TOKEN ECONOMY

Effect Size: 0.90

A token economy is a system of reinforcement of target behaviors in which tokens are administered and exchanged later for a reinforcer. Token economies are set up in a way that a student is reinforced with a token for increasing or decreasing an existing behavior. Common forms of tokens are plastic circular chips, points on a card, stars or stickers on a chart, holes punched in a card, beans in a jar, play money, etc.

Token economies are ideally paired with a behavior contract with a student. The contract clearly describes the behavior that needs to be changed, how the behavior change will be monitored, and how many tokens can be earned for specific behaviors. Students should be able to choose the reinforcers from a pre-created list of reinforcers. There are many reinforcers that are inexpensive and require little time. Special privileges, such as being first in line, free time on a computer, running an errand for the teacher, sitting in a special chair, etc. can all be powerful motivators.

When a student earns a token, the token should always be paired with positive and specific praise about the desired behavior. When a student is working on learning a new behavior, tokens paired with praise should be given every time the student engages in the new behavior, but as the student acquires and masters the behavior, tokens are gradually faded, while continuing to praise the student for the desired behaviors.

**Critical Actions for Educators**

- Token economies are ideally paired with behavior contracts.
- Tokens are paired with specific praise around desired behaviors.
- Reinforcers need to be applied consistently when students are learning new behaviors, and gradually phased out as students acquire/master the specific behavior.

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**Step 1:** Pinpoint behavior(s) to be changed.

**Step 2:** Determine what type of tokens will be used (marbles, play money, pennies, plastic chips, punch cards, etc.)

**Step 3:** Select reinforcers, and determine the cost of each reinforcer. Have students help to create a reinforcer menu.

**Step 4:** Determine protocol for spending tokens.