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Rewards in the Classroom

"Both rewards and punishments, says *Punished by Rewards* author Alfie Kohn, are ways of manipulating behavior that destroy the potential for real learning. Instead, he advocates providing an engaging curriculum and a caring atmosphere "so kids can act on their natural desire to find out." -Educational Leadership, Volume 53 Number 1 September 1995

What place do rewards have in our classroom? It can often feel out of balance when contemplating the possibility of utilizing rewards. Will students respond? Will they learn to manipulate? Will rewards compromise accountability? Are there students who will never earn the reward? Then what?

The following are questions to consider when implementing reward-based incentives:

- Is the reward meaningful?
- Is the effect reduced? (Students are asking for more rewards or decreasingly dissatisfied with existing rewards)
- Can students consistently identify what he/she did in order to receive the reward?
- Are students becoming addicted to the "stuff" or doing the right thing?
- Do students refuse to comply unless they get the reward?
- Are students becoming dependent upon rewards?
- Do students manipulate the system in order to get the reward? (Bring items from home to trade for reward slips, take reward slips from other students etc.)
- Is the focus shifting from engaged learning to "just get it done" in order to get the reward?"

The following are ideas to consider when utilizing whole class recognition in lieu of rewards:

- **Class meetings**

- One thing I've accomplished this week is....
- One academic area of improvement is....
- One good choice I've made this week is....
 - The character trait that is a strength for me is....
 - One thing I'm proud of is....

- **Activity-based**

- Time in the library
- Extended time outside
- Drop everything and read
- Free writing time
- Other preferred activity (voted on by class)

- **Relationship-based**

- Pull two name sticks and have students compliment each other.
- The best thing about having you in class is....
 - Your best subject is....
 - One of your talents is....
- Students show work to adult of their choice
- Invite an adult into the room to see the "academic exhibit" of student achievement
- Create a student skill board identifying each student and "area of expertise"
- Build in academic contribution with a younger class

Students who are missing skills (managing feelings, being okay when others are not okay and/or doing something if they don't want to) cannot be rewarded into replacement skills. We wouldn't give a student a reward slip for reading, never practice reading and expect the student's reading level to improve. In the same sense, perceiving that students will improve their skill set by rewards is misleading. It is the daily practice of the positive behavioral skill, accountability and support through relationship that changes student's lives. Read below to find ways to teach the Goals for Life at the building, classroom and individual level.

Building:

- Articulate the Goals for Life daily as part of morning announcements
- Post (Hallway, Cafeteria, Library, Office etc.) words/actions to meet the Goals for Life
- Create a Goals for Life bulletin board
- Acknowledge students at assemblies for improvements related to the Goals for Life
- Ask "Which Goal for Life did you struggle to manage" when students are referred to the

office

Classroom:

- **Create a Goals for Life anchor chart** (Review daily or weekly)
 - Examples of words students can use when mad, when student says/does something they don't like, when given a difficult task
 - Actions students can take to keep from making the situation worse or bigger

- **Class Meetings**
 - One thing I can say when I'm mad....
 - One thing I can say if a peer looks at me and I don't like it....
 - One thing I can say if a peer calls me a name....
 - One rule I will follow when there is a substitute teacher....
 - One way I will be helpful to the substitute....
 - One thing I will say when I'm frustrated with work....
 - I will ask for help when....

- **Pull a student's name stick to review daily**
 - Goals for Life
 - Classroom expectations
 - Common area expectations
 - Practicing the continuum
 - Student choice
 - Teacher choice

- Challenge students to find examples of the Goals for Life in literature and discuss

- Create a song, rap, dance or play related to the Goals for Life--Teach/Perform for another class

- When processing, ask student to articulate the Goal for Life they are working on to make positive choices the next time they are challenged

Individual:

- Have the student write a triage script to practice daily
- Determine with students, peer mentors who can encourage each other
- Allow the student to create a picture of them showing their positive behavioral choices

- Daily, build in time for the student to teach their skill to a younger student
- Have the student create a book about their Goal for Life and read to a younger class
- Post Goals for Life posters created by students

Book/Resource List for Adults:

- Reclaiming Youth at Risk--Larry Brendtro
- Drive--Daniel Pink
- Myth of Laziness--Mel Levine
- Punished by Rewards--Alfie Kohn
- High Risk Children – Kids without a conscience--Ken Magid
- Growth Mind Set--Carol Dweck
- Changing Kids one Mind at a time--Mel Levine
- <http://www.attachment.org>--Nancy Thomas
- <http://www.ricklavoie.com>---Rick Lavoie
- <http://www.thegraycenter.org>---Social Stories

Building Challenge: Do we give our students HOPE?

H--Helpful (Adults stay in the relationship with students and utilize language of partnership)

O--Optimistic (We focus on skills/goals in order to remain committed to helping students make life changes)

P--Persevere (Adults are committed to maintaining restriction/protection to prevent acting out while continuing a relationship with students)

E--Excellence (We have high expectations for all students to reinforce how important they are to our community)

Welcome!

When you call the BIST Office, you will hear a new voice! Welcome Heather Leap who is the new BIST Administrative Assistant. Please contact her at 816.508.3652 or heather.leap@ozanam.org if you have questions or need information. As always, thanks for all you do!