THE TROUBLE WITH REWARDS

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Overview

- Overview of the “trouble with rewards”
- Connections to Our Students
- Brief Q & A
- Where rewards, incentives, praise, etc. are currently used
- Implications for Practice
- Closing

- Book: “Punished by rewards: The trouble with gold stars incentive plans, A’s, praise, and other bribes” by Alfie Kohn
Rewards Ignore Reasons

- Rewards do not require that we understand the reason behind the issue: focus on manipulating behaviors
- Focus is on results and changing behaviors: how does this connect to our educational missions?
Rewards Rupture Relationships

- Rewards create a more destructive power differential in the relationship.
- Jealousy & competition are created when rewards are given.
- Collective rewards: is this creating a positive peer pressure?
- Rewards create an atmosphere of judgment & competition: will people ask for help?
Rewards Discourage Risk-Taking

- Rewards narrow our focus to include things that relate only to the rewards—reduces incidental learning
- Goal becomes about the reward, not about the task
- People are less likely to:
  - Engage in the creative process
  - Go above and beyond
  - Try new things
  - Take on challenges
Rewards Punish

- Come from the model that motivation is just behavior manipulation
  - Rewards are fundamentally controlling
- People who aren’t getting the rewards are being punished
  - The threat to remove an reward is a punishment
Rewards Undermine Intrinsic Motivation

- “Do this and get that” automatically devalues “this”
- Rewards are experienced as controlling
  - We shy away from situations where our autonomy is stripped away
- Even self-rewarding can be detrimental
Who Are Our Students?

- Come from a culture of rewards, praise, & incentives

- Millennial Students
  - Special
  - Sheltered
  - Confident
  - Conventional
  - Team-Oriented
  - Achieving
  - Pressured

Where Do You See Rewards?

- Praise
- Recognition
- Awards
- Incentives
What Are The Alternatives?

- Rewards Punish
- Rewards Rupture Relationships
- Rewards Ignore Reasons
- Rewards Discourage Risk-Taking
- Rewards Undermine Intrinsic Motivation

Questions to Consider:
- Why is the reward in place?
- What are we trying to do?
- What are we trying to accomplish?
Implications for Practice

- Create environments where students can listen to their inner voice
- Question the motivation behind why a reward/praise/incentive is in place: what is the alternative?
- Step by step . . .
Questions?

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