

Rewards and Accomplishments

By Bill Swick

Ever wonder what it would take to convince students to do something you would really like them to do? The first big step in the process is to have a clear definition of what you would like to see your students accomplish. The second step is to decide to what degree are you willing to go to reward such accomplishments. Here are a few real examples of rewards and accomplishments.

Desire-students to score high on weekly playing tests. Students are given two playing tests every other week. What would it take to motivate a student to receive two perfect scores?

Reward-Create the “Double Century Club”. This is not a real club. There are no meetings, no dues, absolutely no elements that resemble a club. And yet, students want to be in the club in the worst way. How does one have acceptance in the club? Students who receive two perfect consecutive scores, two consecutive 100’s on playing tests receive admission into the club for a two-week period. If they want back in the club, they must score another set of perfect scores. The maximum number of times a student can be in the Double Century Club during the school year is sixteen times. Over the years, there have been a number of students who were in the club ten or more times. And yes, there were students who made it in the club all sixteen times in a single year. Is this effective? Yes. Are there costs involved? No!

Desire-students to participate in honor guitar, solo & ensemble, and attend all rehearsals and performances

Reward-Create a Guitar Letter or a Guitar Patch. This patch may be sewn on to a jacket, sweater, hat, or may be framed. A student may earn one patch per school year. The requirements may include most anything. Our model includes auditioning for honor guitar (regardless if student makes it or not), participate in solo

& ensemble (regardless if students do well or not), attend all required after school rehearsals and performances. This was another major motivator for students who wanted to collect a patch for all four years of guitar while in high school. Is this effective? Yes. Are there costs involved? Each patch costs about five dollars.

Desire-to encourage guitar students to take other music classes including music theory, piano, and one other music class, usually music technology. It could be any three music classes including choir, band, jazz band, guitar quartet, chamber class, orchestra, Mariachi, handbells, etc.

Reward-Create a music cord for students to wear at graduation. Students who complete three music classes as well as guitar class receive a music cord to wear over their gown during graduation. Because this task takes at least three years to accomplish, it is planned during the freshman year and makes the guitar students more well-rounded musicians. Is this effective? Yes. Are there costs involved? Each cord costs about eight dollars.

Desire-to encourage students to take a leadership role within the ensemble or class and have a say in the shaping of the class.

Reward-Create officer positions like president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, etc. and have students run for these positions. They will be elected by peer voting. Once students are in place with office roles, meet with these leaders regularly and have them be the liaisons between you and each class. Encourage the class leaders to contribute to ensemble selection, uniforms, trips, performance ideas, fund raising, whatever is on the table, allow these leaders to have a say in shaping what happens in the classroom. Is this effective? Yes! Are there any costs involved? No.