

One of the things that my daughters school like to do is give certificates to students for various achievements. Below are two that she has had over the last few months. Which one do you think she was happiest to get?



Gold Award for reading 25 times in a term



Bronze Award for Science Experiment

If you guessed the Gold award for reading 25 times or more in a term - you were wrong. She has half a dozen of them on the wall. The Bronze award for a “brilliant and inspiring” science experiment had her far more excited than all of the Gold awards put together.

I have mentioned our struggles to get my eldest to bond with [reading](#) and to be honest, even though she now does it quite happily, it really is not something she enjoys much. The thing is, she knows that it is something good to do and for the most part is OK with reading every night. That makes the Gold award pretty much guaranteed without having to put any abnormal effort in.

The science project was done as a homework over a weekend. Now, I am a hugely against homework, but that is another story. This however was something that she enjoyed doing and had a great deal of fun with. It was also something that stretched her a bit, without making her do things that she did not find enjoyable (I.E. reading things she has no interest in or writing anything!).

When I asked her why she was so happy with her Bronze award over the Gold awards she had, she said as much. “I enjoyed doing the experiments with you”. She didn't even know

there were going to be awards, she just enjoyed doing it. She got to play with vinegar, baking soda, balloons, food dyes and call it work!

This highlights three significant points about giving rewards.

- It means more if it was unexpected ([surprise and delight](#))
- It means more if earning it is enjoyable in the first place (autonomy and [fun](#))
- It means more if it is earned or felt to be deserved in some way (achievement)

The unexpected and earned element is further highlighted by a Headteachers award that she got last term for improvements and putting 100% into her work.



Headteachers award for 100% effort

She had no idea that she was in the running for this and definitely had no idea she would get it. I have never seen her so excited about a certificate or so proud!!

If we look at one of my previous [blogs on rewards](#) (where I introduced the idea of RIM; Relevant, In-Time and Meaningful), we can see why this might all be.



Feedback and Rewards

- Relevant: A certificate to show your parents and to give a little bit of social status.
- In-Time: This is a great example of not needing to give a reward straight away
- Meaningful: In the case of the bronze award for her experiment, she felt that she had earned the reward because she put work into it. Again, there was also a level of social status included.

Rewards are [not all evil](#), you just have to reward the right things in the right way. Olivia is more excited than ever about experiments and science than ever, not because she wants more rewards, but because the certificate has given her a new level of confidence. She feels that she may actually be good at it and knows that she enjoys it.

So remember - Rewards should **recognise** not *bribe*.



Rewards: Recognise Don't Bribe

Whilst we're at it - don't forget to PIMP your gamification as well ☐



PIMP: Play Intrinsically Motivates Performance

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