

Positive Rewards for Staff Members in a PBS School

By Laura A. Riffel, Ph.D.

1. Ask an office supply store to consider donating their clearance items to the school and have a “store” for all the staff members to come in and “purchase” office supplies with gotchas they received from each other.
2. Ask everyone to start a diary writing down 3 things that went well each day. Ask the staff to bring their diaries to faculty meetings. Reward staff for bringing the diaries and give out chocolate kisses to everyone who shares at least one thing from their diary.
3. Ask parents to send in praise via email. At the end of the day, do a David Letterman’s mail bag and read the kudos that came in via email about staff members. Give kudos to the parent who shared by sending a hand written note. It won’t take long for word to spread that compliments are appreciated.
4. Ask the cafeteria staff to bake some special cookies. After a particularly difficult day, invite all the staff to come down for cookies in the cafeteria. Have the PBIS team set up ready to entertain. The PBIS team might be dressed as Alvin and the Chipmunks and lip sync the Alvin and the Chipmunks song. Another idea is to have the PBIS team put on lipstick and paint eyeballs and a nose on their chins. Then lay across a table with heads hanging backwards with stocking caps over their hair, face, and nose. Then lip sync to a silly song like “We are Family.”
5. Ask your employees what makes them tick. Ask each employee to list their values that guide their daily decisions. During conferences with individuals ask them to compare and contrast their values with the mission of the school.
6. At the beginning of the year, have staff fill out a questionnaire on spouse and children’s birthdays. Send birthday cards from the school to spouses and children. Recognizing that staff members have lives outside the school is very important.
7. Bring in a masseuse and a massage chair and provide free massages during planning periods. Darken the staff lounge, play classical music and burn candles (if the fire marshal approves). Do this during one of the more difficult months for student behavior. (October, December, March, April, May).
8. Call each other by name especially in front of the students. “Good morning, Mrs. Turquoise.” And Mrs. Turquoise says, “Good morning, Mr. Purple”. Modeling appropriate greetings is very important for the students and using names with each other shows respect for individuals.
9. Call in an ice cream truck to come to the school the last day of criterion reference testing. Have the truck show up after all the students are gone and invite all the staff to come down and have an ice cream on the PBIS team. Tell them they are “Way Cool, the way they accomplished all the testing this week.”
10. Create an instruction manual based on skills developed or used by team members in the school. Beginning of the year tips from the experts. Take a picture of each staff member with their words of wisdom and print the book off for all staff. Give a copy to new staff members and substitute teachers. For example, “Mr. Green’s recipe for cheering up students on a difficult

day. Do a magic trick. Have two brown paper bags. Put a piece of fruit in one brown paper bag and staple it shut. Ask the students to guess what fruit is in the bag. Have little slips of paper and pretend to write the fruits that the students name on pieces of paper and drop them in the other brown paper bag. Now tell the students that you will be able to pull out the exact name of the fruit in the sealed bag. Reach in to the open paper bag and pull out a slip of paper and amazingly read the name of the fruit that is in the bag. Show the students that it indeed says "apple" (or whatever fruit). Then open the sealed brown paper bag and show the apple. The students will be amazed. What the students do not know is that you wrote "apple" on every piece of paper that you put in the open brown paper bag. Even though you pretended to struggle even to write the word rhubarb- you were really writing apple. It's a great mood breaker. " Put a picture of Mr. Green on this page. On the next page you might have Mrs. Brown's great math experiment. "Mrs. Brown asks her students to answer this question: Which would you rather have? A dollar a day for the next 30 days or a penny on day one, two pennies on day two, four pennies on day three, eight pennies on day four and so on for 30 days? The students guess and then Mrs. Brown shows them that pennies doubled each day for thirty days comes out to 10,737,418.23 dollars. It is great fun to watch their faces." Put Mrs. Brown's picture on this page.

11. Do a staff survey and find out everyone's favorite snack. Stock the staff lounge with snacks one day a week. The PTO could help furnish the snacks.
12. Each day have the entire PBIS team spend ten minutes looking for someone doing something that furthers the goals of the PBIS plan of action. Give out special gotchas good for leaving school 10 minutes early on a day of choice.
13. Encourage employees to post their values in a conspicuous place in their respective rooms.
14. Get a parent volunteer to be at the door in the morning dressed in a tuxedo. Have them speak in a British accent and greet each staff member as they enter the building. They could say something like, "We've been anticipating your arrival Mrs. Yellow."
15. Give each other affirmations. When someone says, "Oh my goodness, I don't think I can handle another day of Johnny and Susie swinging from the chandelier." Make sure the staff is ready to tell each other "You can do it." "I know you can do it." "I have faith in you."
16. Give out thank you cards to all staff members and ask them to write one a week to someone on the staff. Ask them to write to different people each week.
17. Give out the Depends Award during staff meeting. Take a pair of Depends™ Undergarments and spray paint them gold. Give out the Depends Award to the most dependable person each week. This is an award they can keep until it is passed on to the next person. Be specific about how each person is dependable.
18. Go around a local mall and ask the store owners to donate items to celebrate great education staff members. If the PBIS team splits up the mall, they can collect a huge bevy of items for give away items for the adults. Use these as prizes for recognizing everyone's contributions to the greater cause.
19. Gotchas work for school personnel, but only if everyone remembers. Put three silver dollars in your left pocket in the morning. As you compliment different adults in the building, move a silver dollar from your left pocket to your right pocket. At the end of the day, all three silver

dollars should be in your right pocket. (You move from left to right to help you remember you are doing the “right” thing.)

20. Have the entire staff fill out a sheet answering this question: 1) Name something about yourself that no one else would ever guess. Each morning read one clue and give everyone an answer sheet. Each day they are to guess who the mystery person is based on the clues read that morning. After all the clues have been read, invite the whole staff to a pizza party. Read the entire list of clues and have people guess aloud and then have the real mystery person confess their secret identity. Have a prize for the person who gets the most guesses correct.
21. Have the PBIS team read books that would be helpful for teachers and create “Cliff’s Notes” on those books for the staff. Send it out in a weekly newsletter. Book idea: Marzano’s “What Works in Schools.”
22. Have your PBIS team go online and post positive statements about each one of the staff members on the school website. Example: Meet John Jones. Loves waterskiing and horseback riding. We love the way Mr. Jones is always at the front door to greet the students.
23. Highlight staff strengths in the parent newsletter. Let the parents know the strengths of each staff member throughout the year.
24. Hire a celebrity impersonator to come to the school and visit classrooms. For example: Abraham Lincoln visits the school and comes in each classroom giving a small history lesson tying something special about the adults in each room to the history lesson. For example, “I was the only president to ever own a patent. I designed a special idea that helped boats float over sand bars. I was good at floating boats and Mrs. Blue has designed a special chair that lets students get their wiggles out.”
25. Hire the high school choir to change the words to a popular song and serenade the staff with a kudos song some morning.
26. Identify what each staff member does best and have an “Academy Awards” ceremony with statues for each person. Invite the parents to come to the award ceremony.
27. If a staff member has a problem, find out about it and figure out a way to help them. For example, if a staff member’s child is struggling in Algebra find another staff member who is willing to tutor that member’s child in exchange for something they need- like their car washed.
28. Instead of criticizing an employee who has behaviors you would like to “target” for change, make a positive intervention. Express to the employee what needs to change and end with a statement affirming, “I have confidence in you that you can get this done.”
29. Invite spouses and children to come up for the catered dinner on the nights staff needs to work late.
30. Invite staff members to the next board meeting and stand up and compliment their achievement to the board.
31. Make a deal with the staff. “If we have 100% attendance for the Criterion Reference Testing then the PBIS staff will wash everyone’s car on a non-rainy day.”
32. Make it a point to give one hand written note a day to someone who has done something exceptionally well.

33. Name the conference room after an employee each week. Base the choice on someone who has received a lot of gotchas that week. Make a sign for the door and make sure to call people down to the Violet Conference Room.
34. Order business cards for each staff member (<http://www.vistaprint.com/frf?frf=691384697124>) Pick a design that fits each person's personality. Vista Print has almost free deals on business cards.
35. Order enough flowers for each staff member to get one and stand at the door as each person enters and tell them you appreciate the way they help children "bloom" in this building.
36. Organize a lunchtime game that everyone can watch. For example, set up a jeopardy game, who wants to be a millionaire etc. in the staff lounge and challenge two contestants during lunch to play while others watch.
37. Pass out grape juice in plastic goblets at the next staff meeting and toast each other. Keep going until everyone has received a toast.
38. Poll your staff to find out what they would like to have training in and then have your PBIS team decide where some training opportunities exist and who should go to those trainings.
39. Post goals in teachers' lounge and graph results. Example: Positive phone contacts home- shoot for 2 times the number of students in the school. Set the goal of 200% in 6 weeks. (graph phone calls, post cards, emails, notes)
40. Purchase small plants for each staff member and place on their desk. Leave a note saying, "I know you'll nurture this plant to full beauty because of the way you nurture children."
41. Supply a box of birthday cards to each staff member. On birthdays, encourage each staff member to fill out a birthday card and do a drive-by carding by hiding birthday cards all over the person's area throughout the day. For example, the birthday person might find a card taped to the staff restroom mirror, or on the coffee pot and so on.
42. Surprise staff by greeting them at the door with a cup of hot coffee or diet coke (know what everyone's drink of choice is) Just say, "We are so glad you are here today."
43. Surprise the staff with a scavenger hunt all over the school. As each person enters the building have them see a sign that says "Immediately check your box." In their boxes have a candy bar that says, "Your next clue is awaiting you at the coldest water fountain in the school." When the staff members get to the coldest water fountain, one of the PBIS team members will be waiting with a bottle of water that has the next clue taped on it. This will go on and end up in the cafeteria where the team meets up again and has a breakfast ready for all the staff members.
44. Surprise whole staff and take them on a group outing on a weekend- for example: 1) movie theater to see an uplifting movie, 2) breakfast at a restaurant, 3) BBQ at someone's house or 4) pool party at someone's house (preferably someone with a pool 😊)
45. Survey the staff and find out what their least favorite part of the job is. Throughout the year, have the PBIS committee do one disliked job for each person. For example, Mrs. Green might dislike bus duty. The PBIS team might take Mrs. Green's bus duty some Friday and let Mrs. Green go home early.
46. Take a survey of the staff on their favorite magazines. Purchase some subscriptions to put out in the staff lounge.

47. Take an old real estate sign and paint it with white enamel paint or chalkboard paint. Each day when the staff are pulling into the parking lot let them see the PBIS team has written a special thank you to one staff member for something outstanding each day. "Mrs. Orange, we love the way you handled the bullying situation yesterday." "Way to Go."
48. Think about each employee's strength and ask them to share that strength with others. This could be done through faculty meetings, one to one mentoring, etc. Make sure when the employee is asked to share, they are told why they were chosen. "What made them stand out as an exemplar in this area?"
49. When a new employee comes to the school (including substitutes), set expectations by planning a small celebration welcoming the new person. Make an intercom announcement welcoming the substitute and ask everyone to make them feel welcome.
50. When employees have to work extra (PTO, Parent Teacher Conferences, etc.) provide a catered dinner.