

This Issue: MOTIVATION

By this time of the year, teachers start to see a decline in the natural motivation that comes with the start of a new year. Students are settling in to the routines of the classroom and becoming comfortable with a new situation. The desire to put one's best foot forward and make a good impression has started to ebb, but we've only just begun, really. There is still over half of the year to go and much left to teach!

What can teachers do to fire up their students about learning? Is it possible to engage and excite kids when you may not even be that inspired? Yes! Read on to find out what motivates students and how to put it into action in your classroom!

What IS Motivation?

Motivation can be divided into two categories: Intrinsic and Extrinsic. Understanding the difference and knowing how to work with each are key issues for teachers.

Extrinsic: The will to do something based on an outside reward or punishment. Many teachers use a reward system in the classroom, and while it may be productive for a while, over the long term it is detrimental. Motivation based on extrinsic factors can be temporary unless there is a gradual weaning and replacement with more intrinsic motivations. If a teacher does not use extrinsic motivators properly, the drive to do well can be extinguished. Examples of extrinsic motivators include candy, toys, and point systems. It is very important to offer extrinsic motivators in a random fashion so that students work at optimum levels at all times, rather than just for the reward.

Intrinsic: This is a desire to perform a behavior and do well for its own sake. Teachers who focus in intrinsic factors to motivate their students nurture a natural curiosity and desire for understanding and help to create positive patterns of learning. Examples of intrinsic motivation are task completion, a sense of mastery, and the acquisition of knowledge or skills.

Why Aren't They Motivated?

Attribution Theory tells us that students who believe that their poor performance is caused by factors out of their control are unlikely to feel inspired to improve. In contrast, if students attribute poor performance to a lack of skills or inadequate study habits, they are more likely to persist in the future. Determining which category students fall into can be difficult, but begin by narrowing down the cause(s).

Here are common factors that may contribute to a lack of motivation:

- Previously poor academic results
- Inefficient study methods
- Poor time management
- Unrealistic goals
- Fear of failure
- Lack of perseverance
- Procrastination
- Lack of encouragement from family
- Boredom with the same routine

Also In This Issue:

- [Tips For Developing Motivation](#)
- [How To Praise The Unmotivated Student](#)

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Suggestions for Developing Motivation

Understanding the reasons for a student's lack of motivation to do quality work, participate in class discussions, or even want to come to school is only the first step. Knowing how to bring the unenthusiastic student around to being a participating member of your classroom community and ultimately develop their intrinsic motivation is your real challenge.

When a learner believes that the purpose of doing well is personal improvement and understanding, they feel successful when they master new skills and gain knowledge. Assigning tasks that are meaningful, concrete, relevant, and of the appropriate difficulty level is a key consideration for teachers. In addition, creating task-oriented, rather than ego-oriented, classrooms, in which students are recognized for effort and improvement, rather than for "ability" is important.

Educators can foster student autonomy, which leads to a rise in intrinsic motivation, by providing choices, allowing alternative solutions, and requiring that students participate in setting goals for themselves. While those goals are developed, take the time to find out about each student's interests and let that knowledge inform future curriculum decisions. Most importantly, use positive feedback and praise frequently, and always teach with enthusiasm. If you're not excited about what you're teaching, your students are definitely going to be apathetic!

How To Work With A Student Who Needs Motivation

- Provide consistent encouragement
- Be very careful not to sound sarcastic!
- Always connect your support and positive comments with their efforts.
- Develop a one to one relationship with the unmotivated student.
- Let the student know that you recognize their accomplishments.
- Demonstrate that you have confidence that he or she can continue to do well.

Secret Weapon

Having your whole class reward system tied into this student's effort can be very effective in utilizing peer pressure to work for the unmotivated student. For instance, if the teacher has directed the class to do some problems, the teacher rewards the whole class for the unmotivated student completing one and then another. Soon the class will be cheering the student on to complete her work as it benefits the entire class!

HOW TO Praise THE UNMOTIVATED STUDENT

Point out the success:

"Do you see what you have done?"

Specifically define what occurred:

"You were able to complete this assignment on time and got a 95% on it!"

Encourage them onto the next step, tying with past success:

"If you can do these three problems, you can do the next group as well"

Make a statement of belief in them:

"I knew you could do it!"