Mystery Motivator

The Mystery Motivator can be used class wide or with individuals. Desired and expected behaviors are clearly defined and described. A chart is created to identify and track daily behaviors. If appropriate behaviors are demonstrated, the corresponding space on the chart is selected, which may show a Mystery Motivator symbol, whereby a prize is selected from a menu of options. The unknown nature of the reward serves to build and hold student interest.

Materials:

- "Invisible" markers (ex. Crayola Color Switchers: watercolor markers that include a pen with transparent ink)
- Weekly behavior charts (place an "invisible" mark—star, "MM"—on a space. When students demonstrate appropriate behaviors, a space on the chart is colored in. When the marker writes over the "invisible" ink, the mark appears and students receive the reward).
- Reward menu (ex. Extra recess, 5 min. for a class game, snacks, gum, extra reading time)
- Reward items

*This intervention may not be successful for students who are engaging in off-task behaviors as a means to gain attention (as determined by the FBA), as calling out student names for off-task behaviors may reinforce and lead to an increase in the undesired behavior.

Resources:

Mystery Motivator chart
ADHD: Mystery Motivator, Rena Little
Mystery Motivators on Pinterest
The Teacher ToolKit
Youtube Video

References:
Kraemer, E. E., Davies, S. C., Arndt, K. J., & Hunley, S. (2012). A comparison of the Mystery Motivator and the Get 'Em On Task interventions for off-task behaviors. Psychology in the Schools, 49(2), 163-175.

Implementation Procedures:

1. As a class, identify desired behaviors (within varied learning situations: whole group, small group, peer work, or individual work). Model, demonstrate, and role play to ensure student understanding. Use of Rules Within Routines Matrix may be effective and may help with generalization to other classes and settings.
2. Explain that students will have the opportunity to earn rewards for appropriate behavior.
3. As a class, identify desired rewards (ex: special activities, snacks).
4. Designate the point value/cost for the various items. Create goals based on points per day (for example, 10 points available per day).
- Pre-determine when students can use their banked points to exchange for a reward item. For example, depending on the age and ability of students, and in order to build their endurance for demonstrating the appropriate behaviors, you may want to offer the reward exchange opportunity in smaller increments, and gradually extend this time (end of a class period, middle of the day, end of the day, end of the week.)
5. As a class, identify behaviors to avoid, particularly in areas where students have struggled (i.e. negative language, not cooperating during group work).
6. Identify the minimum behavioral requirements for earning the reward.
7. When the class demonstrates identified on-task behaviors, a space on the chart is colored in.
- If the Mystery Mark appears, the class earns the reward.
- If the Mystery Mark does not appear, verbally praise the students for their behavior and efforts.
8. If the class earns all the possible Mystery Motivators for the week, they earn the reward from a Bonus Points menu.

Tips:
- Vary where the Mystery Mark is located so there is not a pattern for students to follow.
- This system can be modified for use with various age ranges.
- Start small: perhaps use this system with only one class period/subject a day, or just in the mornings or afternoons. As students build up endurance for demonstrating the appropriate behaviors, use the intervention across more of the school day.