

Rewards, Simple Reward Systems, & Incentives

Why should I do it:

- Students are apt to work for something they want
- Some students need outward motivators
- It helps keep students engaged
- Provides encouragement
- Provides visual and tangible indicators of progress, success, behavior, performance, etc
- Increases motivation, buy-in, and sustained effort
- Gives students goals and milestones to work toward and for
- Creates a positive and motivating “buzz” among students

When should I do it:

- Reward and incentive systems and programs should be a regular part of all schools and classrooms
- When students need motivation, encouragement, and incentive
- When students exhibit low motivation and interest
- When students lack an internal drive to succeed
- At the start of a new year set up a reward or incentive system with the class
- When you want to increase positive behaviors
- When you want to increase student outcomes
- When you want to boost students’ self-esteem and self concept
- When you want to provide the class with something to work toward
- When a task, assignment, or expectation is boring, difficult, tedious, etc

How do I do it:

- Have the class take the “Forced Choice Reinforcement Menu” to determine what sort of rewards students want most (Adult approval, peer approval, consumable rewards, competitive approval, independent rewards)
- Additionally, you might have students write down 3 things they would work for on an index card and collect these cards
- Create a list of rewards based on the data from the surveys and index cards and post this list in the class where everyone can see it
- Identify what behaviors students will earn rewards or incentives for displaying and make a list of these behaviors, posting them in a place where everyone can see them

- Determine how to track each student's progress toward rewards through a star chart or other charting system
- Track behavior daily and reward students who earn enough points or stars for a given reward or incentive
- Reward at the end of each day or week, having those students who qualify choose from the reward list
- Rewards may vary in significance, whereby students have to earn more stars for bigger rewards and fewer stars for lesser rewards
- Consider using school dollars as a way to track behavior, wherein students earn school bucks for displaying the expected behaviors on the list and use these school dollars to buy rewards and incentives in a school or class store at the end of the day or week (again a variety of rewards from cheaper to expensive)
- Consider small incentives without all the formality of a system by giving students a Cheerio, other food item, eraser, pencil, pen, pat on the back, sing a special little tune to them, etc, when they demonstrate a positive or expected behavior on the list
- At any time when you witness the student taking part in the behavior to be increased, verbally praise them. Can be done either quietly or if the student is motivated by peer approval, can be done in front of the class.