

ENCOURAGE RATHER THAN PRAISE

Many teachers think they are encouraging children by giving them praise. Praise can be discouraging. At first, praise and encouragement seem to be the same thing. This is because both praise and encouragement focus on positive behaviors. To understand the differences, think about the purpose and effect of praise versus encouragement.

PRAISE

Praise is a type of reward, based on competition. It is given for winning and being the best. The teacher who uses praise teaches children, "If you do something I consider good, I will reward you by recognizing you." Praise focuses on motivating children with external rewards.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Encouragement is given for effort or improvement. Its focus is on the child's strengths and positive traits. A teacher who encourages is not interested in how a child compares with others. The teacher is concerned about the child accepting himself/herself and developing the courage to face difficult tasks. Encouragement helps a child feel worthy. It attempts to motivate children through internal means. Encouragement can be given when children feel they are not doing well or when they are facing failure.

Praise places value judgments on a child and places value judgments on the child. For example:

"You're such a good boy!"
"I'm so proud of you!"

Encouragement focuses on internal evaluation and contributions. For example:

Demonstrate acceptance:
"I like the way you handled that."
"I'm glad you enjoy learning."

Show confidence:
"You'll make it!"
"Knowing you, I'm sure you'll do fine."

Express appreciation:
"Thanks, that helped a lot."
"That was thoughtful of you."

Recognize effort and improvement:
"It looks like you really worked hard on that project."
"Look at the progress you have made."

Have students practice using encouragement rather than praise.