

# Why Should Misbehaving Students Receive Incentives?

Creating effective behavior systems within schools requires multiple strategies that all student behaviors respond to. The majority of students will respond to a solid Tier One school-wide behavior system and incentives (see *The PBIS Tier One Handbook*); however, some students will require more to correct behavior. In these cases, Tier Two (targeted/small-group) interventions are necessary. Students who meet a set of criteria for additional interventions (meaning Tier One systems are in place with fidelity but the individual student is not responding) need to have additional opportunities provided for them in order to learn the appropriate ways to behave.

We have met educators who do not believe students needing additional interventions should be incentivized for meeting their goals. We frequently hear the following comments: “Why should a naughty student receive an incentive? Why is he/she being rewarded for behaving the way the other students *always* do? What do I tell the rest of my class when they see this student with a history of misbehavior receive an incentive for behaving the way they are supposed to?”

What we ask those educators is simple: how is it currently working out for you? Is the student responding to what you are currently doing? If you don't have a positive answer to either of these questions, then the response for that student needs to be changed. Here are three reasons why it is critical to educate staff on the importance of providing appropriate incentives for students responding to Tier Two interventions.

## ***Reason 1: Choosing incentives that the student wants to earn is key.***

Identifying what motivates the student as an incentive will help the student buy into the intervention. This does not necessarily have to be something tangible; some students ask for time with adults or other special privileges that can be free of cost (e.g., lunch with an administrator, time to draw, etc.). Whatever the incentive is, it must be something the student states that they want and not something the teacher or administrator thinks the student would like. Positive incentives for meeting Tier Two intervention goals need to be consistent and meaningful for the student.

## ***Reason 2: Establishing relationships with the students will help shape their behavior.***

During the time students receive incentives for meeting their goals, they are establishing relationships with the adults supporting them. It is important for the incentives to be consistent and for the student to feel assured that he/she can trust the adult's word. The terms of the incentive cannot be changed during the intervention or if the student meets their goal; the bar cannot be raised without first rewarding the student for meeting their goal. This will erode the trust in the adult and the process for the student and they will stop working toward their goal.

## ***Reason 3: Creating an opportunity for students to feel success with the intervention is essential to help shape behavior.***

Students need to be given an attainable goal aligned with the Tier Two intervention that is monitored for effectiveness. It is important for the student to feel successful in meeting his/her goals. As the student feels success in attaining his/her new skills, he/she will begin generalizing the new behaviors in different settings. Look at the data to establish if the student is responding. If he/she is responding, reward the

student, increase the goal and reduce the intensity; if he/she is not responding, change the intervention and/or increase the intensity.

Educate your staff on the purpose and goal of putting a Tier Two intervention in place using the provided reasons. Emphasize that the goal of a Tier Two intervention is for the student to practice behaving in the way that is expected. This is not going to happen overnight and it is not going to happen by continuing to do what hasn't worked in the past. Also, consider that home circumstances differ for every student. Some students will not have experiences at home that give them a structured environment, while others will have tight procedures and expectations to follow. These students will bring those behaviors to your campus. They need to practice the appropriate ways to behave and in doing so, need to be rewarded when they are successful. The school's reward for taking the time to implement Tier Two interventions with fidelity is a campus where every student behaves the way that is expected. Remember, the goal in Tier Two is to get the student back in Tier One and off your radar, especially if that means giving an incentive to encourage them getting there.