

TECHNIQUES FOR STUDENTS MOTIVATION

Karabasappa Channappa Nandihally

Assistant Professor Of English

Government First Grade College, U.G.&P.G. Centre

Dental College Road, Vidyanagar, Davanagere.

Abstract

In his book, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, Daniel Pink argues that extrinsic motivations such as grades, standardized tests and financial rewards are merely temporary incentives that cannot provide a sustainable framework for quality learning and careers. The question then is how can we educators encourage our future world citizens to develop their own determination to learn and succeed? Although it seems paradoxical to us to extrinsically motivate our students to intrinsically motivate themselves, there are five main areas in which we can help to create an environment that will offer the perfect conditions for intrinsic motivation to develop. The best lessons, books, and materials in the world won't get students excited about learning and willing to work hard if they're not motivated.

Motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, is a key factor in the success of students at all stages of their education, and teachers can play a pivotal role in providing and encouraging that motivation in their students. Of course that's much easier said than done, as all students are motivated differently and it takes time and a lot of effort to learn to get a classroom full of kids enthusiastic about learning, working hard, and pushing themselves to excel.

Even the most well-intentioned and educated teachers sometimes lack the skills to keep kids on track, so whether you're a new teacher or an experienced one, try using these methods to motivate your students and to encourage

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INTRODUCTION

Assigning a piece of writing? Allow students to pick their own genre—such as reports, poems, creative writing stories, plays, or songs—when assigning a topic. When students can pick their favorite form of writing, they'll stay intrinsically motivated. Holding class or even just a short discussion in a new environment, whether a park, museum, or the school library, is a great way to stoke student interest. When you return to your classroom, they may see a new approach to a problem or assignment. Participate in a competition. As long as there is appreciation for everyone's best effort and not all attention is placed solely on the winner, a competition can be a great way to create excitement. Students should have multiple opportunities to set their own academic goals. Invite them to establish obtainable goals for a lesson, a unit, or even for the

whole year. Ask them what they would like to learn about a topic and what they think they must do to learn that material. Psychologists tell us that the goals we set for ourselves (as opposed to the goals others set for us) are intrinsically more motivational. We're more inclined to pursue those goals and relish in the success that comes about when we achieve them. Students must be able to see a direct connection between any effort or completed task (such as homework) and a response from you, both verbal and written. Make sure you mention each student's personal progress, rather than comparing his or her work with others in the class. Provide numerous opportunities for students to share their accomplishments with the class and the class to share their achievements with the larger school community. Use skits, plays, readers theater productions, library displays, bulletin boards, a class newspaper or newsletter, or other media to promote the efforts of the whole classroom.

The problem is that many students are not motivated to learn. Even with the perfect lesson plan in place, an unmotivated student will not learn. Some teachers claim that motivating students is not their job. It is a teacher's job to know the content and to teach it well; the student must take responsibility for his or her learning and find his or her own motivation. This old-fashioned idea is what limits many teachers to being average. A great teacher recognizes that student motivation is necessary for success in learning and that teachers are in the perfect position to improve student motivation. Here are some strategies that can be used in the classroom to help motivate students: According to Robert Marzano, "Positive relationships between teachers and students are among the most commonly cited variables associated with effective instruction. If the relationship is strong, instructional strategies seem to be more effective." Here are some great ways to gain the trust of your students and learn what is meaningful to them.



1. Students Opportunity

In the art project pictured right, students cut out silhouettes of themselves and then decorate them with symbols to represent their interests and important experiences. This is a fun way to start your school year, and can give you useful insights into the lives of your students. Consider doing one yourself, so they can learn about you, too!

2. Make Better Decisions

By collecting data digitally, you can instantly refer to it throughout the year when making decisions about class projects and assessments, allowing you to build on the strengths and interests of individual students. Tritely is a great online tool that will provide a detailed picture of each student's interests and skills.

3. Full Fill Students Expectation.

When students feel that you have a genuine interest in what you can do to gain their respect, they will be more willing to do what they can to gain yours. Asking for their opinions about what constitutes a good teacher in their eyes, and doing your best to live up to their descriptions, will show students that what they say matters to you.

4. Let Students Choose What They Want To Learn.

“Genius Hour” (also called, “20% Time” or “Passion Time”) has become a huge trend in education. Originally based on a concept used in some famous companies such as Google and Federal Express where workers were given time during their work week to pursue their own creative projects, teachers around the world have developed ways to include this in their own school schedules. One of the most popular pages on my website, Engage Their Minds, is the Genius Hour Resources page, which offers examples and resources on how to facilitate Genius Hour in your own classroom.

5. Give Students Options

Perhaps you don't have the freedom to allow students to choose their own learning topics. That doesn't mean they can't still have choices. You can give students their own options for how to achieve their learning objectives. Many teachers offer their students “Choice Boards,” allowing them to tailor their own learning activities to individual preferences. This example of an art history choice board for primary students provides learning styles options to help students make their decisions.

6. Students Assessments.

We know that we need evidence of learning from our students so we can report this to their parents and the school. However, assessments can come in many forms. Choice boards can be used to suggest ways to demonstrate learning, just as they are used to present a variety of learning activities. A great digital tool for product suggestions is “The Differentiator,” which was adapted from David Chung and The Flip Book, Too by Sandra N. Kaplan, Bette Gould & Victoria Siegel by Ian Byrd, a gifted educator and author of Byrdseed.com. Teachers spend years of hard work and thousands of dollars to become experts in their content areas, with degrees and teaching certification to prove it. We develop curriculum maps and teaching calendars to be sure to cover the appropriate standards. We endure hours of professional development so that we are well versed in all the current educational pedagogy. We collaborate with colleagues so that we are all using best practices in the classroom. We develop assessments for students so that we can track their progress. When all this doesn't work, we have intentional interventions aimed at getting students back on track.

7. Promote Growth Mindset Over Fixed Mindset.

In her book, *Mindset*, Carol Dweck argues that students have an underlying belief about learning: either a fixed mindset or a growth mindset. A fixed mindset belief suggests that people are born with or without certain abilities and talents, and that abilities cannot be changed. Fixed mindset learners try to prove themselves and will often shy away from challenges because they do not want to appear to be struggling. A growth mindset learner, on the other hand, believes that abilities and talents can be cultivated and improved through hard work. Growth mindset students enjoy a challenge and see struggles and failures as necessary parts of growth. Learners with a growth mindset are certainly more motivated to work hard.

One of the most powerful elements of feedback for our learners is to praise them for their efforts and hard work. “I can tell that you have been practicing your reading,” or “The practice is paying off on your times tables,” tells learners that they have the power to improve their academic success. That said, we must stop praising ability: “Wow, you are such a smart math student,” or “You are such an incredible reader.” Praise for abilities over efforts reinforces the fixed mindset that students have the ability or they don’t and no amount of hard work on the learner’s part can change the outcome. We are all learners, and should be encouraged as such.

Throughout a learning cycle, teachers assess student progress by incorporating formative and summative assessments.

The purpose of formative assessment is to pinpoint the learning needed for ultimate success on a later summative assessment. Formative assessment informs teachers and students about student and classroom needs for improvement so both can act accordingly to improve performance on the final assessment. Some formative assessments are: a thumbs up/thumbs down check for understanding, a quiz in small groups, or an exit slip at the end of a lesson. What is important is that students get timely and descriptive feedback from the assessment so that they can move forward in their learning. This cycle of learning will improve results on a later summative assessment. As teachers, we can model the growth mindset. Have courage! Ask students for feedback about your teaching and be willing to make necessary changes. Be dedicated! Work hard for students and share how hard work and dedication translates to success and growth. This feedback shows that we, too, are learners. It also invites our students to continue on the learning journey alongside us. Students are always willing to work hard for a teacher that is reciprocating that hard work.

8. Develop Respectful Relationships With Your Students.

If we are going to truly inspire and motivate all of our students, we should know each of them on a personal level. We need to know their interests and hobbies, who they hang out with, their family situations, and what gets them excited. Each student is going to require different motivational strategies, and we have to know them to be able to predict what strategies might work. We all learn differently. In each classroom several types of learners exist: visual, tactile, verbal and more reserved. We can see it as our responsibility to discover

this by knowing them and endeavor to teach them accordingly. This work results in our ability to know our students which leads to a more cohesive, open learning community.

9. Grow a Community Of Learners In Your Classroom.

Students need a classroom environment that is safe, where they are willing to take risks and struggle. To achieve this goal, the students and teacher must work together towards common collective goals. Students must be willing to work with and assist other students in class. Struggle should be acceptable and encouraged as a part of the learning process. Traditional teaching consists of teachers lecturing and learners taking notes, followed by the learners doing independent work to check for understanding. Transforming this outdated model to include more time where students are talking to students brings about true community. Student work should be proudly displayed throughout the classroom. This sends a message to students that they are active participants in creating the knowledge in the classroom. The teacher is not the sole holder of knowledge. Additionally, teachers can use language that promotes the community of learners – including the teacher – rather than a room full of individual learners. Using the words “we” and “our” rather than “I” and “you” has a significant impact on classroom culture, and how students function as interdependent learners.

10. Be Inspirational.

Most adults can recall a specific teacher from their childhood who had a lasting impact. These are the teachers that have inspired, challenged, and motivated students enough to be memorable years later. Inspirational teachers represent success to their students. Teacher success might be: completing a 10K race, owning a small business, or receiving a teaching award. We each have successes to share. Through our triumphs, students can learn what success looks like and go after it. Once our students decide that they want success, they pay close attention to the behaviors and choices and even sacrifices that led us to our success. These behaviors include hard work, willingness to struggle, and ability to learn from our mistakes. Students internalize our behaviors and strategies as a way to accomplish their own goals. We give them an opportunity to do so in our everyday routines, assignments and encounters with them.

11. Create a Threat-Free Environment.

While students do need to understand that there are consequences to their actions, far more motivating for students than threats are positive reinforcements. When teachers create a safe, supportive environment for students, affirming their belief in a student’s abilities rather than laying out the consequences of not doing things, students are much more likely to get and stay motivated to do their work. At the end of the day, students will fulfill the expectations that the adults around them communicate, so focus on can, not can’t.

12.. Change your Scenery.

A classroom is a great place for learning, but sitting at a desk day in and day out can make school start to seem a bit dull for some students. To renew interest in the subject matter or just in learning in general, give your students a chance to get out of the classroom. Take field trips, bring in speakers, or even just head to the library for some research. The brain loves novelty and a new setting can be just what some students need to stay motivated to learn.

CONCLUSION

Knowing our students also has some other benefits, namely that it allows you to relate classroom material to things that students are interested in or have experienced. Teachers can use these interests to make things more interesting and relatable to students, keeping students motivated for longer. It can be great to help students get motivated, but at the end of the day they need to be able to generate their own motivation. Helping students find their own personal reasons for doing class work and working hard, whether because they find material interesting, want to go to college, or just love to learn, is one of the most powerful gifts you can give them. When students are interacting and engaged, they won't have to time to get bored. Choose students at random to answer questions, and make it understood that you value their input and ideas. Student interaction and sharing enhances instructional time and prepares students to function more effectively as a body of learners. We must recognize the importance of these dynamics and find ways to celebrate student intelligence.

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