

Affirming Student's Correct Attempt

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[Title]

Affirming Student's Correct Attempt

[Competency]

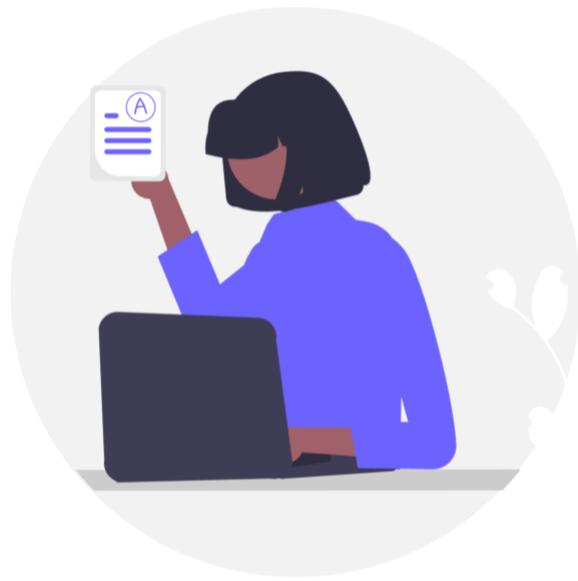
Applying Tutoring Skills

[Estimated Time]

13 minutes

[Undraw Key]

Teacher



[Description]

Affirming students' correct attempts is a powerful strategy to build confidence, reinforce learning, and encourage continued effort. In this lesson, you will practice recognizing and affirming students' correct attempts in a way that fosters a positive learning environment and motivates them to persist.

[Learning Objectives]

- Explain the importance of affirming students' correct attempts to reinforce learning and build confidence.
- Identify strategies to effectively affirm students' correct attempts while encouraging further engagement.

Tutor's Experience Level:

How would you describe your tutoring experience and skills?

Beginner tutor- 1 (no experience)

Expert tutor- 5

[Text]

Scenario 1

Before we begin, let's reflect on what you already know about affirming students' correct attempts.

Situation:

You're tutoring a student named Nysa. She is working on a multi-step algebraic equation:

Question: $3(2x + 5) - 4 = 23$

Nysa correctly solves the equation and responds with, "The value of x is 2."

Nysa: First, I distributed 3 to both terms inside the parentheses, giving me $6x + 15$. Then, I subtracted 4 to get $6x + 11 = 23$. Next, I subtracted 11 from both sides, leaving $6x = 12$. Finally, I divided by 6 to find $x = 2$.

Despite getting the response and explanation correct, she still seems a little unsure of herself.

[Image]

$$3(2x + 5) - 4 =$$

[image link]

Description: the math problem $3(2x + 5) - 4 = 23$

[Question - Open Ended]

1. What exactly would you say to the student to affirm her correct attempt?

[Question - MCQ]

2. Which of the following is the best way to affirm the student's correct answer?

- A. **Yes, that's correct! Well done!**
- B. Let's move on to the next problem.
- C. You always get these right.
- D. I think you made a mistake. Let's check again.

[Question - Open Ended]

3. Why is it important to affirm the student's correct answer?

[Question - MCQ]

4. What is a key benefit of affirming a student's correct answer?

- A. **It helps build their confidence and reinforces learning.**
- B. It ensures they will never make mistakes in the future.
- C. It saves time and allows the tutor to move quickly.
- D. It prevents students from questioning their own reasoning.

[Text]

Research Says...

Affirming a student's correct attempts plays a crucial role in building confidence and reinforcing learning. Research shows that positive reinforcement enhances motivation and persistence, helping students feel more capable and secure in their knowledge (Neerigen Brook Primary School, 2022; ACL Anthology, 2024). For this reason, the correct response to the scenario above is:

“Yes, that’s correct! Well done!”

Simple affirmations such as “*Yes, that’s correct!*” or “*Great job!*” immediately validate success and encourage continued effort. When affirmations highlight effort or process, they do more than celebrate correctness—they reinforce understanding and motivate students to stay engaged.

A recent study of Tutor CoPilot, a human–AI system that provides tutors with real-time, expert-like guidance during live tutoring sessions, offers further evidence on effective tutor actions. The study found that tutors who used affirming strategies were more likely to adopt high-quality teaching practices that supported deeper student engagement. Notably, students of less-experienced tutors who affirmed correct attempts achieved up to 9 percentage points higher mastery rates compared to peers in the control group (Wang et al., 2024).

As a tutor, even a simple response affirming a student’s correct attempt can be highly impactful.

Here are some examples you can use:

- “Yes, that’s correct! Well done!”
- “Great job—you got it right.”
- “That’s absolutely right! Keep it up.”
- “You nailed it!”
- “Exactly—you’ve got it.”

[Question - Open Ended]

5. In your own words, explain why affirming students' correct attempts is important for their learning and confidence.

[Question - Likert]

6. How much do you agree or disagree with the expert belief that “Affirming students' correct attempts enhances their motivation and confidence”?

- A. Strongly disagree
- B. Somewhat disagree
- C. No opinion
- D. Somewhat agree
- E. Strongly agree

[Question - Open Ended]

7. Explain why you agree or disagree.

[Question - MCQ]

8. Please select “No opinion” below.

- A. Strongly disagree
- B. Somewhat disagree
- C. No opinion**
- D. Strongly agree

[Text]

Scenario 2

You are tutoring a student named Fiona, who is working on a math problem involving exponents. She hesitates slightly before responding.

Question: What is the value of $2^4 + 3^3 =$

Fiona: First, I calculated 2^4 , which is 16. Then, I found 3^3 equals 27. Adding these together gives $16 + 27 = 43$.

[Image]

$$2^4 + 3^3 =$$

[image link]

Description: the math problem $2^4 + 3^3 =$

[Question - Open Ended]

9. What exactly would you say to the student to affirm her correct attempt?

[Question - MCQ]

10. Which of the following is the best way to affirm the student's correct answer?

- A. Okay, that's fine, let's keep going.
- B. You're absolutely right, it is 43!**
- C. You always get these right without any trouble
- D. I suppose that answer works, but let's double-check.

[Question - Open Ended]

11. Why is it important to affirm the student's correct answer?

[Question - MCQ]

12. What is a key benefit of affirming a student's correct answer?

- A. It reduces the need for future practice.
- B. It guarantees the student will never make the mistakes again.
- C. It motivates students to persist and stay engaged.**
- D. It allows the tutor to avoid giving feedback.

[Text]

Conclusion & Feedback

Research supports the use of specific affirmations to reinforce students' correct attempts. This approach not only builds confidence but also encourages students to stay persistent in their learning (Neerigen Brook Primary School, 2022; ACL Anthology, 2024).

In the scenario above, the most effective strategy is:

“You’re absolutely right, it is 43!”

This type of affirmation is effective because it directly validates the student's correct reasoning and highlights their success in the moment. By acknowledging accuracy with enthusiasm and clarity, the tutor communicates that the student's effort and process are valued. Over time, this builds a stronger sense of capability, encourages persistence, and reinforces a positive learning mindset.

[Text]

References:

1. Neerigen Brook Primary School. (2022). Positive reinforcement professional reading. Retrieved from <https://neerigenbrookps.wa.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Positive-Reinforcement-Professional-Reading.pdf>
2. ACL Anthology. (2024). The impact of positive reinforcement in educational settings. Retrieved from <https://aclanthology.org/2024.nacl-long.120.pdf>
3. Wang, R. E., Ribeiro, A. T., Robinson, C. D., Loeb, S., & Demszky, D. (2024). Tutor copilot: A human-ai approach for scaling real-time expertise. [arXiv preprint arXiv:2410.03017](https://arxiv.org/abs/2410.03017).