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Word Generation - Unit 2.05

Focus Words

implement | motivate | undertake | incentive | enables

WEEKLY PASSAGE



In September 2007, New York City **implemented** a new program to try to **motivate** students to do well in school. The mayor wanted to **undertake** the task of raising student achievement in a new way. He offered students money as an **incentive** to try hard. Some fourth and seventh graders were paid up to \$500 per year for doing well on the city’s math and reading tests.

Many people are excited about the mayor’s idea. They think this will make school more like the real world, where people earn money for working hard. Students might do better if they get immediate rewards. It is hard for them to wait for the “payoff” of getting into college or finding a good job. Also, they might learn more. Knowing they will be paid for high scores could make them study harder.

However, some people think that this is not fair. They worry about students who try their hardest, but still don’t score well enough on the test to get the

reward. Those students might stop trying in the future. Also, many people believe that education should be its own reward. A good education makes someone a better critical thinker and more creative. It **enables** people to deal with challenges they face. If students are only motivated by earning money, they might not understand that learning can be fun.

Will New York City’s program help students succeed in school? Should students be paid for high test scores?

Should students be paid to do well in school?

FOCUS WORDS OF THE WEEK

implement : (verb) to put a plan into action

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

motivate : (verb) to make something want to take action

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

undertake : (verb) to accept as a challenge

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

incentive : (noun) a reward that leads someone to take action

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

enables : (verb) make something possible

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

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PROBLEM OF THE WEEK


Option 1: Washington D.C. School Chancellor Michelle Rhee has **undertaken** the task of improving schools. With her help, D.C. public schools have **implemented** a cash **incentive** program. The program is designed to **motivate** students to work hard and behave properly. Good behavior **enables** students to earn up to \$100 per pay period. Each pay period is 2 weeks, or 10 school days.

There are 180 days in the school year. How much could each student expect to earn per year?

- A) \$180
- B) \$1,800
- C) \$360
- D) \$3,600

Option 2: Many different people have **undertaken** efforts to create better schools. Their ideas vary widely. Some schools are based on strict discipline, while others are based on student freedom. Some use complicated textbooks, while others use no textbooks at all. But no plan can **enable** schools to succeed if students are **unmotivated**. Are cash **incentives** the answer? If we took a fraction of the money spent buying books, paying teachers, and **implementing** programs, and offered it directly to students as an incentive to focus and study, would this fix our schools?

In the U.S., schools spend about \$10,000 per student per year. Some schools spend more and some spend less. What if we turned 5% of the money spent on each student into incentive money? If i = incentive money and e = expenditure per student, write a formula that would show the relationship between per-student expenditure and per-student incentive.

 **Discussion Question:** Pretend that your school wants to **implement** a cash **incentive** plan to encourage students to attend an extra 1-hour study session after school each day. What is the minimum amount it would take to **motivate** you to attend for one week? How about for one year? Would it be cost-effective for your school to **undertake** this kind of plan?

Should students be paid to do well in school?

THINKING SCIENTIFICALLY

The students in Mr. Seemy's class just finished taking a test on organizing and interpreting data. Mr. Seemy asks, "What would you say if I told you that those of you who got an A on this test will get \$20?"

"I'd say that's the best news I've heard all year!" exclaims Shantel. "I would be much more **motivated** to study if I knew I could make money for doing well."

Mr. Seemy says, "The school is thinking about **implementing** a program to pay students when they get good grades. It would be a partnership between local businesses and the government to provide the money and payment plans."

"Really?" questions Sharif. "**Incentives** are great, but I think that would send the wrong message to kids. There are other good reasons for doing well in school. Money isn't everything, you know."

"But it sure does help. I mean, anything that **enables** kids to learn more is good, right?" responds Shantel.

"Well, to **undertake** such a program, the school would need to gather evidence to support the idea that money motivates students to get better grades," says Mr. Seemy, "Shantel, do you think you can prove you're right?"

"I'm sure of it. I'll survey everyone in 8th grade," replies Shantel, "and my evidence will show that money is the most important reason students are **motivated** to get good grades."

"I'll work with you, just to make sure you report your data accurately!" says Sharif.

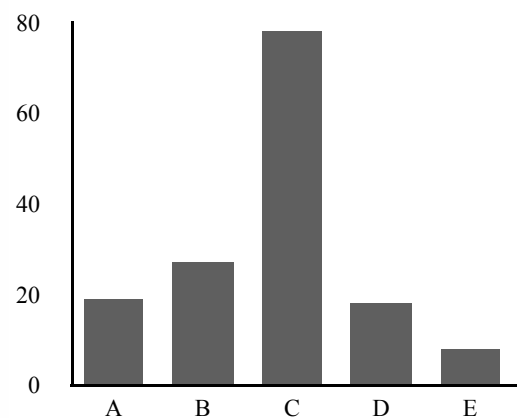


Shantel and Sharif's survey

To me, the most important reason for getting good grades is...

- A. Having my friends think I'm smart
- B. Getting approval/privileges (not money) from my parents
- C. Being able to get a good job/get into a good college
- D. Getting money so I can buy stuff
- E. Because it makes me feel good about myself

Student Survey Responses
(Total = 150)



Was Shantel right? Do students consider money to be the most important? How do you know?

Are you surprised by the data that Shantel and Sharif collected? Why or why not?

How could you replicate this investigation at your school? Do you think that the survey made by Shantel and Sharif addresses the question well?

Should students be paid to do well in school?



DEBATING THE ISSUE

Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A Students should be paid for high scores on tests. This will motivate them to do well and reward hard work.

B Students should not be paid for high scores on tests. This incentive will lead them to think only of money and not of the value of learning.

C Schools should implement a plan to pay students for effort and improvement, not for their actual score on a test.

D Money should be offered only to students who are struggling, to enable them to improve.

E _____

Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

GO!

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

I believe that...

I agree with you, but...

You make a good point, but have you considered...

Can you show me evidence in the text that...

