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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a project created to improve high school students' academic success. Students in three schools in the suburbs south of Chicago were targeted. Lack of student success was attributed to several probable causes: teacher-student relationships, curriculum relevance and choice, family issues, teacher expectations, lack of incentives, past academic performance, risk taking, and teaching to just a few of the multiple intelligences. Interventions were based on motivational strategies, such as strengthening the student/teacher relationship, employing the use of activities that targeted the multiple intelligences, and providing students with academic choices. Following the interventions, almost half of the target population indicated that their motivation increased. Cooperative learning and activities that built the student/teacher relationship proved to be the most successful strategies in improving academic success of the target population. This paper includes Appendix A, "Parent Letter," Appendix B, "Teacher Observation Checklist," Appendix C, "Student Survey," and Appendix D, "Student Questionnaire." (Contains 25 references.) (Author/JDM)

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IMPROVING SECONDARY STUDENT ACADEMIC
SUCCESS THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MOTIVATIONAL
STRATEGIES

By:

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the
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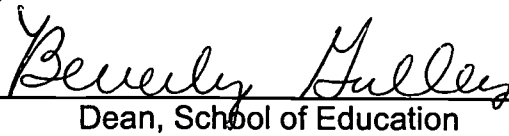
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ABSTRACT

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Site: Tinley Park VII

Title: Improving Secondary Student Academic Success through the Implementation of Motivational Strategies

This action research project employed several strategies to improve high school students' academic success. The target population consisted of all levels of students attending three high schools located in the south suburbs of Chicago. Teacher observations, student surveys, and disciplinary referrals documented the problem of student academic success.

Analysis of probable cause revealed several reasons for lack of student academic success. Probable causes included: teacher-student relationships, curriculum relevance and choice, family issues, teacher expectations, students have few incentives to study, past academic performances, risk taking, and teaching in just one or two of the multiple intelligences. The lack of academic success was evidenced by: teacher/student observations, surveys, disciplinary referrals, and anecdotal records.

Analysis of the observations, surveys, and referrals combined with probable cause research inspired interventions based upon concerns that were intended to improve high school students' academic success through the implementation of motivational strategies such as, strengthening the student/teacher relationship, employing the use of activities that targeted the multiple intelligences, and providing students with academic choices.

As a result of the interventions, almost half of the target population indicated that their motivation increased. This would indicate that the strategies used were helpful to the students. Cooperative learning and the building of the student/teacher relationship proved to be the most successful strategies. Although time was limited, improvement did take place and the chosen strategies appeared to be effective and have an impact on the academic success of the target population.

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CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The primary goals of education are to develop the students' ability to think, reason, and become life long learners. Essential to the development of these goals is the ability of students and teachers to work together as a team. As the teacher assumes the role of a coach, and the students assume the role of the athletes, the responsibility for the educational process is shared.

Students of the targeted schools exhibited a lack of motivation that interfered with their academic success. Evidence for the existence of the problem included teacher observations, student surveys, and disciplinary referrals.

Immediate Problem Context

Schools A, B, and C were comprehensive high schools dedicated to serving the needs of individual students in grades 9-12. All three schools offered a multitude of courses ranging from academic to vocational to special services departments at a variety of levels. Each school had in place a diversity of special services to assist the students both in and out of the classroom. Services included a substance abuse coordinator, guidance counselors, career center, social workers, psychologists, a full-time nurse, and a speech therapist.

The following paragraphs will offer a statistical profile of sites A, B, and C. All data were taken from the 1998 School Report Cards. Also included is information on low-income, limited English proficient students, dropouts, attendance, mobility and chronic truancy; average class size, graduation rate, teacher by racial/ethnic background and gender, teacher educational background, and school financial indicators.

Site A

The total enrollment for Site A was 1,421. Of these students, 90.7% were White, 0.6% Black, 7.0% were Hispanic, 1.3% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.4% were Native American. The pupil to teacher ratio per section was 21.2:1. Three and two-tenths of a percent of the students at Site A fall in the low-income category. Students of limited-English-proficiency account for 1.3% of the students, while the dropout rate was 4.3%.

Site A exhibited a 93.5% attendance rate and a 0.6% chronic truancy rate. The student mobility rate was 13.6%. The average class size for Site A was 14.1 students per class and its graduation rate for the 1997-98 school year was 87.2%.

Of the 76 teachers in district A, 100% were White. Further breakdown of teachers by ethnicity at the state levels showed that 11.3% were Black, 3.1% were Hispanic, 0.7% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.1% were Native American. Forty-three percent of the teachers at Site A were male. The teaching staff at Site A had an average teaching experience of 17.3 years. Seventy-one percent of the teaching staff had a master's degree or higher. The average teacher salary for the 1997-98 school year was \$56,000, while the average administrator salary was \$84,800.

The original Site A school was built in 1953 with an enrollment of 520 students. The enrollment grew steadily and a north wing was added. A severe tornado in the spring of 1967 damaged a large section of the building, but another addition was added to correct the damage. The addition included a new pool, gymnasium, and a large industrial arts wing. The enrollment peaked in the middle 70's with over 3,400 students. Site A offered over 170 courses from 13 different areas. The student day was from 8:00 am to 2:35 pm.

Other attributes of Site A included a modernized football field and stands, a newly resurfaced track, newly rebuilt tennis courts, ten acres of land used for baseball and other athletic activities, and a parcel of land to be used for the construction of a theater for the performing arts.

Site B

The total enrollment for Site B was 2,212. Of these students, 2.3% were White, 93.4% were Black, 4.0% were Hispanic, 0.1% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.2% were Native American. The pupil to teacher ratio per section was 17.1:1. Forty-nine percent of the students at Site B fell in the low-income category. Students of limited-English-proficiency accounted for 1% of the students, while the dropout rate was 4.4%.

Site B exhibited a 90.5% attendance rate and a 1.8% chronic truancy rate. The student mobility rate was 30.7%. The average class size for Site B was 18.1 students per class and its graduation rate for the 1997-98 school year was 73.9%.

Of the 439 teachers in district B, 77.6% were White, 21.7% were Black, 0.5% Hispanic, 0.2% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and none were Native American. Over 44% of the teachers at Site B were male and 55.6% were female. The teaching staff at Site B

had an average teaching experience of 17.4 years. Over 63% of the teaching staff had a master's degree or higher. The average teacher salary for the 1997-98 school year was \$64,600, while the average administrator salary was \$91,000.

Site B originally opened in 1899 and recently celebrated its centennial. The original building opened with an enrollment of 241 students. The student body peaked in the mid-seventies when numbers reached over 4,000. Enrollment at the time of the study was 2,212.

This school offered over 120 courses from 15 academic, vocational, and special service departments with levels ranging from honors to remedial and special programs for students with disabilities. Students attended six 50-minute period classes per day and one 23-minute lunch period. Students could also attend class before school called zero-period. The typical student day was from 8:00am to 2:35pm.

There were a variety of services available to the students. There was a Perkins Vocational Program for at risk students, which is a vocational program, and a peer mediation program to deal with conflicts between students. Also, because of low I.G.A.P. scores, the school had initiated a tutoring program after school to help students in math and English.

Another program that had been implemented to combat low-test scores and improve learning skills was the Acceleration Program. Approximately 300 freshmen and sophomore students were involved in the program. These students received additional help in mathematics and English. Teachers were assigned to teams to provide instruction in their content area and in the learning skills area. Learning skills that were taught included study skills, note taking, listening, test taking, graphic organizers, memory

strategies, and following directions. Special attention had been given to reading and writing strategies. Students also took part in activities that taught them how to develop relationships, how to stay motivated, and how to manage their time appropriately.

Site C

The total enrollment for Site C was 1,984. Of these students, 90.3% were White, 1.9% were Black, 3.9% were Hispanic, 3.7% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.2% were Native American. The pupil to teacher ratio per section was 18.6:1. Eight percent of the students at Site C fell in the low-income category. Students of limited-English-proficiency accounted for 1.6% of the students, while the dropout rate was 3%.

Site C exhibited a 94.1% attendance rate and a 0.6% chronic truancy rate. The student mobility rate was 8.9%. The average class size for Site C was 19.5 students per class and its graduation rate for the 1997-98 school year was 88.3%.

Of the 427 teachers in district C, 99.3% were White, 0.2% were Black, 0.5% were Hispanic, none were Asian/Pacific Islander, and none were Native American. Forty-seven percent of the teachers at Site C were male and the rest were female. The teaching staff at Site C had an average teaching experience of 18 years. Over 70% of the teaching staff had a master's degree or higher. The average teacher salary for the 1997-98 school year was \$59,800, while the average administrator salary was \$79,000.

Site C originally opened in 1965 with an enrollment of 500 students. The student enrollment peaked at 2,250 and was 1,985 at the time of the study. This school offered a variety of courses from 15 academic to vocational departments with levels that ranged from remedial courses to honors classes with special programs for students with disabilities. Students typically attended seven 55-minute class periods per day with the

option of a zero hour. The typical student day ran from 8:15 am to 3:10 pm. In addition, the school day had been modified one day per week to accommodate common planning time for the faculty.

There were a variety of services, sports, and clubs available to the students. Some special services included a peer mediation program, the Extra Mile Program, and a peer mentors program. Some of the clubs available to the student included a multicultural club, a student prayer group, and a technology club. In addition to this, site C was currently involved in the NCA process of self-evaluation and this school was recognized in 1990 by the president for National Excellence in Education.

Surrounding Community

Site A

Site A was located in a suburban area southwest of Chicago. The students who attended site A lived in four adjacent communities with similar characteristics. There were no major industries in this area, but instead there was a large assortment of retail, service, and hospitality businesses lining the four major thoroughfares that intersected the communities. A major shopping mall and numerous new car dealerships were also prominent in this area.

The community supported a major library and many other facilities related to culture, entertainment, and recreation. A large community center was located within a mile of site A. Theater, music, and sporting events took place there. There were also many village parks, which offered swimming, ice-skating, basketball, soccer, and personal fitness facilities. Also, county forest preserves were available for recreational use.

The community that encompassed site A had a population of 40,100. This was broken down ethnically as 96.36% White, 2.11% Hispanic, 1.34% Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.1% Native American/Eskimo, and 0.09% Black. The entire population lived in an urban setting with 3.81% living in poverty.

Site A's community had more than 15,000 housing units, a majority of which were single family dwellings, with the median housing value being \$93,000. The median household income was \$35,000 with the 1989 per capita income averaging \$15,000.

Site B

Site B was located in a suburban area south of Chicago. The community that surrounded site B was comprised of small businesses and manufacturing. The area with the greatest job growth over the last two decades was in health services. A local hospital was the community's largest employer. The community had seen some economic setbacks over the years and had currently been working to rebuild itself. The school population is 93.4% Black and 2.3% White. The community had a problem with gang violence, and a transient school population.

The community that surrounded site B had a population of 29,800 people. With respect to ethnicity, 80.0% were Black, 13 % were White, 0.2% Native American, 0.3% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 6.5% were Hispanic. The entire population lived in an urban setting with 25.6% living in poverty.

Site B's surrounding community had a wide variety of affordable housing. Prices ranged from \$30,000 to \$85,000. The average price of a home was in the mid-\$40,000. The median household income was \$26,000.

Site C

Site C was located in a suburban area southwest of Chicago. The surrounding community was compromised of small businesses and some light manufacturing. Within a short drive of the school, were numerous opportunities for recreation, several forest preserves, and a large shopping mall.

This school serviced students from portions of six separate communities. The community that surrounded site C was composed of a population of 35,780 people. With respect to ethnicity, 90.3 % were White, 1.9% Black, 3.9% were Hispanic, 3.7% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and .02% were Native American. The entire population lived in an urban setting with 8.0% living in poverty. Site C had a wide variety of housing with home values ranging from \$93,000 to \$207,000. The average household income was \$55,000.

National Context of the Problem

Many people believe in the idea of the self-fulfilling prophecy. If you believe you can succeed you will, and if you believe you will fail, then you will fail. This inner motivation is what every child needs to be successful in school. Any parent of a pre-school child will attest to the fact that these children love to learn. Parents never seem to complain that their pre-school age child is not motivated to learn (Lumsden, 1994). As students progress through the educational system, learning seems to become comparable to drudgery rather than fun. A chronic concern of high school teachers today is that students are not motivated to learn (Rinne, 1998). Awareness of this belief may help educators in their attempts to reduce student apathy.

Educators should never be content with the status quo. The intrinsically motivated student does not sit in every seat of the classroom. Educators should be concerned with their students' desire to participate or not to participate in the learning process. According to Lepper (1988), a student who is intrinsically motivated undertakes an activity for its own sake, while the extrinsically motivated student performs for some reward or to avoid punishment. There is a concern in our nation over students' lack of motivation in the classroom.

Building relationships with students may help to create a genuine sense of community in the classroom (MacLean, 1998). Students that feel a connection to the teacher will possibly remember some of the content of the class, but they will definitely remember how they felt in the classroom. Students who feel that the teacher truly supports them will have more success in the classroom. Students who feel safe in the classroom are more willing to take risks in that type of learning environment. Once the relationship has been established, the journey through the educational process becomes a mutual venture.

Children have an inexhaustible enthusiasm to learn. Once children start school, they immediately begin forming their beliefs about their school-related successes and failures (Lumsden, 1994). Students will find success if their teachers expect success. For students to be motivated and to be successful, it is necessary for educators to recognize themselves as capable of stimulating student motivation (Brophy, 1987). A teacher has many opportunities to take time out of the day to celebrate and acknowledge learning, the ultimate goal of the classroom.

Motivating students is one of the many goals of education. In an effort to help increase student motivation, there must be an emphasis on training teachers to use a variety of teaching methods and motivational strategies in their classroom. Educators must work to inspire the students.

CHAPTER TWO

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

By the time a child reaches high school, one of the most common complaints by teachers and parents is that their teenager is unmotivated. Considerable research shows a decline in motivation for many children as they progress through the grade levels (Brophy, 1986). Motivation is of particular importance for those educators who work with adolescents. Students may lack motivation at the high school level because classroom activities do not encourage or acknowledge their learning style (Cambell, 1997). Activities that target the multiple intelligences are going to be more effective in motivating students (Collins, 1998). The educators that are able to use a variety of motivational strategies in the classroom will be able to encourage more students to tap into their academic potential.

Lack of motivation and underachievement are not limited to age, race, gender, or socio-economic background. Rather, lack of motivation and underachievement and discrepancies between a student's ability and their performance in school. Students at each site exhibited a lack of motivation, which interfered with their academic success. In order to obtain more accurate information and documentation about this problem, a student survey was administered at each site (Appendix A). The survey results supported the researchers' hypothesis that lack of motivation was an important issue at their schools. In addition to student surveys, teacher observation checklists (Table 1), and disciplinary referrals (Figure 1) were also documented.

Table 1

Observable Behavior Check List

Observable Behavior	Site A	Site B	Site C
Participation in Class	25%	40%	55%
Disruptive Behavior	27%	22%	13%
Completion of Assignmmt	58%	42%	70%
N =	26	21	43

As the data in Table 1 indicate, each site had problems with students who disrupted the educational process and/or refused to participate on a regular basis.

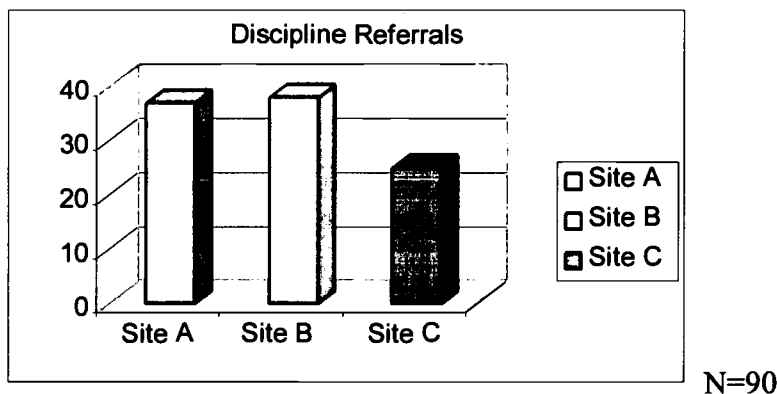


Figure 1. Percentage of discipline referrals for disruptive behavior

This documentation also supported the hypothesis of a lack of motivation in the schools at each site. As far as disciplinary referrals were concerned, an average of 30% of the referrals written at each school were tied to a lack of motivation on the students' part. A student's behavior in the classroom is directly connected to their inner motivation to learn. If a student's motivation to learn is low, then students typically refuse to participate, refuse to turn in work, refuse to work with other students in class, and/or act

or speak disrespectfully to other students or the teacher. If a student's motivation can be stimulated through a variety of activities, then classroom participation and behavior should improve.

Probable Causes

Lack of motivation may be a combination of symptoms possibly stemming from the home or the school environment (Lumsden, 1994). While educators cannot control the home environment, the school environment may be altered to reverse this trend of underachievement. By providing students with activities suited to their nature and learning styles, and developing relationships with the students, teachers can minimize behavior problems and maximize the learning potential of each student.

Teenagers, by nature, are social and inquisitive. This was reflected at each of the sites through teachers' observing students enjoying working together cooperatively, and most students enjoy the opportunity to talk to their classmates. In general, high school students can be quite inquisitive when given the opportunity to ask and pose questions. Teachers need to provide all students with opportunities to be social and inquisitive through a variety of activities. In this way teachers can capitalize on a student's strength, while working to improve weaknesses.

The researchers observed a lack of motivation within their classrooms. The researchers observed students who were unwilling to participate in classroom activities and frequently disrupted the educational process with disrespectful behavior. The researchers hypothesized that by implementing activities, such as cooperative learning, activities that target the multiple intelligences, and develop student-teacher relationships, then apathy in the classroom would decline, and disciplinary referrals

would decrease. The pre-intervention student survey results (Figure 2) revealed that most students felt that their motivation to learn was average to below average, and that their motivation was more external than internal. In addition, a survey was administered to students that indicated which learning style was best for each student (Appendix D). This survey help the researchers develop a variety of activities that would target each student's learning style.

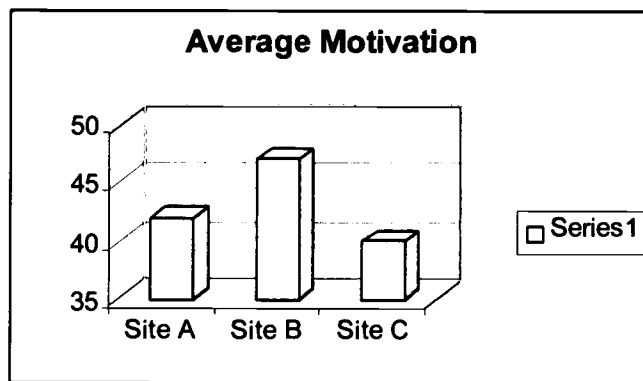


Figure 2. Percentage of students per site who rated their motivation to learn as average

Lack of motivation seems to be a combination of symptoms possibly stemming from the home and the school environments. All educators should strive towards altering the school environment in an effort to combat this national problem. While lack of motivation and underachievement is a serious problem; it is not irreversible.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Infants and young children appear to be driven by an intense need to investigate, interact with and make sense of their surroundings. From the beginning they thirst to make sense of their environment. Every day a child embarks on a new adventure, a new voyage of discovery encouraged by all those around (Rose & Nicholl, 1997). As children grow, their excitement for school and learning declines. A large percentage of students, more than one in four, leave school before receiving a diploma. Educators are aware of the problem, yet most are at a loss as to a solution. “What if you could keep students engaged in their learning longer, unleash their motivation, and cause their learning to occur naturally as an extension of their experience?” (Deporter, Nourie, & Reardon, 1998, p.18)

A research team of three high school teachers was created to increase student success through the implementation of motivational strategies. Each researcher reviewed first quarter student surveys, teacher observations, multiple intelligence inventories, and disciplinary office referrals documenting the problem of lack of student academic success.

The target population consisted of all levels of students attending three high schools located in the south suburbs of Chicago. The goal was to raise the target groups' success through motivational strategies. Along with improving student motivation, it was anticipated that students' overall attitude toward school would also improve.

One intervention is strengthening the student-teacher relationship. This includes getting to know the students in the class, know what they enjoy, and how they think. By far, the best way a teacher can reduce problems in the classroom and heighten the learning process is by building and maintaining strong relationships. Success in the classroom is dependent on establishing positive, caring, and honest relationships between the teacher and the students that are in the room. Given 50-55 minutes per class and the pressure of instructing content, relationship time is limited. Every move must count. Each activity must serve as a vehicle for building a strong working relationship between the teacher and the students (Jensen, 1995). Effective teaching depends on building relationships with and among students. By building relationships with and among students, teachers can create an authentic sense of community and collaboration in the classroom (MacLean, 1998). Students work better, more effectively, and more harmoniously with people they know and enjoy. Relationships will have a profound effect on everything that happens or fails to happen in the classroom community (Panico, 1999).

One way to build relationships between students and teachers is to share personal experiences with students. Teachers could tell students stories about past experiences and share feelings regarding these occurrences at their age (Smith, 1996). Discuss with students what the teacher finds enjoyable about teaching and allow them to see you reading and engaging in other pursuits for pleasure. Teachers can also set an example by admitting when they do not know something and asking for support to discover the solution (Kohn, 1993). As a teachers converse with students it is important to remember, "How...teachers talk tells a child how they feel about him. Their statements affect his

self-esteem and self-worth. To a large extent, their language determines his destiny" (Ginott, as cited in Faber & Mazlish, 1995, flyleaf). To continue building the student-teacher relationship, the teacher should refrain from doing anything to them they would not want done to themselves. Refuse to do anything they could do for themselves. Lastly, empower students to do the things they believe they cannot do themselves (Panico 1999). These beliefs will help to foster a feeling of mutual respect for all parties involved.

Emotions are key when building relationships. Getting in touch with students' emotions can assist the teacher in helping the students become involved in the learning process quicker and easier (Deporter, Nourie, & Reardon, 1998). Emotions are important in the education process because they drive health, meaning, survival, and attention, which in turn drive learning and memory (Rose & Nicholl, 1997). When a student perceives a threat the brain goes into survival mode at the expense of developing higher order thinking skills. Examples of threat may include anything that embarrasses students, unrealistic deadlines, a bully in the hallway, or a fight with a family member. Any of these threats are a detriment to rational thinking. Negative emotions may make students not want to participate and wishing to leave a class. Positive emotions create an environment where students want to belong. Emotions spur motivation to learn. When students are in the classroom teachers need to engage them projects and ideas, which elicit productive emotions. Ways to elicit these productive emotions include physical activity, music, hands-on-projects, role-playing, curiosity, competition, and celebrations (Jensen, 1998).

Another intervention is to acknowledge learning that is taking place in the room. If the content is worth learning the student and teacher should celebrate the students academic success. Students have few incentives to study. Often schools reward high achievement, not hard work itself (Parent News, 1996). According to DePorter and Hernacki (1992), the rationale for celebrating success includes the following:

Many times, as you look at a goal whose completion is still in the future, it seems larger than life - almost overwhelming. You think, "Wow, if I can accomplish that, what a great thing it will be." Later, when you finally do accomplish the goal, it doesn't seem so huge anymore. It becomes just another one of the things in your past, and you forget to acknowledge yourself for a job well done. You move on to the next project without stopping to reflect on the last one - without recognizing the significance of what you've just done. When you've completed a task, it's important to celebrate the feat. It gives you a sense of accomplishment, completion, and confidence, and it builds motivation for your next goal (p. 58).

Providing celebrations for students encourages them to take more ownership and to initiate their own learning. Academic celebrations also provide an incentive to study and continue learning. Celebrations can be in the form of powerful, specific acknowledgements. Give A's for effort. Students need to know that teachers appreciate and recognize how much they are trying. Take note of the learning that is taking place in the room (O'Connell, 1994). Celebrations can also be in the form of group energizers, public posters, or affirmation statements. The use of large signs made on poster-board with simple and powerful messages on them can have a very positive impact on the students. When the eyes of a student look above they find a message such as, "If you

dream it, you can achieve it", "Learning is Fun, Easy, and Creative", or "I believe in My POWER to Succeed!" Over time the ideas on the poster board will have a positive affect on students (Jensen, 1995a).

A fourth intervention is providing students with academic choices and providing students clear explanations that clarify the importance of what they are doing. Take the time to justify it to them (Palardy, 1999). According to Kohn (1993), "If we expect children to want to learn something, we have to give them a clue as to why they should be motivated, besides, it is a simple matter of respect to offer such explanations (p. 212)." Studies show that students learn more when their classes are satisfying, stimulating, and friendly, and when they have a voice in the decision-making process. By allowing students to participate and voice their opinions about their education, students feel that they are in control of their own learning. Given such conditions, students often participate in non-required activities related to the subject matter (Walberg & Greenberg, 1997). Students learn at their best when they have something they care about and they can get pleasure from being engaged in these activities (Gardner, as cited in Goldman, 1995).

Employing the use of activities that target the multiple intelligences was a fifth intervention. Academic success will be improved by targeting the multiple intelligences in the classroom. Everyone has different natural strengths and challenges in the multiple intelligences. Every individual possesses several different and independent capacities for solving problems and creating products (Gardner, as cited in Goldman, 1995). By incorporating the use of multiple intelligences into the content, teachers help students get more meaning and brain stimulation in their learning. Below are explanations of the different intelligences and activities used to target the intelligence:

- a. Spatial-Visual involves thinking in images and pictures. Activities include drawing, sketching, visualizing, images, graphics, designs, charts, and movies.
- b. Linguist-Verbal involves thinking in words. Activities include debates, speeches, reading, journaling, and oral questioning.
- c. Interpersonal involves thinking by communicating with other people. Activities include cooperative learning, group projects, debates, and role-playing.
- d. Musical-Rhythmic involves thinking in rhythms and melodies. Activities include writing raps, jingles, songs, or cheers.
- f. Bodily-Kinesthetic involves thinking through physical sensations and movement. Activities include role playing, human graphs, reenactments, charades, and other physical activities.
- g. Intrapersonal involves thinking reflectively. Activities include journaling, open-ended activities, goal setting, reflecting, and self-assessing.
- h. Logical-Mathematical involves thinking by reasoning. Activities include using deductive and inductive logic, graphic organizers, and scenarios.

By using the multiple intelligences in our classrooms, teachers help students get more meaning and brain stimulation in their learning. It also offers more variety and enjoyment and it causes them to expand and strengthen their intelligences (DePorter, Reardon, & Nourie, 1999).

A final intervention is employing the use of cooperative learning groups. Cooperative learning involves students' participation in small group learning activities that promote and foster positive interaction and interdependence among group members

(Johnson & Johnson, 1984). As part of a prosperous learning team, students can achieve success by working well with others. Students improve academic achievement, behavior, and attendance through the use of cooperative learning (Slavin, 1987). Students want and need work that will enhance their relationships with others. When student work is interdependent one student's job is to research education in the twenties, another's is to learn about fashion in the twenties, and a third student is investigating music and literature. After they do their research, they jointly develop a poster comparing and contrasting these three areas to year 2000. The students need one another's knowledge. Together students use their individual talents and abilities work cooperatively with one another to produce a project that requires all of their input (Robinson, Silver, & Strong, 1995).

Obviously one single strategy will not improve all targeted students' academic success through the implementation of motivational interventions. After reviewing literature, student surveys, teacher observations, multiple intelligence inventories, and disciplinary office referrals documenting the problem of student academic success, the research team developed a list of appropriate and realistic interventions. These interventions were employed to generate interest in the target group members to improve student academic success in the secondary school setting. Strategies were implemented during the period of September 1999 through January 2000 in the attempt to improve high school students' academic success. The strategies implemented included: strengthening the student-teacher relationship, getting in touch with students' emotions, acknowledge learning is taking place in the classroom, providing students with academic choices and clear explanations that clarify the importance of what they are doing,

employing the use of activities that target the multiple intelligences, and employing the use of cooperative learning groups. By setting up conditions that make learning possible teachers can encourage student success in the academic setting.

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of implementation of a variety of motivational strategies including: strengthening the student-teacher relationship, getting in touch with students' emotions, acknowledge learning is taking place in the classroom, providing students with academic choices and clear explanations that clarify the importance of what they are doing, employing the use of activities that target the multiple intelligences, and employing the use of cooperative learning groups during the period of September 1999 through January 2000, the high school students from the targeted classes will increase their academic success, as measured by teacher observations, student surveys, disciplinary referrals, and anecdotal records.

In order to accomplish the terminal objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Employ activities that strengthen the student-teacher relationship.
2. Develop activities get in touch with students' emotions.
3. Acknowledge learning taking place in the room by celebrating by verbal praise and visual acknowledgements.
4. Provide students with academic choices and explanations that clarify the importance of what they are doing in the classroom.
5. Construct a series of learning activities that target the multiple intelligences.
6. Utilize cooperative learning groups.

Project Action Plan

- I. Baseline data collection (first two weeks of September)

- A. Student surveys (Appendix C) (Figure 1)
 - 1. Personal information about students
 - 2. Ninth and tenth grade history
 - 3. Ninth grade English
 - 4. Tenth through twelfth grade small engine concepts
- B. Teacher observations recorded before, during, and after interventions Implemented (Appendix B)
- C. Anecdotal records, journaled weekly (September through January)
- D. Disciplinary referrals collected and categorized (first two weeks of September)
- II. Distribution of parent/student permission letter (first week of September) (Appendix A)
- III. Distribution of “How Are You Smart Chart” (third week of September) (Appendix D)
- IV. Implementation of motivational strategies (starting fourth week of September)
 - A. Classroom activities targeting the multiple intelligences
 - B. Classroom activities aimed at developing student/teacher relationships
 - C. Provide opportunities and choices for students to have a say in their learning
 - D. Develop cooperative learning groups to promote and foster positive interaction and interdependence between group members
- V. Distribution of post-survey to students (end of January) (Appendix D)
- VI. Assessment of data collection (end of December)
 - A. Analysis of student pre and post surveys

Analysis of teacher journals

B. Analysis of teacher observation checklist

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, a student survey of attitudes about student motivation will be administered prior to the implementation of the interventions and another similar survey will be administered at the conclusion of the project. (Appendices D & E) Teacher grade books will be used to record completion of homework and classroom assignments. The teachers will record observations and comments in journal form throughout the intervention period.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The researchers were concerned with academic achievement at the high school level. As a result, the objective of this action research project was to increase student motivation and academic success through a variety of motivational strategies. The interventions used to accomplish this increase in motivation were focused on student-teacher relationships, cooperative learning activities, activities that targeted the multiple intelligences, and providing students with academic choices and clarification of relevance of material and activities. The strategies were implemented over a period of ten weeks. Each researcher implemented the strategies at various times over the ten week period depending upon how each believed that the strategies would best impact the classroom.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Data were gathered and conclusions were drawn based on student responses to post students' surveys and anecdotal records. Disciplinary referrals were not used as a post data measure. The data gathered from this source were incomplete. Ninety student surveys were administered at the three sites. Based on these surveys, the researchers concluded that the majority of students enjoyed working in groups and also experienced academic success within the group setting. One student at Site A commented, "I like the group activities." Each researcher noted in the weekly logs that the students seem to have

more academic success when working in groups. The students' academic success was reflected in the increase of completed assignments.

The information in Table 2 shows the results of student surveys, which questioned any increase in motivation they experienced over the course of the semester.

Table 2

Student survey results: Students rate motivation to learn.

Survey Question	Site A – Results	Site B - Results	Site C - Results
Level of Motivation Average/ Below	52 %	43%	44%
Perceived Increase in motivation	57%	67%	46%
Number of students	N=26	N=21	N=43

The results from the survey can be interpreted in a variety of ways. The researchers noted that some students, who considered themselves mostly college-bound students, came into the class with a good deal of self-motivation. As a result, there was no measurable increase in motivation, at Site C. At Site B the researchers noted that motivation increased. One student at Site B stated, “Working in groups really helped.” The researchers noted that the students at Site A, who do not consider themselves college-bound, did not see a measurable increase in motivation over the course of the semester. However, according to the surveys at all three sites, many of the students indicated that they enjoyed the classes and they enjoyed the activities done in the class.

The posting of student work to celebrate success, working in cooperative groups, and developing activities to target the multiple intelligences had an impact on the behavior of the students at each target site.

Table 3

Post-Teacher Observable Behavior Checklist

Observable Behavior	Site A	Site B	Site C
Participation in Class	30%	77%	72%
Disruptive Behavior	22%	15%	10%
Completed Assignmnts	67%	65%	75%
N =	26	21	43

The data in Table 3 indicate an increase at each site in each category when compared to the information in Table 1 of Chapter 2. Each teacher noticed an improvement in classroom participation, especially when the students were actively engaged in cooperative learning activities. The researchers noted at Site B that as students were engaged in cooperative activities they tended to act out less due to the responsibility they took on as a team member. Students seemed to realize the impact their behavior had on their team's success. The table also indicates that the students showed a marked increase in their completion of assignments, in particularly on days when the class was participating in cooperative learning activities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data, the students' showed some improvement in motivation and a marked improvement in completion of assignments.

The developing of relationships between the student and the teacher, the use of cooperative learning, and the implementation of activities targeted at the multiple intelligences, appear to have had an overall positive impact on student motivation and academic success. The results from the teacher observation checklists seem to indicate that the students improved participation as a result of the strategies that were implemented.

Cooperative learning activities appeared to have the most positive impact on motivation and participation. Several students, from each site, commented on the post-survey that they really enjoyed the days when they worked in groups. The researchers surmised that peer pressure was a strong and important component to the cooperative learning activities. The accountability factor in cooperative learning activities certainly motivated almost of the students at each site.

Lack of motivation is a concern for all teachers. Based on the information gathered by the researchers, the strategies that seemed to be the most successful in increasing motivation and academic success at the high school level are cooperative learning, developing relationships between students and teacher, and activities targeted at the multiple intelligences. The researchers noted that building strong relationships between students and the teacher helped to create a positive atmosphere in the classroom. The researchers strongly recommend dedicating the time at the beginning of the school year to developing the student/teacher relationship and the time invested at the beginning of the year will pay off during the course of the year.

The researchers noted an area that may be useful for future inquiry would be on how motivation changes over the course of a school year simply due to the maturation of

the student. A drawback to this project was the varied make-up of the targeted populations made it difficult to draw conclusions. Each researcher taught a different subject to a different age and academic level of student. Another drawback noted by the researchers was that too many interventions were implemented. The researchers believe that the implementation of three interventions would be much more manageable. Trying to implement too many strategies makes it difficult to keep track of what is successful, and there is simply not enough time in the school year to implement so many strategies without having to give up some content.

In conclusion, the researchers believed that the strategies that were implemented were successful. The students at each site demonstrated improvement in completion of assignments and an increase in motivation as a result of the interventions. Therefore, the researchers recommend the interventions they used to any teachers who are hoping for improvements in their classroom in the areas of motivation and completion of assignments.

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Appendix A

August, 1999

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the start of another school year. I am looking forward to teaching your child this year.

I am currently enrolled in a Master's degree program at Saint Xavier University and will be conducting an action research project in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree. This project will involve some changes in instructional strategies and some modification of curriculum materials. My students may be asked to complete a survey or questionnaire about how they feel about the new materials and teaching methods I plan to use. Any responses that the students make will not affect their grades in any way, nor will the project interfere with their required studies.

Your child will not be identified in any way, and all results of my project will be confidential. Some photos, a video, or a tape recording may be made for display at an exhibition of my project next spring.

If you have any questions or concerns about this project, please call me at school at xxx-xxxx and I will be happy to discuss these things with you.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Appendix B

TEACHER OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Observable Behavior	First Observation	Second Observation	Third Observation
1. Student Participation in Class			
2. Eye-contact			
3. Disruptive Behavior			
4. Completed Class Assignment			
5. Active Group Participation			
6. Student Attendance			

Teacher Comments

First Observation - _____

Second Observation - _____

Third Observation - _____

Appendix C

STUDENT SURVEY

DIRECTIONS:

Please read each question carefully. There are several possible responses to each question. Select the response that most clearly represents your opinion.

1. Which of the following best describes your family situation now?
 - a. live with both parents
 - b. live with one parent and one step-parent
 - c. live with one parent
 - d. live with one step-parent
 - e. live with guardian or foster parents

2. How many hours do you work for pay, outside the home, per week?
 - a. 31+
 - b. 21-30
 - c. 11-20
 - d. 1-10
 - e. 0

3. How much of the money YOU earn at your job is used to pay for necessities of your family? (food, bills, rent, etc.)
 - a. more than half
 - b. about half
 - c. less than half
 - d. none
 - e. I don't know

4. Do you plan to continue going to school within six months after graduation?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
 - c. I don't know

5. If you are planning to continue formal education after graduation, what type of school do you plan on attending?
 - a. four year college
 - b. community college
 - c. technical/vocational school
 - d. other

6. If you are NOT planning to continue your formal education within six months after graduation, what do you plan to be doing?
 - a. working full time
 - b. military service
 - c. working part time
 - d. traveling
 - e. other

7. Considering your goals for the future, how many of your last year's teachers expected TOO MUCH work from you?
 - a. almost all of them
 - b. most of them
 - c. about half of them
 - d. less than half of them
 - e. few or none of them

8. Considering your goals for the future, how many of your last year's teachers expected TOO LITTLE work from you?
 - a. almost all of them
 - b. most of them
 - c. about half of them
 - d. less than half of them
 - e. few or none of them

9. Do you feel that you are:
 - a. working to your academic potential
 - b. working close to your academic potential
 - c. working below your academic potential
 - d. working far below your academic potential
 - e. I don't know

10. What grade would you give your motivation to learn?
 - a. excellent
 - b. above average
 - c. average
 - d. below average
 - e. poor

11. Who has or has had the BIGGEST impact on your desire to learn?
 - a. parent/family member
 - b. myself
 - c. teachers
 - d. friends
 - e. other adults in your life

Appendix D
How Are You Smart?

Multiple Intelligence Inventory

Directions: This inventory will help you identify your areas of strongest intelligence. Read each statement circle those actions you like to do, or do well.

- ☞ 1. I always understand the drawings that come with new gadgets or appliances.
- 🔔 2. Life seems empty without music.
- E 3. I like to host parties or special events.
- ☞ 4. I always know north from south no matter where I am.
- ✍ 5. I enjoy listening to people speak (a good story teller).
- ✍ 6. I become annoyed when I hear an argument or statement that sounds illogical.
- μ 7. I enjoy dancing and or making up dances.
- E 8. I am good at convincing other people to follow my ideas or plans.
- # 9. I like to work with calculators and I enjoy math.
- μ 10. I have a good sense of balance and coordination.
- ♥ 11. I can help a friend sort out strong feelings because I successfully deal with similar feelings myself.
- # 12. I often see patterns and relationships between numbers faster and easier than others.
- # 13. I can do simple math problems quickly in my head.
- ☞ 14. I can look at an object one way and see it turned other directions just as easily.
- μ 15. I learned how to ride a bike quickly and easily.
- 🔔 16. I can play and enjoy playing a musical instrument.
- ♥ 17. I have taken time to reflect on or write down my inner thoughts and feelings.
- 🔔 18. I like to hum, whistle, or sing.
- ✍ 19. I enjoy writing detailed letters to friends.
- ♥ 20. I stay in touch with my moods. I have no trouble identifying them.
- ☞ 21. Just looking at shapes of buildings and structures is enjoyable to me.
- ✍ 22. I know the definitions of many words.

- ♥ 23. I usually know exactly why I feel angry or happy.
- # 24. I like to work with numbers and figures.
- E 25. I am easily aware of the moods of others.
- 🔔 26. I associate music with my moods.
- μ 27. I enjoy building models or sculptors.
- ✍ 28. Words come easy to me in an argument or debate.
- 🗺 29. I would rather draw a map than give someone verbal directions.
- μ 30. I am good athlete.
- E 31. I am can read and interpret expressions on other people's faces.
- E 32. I have a good sense of what others feel about me.
- 🔔 33. I often associate a piece of music with some event in my life.
- # 34. I enjoy working with puzzles and playing games.
- E 35. I am generally aware of the expression on my face.

Appendix E

POST-STUDENT SURVEY

DIRECTIONS:

Please read each question carefully. There are several possible responses to each question. Select the response that most clearly represents your opinion.

1. What are your goals for the future?
 - a. work full time
 - b. work part-time and attend community college
 - c. four year college
 - d. military service
 - e. other

2. Considering your goals for the future, how many of your current teachers expect TOO MUCH work from you?
 - a. almost all of them
 - b. most of them
 - c. about half of them
 - d. less than half of them
 - e. few or none of them

3. Considering your goals for the future, how many of your current teachers expect TOO LITTLE work from you?
 - a. almost all of them
 - b. most of them
 - c. about half of them
 - d. less than half of them
 - e. few or none of them

4. Do you feel that you are:
 - a. working to your academic potential
 - b. working close to your academic potential
 - c. working below your academic potential
 - d. working far below your academic potential
 - e. I don't know

5. What grade would you give your motivation to learn?
- excellent
 - above average
 - average
 - below average
 - poor
6. Who has or has had the BIGGEST impact on your desire to learn?
- parent/family member
 - myself
 - teachers
 - friends
 - other adults in your life
7. Has your desire to learn change at all this semester?
- a great deal
 - somewhat
 - a little
 - not at all
8. Please add your own comments regarding this class. Anything you liked or disliked about the class and why?



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