

Many of you will know by now that I intensely dislike the way my daughter's school uses rewards. However, one teacher has changed some of my views in one simple act. She gave out a truly meaningful reward.

It was a certificate, the exact same certificate that my daughter has had several times. It came signed by the head teacher, as they all do with this type of certificate. However, this time there was one very slight difference... the text on the certificate.

Rather than the usual generic "This award was given for extra effort", or "This award has been given for being good at spelling", this one was totally specific to my daughter and the struggles she has had with dyscalculia.

She has been struggling with maths and english for some time and recently we discovered she had dyscalculia (which is a deep-rooted problem with understanding numbers) and mild dyslexia. This had been causing huge issues for her and she was suffering from anxiety and related problems. Her newest teacher has been a godsend and has been doing everything she can to help my daughter overcome the worst of the issues and has had great success.

Then at the end of last week, she came home positively bouncing. "I got a head teachers award today!" she said. This was not the first time she had had one, but this time she seemed more excited than usual. I had a look and was stunned to the point of nearly crying when I read the reason for the certificate.

"For developing her resilience and fully applying herself to complete challenging maths problems in class"

Whilst the certificate was the same bit of paper she had had before, the words were so meaningful and specific to her and the struggles she has had that it had more impact than any number of generic "well done" stickers she could have been given.

In gamification, we often talk about creating meaningful rewards. What we don't say very often, is how to make them meaningful. The certificate given to my daughter proves that it doesn't take much to make something meaningful, just a few words different to normal in this case. What it takes is an understanding of to whom the reward/award is going. Know your users and understand their wants, desires, hopes, and dreams. Then you will be able to create experiences and rewards that actually mean something to them and will be remembered.