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PROCEDURES: For the Classroom : Replacing Dull or Broken Pencils

Learn more about how praising a deed is more effective than complimenting the student.

An effective way to praise is to praise what the person did, rather than the person, and then encourage the person to do the achievement or deed again. The technique is called specific praise, or "praise the deed, encourage the student."

Praise is nice, but it is not tangible or meaningful—for instance:
  Peyton, you are a bright child.

For a more effective kind of praise, point to something the student did well. Then encourage the student to do it again—for instance:
  Peyton, please take out your last spelling test. What score did you get? Right, 19 out of 20 correct. Great! Pat yourself on the back. Shake your own hand. Congratulate yourself. DO IT AGAIN ON THE NEXT TEST.

Here are some other examples:
  Thank you, class. That was the correct procedure when you see my hand or hear a bell. Please do the same thing each time you see my hand or hear a bell.

  Andrew, thank you for the excellent report at the faculty meeting. The next time I need assistance, I would truly appreciate your help again.

  Hugh, thanks for helping with the dishes tonight. Mom had a meeting to go to, and you helped out. The next time I need assistance, I would be glad to have you help out again.

The reason people are more likely to do well again is that they know that you saw them do something specific. They believe, "You were paying attention to me. You noticed me! And you thanked me for doing something I did personally."

Pep talks are invigorating but hollow. They become meaningless quickly because no one is sure to whom the message is directed. When you praise the deed and encourage the student, you help the student do two things:
  1. Accept responsibility for having done the task.
  2. Develop a sense of accomplishment.

The key words are responsibility and accomplishment, two things that all people must develop to be successful in life.

With gratitude to Barbara Coloroso, author of ***Kids Are Worth It,*** for suggesting this technique.