



PRESENTS A RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

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USING SPECIFIC, POSITIVE FEEDBACK IN HIGH SCHOOLS

POSITIVE FEEDBACK

is underused, especially in high schools

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The power of feedback

BARRIERS

to providing feedback

DEFINING

specific, positive feedback

WHAT DO WISCONSIN

teachers and administrators say?

HEAR DIRECTLY

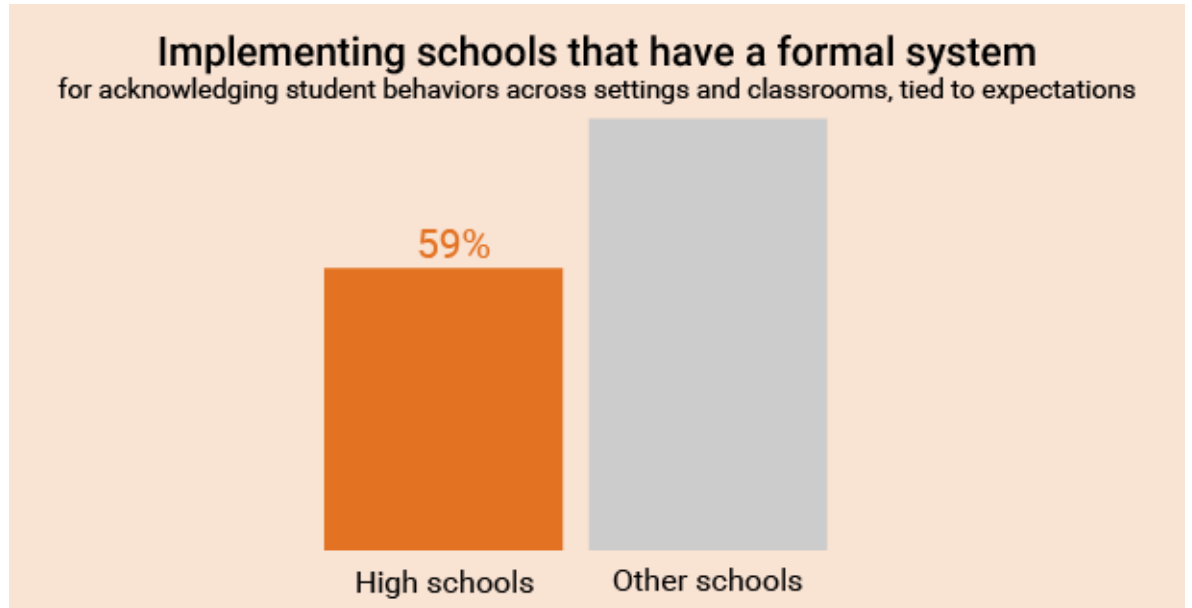
from Wisconsin high school students

POSITIVE FEEDBACK IS UNDERUSED

ESPECIALLY IN HIGH SCHOOLS

Only 59% of implementing high schools have a formal system for acknowledging student behaviors across settings and classrooms, tied to expectations.

(according to schools who self-assessed using the Tiered Fidelity Inventory)



WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

THE POWER OF FEEDBACK

Studies have shown that specific, positive feedback is a critical part of a high school's acknowledgement system. It is important to have feedback tied to predetermined expectations.



Feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement.

(Hattie, 2015)

This impact can be either **positive or negative.**

(Hattie & Timperley, 2007)

Feedback is a fundamental piece of how we learn and move in the world. We practice, get feedback, practice, get feedback.

(Thaler, 2016)

BARRIERS TO PROVIDING FEEDBACK

WHY IS FEEDBACK UNDERUSED IN HIGH SCHOOLS?

Staff at the high school level often expect students to know how to behave or do not consider it their role to provide specific, positive feedback on appropriate social or behavior skills.



“**High school staff** are less likely to consider it their job to teach and acknowledge appropriate social-behavioral skills.”

(Hershfeldt & Flannery, 2019)

“High school staff beliefs and values about school, including their expectations such as that students should know how to behave, can be **barriers to implementation.**”

(Bohanon et al., 2009; Flannery et al., 2009; Putnam et al., 2009)

“High schools often have a **focus on negative sanctions** for lack of student compliance.”

(Fenning et al., 2008; Fenning, Parraga, & Wilczynski, 2000)

“I've seen teachers warning students about their behavior over and over and the student keeps going. Their behavior does not change.”

Molly N., 10th grade

DEFINING SPECIFIC, POSITIVE FEEDBACK

WHAT IT IS

How are we defining specific, positive feedback?
And what does this look like in a high school environment?



“Intentional, authentic feedback and reinforcement, when used in school-wide environments and classrooms, help students learn and grow their skills.”

– Emilie O'Connor
Wisconsin RtI Center



Positive feedback **is not** about compliance; for example, giving students a ticket for walking quietly in the hall or not swearing.

Positive feedback **does not** have to involve tangibles such as tickets or stickers.

Positive feedback **is** part of your acknowledgement system.

Positive feedback **is** a strategy that encourages development and use of relevant skills and habits students need to be successful in the academic and behavioral routines of their day.

Positive feedback **is** making the expectations and success criteria clear and tying the positive feedback to those expectations.

WHAT DO WISCONSIN HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS SAY?

HEAR FROM THE EXPERTS

We interviewed some Wisconsin teachers and administrators to learn what they've discovered in their practical experience.



I can get behind this. I wish I would have heard this when we started PBIS 8 years ago. I had a hard time thinking high school kids needed tickets and stickers, but I can understand that high school students need feedback and connection.

– Teacher (anonymous upon request)

I learned quickly in teaching that students respond much more positively to positive feedback than negatives.

– Anita Mattek, associate principal

At our high school, it is not just about giving students a ticket. When tangibles are used, they are paired with positive, verbal feedback and students know the reason for the acknowledgement. The feedback is always tied back to the expectations.

– Amanda Urmanski, associate principal

Even students who may not seem to need a lot of feedback do.

– Mike Werdeo, biology teacher

In high school, acknowledgement is about providing feedback on what skills and habits students need to be successful.

– Mike Wanninger, German teacher

A student in my class last year had trouble with grades and behavior. I looked back at her middle school grades and she was an A/B student. I spent more time focusing on positive feedback, and this helped her see she could succeed. She passed all of her classes junior year, and has had fewer behavioral referrals this year.

– Mike Wanninger, German teacher

HEAR DIRECTLY FROM WISCONSIN STUDENTS

THE IMPACT OF SPECIFIC, POSITIVE FEEDBACK

Here's a sampling of thoughts from some Wisconsin high school students about the impact of positive feedback.



“ One of my teachers gave me positive feedback in math. That teacher cared. ”

– Anonymous, 11th grade

“ When I get positive feedback that tells me it is achievable. ”

– Molly N., 10th grade

“ Positive feedback helps high schoolers feel better about themselves, but also helps them to know what they should do. Negative feedback makes us feel bad about ourselves. ”

– Kalsin T., 11th grade

“ You can never say enough. There is never too much positive feedback for high school students. ”

– Molly N., 10th grade

“ Students are not comfortable asking adults for more positive feedback if they are not getting that feedback. ”

– Anonymous, 11th grade

“ I get positive feedback on my academic skills but not on my behavior. Only the kids with behavior issues get positive feedback for behavior. ”

– Molly N., 10th grade

For more information about aligning expectations and positive feedback with college and career ready skills, contact your [regional technical assistance coordinator](#).



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