



The Principals' Partnership
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A Program of Union Pacific Foundation

Research Brief

Student Engagement

Question:

How can teachers truly engage students (not just do a series of activities), especially the most reluctant learners?

Summary of Findings:

Many teachers are challenged by working with underachieving and unmotivated students. As stated in the ERIC Digest on Student Motivation to Learn:

Infants and young children appear to be propelled by curiosity, driven by an intense need to explore, interact with, and make sense of their environment. Unfortunately, as children grow, their passion for learning frequently seems to shrink. Learning often becomes associated with drudgery instead of delight. A large number of students--more than one in four--leave school before graduating. Many more are physically present in the classroom but largely mentally absent; they fail to invest themselves fully in the experience of learning

One of the largest challenges facing schools and educators today is how to reach all students. Educators are especially challenged by students who seem most reluctant to learn, or, as one principal described them, "intentional non-learners."

Motivation, in the context of school, is described as a student's want or desire to learn. Sometimes educators mistakenly believe that some students don't have motivation, when in fact they might only lack motivation to learn what we want them to learn. The good news is that although motivation is influenced by many factors outside of the control of schools, educators can motivate and engage students in learning.

Muir suggests that there are nine essential elements to motivating underachieving students:

- Positive relationships & school climate;
- Feedback and helping students succeed;
- Hands-on, active work;
- Variety and attention to learning styles;
- Tying learning into interests and making it interesting;
- Avoiding bribery rewards;
- Giving students voice and choice;
- Making connections and higher order thinking; and
- Putting learning into context and making real world connections.

Schools working to motivate and engage students can reduce misbehavior and disruptions, as well as improve dropout rates (most dropouts claim they left school because they were bored, or learning material they didn't need to know).

Online Resources:

(Note: ERIC documents can be found by going to <http://www.eric.ed.gov/> and entering the ERIC ID#)

Motivating Underachievers - Reaching All Students

Mike Muir

Are you frustrated at the challenge of working with underachieving and unmotivated students? One of the largest challenges facing schools and educators today is how to reach all students. Reaching every child is not a challenge simply because of federal policy. This issue transcends No Child Left Behind. The economy has changed and we need all students to learn to high standards so they can go on to college and productively join the workforce. Schools are working hard to learn how to accomplish this.

<http://mcmel-resources.wikispaces.com/Motivating+Underachievers>



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Student Motivation To Learn

ERIC Digest, Number 92.

Author: Lumsden, Linda S.

Infants and young children appear to be propelled by curiosity, driven by an intense need to explore, interact with, and make sense of their environment. Unfortunately, as children grow, their passion for learning frequently seems to shrink. Learning often becomes associated with drudgery instead of delight. A large number of students--more than one in four--leave school before graduating. Many more are physically present in the classroom but largely mentally absent; they fail to invest themselves fully in the experience of learning. Awareness of how students' attitudes and beliefs about learning develop and what facilitates learning for its own sake can assist educators in reducing student apathy.

ERIC #: ED370200

http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content2/Student_Motivation.html

Increasing Student Engagement and Motivation: From Time-on-Task to Homework

Cori Brewster & Jennifer Fager

High motivation and engagement in learning have consistently been linked to reduced dropout rates and increased levels of student success. Yet, keeping students interested in school and motivating them to succeed are challenges that present themselves year after year to even the most seasoned teachers. This booklet offers some practical strategies for promoting student engagement in learning. When possible, we have included suggestions for both teachers and administrators, describing techniques that can be incorporated at the classroom, school, and district levels. Also included are tips to share with parents, who play the most important role in cultivating students' motivation to learn.

<http://www.nwrel.org/request/oct00/textonly.html>

Motivating The Unmotivated

Ronald W. Luce

Over the years, I've listened to the long sighs of frustration and then the discussion of the "fact" that students are largely "unmotivated," unwilling slugs taking up my time and best performances. And though I, too, have fallen into this occasional "locker room talk" about students, I find myself now regretting my ignorance. Over the past few years, I have tried to take time to get to know my students, to talk honestly with them about who they are and what they want from me, the institutions where I have encountered them, and their education. They have taught me a great deal. I no longer believe that their motivation is the real issue regarding the ways many of them perform or fail to perform in my classroom.

<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/unmotiva.htm>

Motivating Students: 8 Simple Rules For Teachers

Lana Becker and Kent N. Schneider

Principles of Accounting has the reputation of being a "hard and boring" course. It is difficult to motivate students to invest the time and effort necessary to succeed in the course. To meet this challenge, we have assembled a list of eight simple rules for keeping students focused and motivated. These rules are not original, and they aren't just for those of us who teach accounting classes. Indeed, most of these time-honored suggestions apply to any course students find hard and boring, and we think that makes them broadly applicable.

<http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/motiv8rules.htm>

Critical Issue: Using Technology to Enhance Engaged Learning for At-Risk Students

An increasing number of educators are calling for high standards and challenging learning activities for at-risk students. New technologies can provide meaningful learning experiences for all children, especially those at risk of educational failure. Schools that capitalize on the relationship between technology and education reform will help students to develop higher order skills and to function effectively in the world beyond the classroom. Achieving such fundamental change, however, requires a transformation of not only the underlying pedagogy (basic assumptions about the teaching and learning process) but also the kinds of technology applications typically used in classrooms serving at-risk students.

<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/atrisk/at400.htm>



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Re-engaging Students in Learning at School (article within the newsletter)

Focuses on motivational considerations related to re-engaging students who have disengaged from classroom learning.

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/dbsimple2.asp?primary=2302&number=9999>

Motivation in Instructional Design. ERIC Digest.

Developing life-long learners who are intrinsically motivated, display intellectual curiosity, find learning enjoyable, and continue seeking knowledge after their formal instruction has ended has always been a major goal of education. Early motivational research was conducted primarily in the workplace, and centered on ways to motivate industrial workers to work harder, faster, and better.

<http://www.ericdigests.org/1998-1/motivation.htm>

High School Dropouts Say Lack of Motivation Top Reason to Quit

Gewertz, Catherine

Education Week; v25 n26 p1, 14 Mar 2006

High school dropouts interviewed for a study released in early March, 2006, were far more likely to say they left school because they were unmotivated, not challenged enough, or overwhelmed by troubles outside of school than because they were failing academically. This article discusses this study, which consisted of four focus groups with dropouts in Philadelphia and Baltimore, as well as interviews with 467 dropouts from 25 large cities, small towns, suburbs, and rural areas.

ERIC #: EJ738593

Motivation to Learn: An Overview

A thorough overview of motivation.

Citation: Huit, W. (2001).

<http://chiron.valdosta.edu/whuitt/col/motivation/motivate.html>

Motivation

Central Michigan University

Lots of links about motivation

<http://www.facit.cmich.edu/instructional-development/links/motivation.htm>

Mathematics and Motivation

An Annotated Bibliography

by Liza Ewen

<http://mathforum.org/~sarah/Discussion.Sessions/biblio.motivation.html>

Quick Find Online Clearinghouse: Motivation

A huge list of links related to motivation

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/motiv.htm>

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