

Advice Sheet 9

CATCH THEM BEING GOOD!

Yes, it's a cliché, but it's a simple one and a good one. It operates on the principle that people respond to attention by repeating the behaviours that gain attention. So if we respond to negative behaviours by giving attention to the pupil only when these behaviours are observed, then the pupil learns that this is the way to get the teacher's attention. However, if we praise pupils when their behaviour / on-task focus is as we wish it to be, then it is more likely that they will repeat these behaviours.

So, in the words of the Johnny Mercer & Harold Arlen song: "You've got to accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative, latch on to the affirmative ... spread joy up to the maximum, bring gloom down to the minimum".

The other huge advantage to 'catch them being good' is that it is a very simple technique which we can explain to parents, and ask them to practice implementing it in the home. This will strengthen its power in both environments. If the pupil sees positive behaviour as a way to be affirmed at home as well as at school, this will increase the likelihood of the behaviours occurring.

Basic Steps of the Catch Them Being Good Technique

1. Identify instances of disruptive behaviours. Categorise them into those that can and those that cannot be ignored.
2. Identify instances of non-disruptive and appropriate classroom behaviours.
3. At appropriate times give specific praise to a number of pupils (including those who are the focus of your concern) if they are not engaged in disruptive behavior.
4. When a pupil is disruptive, ignore the disruptive behaviour, unless the nature of the behaviour cannot be ignored – if for example staff / other pupils are being threatened, mocked, or their safety is at risk.
5. At the same time you are ignoring a pupil's disruptive behaviour, direct your attention to others adjacent to the target pupil who are behaving appropriately and give them specific praise for their appropriate behaviour.
6. If a pupil is engaged in severely disruptive behaviour, it may be necessary to remove him or her to a time-out area for a short period of time. (See Advice Sheets 6 and 36 on 'Big Toe First' and the 'Time-out' strategy).
7. When the pupil whose behaviour you wish to change exhibits the appropriate behaviour, specifically praise the behaviour immediately. Use your judgement (know your pupil!) on whether this praise should be public and affirms the pupil in front of his/her peers, or more discreet and private.

For more: <http://www.teachervision.fen.com/teaching-methods/classroom-management/9154.html>
<http://www.behavioradvisor.com/CatchGood.html>