

National Implications: Practical Ways for Improving Student Self-Concept through Student Achievement

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to examine the factors that influence student motivation that ultimately affects student achievement. This article examines factors that include motivation, school culture, student self-concept, and goal-setting. The authors provide strategies that involve practical methods for activating a student's desire to achieve. Motivational strategies are emphasized to develop school environments that are provide avenues for students to strive for excellence in their educational pursuits.

What is Motivation?

Student motivation is a key component connected to student achievement. The degree in which teachers utilize motivation in the classroom determines successful learning as well. Theoretical explanations of motivation have been developed to assist teachers in attempting to understand the phenomena that impacts human behavior. Motivation can be defined as belief in what one believes he or she can do and whether the task at hand has enough value to put forth the effort. In other words, people are motivated to take action when they believe they can acquire the goal, and they believe that the goal is worth taking the risk. According to Dr.

William Allan Kritsonis, author of *The Ways of Knowing Through the Realms of Meaning*, motivation is an inferential concept referring to the fact that the learner is active rather than inactive and engages in certain kinds of activities rather than others. The organism has certain biological needs for self-maintenance and self-perpetuation that arouse certain drives and direct the animal into activities that will satisfy the needs in question (Kritsonis, 2007).

Bob Sullo, author of *Activating the Desire to Learn*, asserts that researchers have spent over a century contending that human behavior is a result of external stimulus. Educators are trained to use external force controls to manipulate behavior. He emphasizes 'that we send a clear message, even if it's unintended, that if it were not for the reward offered, what we are teaching may not be worth learning. This type of reward in exchange for learning is anti-educational (Sullo, 2006).

Motivation is an on-going process that embodies various levels and degrees from student to student. Some students are obsessed with achievement because they perceive they gain a sense of power and superiority by being recognized as the brightest student in class. Others put forth effort to succeed because academic success is deeply embedded within the classroom environment, therefore, giving purpose and focus to learning objectives. It is within the walls of these schools that energy is high and student success thrives. High motivation is a key indicator of highly effective schools.

Motivation and School Culture

Principals and other campus administrators are key players in stimulating motivation within a school. The campus culture is a reflection of the school's vision. Principals must examine their personal motivation in desiring to manage a school that is highly effective in motivating the school to pursue its' vision. These goals must be articulated, nurtured, and shared among all stakeholders of the school community. Principals must use various modes of internal and external communication to produce support from all constituents. Principals can motivate teachers by providing staff development and training on current research and best practices in the field of student motivation. Principals must provide teachers with opportunities to visit other successful teachers in their classrooms or neighboring schools to visualize what a motivated classroom embodies and acknowledge student success. The key to stimulating motivation is to recognize student accomplishments daily. Students put forth more effort when they realize that school leaders show great interest in their academic progress.

Parent participation is another critical factor in cultivating student motivation. Principals can help parents nurture motivation by helping parents to understand the importance of instilling belief in their child which will promote a healthier self-image. Parents must partner with the school in developing the child's potential and not their inadequacies. Both parties must be willing to support and celebrate the child's accomplishments no matter how minute.

The principal should reach out to the community in support of the school's motivational vision by inviting members to pay frequent visits to the school and assist in recognizing student success. The more the vision of motivation is articulated and supported the greater the school's chances for productivity.

The Self-Concept

Self-concept can be defined as how and what one thinks of him or her self. An individual's self-concept is developed over a period of time beginning from birth to the present by the acquisition of knowledge through an individual's five senses. Because children have little control over what passes through their senses, they enter school with their own unique set of values and perceptions of what is real. This perception is either positive or negative. These perceptions can either stimulate or inhibit internal motivation. The authors have observed that students who possess have intrinsic motivation. In contrast, students with low self-concepts displayed a negative out-look toward their situation in life and lack intrinsic motivation. These students needed more encouragement in order to move past their struggles. Teachers, mentors, and coaches can become very influential in building a student's self-concept. Even if there seems to be a lack of support at home, the connection with one significant adult of the school community can give that student hope (Glenn, 2003). Teachers must enter the classroom as the one individual that's going to be the conductor of change that will improve the self-concept of the entire class by demonstrating concern and love for their students. Teachers must build rapport with their students by becoming genuinely interested in them. Teachers must also act ethically and fairly with all students. Abandoning favoritism ensures that all members of the learning community are protected, respected, and valued. Finally, teachers must create a learning environment that articulates a passion to perform to the best of one's ability individually and collectively toward the acquisition of a goal.

Goal-Setting

According to Glenn (2003), author of *Motivate to Educate*, the purpose of goal-setting as it relates to motivation, is to ultimately empower, to authorize; to enable one to move from dependency to independence or self-sufficiency. Glenn defines goal setting as the act of taking the necessary steps to transferring dreams and/or intentions into a format whereby achieving a goal constitutes the primary motivating force behind work behavior.

A good starting point in helping students understand motivation is to discuss external and internal motivation along with their own characteristics. The teacher helps students to

identify which type of motivation there are instituting along with helping them to aim for motivation that comes from within. Teachers may also make the concept of motivation come to life by sharing how they have used motivation to take action on a certain task and the results it produced. At the beginning of the school year teachers should help students set academic

and career goals (Glenn, 2003). Goal setting is imperative to student motivation because where there is no vision, there is no purpose and where there is no purpose, there is no stimulation to act.

Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, students come to school with experiences and awareness whether real or perceived. Their self-concept, either positive or negative, impacts their desire to learn. Administrators play a critical role in involving all stakeholders relative to campus vision for motivating student achievement. Teachers can be powerful conductors of motivation by creating a climate within the classroom that values and challenges all learners. When students perceive that teachers care about their success and are willing to give every effort to help them become successful, students make an internal commitment to give just as much and even more. Students must set high goals. It is important to remind them to review their goals frequently and discuss where they are in terms of achieving them. Finally, as students reach an academic goal, celebrate this accomplishment. Make certain to track a level of consistency for students in attaining goals. Once certain goals are maintained and sustained, immediately set new and reasonable goals.

References

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