

News notes

September 2008

Volume 4 Issue 2

On a warm Friday night in August about thirty people attended the new teachers meet and greet party at Emily Brumley's house. It is something new we are trying to help us get to know each other a little better. Those of you who did not attend were missed and we hope to see you at future events. The snacks you all brought were tasty. Thank you Emily for hosting and letting us look at your grand home.

MOTIVATION

Do your students lack it? Do you?

Last year I recommended a book called, DO YOU KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT ME TO TEACH ME. By Stephen G. Peters. If you want to borrow a copy call my office we have a copy to lend. The information below is from that book in a chapter on motivation. It is the best breakdown I have seen on how to teach a person to be motivated. Nobody rises to low expectations.

1. "The **environment** can be used to focus the student's **attention** on what needs to be learned. Teachers who create warm and accepting, yet businesslike, atmospheres in class will promote persistent effort and favorable attitudes toward learning. Use interesting visual aids, such as booklets, posters, or practice equipment, motivate learners by **capturing** their attention and curiosity.
2. **Incentives motivate learning**. In a general learning situation, **self-motivation without rewards will not succeed**. It can be difficult for children to find satisfaction in learning based on the achievement of a long-term goal that is useful to them—it's even less common for them to be motivated by the pure enjoyment of exploring new things. But **privileges** and **praise** offered by a teacher who has thought about the incentive that is likely to motivate an individual at a particular time will **inspire** students every time.
3. **Internal motivation is longer lasting** and more self-directed than external motivation, which must be repeatedly reinforced by praise or concrete rewards. Unfortunately, children of certain ages and even some adults have little capacity for internal motivation and must be guided and reinforced constantly. The use of incentives should be based on the principle that learning occurs more effectively when the student experiences feelings of satisfaction. Caution should be exercised in using external rewards when they are not absolutely

necessary. Their use may be followed by a decline in internal motivation. (Couple a tangible reward with a social reward and gradually you can phase out the tangible.)

4. **Motivation is enhanced** by the way in which the instructional material is organized. The best organized materials makes the information meaningful to the individual, either by relating new tasks to those already known or by determining whether the persons being taught understand the final outcome desired and **instructing them to compare and contrast ideas**.
5. *Learning is most effective when an individual is ready to learn, i.e., when she wants to know something. Sometimes the student's readiness comes with time, and the teacher's role is to encourage its development. But if it's urgent that a desired change in behavior occur, the teacher may need to supervise directly to ensure that the change happens. If a student is not ready to learn, he or she may not be reliable in following instructions and, therefore, must be supervised and have the instructions repeated again and again.*

None of the techniques will produce sustained motivation unless the goals are realistic for the learner. The basic learning principle involved is that **success** is more **predictably motivating** than is failure. Ordinarily, people will choose activities of intermediate uncertainty rather than those that are difficult, in which they perceive a likelihood of success, or even easy, in which they perceive a high probability of success. For highly desired goals, there is even less tendency to choose more difficult conditions. So allowing learners to assist in defining the goals increases the probability both that they will understand them and that they will want to reach them."

Anxiety: "Because learning requires changes in beliefs and behavior, it normally produces a mild level of anxiety. Mild anxiety is good—it's useful in motivating the individual. However, severe anxiety is always bad—it's incapacitating...

But goals must be set because, without them, there can be no growth...Perhaps you're groaning to yourself, 'This sounds like and is a lot of work.' It is. Just remember that goal-setting demonstrates an intention to achieve and activates learning in your students from one day to the next. It directs the student's activities in a purposeful way and offers them an opportunity to experience success."

Affiliation and approval:

“It’s human nature to seek out others with whom to compare abilities, opinions, and emotions. Affiliation can also result in direct anxiety reduction through the mechanisms of social acceptance and the mere presence of others.

The following framework is to help you analyze motivation factors and strategies...

At the beginning of any learning process:

Student motivational factors	Teacher motivational strategies
Attitudes: toward the environment, teacher, subject matter and self	Positivity: make the conditions that surround the subject positive
Needs: including security, esteem, etc., within the learner at the time of learning	Challenge: confront the possibly erroneous beliefs, expectations, and assumptions underlying negative learner attitudes
	Planning: tailor activities to allow learners to meet identified needs
	Sensitivity: reduce or remove components of the learning environment that lead to failure or fear

In the middle of any learning process:

Student motivational factors	Teacher motivational strategies
Stimulation: note which learner intelligences are affected by the experience	Variety: change style and content of the learning activity
Affect: note the emotional experience of the learner while learning	Involvement: use problem solving, role playing, etc., to make learners essential to learning process
	Relevance: use learner concerns to organize content and develop themes and teaching procedures
	Collaboration: use team concepts to maximize learner sharing

At the end of the learning process:

Student motivational factors	Teacher motivational strategies
Competence: achieving this makes learners value the learning experience	Feedback: provide consistently regarding mastery of learning
	Acknowledgement and affirmation: of the learner’s growing skill
	Consequences: take advantage and make explicit natural learning situations
	Reinforcement: creates a feedback loop to stimulate more learning
	Closure: provide a positive ending to the experience

The Kansas Assessment results are here. If you wish to see a breakdown of how your students scored let me know by email and I’ll bring the information, share it with you, and help you plan for this year.

This year I will be looking for:

- standards posted
- instruction linked to standards
- student engaged
- smooth transitions
- differentiated instruction
- good discipline
- mutually respectful relationships
- good use of para staff
- paper work on time and completed appropriately



do it!

Together we can