

# Essay on should school implement reward system for students

[Profession](#), [Student](#)



Chicago proposed plan of giving all ninth-graders money based on their performance in tests as reported in the Times on 8th April 2010 brought into focus the never ending debate about the merits and demerits of the system. Issues have arisen as to whether such rewards give an incentive to perform better among students, and if so, whether the same motivation to do well is sustainable in the long term.

The question as to whether the proposed plan would be useful in motivating or demotivating learners to do better can be answered by having regard to the theories underlying motivation. The proposal to give money to students according to their performance in the tests is an extrinsic motivation in the sense that the monetary reward being offered is an external factor to students and unrelated to the task at hand-that of learning and performance. As such, giving of money to students in a bid to enhance performance is akin to bribing learners and may not produce the desired outcome.

On the other hand, it would be wise to imbue intrinsic motivation in learning so as to enhance tests performance amongst students. Students who are motivated intrinsically have the ability to do better in tests simply because they are willing and eager to learn on their own motion. As a result, intrinsically motivated students tend to go deeper into their studies and thus end up doing well. Intrinsic motivation encompasses the internal desires of a learner to learn; owing to the pleasure they derive from the activity and the need to develop the skill of learning.

Indeed, most students are biologically driven to learn; they possess an inbuilt motivation mechanism that needs only a reignition and does not require an extrinsic motivation in the form of money rewards. The natural motivation, in

this case, the intrinsic desire to learn and do well, can be rejuvenated in the learner through a number of ways. For intrinsic motivation to be present in the learners there needs to be the provision of the basic needs, safety and social needs as well as self-esteem among learners. Rote learning, coercion, manipulation, put-down and rewards systems have the effect of demotivating learners and lowering their intrinsic desire to do well. These negative effects that put a dent on the intrinsic motivation of students, can be remedied by engaging the emotions of learners, providing a positive social bonding, sharing inspiring stories with learners and availing acknowledgments by way of compliments, group notices and issuance of certificates.

Contrary to money rewards to learners so as to motivate them to learn, teachers should use other ways of acknowledgements such as celebrations, compliments and issue of merit certificates. The question then becomes; why is money rewards ineffective? It is the case that giving of money is geared at enhancing student's grades in tests is an extrinsic motivation. Without doubt, money in itself has no relation with good performance in the tests. It is the contention that a money-based reward system as proposed will do more harm than good to the learners. Rewards tend to inhibit a learner's creativity. In the usual course of events, a student may record positive outcomes in activities that involve repetitive tasks or memorizing skills due to the giving of rewards, but this is not so with activities that requires creativity. According to Deci and Ryan (1997) Creativity, reflection and increased interest in a subject in a learner can only be enhanced through intrinsic motivation and yet these are the very crucial factors necessary to

record high performance in tests. More so, money rewards as advocated for, will not make the students self-directed in their affairs nor will they get the necessary inner drive to perform. Money rewards have the effect of eating away at the respect between teachers and the learners' as well overall performance in the long term. It is the argument that if a student is offered a chance to do well, absent a reward mechanism in the form of money, he will develop the required intrinsic desire which is sustainable in the long term. When money as a reward is introduced amongst learners and then withdrawn, consistent performance is noted among the self directed learners and the same is absent among the other learners. This leads to an inescapable conclusion; that the rewards system is only effective in the short term and is inimical to the learner. This must have led to Alfie Kohn (1993) to state, " if your objective is to get people to obey an order, to show up on time and do what they are told, rewards can work."

Creativity and intellectual expression in the brain is pegged on intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation. A money reward system is an antithesis to the establishment of this crucial creativity, as learners only respond to the requested behavior in the hope of getting the reward. According to a study conducted by Amabile, rewards actually lead to reduced quality of a work. As an illustration, he gave the example of an artist whose creativity dropped significantly upon entering a contract to sell their work on completion. It is instructive that the level of creativity went down, the money reward at the completion of the work, notwithstanding. This could point to the money reward not being the driving mechanism in the performance to the artist. Similarly, this very concept holds true for learners and tests performance.

It thus appears that the money reward system is counterproductive and may not lead to improved test performance. This paper concludes with the words of Geoffrey and Renaite Caine” a system of rewards and punishment can be selectively demotivating in the long term, especially when others have the control over the system.”