ABSTRACT
        A program for improving adolescent classroom behavior
through motivational techniques was developed and implemented. The
targeted population was 20 junior high school students in a large,
low socioeconomic status community in the Midwest. A problem in
motivation had been documented through observation, an analysis of
academic achievement, and a student survey. Probable causes were
considered to be peer pressure, community demographics, student
attitudes, teacher attitudes, and a high student mobility rate. A
review of solution strategies suggested in the literature, combined
with an analysis of the setting, resulted in the following
interventions: (1) incentive charts; (2) instruction in goal setting
strategies; and (3) feedback on completion of assignments.
Post-intervention data revealed an increase in student seatwork, an
improvement in the target observed behaviors, and an increase in
student verbal participation during class discussion. Three
appendixes include the parent consent letter, a student survey, and a
behavioral checklist. A discipline referral form is attached.
(Contains 2 tables and 31 references.) (Author/SLD)

IMPROVING CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

THROUGH A MOTIVATIONAL INTERVENTION

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the

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Abstract

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Date: May 1, 1995

Title: Improving Classroom Behavior through
            a Motivational Intervention

ABSTRACT: This report discusses a program for
improving adolescent behavior in the classroom using
motivational techniques. The targeted population
consists of junior high students in a section of a
large, low socio-economic, urban community, located in
the Midwest. The problem of motivation has been
documented through observation, an analysis of academic
achievement, and a student survey.

Probable causes of the problem include peer pressure,
community demographics, students attitudes, teacher
attitudes, and high student mobility rate.

A review of solution strategies suggested by the
literature, combined with an analysis of the setting,
has resulted in the following interventions being
selected: incentive charts, instruction in goal
setting strategies, and feedback on completion of
assignments.

Post intervention data reveals an increase in students
seatwork, an improvement in the target observed
behaviors, and an increase in the student's verbal
participation during class discussion.

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Chapter 1

Problem Statement

The seventh grade students at the elementary
school studied show a lack of motivation toward
learning as evidenced by teacher observation, and
academic achievement on teacher made tests.

Description of Problem Setting

The elementary school services students in grades
kindergarten through eighth. The enrollment of the
student body is 1,080, with 99.8 percent Black, and 0.2
percent Hispanic. Student mobility rate is 65.7
percent. Student absentee rate is three and a half
percent. The teaching staff consists of 10 males and
70 females, a total of 80 teachers. Fifty teachers
have master's degrees.

The school was built in 1892. It is a three-story
brick building with 12 to 15 classrooms per floor.
There are five labs, a library, gymnasium and
auditorium. It also has a modular building that
consists of nine classrooms and a gymnasium. The
building is in good condition. The seventh grade cycle
is currently using Scott Foresman (1989) for Reading,
McDougal Littel (1994) for Literature and Spelling and
Silver Burdett (1987) for Science. Junior Great Books

are used as a reading tool and hands on science is used to enhance students experiments.

Description of Surrounding Community

The Community has a population of 61,517 and the majority of the population is African American. Children are bused from other communities to the school and some students take public transportation. The school is located in District Nine, on the Southeast side of Chicago. There are 49 schools in district nine.

The educational attainment of the community is: less than ninth grade 7.1 percent; ninth thru 12th grade, no diploma 20.4 percent; high school graduate 24.3 percent; some college, no degree 27.9 percent; associate and bachelor degrees 14.6 percent.

The community is made up of low to moderate income families. The average income is $15,000. The community is changing because of rapid growth of the single one-parent household. The majority of the households are headed by females. The community is being plagued by gangs, graffiti, theft, shootings and fear. The local banks are presently involved in rehabilitation and redevelopment of the area with more strip malls, small businesses, and economic development. This is gradually elevating the property values of the community. The Culture Center, Rainbow

Beach, and the New Arthur Ashe Park are major
attractions and social outlets for the community.

Regional and National Context of Problem

Nationally, educators and other human development
professionals have recognized that the early adolescent
period (from about 11 to 14) represents a particularly
challenging time. This period is often a difficult
"in-between" stage during which the physical and
emotional stresses caused by the transition from child
to adolescent frequently result in unpredictable and
sometime troublesome behaviors. Many educators argue
that to be successful with these students in the
classroom, teachers must be especially flexible and
forgiving. In short, teachers of early adolescents
need to understand how to "behave" in the classroom;
they need to understand why some teaching behaviors
usually succeed while others tend to fail. The first
task facing middle school-level teachers who want to
improve their teaching experiences, as well as the
learning experiences of their students, is to become
multi-disciplinary students of adolescent development
(Tierno, 1991).

Motivation is one of the most important factors in
successful accomplishment. Motivation is a process
that can arouse and instigate behavior, give direction
and purpose to behavior, continue to allow behavior to

persist and lead to choosing or preferring a particular behavior (Wlodkowski, 1990).

Many, if not most students experience the onset of puberty during the first or second year of middle school. During the period immediately preceding the major physical signs of puberty - menarche in girls, nocturnal emissions in boys - behavior will change significantly (Hurlock, 1973). When puberty is reached, all body systems and sub-systems are affected. Chemical and hormonal changes actually have an impact upon every organ (Mitchell, 1974).

The idea that students need positive verbal feedback is a basic truth for most teachers. Many teachers have given comments like "nice singing" or "you've never played better" and noticed the effect positive comments have had on the attitudes, behaviors, and actions of students. We typically classify these positive comments as "praise" and it may be surprising to read that praise is not always positive. The purpose of praising students seems to fall into three broad categories: 1. to recognize or show interest in them, 2. to encourage them, 3. to describe what we observe in their performance. When we tell students that they have done well in class, we may be intending to show interest in them as people, to evaluate their work, and to support and reinforce certain behaviors

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exhibited in class or point them toward other behaviors by giving descriptive feedback. The problems begin when we realize that the statement "you did well" does not accomplish all of these purposes equally well (Bartholomew and Douglas, 1993).

Teachers dealing with homogenous grouping must make extra effort to motivate the average students and desperately need help through policies and programs to create professional support. According to contexts that matter for teaching and learning: Strategic Opportunities for Nation's Educational Goals (Cited in Gallicchio, 1993), a five-year study of what it is like to be a high school teacher today, the core problem of secondary schooling is that yesterday's teachers are teaching today's students (Gallicchio, 1992). The tremendous mismatch between the context for which teachers were prepared and have taught in for much of their careers, and the realities of today's classroom has been underestimated.

Equal to the cultural and language differences of today's students are other manifestations of changes with which teachers must cope. These include dysfunctional lives of students that take precedence over schooling, their lack of interest in reading, an imbalance between part-time work and school work, and lack of support from families. A second area for

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policy development is support for students. Present
policies need to be overhauled to emphasize integrated
services at the school site. Stronger links are needed
between students' lives and their schools, with special
attention to culturally sensitive strategies that help
parents help their children. Adequate and culturally
sensitive counseling services; student advocates in
especially distressed communities; and engagement of
grassroots agencies in education through new alliances
for youth are also needed (Gallicchio, 1992).

This researcher feels that many disruptive
behaviors in school are caused by a lack of motivation.
Lack of student motivation is a complicated problem,
especially when you are talking about adolescents and
the physical changes of puberty.

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Chapter 2

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSE

Problem Evidence

In order to document the extent of student lack of motivation, the number of parental contacts, the number of teacher/student conferences, a record of discipline referrals to the disciplinary office, and student surveys were administered over a four week period.

Of the 28 students in the class, 20 were involved in this process. Only 20 permission slips were returned signed by parents. A survey form was developed by the researchers (Appendix B) to measure student's motivation to come to school. A summary of the number of teacher observed incidents is presented in table one.

Table 1

Observed Behavior
09/05/94 - 10/14/94
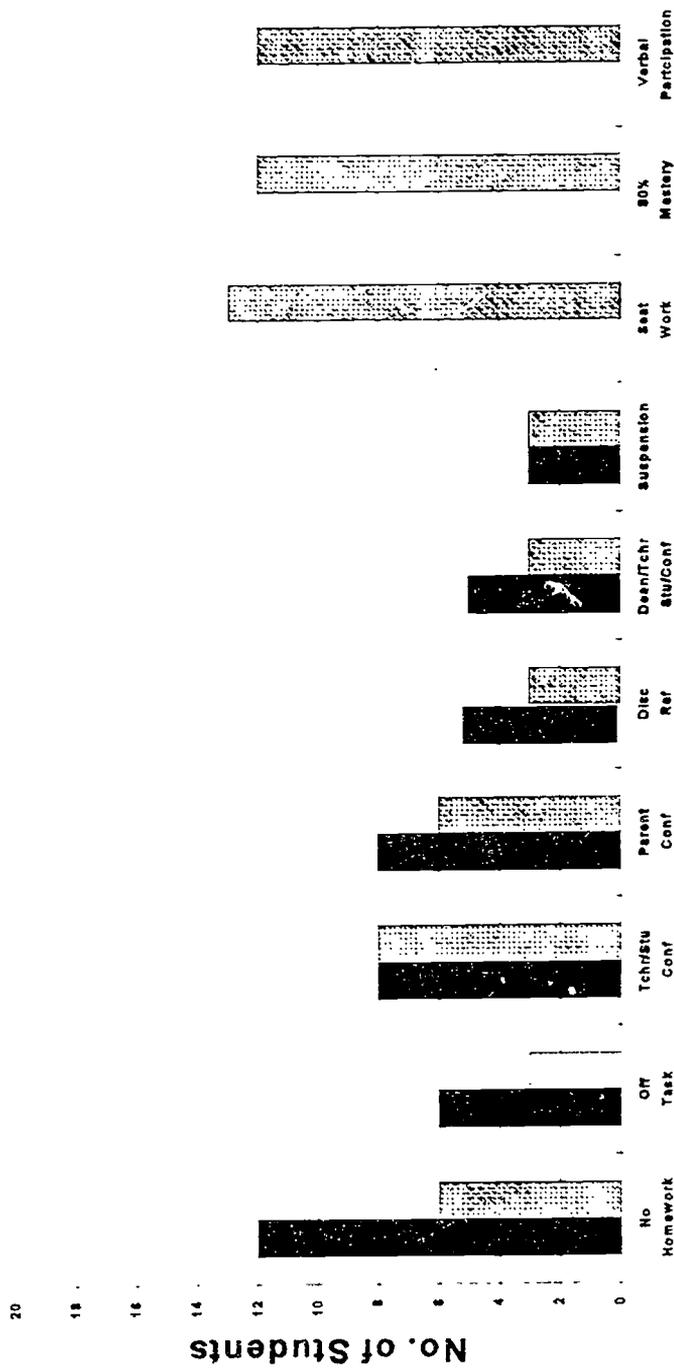
The graph above contains ten behaviors observed during a six week period by the researcher. The graph also includes the number of incidents and the number of students involved. The behaviors are shown in the order in which the incidents occurred during the six week period. The number of students involved in each of the behaviors as well as number of incidents for each behavior is shown on the graph. The "No Homework" category was recorded in the researcher's attendance book using checks for students who failed to turn in their homework. Checks were also used to identify students who were off task. Behaviors three through seven were documented on official school discipline forms. Numbers eight through ten were documented in the researcher's grade book. As the table shows, a high number of negative behaviors were observed during the six week period.

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Probable Causes

This researcher will attempt to identify probable causes for the lack of motivation for poor performance in school. The community is a low socio-economic area with many single parent families. There are gangs on every corner, drive by shootings, students being caught in gang's cross-fire and the selling of drugs to minors.

Probable causes of the problem may include peer pressure. Students are pressured to be part of gangs in their community. They are influenced by older peers that being in a gang will make them popular, and the gangs are their family for life.

Some students have a don't care attitude about coming to school and learning. Still others feel unwanted in class due to a lack of concern by some of their teachers. Some students come to school only because their parents insist on their coming, others come because the school is safe from gangs and they don't have to be afraid.

The students high mobility rate which is due to the gangs and drugs in the community is also a contributing factor. There are several shelters in the area, whereby students can transfer out or just leave without any explanation.

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It is important to realize that motivation is not
generic; most of it is learned. What is learned can be
taught and teaching is our business. Therefore, we
need to become knowledgeable about, and skilled in the
use of, professional techniques which have high
potential for increasing a student's motivation or
intent to learn. Many factors affecting motivation are
beyond our control. Students' families, neighborhoods,
former teachers, or previous experiences in the same
context have all had an effect on the motivation of
students in our classes. Those factors are beyond our
control (Hunter, 1982).

According to Wlodkowski (1990) teachers do not
motivate students. In fact, no one motivates anyone.
Teachers can make things attractive and stimulating.
They can provide opportunities and incentives. They
can allow for the development of competence and match
student interest with learning activities, but the
teacher cannot directly motivate students. Just as we
are responsible for our own feelings, we are
responsible for our own motivation. Between what we do
as teachers and what students do as learners are the
students' perceptions, values, personalities, and
judgements. These elements decide the final outcomes
of student motivation and behavior. There is no direct
line of control between teacher behavior and student

motivation. Students can be influenced and affected by

teachers, but they cannot be directly motivated. If it

were not so, students would have no responsibility for

their learning. They could not take pride in the

choice and perseverance that leads to their

accomplishments. It is not through obedience but

through responsibility that real self-affirmation takes

place. In many ways, because we as teachers continue

to support the idea that we can motivate students, we

allow them and their parents to unquestionably blame us

for poor learning. As Wlodkowski (1991) states: "This

continues the image of the teacher as the ultimate

'learning giver' and prevents the mutual respect and

interdependence that are necessary between an effective

teacher and a responsible student" (p.14).

The lack of student responsibility to achieve can

be linked to many public polices at federal, state, and

local levels. These policies have reduced college

admission criteria, changed high school curricula,

which allows students to evade complex academic tasks.

While others take advantage of the need to make effort,

they teach to the test, give answers to questions,

construct a true and false quiz, etc. Many give the

appearance of educational attainment (for example,

seatwork, worksheets, diplomas, and special schools for

indifferent students). Students at all levels of

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ability have taken advantage of these educational gratuities (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). However, Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi state that peer pressure has great influence on the academic behavior of students. In many schools, this pressure describes the foothold students will take toward academic achievement and academic effort. Societal pressure on the student is to stay in school and graduate; but some student peers and cultures reject academic aspirations, and forceful punishment may be imposed on high achievers.

Motivation is a complicated concept that is not well understood. But, what motivates one person may not motivate another. It is difficult to understand what motivates each student. Students who do not respond, or who respond negatively are then assumed to be "unmotivated" (Berliner & Casanova, 1993).

When students are offered pity for academic failure, praise for low accomplishments, and help that is unwanted, they take it to mean that they lack ability. These messages are difficult for disadvantaged minority students, whose teachers feel sorry for them and concern about protecting their self-esteem (Granam & Weiner, 1990). They state: "Consequently, they may offer a diet of praise and help that students know is not deserved or wanted and

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however well-intentioned, implies inability and stifles the hard work and enterprise so necessary to learning" (Graham and Weiner, 1990, p. 73).

It is a known fact that keeping a student from continuing on to the next grade decreases their motivation and alienates them from school. They lag behind their peers. Even after catching up with them, they still feel a sense of not belonging (Berliner & Casanova, 1993).

Many teachers wonder if their students have motivation problems. Colleagues of theirs complain about the way they have to present a lesson. It must be entertaining and high energy for them to compete with the attractiveness of out-of-school activities. Some teachers are concerned about the possible detrimental effects of granting students special privileges, tangible items, and other stimulus to persuade them to learn (Hootstein, 1994).

Rothman (1990) suggests that too many students think that school is boring. A survey was done of 25,000 eight grade students, half claimed they were bored in school for half or most of the time. This is an enormous concern for teachers. They want to keep the students focused and active, and most important, teachers want students who really want to learn. "Clearly, too many students think that school is

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boring, and they see little connection between school learning and their lives outside the classroom. Consequently, many experts in the field have identified lack of student motivation as one of the primary causes of low achievement levels" (Tomlinson, 1991, p. 213).

Glasser (1986) feels that all of our motivation comes from within ourselves. There is no outside stimulus responsible for our behavior. Student behavior arises from within themselves. We all choose to do what is satisfying to us at any given time. Regardless of what is going on outside of the students, it is the inside that causes the behavior. Teachers can put their best effort forth to help student learn. But, if the students choose not to do the work, it is because it does not satisfy their need to do so (Glasser, 1986).

There are clearly differences of opinions on this matter. This researcher believes that both theories have merit and what works for one student might not work for another.

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Chapter 3

Review of the Literature

Wlodkowski (1990) suggested that teachers plan
motivation strategies, just as they plan lessons and
organize objectives. If teachers want to motivate
their students, they must think of techniques that will
be useful and effective. Teachers can still have a
spontaneous lesson, but it must be structured to bring
out the highest potential of facilitating motivation.
This is not something that can be done without very
careful consideration. Even teachers who teach
successfully without ever planning for motivation are
doing something that relates to motivation (Wlodkowski,
1990).

Most teachers believe student motivation is a
significant contributor to school performance.
Motivation is confidence in one's own ability, and
persistence in the face of obstacles. There are many
aspects of motivation in the academic arena, and all
are theoretically important (Ames & Ames, 1990).

Some believe that threat can facilitate motivation
to learn. Most teachers use threats as a last resort.
When persuasion and teaching methods are ineffective,
we become desperate and draw back on the methods that
were used on us in our school days. Teachers often

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tell students if they don't "shape up," they will call
their parents, lower their grades, make them do more
work, keep them after school, and on it goes. And for
some students, it seems to work - so teachers are
reinforced in their efforts and encouraged to use them
again. What happens to the student who is threatened?
How does she/he feel? The same way you would feel in
similar circumstances. Students feel frightened and
resentful of the threatening persons. She/he will get
rid of the fear by doing the work, but the resentment
usually lingers. The student who is not frightened, is
usually resentful because threats are often demeaning
to the human personality. This may result in sloppy
work, slower learning, and negativism which leads to
more teacher nagging and frustration. There is no
conclusive evidence that supports the idea that
motivation enhances learning. Many things must be
cons dered when trying to motivate: "Student
motivation depends on the type of learning (learning to
read vs. learning to write), the type of task (verbal,
nonverbal, simple, or complex), the cognitive style of
the learner (audio, visual, tactile), and type of
setting (group or individual), as well as other
factors" (Wlodkowski, 1990, p. 16).

Effective teachers do not need to threaten or
coerce their students. There are innumerable things

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that can be done in order to facilitate motivation.
There is no pleasure in teaching where there is threat.
The love of learning is a reality in the relationship
of an effective teacher and a responsible student.

According the Hunter (1982) there are six factors
a teacher can use to facilitate motivation. The first
factor is the level of concern a student has about
achieving the learning. How much does she/he care
about whether they learn? If a student has a low level
of concern they will put forth no effort, but a
moderate level of concern is substantial for student's
putting forth effort. When one is satisfied with his
appearance and surrounding, one will not put forth
effort to change it. It is only when one becomes
concerned that one will "do something." When there is
too much concern, there may be no energy obtainable for
learning. The way a student feels in a certain
situation affects the amount of effort she/he is
willing to put forth to achieve learning. Students are
most influenced to put forth effort to learn if they
find the learning environment pleasant and if they
anticipate a pleasant feeling that they will be
successful. Common sense tells us to make classroom
environments a pleasant one where students have high
probability of achieving success (Hunter, 1982).

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However, unpleasant feeling tones can activate a learner to put forth effort (Hunter, 1982). Most teachers are reluctant to use unpleasant tones in their classroom. Unpleasant feeling tones are effective in stimulating effort to learn, but they can have distasteful side-effects. The student may learn, but may avoid that subject or teacher in the future. Teachers need to be aware of and occasionally utilize the strength of unpleasant feeling tones (when pleasant ones aren't working). Teachers should strive to expel the possible after-effects of students evasion by returning to pleasant feeling tones as soon as students put forth effort to learn (Hunter, 1982).

Nothing increases student motivation more than the feeling of success, one must expend effort and have a certain degree of uncertainty about the outcome (Hunter, 1983). No one feels successful when they put forth little effort for accomplishment. If the work is easy and requires little effort they feel little success and are not motivated to continue. If, with effort and no guarantee they can attain the learning, they accomplish it, they feel successful and usually are motivated to try to do more (Hunter, 1983).

Hootstein (1994) suggested that teachers need to learn strategies to enhance student motivation, and they need to put these strategies into the

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instructional lesson. For teachers to motivate

students they need to know what is effective, why it is

effective and how to implement these strategies into

their lesson. Teachers need to take a closer look at

their motivational strategies to see what factors make

it difficult for teachers to motivate students to

learn. One major factor that teachers and

administrators rarely consider is letting students

create more of the curriculum. This may be an

important thing to try because many educators believe

that young adolescents need a more personal, student-

managed environment (Hootstein, 1994). Some of the

strategies that were suggested would provide students

with opportunities for social interaction, hands-on

experience with finished products, and physical

movement; provide opportunities that allow students to

perceive a sense of control in their learning

activities; and make learning relevant by relating the

content to the students' needs, goals, interests,

values, and experiences.

According to Tierno (1991), teachers of early

adolescents need to understand how to "behave" in the

classroom; they need to understand why some teaching

strategies succeed while others tend to fail. One of

the first obstacles facing middle-school level teachers

that want to improve their teaching, as well as the

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learning experiences of their students, is to become
multi-disciplinary students of adolescent development.
All teachers need to become an authority in the subject
matter they teach. Becoming an expert in the subject-
matter does not guarantee success in the teaching of
11-to-14-year-olds.

Many students experience the onset of puberty
during these years. For most adolescents, the
physiological changes created by shifts in chemistry
are instrumental in producing changes in behavior,
changes which exasperate both parents and teachers.
Students who were pleasant and amiable become more
irritable, quarrelsome, and sometimes obnoxious during
this period (Hurlock, 1973).

Teachers have to understand this process. Both
before and after the development of secondary sexual
characteristics, difficult behaviors caused from the
stress of physiological maturation can provoke an over-
reaction by teachers. The most effective reaction is
to remain calm and avoid the appearance of being
threatened. Among the most important concepts that
teachers should understand is the relationship between
this new cognitive competence and the significant
growth of peer influence (Havighurst, 1983; Hurlock,
1973; Sale, 1979).

Teachers can be powerful role models, despite the increased influence exerted by peers. By avoiding direct confrontations, teachers demonstrate respect for students and model appropriate ways for students to relate to each other. When faced with off-task, distractive or disruptive behaviors, teachers can react confidently with carefully planned, non-humiliating options (Havighurst, 1983; Hurlock, 1973; Sale, 1979).

Flexibility and compassion certainly are important traits of a successful middle school teacher. These traits do not automatically translate into informed and effective action. Teachers of adolescents need to recognize the socially focused motivations and behaviors of students in order to respond constructively (Sales, 1979).

The purpose of the Gottfried, Fleming, and Gottfried study (1988) revealed that parental motivation practices regarding academics play an important role in the development of students motivation. The earlier parents get involved in their children's academics, the learning process becomes significantly important to the student. The parent can socialize their children's academic motivation through encouragement of curiosity, persistence, and mastery of school-related activities. Instructing parents on motivational practices can be important for the

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academic achievement of their child. An orientation to
new pleasurable learning experiences, provision of
assistance, and suggestion of home activities in areas
which are needed will help the parents.

Many students have poor self-concepts, feel
alienated and have trouble planning for the future.
When students have had many years of education during
which they have felt inadequate about their ability and
themselves, teachers cannot expect them to be
enthusiastic about learning. Teachers must work with
students and the history that they bring with them to
the classroom. Recognizing the complexity of
motivation and the uniqueness of each situation is
important (Redick & Lloyd, 1993).

Regardless of how old the student is or what their
background may be, a caring teacher can unlock minds
that have been closed to learning. No matter what has
happened before they enter your classroom, let them
find someone who cares about them and will try to make
this day a good day.

Redick and Lloyd (1993) suggested using
motivational strategies in game playing. Do business,
but also have fun. Play a game that is designed to
help students know each other, use cooperative learning
to introduce fun into the lesson. Wear costumes to
reinforce a lesson and show that you have a sense of

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humor, be a role model, let students know that teachers attend in-service meetings and conferences. More importantly, make students aware that we all are lifelong learners (Redick & Lloyd, 1993).

According to Berliner and Casanova (1993), motivation is not a one-way street. Whether or not students are motivated to accomplish a task depends on: 1) Do they think the task is worth accomplishing, 2) do they feel capable of succeeding, and 3) is there some gain associated with its accomplishment (Berliner & Casanova, 1993). Teachers can modify each of these aspects through their actions by enhancing student motivation. Teachers need to assign students work that they can value. Teachers should give assignments that help students understand that there is something to be gained by completing the task. Teachers also need to associate what students do today with what they did yesterday and what they are going to do tomorrow, so that students can see themselves successful. Through teachers own instruction and motivation they affect the motivation of their students.

Weaver (1991) talks about "self motivation" and revealed that self-motivation is most likely to happen when one can successfully deal with stress. Stress depletes both energy and motivation. Self-motivation does not come form outside of us. It can only come

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from the inside. Change must begin from within. The key to improvement and change is in recognizing one's own stress signals. Another way students can relieve stress, that is especially important, is to engage in exercise and practice good nutrition (Weaver, 1991).

Teachers should develop strategies or use specific techniques to help students deal with stressful situations. Students have trouble at home, and peer pressure, as well a sense of wanting to be accepted by their peers. Teachers and administrators should form a support group for students who have such stress.

Teachers can encourage students to eat a balanced meal and make students aware that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. If they stay away from junk food, eat regular meals of high quality, and make fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, and grains a part of their daily diet, they will less likely to experience severe stress, and will be more motivated. Good nutrition can play a significant role in motivation (Weaver, 1991).

The one problem teachers face today is teaching today's students. The context for which teachers were prepared and taught in for much of their careers and the differences in the realities of today's classroom has been under estimated. Teachers must cope with dysfunctional family lives of students which takes precedence over schooling. But teachers can overcome

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these obstacles by making extra efforts to motivate
students. Teachers should maximize every opportunity
to better understand their students, create a positive
classroom, and design lessons of appropriate difficulty
(Gallicchio, 1992).

According to Johnson and Lamb (1994) educators
should give students the encouragement and opportunity
they need to prove themselves. In return, teachers
would get motivated, hard working students. The key to
educating students is, "you've got to touch the heart
before you can reach the mind" (p. 38).

Jillison (1992) suggested many ideas for
motivating many kinds of students. These are some that
were suggested that will keep students motivated and
interested in learning: "Genuinely care about your
students, believe in your students, and let them know
you believe in them, help students believe in
themselves, post sayings and posters that create a
positive climate, let students know you value their
opinions and ideas and be enthusiastic about teaching,
remember that enthusiasm is contagious. All of these
ideas will help your love for teaching grow stronger
and encourage you to go the extra mile.

According to Connolly (1993) believe in your
ability that you can make a difference in your students
lives. When students see that teachers care if they

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learn, they will be motivated to put forth more effort
to achieve the task. Teachers rewards come when they
can see the positive influence they have had on a
student's behavior.

Bartholomew & Douglas (1993) found that students
need positive verbal feedback. Praising students
encourages them to exhibit certain behaviors in class.
Teachers show interest in students by recognizing them
or noticing something about them in a way that
acknowledges their uniqueness. When teachers tell
students that they have done well in class, they are
encouraged to put forth more effort to achieve the
task. Teachers want students to know that although
they are having difficulties, they are making some
progress. Teachers want to direct the students'
attention to the positive aspects of their performance,
so that they can see some achievement even when other
factors may be negative. Praising and encouraging
students is a way for the students to become more aware
of your expectations and their own achievement.

. Tomlinson and Cross (1991) assert the basic ideas
that higher achievement will result if the standards
and expectations for student achievement are raised.
All teachers should have high expectations for their
students. How teachers deal with students expectations
for themselves can set the standard of learning they

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will meet. Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988) found that when students get into the "flow" of something-when they find something they really like and are good at, they can rise to heights of great accomplishment.

Motivation in the classroom has generally focused in the creation of intrinsic (internal)/extrinsic (external) orientations and the differential effect they produce. The focus is now directed to the role of the classroom teacher and his or her impact on the development of such orientations within the students (Brophy, 1988). Some teachers use intrinsic motivational techniques, while others use extrinsic motivation. Ames and Ames (1984) suggested that student competitive, individualistic, or cooperative task motivations are strongly influenced by the goals and values set forth within the classroom environment by the teacher. Most teachers believe student motivation is a significant contributor to school performance. Motivation is self-confidence in one's own ability, and persistence in the face of obstacles. There are many aspects of motivation in the academic arena, and all are theoretically important (Ames & Ames 1984).

When teachers relate their lesson to students interests, the students become more attentive and

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motivated to stay on task. Classroom motivational

strategies encourage on-task behavior from students

(Ames & Ames, 1984).

Corno (1992) found that students who do well in

school are not necessarily better learners than those

who do poorly. Any teacher can describe some students

who do well by circumventing learning difficulties.

Coercing assistance from peers are not the only way

this occurs, some students just buckle down when they

need to and are rewarded accordingly. They take

responsibility for their own learning and performance.

Hansen (1989) found that for many students,

frustrating assignments evoked the kind of unmotivated

withdrawal of productive work one might expect. But

other students were able to rely on coping skills to

focus and concentrate and become more engaged in work

than usual. Students who tend to cope, seek

clarification or specification of confusing elements in

an assignment, often by asking direct questions. Some

cope by watching what others are doing, seeking

insights indirectly. Regardless of how confusing the

assignment may have seemed, these students attempted to

make sense of it so they could accomplish the

assignment.

According to Zorn (1991), motivation to

communicate in the classroom may be facilitated by the

use of instruments designed to measure the construct.
Teachers may want to use these instruments to
understand how students differ in their motivation.
The use of these instruments can lead to a more
comprehensive understanding of motivation to
communication.

There are many different theories on what
motivation is and how to achieve it in the classroom.
This researcher believes that different techniques of
motivation should be used in the classroom to reach
different students.

Action Plan:

During the months of September and October the
researcher collected the data. The student's homework
and seatwork were collected three days a week. Charts
will show the completion of homework, seatwork and 80%
mastery on teacher made tests in the major subjects.

Beginning in November the researcher began the
motivational intervention. The teacher instructed
students on how to set and achieve realistic goals for
themselves one class period each week throughout the
school year. To motivate students to prepare for their
futures, the teacher used career guidances including
pamphlets on how to choose a career, guest speakers
from different companies and universities to talk about
education, behavior, and discipline in the job market.
The students got positive verbal praising for
completion of work, participating in class and
exhibiting satisfactory behavior. Incentives for
students to complete classwork and homework were to
select students of the week and display their photo
(for a week) in the classroom window, to use students
as room and hall monitors who have completed their
work, and to send positive notes home to parents
concerning students behavior and achievements.

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Project Objectives:

As a result of increased use of motivation techniques, during the period October 1994 thru March 1995, the seventh grade targeted students will increase their homework, seatwork, 80% mastery on teacher made tests, and participation verbally in class activities. There will be a decrease in unsatisfactory behavior, for example off task, teacher/student conferences, parent conferences, discipline referrals, dean/teacher/student conferences and suspensions, as recorded on the behavioral checklist.

Process:

1. Student homework and seatwork will be collected for completion and corrections.

2. Teacher will give students rewards/incentives for completion of homework and seatwork.

3. Teacher will instruct students on how to set and achieve goals.

4. Teacher will construct progress chart to motivate students to increase achievement.

5. Teacher will praise students for work that is well done.

6. Teacher will attempt to get parents involved in their children's education (and to feel good about their child as a student) by sending home positive notes when there is good behavior or achievement to report.

Method of Assessment

The subjects is this research began, in a regular seventh grade classroom (September, 1994) using the curriculum approved by the local school council (School Improvement Plan). The students participating in this study are the students that were assigned to room 209 in June, 1994.

The researcher will collect data on homework, seatwork, 80% mastery on teacher made test, and verbal classroom participation using the behavioral checklist that was used in the pretest (Appendix B). Thus improvement following the intervention can be charted. She chose school performance behaviors she felt indicated lack of motivation including: no homework, off task behavior, teacher/student/conferences, parent conferences, discipline referrals, dean/teacher/ student/conferences, and suspensions.

Chapter 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of Intervention

The objective of this project was to increase the
verbal participation in classroom activities, homework,
seatwork, and 80 percent mastery on teacher made tests
using motivational interventions. This researcher
attempted to decrease unsatisfactory behavior such as
off-task behavior, teacher/student/conferences, parent/
conferences, discipline referrals, dean/teacher/student
conferences, and suspensions.

The intervention included motivational guest
speakers. A nurse from Providence Hospital, a phone
technician from Ameritech, and a local lawyer came to
speak to the students about their careers. They
brought pamphlets, answered questions, and demonstrated
different aspects of their jobs. They also talked
about the importance of self-discipline and education.

The students were given positive praises for
completion of class work and homework such as "great
job," "way to go," "super," "fantastic," "excellent,"
and stickers were placed on their assignments. Parents
of those students who demonstrated satisfactory
behavior were notified by notes informing them of the
discipline their child displayed during the academic

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instructional day. Parents were also sent positive
notes about their child's academic achievements in
major subjects on teacher made tests. Incentives were
given to students for their achievements on classwork
and homework. Those incentives included being
appointed classroom monitors which entitled the
students to collect homework, classwork, pass out
spelling papers, and sometimes grade spelling quizzes
which students enjoy doing. Hall monitors were a part
of the incentives which allow the students to take and
pick-up the mail from the office. It also permitted
the students to escort the class to the washroom, to be
lunchroom monitors and used for messenger. A student
photo was displayed in the classroom window (for a
week) to honor the "student of the week" as an
incentive for completion of homework and classwork.
Some weeks there were more than one photo displayed in
the classroom window because of the excellent work the
students had done.

A progress chart was constructed to help motivate
students to achieve 80 percent mastery on teacher made
tests in major subjects. These charts were placed in
the classroom listing the name of the students who
achieved 80 percent on their test. This helped to
motivate other students to study harder to achieve
mastery. In the beginning only eight students names

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were placed on these charts who achieved 80 percent on their test. By December, there were 13 names placed on the charts. At the end of this study, 17 students had achieved 80 percent on teacher made tests.

In an effort to increase the student's verbal participation during class activities, I placed the students in groups of four. Each group was given a different color dot for their table (for example) red, blue, yellow, and purple. Each day I made a conscious effort to get participation from every student in each group. It was difficult at first to get students to raise their hands and answer or ask a question. But, I would discuss the questions and possible answers to the questions to make the students feel confident enough to raise their hands and not feel what they were about to say was wrong. I generally begin with "there are no right or wrong answers," so they would feel free to make any statement that was relevant to the topic of discussion. This made the lesson much more interesting and exciting for the students.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of motivational intervention on student behavior, a weekly tally of homework, classwork, 80 percent mastery on teacher made tests, verbal participation during class activities and

discipline incidents was maintained throughout the
intervention. These data were aggregated by months and
are presented in Table 2.

The intervention appears to have had a positive
effect on all targeted behaviors. In particular, the
incidence of no homework, decreased by 83 percent.
Those behaviors associated with academic work, off-task
and suspensions, also showed a marked decrease.
Teacher/student conferences, discipline referrals, and
dean/teacher/student conferences showed a decrease of
60 percent. These conferences with the students seem
to have had an impact on their behavior. But the one
conference incident that decreased the most was parent
conferences which decreased by 75 percent.

The most dramatic increase that had an effect on
academic achievement was seatwork. In the beginning of
this study, 65 percent of the students completed their
seatwork, by December 75 percent of the students
completed their seatwork and at the end of the study in
March, 90 percent of the students completed their
seatwork assignments. There was also a great impact on
teacher made tests with 80 percent mastery. At the
beginning only 60 percent of the students achieved 80
percent on tests. By the end of the study, 85 percent
of the students were achieving 80 percent mastery on
teacher made tests. Reward/incentives that were given

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to the students who achieved 80 percent mastery on
teacher made tests and completed their assignments
motivated other students to try harder to achieve
success. These two behaviors had a significant effect
on verbal participation. The achievements they had
made gave them confidence in themselves to actively
have an open discussion about the topics that were
being discussed. Verbal participation in class
activities was limited prior to the intervention. In
September it was only 60 percent. After using
incentives/ rewards for being prepared for discussion
or for giving their opinions or making a statement
relevant to the topic, verbal participation made a
dramatic increase to 80 percent at the end of the
study.

In summary, there were decreases in all negative
behaviors and consequences, while there were increases
in all positive classroom behaviors measured. The
intervention was very successful.

Table 2
Results

	September / October		December		March	
	Incidents	Students	Incidents	Students	Incidents	Students
No Homework	12	6	6	6	2	2
Off Task	6	3	4	2	2	1
Teacher Student Conference	8	8	6	4	3	2
Parent Conferences	8	6	4	4	2	1
Discipline Referrals	5	3	3	3	2	1
Dean / Teacher / Student Conference	5	3	3	3	2	2
Suspension	3	3	2	2	1	1
Seatwork		13		15		18
80% Mastery on Teacher Test		12		13		17
Verbal Participation		12		14		16

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Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data on behaviors, the students showed a marked improvement in their classwork. The rewards/incentives had an impact on their motivation to succeed. Instructing the students on how to set and achieve goals decreased the amount of teacher-time devoted to student/teacher conferences, and dean/teacher/student conferences for unsatisfactory behavior during the instructional day. The positive notes sent home to parents about their child's behavior decreased parent conferences significantly. Some students showed no sign of motivation during the first six weeks of the study, but after individual conferences with those students to reiterate what was expected from them and what reward/incentives they might receive, there was a great interest and concern about classwork, homework, 80 percent mastery on teacher made tests and an increase in verbal participation. This researcher believes attention should be focused on goal setting in earlier grades so that the students can develop a mind set on how to achieve realistic goals. This would increase their motivation to come prepared with homework, complete class assignments and willingness to verbally participate in class discussions. The students would

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gain the confidence and determination to achieve the goals they set for themselves.

This researcher recommends that rewards/incentives should be given to students for work that is well done and for satisfactory behavior, with the understanding that motivation must be a self-driven process rather than a process of looking for material rewards from others. This researcher also recommends that other educators lessen the number of behaviors studied in doing their research, more time could be spent on the five behaviors that they feel are important to their classroom setting. Concentrating on five behaviors instead of ten will allow the researcher more time to spend with individual students that display unsatisfactory behaviors. The researcher also believes that once a student realizes the importance of setting and accomplishing goals they will become self-motivated.

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Appendices

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Appendix A
Informed Consent Letter

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Dear Parent(s),

I'm Ms. J. Sanders, your child's seventh grade teacher. I am in the process of conducting a survey.

The survey is entitled, "Improving Classroom Behavior Through a Motivational Intervention." Hopefully this survey will provide information and answers to many of our concerns as educators.

I'm seeking your permission in order to proceed with the procedures mentioned above. I feel this will be very beneficial.

If you will place a check in the box and please sign this letter and return it to me, I will proceed with my research.

_____ my child may participate
_____ my child may not participate

Please keep in mind that if your child chooses not to participate, it will not affect his/her grade or classroom treatment. Also your child may choose to quit at anytime in the project.

All data from the survey will remain anonymous.

Signature of Parent of Guardian: _____
        Date of Signature: _____

                        Yours sincerely,

                        Ms. J. Sanders
                        7th Grade Teacher

Appendix B
Student Survey

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<u>Students Survey</u>:

1. What motivates you to come to school?

2. Why is school important to you?

3. What motivational techniques can a teacher use to inspire you to come to school?

Circle the answer that best applies

4. How much influence do your peers have on your decision to come to school?

   Very little,   little,   not much,   great amount

5. How much influence do your peers have on your behavior in school?

   Very little,   little,   not much,   great amount

Appendix C
Behavioral Checklist
Discipline Referral

Subject

Student Name	No Homework					Seatwork					80% Mastery on Test					Participating Verbally in Class Activities									
	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F					
	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F					

Subject

Student Name	Off Task					Teacher/ Student Confer.					Parent Confer.					Discipline Referral					Dean/Tchr /Stud/ Confr	Suspension
	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F		

Discipline Slip

Date _____

Dear Parent of _____

In compliance with the uniform discipline code.   The
following procedure has been adopted by the school.

We are sorry to report that your child has become a
disturbing influence either to himself or others in the classroom
by /

_____   Lacking required materials.
_____   Missing classroom or homework.
_____   Unnecessary talking during a lesson or period of
             study.
_____   Leaving assigned seat and walking around the room
_____   Ignoring the teacher direction or request.
_____   Discourtesy to the teachers or others.
_____   Fighting on school premises.
_____   Misconduct on the playground.
_____   Failure to return note or communications from the
             school.
_____   Excessive tardiness or absences.
_____   Leaving the classroom without permission.
_____   Running and / or making excessive noise in the hall or
             building.
_____   Detention / Dates _____
_____   Others

We ask you to help us impress your child with the necessity
of good behavior in a classroom in order that the educational
needs of all the children as well as your child may be filled.
Misconduct can not be tolerated.

_____1.   Please write a reply at the bottom of the sheet and
             return it to the teacher.
_____2.   I would like a conference with you at 8:30 a.m. on
             _____ in room _____.
_____3.   Your child may not return to class without a parent/
             teacher/principal conference your child will be
             suspended.

                                    Sincerely,

_____   _____
   Dean of Students   Teacher
_____
                      Parent's Reply

Dear _____,
_____
_____

                          _____
                            Parent Signature