



ADVANCING EQUITY

Practice Brief:

Celebrating Success

Learning Objectives

After reviewing this practice brief you will be able to

1. Describe the importance of providing frequent opportunities for community acknowledgment of student successes.
2. Reflect on your current practices and goals surrounding acknowledging student success.
3. Identify general strategies for community acknowledgment of student success.
4. Apply specific strategies for celebrating success to your own classroom context.

Background

Teacher-derived praise may create a student-teacher relationship that is dependent on the teacher's evaluation and what the giver of praise (the teacher) has determined to be good or bad (Kohn, 2001). This dependence on another's judgment may deter students from forming their own judgment about their values and the worth of their accomplishments (Kelsey, 2011; Kohn, 1993).

In an equity-focused model of education, the goal is to more intentionally empower students and center their perspectives, values, voices, and cultures in the process of defining and celebrating success in the classroom.

In an equity-focused classroom, the responsibility of celebrating student success should not lay entirely with the teacher. Students must be encouraged and empowered to celebrate themselves and one another in their classroom to help build a strong classroom community. The strength of any community is the ability of its members to nourish, sustain, and build from within (Cortez, 2021).



Key Strategies & Takeaways

Introduction

Dialogue/Discussion: Offer structured class discussions about types of successes students value and appreciate in themselves and their peers. Encourage students to share what they like to be acknowledged for and how they prefer to be acknowledged (e.g., not every kid likes a whole-class shout out). Keep an open line of communication throughout the school year for students to update you and their classmates on their preferences.



Shout-Out Systems: With input from students, establish structured opportunities for students to give shout-outs to their peers, such as at the end of a class period or each week. Involve students in deciding on the right platform for shout-outs (e.g., leaving written shout-outs on student desks, posting written shout-outs on a board, having an online portal, or doing shout outs verbally as a whole class). Ensure clear agreements around shout-outs, emphasizing positivity, respect, and inclusivity.

Ceremonies: Plan occasional awards ceremonies throughout the year, such as quarterly or semester-based events. Allow students to nominate their peers or themselves for awards by submitting their successes and achievements. Include students in preparation and delivery of awards.



Peer-Feedback: Incorporate frequent opportunities for students to review and give both positive and constructive feedback on each other's work. Work with students to develop agreements about how feedback will be given, how to center respect, and how to honor students' unique perspectives in the process of giving feedback.

Proud Moments: Model and practice “proud moments” sharing sessions with students, demonstrating out celebrate both big and small successes. For instance, the teacher might say out loud to the class, “I am so proud of this activity I planned for us today. I think it’s going to be really fun and really help you learn this concept. Proud moment!” Work with students to identify how and when students might share their proud moments (is it something anyone can share at any time, is it only during whole-class discussion time, etc.).



Town Crier Role: Assign rotating roles for students to be the “town crier” during specific periods, who are responsible for noticing and sharing their classmates’ successes. Discuss with students the best format for the town crier to share student successes at designated times in the class period.

Conclusion

Celebrating success in an equity-focused model empowers students and creates a strong classroom community. Teachers can decenter teacher praise by implementing a variety of strategies that allow students to be included in the process of defining and celebrating success in the classroom. When implemented with fidelity, teachers can expect to see increased participation, increased student confidence, and a strong classroom community.

