POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT: THE RIGHT WAY!

by:
Maria Ailene L. Libao
Teacher III, Casupanan Elementary School

Love, money, fear- There are as many motivations as there are people. For teachers, it is imperative that they are aware of the different categories of motivation. Included in these categories is the “Positive Motivation”, which involves using praise and other uplifting forms of incentives.

However, it is often perceived that sugar-coating words and telling sweet notions is the way to provide positive reinforcement. It should be noted that the proper method of constructive encouragement requires saying the right words at the right time. As such, even if there is good intent it could prove even more damaging if positive reinforcement is wrongfully done.

Here are some noteworthy aspects of positive reinforcement provided by organizations such as American Psychological Association, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, and other professionals that every educator should know!

Praise Effort not Intelligence

Studies categorize praise as either Person praise or Process praise. Person praise compliments a certain attribute of a student such as their intelligence or creativity. Process praise on the other hand, evaluates the student’s effort and how he approached or solved a problem he encountered.

Person praise has been discovered to reduce motivation and even pushes the student to compare his achievement, output, and work with others. Meanwhile, process
praise teaches flexibility and allows the child to perceive challenges more positively. It is therefore important for a teacher to know the difference between the two praises.

Though there are many guidelines and know-how regarding the two praises, the general rule is to acknowledge the student’s methods and not their inherent skills. For example saying, “Your strategy in the game was really effective!” is a far better motivator than stating “You won because you are so intelligent!” The difference between the two could be easily seen as the first praise encourages the student while the second example simply compliments the child’s latent abilities and could turn him complacent.

**Sway the Student from Negativity**

In the Philippine setting, those students who are consistently on the honor roll and at the top of their classes are viewed as smart and intelligent children. Though it is not erroneous point of view, society still has a negative perception of those students who are not excelling academically. This judgemental culture has often contributed to the creation of students that either pressured to stay on the top or brand themselves as unintelligent without properly evaluating their skills.

There are times when the student loses the willpower to educate himself or empower his skills simply because he thinks that he is not as intelligent or creative or talented as his peers. In fact, this idea that being clever is latent and cannot be achieved has already been labelled by scholars as Fixed Mindset. Luckily, the opposite of a fixed mindset is also present. A Growth Mindset is when a person believes that he can also be intelligent through effort.

Obviously, a growth mindset is more preferable. In order for teachers to turn their student’s attitude towards a positive one he must know and be aware for their students. Some ways, to induce a growth mindset is by pointing out that everyone could improve by putting hardwork, sincerity and effort in every activity. With the little help from the educator, any learner is sure to gain optimistic point of view about education!
Be Sincere, Always

If your praise appears to be insincere, it would only have negative effect. The child will only think that words come out of pity and not out of the effort that he or she had given. This is why a teacher should always mean what he says to his pupils, be it praise or not.

One way to be sincere in providing positive reinforcement is by knowing when and when not to give one. If an educator only acknowledges praiseworthy accomplishments, the students will be challenged and will understand the value of praise. Through this, a healthy bond can be created.

More so, sincerity requires that a teacher’s admiration do not compare one student to another. Comparisons tend to encourage the children to become over competitive and diminish their focus into the lessons as it flows to defeating their peers. Individuality is an important aspect of sincere motivations.

Though there are still many aspects to positive reinforcements that could be discovered through research and studies, it never hurts to be reminded of some methods to carry out this form of motivation successfully. In the end, being aware of the correct way of reinforcement is key to happy, motivated and hardworking students!

References:

www.hanen.org/hepfu

www.mindsetkit.org/practices