

5-9-2013

# Is Rewarding Beneficial to Behavior?

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## Recommended Citation

Webb, John, "Is Rewarding Beneficial to Behavior?" (2013). *Education Senior Action Research Projects*. Paper 34.  
<http://scholar.valpo.edu/sarp/34>

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## Abstract

What effect does a reward system have on ninth grade student behavior? Is there a way to have my students behave better than they currently are? There is plenty of research that has been conducted on different types of distracting behavior as well as different types of systems and programs that try to influence that behavior. A ninth grade class has been selected, observed, and data has been recorded on any disruptive or unwanted behavior for three weeks. The first three weeks the student had no clue they were being checked for behavior. For the second three weeks, a reward system was implanted for the class. The class was given the opportunity to earn a “free day” in physical education class by decreasing their disruptive behavior during class. In this study the students proved that if given the chance to work towards something they would work harder and behave better.

## Research Problem

The first day of student teaching had already began and I noticed that when my cooperating teacher was instructing her 9th grade class on how to prepare for the Presidential fitness challenge pre assessment. She had to tell the class to be quiet and pay attention multiple times. As I took over I quickly found myself in the same situation. They don't listen to directions, they constantly break the rules, and they never pay attention to the teacher.

## Research Question

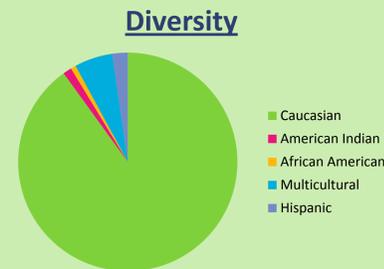
This brings me to my research question. My question is, does a rewards system effect student behavior?

## Hypothesis

My hypothesis is that students will behave better by misbehaving less due to the fact that there is a reward of a free activity day for gym.

## Methodology

The research project that was conducted was in a mandatory ninth grade P.E. class,. The sample population consisted of 23 students ( 11 Caucasian girls, 1 African American girl, and 11 Caucasian males). The students attend a very small school and are placed together for P.E. due to class size. This high school is located in a highly small farm town in Northwest Indiana. The demographics of this school are illustrated in the following diagram:



As a way to measure behavior, I am tallying every student in every class for every behavior issue as well as marking down every one of the students names and what they have done that wasn't proper student behavior. Not listening to directions, talking back, sitting out, talking while teacher is talking, not having gym shoes, and messing with other students are examples of improper behavior. After a couple weeks of charting down student behavior, I will then announce to the class that if they have good behavior for the day, they will get a check in the grade book. If they reach a certain amount of checks by the end of the next three days, they all get a free day of gym where they can select any game/activity to play. This is a points & rewards system.

## Data

Data for this project was collected at a local high school where I served as a student teacher during the Spring semester of 2013, from January 7<sup>th</sup> to May 1<sup>st</sup>. Figure 1 shows the number of students who had good behavior before the research project was implemented. Figure two shows the difference in behavior by gender and how much trouble they were causing.

Figure 1

This figure represents the number of student who received check marks for the first week. The student had yet to find out about the research project or anything I would be keeping track of.

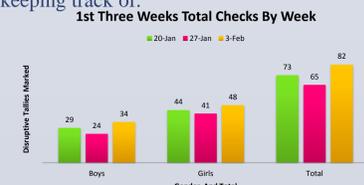


Figure 2

Figure 2 represents the number of checks the first week and compares the to gender. For example the girls received more checks than the boys.



## Results

The results of this project come from the second three week period of the research project. This was after the students had been told that they were working toward a reward at the end of each week. The reward being a free day in P.E. Figure 3 shows the improvement of check marks that the students made. Figure 4 shows the improvement based on gender for the second three weeks. The results greatly improved.

Figure 3

This figure shows the number of check marks the students received the second three week period. The results were collected after the students knew what they were receiving for good behavior.

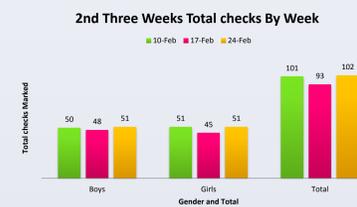
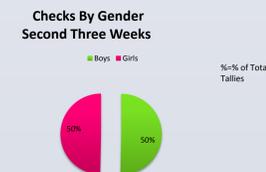


Figure 4

This figure shows the difference in behavior by gender. It also shows the ratio of boys vs. girls in the check marks. This was after the students knew they would get rewarded for good behavior.



## Analysis

Overall the data indicated a increase in students' behavior levels after the rewards system was put into place by the educator.

- Both males and females greatly increased the proximity of their check marks due to the fact that they felt they were working towards something.
- Each of the weeks showed great improvement of student behavior in comparison to the first three week period of data.

## Conclusion

This study was created with the intent to decrease disruptive behavior and increase appropriate behavior through a positive reinforcement or reward. The study illustrated that future educators should enforce a strict discipline system early in the school year in order to maintain control of the classroom. Control is vital for the student's education, the instructor's method of delivery, and everyone's safety and well-being. If one wants to recreate this experiment keep in mind a couple important particulars. Make sure the length of the study is enough to gather quality results, for if the experiment is created with too little of time adjustments to the experiment may be difficult to be made. Make sure to focus on a type of disruptive behavior either from an individual student or the class as a whole, this way both halves of the study are absolutely congruent in terms of desired observations and data collect.

This study is another useful example of the immediate and significant impact that classroom management and discipline has on a school year. Without them, school would be in total disarray and fail to fulfill its intended purpose, which is to educate young minds. Students need an education, that is a known fact. However, students also need strong discipline if a teacher wants their student to grow and succeed as much as they can.

## Implications

This research project had a significant impact on student performance levels because giving students a goal to work towards increased motivation and behavior.

This research project had a significant impact on the field of education because it clearly illustrated how giving students a rewards system improves student behavior. If students have a goal to work for or towards they tend to do things necessary to achieve the goal.

*I think that being able to change the behavior of an entire freshman class shows that my project was worth conducting.* A question I found was, what if teachers from every subject tried a rewards system? Would students work harder? Would it change students view on school or school work? My study showed encouraging results, I wonder if other teachers would get similar results.

The impact on the students was very noticeable. I watched them change their behavior to earn something that they really wanted. The only thing that I wish I could have done was make it last a whole semester and compared it to a semester of not having a reward system.

When I talked to my cooperating teacher and the other teachers at the school, they thought my study was a great idea and they were curious about it working. I was never told by another teacher that they were going to try to incorporate a system like this in their class, but they were definitely interested. It led teachers to think about ways to give students the opportunity to earn things,

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