TIX 116: Creative Cartooning for Language, Learning, and Laughter

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Descriptors: Creative Expression, Freehand Drawing, Reading Skills, Communication Skills, Art Materials.

- Through cartooning children who are weak in reading and language arts may be motivated to accept help in grammar and creative writing, to refine their motor and eye-hand coordination, and to improve their social communication and school adjustment. Cartooning is most successful with boys and girls in grades 4 through 7. It is a satisfactory small group project for children with learning and/or behavioral disorders.

THE MATERIALS
A cartooning lesson requires little in the way of materials. Paper and pencil will suffice, although felt tip markers and liquid crayons may be more appealing than pencils. In addition, some of the commercial cartoon books will help break the figures apart and give samples of features for children to put together in their own imaginative ways. A talent for drawing is not a prerequisite. What is needed, however, is an attitude of encouragement and enthusiasm that will spread from teacher to students.

THE LESSON PLAN
A good lesson plan is also a necessary part of the material. For example, the day's language lesson may have three objectives: The students will study adjectives, practice auditory discrimination, and increase vocabularies. The teacher begins by asking the students to draw some cartoon faces that can be described with a name. If the name Frank is selected, how does Frank look? Only adjectives that repeat the initial sound of the name should be used. Maybe he looks frightened. The cartoon character is named Frightened Frank. The name has an adjective repeating its initial sound. One or two more adjectives may be added to describe Frank, but each must follow the phonics rule.

In the same way, a student may think his character, Dan, looks odd or strange. He becomes Daffy Dan. A sweet little girl could be named Sweet Sue. Or an easy-

TIX 117: Novel Reinforcement in a Token Economy System

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Descriptors: Positive Reinforcement, Operant Conditioning, Emotionally Disturbed.

- Numerous reports by teachers who have applied behavior modification principles have demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach. Special educators are constantly faced with the need to develop novel approaches for implementing operant conditioning procedures. One such novel approach was put into effect in a classroom for intermediate aged emotionally disturbed children at the Children's Rehabilitation Unit of the University of Kansas Medical Center.

IDENTIFYING AND RECORDING BEHAVIORS
The teacher and each child in the class jointly identified a problem classroom behavior. This pinpointing process focused on both academic and social behaviors. Those behaviors selected consisted of such things as raising a hand to speak, doing something within one minute of first being told, staying in one's seat except when given permission to be out, and handing in only completed papers. A chart for each individual's selected behavior was constructed and hung in the student's individual study carrel. Each chart was divided into a

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going fellow fits the name Carefree Carl. The name chosen with the proper adjective meets the first two lesson objectives.

If a student cannot think of words to describe his character, he may ask another student or look up a word in the dictionary. Whatever his choice, he will add new words to his vocabulary.

IMPROVING COMMUNICATION
Cartoons drawn one day may be saved for later use. Plan a story writing lesson about what frightened Frank or why Sue is so sweet. Study a few sentences for grammar and structure or look at a whole paragraph for imaginative thought. Putting ideas in written form is difficult for children with learning disorders, and it is always more meaningful and motivating if the writing has personal reference.

The small group, relaxed and having fun, gives impetus to cooperative group work. Students help each other name their cartoons and share descriptions. They may also be encouraged to put several characters together in a story or cartoon sequence. It is not hard to work together when the task is enjoyable, and cartooning facilitates better socialization.

THE FINISHED PRODUCTS
The finished products of cartoon lessons make unique bulletin board learning centers. They provide an opportunity for the entire school to see the good work of youngsters who are usually starved for recognition. Display their cartoons and include several unnamed characters to challenge other students who will also enjoy sharing in the learning experience.

The benefits derived from creative cartooning extend beyond mere enjoyment of art. Youngsters can improve their reading and language skills, motor coordination, social communication, school status, and general good humor. That is a lot of mileage from a funny face.

series of columns and labeled with the child’s name and the identified behavior (see Figure 1). Each student was then given an opportunity to earn stars to place on the chart by engaging in the appropriate pinpointed behavior. The stars were dispensed on a daily basis according to individualized criteria decided upon prior to initiation of the program. The stars were affixed to the chart in a given column until a particular column was filled.

BONUS CARDS
When a column was completed, which took on the average of one week, the student was given an opportunity to select a bonus card from a deck of 3 x 5 inch index cards (see Figure 2). The cards were stacked with the bonus reinforcement face down, thus requiring the student to randomly choose one card in the deck. Although each card provided some form of reinforcement, each did so in a different manner. For example, one card allowed the child to replace a subject of his choice with free time, another to involve the principal of the demonstration school in a game of ping pong, and another to accompany the teacher to the snack bar for a soft drink. Each bonus was carefully selected to assure that it would be reinforcing.

BENEFITS
This particular reinforcement system was extremely successful, probably because of the multiplicity of procedures used. The system provided an opportunity for self graphing, the earning of tokens which could be exchanged for meaningful rewards, and the novelty of a game atmosphere in which the child was never aware of what the reward would be. With only a few minor modifications, the approach could be applied to a variety of age groups and exceptionalities.