

**The Rebound Effect:
Positivity Generates Positivity**

**by
Terry Lee Marzell**



Every chalkboard champion knows that positivity in the classroom generates positivity in return. Here's a tangible example of that which I learned one year, quite by accident.

You know how at the beginning of every year we are asked to complete a form that lists our goals for the year? Well, one year I decided that my goal was to make a sincere effort to be better at praising my students. I wanted to create a more positive relationship with my kids and a more congenial classroom environment. In addition, my principal was impressing upon the staff the need to foster better communication with parents. I decided I would combine the two goals, and so, on my form, I wrote that each month I would write six letters to parents praising their child. As a junior high school teacher with six classes of 42 students each, I reasoned that it shouldn't be difficult to find one kid from each class each month that I could say something good about.

And so for the entire year, at the end of every month, I selected my six students and wrote each one a praise letter on decorative stationery. I read each letter aloud to the student before I put it in the envelope and sealed it, and then I gave it to the kid to take home to their parents. I shared the notes with the students to lower their anxiety level---a letter from the teacher is rarely good news---and to ensure that the note would really get delivered. But I could just as easily have put some postage on the letters and sent them through the U.S. mail.

The response I received from the parents was overwhelming. Many of the parents wrote notes back to me, expressing messages about how much they appreciated receiving praise about their child, how much their child enjoyed my class, or how pleased they were that I was their child's teacher. Imagine my surprise when I realised that I was receiving praise letters like the ones that I was sending! I saved these notes, partly because they were so uplifting, and partly as proof that I had met the goals I had set for myself for the year. In May, I presented them to my principal at my annual evaluation conference. My principal

suggested I photocopy the notes and take them to the District Office to be placed in my personnel file there, so I did.

And here is how those letters further rebounded positivity back to me. A couple of years later I applied for a transfer to a new school that was opening up in my district. I was thrilled when I was selected for the position. Imagine my surprise when, later, my new principal told me that he had read those letters in my personnel file, and it was partly because of them that he decided to hire me!

Try this strategy. It could create a rebound of positivity for you, too!