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The Third Pillar: Linking Positive Psychology and School-Wide Positive Behavior Support

Kristin D. Sawka-Miller

Siena College

David N. Miller

University at Albany, State University of New York

ABSTRACT: The cultivation of positive institutions, or the third pillar of positive psychology, has received relatively little attention in the field. This article makes the case that negative school climates are contributing to a host of negative student outcomes. School-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) is a prevention model predicated on the need to build healthy, protective school environments. It is argued that a primary basis for building positive institutions and successfully implementing SWPBS is positive interaction in general and praise in particular. The use of praise in schools is briefly reviewed, and specific strategies that can be used by the school psychologist to assess and increase rates of praise in schools through teacher consultation are discussed.

They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel.
—Carl W. Buechner

The field of positive psychology has broadly been defined as the scientific study of strengths and virtues that enables individuals and communities to thrive (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Like education, at the heart of this discipline is a focus on systematically identifying, building, and promoting strengths and competencies. Positive psychology was developed in reaction to a perceived overemphasis in psychology on disease and disorders. Although it has many historical precursors, the advent of positive psychology officially began with Martin E. P. Seligman's 1998 presidential address to the American Psychological Association (Seligman, 1999), and since that time positive psychology has grown substantially and influenced many disciplines, including school psychology (Chafouleas & Bray, 2004; Huebner & Gilman, 2003).

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) suggested there are three “pillars” or central concerns of positive psychology: positive emotions, positive individual traits or characteristics, and positive institutions. The first pillar deals with cultivation of positive emotions such as gratitude, hope, and optimism for enhancing subjective experience of the past, present, and future. For example, research has demonstrated that keeping a gratitude journal, or a written list of things for which one is thankful, is associated with a variety of positive outcomes such as increased levels of energy, more positive moods, increased connectedness with others, and diminished symptoms related to depression and sleep problems (Emmons & McCullough, 2003).

Correspondence regarding this article should be directed to Kristin Miller, Department of Psychology, Siena College, 515 Loudon Road, Loudonville, NY 12211.

The second pillar focuses on the building of positive individual traits (strengths and virtues) such as resilience, curiosity, and perseverance. For example, research suggests that those with higher levels of empathy might develop more satisfactory interpersonal relationships as well as reap better overall health benefits than those who do not possess this character strength (Batson, Ahmad, Lishner, & Tsang, 2002).

The third pillar of positive psychology, positive institutions, refers to the study of strengths that foster better communities. Cultivating family and school environments that allow children to flourish, identifying and building supports in workplaces that foster satisfaction and high productivity, and establishing communities that encourage civic engagement are goals consistent with this branch of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Although research in positive psychology is becoming increasingly established and continues to grow in the areas of positive emotions and positive traits/characteristics, there has to date been far less research on the topic of positive institutions (Gable & Haidt, 2005). In fact, this third pillar of positive psychology has been criticized even by leaders in the field as being a neglected area of discussion and one in which there is a great need for further investigation (Linley, Joseph, Harrington, & Wood, 2006). Early hopes for this third pillar have to date gone largely unfulfilled, and there has been a call for greater attention from researchers and practitioners for improving the functioning of a variety of institutions, including schools (Gable & Haidt, 2005).

SCHOOLS AS POSITIVE INSTITUTIONS

Researchers and practitioners are increasingly focusing on the use of positive psychology in the context of schools, and entire issues of school psychology journals have been devoted to the subject (see *Psychology in the Schools*, 2004, 41(1), and *School Psychology Quarterly*, 2003, 18(2)). Like the field of positive psychology, much of the discussion in school psychology has focused on the cultivation of positive emotions and traits (i.e., the first two pillars of positive psychology) to enhance learning and social outcomes for students (Chafouleas & Bray, 2004; Huebner & Gilman, 2003) rather than focusing on the creation of positive institutions such as schools (i.e., the third pillar of positive psychology). However, the notion of constructing positive school environments is gaining momentum in the literature. For example, Clonan, Chafouleas, McDougal, and Riley-Tillman (2004) lay out a cogent agenda for conducting research on creating positive schools, such as operationalizing key components, understanding and using the natural school environment to make and support changes, and planning for sustained change.

Is there a need for more positive schools? As positive institutions, one could argue that schools are falling short. Research suggests that there is a strong relationship between student perceptions of school satisfaction and their academic achievement (Samdal, Nutbeam, Wold, & Kannas, 1998; Voelkl, 1995), and that students who view their school climates as positive achieve more and exhibit better adjustment (e.g., Loukas & Murphy, 2007). Unfortunately, school absentee and dropout rates remain alarmingly high (Lehr, Hanson, Sinclair, & Christensen, 2003), with school dropouts rating their school climate significantly lower than graduates (e.g., Worrell & Hale, 2001).

In addition, although school violence has decreased overall (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006), 8% of students between 12 and 18 years of age reported being threatened or injured by a weapon on school property (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006), and 24% of urban adolescents reported not trusting their teachers and not looking forward to attending school (Perkins, 2006). Decades of research have suggested that disapproval is used more often than approval in schools (Beaman & Wheldall, 2000) and that typical responses of educators to students with externalizing behavior problems have frequently involved punishment and exclusion (Morrison & D’Incau, 2000). Paradoxically, these sorts of reactive practices have not only failed to coincide with improved student behavior or increased school safety (Skiba & Peterson, 2000; Stage, 1997), but in many cases have also been associated with increased levels of violent and disruptive behavior (Mayer, 2002; Morrison et al., 2002).

It appears, therefore, that many public schools are not institutions that are experienced by students as being positive environments in which to learn. Instead, schools often appear to be characterized by negative climates resulting in negative outcomes such as increased student behavior problems, dropouts, and low rates of student and teacher engagement and satisfaction. How can schools, and school psychologists, begin to reverse this downward trend? One possible way of doing so is to implement school-wide positive behavior supports (SWPBS).

SWPBS: MAKING SCHOOLS MORE POSITIVE INSTITUTIONS

Although not typically associated with positive psychology, an approach that can clearly be placed within a positive psychology framework is SWPBS, a research-based alternative to the failure of “get tough” policies in schools (Horner, Sugai, Todd, & Lewis-Palmer, 2005). SWPBS is a systematic, systemic approach to improving the overall climate in schools. Based on a multitiered public health model of prevention, SWPBS includes three levels of support that are directly linked and coordinated: universal approaches for all students, selected intervention strategies for students at risk for developing problem behavior, and individualized supports for students already exhibiting severe problem behaviors (Sprague & Horner, 2006).

SWPBS may be defined as a “process through which schools improve services for *all* students by creating systems wherein intervention and management decisions are informed by local data and guided by intervention research” (Ervin, Schaughency, Matthews, Goodman, & McGlinchey, 2007, p. 7). SWPBS is an outgrowth of positive behavior support (PBS), the scientific origins of which are behavioral theory in general and applied behavior analysis in particular (Sugai, 2007). Although applied behavior analysis and the science of behavior played a significant role in the development of PBS, other philosophical and values-based approaches were equally important, including an emphasis on strength building and quality-of-life issues (Bambara, 2005). Originally developed for use with students with severe developmental disabilities, more recently PBS has been expanded to include a school-wide focus on all students (Sugai, 2007).

The goals of SWPBS include facilitating the academic achievement and healthy, prosocial development of children and youth in environments that are safe and conducive to learning (Sprague & Horner, 2006), goals that are clearly consistent with positive psychology. Designed originally to prevent and decrease disruptive, antisocial behavior in schools, SWPBS is a proactive program that emphasizes direct intervention approaches (e.g., teaching expectations, monitoring student performance, providing specific and immediate feedback) in multiple settings (e.g., classrooms, cafeterias, buses, hallways) throughout an entire school (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Horner et al. (2004) described seven key features of SWPBS: (a) define three to five school-wide expectations for appropriate behavior, (b) actively teach the school-wide behavioral expectations to all students, (c) monitor and acknowledge students for engaging in behavioral expectations, (d) correct problem behaviors using a consistently administered continuum of behavioral consequences, (e) gather and use information about student behavior to evaluate and guide decision making, (f) obtain leadership of school-wide practices from an administrator committed to providing adequate support and resources, and (g) procure district-level support. School psychologists can and should be an integral part of this process, particularly as trainers and consultants and in developing effective, efficient, user-friendly data-collection systems (Simonsen & Sugai, 2007).

Studies examining the effectiveness of SWPBS have reported reductions in students’ office discipline referrals of up to 50% after its implementation, and the continued improvement over a 3-year period in schools that sustain the use of SWPBS (Irvin, Tobin, Sprague, Sugai, & Vincent, 2004). Research suggests that SWPBS is effective for reducing antisocial behavior in suburban (Metzler, Biglan, Rusby, & Sprague, 2001), urban (McCurdy, Mannella, & Norris, 2003), and alternative schools (Miller, George, & Fogt, 2005), and studies employing SWPBS components have documented reductions in student vandalism, aggression, and delinquency, as well as alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use (Sprague & Horner, 2006). Furthermore, the use of SWPBS has been found to reduce problem behaviors in noninstructional areas, including recess (Todd, Haugen, Anderson, & Spriggs, 2002), hallway transitions (Lewis, Sugai, & Colvin, 1998), and during

bus rides (Putnam, Handler, Ramirez-Platt, & Luiselli, 2003). Finally, positive changes in domains such as academic achievement and school engagement have been found following implementation of SWPBS (Sprague & Horner, 2006), and although it has been conceptualized primarily as a program for decreasing noncompliant, disruptive behavior characteristic of externalizing disorders, there are indications that SWPBS may also be a useful component in preventing childhood internalizing disorders such as depression (Herman, Merrell, & Reinke, 2004).

THE LINK: PRAISE AS A METHOD FOR CREATING MORE POSITIVE INSTITUTIONS

The school-wide approach described above has much in common with the tenets of positive psychology. For example, the impetus for the development of both SWPBS and positive psychology grew out of dissatisfaction with previous models of behavior management and psychology that focused primarily on deficits and disorders rather than strengths and competencies (Bambara, 2005; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Similarly, both SWPBS and positive psychology were developed in reaction to the recognition by researchers and practitioners that a focus on building strengths and competencies could be an effective approach for offsetting risk and possibly preventing the development of debilitating disorders (Linley et al., 2006; Walker et al., 1996). Such an approach would have the added benefit of not only preventing problem behavior but also promoting more optimal functioning and potentially enhancing individual quality of life (Carr, 2007). Finally, both SWPBS and positive psychology have the common goal of promoting not just positive personal development, such as particular positive emotions or characteristics, but also the development of positive institutions, the so-called third pillar of positive psychology. The creation of positive institutions is largely the result of creating a positive climate, and this is primarily accomplished through the creation of positive *interactions* between and among individuals in an institution.

Perhaps the most effective method for creating more positive interactions between groups of individuals in an institution is to increase the level of verbal praise that is given and received. Indeed, the increased use of praise and the subsequent creation of stronger, more positive relationships may be viewed as an integral and critical element in the creation of psychologically healthy schools. As such, an emphasis on praise has clear connections to positive psychology, and, although frequently not acknowledged explicitly in the SWPBS literature, the use of verbal praise by teachers toward students and the subsequent enhancement of positive relationships between these two groups are critical elements in the successful implementation of SWPBS.

Although generally not discussed under the guise of positive psychology, the demonstrable power of praise in promoting healthy institutions and optimal outcomes for individuals has been clearly established. For example, survey analyses of more than 10,000 business organizations representing more than 30 industries found that employees who receive praise and recognition on a regular basis have higher levels of work productivity, and increased collaboration with their colleagues, and are more likely to stay with their organization longer than those who do not (Harter, Schmidt, & Killham, 2003). The frequency of praise also appears to play a key role in this process. For example, Losada (1999) found that work teams that had at least three positive interactions for every one negative interaction were the most productive.

Similarly, Gottman (1994) found that frequency of positive interactions (e.g., praise) to negative interactions plays a key role in the institution of marriage. Based on 15-minute observations of 700 soon-to-be married couples, Gottman was able to predict with 93% accuracy which marriages would be successful. Specifically, when positive interactions outnumbered negative interactions at least five to one, couples were more likely to remain married 10 years after the observation. When the ratio of positive to negative interactions was any less than five to one, the marriage was unlikely to last (Gottman, 1994; Gottman, Coan, Carrere, & Swanson, 1998).

The power of the praise ratio has also been demonstrated in the family context. For example, Hart and Risley (1995) recorded in-home verbal interactions between parents and children in 42 families. They found

that, irrespective of socioeconomic status, children who made the strongest gains in vocabulary and IQ between the ages of 3 and 10 were more likely to have parents who talked to them more and provided at least six praise and approval statements for every one criticism.

Finally, in the institution of schools, verbal praise and the attention that accompanies it have been repeatedly found to be highly effective, powerful reinforcers for students (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 1987). Indeed, school environments in which verbal praise rates are low are associated with multiple problems and those with high praise rates are associated with fewer problems and more positive and adaptive functioning (Jenson, Olympia, Farley, & Clark, 2004; Maag, 2001; Osher, Dwyer, & Jimerson, 2006). Additionally, increasing teacher delivery of behavior-specific praise to students with behavior disorders has been associated with increased levels of academic engagement and decreased disruptive classroom behavior (Sutherland, Wehby, & Copeland, 2000). Moreover, instruction paired with high rates of praise for correct academic responding has been effective in increasing reading achievement for elementary students who were not reading at grade level (Merrett, 1998) and quick and steady achievement gains in math and reading in students with and without learning problems (MacIver & Kemper, 2002; Vreeland et al., 1994).

In creating positive institutions it should be noted that praise and other positive approaches are necessary but not sufficient. The research is clear that all-positive approaches do not result in desirable outcomes in the institutions of marriage (Gottman, 1994; Gottman et al., 1998), organization (Fredrickson, 2003; Rath & Clifton, 2004), or school (Pfiffner, Rosen, & O'Leary, 1985; Rosen, O'Leary, Joyce, Conway, & Pfiffner, 1984). Rather, it is suggested that punitive responses—when substantially outnumbered by positive interactions—are an essential element of effective programming (Flora, 2000; Stage & Quiroz, 1997).

A comprehensive review of the literature on praise is beyond the scope and purpose of this article (for more information see Flora, 2000; Jenson et al., 2004; Maag, 2001). Even based on a cursory review, however, the message should be clear: Praise is not only desirable but also essential in building positive institutions. Unfortunately, despite praise's free cost, easy access, and proven effectiveness, it is severely underutilized (Flora, 2000; Jenson et al., 2004). For example, in an analysis of studies conducted in multiple countries and cities—United States, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and Hong Kong—Beaman and Wheldall (2000) found that “there is little evidence to suggest that teachers, universally, systematically deploy contingent praise as positive reinforcement in spite of the considerable literature testifying to its effectiveness. In particular, praise for appropriate classroom social behavior is only rarely observed” (p. 431).

Research examining the interactions between teachers and students with externalizing problems and disorders is even less encouraging. For example, research suggests that teachers are more likely to attend and react to students' inappropriate behaviors and less likely to respond to positive behavior by using verbal praise and other positive methods (Shores, Gunther, & Jack, 1993). In fact, these researchers found praise rates as low as 1 per hour for students with externalizing disorders and 4.4 per hour for students with learning disabilities. In general, teacher rates of positive compared to negative interactions with students with behavior disorders are alarmingly low (Sutherland et al., 2000). Moreover, when these students comply with a directive given by teachers, positive feedback for student compliance is rarely given (Jenson et al., 2004). For example, in their study of students at moderate to high risk for developing aggressive behavior, Van Acker, Grant, and Henry (1996) reported that teacher praise appeared to be a random event unrelated to student behavior. These researchers found that teacher praise for students' compliant behaviors did not even exceed chance levels for students either in the moderate or high-risk groups, whereas teacher reprimands for inappropriate behavior were highly predictable.

Maag (2001) offers several reasons for the frequent use of punishment procedures (such as verbal reprimands) and the infrequent use of positive reinforcement procedures (such as verbal praise). In particular, punishment often produces a rapid (though frequently temporary) suppression of students' inappropriate behaviors, and its use with students can often be negatively reinforcing for teachers (e.g., removing a disruptive student from the classroom). Furthermore, many teachers and school staff members may not realize that adult attention, even if it is negative, may function as a powerful reinforcer, especially

for students with challenging behaviors who typically receive little positive attention for their behavior. Finally, there is a prevailing view in education that teachers' primary responsibility is to enhance students' academic functioning and to control their socially inappropriate behaviors. Unfortunately, this control mentality is pervasive and "places teachers in reactive, instead of proactive, positions when managing students' challenging behaviors" (Maag, 2001, p. 182). Effectively managing students' challenging behaviors will continue to be a frustrating activity until teachers view student misbehavior as an opportunity for increasing positive social interaction rather than something to be punished (Maag & Webber, 1995).

BUILDING POSITIVE INSTITUTIONS: INCREASING PRAISE IN SCHOOLS

It appears as though successful implementation of SWPBS and the establishment of the school as a positive institution are predicated on positive interactions. Although high rates of praise are necessary (but not sufficient) in creating positive climates and successful outcomes for students (Jenson et al., 2004), as mentioned previously praise as a behavior change agent is vastly underused (Flora, 2000). A critical role of the school psychologist may be to assist teachers in increasing praise rates through consultative efforts and supports. Specific recommendations for increasing praise through intervention at the school, teacher, and student levels are described below.

Emphasize the Importance of Praise

Schools that undertake SWPBS initiatives spend many hours setting up the universal system. This includes but is not limited to creating specific expectations, a recognition system, lesson plans for teaching the expectations, and a systematic disciplinary response system (Horner et al., 2004). It is our experience that schools often overemphasize the structural components of SWPBS (e.g., posters, rewards, spirit activities) at the expense of focusing on the importance of praise as the driving force of universal prevention. Furthermore, it has been observed that schools with low praise ratios (Sawka, 2006) and staff with philosophical objections to recognition systems (Lohrmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, in press) have difficulty implementing SWPBS universal systems with success.

It is important for school personnel to understand that the purpose of having posted expectations and readily available tickets for recognizing students for following expectations is to deliver systematic praise statements. Increasing the density of praise school-wide is the goal of the universal system, and the posted expectations, lessons, and tickets are merely vehicles to help achieve this institutional goal. The school psychologist can share information about the importance of teachers developing the skill of praise for successful implementation of SWPBS. It is important that not only is behavior-specific praise given, but also that the density of praise school-wide is rich (e.g., 5:1; Flora, 2000). One should also not assume that simply asking teachers to praise more or providing an inservice on the topic will result in staff behavior change (Sawka, McCurdy, & Mannella, 2002; Shapiro, Miller, Sawka, Gardill, & Handler, 1999). Therefore, efforts to support skill acquisition of praise on an ongoing basis through training, consultation, and accountability should be built into the SWPBS universal system.

Use Tickets (Prompts)

Whether the goal is to create a healthier environment at the school-wide level or the class-wide level, it is recommended that tickets be used to help shape the educator's skill at delivering praise. Research suggests the behaviors that are most likely to naturally elicit teacher praise are correct academic responses (Jenson et al., 2004; White, 1975), suggesting that social behaviors (e.g., following directions, arriving to class on time, staying in one's seat) are not as likely to be verbally recognized. Furthermore, evidence has suggested that teachers provide less academic instruction and opportunities to respond to students who exhibit externalizing behavior problems (Carr, Taylor, & Robinson, 1991; Wehby, Symons, Canale, & Go, 1998). Collectively, these findings illuminate the situation that—without a prompt—teachers are unlikely to praise

social behavior in general and the social behavior of students with behavior problems (who conceivably need the most praise in this area) in particular.

The use of tickets to accompany praise statements provides a tangible prompt for doing so as well as a data-collection strategy for monitoring goals. Stated somewhat differently, tickets can artificially increase the density of praise. Therefore, in the context of SWPBS, school psychologists should work with administrators to create a defined expectation of the minimum number of tickets (praise statements) that should be administered each day by each staff person. For example, an administrative requirement that a minimum of 20 tickets per day be handed out with behavior-specific praise (which may seem substantial) translates to only about three praise statements per hour. Assuming praise is not given at other times, this rate or dose of praise is not likely to be high enough to have an impact on school climate or individual functioning (Jenson et al., 2004). In addition to tickets, Sutherland, Copeland, and Wehby (2001) suggest that Post-it notes reading “praise,” creating personal goals for daily delivery of praise, and placing tokens in a pocket or cup on the desk each time a verbal praise statement is provided may also function as subtle teacher reminders to increase their use of praise.

Provide In-Class Performance Feedback

The school psychologist can assist teachers in developing the skill of praise delivery through classroom consultation. Research suggests that providing structured observation and feedback around the use of praise is an effective strategy for increasing teacher praise rates as well as decreasing student disruptive behavior and increasing academic engagement in the classroom (Sutherland & Wehby, 2001; Sutherland et al., 2000). For example, in a self-contained classroom for students with behavior disorders, Sutherland et al. (2000) demonstrated that the teacher rate of behavior-specific praise statements increased from 1.3 praise statements per academic lesson to 7.8 per lesson in only 12 sessions simply as a result of an observer providing feedback to the teacher on the number of praise statements being delivered and setting improvement goals. In this study, increases in praise also corresponded with increases in students’ on-task behavior. It should be noted, however, that even after the teacher developed this skill, praise rates returned to low levels when feedback from the observer was removed. This underscores the critical importance of building in self-prompts for teachers, such as the use of tickets, to establish high-density praise environments.

The delivery of four or five praise statements for every one negative or neutral statement has been suggested as an optimal or magic ratio for positive climates and improved individual functioning (Flora, 2000). It would therefore behoove SWPBS teams to build in individual teacher goals of 4:1 praise ratios in the context of a universal system. For the school psychologist assisting teachers in developing this classroom management skill, the use of a praise assessment (see the Appendix) might be useful.

To conduct a praise assessment, an observer (e.g., the school psychologist) records—with teacher knowledge—teacher praise, neutral, and negative statements for 10 minutes. Praise statements should be recorded if they are behavior specific (e.g., “Nice job following directions the first time I asked” versus “Good work”). Neutral statements are typically observations that could be easily constructed into praise or instructional statements but, by themselves, have little value (e.g., responding “OK” and moving on after a student provides a correct academic response, or noting “People are out of their seats” when they should be seated). Negative statements include reprimands and put-downs. The praise ratio is determined by reducing the number of positive statements to the combined number of neutral and negative statements to the lowest common denominator. For example, the praise ratio in which two positive, three neutral, and five negative statements were observed would be 1:4. Although not frequently cited in the literature in the context of SWPBS, there is evidence to suggest that schools that have highly successful SWPBS universal implementation and outcomes systematically target teacher praise ratios of at least 4:1 (Miller et al., 2005).

In addition to school psychologists assessing and providing consultation around teacher praise in an effort to enhance institutional functioning, including these practices in the context of individual student evaluations may also prove useful. As school psychologists are increasingly utilizing response-to-

intervention models, it will be important to assess the contextual variable of praise. For example, it would be an erroneous assumption that students who are referred for an evaluation are receiving minimal adequate doses of praise (Jenson et al., 2004). Therefore, before determining whether intervention is warranted at the student level, it would be important to assess classroom management strategies such as the delivery of praise at the classroom level (Fairbanks, Sugai, Guardino, & Lathrop, 2007).

Finally, it should be noted that achieving high praise rates takes time. In one study of 64 teachers in urban elementary schools, it took on average 3 months for teachers to achieve a praise ratio of 4:1 in their classrooms when they were provided initial training and in-class observation and feedback by a school psychologist one to two times per week (Sawka et al., 2002). Other studies have similarly suggested that at least 12 feedback sessions are necessary to build this skill to mastery (Sutherland et al., 2000). As such, school psychologists should allow adequate time in their consultative efforts for success to occur.

Teach Self-Recruitment of Praise

In cultivating more effective and positive school climates, one has to recognize the inherent challenges of institutions. Praise rates in schools are typically low (Maag, 2001), and change requires highly systematic and systemic efforts. Targeting adult behavior change will take time and significant administrative support, which is one reason successful implementation of SWPBS at the universal level typically takes 2–3 years (Horner et al., 2005). In addition to targeting delivery of higher praise rates at the teacher level, Jenson et al. (2004) suggest that another way to influence the positiveness of the environment is to teach students to engage in self-recruitment of praise through self-monitoring and self-evaluation.

Several studies have demonstrated that students with learning disabilities (e.g., Alber, Heward, & Hippler, 1999) and developmental disabilities (Connell, Carta, & Baer, 1993; Craft, Alber, & Heward, 1998) can be taught to recruit positive teacher attention and that this practice is associated with improved student outcomes such as academic engagement and improved academic accuracy (Alber et al., 1999). School psychologists can intervene with specific students to teach praise self-recruitment strategies and provide consultation to teachers around training their whole class in self-recruitment of praise. Based on their review of the literature, Sutherland et al. (2001, p. 48) offer the following five-step self-recruitment procedure that could be taught in general or special education contexts:

- Discuss the rationale for recruiting teacher attention with the student.
- Instruct students on when, how, and how often to ask for help.
- Model the recruiting strategy using a think-aloud procedure. (a) “OK, I’ve finished about half of my math problems and want to know how I’m doing.” (b) “Now I will look for the teacher.” (c) “She’s not busy. I’ll raise my hand now.”
- The teacher and the students then role-play five different recruiting episodes.
- The teacher asks the students to state the steps.

CONCLUSION

In the field of positive psychology there is existing research on positive social, physical, and emotional outcomes related to cultivating individual positive emotions and positive traits, the first two pillars of positive psychology. There is less research in the field of positive psychology on developing the third pillar, positive institutions. School climates contribute to student success, and student perceptions of unwelcome or unsafe schools, low rates of teacher praise, and high rates of punitive responses in schools are resulting in poor outcomes for children. SWPBS attempts to address many of these concerns, and implementation of universal SWPBS procedures has been associated with positive student and institutional outcomes. Although it has not been discussed extensively in the professional literature, positive psychology and SWPBS appear to be linked in a variety of areas, particularly their mutual emphasis on the creation and development of positive institutions.

A key variable in the creation of positive institutions is the development of prosocial interactions between institutional members. Although frequently underutilized, the use of behavior-specific praise is clearly associated with the creation of positive social interactions and should therefore be considered a key variable in the creation of positive institutions, including schools. School psychologists can play a number of roles in increasing the use of praise in schools, particularly as consultants working with teachers. The information contained here will, it is hoped, provide useful, practical, evidence-based information to school psychologists seeking to make schools more positive environments for students, teachers, and staff.

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WEB RESOURCES

Intervention Central: www.interventioncentral.org/

Free tools and resources to help school staff and parents to promote positive classroom behaviors and foster effective learning. Several specific classroom management and behavioral intervention suggestions for increasing praise.

Least Restrictive Behavioral Interventions, Utah State Office of Education: LRBI Resources:

<http://www.usu.edu/teachall/text/behavior/LRBI.htm>

Resources include checklists and instructional videos for achieving high rates of praise in the classroom as well as many other positive intervention strategies.

National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports:

www.pbis.org

Established by the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education, to give schools capacity-building information and technical assistance for identifying, adapting, and sustaining effective school-wide disciplinary practices.

Positive Psychology Center: www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu

Promotes research, training, education, and the dissemination of positive psychology resources.

Readings, videos, surveys, and research summaries in the area of positive psychology are available.

APPENDIX. WHAT'S YOUR RATIO? PRAISE FEEDBACK

Name:		Start time:	
Observer:		Stop time:	

Targeted Ratio of Praise Statements to Neutral, Warnings, and Negative: 4:1

Tally count	Notes/phrases for reference
A. Positive:	
B. Neutral:	
C. Warnings, negative:	

Praise ratio = Ratio of A to (B + C)

Total positive (A) _____

Total neutral (B) _____

Total negative (C) _____

Praise ratio: ____ praise statements to every ____ neutral and negative statements (4:1 goal).

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