

Schoolwide Acknowledgements & Celebrations

A digital one-pager



Virginia Department of Education's
**Training & Technical
Assistance Center**
at Old Dominion University

Purpose:

Schoolwide celebrations and acknowledgements are meant to build an inclusive school environment, where all students participate and can see and feel themselves as a part of their school community. PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) research highlights that inclusive school-wide celebrations foster:

- ✓ *Stronger school climate* (Sugai & Horner, 2002)
- ✓ *Increased student engagement* (Bradshaw et al., 2010)
- ✓ *Impartial recognition of efforts* (McIntosh et al., 2018)
- ✓ *Motivation for all students* (Sprague & Walker, 2005)

What are schoolwide acknowledgements?

Schoolwide acknowledgements may be planned to celebrate collective goals that all students have the opportunity to help reach. Set clear, measurable goals, such as:

We will have a schoolwide celebration when we:

- ✓ reach 500 “Caught Being Good” slips or fill the fishbowl, etc.
- ✓ have 3 weeks with 95% attendance
- ✓ have 95% of our students with 0-1 referrals

Why Non-Exclusionary Celebrations?

- ✗ Withholding participation due to behavior or academic performance can decrease motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000)
- ✗ Excluded students may feel even further alienated by their school community
- ✗ There is no research to support excluding students from school-wide celebrations

What are some examples of schoolwide celebrations & acknowledgements?

- ✦ School spirit days, theme dress days, etc.
- ✦ Music events, such as dances or karaoke
- ✦ Art or Creation Stations
- ✦ Game rotations
- ✦ Storytime celebrations at the end of unit
- ✦ Field Day or other athletic events
- ✦ Glow Party

Additional Tips:

- ✦ **Build** your own School Acknowledgement Matrix
- ✦ **Provide multiple ways** that students and staff can be recognized – tickets, notes, phone calls, tangibles, etc.
- ✦ Provide opportunities for students and staff to **recognize** one another
- ✦ **Recognize effort** and improvement in addition to excellence
- ✦ **Vary frequency** of acknowledgement – immediate, daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly
- ✦ Consider **opportunities for intermittent recognition** to maintain enthusiasm, such as drawing the name of a student or staff member who is present that day or who had a recognition slip turned in, etc.

Key Take-Aways:

- A positive school culture includes and celebrates EVERY student, building a sense of belonging and motivation for ALL!*
- ✓ Set school goals that all students can participate in reaching
- ✓ Focus on positive reinforcement rather than punishment or removing an earned reinforcement
- ✓ Celebrate effort, improvement, and community spirit
- ✓ All means ALL – Every student is included, regardless of behavior history

For additional information:

Center on PBIS: pbis.org Association for Positive Behavior Support: apbs.org
National Center on RtI: mtss4success.org

References list

[linked here](#)