Name of the Activity: Premak Principal

Purpose: To provide motivation to students to complete an activity that is not voluntarily performed independently.

No special materials needed

Time: Brief (less than 30 seconds)

Procedure:

1. Determine activities that the student prefers by watching to see which activities the student engages in voluntarily or simply ask the student. Note the activities as well as the peers the student interacts with most often. Start small. Integrate the Premack Principle into one or two subjects or periods in which the student is having the most trouble. Focus on one preferred activity contingent upon one less-preferred activity.

2. Classify student preferences into highly preferred, moderately preferred, or not preferred activities. Remember that what is reinforcing for some students may not be reinforcing to others. Perhaps use a reinforcer menu that lists with words or pictures a variety of activities that the teacher can make available. A student can then rank the order of preferences to indicate the value of each reinforcer.

3. Match the effort of the less-preferred activity to the value of the preferred activity. Consider the amount of effort required for the student to perform the less-preferred activity and the reinforcing value of the preferred activity. For example, access to do research online (a preferred activity) may not be reinforcing enough for an hour of writing (a less-preferred activity).

4. Teach the student the sequence of activities. Access to the preferred activity will be given only after the completion of the less-preferred activity.

5. Be consistent in using the Premack Principle. Clearly state the activity that must be completed before providing access to the preferred activity. Make sure the student does not get the preferred activity if the less-preferred is not completed.

6. Vary the preferred activities that are selected; it is more effective than using the same reinforcers over and over again. Introduce novel activities that are similar to preferred activities. Repeated use of the same reinforcer can lead to boredom, lessening the motivating effectiveness.

7. If the student does not engage in or complete the less-preferred activity, consider the function or reason the student is not performing. If the function is to avoid the less-preferred activity, consider the reinforcing value of the preferred activity. Reduce the requirements for the less-preferred activity or increase the reinforcing value of the preferred activity.

8. Monitor the effectiveness of activities to motivate students to complete less preferred activities. Determine if the completion rate of the less-preferred task increases when the activity is presented and decreases when the activity consequence is withheld.

9. Fade the systematic use of preferred activities to motivate less-preferred activities. Praise the student when he or she is engaged in the less-preferred activity. Utilize natural reinforcers that occur automatically on a contingent basis. For example, praise for a homework assignment will not naturally occur unless the homework is complete. As the student becomes more proficient in performing the less-preferred activity, add to the sequence of tasks that must be complete before access to the preferred activity is available.
Research