

## Providing Positive Reinforcement for Autistic Students

### What is Positive Reinforcement?

- Positive reinforcement giving something to the student that increases the likelihood that the behavior will occur again.  
Examples: praise, prizes, sticker, candy
- It is important to provide clear expectations of the positive behavior that you expect in the class.

### Levels of Reinforcement

1. Primary – fill a biological human need (ex: food, water, oxygen, etc.)
2. Secondary – have a value only if associated with a primary reinforcer (tangibles, activities, social approval, praise)
3. Generalized – paired with a variety of previously established reinforcers

### Using Reinforcement Effectively

1. At the beginning of the sessions, reinforce frequently, then reinforce less as the student's performance improves.
2. If the students display behaviors that require more effort or endurance, it may be necessary to introduce higher quality reinforcers of with greater magnitude.
3. Use varied reinforcers to maintain potent establishing operations
4. Give the reinforcement as soon as possible after the desired behavior is shown.
5. Pair the reinforcement with prompting (verbal, modeling and physical), so eventually the prompting will serve the same purpose as the reinforcement.
  6. Use contingent attention and descriptive praise and make the praise as natural as possible.

(Cooper, J.O., Heron, T.E. & Heward, W.L. (2007). *Applied behavior analysis*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson.)

1. There are three basic behavior expectations:
  - **You should be attending** – hands to yourself, hands off of others and other's materials or belongings, eyes toward the speaker, complying with what I am asking you to do.
  - **Speak in positives** – if you don't have something nice to say, keep it to yourself.
  - **Take turns talking** – if you have something to share, raise your hand. If someone else is talking, it is your job to listen.
2. Provide clear expectations of the positive behavior that you expect throughout the program based upon the rules of the class.
3. These rules are intended to complement existing classroom rules, but can be added to or modified to fit each individual class.
4. Classroom Rules should be posted, reviewed and reinforced.
5. Classroom rules should be stated positively.
6. If the rules are not followed:
  - If a student breaks a rule, they get a warning. Upon the second offense, they will receive a strike.
  - Students are allowed three strikes per session.
  - If a student receives three strikes, they will be removed from the room to work with another adult one-on-one.
  - If the student is unable or unwilling to answer a question, but is not a behavior problem they are allowed a pass.