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Motivating Students: Identifying and Motivating Reluctant Learners to Reach Their Academic Potential

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MOTIVATING STUDENTS:

IDENTIFYING AND MOTIVATING RELUCTANT LEARNERS TO REACH THEIR ACADEMIC POTENTIAL

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EDCS 597	Grad Research	3	S. Schmitz	Fall 2007
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ABSTRACT

MOTIVATING STUDENTS:

IDENTIFYING AND MOTIVATING RELUCTANT LEARNERS TO REACH THEIR ACADEMIC POTENTIAL

By

Kim Yeager

February 27, 2008

Motivation plays an important role in determining how well a child will perform in school (Philips & Lindsay, 2006). Regardless of how intelligent or capable a student may be if the student is not motivated to do well then their academic performance will be less than it could have been with some motivation. Teachers need to understand why some students are motivated to try hard in school and why some students are not. This understanding will lead teachers to understand why their students are not reaching their academic potential. The purpose of this project was to design a guide that helps teachers motivate otherwise unmotivated students. The project includes ways teachers can identify students who may be below standard because of a lack of motivation, instead of a lack of ability. The project then proposes a program to help teachers motivate reluctant learners to try their best in school.

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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

Introduction

Motivation is one of the keys to a student's success in school. All students have a unique academic potential they can reach if they are motivated. While not all students can earn the highest marks in school, all students can give their best effort. There are always students, however, who do not seem to be as motivated in school. Preckel, Holling, and Vock (2006) called these students who are not living up to their potential "academic underachievers." These are students who have a gap between what their academic performance could be and their actual, current performance in school. Daniels and Arapostathis (2005) termed these students who have the ability to achieve but choose not to as "reluctant learners" (p. 35). Research has shown that motivation plays a "crucial role" as one of the factors of underachievement (Preckel et al., 2006).

Children who are highly motivated in school are more likely to make an effort to learn and to remember what they have been taught. For example, Naceur and Schiefele (2005) examined how intrinsic motivation affects text recall. They found that students who were interested in the text recalled more of their reading than students who had a low interest. Aunola, Leskinen and Nurmi (2006) found that as student motivation in math increased, so did student performance, which then cycled back into high math-related motivation. Duncan and McKeachie (2005) found that students who have positive motivational beliefs tend to think more about what they learn and how they learn than students who have more negative motivational beliefs.

According to Linnenbrink (2003), a simple definition of a motivated student is a student who shows interest in school projects, feels an enthusiasm for school, and believes that education is necessary and important. A student who has a high interest in school and enjoys receiving an education wants to succeed and try his/her best. A simple description of a less motivated student would be a student who has low interest in school, frequently feels bored, and does not see the value of education. Less motivated students are likely to perform poorly in school, since they see no reason to put forth any effort to succeed. The author will be using Linnenbrink's description of a more motivated student in the review of the literature and the project.

Motivation is primarily driven by two forces: control and emotion. How motivated a student is can depend on how much control the student believes he/she has over his/her performance. Motivation is also based on emotion, or the positive or negative feelings a child has about school, or even more specifically, a specific task at hand (Meyer & Turner, 2006). Most factors that influence motivation, whether to increase or decrease motivation, are based on whether a child believes he/she controls his/her learning, the child's feelings about the assignment, or a combination of both control and emotion.

It is also necessary to understand that motivation is neither stagnant nor permanent. Motivation can constantly change and fluctuate, depending on the interests and abilities of the student. A student may have a strong interest in sports and, therefore, be highly motivated to do well in physical education. This same student may dislike math and may therefore put less effort in math class than in PE. It could be said that this

student is motivated, but it would be just as true to say that the student is less motivated, since the motivation depends on the class the student is attending. Students cannot be labeled as motivated or unmotivated, nor can student motivation be "characterized in some quantitative manner between two endpoints on a single continuum" (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002, p. 313). In other words, student motivation is not a simple "yes" or "no" question; rather, the answer depends on the context of the situation and several different variables. When reviewing the different causes of motivation, it is important to remember that the different perceived causes are not all-inclusive, but instead apply to different situations and conditions in each student's academic career. It is also important to understand that as motivation can not be characterized in a quantitative manner (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002, p. 313), then student motivation is something that is perceived. The teacher must make a judgment call based on their definition of a motivated student, and in this project the author will be using Linnenbrink's definition of a motivated student: a student who shows interest in school projects, feels an enthusiasm for school, and believes that education is necessary and important (Linnenbrink, 2003).

It is also important to understand the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is when a student is interested in a task for its own sake, while a student who is extrinsically motivated is interested in a task as a "means to an end" (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2002, p. 318). It is better for a student to be extrinsically motivated than not motivated at all. However, intrinsic motivation is preferable because students who learn for the value of learning will most likely always be motivated, while students who learn in hope of an external reward will most likely only be motivated until

they earn their reward. It is important to differentiate between each type of motivation because the factors that influence motivation and the causes of amotivation can be traced back to whether the student is motivated intrinsically or extrinsically.

While most teachers want to see their students succeed in school and want them to love learning, it can be difficult to know how to motivate students who do not seem to care about school. Teachers need to know why those students are disinterested in school and how to help those students to be more motivated. This project will make it possible for teachers to motivate their students.

Significance of the Project

As a 5th grade teacher in the Puyallup School District, I have seen how important it is to a child's chances of success in school that he/she is motivated to try his/her best. I have seen the difference in academic performance in both highly motivated and less motivated students. I believe that students who are less motivated could perform much better in school if they learned to care about their education. I feel that student performance will improve if teachers know how to identify students with perceived low motivation and are equipped with strategies for motivating these reluctant learners.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to help teachers learn how to motivate students who are otherwise struggle with the motivation to try their best in school. A sequential plan was developed to help teachers recognize students who may be below standard because of a perceived low motivation instead of low ability, and then to increase the motivation of these students. The program includes different ways to identify low-motivated students and then to identify different strategies for increasing their desire to do their best in school.

Limitations of the Project

The project was designed specifically for teachers of intermediate elementary students (grades 4-6) at a Title I school. The project does not target specific subjects; rather, teachers will need to adapt the material in the project to specific subjects for which their students may show low motivation. The influences that factors such as gender, culture and ethnicity may have on student motivation were not addressed in this project.

Definition of Terms

Amotivation- absence of motivation (Legault, Pelletier & Green-Demers, 2006)

Contingency- the uncontrollability of a situation (Firmin, Hwang, Copella & Clark, 2004)

Cognition- the attributions that people make regarding their situation or surroundings of which they are a part (Firmin & et al., 2006).

Motivated student- shows interest in school projects, feels an enthusiasm for school, and believes that education is necessary and important (Linnenbrink, 2003).

Reluctant learners- students, who possess the ability to achieve, but choose not to participate in school learning experiences (Daniels & Arapostathis, 2005).

Scaffolding- When a teacher helps a student learn once the student has reached his/her optimal level of learning on one's own (Mattanah, Pratt, Cowan & Cowan, 2004).

Self-efficacy- person's belief that he/she is able or unable to perform a task at hand (Steifer, 2004).

Self-worth- the judgment one makes about one's sense of worth and dignity as a person (Steifer, 2004).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of the literature is organized into four sections. The first section reviews a variety of reasons why a student may be less motivated. The second section addresses methods for recognizing highly motivated and low motivated students. The third section discusses the different factors influencing motivation. In conclusion, strategies for helping low motivated students will be addressed.

Reasons for Amotivation in Students

In order to motivate less motivated students, teachers need to understand why some students struggle with the motivation to do their best in school. Just as there are several perceived reasons why students may wish to reach their academic potential, there are also several reasons why some students give little or no effort in school. When teachers are familiar with these reasons, they will be better able to identify and help less motivated students. It is important to remember that motivation is primarily driven by how much control students believe they have over their performance, as well as the emotions accompanying students when they begin a task. Absence of motivation for a given task likely occurs because of a child's belief he/she has no control over the result of his/her performance, or a negative emotion the child associates with the task, or a combination of both.

Learned helplessness is one major reason why students may feel less motivated to try in school. Learned helplessness in the academic setting basically means students

firmly believe they have no control over how well they do in school. According to Firmin, Hwang, Copella and Clark (2004), there are three causes of learned helplessness: contingency, cognition, and behavior. Contingency and cognition are closely intertwined. Contingency refers to chance, or uncontrollability of a situation, while cognition is to what students credit their success or failure. To illustrate, a student may take a test and fail it. If a student thinks he/she failed because the test was too hard, this is an example of both contingency (the level of difficulty of the assessment was out of the student's control) and cognition (the student attributes lack of the success to the difficulty of the test instead of to his/her study skills). Lastly, behavior is a factor that may lead to learned helplessness. According to Firmin et al. (2004), behavior concerns whether students decide to persist in trying when facing a difficult task. Instead of meeting a challenge head on, students struggling with learned helplessness choose to give up and avoid the difficulty of the task.

In addition to the child thinking he/she has little or no control over the outcome of a task, the child may also associate negative feelings with a task. If a students feels negatively about an assignment, this leads to a decrease in motivation.

For one, if a student feels that he/she lacks the ability to complete a task or has low self-efficacy, this student will likely become detached from school and have little belief about their academic ability (Battin-Pearson, Newcomb, Abbott, Hill, Catalano & Hawkins, 2000). Legault, Green-Demers and Pelletier (2006) stated that, "poor belief in one's ability is a driving component of academic disengagement" (p. 568).

Connected to the lack of self-efficacy is a lack of belief that one can put forth the effort to complete a task. Students have to believe that they are not only able to complete a task, but that they can maintain the effort the task requires (Legault et al., 2006). Even if a student believes he/she has the ability to complete a task, if the student has no desire to put forth the effort then the student will continue to struggle with low motivation.

Another cause of low motivation may be that a student attaches no value to a lesson or a task (Legault et al., 2006). While this may motivate the student to ask the timeless, "When are we ever going to use this?" question, not seeing the importance of a lesson can lead to a decreased desire to master the concept being taught.

Low motivation can also result when a student feels a project, lesson, etc. is uninteresting or boring. In other words, the characteristics of the task can lead to decreased motivation (Legault et al., 2006). Legault stated that: "When a task is void of interesting or stimulating qualities and when it is boring, routine, tedious, arduous, or irrelevant, amotivation may ensue. Such an activity is likely to be abandoned or neglected. Thus, the unappealing characteristics of the academic task may indeed lead to academic disengagement." (p. 569). Students who are interested in a task can stay focused on the activity for a longer period of time (Harackiewicz, 2000).

Parents also play an important role in motivating their children in school. Parents' beliefs, goals, and values concerning their child's education in school can predict how well their child does in school (Spera, 2006). Authoritative parenting style, as opposed to an authoritarian or permissive style, will most likely influence children to be intrinsically motivated in school (Spera, 2006). Authoritative parents have high

standards for their children, but because they explain why they value education, their children become intrinsically motivated to succeed. Authoritarian parents may also have high standards for their children, but these children will more likely be extrinsically motivated. In other words, they value education because doing well can result in a reward. Permissive parents have lower demands for their children; therefore, the children are less motivated simply because their parents expect little of them (Gonzalez & Wolters, 2006).

Authoritative parents may be more likely to help their children with their schoolwork through scaffolding. Scaffolding encourages children to learn for mastery and not performance goals, which then encourages intrinsic motivation (Mattanah, Pratt, Cowan & Cowan, 2004).

In addition to parents' expectations, the expectations of a student's teacher can influence the perceived level of motivation of a student. Students generally rise to a teacher's expectations. A study concerning teacher expectations and students self-perception was conducted in New Zealand. The results of this study found that the academic self-perception of students matched the teacher's expectations of the student's performance. Students for whom the teacher had high-expectations had increased self-perceptions, while the students for whom the teacher had low-expectations experienced a decrease in self-perception (Rubie-Davies, 2006). Rubie-Davies (2006) states that teachers and families need to work together "to ensure that students remain optimistic, motivated, and successful within the school environment" (p. 550).

Along with teacher expectations, the amount of support a teacher gives students can affect the perceived students' motivation level. Marchand and Skinner (2007) stated that: "teachers play a key role in providing motivational support" (p. 66). Students will be more likely to be motivated in a classroom managed by an authoritative teacher, just as children will be more likely to be motivated with authoritative parents. Teachers who have a warm relationship with their students, who provide structure, and allow students to follow their own interests help motivate students; teachers who are less friendly with students, provide little structure and little choice can decrease student motivation (Marchand & Skinner, 2007).

In summary, there are several causes of low motivation in students. Students may feel that success or failure is out of their control, and therefore there is no point for them to put forth any effort. Students may be unable or unwilling to take responsibility for their education. A less motivated student may feel that a task is too hard and will then want to avoid it. Students may believe that they lack the ability to complete a task, or they are unwilling to give the effort they believe the task requires in order to do a good job. If a student sees no value to an assignment; no application to the child's life, the student may feel less motivated to complete it. Or students may struggle with motivation simply because they see an assignment as boring. Lastly, an absence of motivation may result from low expectations from parents and/or teachers.

Recognizing Low Motivated Students

It is important to know the causes of motivation and amotivation so that teachers are better informed to help their students. It is also necessary for teachers to be able to

identify what specifically is motivating, or not motivating, each student. In other words, it is not enough to proclaim one student "motivated" and another student "unmotivated" to reach their potential in school. If one student lacks motivation because of many past failures while another student is less motivated because of a lack of interest in the current assignment, then those two students need different types of encouragement to motivate them. Therefore, teachers need to know how to identify the different causes of low motivation in the students.

A good starting point is identifying whether the perceived low motivation is caused by the students thinking they have no control over their performance, or a negative feeling associated with an assignment, or both. In the following paragraphs, the author has addressed certain behaviors of students who are less motivated because they believe they have no control or have negative feelings.

Students, who don't try in school because of learned helplessness or low self-efficacy, believe that no matter how hard they try in school, their efforts will make no difference and that they will always fail. They believe that they are at fault when they perform poorly, but when they do perform well they take no credit (Steifer, 2004). These are students who believe they have no control over the outcome of their performance. According to Steifer (2004), students who are efficacious are better at managing themselves and have strategies for learning. They are willing to take on a challenge with material that they believe is difficult. Students who lack confidence in themselves avoid tasks that they think are hard.

According to Steifer (2004), another sign of students who are less motivated because of learned helplessness is the explanation they give for their failures/successes. In other words, to what cause they attribute their performance in school. Students who have confidence in their abilities generally attribute their performance in school to their own choices, such as whether or not they studied. Students with low self-efficacy credit their performance to their inability. Simply put, students with confidence in their abilities credit their successes/failures to their own effort (I studied hard/I didn't study), while students with low or no confidence in their abilities credit their successes/failures to their own ability (I passed because I'm smart/I failed because I'm dumb).

Some students feel that their performance in school determines their own self-worth. To these students, how hard people try is an indicator of their ability. In other words, their perception is that a smart student earns high grades with little effort. Students who are not smart have to try harder. Greater effort shows that they are not smart and this leads to lower self-worth (Steifer, 2004). To students who feel their self-worth relies on their performance in school, to try hard and fail would then lead to feelings of shame. Steifer (2004) terms these students as failure-avoidant students, who would rather feel guilt over not trying and then failing, than shame from trying hard and still failing. According to Steifer (2004) some behaviors of these students are: "effort withdrawal (not trying), procrastination, maintaining a state of disorganization, setting goals too high, setting goals too low, cheating or asking for help" (p.141-142). These students then use these behaviors as excuses when they fail or perform poorly on a task, instead of crediting their failure to their inability.

Students who are less motivated because they are afraid of failing have low self-efficacy as well as misplaced attributions. They have little or no confidence in their abilities, as shown by their fear of trying, and they mistakenly blame factors such as disorganization or unreachable goals as the cause of their failures.

Some students may appear to be motivated, but their motivation is short-lasting. These students pursue performance goals and are mainly concerned with how well they performed when compared to others. Similar to failure-avoidant students, they attribute their successes/failures to ability instead of effort. They do not take responsibility for their performance. They also make more negative remarks about themselves, they want to appear superior to their fellow-students, and they work to receive extrinsic rewards. Their focus is on their grades, instead of what they're learning, and they generally choose easy tasks that will result in a good grade (Turner & Patrick, 2004).

In contrast, students who pursue mastery or task goals believe that effort is the reason why they pass or fail, they make more positive comments about themselves, and they take responsibility for their performance (Steifer, 2004). They are interested in their tasks and work hard on them, and look forward to learning new skills (Turner & Patrick, 2004).

To summarize, teachers need to observe their students to determine why their low motivated students do not try in school. If a student is avoiding tasks, that student may have little confidence in his/her ability to complete the assignment. In addition, the student may prefer to not complete the assignment as opposed to trying and still failing. Or, the student may believe that effort is meaningless because of a belief that he/she has

no control over his/her performance in school. A student may also try hard, but only because of a desire to appear competent in front of peers. The comments students make about tasks can be key indicators as to why they are not trying.

Factors Influencing Motivation

Teachers need to understand why certain students are motivated to try hard in school. If a teacher recognizes why students struggle to grasp concepts instead of giving up, then the teacher will know how to encourage and reward the child for his/her effort. In addition, if a teacher knows why some students are motivated, then the teacher may also better understand why some students are not as motivated. The specific reasons why motivated students want to do their best in school may be innumerable. However, most of the general factors influencing motivation can be linked together under a few different reasons for motivation.

Three factors that influence the level of motivation are determined by how much control a student believes he/she has over his/her academic performance: self-efficacy, attribution, and goal setting. One factor that influences the level of motivation may be that a student is efficacious, or has high self-efficacy (Steifer, 2004). Simply put, a student may feel motivated to complete a task simply because the student has a belief that he/she is able to do it. The student will perform a task because the student thinks he/she can.

For clarification, it is necessary to differentiate between self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-concept. Self-efficacy refers to a specific task, self-esteem refers to how one feels about ones performance with the task, and self-concept is a broad feeling about a

general topic (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). For example, if a student believes he/she is capable of long division, then that student believes he/she is proficient with long division. If the same student believes that he/she is bad at math, then that student has a poor self-concept about math (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003).

Another factor that influences motivation is attribution. Attribution refers to the student's explanation as to why an event turned out the way it did (Steifer, 2004). There are two types of attributions: functional and dysfunctional. Functional attributions are positive; they are attributes that credit the student's effort for his/her success or failure. Dysfunctional attributes are negative; they credit the success or failure to factors out of the student's control (Margolis & McCabe, 2006). The student's belief as to the cause of the event can directly influence how motivated the child will be to try this event again. For example, a student may have an upcoming social studies test. If the student earns a passing grade on the test, the student will determine why he/she passed. The student may believe that he/she earned a good score because of his/her study habits, and will, therefore, feel motivated to study hard again for the next social studies test. Or, the student may believe that he/she passed because of good luck and that studying was unnecessary. This student would then be less motivated to study hard for the next social studies test. According to Steifer (2004), some "typical attributions might include effort, skills and knowledge, strategies, ability, luck, the teacher's mood or mistakes by the teacher."

In other words, attribution affects motivation because it is a sign of how much control the child believes he/she has over the outcome of his/her efforts. Students who

feel they succeeded because of their effort know they controlled the result of their performance and also know that effort in the future will likely lead to future success. Students who think they succeeded because of luck believe the result of their performance was out of their control and, therefore, are less likely to try in the future.

Steifer (2004) also stated that students may be more motivated because they may have set goals for themselves, which is another indicator that they believe they have control over their performance. Quite simply, these students try their best because they have set a goal to succeed and are working towards that goal.

There are two types of goal-setting that students may set. One type is mastery or task goals, in which students challenge themselves to master a new skill. Another type is performance goals, where students want to succeed so they appear competent to others, instead of wanting to conquer the task for the sake of learning (Steifer, 2004).

In addition to control, emotions also drive motivation. Trying to boost or maintain a sense of self-worth is another factor which may motivate students to succeed in school (Steifer, 2004). Students may feel that their self-worth relies on their grades in school or their performance in school. They feel more motivated to try their best in school so their self-worth remains high. As Steifer (2004) stated, students who are successful because of a high ability feel confident in themselves. They feel competent; they have a high sense of self-worth and, therefore, are motivated to try again.

Interest in an assignment is another reason why students may want to learn. Basically, if a student is genuinely interested in a task, then that student will feel more motivated to succeed. According to Hidi and Harackiewicz (2000), there are two types of

interest: personal and situational. Personal interest is how much a student likes a certain activity and is an interest that lasts over time. Situational interest relies on the situation at hand and the interest may last or it may be fleeting. For example, a student may have a personal interest in reading mystery novels. This same student may show situational interest in a science fiction novel because of a recommendation of a friend, or because of the book's cover. However, this interest may last only as long as it takes the student to read the book, and the student will go back to mystery novels.

The type of interest, personal or situational, is closely related to the type of motivation, intrinsic or extrinsic. Students who are intrinsically motivated have a personal interest in a topic that is lasting, while students who are extrinsically motivated have a situational interest in a topic that is fleeting.

There is also close connection between motivation, interest and type of goal setting. The two types of goal setting are mastery goals and performance goals. As stated by Turner and Patrick (2004), "Mastery goals are focused on increasing competence, whereas performance goals are focused on demonstrating competence" (p. 1761). Students who are intrinsically motivated set mastery goals; they want to learn for the sake of learning. Students who are extrinsically motivated set performance goals; they want to learn for the external reward of grades or to appear better than their peers.

In summary, there are several different reasons why students may be more motivated to achieve in school. Students may feel more motivated to try a task simply because they have a strong belief in their ability to do it. Or the factor influencing student motivation may be students attributing past successes to their own ability or effort

and, therefore, are willing to try again. Motivation may spring from a goal a student has set, whether it is a mastery goal or a performance goal. Students may feel that their self-worth is dependent on their successes in school and feel it is necessary to continue to perform well so their sense of worth stays high. Lastly, students may wish to try a task because they are interested in it. A student may be motivated by one of these factors, or by a blend of two or more causes, as in the intrinsic motivation and mastery goals.

Strategies for Increasing Student Motivation

It is necessary to understand that control and emotion drive motivation. If a student is less motivated, the root reason is because the student believes he/she has no control over his/her success in school, or struggles with a negative emotion related to the task, or a mix of both. It follows that improving student motivation means teaching students that they have control over how well they do on assignments, and it means teaching students to feel positively about assignments they are given.

The first step begins with the teacher. According to Meyer and Turner (2006), a teacher's intrinsic motivation and enthusiasm for a task directly correlates with a student's feeling positive about an assignment and feeling motivated to learn it. Meyer and Turner state that "a teacher's enthusiasm, humor and passion for learning" (p. 384) are some characteristics that help lead to students feeling motivated to learn.

Next, a teacher needs to create a classroom climate that encourages and motivates students to learn. Patrick, Turner, Meyer & Midgley (2003) state that "the most powerful predictor of students' motivation later in the year was the extent to which teachers

expressed positive emotions and created a positive social and affective environment" (p.1526).

While teachers may choose different activities for their first day and first few weeks of school, there are certain characteristics of a classroom that can directly affect student motivation. According to Patrick et al. (2003), there are three different types of environments a teacher can create that affect the perceived motivation of their classes. A supportive classroom is the first, in which teachers show that they enjoy learning and teaching; respect their students, have a sense of humor and set high expectations for all of their students. These teachers also gave intrinsic reasons for learning in school, supported student choice, student responsibility, and "used students' mistakes within instruction to increase understanding" (Patrick et al., 2003, p.1525). The next environment Patrick et al. (2003) described is a non-supportive environment, in which teachers gave their students extrinsic reasons for learning. The last environment addressed by Patrick et al. (2003) is an ambiguous one, where teachers sometime supported learning and sometimes didn't, and were also inconsistent in their classroom management. In this study, Patrick et al (2003) found that by the end of the year, students in the supportive classrooms demonstrated less avoidance behavior than students in the non-supportive or ambiguous classrooms.

It is also important that teachers create an environment in which mastery goals are valued over performance goals. A classroom that emphasizes mastery goals is one that communicates to students that their learning and understanding is more important than outperforming others, meeting or exceeding standards, or looking smart when compared

to others. Students in classrooms that focus on mastery goals are more likely to be motivated to learn (Turner & Patrick, 2004).

Teachers also need to build a positive relationship with their students. When students feel they have a supportive, positive relationship with their teacher, they are more likely to feel motivated in school (Hughes & Kwok, 2007).

Establishing a general classroom environment that is motivating to students is an important first step. A teacher feeling positively about the lessons taught and a classroom promoting learning are the first steps towards motivating children, because the atmosphere of the classroom communicates the message that students should feel good about their education.

Teachers can build on this by helping individual students who still struggle with low motivation. Students who are less motivated because of negative emotions can be taught to feel good about their tasks.

Students struggling from learned helplessness are less motivated to try in school. They may believe they are unable to complete a task, feel they will fail no matter what they do, and are unwilling to put forth any effort. Helping these students set small, manageable goals for themselves can help increase their self-confidence and, therefore, their motivation. There are three factors to consider when helping students set goals, namely, proximity, specificity, and difficulty (Szente, 2007).

Szente (2007) stated that proximity, or how close-range the goals are set, are better for low motivated children because they take a shorter amount of time to reach. Students need to be able to reach their goals within a reasonable amount of time if the

goals are to help increase their motivation. Also, the more specific a goal is the more likely it is the child will be able to achieve it. For example, if a child's goal is to "read better", it will be unclear to the child if he/she ever reached the goal. When a more specific goal is set, such as "read one chapter book a month", a child can clearly see whether or not he/she met his/her goal. Last, the level of difficulty can make a difference with not only if the child achieves the goal, but on whether the goal-setting actually increases the student's motivation. If the level of difficulty is too low, the child will accomplish the goal too easily. The child will feel little or no sense of accomplishment or pride. If the goal is too hard, the child may lose any spark of motivation and never meet the goal. The level of difficulty needs to be hard enough to make the child struggle to meet it, yet still be within the student's ability. Margolis and McCabe (2006) stated that when activities, such as assignments and projects, are at the appropriate difficulty level, even struggling students will believe that they can achieve their goal (p. 223).

Kitsantas, Reiser and Doster (2004) have shown that perceived student motivation will most likely increase if students set process goals instead of outcome goals. When students set process goals, they are focusing on the strategies they need to learn to master a skill. Students who set outcome goals are focusing only on mastering the skill.

It is also important that students are guided to set their own goals. O'Neill (2004) states that students who have a part in setting their own goals are more motivated, less afraid of failing and try harder.

An important part of goal-setting is visualization. Children need to see themselves succeeding so they have something to work towards (Szente, 2006).

As students work on meeting their goals, teachers need to give their students specific feedback. Doing so helps the child recognize the factors that led to his/her success or failure (Margolis & McCabe, 2006). The feedback helps the child learn that it was through his/her own effort and knowledge that the goal was reached, and not because of luck or any other external cause. The child learns that he/she is in control of his/her learning, and can appropriately attribute the causes of success and failure.

As students work on their goals, it is important that they see their progress. In addition to their teacher pointing out their achievements, students should also chart their own progress. Doing so helps students learn to take control over their own learning because they can see for themselves that they are improving. When students self-record their progress, it helps them learn that "they have power or control over their learning and performance in school" (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 544).

While helping students set goals can help increase their perceived motivation, teachers can also coach their less motivated students to replace negative thoughts with positive thoughts (Szente, 2007). Children who are low motivated may be so because they are afraid of failing or feel certain that they will fail and have no control over their performance. A teacher can help identify these negative thoughts through discussion with the poorly motivated students. Once the teacher knows what the child is thinking, such as "I'm no good at math," or "No matter what I do, I fail," the teacher can teach the child to replace negative thoughts with positive ones.

While some students may feel pessimistic about their chances of success, other students' negative feelings may simply be boredom and lack of interest. Increasing

student interest in a topic, assignment or task is another way to promote positive feelings and therefore increase perceived motivation. It is necessary to differentiate between situational and personal interest. Teachers can have some influence over situational interest, which relates only to a specific topic at hand. Teachers can make certain assignments more interesting or appealing, but it is more difficult to spark personal interest.

Giving students as much choice as is reasonable is one strategy for increasing student interest. Choice piques interest in a topic, which can result in increased motivation. Wilhelm and Smith (2006) found that students had an increase in motivation to read when their teacher gave them some control over what they read. Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) found that one reason children chose to read was because they chose a certain book, instead of its being chosen for them.

According to Reeve and Jang (2006), allowing for student autonomy can also increase intrinsic motivation. When teachers are too controlling, students' intrinsic motivation can decrease because the students learn to rely on the teacher's directions and approval. If a teacher allows for student autonomy, students' intrinsic motivation can increase because students can make their own choices about how they learn, as well as use their own creativity, set their own goals, and build their own understanding (Reeve & Jang, 2006).

Illustrations or graphics can help students feel more interested in a task, since pictures can make a task seem more appealing as well as make learning easier for the student (Park & Lim, 2007).

Another way to help students feel interested is to demonstrate the relevance of the assignment to them and their lives. This also helps increase the value of the task. When students feel a lesson is relevant to them, their interest and motivation to learn will also increase. Ferger (2006) found that when her students read stories that were culturally relevant to their lives, they were more likely to be engaged in reading.

Students may also feel more interested in a task if they are allowed to work in a group setting. Allowing students to work in pairs or small groups can increase student interest, or motivation, in a task (Guthrie, Wigfield, Humenick, Perencevich, Taboada & Barbosa, 2006). Schweinle, Meyer and Turner (2006) found that group work can make assignments seem more meaningful and helps commit students to their work.

In summary, there are several different ways a teacher can increase perceived student motivation. First, the teacher needs to be motivated to teach the lessons, in order to demonstrate the value of the lessons and to spark interest in the assignments. The teacher also is responsible for creating a classroom environment that is motivating to the students, specifically one that promotes mastery goals. The teacher can further encourage student motivation by teaching students to set appropriate goals, as well as encouraging students to think positively about assignments with which they normally feel negatively. If that negative feeling is boredom, teachers can increase perceived student motivation by increasing student interest in a task.

Summary

Motivation is a critical factor in a student's education. Children who are more motivated to reach their academic potential in school are more likely to succeed than

children who are not as motivated. Teachers need to understand what factors influence student motivation, both positively and negatively. Teachers also need to know how to recognize students who are less motivated and how to increase the motivation of these students. Recognizing and motivating reluctant learners may make the difference between their success and failure in school.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

Motivation to perform as well as a child can is an important factor in a child's success in school. While teachers cannot control all the possible factors that may influence how motivated a child is, such as parenting styles and past successes/failures, teachers can still take some steps to help motivate their students. These important steps can help teach students to want to learn, to take an interest in their education and to believe that they have control over their performance.

The review of the literature was divided into four sections, which discuss possible reasons for low motivation, methods for recognizing less motivated students, factors influencing motivation, and strategies for increasing student motivation. As informational as this review may be, it can only benefit a teacher if there is a way to apply the information to a class. The project provides a comprehensive approach of best practices for increasing student motivation. It is a compilation of many suggestions and ideas for teachers, organized into a guide for teachers who wish to improve student motivation. The guide provides practical, concrete ways teachers can use the information in the review of the literature with their students.

The project was meant to be used as a resource for teachers who want to increase student motivation. An overview of the project could be delivered as a presentation at a staff meeting or workshop, at which the presenter could review the main points of the project. Teachers could then take a copy of the project, in bounded form, to use as a guide for increasing student motivation in their classroom. They could implement the

strategies suggested in the project with their own students, and refer back to the project as often as needed.

The methods outlined in the guide are not originally the author's of the project. Instead, the guide itself is original in that the author has taken tips, ideas and strategies for teachers from many different resources, and organized the information as a means to improve student motivation. In other words, the ideas and strategies found in the project may originally have been written to help teachers build better teacher-students relationships or for some other specific purpose. The author of the project researched the originally unconnected ideas for teachers from various sources to create a single guide for teachers wishing to increase student motivation.

For example, one of the steps towards increasing student motivation is to teach students to set academic goals. According to the information found in the review of the literature, goal-setting will increase student motivation if students learn to set manageable goals, focus on mastery goals, and then track their progress. The author adapted strategies for goal-setting, creating a goal contract, ways to identify mastery and performance goals, and a sample chart for student self-recording from various sources to provide a single guide best suited for increasing student motivation.

The project begins by outlining steps teachers can take to create a positive classroom environment. Students are more likely to be intrinsically motivated when a classroom encourages learning and the teacher has an authoritative management style (Patrick & et al., 2003). While the project addresses steps teachers can take to create a

warm classroom environment prior to the start of the school year, teachers can always make adaptations to their classroom and management during the course of the year.

The project then addresses specific ways to identify students who are not meeting standard because of a lack of motivation instead of a lack of ability. The methods of identifying these students are verbal discussion with students and a paper-and-pencil questionnaire (the MSLQ). The discussion and questionnaires will also reveal the cause of low student motivation.

There are several specific reasons why students may lack motivation, but they mostly add up to a lack of belief that they have any control over the outcome of their performance or negative feelings about the subject. This project addresses motivating students who believe they have little control over their performance in school and/or who have negative feelings.

To help students learn to feel positively about school and to learn they control their performance in school, students need to learn to set manageable goals for themselves. In addition to setting up a motivating classroom environment, this project also discusses teaching students to have a vision of their success, tracking their own progress, and setting guidelines for regular teacher-student meetings to discuss the student's progress.

As addressed in the review of the literature, some of the negative feelings associated with low motivation are a dislike for an assignment, or a feeling that one is incapable of performing well on a given task. Goal-setting can help replace these negative feelings with positive ones. Negative feelings such as boredom or lack of

interest in an assignment, may not be helped by setting goals. If disinterestedness is the barrier to student motivation, then teachers may need to use other strategies to increase student motivation. The project also addresses specific ways to interest students who are bored.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROJECT

The intent of this project is to help teachers increase student motivation. The project includes a manual that teachers can use as a guideline for creating a classroom environment that promotes learning, for recognizing less motivated students, and an outline of steps to take to motivate students.

Teachers have a strong influence in determining how motivated their students are in class. There are many factors out of a teacher's control that influence the motivational level of students, such as parental expectations, a student's past experiences in school, and so forth. However, a teacher still has the power to intervene and motivate students who are not trying their best in school. The teacher can be a crucial factor that determines how motivated children are to learn (Reeve, 2006).

The project was written for 4^{th}-6^{th} grade students in the Puyallup School District at a Title I school. The materials included in the project could be adapted for both younger and older students. The guidelines and strategies in the manual presented in this project are based upon the research cited in the review of literature in Chapter II.

The project includes a table of contents covering the different steps teachers can take towards increasing student motivation. The chapters covered are Establishing a Positive Classroom Environment, which involves the teacher's attitude, the first days of school, establishing an authoritative classroom management system, and creating a mastery goal environment. Next, Establishing a Positive Teacher-Student Relationship, which includes specific ways for teachers to build and maintain a good rapport with their

students. Steps for identifying less motivated students are addressed in Identifying Reluctant Learners. Lastly, specific steps for increasing student motivation is addressed Improving Student Motivation, which includes the steps to goal setting as well as increasing student interest.

THE PROJECT

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Establishing a Positive Classroom Environment

The affective climate of the classroom is a powerful predictor of student motivation (Schweinle, Meyer & Turner, 2006). A teacher should be aware of what classroom and management factors increase and decrease student motivation. Planning for a classroom environment which encourages student motivation is a critical part of increasing student motivation.

Beginning with the Teacher

Do	Don't
Have confidence in your ability to teach your students well.	Feel that you lack the ability to teach your students well.
Believe that student success/failure is a result of student effort, persistence and motivation.	Attribute student success/failure to student intelligence.
Value learning for its own sake.	See learning as a way to compete with others.

Adapted from "Classroom goal orientation in high school classrooms: revealing links between teacher beliefs and classroom environments," by S.A. Deemer, 2004, *Educational Research, 46,* 73-90.

Do	Don't
Show enthusiasm, intrinsic motivation and passion for each subject taught and assignment given.	Act bored or uninterested for any subject taught or assignment given.

Adapted from "Re-conceptualizing emotion and motivation to learn in classroom contexts," by D.K. Meyer and J.C. Turner, 2006, *Educ Psychol Rev, (18),* 377-390.

Building Classroom Atmosphere

Do	Don't
Make efforts to involve all students in well-planned activities.	Restrict student creativity or be unenthusiastic about activities.
Know students' names.	Know few or no students' names.
Listen carefully to students' thoughts and needs and respond with compassion.	Ignore or override students' concerns.
Encourage other students to show empathy and support.	Neglect to show support or encourage other students to show support for students in need.
Encourage community values with students; talk about good manners and respecting each other.	Forget to teach students how to cooperate or respect each other.

Instruction

Do	Don't
Teach with enthusiasm	Show little enthusiasm about the curriculum.
Create interest in subjects that are introduced.	Be vague or general about why upcoming activities/lessons will be enjoyable.

Let students know you enjoy the subjects they'll be learning, so they will too.	Neglect to tell students that you enjoy the curriculum or assure them they'll like it too.

Expectations

Do	Don't
Express high and positive expectations; let students know you expect them to show appropriate behavior and succeed academically.	Have or express low expectations for your students, or think that some students will never show appropriate behavior.

Specific Praise

Do	Don't
Frequently provide specific praise.	Provide general praise, infrequently give specific praise or neglect to give praise.
Encourage other students to model the same behavior.	Forget to remind other students that they can behave as good as the model students, or point out negative models.

Democracy/Choice and Control

Do	Don't
Give students a role in creating the classroom rules.	Neglect to make sure students feel they have some ownership of the classroom.
Give students some choices in their work.	Make decisions for students that they could have made for themselves.

Modeling

Do	Don't
Model academic tasks, enthusiasm, self-regulation and being kind.	Neglect to model any behavior or academic skill being taught.

Procedures

Do	Don't
Make sure students understand the purpose of the classroom rules and procedures.	State the procedures without discussing the purpose of the procedures.
Have students practice the procedures.	Neglect to practice the procedures, or over practice them so students get nervous about not following the procedures perfectly.
Make sure the students follow the procedures after they've been taught.	Wait to correct students not following the procedures until there are major behavior problems.

Self-Regulation

Do	Don't
Encourage students to carry out routines with teacher reminders.	Forget to remind students to follow the procedures on their own.
Encourage students to take	Forget to encourage students to take

responsibility for their behavior, both academically and socially.	responsibility for their behavior, both academically and socially.
Encourage students to use learning strategies of their own.	Inhibit students from taking the responsibility to figure out their own strategies for learning.

Adapted from "The first days of school in the classrooms of two more effective and four less effective primary-grades teachers," by C.M. Bohn, A.D. Roehrig and M. Pressley, 2004, *Elementary School Journal, 104*(4), 269.

Authoritative Classroom Management

As was stated in the review of the literature, students are most likely to feel motivated in a classroom where the teacher practices an authoritative classroom management style. In order to do this, teachers need to recognize the factors of an authoritative teaching style, as well as the factors of the two styles to avoid, permissive and authoritarian.

Permissive	**Authoritarian**
• Shows warmth towards students but little control. • Places few or no restraints or limits on student behavior. • Gives students freedom and little guidance.	• Shows little warmth toward students and a high degree of control. • Enforces strict obedience to the rules. • Gives strict commands and expects them to be obeyed

	without discussion.

Authoritative
• Combines warmth with a high degree of control. • Encourages student autonomy. • Limits are set on behavior, with an explanation for the restraints. • Listens to children's objections to the rules. • Allows occasional deviations from the rules when appropriate. • Encourages communication and negotiation in rule setting in classroom.

Adapted from "Understanding Human Development," by J.C. Craig and D. Baucum, 2002.

Specific Actions of Authoritative Teaching

- Be warm, friendly and kind, but firm.
- Treat all students with equal respect by listening to their opinions and considering their feelings.
- Be encouraging at all times.
- Distinguish between the deed and the doer.
- Do not favor the likable students over the defiant ones.
- Encourage group discussion and participation in decision making.
- Do not be mistake-centered; emphasize the positive by marking only correct answers.
- Do not nag, preach, or criticize.

- Allow students to express their creativity and plan class projects.
- Use a friendly, not sharp voice.
- Win cooperation by influencing the class instead of demanding or using pressure.
- Sell ideas instead of imposing your will.
- Help and guide the students, instead of dominating and punishing.

Adapted from "Discipline without tears," by R. Dreikurs, P. Cassel and E.D. Ferguson, 2004.

Mastery Goals

As was stated in the review of the literature, students will most likely feel motivated in a classroom that emphasizes mastery over performance goals. Students will more likely want to learn if they feel that the learning itself is more important than the grades they earn or any external outcome.

Mastery Goal Environment	*Performance Goal Environment*
• Emphasizes the importance of understanding. • Holds students accountable for what they have learned by asking them to explain their understanding. • Encourages student effort and persistence.	• Emphasizes right answers. • Emphasizes following directions instead of understanding. • Emphasizes work completion instead of emphasizing learning. • Uses threats and sarcasm • Uses social comparison by

• Sees mistakes as learning experiences. • Expresses positive emotion and enthusiasm about learning. • Encourages students to help each other.	suggesting that certain students are more intelligent or "better" than others.

Adapted from "Motivational influences on student participation in classroom learning activities," by J.C. Turner and H. Patrick, 2002, *Teachers College Record, 106*(9), 1759-1785.

Establishing a Positive Teacher-Student Relationship

Student motivation can be affected by the teacher-student. The quality of interaction between teacher and student is a strong factor in how well a student learns (Aðalsteinsdóttir, 2004). One study found that teachers who take the time to build relationships with their students communicate to their class that the students' best interests are most important to the teacher, and these students were the most likely to want to learn (Daniels & Arapostathis, 2005).

Positive Relationship with the Students

According to Gallagher and Mayer (2006), four factors of a good relationship are:

- Recognition- being aware of a person's presence and their like and dislikes
- Familiarity- knowledge of a person's "abilities, preferences, contexts, and history, including the important people in his/her life" (p. 45).
- Respect- treating a person with a high value

- Commitment- intent to continue the relationship with the person

Steps teachers take to build good relationships with their students should focus on each of the above factors of a good relationship. The following are qualities and actions of teachers who are working to build good relationships with their students:

Listening & Understanding

- Pay attention to students and understand what they are saying.
- Be patient and gentle to show students you understand.
- Listen to students' arguments and help them solve their problems.
- Show empathy and understanding by discussing appropriate personal experiences.

Get to Know the Students

- Take advantage of opportunities both in and out of school to get to know your students.
- Learn your students' personalities and what they like and dislike.
- Care for the student as a child first, then as a pupil.
- Be aware of your students' cultures outside of school.

Be Fair and Respectful

- Treat the students as people.
- Avoid situations that may embarrass a child in front of his/her classmates.
- Demonstrate fairness for all students, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity or ability.
- Provide students opportunities to have some say in the classroom.
- Give every student an opportunity to participate in classroom activities.

Make and Maintain Positive, Caring Connections

- Behave in a friendly and personable manner while maintaining a professional relationship with students.
- Treat students with respect.
- Allow students to participate in appropriate decision making.
- Pay attention to what students have to say.
- Have a sense of humor, share jokes, and be playful.

Adapted from "Qualities of effective teachers," by J. Strong, 2002.

- Be polite to the students and remind them to be polite to each other.
- Discipline students in private.
- Apologize if you hurt a student's feelings or made a mistake.
- Teach words students can use that are kind and polite.

Adapted from "Common-sense classroom management for elementary school teachers," by J.A. Lindbergh and A. Swick, 2006.

Specific Ways to Build Positive Relationships

- Greet your students by name as they enter your classroom each morning.
- Stop to chat with them in the hallway, in the cafeteria, at recess and before class.
- Make a point of initiating conversations.
- Monitor and modify your tone and body language to convey openness and friendly concern.
- Show your interest and give complete attention when your students are talking to you.

- Express care, concern and empathy.
- Smile and show a sense of humor.
- Take a student interest inventory at the beginning of the year to learn about your students' favorite activities.
- Bring up nonacademic topics of mutual interest.
- Share appropriate personal interests and experiences.
- Call a student after a bad day to discuss how you might have a better day tomorrow.
- Call a student after a good day and compliment her on her success.
- Send get-well notes, or call home if a student is sick.
- Write positive notes to the student and his parents.
- Attend school activities, such as plays, dances, athletic events. Don't forget to mention a student's accomplishments the next day as you greet her at the door.
- Recognize and offer supportive feedback for a student's strengths and achievements, both academic and nonacademic.
- Help others see the student's positive side.

Adapted from "Assertive discipline: positive behavior management for today's classroom," by L. Canter and M. Canter, 2001.

Identifying Reluctant Learners

Observation

By watching and listening to students' actions and comments when assigned a task or through one-on-one discussion with a child, teachers can differentiate between

highly motivated and less unmotivated students. Based on information in the review of the literature, the author created a chart of behaviors of less motivated students, which teachers can recognize through observation.

Learned helplessness students	**Self-worth/Failure Avoidant students**
• Believe that no matter how hard they try, they will fail. • Do not take credit for their success. • Believe they have no control over the outcome of their performance. • When explaining their failure, they usually say it was due to their inability to complete the task (I failed because I'm dumb).	• Believe that the amount of effort a student gives indicates their ability to complete the assignment (smart kids earn high grades with little effort). • Prefer to feel guilt over not trying, than to feel shame over trying and still failing. • Refuse to try assignments. • Procrastinate • Are disorganized • Set goals to high or too low • Tend to cheat • Use behavior as excuses when they fail (I failed because I lost my homework).

Adapted from "Understanding student motivation," by T.L. Steifer, 2004, *Educational Research, 46*(2), 137-149.

Introducing the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire

In addition to observing students, teachers can also give their students a questionnaire that can help identify what motivates the students to learn. It can also help determine if the students is less motivated. A questionnaire that serves this purpose is the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ).

The MSLQ was created by Paul Pintrich. The MSLQ was designed based on the theory that student motivation is not a permanent trait of a person, but rather that motivation is dynamic and based on context, such as student interest in a subject or whether the student believes he/she is capable of accomplishing a task. The MSLQ has been used in many research studies, but it can also be used for self-evaluative purposes. Teachers can use it to determine what motivates their students, and students can use it on themselves a well. The MSLQ has been translated into many languages and it has been used throughout the world. It is considered a reliable tool to determine what motivates students (Duncan & McKeachie, 2005).

The MSLQ is 81 questions long. Of the 81 questions, the first 31 questions assess what student goals are when attending school; the next 31 questions assess learning strategies students use in the classroom, and 19 of the learning strategy questions assess what resources students use in order to learn (Duncan & McKeachie, 2005).

When the MSLQ was designed, the research for the MSLQ was based on studies done on college students. The questions can be adapted, however, to assess younger students. Duncan and McKeachie (2005), coauthors of the MSLQ, "encourage users

to use the MSLQ in its entirety or to select whatever subscales are relevant for their purposes, in whatever format is most practical" (p. 120).

*Formal **Motivated** Strategies for Learning Questionnaire*

Part A: Motivation

1. In a class like this, I prefer course material that really challenges me so I can learn new things.

2. If I study in appropriate ways, then I will be able to learn the material in this course.

3. When I take a test I think about how poorly I am doing compared with other students.

4. I think I will be able to use what I learn in this course in other courses.

5. I believe I will receive an excellent grade in this class.

6. I'm certain I can understand the most difficult material presented in the readings for this course.

7. Getting a good grade in this class is the most satisfying thing for me right now.

8. When I take a test I think about items on other parts of the test I can't answer.

9. It is my own fault if I don't learn the material in this course.

10. It is important for me to learn the course material in this class.

11. The most important thing for me right now is improving my overall grade point average, so my main concern in this class is getting a good grade.

12. I'm confident I can learn the basic concepts taught in this course.

13. If I can, I want to get better grades in this class than most of the other students.

14. When I take tests I think of the consequences of failing.

15. I'm confident I can understand the most complex material presented by the instructor in this course.

16. In a class like this, I prefer course material that arouses my curiosity, even if it is difficult to learn.

17. I am very interested in the content area of this course.

18. If I try hard enough, then I will understand the course material.

19. I have an uneasy, upset feeling when I take an exam.

20. I'm confident I can do an excellent job on the assignments and tests in this course.

21. I expect to do well in this class.

22. The most satisfying thing for me in this course is trying to understand the content as thoroughly as possible.

23. I think the course material in this class is useful for me to learn.

24. When I have the opportunity in this class, I choose course assignments that I can learn from even if they don't guarantee a good grade.

25. If I don't understand the course material, it is because I didn't try hard enough.

26. I like the subject matter of this course.

27. Understanding the subject matter of this course is very important to me.

28. I feel my heart beating fast when I take an exam.

29. I'm certain I can master the skills being taught in this class.

30. I want to do well in this class because it is important to show my ability to my family, friends, employer, or others.

31. Considering the difficulty of this course, the teacher, and my skills, I think I will do well in this class.

Part B: Learning Strategies

32. When I study the readings for this course, I outline the material to help me organize my thoughts.

33. During class time I often miss important points because I'm thinking of other things. (REVERSED)

34. When studying for this course, I often try to explain the material to a classmate or friend.

35. I usually study in a place where I can concentrate on my course work.

36. When reading for this course, I make up questions to help focus my reading.

37. I often feel so lazy or bored when I study for this class that I quit before I finish what I planned to do.

(REVERSED)

38. I often find myself questioning things I hear or read in this course to decide if I find them convincing.

39. When I study for this class, I practice saying the material to myself over and over.

40. Even if I have trouble learning the material in this class, I try to do the work on my own, without help from anyone. (REVERSED)

41. When I become confused about something I'm reading for this class, I go back and try to figure it out.

42. When I study for this course, I go through the readings and my class notes and try to find the most important ideas.

43. I make good use of my study time for this course.

44. If course readings are difficult to understand, I change the way I read the material.

45. I try to work with other students from this class to complete the course assignments.

46. When studying for this course, I read my class notes and the course readings over and over again.

47. When a theory, interpretation, or conclusion is presented in class or in the readings, I try to decide if there is good supporting evidence.

48. I work hard to do well in this class even if I don't like what we are doing.

49. I make simple charts, diagrams, or tables to help me organize course material.

50. When studying for this course, I often set aside time to discuss course material with a group of students from the class.

51. I treat the course material as a starting point and try to develop my own ideas about it.

52. I find it hard to stick to a study schedule. (REVERSED)

53. When I study for this class, I pull together information from different sources, such as lectures, readings, and discussions.

54. Before I study new course material thoroughly, I often skim it to see how it is organized.

55. I ask myself questions to make sure I understand the material I have been studying in this class.

56. I try to change the way I study in order to fit the course requirements and the instructor's teaching style.

57. I often find that I have been reading for this class but don't know what it was all about. (REVERSED)

58. I ask the instructor to clarify concepts I don't understand well.

59. I memorize key words to remind me of important concepts in this class.

60. When course work is difficult, I either give up or only study the easy parts. (REVERSED)

61. I try to think through a topic and decide what I am supposed to learn from it rather than just reading it over when studying for this course.

62. I try to relate ideas in this subject to those in other courses whenever possible.

63. When I study for this course, I go over my class notes and make an outline of important concepts.

64. When reading for this class, I try to relate the material to what I already know.

65. I have a regular place set aside for studying.

66. I try to play around with ideas of my own related to what I am learning in this course.

67. When I study for this course, I write brief summaries of the main ideas from the readings and my class notes.

68. When I can't understand the material in this course, I ask another student in this class for help.

69. I try to understand the material in this class by making connections between the readings and the concepts from the lectures.

70. I make sure that I keep up with the weekly readings and assignments for this course.

71. Whenever I read or hear an assertion or conclusion in this class, I think about possible alternatives.

72. I make lists of important items for this course and memorize the lists.

73. I attend this class regularly.

74. Even when course materials are dull and uninteresting, I manage to keep working until I finish.

75. I try to identify students in this class whom I can ask for help if necessary.

76. When studying for this course I try to determine which concepts I don't understand well.

77. I often find that I don't spend very much time on this course because of other activities. (REVERSED)

78. When I study for this class, I set goals for myself in order to direct my activities in each study period.

79. If I get confused taking notes in class, I make sure I sort it out afterwards.

80. I rarely find time to review my notes or readings before an exam. (REVERSED)

81. I try to apply ideas from course readings in other class activities such as lecture and discussion.

Adapted from "The making of the motivated strategies fro learning questionnaire," by T.G. Duncan and W.J. McKeachie, 2005, *Educational Psychologist, 40*(2), 117-128.

Simplified Online Version of the MSLQ

Remember: 1 = not true at all 7 = always true

1. During class time, I often miss important points because I'm thinking of other things.

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ 6 ○ 7

2. When reading for a course, I make up questions to help focus my reading.

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ 6 ○ 7

3. When I become confused about something I'm reading, I go back and try to figure it out.

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ 6 ○ 7

Remember: 1 = not true at all ... 7 = always true

4. If course materials are difficult to understand, I change the way I read the material.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. Before I study new material thoroughly, I often skim it to see how it is organized.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. I ask myself questions to make sure I understand the material I have been studying.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Remember: 1 = not true at all ... 7 = always true

7. I try to change the way I study in order to fit the course requirements and the instructor's teaching style.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. I often find that I have been reading for a class but don't know what it was all about.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9. I try to think through a topic and decide what I am supposed to learn from it rather than just reading it over when studying.

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ 6 ○ 7

Remember: 1 = not true at all ... 7 = always true

10. When studying, I try to determine which concepts I do not understand well.

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ 6 ○ 7

11. When I study, I set goals for myself in order to direct my activities in each study period.

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ 6 ○ 7

12. If I get confused taking notes, I make sure I sort it out afterwards.

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ 6 ○ 7

Adapted from "MSLQ," by The University Learning Center, 2000.

Goal-setting is an important part of increasing student motivation. Through goal-setting, students learn that they control how well they do in school and they learn to feel more positively about the subjects they study. They learn to attribute both successes and failures to their own efforts, and they learn to take responsibility for their learning. Goal setting teaches students how to break a difficult task into manageable portions, instead of avoiding it. They learn to feel positively about subjects as they progressively achieve small goals. This is accomplished by helping the student visualize success, setting short-term, manageable goals, having the student record his/her progress, and providing feedback on student progress.

Visualize Success

Students need to have a vision of themselves succeeding. A vision gives a student direction and it helps keep a student focused on the goal (Fitch & Evans, 2006).

To teach students to visualize success:

- Tell students to create a movie in their mind, and they are the star of the movie. Each scene in the movie should represent the student achieving his/her goals.
- Have students draw pictures of themselves achieving their goals.
- Have students cut out pictures from magazines or other sources that represent them meeting their goals.

Adapted from "Goal setting for students and teachers," by L.A. Rader, 2005, *Clearing House, 78*(3), 123.

- Ask students questions, such as, "How do you feel when you finish a book?"

- Have students create posters of themselves accomplishing their goals. Then put the posters where the students can see them daily, such as on the wall or on their desk.

Adapted from "Empowering young children for success in school and in life," by J. Szente, 2007, *Early Childhood Education Journal, 34*(6), 449-453.

Setting Manageable Goals

- Teach students the difference between short-term and long-term goals. Teach them that short-term goals can help them reach their long-term goal. Explain that short-term goals can be accomplished in a week or a month, and long term-goals are accomplished in a school year.
- Teach students the importance of setting specific instead of vague, general goals. If students want to "do better in math", help them narrow it to a certain, specific goal, such as learning long division.
- Have students write down their goal.
- Have students decide when they will accomplish their short-term goal within a reasonable time period.
- Help students make a plan for reaching their goal. Have students list things that may prevent them from accomplishing their goal and what they will need to meet their goal.
- Teach students to review their goals daily.

Adapted from "Goal setting for students and teachers," by L.A. Rader, 2005, *Clearing House, 78*(3), 123.

Sample Goal Contract

Goal Contract

Student's Name: _____ Date: _____

A goal for you to work on is to

_____

_____

You can show you are working on this goal by:

A.

_____

_____

B.

_____

_____

_____

Student's Signature

_____

Teacher's Signature

Adapted from "CHAMPs: a proactive and positive approach to classroom management," by R. Sprick, M. Garrison, and L. Howard, 1998.

Mastery/Performance Goals

Student motivation can be divided into two categories: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Students who are intrinsically motivated work for a personal reward, such as pride in an accomplishment; students who are extrinsically motivated work for an external reward, such as grades or outperforming peers. Whether students are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated can be seen through the type of goals they set for themselves: mastery or performance goals. Mastery goals focus on increasing competence, while performance goals focus on demonstrating competence (Turner & Patrick, 2004).

Students with Mastery Goals	**Students with Performance Goals**
• Use their past performance as their standard with which to compare their current performance. • Are willing to put forth effort and persistence even when confronted with a task they find hard. • View mistakes as opportunities to learn. • Show interest and excitement when learning new skills.	• Are concerned with demonstrating competence and avoiding demonstrating incompetence. • Are concerned with how they perform in comparison to others. • Prefer easy tasks to look like they are succeeding with minimal effort. • Focus on grades and compare themselves to others.

Adapted from "Motivational influences on student participation in classroom learning activities," by J.C. Turner and H. Patrick, 2004, *Teachers College Record, 106*(9), 1759-1785.

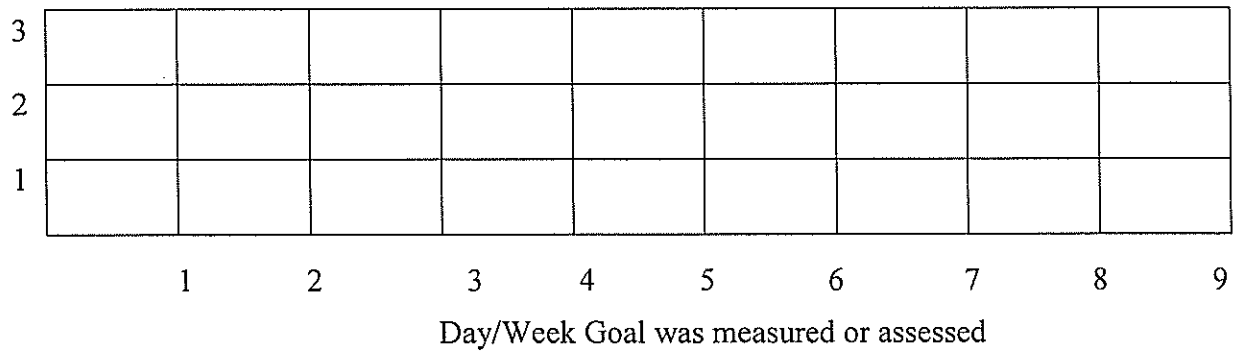
Where possible, it would be better to encourage students to set mastery goals instead of performance goals, since mastery goals are more conducive to learning. However, it is possible for performance goals to lead to mastery goals. One study found that while for some students a mastery goal was their main goal, a performance goal was a sub goal that led to meeting their desired performance goal (Hannula, 2006). Hannula (2006) stated that mastery and performance goals can support each other, instead of being opposites or contradictory goals. So students who are driven by performance goals can also want to master the skills, just as students who are more intrinsically motivated can also want to compete with peers or perform higher than an average standard.

Student Self-Recording

- Students charting their own progress learn that they have control over their performance in school. Teach students how to graph their data and understand how it shows their growth.

(Rader, 2005).

Student Name: _____ Title of Assignment/Goal: _____



Adapted from "Continuous improvement in education," by L.A. Fitch and B. Evans, (no date given).

- Teach students to set process instead of outcome goals. Teach students that their goal should be to master the steps/strategies of a new skill, instead of just focusing on getting something right (Kitsantas et al., 2004). For example, a student could set a process goal of learning all of the steps to long division, instead of an outcome goal to get a long division problem correct.

Follow-Up

Following up on student progress is an important part of goal setting, which traces back to increasing student motivation. The teacher-student discussion is when the teacher can cement the reasons why the student is making progress, thereby ensuring the student correctly attributes success with his/her effort and learns to self-evaluate why he/she is progressing or not. It is also a time when teachers can encourage the students so that students learn to feel positive instead of negative feelings about their task.

Providing Feedback

Do:	**Don't:**
Give feedback immediately	Wait too long to give feedback.
Link success with effort	Link success with student's ability or personality traits, or criticize the student
Point out the student's improvement and mastery.	Give praise that doesn't specify how the student is progressing,

Adapted from "Striking the right balance: students' motivation and elementary mathematic," by A. Schweinle, D.K. Meyer and J.C. Turner, 2006, *Journal of Educational Research, 99*(5), 271-293.

Self-Evaluation

- Ask students to assess their own progress and discuss possible alternative methods to reach their goals, if the current methods are inefficient.
- Use student responses to determine if students are attributing their progress, or lack of progress, to external or internal factors. In others words, see if the students are taking responsibility for their learning or are blaming factors out of their control.

Emotional Support

- Focus on goal achievement by reminding student of previous accomplishments.
- Tell the student inspirational stores of times you had a goal and accomplished it.
- Give the student notes/letters to recognize his/her achievements or efforts.

Replace Negative Thoughts with Positive Thoughts

1. Encourage children to share their thoughts about current assignments with you.
2. Set aside a special time when you can talk with students who have negative thoughts.
3. Find out why the student(s) have negative thoughts by asking them why. (Why do you think you're no good at math?)
4. Teach the student(s) how to think good thoughts anytime they have a bad thought.

5. Teach that the positive thoughts should be thought in present tense and have specific details ("I am good at dividing decimals" instead of "I will someday be good at dividing decimals")
6. Make sure that the students think of their own positive thoughts, and you as the teacher don't tell them what to think.

Adapted from "Goal setting for students and teachers," by L.A. Rader, 2005, *Clearing House, 78*(3), 123.

Increasing Student Interest

It's important to be cautious when working to improve student motivation by increasing student interest. Students who are low motivated because they are bored also lack or have low intrinsic motivation. If a teacher works to increase student motivation by increasing student interest in an assignment, then that teacher is only building extrinsic motivation, and not intrinsic motivation. If students come to rely on external rewards, they will lose the motivation to succeed once the external rewards are not available. In addition, the teacher may need to continuously improve the external rewards to continue to motivate students. As Jensen (2005) stated, students can quickly habituate to rewards (p. 105). For example, students may initially be satisfied with a sticker on their assignment as a reward, but next time they'll want two stickers. In this case, student motivation is actually not increasing at all because the student cares only about external rewards and will stop caring about learning once the rewards are no longer included.

A teacher could use rewards to build student interest as a way to help increase intrinsic motivation. The external rewards may be the way to spark student motivation,

and once the child realizes the value of an assignment, intrinsic motivation can replace the initial extrinsic motivation. Studies have also found that positive feedback that specifies what a child did to succeed can increase a child's intrinsic motivation (Denissen, Zarrett & Eccles, 2007).

If rewards are use to spark student motivation, it may be a good idea to:

- Use low-cost, concrete rewards and plan to stop giving them soon.
- Use abstract rewards such as certificates praise or recognition.

Ways to wean kids off external rewards:

- Phase them out slowly.
- Begin to develop intrinsic motivation.
- Increase the abstract rewards over the concrete rewards.

Specific Ways to build Intrinsic Motivation

Make sure students have either a process model to follow or a strong end goal.

- Ensure the students have the working tools they need.
- Provide plenty of encouragement.
- Allow student choice- in little and big decisions.
- Show students that you enjoy learning.
- Make lessons relevant to students.
- Give feedback.
- Allow time for students to become interested in their learning.
- Instigate peer-tutoring.
- Ask former students to come back and share success stories.

Adapted from "Teaching with the brain in mind (2nd edition)," by E. Jensen, 2005.

Social Relationships

- Allow students to work with their peers on tasks that seem uninteresting.
- Teach students to use cooperation instead of competition when working together.

Adapted from "Striking the right balance: students' motivation and elementary mathematics," by A. Schweinle, D.K. Meyer and J.C. Turner, 2006, *Journal of Educational Research, 99*(5), 271-293.

Specific Ways to Create Novelty in the Classroom

- Change teacher and student location, by rearranging desks, teaching outside, switch rooms with another teacher, etc.
- Introduce lessons with different kinds of music.
- Use a variety of instructional strategies.
- Use cooperative learning strategies.
- Have students work with different partners or groups.
- Use props, noisemakers, costumes, poetry or singing to get kids' attention.

Adapted from "Classroom of choice: giving students what they need and getting what you want," by J.C. Erwin, 2004.

Allowing student autonomy in the classroom can promote student motivation. Kohn (2000) stated that: "all of us tend to be happiest and most effective when we have some say about what we are doing. If we are told what to do (or, in the case of schooling, deprived of any opportunity to make decisions about what we're learning), achievement tends to drop right along with any excitement about what we're doing" (p. 150). However, teachers need to be careful that the choices given are controlled, and that the

classroom doesn't turn into a three-ring circus justified on the teacher's belief of student autonomy. Students need a balance of control and choice, and teachers can decide how much autonomy and in what areas would best enhance their students' learning.

Ways to Increase Student Choice in the Classroom

- After discussion the responsibilities of this choice, allow students to choose where they sit, or if they want to stand during lessons.
- Be flexible enough to allow some student choice in developing the agenda; a choice in when lessons are taught.
- Allow student choice of partners and/or team members.
- Allow students to have some say in what they are interested in learning about a particular subject.
- Allow students to choose between specific topics for an assignment. For example, students can't choose whether or not to write an essay, but they can be given choices for the topic of the essay.
- Allow student choice in how they are assessed.
- Allow student choice in what they put into their portfolios.
- Help students choose their own behavior guidelines with a class constitution.
- Allow students to choose a learning center that fits their learning styles.

Adapted from "Classroom of choice: giving students what they need and getting what you want," by J.C. Erwin, 2004.

There are specific behaviors of teachers who allow for student autonomy in their classroom, and there behaviors of teachers who are too controlling. Below is a chart of general and specific behaviors and comments that a teacher who supports student autonomy would do and say, and under it a chart of what a controlling teacher would do and say. The chart was taken from a study determining whether teacher's instructional behaviors correlated with students' autonomy; the operational definitions are the actual behaviors and comments made by teachers during the study (Reeve & Jang, 2006).

Autonomy-Supportive Instructional Behaviors

Instructional Behavior	**Operational Definition**
Time listening	Cumulative number of seconds the teacher carefully and fully attended to the student's speech, as evidenced by verbal or nonverbal signals of active, contingent, and responsive information processing.
Asking what the student wants	Frequency of questions asking specifically about what the student wanted or desired, such as, "Which pattern to you want to start with?"
Time allowing the student to work in his/her own way	Cumulative numbers of seconds the teacher invited or allowed the student to work independently and to solve the puzzle in his/her own way.

Time student talking	Cumulative number of seconds the student talked.
Seating arrangements	Whether or not the teacher invited the student to sit in the chair nearest to the learning materials.
Providing rationales	Frequency of explanatory statements as to why a particular course of action might be useful, such as, "How about we try the cube, because it is the easiest one."
Praise as informational feedback	Frequency of statements to communicate positive effective feedback about the student's improvement or mastery, such as "Good job" and "That's great."
Offering encouragement	Frequency of statements to boost or sustain the student's engagement, such as "Almost," "You're close," and "You can do it."
Offering hints	Frequency of suggestions about how to make progress when the student seemed to be stuck, such as "Holding the puzzle in your hands seems to work better than laying it on the table" and "It might be

	easier to work on the base first."
Being responsive to student-generated questions	Frequency of contingent replies to a student-generated comment or question, such as "Yes, you have a good point" and "Yes, right, that was the second one."
Communicating perspective-taking statements	Frequency of empathic statements to acknowledge the student's perspective or experience, such as "Yes, this one is difficult" and "I know it is a sort of difficult one."

Controlling Behaviors

Instructional Behaviors	**Operational Definition**
Time teacher talking	Cumulative number of seconds the teacher talked.
Time holding/monopolizing learning materials	Cumulative number of seconds teacher physically held or possessed the puzzle.
Exhibiting solutions/answers	Number of puzzle solutions the teacher physically displayed or exhibited before the student had the opportunity to discover the solution for him/her self.
Uttering solutions/answers	Frequency of statements revealing a puzzle solution before the student had the

	opportunity to discover it for him/her self, such as "The cube's done this way-like this."
Uttering directives/commands	Frequency of commands such as do, move, put, turn, or place, such as "Do it like this," "Flip it over," or "Put it on its side."
Make should/ought to statements	Frequency of statements that the student should, must, has to, got to, or ought to do something, such as "You should keep doing that" and "You ought to…"
Asking controlling questions	Frequency of directives posed as a question and voiced with the intonation of a question, such as, "Can you move it like I showed you?" and "Why don't you go ahead and show me?"
Deadline statements	Frequency of statements communicating a shortage of time, such as "A couple of minutes left" and "We only have a few minutes left."
Praise as a contingent reward	Frequency of verbal approvals of the students or the student's compliance with the teacher's directions, such as "You're

	smart" or "You are really good at playing with blocks."
Criticizing the student	Frequency of verbal disapprovals of the student or the student's lack of compliance with the teacher's directions, such as "No, no, no, you shouldn't do that."

Adapted from "What teachers say and do to support students' autonomy," by J. Reeve and H. Jang, 2006, *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98*(1), 209-218.

Other Ways to Increase Student Interest

Use Movement

- Take students outside for a short walk when they seem to be getting tired.
- Lead the students in stretching exercises. Have them stretch the muscles they've been using, such as their fingers, wrists and neck.
- Use beanbags- students can toss a beanbag from hand-to-hand as they practice spelling words, reciting multiplication facts, and so on.
- Start a lesson in one part of the room and then move the class for the second part of the lesson.

Use Color

- Use color in bulletin boards, curtains, and other places around the room.
- Organize the day's agenda on the board by color.
- Use colored chalk.
- Use color on overhead transparencies.
- Allow students to use color in their writing.

- Allow students to use color as an organizer: for fact families in math, for their daily planner, etc.

Use Music

- Introduce each subject for the day by playing a certain song.
- Signal a transition by playing a song.
- Play music during more monotonous times of the day, like at the end of the day when picking up the floor.
- Use a variety of music.
- Sing your instructions to your students.
- Help improve memorization of facts through music; teach the multiplication facts, the continents, etc. by putting the words to a song familiar to the children. Add movements to the song.

Adapted from "How students really learn," by L.H. Wilson, 2006.

Some sample songs most children are familiar with are:

- Happy Birthday to You
- Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star
- Bingo
- The Ants Go Marching
- Theme songs from TV shows

Use Technology

- If the technology is available, teach students to design a web page for a project.

- Allow students to publish stories, essays, or any school work on their web page for their family and friends to see.
- Use email to allow students to communicate with students from around the world. This can motivate kids to improve their writing skills, communication skills, help kids to better understand current events, etc.
- Use Inspiration software to teach organization with writing essays.
- Teach students to use the internet to do research.

Adapted from "Computers and education," by J.D. Torr, 2003.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Motivation plays an important role in a child's education. Education requires the efforts of both the teacher and the learner; without one or the other, learning cannot take place. Students must be motivated to learn the material they are taught. Students who are not reaching their academic potential may be inhibited by a lack of motivation instead of a lack of ability. It therefore follows that teachers could help increase student achievement by increasing student motivation.

In order to increase student motivation, teachers must first understand what causes students to feel less motivated in school. According to the information collected in the review of the literature, students may feel less motivated in school because they feel they have no control over specific situations, they associate a negative feeling with a given task, or a combination of both. Teachers must also be able to recognize signs of students who are not reaching their academic potential because of a lack of motivation instead of a lack of ability. By observing and analyzing student behavior, teachers can determine how motivated a student was to complete a task to the best of their ability.

Teachers should also be knowledgeable about factors that lead to a student feeling motivated in school. Teachers can then intervene with perceived low motivated students and increase their motivation in school. Teachers can create a classroom environment that promotes motivation, and they can model their own motivation for learning. They

can teach students that they have control over their own learning, and teach students to feel positively about their education.

Conclusion

Motivation is an important component of a child's education. Students who are motivated to learn will more likely reach their academic potential than students who are less motivated. It is well worth teachers' time to understand what causes student to feel highly motivated or less motivated to do their best in school. Lack of motivation may be the only obstacle blocking a student from success in school. Teachers who can increase student motivation can also increase student achievement.

Teachers must understand what causes students to become less motivated in school. When a teacher understands why a student struggles with motivation, the factors inhibiting his/her low motivation can be addressed and resolved. Teachers must know how to teach a student to feel motivated to try their best in school. They must be aware of the strategies they can use to increase student motivation, both for their whole class and individual students. When teachers focus on both teaching academics to their students and increasing and maintaining student motivation, their students have the best chances for success in school.

Recommendations

Motivation plays an important factor in determining a student's success in school. Other factors can influence how well a child performs in school, such as a student's learning ability, maturity and organizational skills. It is recommended that a teacher

consider all possible factors for a child performing below their capabilities, and not just assume that a student has a lack of motivation.

It is also recommended that a teacher recognize that there are many factors which may cause a student to feel less motivated, and some of these factors may be out of the teacher's control. For example, if a student is low motivated to perform their best in school because that student's parents do not support their child's education, there may be little the teacher can do to increase that student's motivation. It is recommended that the teacher at least try to increase that student's motivation. The child may learn to feel motivated in school despite the other factors inhibiting that student's motivation.

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