

Stamps

Use this strategy to:

- ✓ Manage groups
- ✓ Build group accountability
- ✓ Provide positive reinforcement for effective group work
- ✓ Encourage inactive kids to participate in group conversations

This strategy will help students address the following New Mexico process standards:

- Problem solving
- Reasoning and Proof
- Communication
- Connections
- Representation

Grade Level: Appropriate for all grades

Materials: Self inking stamp (for teacher), half sheets of blank paper for each group

Background

How to use this strategy:

How to set up stamps: At the beginning of each class period each group of students has a stamp sheet easily accessible to the teacher. Students are responsible for listing the members of the group or the group name on the sheet. The teacher will establish a pattern for walking around the room and this stamp sheet should be located where the teacher can easily stamp the sheet.

Why give stamps: Stamps are given for a variety of reasons including working together, using vocabulary, homework completion, on task behavior, volunteering an answer, lack of tardies, having materials, sharing materials, explaining their thinking, sharing a strategy, asking good questions or for whatever you feel you need to be reinforced or encouraged at the time. For example, you might be having difficulty with students working together, so when you catch them working together, you give the group a stamp.

How to reinforce positive behavior: When stamping a paper, reinforce verbally why the group is getting the stamp to help students understand your expectations. When other students can benefit from the reinforcement, speak loudly so other groups hear and understand your expectations. Stamping is intended as a positive strategy. The teacher is responsible for guaranteeing that all groups get stamps and positive reinforcement.

Raising the expectation: As targeted behaviors become habit, stop stamping for them and begin to stamp for other behaviors you want to develop.

Example: Initially you might give stamps to encourage participation in the group. Once all students are working together in a group, start giving stamps for the quality of their mathematical conversations.

Giving a grade: At the end of each day one member of that group turns in the stamp sheet with the number of stamps totaled and circled. The group with the most stamps for that day gets a 100, the next group gets 95, and so forth. If there is a tie then both groups get that grade. This can be recorded as a daily participation grade. Lowest grade for stamps should be a “B” – the teacher should never give an F for a stamp participation grade. The purpose of stamps is to provide positive reinforcement and to give a boost to the student(s) who feels unsuccessful and needs a boost or motivation to keep trying.

Stamps

The number of stamps they need to get the 100 always changes depending on how many you give out, some days it takes 24, sometimes 6, sometimes 40. Remember you always control the number of stamps you give out and some days you just go stamp happy.

- **Grades:** Students may keep track of daily grades on their assignment sheets or in their binders to remind them of the type of contributions they are making in class daily.

Other things to consider:

Assessment:

Assess students' degree of mastery of material and reward the groups whose members reach the pre-set criterion or give bonus points on individual scores if criterion is met. Students may self-evaluate group performance (e.g., active listening, checking each other for understanding, and encouraging each other) and set goals for further interaction.

Reference:

Trevino, E., & Whitman, C. (2007, December). *Stamps*. Activity presented at the MC² CMP Conference, Ruidoso, NM.

Things to remember about Stamps

- ❖ Make it public what the stamps are for – let students know what behaviors you are reinforcing.
- ❖ Celebrate successes!
- ❖ Bring the class together at the end of day and talk about why they got stamps. Recording stamp participation grades can help kids think about why they are getting stamps and reflect on what positive behaviors really stood out in the class. This is something to be done often in the beginning and then occasionally later. This helps students understand the reason why stamps are given and teacher's expectations for the class.