

Behavior Motivators

Positive consequences are one of the most powerful forces that influence human behavior. For example, one of the reasons you show up for substitute teaching assignments is because you know when you do you are going to get a paycheck. You can use this same principle to help manage student behavior in the classroom.

While motivating students to behave appropriately by paying them money would likely be very effective, unless you are independently wealthy it's probably not an option. Instead you need to identify a no cost/low cost motivator that can be used to "pay" students for appropriate behavior. Next sell this "paycheck" to the class. Finally (and most importantly) you must teach students what specific expectations they must meet in order to "earn" their reward.

No Cost/Low Cost Motivators

- Reading a picture book
- Playing a game
- Stickers
- Fun worksheet or coloring page
- Riddles and brainteasers
- Funny age appropriate poetry
- Five minutes of "free" time

Selling the Paycheck

- Present the idea a something they can "earn" rather than a bribe
- Be enthusiastic when you talk about the reward
- Let students have some say in what they get (i.e. show them three picture books and let them vote which one they want to hear)
- Make it a mystery, put something for the activity in a box or bag and set it out where everyone can see it. Tell students if they earn the reward you will open the box and they can use what's inside (i.e. bean bags for a game, a timer for free time, a book, etc.)

Teaching Expectations

- Identify specific behaviors that are appropriate and inappropriate
- Communicate expectations in positive rather negative terms (i.e. "stay in your seat" instead of "don't wander around the classroom" or "work silently" instead of "no talking")
- Write expectations on the board and keep the list short
- Explain the consequences for individual students who threaten the success of the entire class
- Quiz students about expectations and have them restate them, making sure everyone knows what is expected
- Have a plan for letting students know how they are doing (i.e. tally marks on the board, marbles in a jar, etc.)
- For all day classes consider offering a "paycheck" at several different times throughout the day (especially in K-3 classes)

Throughout the day recognize and reinforce appropriate behavior whenever you see it. Let students know you want them be successful in earning the reward, but that you are going to abide by the established rules. If students don't earn the reward don't let them have it. Whatever happens stay calm, cool, and collected; remember that you can be firm and fair without being mean, students will respect you for that.