

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](#)