Research-Based Practice: Positive Reinforcement

References:

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     Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Cooper, J. O., Heron, T. E., & Heward, W. L. (2007). *Applied behavior analysis* (2nd ed.). Upper
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Description: A consequence delivered immediately following a behavior that increases the likelihood that the behavior will continue or increase in the future. There are five types of positive reinforcement (you should use social and natural reinforcement as much as possible; only using token, activity, and tangible reinforcement when social and natural reinforcement are not enough to motivate the student to engage in the desired behaviors):

1. Natural reinforcement: natural consequences that occur as a result of a specific behavior. For example, if you ask nicely for extra time, and the teacher says, "yes," you will be reinforced for asking nicely and will be likely to do so again in the future. Using effective communication skills can often result in natural reinforcement, because it typically results in the individual getting what he or she wants. Other examples of natural reinforcement include feelings of success and independence.

2. Social reinforcement: this includes general and specific praise, smiles, high-fives, fist-bumps, thumbs-up, etc.

3. Token reinforcement: this involves the student receiving a token of some sort for engaging in desirable behavior. When a pre-determined amount of tokens is earned, the student can trade in the tokens for a desired activity or item. Examples of items used as tokens include penny boards, sticker charts, happy faces, check marks, stars, etc.

4. Activity reinforcement: immediately following a desired behavior, a student is able to engage in a desired activity (e.g. computer time, reading a favorite book, drawing, playing basketball, listening to music, watching a video).

5. Tangible reinforcement: immediately followed a desired behavior, a student is given a desired object (e.g. food, drink, toy).

Note: It is important to make learning activities socially reinforcING as opposed to only delivering positive reinforcement after the student does something undesirable. You can make activities reinforcING by tapping into the student's strengths and interests.