REINFORCEMENT SURVEYS

Understanding what our students want to work for can help us build reinforcement into their school day

Goals of the Reinforcement Survey

There are three goals of the reinforcement survey:

1. We want to get student "buy in" to our token economy system
2. We want to have items in our school store that our students value
3. We want to provide reinforcement for students who are displaying the desired behaviors so that we strengthen those behaviors

Giving the Reinforcer Survey

Getting reinforcer ideas from students is not as easy as just having students give you a list of what they want. A reinforcer survey is an evidence based strategy to gather more accurate options and ideas about what students really want to work for. These can be given interview style, via google forms, or by paper and pencil.

There are many free reinforcer surveys online. There are some that will have you plug in items so that you can see what items the students want to work for. There are also some that will tell you what types of reinformcement they like best, whether it's adult approval, consumable rewards, or peer approval.

The important thing is to make sure that you have reinforcers that meet your students wants and needs. Here are some ideas.

1. Social Reinforcers: Peer and Adult attention. Could be eating lunch with a preferred person, playing a game with a peer, etc.
2. Activity Reinforcers: Any social, work, or play activity that students engage in voluntarily. Could be listening to music, helping with school announcements, extra computer time.
3. Tangible Reinforcers: Things that students get. Could be stickers, pencils, comic books, notebooks.
4. Edible Reinforcers: Things that students can eat or drink. Could be candy, gum, soda, juice, chips, ramen
5. Escape Reinforcers: Things that allow a student to remove an undesirable task. Could be a reduced problem pass, a no homework pass, answer to a test question pass, verbal essay instead of a written essay.

OK, so now what? What do I do with this reinforcement information? Now you look at your data! What does it tell you about what students want to work for?

Look at the Data

1. Look at what your surveys are telling you about your students and what they want to work for. Make a list of what they said or what motivates them.
2. Pull the most common items off of your list and stock your menu/school store with those items. Get items that everyone would like to purchase in the school store. Try to steer clear of purchasing specific items that only one student will work for, especially if they are expensive. For example, if I have one student that likes Dr. Pepper, I may stock that in my store, but I would not purchase a specific T-shirt in my store for one student.
3. Create your menu/school store list with prices for each item. How much will each item cost? Think about how often your students need to be reinforced. Make sure that there is a large selection of items available for a wide range of prices. This way students who want more frequent reinforcement can purchase smaller items more often, and those that want to save their points for larger items can do so. Keep in mind what your students are using to purchase the items. If you are using a point system and they can only get 20 points a day, having an item for 1,000 points would take 50 perfect days? Is that realistic? These reinforcers have to be attainable.
4. Implement your school store. After a few weeks, reevaluate how it is going. If you have specific items that are selling like crazy, stock up on more of those. Get student input on how they think things are going.
5. Give the reinforcer survey more than once a year. Ideally, try to give it quarterly. Our students preferences change all the time so it is helpful to give the survey to stay up to date with their likes.

Resources for Reinforcement Surveys

Here are some links to reinforcement surveys on the internet:
- Student Reinforcer Questionnaire
- Forced-Choice Reinforcement Menu
- Student Reinforcement Survey
- Reinforcement Questionnaire