

REWARDING BEHAVIOR

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Summary: Rewards can change behavior for the better. Punishment rarely works the way that's wanted, especially on a long-term basis.

Some are uneasy with this concept of paying children to do something they should be doing. "Very rarely do we do anything for free." The two greatest motivators (rewards) are self interest and social approval.

Reward behaviors associated with academic success: starting on time, staying on task and completing assignments. Pair rewards with specific verbal praise so tangible rewards can be (gradually) phased out.

Rewarding with "cash" sends a strong message of importance. Cash (points/tickets) can be exchanged for numerous rewards. Earning power enables children to exercise control and is an essential part of growing into an adult. This is not the same as bribery, which is something you do "under the table" and is often illegal.

POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND:

1. Kids do whatever they have to get what they want. If they get what they want - inflated grades, social promotion, and privileges - without any real work, then don't expect them to work.
2. Children are either given what they want, or allowed to *earn* what they want.
3. Going to school is a child's job - and adults are rewarded with paychecks for their jobs. Children need rewards for efforts critical to their future success.
4. Studying out of a "love of learning" is a goal...a path towards that goal is catching children doing the right thing and rewarding them. If they develop a love of learning (or not), they learn that appropriate behaviors earn, and inappropriate behaviors set them up for failure.
5. Rewarding positive actions is how children learn the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. Acknowledging appropriate behaviors accelerates this learning process.
6. Reward behaviors daily that lead to good grades, not the actual grades. These could include starting on time, staying on task and returning completed homework.

MOTIVATED V. UNMOTIVATED:

Do not hesitate to reward motivated students. Let them know positive behaviors pay off now and in the future. Reinforcing their appropriate behaviors also serves as an example/cue to others! It's easy to focus on the negative, but the reverse habit reaps wonderful benefits.

Students who do not seem motivated by rewards are likely ashamed, embarrassed, distrustful and/or discouraged. Some have given up because they expect to fail. It's important to reward them for the smallest effort to start on-time, return homework assignments and/or attempt difficult tasks. Achieving concrete objectives helps build their self-esteem. Consistency is the key to effective behavior management.

Additional articles of value:

1. [A Menu of Effective Rewards](#)
2. [Rewarding Behavior](#)
3. [Some Additional Thoughts on Rewards](#)