

Why Pay Kids for Good Grades?

The virtue of paying kids for grades can be understood in terms of the Adlerian concept of logical consequences. Adlerian Theory has long been recognized in the fields of education and counseling, with extensive research and formal trainings available for teachers and parents. The most recent and famous book detailing Adlerian concepts is *Love and Logic* by Foster and Kline (2006), which was featured on Public Television and taught in school districts around the country. The theory calls for those who work with children to discipline in a manner that promotes learning about the way the world operates. By providing logical consequences instead of rewards and punishments, children learn the natural outcomes of their behavior. For example, if Jane behaves well at school and her mother gives her a cookie because she was good, Jane has received a reward. While one could argue that such a reward has its merits under certain circumstances, the reward (a cookie) teaches Jane nothing about the results of good behavior because cookies and good behavior are not connected in any way. However, if Jane is paid for her performance at school, she learns that performance at school is linked to money. It is not hard to find a connection between academic achievement and future capacity to earn money. Furthermore, performance and success generally go hand in hand.

When trying to teach kids how the world operates, it is important to consider what kind of world you want them to function in. It could be argued that a parent should hit their child back if attacked because in the “real world” people will defend themselves with violence if provoked. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, is certainly the rule in some unstable regions, and yet most of us would prefer our children learn to solve their problems without violence. For this reason, we aim to address the issue of hitting without violence.

A major difficulty for children being reared in poverty is that their world operates in a backward fashion in regards to money. Parents who work for a livable wage are able to model that hard work pays. For these kids, life says, “Without a good education, you’ll be without good work; without good work, you’ll go hungry.” However, for children being reared in less fortunate circumstances, they experience a different reality: perhaps no one works and yet they still have food and shelter. Furthermore, when under- resourced persons do make the effort to find work,

they face tremendous obstacles and may be unable to succeed due to transportation issues, health problems, and misunderstandings due to cultural differences. From the perspective of a child stuck in this situation, work is not associated with meeting basic needs and hard work may not pay off.

Therefore, we can tell children “work hard and someday it’ll pay off” and hope they will believe us, or we can show them right now, as children, that performance matters. For children being raised in poverty, this is a lesson best learned and reinforced as many times as possible beginning at the earliest age.

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