

# Rewards & Praise

Rewards and Praise are often used in classrooms to encourage students to respond with positive effort and behavior, from answering questions in a classroom discussion to actual accomplishments in their studies and class work.

Praise does encourage students toward positive behavior. It also builds conformity. It can make students depend upon others for their worth rather than upon themselves. Praise has also been found to be a detriment to creativity. Research reveals that some teachers use praise so often and so indiscriminately that it becomes meaningless as a response to student behavior. Students then derive little benefit when praise is used this way. Praise must be specific as to what accomplishment deserves praise, and individualized to the student's learning styles and ability level. Praise should be related to the effort students put into their work, such as "I can see you have worked very hard on this project". This leaves it open to more challenges, "If you work a little harder, I'm sure you will find better results!" This is positive feedback. Comments like "You are so smart" states to students that they have reached their limit and are "that smart", therefore cannot be challenged to do any better.

Rewards are often confused with Feedback. Teachers can either control one's behavior (using Rewards) or give information about a student's efforts (giving Feedback). If students perceive teacher's rewards as "controlling", a decrease in their intrinsic motivation will likely occur. The opposite is true if the student perceives the rewards as providing feedback about his or her knowledge or competence.