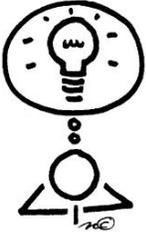




GETTING STUDENTS TO WORK HARDER: IMPROVING STUDENT MOTIVATION IN YOUR CLASSROOM

Some students are inherently eager to learn. These students value the subject and find it meaningful. Their reward is the satisfaction of attaining mastery or the pleasure that comes from solving that discipline's type of problems.



There are research-based teaching strategies that may heighten the value of your subject for all of your students and spark their curiosity. Some of these also reduce the focus on grades and increase student self-confidence, each of which will help students who are not intrinsically motivated. There are also specific practices that improve student motivation by giving feedback, increasing student participation and encouraging students to complete assignments.

GENERAL STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING STUDENT MOTIVATION

Research has shown the same eight characteristics of a class contribute to student motivation. These are also associated with good teaching practices and improving intrinsic motivation in students.

- Be enthusiastic
- Show the relevance of the material
- Organize the course logically and be prepared for class
- Demand appropriately high expectations
- Include active student involvement
- Use a variety of instructional approaches
- Build rapport between students and the instructor
- Use understandable examples

There are a variety of specific teaching techniques that align with these general strategies. Each technique, listed below, elevates one or more of the rewards associated with intrinsic motivation for all students.



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BEST PRACTICES FOR EMPHASIZING THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF THE MATERIAL

Technique	Description	Examples
<i>Show how the material is relevant</i>	Show the how influential the subject is or what kinds of significant problems it solves.	What BIG questions does your discipline answer? What are the controversies? What is still unknown?
<i>Choose meaningful topics or examples</i>	Use familiar firms or ideas; connect the subject with your students' culture, outside interests or social lives.	Begin a session with a recent news headline; use short youtube videos for examples; discuss how the subject applies to a Bay Area firm.
<i>Share your own motivation for the material</i>	Share your own intrinsic motivation or desire for mastery of the topic. Your passions are infectious.	Tell stories about your own "discoveries" and fascination. Use your current research or experiences to color the discussions.
<i>Offer a choice of assignments</i>	Allow students to take charge of planning their work and to select topics of the greatest interest.	If you would like students to write two papers during the term, provide 3-4 assignments and ask them to choose two. Similarly, give a choice of topics for each assignment.
<i>Teach by discovery</i>	Use an inductive approach where students reason through the problem to discover the underlying principle.	Socratic discussions or case analysis where solutions emerge from the discussion.
<i>Help students construct new mental models</i>	Identify students' preconceptions and plan to challenge these assumptions.	Explicitly raise the questions "How do we know...?" "Why do we believe...?" "What is the evidence for...?" "What are the underlying assumptions...?"



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BEST PRACTICES FOR SHARING THE JOY OF SOLVING THE DISCIPLINE'S PUZZLES

Technique	Description	Examples
<i>Stimulate uncertainty or surprise</i>	Pique students' curiosity with puzzling questions.	Begin the discussion with opposing points of view; Survey the students with a question, display the class results, pose the question again at the end of the session; Ask students to bring two questions to class every day and build the discussion based on those questions.
<i>Group learning activities</i>	Ask students to tackle a question, problem or assignment in a small group format. The group creates positive social pressure.	Buzz groups are teams of 4-5 that form extemporaneously to respond to 1 or more questions. ConcepTests: during a lecture a moderately difficult problem is posed. After a few minutes of individual reflection, pairs or small groups students discuss their answers. If they disagree, each should try to persuade the others.
<i>Include a variety instructional activities</i>	Besides lecture or in-class discussions there are many ways to "instruct" students.	Simulations, student presentations, role playing, guest speakers, think-pair-share, debates, brainstorming.



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BEST PRACTICES FOR DE-EMPHASIZING GRADES AND COMPETITION

Technique	Description	Examples
<i>Get all students involved</i>	Signal that everyone's contributions are welcome.	Cold call; warm call; encourage debate; give time for reflection before calling on students
<i>Avoid using grades as threats</i>	Emphasize the benefits of learning as reward and of continuous improvement.	Ask (or assign) students to critique their own work, analyze strengths, address their weaknesses
<i>Be free with praise and constructive in criticism</i>	Offer nonjudgemental feedback about particular performance.	Give specific feedback - say what works, what doesn't and why.
<i>Be supportive</i>	Supportive teacher behaviors include listening, hints, encouragement, empathy and responsiveness to concerns or questions.	<i>Listening:</i> attend to student questions with verbal (e.g. re-state their point) and non-verbal (e.g. nodding) signals of active listening <i>Hints:</i> suggest how to make progress : "It's helpful to start..." " Have you tried..." or "It might be easier if you look at ..." <i>Encouragement:</i> "You are almost there." "You are so close." " You can do this." <i>Empathy:</i> "Yes, this one is difficult" or "I know you had to wrestle with this one." <i>Responsiveness:</i> "You have a good point." "That is a good question."



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BEST PRACTICES FOR SETTING HIGH – BUT REALISTIC – EXPECTATIONS

Technique	Description	Examples
<i>Balance the challenge</i>	Students perform best when the level of difficulty is slightly above their current ability level.	Set specific, challenging goals; give prompt feedback.
<i>Offer opportunities for improvement</i>	Demonstrate your confidence that students can and will improve	Assign draft versions (graded or not); Give several assessments to demonstrate mastery;
<i>Build relationships</i>	Encourage trust and rapport to improve student self-confidence, and improves your own awareness of students needs and progress	Meet informally outside of class; Arrive a few minutes early and talk casually; Move closer to students during discussions or when they pose questions; Call on students by name
<i>Assist low performing students</i>	Confer with students to identify what they can do to improve their performance.	Help students think diagnostically about their performance. Ask them about how they prepared; review where the flaws were; suggest how to prepare or write in the future.
<i>Teach students how to prepare for class or assessments.</i>	Show students how to examine and analyze the material.	In assignments and discussions, teach students to recognize arguments; to distinguish between evidence and conclusions; to understand what data is missing; to explore implications of conclusions; to name assumptions



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REFERENCES AND SOURCES FOR MORE SUGGESTIONS

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