field Trainer will help you choose the appropriate positive reinforcement techniques to apply and help you test the technique.
- When appropriate, the Field Trainer will model positive reinforcement techniques directly with students.
- The Field Trainer will meet with the Level 3 and the Assistant Principal for Security at your school to discuss how using these techniques are affecting your daily work.

Trainers CANNOT help you with the following:

- Field Trainers are not authorized to help you respond to a school safety incident.
- Field Trainers cannot help you restrain a student.

- Field Trainers cannot help you search a student.

It will take time to integrate the techniques you learned today into your daily routine, but after a while it will become second nature to you. Don't worry if you do not understand them at first because the field trainer will be with you to guide you along and help facilitate your understanding. We just ask for your patience so that you too can see how positive reinforcement can work for you. Good luck!

(Close with A Heart for Children poem)

Appendix A

When I was Fifteen...

Briefly answer the following questions:

1) My favorite kind of music was

2) The clothes I wore the most were

3) My favorite teacher was

4) My favorite subject was

5) I was really proud when

6) My role model was

7) I dreamt of being/having

8) An adult I trusted and who understood me was

9) The thing that frustrated me the most about adults was

10) My biggest worry was

11) The person I admired the most was

Scenarios, Part 1

Tell trainees you're going to break them into groups. (Point to each person and give them one of four words: terrific, awesome, fantastic, and incredible. Then tell all the terrific's to get together, etc.) Hand each group an index card, a piece of newsprint and some magic markers and ask them to write what they would say to reinforce two or three of the students in their scenarios using verbal/non-verbal communication and the sandwich technique. Refer them to the '30 Ways to Start Saying Something Positive' and the 'Positive Adjectives' list in Appendix B to help them find the right words. The point of this activity is to have trainees practice using verbal positive reinforcement, nonverbal positive reinforcement and the sandwich technique.

1. Scanning- Joe, Marc, Derek, Jamal.

Joe, Marc, Derek, and Jamal are all friends. Joe always gives agents a hard time during scanning. He throws his book bag on the x-ray machine and is loud and curses. Joe is very uncooperative. Marc, Joe's brother, also dislikes waiting on line, because he's always late to his first period class. He usually has his ID out but often forgets to empty his pockets. This sets off the walk-through scanner and causes him to have to be hand scanned. He often tells you that you are too slow and that you should hurry up. Meanwhile, Jamal always waits patiently; he empties his pockets and removes his belt before going through the walk-through scanner and rarely has to be hand scanned.

2. Cafeteria-Silvia, Monique, Shawn.

Silvia is a good student who rarely cuts classes. Today, she decided to cut her 3rd period class because she was hungry and wanted to have an early lunch. You see her try to get her friend Monique to cut with her, but Monique refuses and goes to class. Shawn is sitting at the table eating his lunch and reading his science book; he tells you he studying for an exam next period. As he walks out of the lunch room he throws out his tray.

3. Hallway/during passing-Karen, Jennifer, Sonia, William.

You often see Karen roaming the halls during class time without a hallway pass and no school identification. She constantly stops at classroom windows looking for her friends which causes classroom distractions. When the bell rings, Jennifer is walking and talking with Sonia and William toward their class, and Karen bumps into her. Karen begins to curse and yell at Jennifer. Jennifer gets mad initially but Sonia convinces her to walk away reminding her they're going to be late for class. William also tries to calm Karen down and offers to walk her to class.

4. Stairs-Mike, Billy, Marcus, Joel.

Mike was a school bully and loved to cut class and hang-out at the back stair case with Billy and Jose. Lately you've noticed a change in Mike; he's been going to his classes more and bothering kids less, but Billy and Jose keep trying to influence him to hang-out and cut class. Today you encounter them in the stairwell just after the late bell. Joel, another student who seems to want to be in this group, and Mike go to class as soon as they see you. Billy and Jose walk away, but you find them in the same staircase 10-minutes later.

5. Front of school-Marty, Jack, Michelle, Vivian.

As you do your morning perimeter-check, you see Marty; a student who usually makes it on time to his 1st period class. You notice, however, that some mornings he likes to hang-out in front of the school with Michelle and Jack. Michelle's first class isn't until 2nd period, and she always arrives on time. Vivian stops to talk to them momentarily but sees a line forming and starts walking toward the door. She turns and motions for them to come in but they hesitate, so she goes inside. A few minutes later Marty looks at his watch and decides to go inside, too. Jack is a nice kid, but he rarely makes it past the front door. You know he's smart and could do better; all he needs is a little push.

Scenarios, Part 2 - SILVIA

Tell the trainees that this time we will work on “SHAPING” a change in a student’s behavior. As a group, we will come up with a plan to help a student work toward a desired behavior. Let the trainees know that we will work with scenario #2 (**trainer must re-read the scenario to all trainees**), and we will pick Silvia as the student who we would like to “SHAPE.” The trainer should remind the group that they should come up with at least three techniques that we can use in helping Silvia, and that they should also identify something positive about Silvia.

Helpful questions/suggestions for the group to consider:

1. Identify the behavior that we’d like to see changed in Silvia.
2. Identify a positive behavior that Silvia exhibits.
3. What can we do to assist Silvia in changing that behavior?
4. What techniques can we use to reinforce Silvia when she has shown change?
Suggest that the group think about the *Verbal/Non-Verbal Reinforcement* techniques and/or “sandwich technique” (*Positive-Corrective-Positive*) and when they can use them.



Newsprint activity

Brainstorm on a sheet of newsprint the answers to questions 1-4. After the trainees have come up with all their ideas, help them form it into a specific plan for shaping. Have the trainees think about where they see the student, specifically what the agent will say to the student the first day s/he works with the student on shaping, and what type of interaction the student will respond most favorably to. You can use the following sample to guide the trainees.

Then on a separate sheet of newsprint, with the groups input, write a 3-4 day plan for what the shaping will actually entail.

For example:

- Day 1: You see student in class during that period, give her a smile or a thumbs up.
- Day 2:
- Day 3:
- Day 4:

Trainer Sample:

Non-Verbal Reinforcement: When you see her in class during that period, give her a smile or thumbs-up.

Verbal Reinforcement: Acknowledge her when you see her in the appropriate lunch period.

Verbal Reinforcement: Maybe walk with her (without her even realizing it) to her next class and tell her something positive about her going to class.

Tangible Reinforcement: Maybe you can give her a letter.

Trainer should end the lesson by reminding the agents it is important to remember shaping takes time, patience, and consistency. They should not expect to see a change overnight.

30 WAYS TO START SAYING SOMETHING POSITIVE

1. You're on the right track!
2. You did it!
3. You are very good at (blank).
4. That's the way to go!
5. I'm happy to see you working so hard on that.
6. You're doing a good job.
7. Now you have it!
8. I knew you could do it.
9. GREAT!
10. Keep working on (blank), you're getting better
11. Nice going.
12. SENSATIONAL!
13. PERFECT!
14. OUTSTANDING!
15. You did that (blank) very well.
16. Keep up the good work.
17. TREMENDOUS!
18. I'm very proud of you.
19. Congratulations, you received a (blank) on your paper.
20. I'm proud of the dedication you are demonstrating.
21. That's quite an improvement.
22. Well, look at you go!
23. EXCELLENT!
24. Right on!
25. Keep it up and you will have mastered it.
26. You out did yourself today.
27. DYNAMITE!
28. Good going.
29. Good Job.
30. Keep on trying!

POSITIVE ADJECTIVES

- Amazing, Approachable
- Bright, Brilliant
- Charismatic, Confident, Courageous, Creative
- Dedicated, Determined, Dignified, Diligent, Down-to-earth, Dynamic,
- Easygoing, Effective, Encouraging, Energetic, Engaging, Exceptional
- Fabulous, Fantastic
- Good-natured, Grounded,
- Humble, Honest
- Incredible, Intelligent, Insightful
- Knowledgeable, Keen
- Level-headed, Lovable
- Magnetic, Marvelous, Motivated
- Noble, Nice
- Observant, Open-minded, Optimistic, Outgoing
- Perceptive, Poetic, Poised, Practical, Prepared, Positive
- Radiant, Refreshing, Remarkable
- Sensational, Splendid, Superb, Supportive
- Tremendous, Tactful, Triumphant
- Vibrant, Vigilant,
- Warm, Wonderful, Worthy

Appendix B

AFFIRM parent letter

INSERT SCHOOL'S LETTERHEAD

Date: _____

Dear Ms./Mr. _____:

The school safety staff at your child's school help make the school safe and free of disruptions so that students can learn. Working together, we scan students as they enter the building; monitor exits; and patrol hallways, the cafeteria, and other areas in the school.

We are participating in a new program at our school that reinforces positive student behavior. We are writing to let you know that your child, _____, behaved well today. It is a pleasure to have your child attend our school.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
The School Safety Staff at
(Insert School Name) School

Appendix C

A HEART FOR CHILDREN

One hundred years from now
It will not matter
What kind of car I drove,
What kind of house I lived in,
How much I had in my bank
Nor what my clothes looked like.

One hundred years from now
It will not matter
What kind of school I attended,
What kind of typewriter I used,
How large or small the company for which I worked,
But the world may be
...a little better because...
I WAS IMPORTANT TO THE LIFE OF A CHILD.

-Adapted from a poem attributed variously to "Anonymous" and to Margaret Fishback Powers