Session 12

Expectations for Success:

Motivation and Learning

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I. Key Questions and Learning Objectives

Key Questions

- What motivates us to learn?
- How can teachers create motivating learning environments?

Learning Objectives

- **Influences on motivation**—Teachers will understand motivation as something constructed by both teacher and students. Teachers will learn how students' expectations for success and interests in learning can influence motivation.

- **Motivating learning environments**—Teachers will understand the characteristics of learning environments that enhance students' motivation, including building on students' interests and strengths, offering choices, encouraging risk-taking and improvement over time, and minimizing competition and comparison.

II. Session Overview

What does it mean to be motivated to learn? One image of a motivated student might be a young girl who stays after class to talk with the teacher about her interpretations of the poem they just discussed in class. Another image may include a high school student who works patiently with his lab partner to determine why their chemistry experiment did not react as planned. A first-grade student's desire to own every book and CD related to oceans and marine life is another example of a student who is intrinsically curious about a particular topic and motivated to learn more. Motivation to learn is usually associated with an eagerness to learn and a commitment to learning. Students who are motivated to learn can be observed working thoroughly on a task, seeking understanding, and persevering when they encounter challenges.

What is important to note in these examples is that motivation to learn is more than simply excitement about a particular topic. Rather, being motivated to learn refers to the degree to which students are dedicated to and engaged in learning. A willingness to think through problems and work through challenges to achieve mastery of a concept or skill goes beyond simply having fun during learning.

Historically, motivation theorists were concerned with individuals' behaviors, and they paid less attention to attitudes or beliefs about a learning activity. In the 1950s, B. F. Skinner conducted studies to see what external events or stimuli might lead to or reinforce particular behaviors. If the goal was to have students complete a homework assignment or work diligently at their desks, Skinner and other "behaviorist" researchers would try to find the right strategy to reinforce that particular behavior. For example, praise from the teacher or gold star stickers might be external rewards linked to students turning in their homework more frequently (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

Motivation theory eventually moved away from a purely external, behaviorist perspective, and theorists began to recognize that individuals are not passive respondents to their environment. Researchers such as John Atkinson and Albert Bandura began to examine the role of thoughts, beliefs, and interpretations in explaining behaviors. They found, among other things, that students' expectations for success and their perceptions of their ability were related to different strategies for studying. Students who expected to succeed exerted more effort than those who thought their chances of success were slim (Bandura, 1997). In addition, theorists such as Edward Deci began to consider the possibility that individuals have an innate interest in learning. He suggested that a personal or intrinsic value is attached to developing competencies (Deci, 1975).

As motivation theorists were beginning to explore the role of cognition, researchers found that children who were given extrinsic, or external, rewards for engaging in a task were actually *less* interested and *less* motivated to pursue that task in the future. It is as if the external reward undermined their intrinsic interest in the activity (Lepper, Greene, & Nisbett, 1973).

In this session, we introduce motivational concepts that have been studied, observed, and implemented in both laboratory and classroom settings (Ames, 1992; Blumenfeld, Puro, & Mergendoller, 1992; Stipek, 2002). We focus on the important role that teachers play in influencing their students' motivation to learn by cultivating students' expectations for success and students' interests in learning activities. We also highlight the ways in which teachers can make learning more accessible for their students. These practices include the following:

- Enhancing students' *expectancies for success* by choosing tasks at an appropriate level of difficulty, scaffolding student learning, and communicating high and equitable expectations for all students;

- Enhancing students' *interest* and the perceived value of the material being studied by relating classroom work to students' experiences, offering choices, and assigning varied and interesting tasks that are active and authentic;

- Creating a *supportive learning environment* that emphasizes learning and encourages risk-taking, not just getting the right answers; that stresses improvement over time; that provides opportunities for revision; and that minimizes competition and comparison (Blumenfeld et al., 1992).

II. Session Overview, cont'd.

Expectations for Success: Can I Do This?

Students need to believe they can be successful if they are going to try. Their expectations for success influence their willingness to engage in learning. For example, a student who believes that he is good at writing is more likely to spend his time crafting and revising his short stories than a student who does not have confidence in his creative writing skills. Numerous studies have shown that students with confidence in their abilities to succeed on a task work harder, persist longer, and perform better than their less efficacious peers (Bandura, 1997; Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Schunk, 1991; Stipek, 1996).

Various factors can contribute to students' expectations for success. Some of these factors are related to students' beliefs about intelligence and their capacity to improve their intellectual abilities. According to Carol Dweck, a motivation theorist, students have different beliefs about the nature of their intelligence: Some believe that intelligence is fixed, whereas others believe it can be developed by working hard on something. Schools foster or impede these beliefs to the extent that they emphasize effort rather than ability in their judgments about students and their attributions of causes of success (e.g., "smartness" vs. "hard work"). These beliefs can promote or hinder students' learning efforts in the classroom (Dweck, 1986).

Students who believe that their intelligence is a fixed trait and that there is nothing they can do to increase or expand their capacity to learn tend to think that no amount of effort will be worthwhile. A student who believes intelligence is fixed and that she has a large amount of ability to work with may be more likely to work hard to reach her potential than one who believes she has limited intelligence. However, even these able students are at risk, given that they often give up when they encounter a difficult task for the first time.

Other students, in contrast, believe that intelligence is something that can be cultivated and that it is not predetermined or limited. Students who espouse these "incremental" theories about intelligence are more likely to believe that their intelligence is linked to the amount of effort they devote to learning and improving. They will tend to work harder when they encounter an obstacle, rather than giving up. In the classroom, teachers need to emphasize the importance of effort and encourage students to believe that through effort they will indeed improve. Teachers should also avoid labeling students by their perceived ability and acknowledge improvements through feedback they give and the design of their assessment and grading systems. As discussed in Session 4, Multiple Intelligences, teachers can also design assignments in ways that emphasize that intelligence is not a fixed trait and that students can develop a range of intellectual strengths.

Even though students may enter a classroom with beliefs or theories about their own intelligence, teachers play a critical role in enhancing students' expectations for success. Teachers can create opportunities for their students to experience success in the classroom by designing accessible tasks, and by providing clear instructions and information so that the students can concentrate on the content and ideas. Educational psychologist Jerome Brophy suggests, "Make sure that [students] achieve success consistently by beginning at their level, moving in small steps, and preparing them sufficiently for each new step so that they can adjust to it without too much confusion or frustration" (Brophy, 1987, p. 210). Brophy clarifies that beginning at the students' level does not mean watering down tasks or giving students "busy work." Instead, he explains that "... success [is] achieved through reasonable effort that leads to gradual mastery of appropriately challenging objectives" (Brophy 1987, p. 210). Success is enhanced when teachers prepare students for the task through instruction, guidance, and feedback.

To feel successful, students also need to witness their own progress. As Deborah Stipek (2002) points out, students need frequent opportunities to see their skills increase. Creating short-term goals can help students feel that a task is manageable while at the same time allowing them to recognize their accomplishments. Asking for completion of a complex assignment by the end of the month is a long-term goal that might overwhelm a student who does not have high expectations for success. An alternative approach would require the student to share her topic one day, create an outline of her plan a few days later, share a summary of her findings a few days later, turn in a draft of her final paper a week later, complete a revision of the draft, and so on. With short-term goals, students can become more aware of their actual progress and at the same time recognize that assignments require effort and revision. Working through cycles of revisions may help reduce some students' anxiety about completing their work perfectly the first time around and allow them to gradually learn how to develop more areas of competency. If students are allowed to focus on the subject matter and a meaningful assignment rather than the grade, they are less likely to worry about their competence.

II. Session Overview, cont'd.

Communicating that all students can succeed and then *enabling* them to succeed are keys to developing expectations for success. Uncovering each student's strengths and helping the student to recognize and use these abilities—and to be acknowledged for them—increases self-confidence and hence the willingness to attempt new tasks. Grouping students heterogeneously and creating open-ended tasks that enable them to contribute their strengths is another way that teachers can communicate this message and support participation and effort (Cohen & Lotan, 1997). By providing opportunities for success and evidence of mastery through effort, teachers may even influence students' theories about the nature of intelligence and may help students come to believe they can cultivate their own intelligence through consistent effort and strategic learning.

Interest in Learning: Do I Want To Do This?

Expectations for success are expressed in the question, "Can I do this task?" For students to exert effort we also need to consider the question, "Do I *want* to do this task?" Research suggests that students who are interested in a topic or who value learning a particular skill or topic are more likely to work hard and engage in learning (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

Students are more likely to be interested in a task that they find personally relevant or valuable. Therefore, teachers should try to design activities that are related, where possible, to students' lives or current events (Stipek, 2002). Additionally, students are more likely to be intrigued by problems that are realistic and challenging. In particular, their interest can be piqued when the skills they are developing will have real-world significance (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). For example, high school students might complain about reading novels in their literature class because the subject matter seems outdated to them and writing critiques does not seem to be connected to anything outside of obtaining a grade. The teacher may not be given much choice in the novels he is allowed to teach in literature class, but he can work to help his students feel that the "dated" topics have relevance for them, and help them see that their writing and analytical skills are relevant to their individual pursuits outside the classroom. One strategy may be to ask the students to consider how youth are portrayed in the novel, or to compare certain aspects of the novel with certain current events, themes in students' own lives, or with specific issues in the school. The teacher can also communicate reasons why writing analytically can help students in their "real" lives by giving them opportunities to critique something that is important to them and by helping them understand the importance of thinking through the points they make and including evidence and examples to support their ideas. A "real-life" assignment in mathematics might call for calculating the area necessary for school rally posters by measuring the school hallways, estimating volume for the class aquarium, or using trigonometry to survey features of a local park to plan for a school event.

Students are more likely to find an assignment interesting if they have a say or a choice about what they get to work on. For example, in a history class that has been studying the Civil War, the teacher can develop an assignment that asks the students to select a specific event or a historical figure to learn about in greater depth. Although the teacher sets the boundaries and requirements for the assignment, the students feel invested in a topic they have chosen to pursue. One student may choose to learn more about the Underground Railroad, and another student may choose to learn more about Sherman's march. While the students have the opportunity to follow their personal interests, the teacher can make sure that each student still learns the fundamental concepts by requiring the students to explain how their topic relates to the larger context and issues of the Civil War.

Similarly, students may be required to read a novel and provide a critical analysis of the book, but the students can be allowed to choose which novel they read (one that will be interesting and appropriately challenging for them) or which aspect of the book to focus on (e.g., different themes). They may also choose the format through which to present their analysis (e.g., written report, oral presentation, or video analysis).

When teachers stress ideas instead of disconnected facts or procedures, they create room for students to explore and pursue their own curiosities. Students need opportunities to see where their own ideas may take them, and they should be invited to express their opinions and respond personally to the content. In a science class, for example, students can share their personal opinions about environmental issues or their experiences with infectious disease. In mathematics, students can share ideas for solutions and discuss each other's strategies. The teacher's role is to encourage the students to elaborate and explain their ideas and to model the expert thinking

processes. The teacher can take advantage of these discussions to explain aspects of the scientific knowledge base and help students develop hypotheses for later study based on their hunches or predictions. At the same time, the teacher has the opportunity to learn more about the students' thinking, lives, and interests that she can integrate into future lessons.

When introducing a new or complex concept, a teacher can help students understand better by drawing on experiences and concepts that are familiar to them. Students are more likely to be interested in mastering an abstract concept once it has been connected to something they can relate to. Blumenfeld and colleagues (1992) provide an example of a fifth-grade science teacher who explains the concept of interdependence by starting off the lesson asking students whom they depend on and how those people depend on them in turn.

Finally, tasks become more interesting the more realistic and challenging they are. Students are more likely to be motivated and engaged by a unit that helps them learn the features of a short story by having them apply those features in their own creation of a story than by a lesson that asks them to memorize the meaning of setting, plot, character, etc. Students who have to use concepts of ratio and proportion by building a scale model or altering and using a recipe are more likely to be engaged and to learn the concepts for future applications than if they completed a set of paper problems only (Brophy, 1987).

The Learning Environment: Is Learning the Primary Focus?

In the previous sections, we focused on students' beliefs about themselves and their interests in relation to their engagement with learning. This section focuses on what is communicated about learning within the classroom environment as a whole. Teachers communicate the goals of learning and how to be successful in their classroom through their choice of tasks, approaches to instruction, and verbal interactions with their students.

The design of classroom activities and assignments is critical for enhancing students' motivation to learn. First and foremost, teachers need to make sure the task is clear and that the students have the information necessary to pursue the task. The students can then focus on learning, not guessing what the teacher wants or wondering how to do the task. Teachers also need to convey that the primary goal is learning and understanding, that asking questions is desirable, that making mistakes is not cause for embarrassment, and that taking risks is necessary for learning.

Teachers communicate beliefs regarding the purpose and the process of learning that affect students' attitudes. Motivation theorists have found that students respond differently to classrooms focused on "task-oriented learning" as opposed to "ability-oriented learning" (Ames, 1992; Eccles et al., 1998; Urdan, 1997). In a classroom that emphasizes *task-oriented* learning, teachers design goals, tasks, assignments, and activities to help students understand concepts, improve their thinking and analytical skills, and concentrate on a particular topic. Students have many opportunities to work on tasks, get concrete and specific feedback, and revise their work until they achieve mastery. In contrast, a classroom that is oriented toward *ability goals* tends to highlight differences in students' abilities and achievement. When performing well with the minimum amount of time and effort is the goal, students often lose sight of what they are learning. Instead, they focus on the easiest or shortest way to earn the grade and be deemed successful. Thus in a task-oriented classroom, the goal is to learn and consistently improve; whereas in an ability-oriented classroom, the goal is the grade and the work is merely a requirement to be dispatched as quickly as possible.

For example, teachers who place a heavy emphasis on grades and who post the top three book reports on the bulletin board are creating an environment in which success means doing better than others. In such a classroom, students may think that only a select few can succeed, and most may lose interest in their work. Rather than emphasize the highest grades, teachers can make learning more accessible to the whole class by emphasizing goals for mastering concepts, working hard, and seeing gradual improvement. In such a task-oriented classroom, students' work is the center of attention, lots of work is visible, revisions are emphasized, and students understand that the grade reflects their efforts and their progress.

II. Session Overview, cont'd.

Another way to help students worry less about their ability and focus more on mastering concepts and skills is by minimizing social comparisons in the classrooms. Although work may be publicly evaluated and discussed as part of peer assessments and revision processes, teachers evaluate their students privately, thus helping their students concentrate on improvement rather than competing with other students for a grade. At the same time, teachers need to encourage students to take risks in learning and not to worry as much about making mistakes. Teachers can help enhance students' expectations for success by using mistakes as an opportunity to learn rather than an opportunity for criticism or evaluation. For example, if a group of students has been working on a science experiment and they do not successfully achieve the desired results, the teacher could take the opportunity to problem-solve with the students. Asking questions such as, "Why do you think you got your results?" "What do you think this means?" "What might you do differently next time?" and "Why might that lead to different results?" can help the students think through the concepts underlying the experiment. They can then use an unexpected outcome or a procedural error as a source of productive learning.

Evaluation and feedback are also important aspects of classroom and task structures. Students need to be aware of the criteria on which their evaluation is based. Having clear rubrics that describe the features of a successful product or response helps students understand what they are striving for. Getting clear, specific feedback that describes what has been accomplished well and what is needed for improvement provides the guidance needed for the next effort. Having the opportunity to revise or redo a task or a test after receiving feedback and an opportunity to rewrite or study more provides the incentive to use the feedback and learn the material more deeply.

If getting the right answer the first time around is the criterion for success, some students may use surface-level strategies such as rote memorization to help them remember facts so they can ensure their grade while others might not try at all, since they doubt they will get the right answer. However, if evaluations are based on the extent to which students understand a concept, how much their understanding or performance has improved over time, and how much effort they have put forth, students will be more likely to learn the material in a meaningful and more thoughtful way. If evaluation takes place privately rather than publicly, teachers have the chance to share informative, specific feedback with their students. They can also work more closely with students to work through a challenge or devise a plan for how a student might improve next time around.

Students also need opportunities to learn at their own pace and recognize when they need extra help or guidance. The most expert teachers in heterogeneous classrooms know how to differentiate tasks so that all students are working at endeavors that are appropriate for their zone of proximal development, allowing them to make continual progress while achieving success. In addition, teachers need to create a safe place in their classrooms where students can feel comfortable making mistakes and admitting that they may need help. To communicate that mistakes are a part of the learning process, teachers can give students continual opportunities to revise their work and demonstrate their improvement. In addition, by allowing and encouraging students to use their classmates as resources in the classroom, teachers can communicate that it is okay to ask for help. However, it is important for teachers and classmates to differentiate between helping through guidance and merely giving an answer. Teachers can model appropriate ways to guide students in giving useful assistance to others as well as learning things for themselves.

Personal relationships with teachers are also important for students' motivation to learn (Goodenow, 1993; Roeser, Midgley, & Urdan, 1996; Ryan & Powelson, 1991; Ryan, Stiller, & Lynch, 1994;). Students who feel that their teachers support them and care about them as individuals are more likely to feel motivated. It is often said that students learn *for* a teacher as much as they learn *from* a teacher. Teachers can communicate their support by setting aside time to meet individually with students and giving them encouraging, constructive feedback. Teachers can also convey their respect for their students and their personal investment in their students' learning by taking the time to learn about students' interests, opinions, and concerns. In addition, teachers need to make sure they understand, respect, and appreciate their students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

II. Session Overview, cont'd.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted important ways in which teachers can affect their students' motivation to learn. To engage in meaningful learning endeavors, students need to feel they have the ability to succeed, and they need to feel personally interested in the work. In the classroom, teachers have multiple opportunities to communicate to students that they have enormous potential to learn and succeed. By emphasizing effort, recognizing progress and improvement, and minimizing comparisons, teachers can help students gain the confidence they need to feel motivated to learn. Moreover, by connecting the subject matter to students' own lives, emphasizing big concepts, and allowing students to pursue areas of curiosity, teachers can help students develop an authentic interest in learning different types of material. Students may enter the classroom with certain beliefs about themselves, but in a supportive classroom, teachers have opportunities to help them gain self-confidence and enhance students' motivation to learn.

III. Additional Session Readings

Biehler, R. & Snowman, J. (1997). *Psychology applied to teaching* (Chapter 11). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin. [Online]. Available: http://college.hmco.com/education/pbl/tc/motivate.html.

Lumsden, L. (1994). Student motivation to learn. ERIC Digest, (92) EDO-EA-94-7. [Online]. Available: http://eric.uoregon.edu/pdf/digests/digest092.pdf.

IV. Session Activities

Getting Started

Answer one of the following prompts in a free-write, pair-share, or small-group discussion.

1. Think of a time when you were particularly motivated to learn. Describe the setting, who was involved and what you were learning.

    *   Did you feel confident in your abilities? Why?

    *   What sparked your interest in what you were learning?

OR

2. Describe the features of a learning environment that you think made a difference in your motivation.

    *   What does it mean to be motivated to learn? What does it look like?

    *   What characteristics of the learning environment are integral to motivation?

> **To the Facilitator:** These activities can be used as session warm-ups or as activities that occur after video viewing.

Discussion of Session Readings

> **To the Facilitator:** You may want to select questions from the Other Learning Activities and Assessments section to launch a discussion of the session readings. The questions used for the Checking for Understanding activities may be a particularly helpful resource.

Session Video

Many people think of motivation as something students either have or do not have, rather than thinking about what teachers can do to construct and support motivation. This video presents three important aspects of motivation in the classroom:

1. Helping students develop expectations for success—the sense that if they try, they can learn and succeed;

2. Developing tasks that are motivating, engaging, interesting, and appropriately challenging;

3. Creating an environment that supports learning with enough scaffolding, opportunities for trying and revising, and support for risk-taking.

Video excerpts from the classrooms of six of the featured teachers in this video course have been selected to illustrate these aspects of motivation.

IV. Session Activities, cont'd.

Background on Teachers

Daryl Robbins was teaching fifth- and sixth-grade integrated language arts and social studies at Birmingham Covington School in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan at the time this show was taped. Ms. Robbins has seven years of teaching experience. She received her bachelor's degree in elementary education and her master's degrees in curriculum and teaching from Michigan State University. Ms. Robbins is now principal of Bedford Elementary School in Dearborn Heights, Michigan.

Mary Edmunds teaches 10th- and 12th-grade biology at the Detroit High School for the Fine and Performing Arts, Detroit, Michigan. A 14-year veteran of teaching, Ms. Edmunds is a National Board-certified teacher and has been a National Board coach and mentor for five years. She received three Golden Apple Awards and is a presenter on entomology for the Metro-Detroit Science Teachers Association (MDSTA). She received her master's and bachelor's in science from the University of Michigan, and her specialist degree in science education from Wayne State University.

Donald Johnson teaches seventh- and eighth-grade science at Christopher Columbus Middle School in southeast Detroit. He is active in the Detroit Area Pre-College Engineering Program (DAPCEP). He holds a master's degree in education from Marygrove Collage, and a bachelor's degree in biology from University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Mr. Johnson has six years of teaching experience. He is a member of the Board of Directors for the Metro-Detroit Science Teachers Association.

Kendra Hearn was teaching 12th-grade English at West Bloomfield High School, Michigan at the time this program was taped. She has seven years of teaching experience. She holds a master's degree in education administration from the University of Detroit, Mercy. Ms. Hearn holds a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor and is studying metacognitive theory and applications as part of her doctoral studies in curriculum and instruction at Wayne State University. She is certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in English language arts. Ms. Hearn is now a professional development consultant with the Macomb Intermediate School District.

Julie Helber teaches fourth-grade math and science at Paddock Elementary School in Milan, Michigan, where she is also curriculum coordinator. Ms. Helber is a National Board-certified teacher and recipient of the National Educator Award from the Milken Family Foundation. She received her master's degree in curriculum development from Eastern Michigan University, and her bachelor's degree in kinesiology from the University of Michigan.

Avram Barlowe teaches 10th- through 12th-grade American history at Urban Academy High School in Manhattan, New York City. He has 22 years of teaching experience and is a National Board-certified teacher. Mr. Barlowe holds a bachelor's degree in history from the City College of New York, and a master's degree in liberal studies from the City University of New York.

Discussion of Session Video

> **To the Facilitator:** You may want to pause the tape at the following points to discuss these questions. If you are watching a real-time broadcast on the Annenberg/CPB Channel, you may want to consider the questions as you watch and discuss some of them afterward.

1. Helping Students Develop Expectations for Success (Daryl Robbins)

Video Cue: *The Learning Classroom* icon fades out at approximately 6:00 into the program.

Audio Cue: Ms. Robbins says, "If I tell them something it's, you know, 'Are we gonna be tested on this?' It's more that kind of thing."

- What did you notice about how Ms. Robbins created conditions for her students to experience success and feel competent?
- Why are students' expectations for success important?

IV. Session Activities, cont'd.

2. Supporting Students' Autonomy (Mary Edmunds)

Video Cue: *The Learning Classroom* icon fades out at approximately 10:30 into the program.

Audio Cue: Ms. Edmunds says, "Catch them while they're doing it and get them to think about it."

• How does Ms. Edmunds enhance her students' motivation?

• What are some ways you can (or do) give your students autonomy to investigate a problem or activity?

• Why is this important in terms of students' motivation?

3. Connecting Lessons to Real-World Situations (Donald Johnson)

Video Cue: *The Learning Classroom* icon fades out at approximately 14:45 into the program.

Audio Cue: Mr. Johnson says, "So again it's not something that is pencil and paper and I'm going to mark off when they get 10% and 20%, it's more of an application in the real world, because in the real world, the proof is that you did it."

• What are several specific aspects of Mr. Johnson's project that are motivating for his students?

• What do you think characterizes tasks that are motivating?

• Both competition and collaboration can be structured in ways that either enhance or undermine students' motivation to learn.

  • How did Mr. Johnson use aspects of both to support motivation?

  • In general, what aspects of these strategies matter for student motivation?

4. Providing Opportunities for Peer Response and Revision (Kendra Hearn)

Video Cue: *The Learning Classroom* icon fades out at approximately 18:00 into the program.

Audio Cue: Ms. Hearn says, "Think about what people said. What does your thinking need to be about any changes you may want to make?"

• What do you notice about how Ms. Hearn structures the revision process in her classroom?

• How might working with others motivate students, as we see in Ms. Hearn's 12th-grade English literature and composition class?

  • What might become challenges of this strategy?

  • How might you design instruction to address these challenges?

5. Providing Support for Risk-Taking (Julie Helber)

Video Cue: *The Learning Classroom* icon fades out at approximately 22:30 into the program.

Audio Cue: Ms. Helber says, "Take that line off, take that diagonal line off. So this line off and then we would have thirds." Girl says, "Yeah." Ms. Helber says, "Okay, good!"

• What might be the benefits of allowing students to demonstrate and discuss their thinking as we see in Ms. Helber's class?

  • Why is this important in terms of students' motivation?

IV. Session Activities, cont'd.

6. Providing a Learning Environment Where Students' Ideas Count (Avram Barlowe)

Video Cue: *The Learning Classroom* icon fades out at approximately 26:00 into the program.

Audio Cue: Mr. Barlowe says, "The whole process is empowering to different kinds of kids, sensitizing to other kids, you know, I think that really everybody in there can see that on any given day somebody can say something that makes you think about something in a way that you haven't thought about it before. And it doesn't matter who that kid is in the classroom. And that's good for every kid in that classroom."

•   What features of the learning environment do you think support students' motivation to learn in Mr. Barlowe's 12th-grade history class?

•   What are some ways you can (or do) encourage students to respect their peers' opinions?

V. Other Learning Activities and Assessments

> **To the Facilitator:** These activities and assessments are for you to choose from according to your group's needs and interests. Many of the activities offered here would work equally well as assignments both inside and outside of class. You may want to use class time to prepare for and/or reflect on any activities assigned as homework.

Applications

1. Journal

a.   Are there particular units of study in which you feel most successful motivating your students? What is it about one of those units that seems to support student motivation? What can you learn about motivation from examining and reflecting on a particular success?

b.   What dilemmas or questions do you have about making your classroom a motivating learning environment? What do you want to discuss and/or know more about regarding how to enhance your students' motivation?

c.   How do you know when your students are motivated to learn? What evidence might you look for?

V. Other Learning Activities and Assessments, cont'd.

2. Motivating Your Students in a Particular Subject

In subject matter groups, discuss and answer the following questions for the students in your grade level and classroom(s). Stay focused on the subject matter so you can build and share expertise about subject-specific motivation. It is not necessary to answer all the questions; the idea is to have a discussion in which you share expertise and questions with your peers.

Outside school:

- Where do students encounter this subject outside school?

- Which of their activities relate to this subject?

- What do they know about this subject from these activities or other places where they see this subject in action outside school?

- What strengths (skills, knowledge, values, questions) do they bring to your classroom regarding this subject?

- What could interest students about this subject?

Inside school:

- What kinds of experiences have students had with this subject inside school? Consider the particular curriculum they have encountered and the attitudes they have developed.

- What might they already know and do regarding this subject?

- What strengths do they bring to your classroom regarding this subject?

- What topics, units, or concepts in the grade-level curriculum interest students?

- If they have had de-motivating experiences, what has caused them? What might be needed to reverse these de-motivating influences?

Tying together outside school experiences and school environment and curriculum:

- How can you use students' interests and strengths in particular units and topics of study?

- How can you offer student choice within specific assignments and classroom tasks?

- How can you structure revision and risk-taking into particular classroom tasks and assignments?

- How can you evaluate student work in motivating ways?

- What, if any, are the subject-specific ways you can build a supportive and motivating classroom context?

- What are some enduring questions and dilemmas you face regarding motivating your students in your subject area?

> **To the Facilitator:** Subject area groups might make short presentations of their discussion to their classmates. One benefit of doing so might be the opportunity for classmates who are *not* subject experts to contribute their perspective and experiences with the subject as motivated or unmotivated learners. After the group's presentation, you might ask for additional comments and input regarding how to create motivating contexts in this subject matter.

V. Other Learning Activities and Assessments, cont'd.

3. Create an Action Plan

Consider a task that is new to your students or one that has not been especially motivating in the past (e.g., taking notes, working in groups, writing a summary, or working with word problems). Plan how you can enhance student motivation to learn and master the task. In the sketch of your plan, you might consider any of the following in relation to this particular task and your particular students: accessibility, appropriateness, authenticity and relevance, use of students' strengths, grouping strategies, scaffolds, and evaluation practices. Include a brief summary that explains why your plan should support motivation for your students.

Checking for Understanding

1. Short-Answer Questions

a.   What are three ways teachers can enhance student motivation?

b.   Compare "task-oriented learning" with "ability-oriented learning." Which one is most motivating and why?

c.   What kinds of evaluation motivate students? Describe three strategies teachers can use to make their evaluation practices more motivating for students.

2. Essay Questions

a.   How can a student's belief about his or her intelligence and abilities affect motivation and learning? How might a teacher uncover and influence a student's beliefs?

b.   How can teachers create motivating learning environments? Include at least three specific strategies or considerations and examples of each.

c.   How does motivation theory connect to other major learning theories we have considered in this course? Include at least three other theories and how they relate to constructing motivating contexts for students.

> **To the Facilitator:** You may wish to emphasize or specify particular theories here, given the progress of your course and what you have covered.

3. Reflective Essay

•   What has been motivating or de-motivating about this course?

•   What activities and tasks stand out in your mind as especially motivating? Why? Any that were de-motivating? Why?

•   Are your reasons consistent with the motivation theory articulated in this chapter's text? Explain.

V. Other Learning Activities and Assessments, cont'd.

Long-Term Assignments

Curriculum Case Study

Consider your case study learning problem in terms of student motivation. (Note: If your curriculum case is on a unit you plan to teach in the future, answer in the form of what you project for that unit. You may have to anticipate some of your students' reactions.)

- How did you create a context that could be motivating for students? Use the following questions to guide your reflection and analysis; others may also be appropriate:

    - Were the learning tasks motivating?

        - What were students required to know and do to complete the tasks?

        - Were opportunities given for incremental success? How do you know?

        - Were students working toward completing tasks that centered on big concepts, connected to their own lives, or allowed for student choice and curiosity?

        - Did these tasks maintain their intellectual honesty?

    - How did you evaluate student work and learning?

        - Were students recognized for progress, improvement, and effort?

        - Were standards clear and accessible for all students?

        - Were revision and persistence rewarded?

        - What role did grades and points play in the evaluation?

        - What role did competition play in evaluation?

    - How did the learning environment support or inhibit motivation?

    - What evidence do you have that students pursued mastery rather than performance?

    - What might you change to increase student motivation in tackling this learning problem?

> **To the Facilitator:** You will find other learning activities on the course Web site at www.learner.org/channel/courses/learning-classroom. You will want to look ahead to assign learners the reading and any homework for the next session.

VI. Web Sites and Organizations

Patterns of Adaptive Learning: http://www.umich.edu/~pals/ <http://www.umich.edu/~pals/

This Web site, developed by scholars at the University of Michigan, includes reports and publications about research in adolescent development and motivation. Included are links to other resources related to motivation research.

Information on Self-Efficacy: A Community of Scholars: http://www.emory.edu/EDUCATION/mfp/effpage.html

This is a Web site on "self-efficacy" (the belief in one's abilities to handle a situation), created by researchers at Emory University. The site has links to definitions, examples, and research.

VII. References and Recommended Readings

Note that recommended readings are marked with an asterisk (*).

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