



Teaching Threads

Classwide Behavior Incentives

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Classwide behavior incentive strategies are a fun way to motivate a classroom of students to work together to earn recognition and possibly a reward. Here are a few strategies that teachers have found effective. As with all strategies, make sure all students have been taught, have practiced, and can perform the behaviors required in each strategy before you begin.

The Timer Game

Purpose: To increase the time on-task of a group of students during seatwork.

In this strategy a timer is used to cue students to monitor their on-task behavior and record it. Students are taught that each time the timer goes off, they ask themselves, "Am I on-task?" They then record a + or - on the sticky note on their desk - or circle a □ or ◻ on the recording card. The students cannot see the timer and do not know when it will go off.

Initially the timer is set for short and varied periods, such as 3 minutes, 5 minutes, 4 minutes, 6 minutes, 3 minutes, and so on. Gradually the time periods are increased, but still remain varied so students do not know when the timer will sound.

In most classes, students enjoy "playing this game" as they see it. The activity itself is reinforcing to students. Many like to save their recording sheets. I have not had teachers who needed to use additional reinforcement with this strategy.

One question that is always asked is "What if the students records a □ when they really were not on-task?" In this strategy, that's OK, because in most cases the timer and recording will bring students back on-task.

Marble Mania

Purpose: To increase a specified desired behavior of a group of students.

Students are instructed on the desired behavior, such as working without disturbing others, and told that at various times throughout the day, the class will earn one marble for each student who is showing the desired behavior. The times can be preset using a timer or selected by the teacher throughout the day. When this is done, the teacher might say, "I see that 24 students have been working quietly without disturbing others. This class has earned 24 marbles." It is important to restate the desired behavior. The marbles will be put in a see-through container and when the container is full, the group earns a special group activity reward. Activities might include a 10-minute dance party, 10minute joke fest, or a 10-minute fun video or audiobook. An activity reward can be decided upon beforehand or 3 to 5 different rewards can be put in a hat and drawn after the marble jar is full.

Initially teachers should monitor and add marbles several times each day so that the group can earn a reward within 3 or 4 days. This shows students that they can and will earn the reward by working together. This can be adjusted so that a reward is earned approximately once a week, but not longer than that.

Several different behaviors can be increased by this strategy, as long as they occur several times a day. Some teachers put kernels of popcorn into a baby food jar and the students are rewarded with a popcorn party.

If one or more students is not cooperating or even sabotaging this strategy the teacher can design an individual behavior contract for this student to increase his/her motivation to work with the group. Another option is that

the student is not included in the strategy and the activity reward.

The Good Behavior Raffle

Purpose: To build high levels of a desired behavior.

Students are instructed that each time they show the desired behavior, such as following directions the first time, they earn a raffle ticket. At the end of the day students put their raffle tickets into the raffle bucket and one or two tickets are drawn as the lucky winners. The prize can be an individual reward which can be predetermined or students can be given a choice of a reward - a pencil, sitting by the window, or being the line leader. This strategy can be varied by allowing students to choose to put all or some of their tickets in today's drawing or wait for another day's prize.

Prizes can also be group activity rewards. The winner can decide if the group should work with music for 20 minutes or play a special SMART board math game. Students quickly learn that earning more tickets throughout the day increases their chances but does not guarantee a reward - as in a true raffle.

Keeping Ten

Purpose: To decrease the occurrence of an undesired behavior being demonstrated by more than one member of a group.

The strategy is designed to decrease student behaviors such as mean-spirited comments or gestures, the use of the middle finger, inappropriate expressions or put downs, teasing and bullying. After repeated problems with a specific behavior the teacher designs this strategy targeting one problem behavior. At the beginning of each day students are instructed they can earn a 10-minute activity reward at the end of that day if they do not exhibit the targeted behavior. The teacher puts up 10 sheets of paper numbered 1 - 10 on the bulletin board. During the day, each time a student exhibits the targeted behavior, the teacher takes down one paper/minute without comment. The students then clearly see they have lost one minute. There is no discussion or

finger pointing. The teacher reminds the class to work as a group to earn the activity reward. Many students respond well to this strategy. They work to keep the ten minutes they were given at the start of the day.

As you have read, I recommend short ten- or even five-minute activity reinforcers. A short fun activity leaves the students wanting more. Extended activities can result in boredom, extinguishing the reinforcing value to the students. I believe that when teachers manage classrooms so that students are really engaged during instruction, then a ten-minute group activity is a good use of classroom time. It rewards and recognizes the students for what they have accomplished and builds community. I do not recommend spending more time on a reinforcement activity - there is simply too much to learn each day.

As always, my intent in presenting these activities is to help teachers answer this question -

What can I do to make it easier for my students to learn and behave?



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