Motivation: I Encourage You to Read this Article.

Motivation is a central topic in applied psychology. Motivation is one of my favorite psychological topics to write about or discuss with both my students and colleagues. Why do we do what we do as humans? Why does the one student in your class answer all the questions, but the one in the back of the room does not participate in discussions or work? There is no magic pill to make anyone do what you want him or her to do, including students.

Some Theory

Many psychological theories exist to explain why humans act in certain ways. The old Freudian theories suggested that inner conflicts drive us to reduce the amount of anxiety we experience during a situation. So when Joe comes to class, he feels anxiety when he speaks because his mother humiliated him in public so he has learned to avoid classroom discussions and feels stress and anxiety when put in that situation. This is not a very explanatory theory. However, Maslow’s humanistic theory states that only when Joe has met his basic needs will he be able to succeed. However, how do we know when Joe is fulfilled? What if Joe does not like a class? Is it acceptable for him not to go because the class or instructor does not meet his needs? Doesn’t Joe want to succeed? Another concept is called achievement motivation. This point suggests that individuals have a need to excel, and the act of winning or succeeding is their benefit.

Achievement

Individuals can sometimes learn that if they achieve, they actually receive a punishment. For example, at work, Joe has completed all of his assignments, and his supervisor notices and says, “Great job Joe; I am going to give all my assignments to you.” What has Joe learned? He learned that when he does a good job he receives a punisher in the form of more work. Other side effects could be noticed, such as Joe becoming mediocre or apathetic, so achievement motivation has its drawbacks, too. So how can we help students who have
needs and may have learned to give up? Instructors can model effective behaviors to help encourage students to excel. I use the term encourage because that is the only behavior instructors can demonstrate. As instructors, we can only set up the environment for positive success. It is up to the student to excel; however, instructors should meet the students half way.

**General Instructional Behaviors**

What behaviors could the instructor do to help encourage students to participate in their learning process? Here are some general behaviors that an instructor can perform:

- Allow students to gain a sense of control over their school work
- Give students the course objectives
- Have high expectations
- Provide requirements for assignments
- Set obtainable goals
- Give frequent, early, positive feedback
- Provide opportunities for success early in the course
- Develop an organized class
- Make material relevant
- Make encouraging statements
- Offer praise - contingent and specific
- Show that you care

**Specific Instructional Behaviors**

Here is another list of specific instructional behaviors that could help encourage students to participate:

- Set high, but realistic expectations
- Help student with meeting the course objective and goal
- Spell out what the student need to do in order to pass the class - model
- Avoid argument/competition in class
- Give students feedback - both positive and quick
- Choose to be an enthusiastic instructor
- Increase complexity of the course - use the high-ordered action verbs
- Demonstrate that you treat the student with respect and that you care about them as a person and their academic progress

**Self-Efficacy**

In addition, how does the student perceive the course? A very important term to know is **self-efficacy**. This refers to the self-belief a person has about his or her own ability to complete a task. Teachers and students both have self-efficacy concerns. A teacher with low self-efficacy may feel worthless and will not pass as a competent teacher or facilitator.

Students who are repeatedly told that they could not complete the work usually have poor educational experiences and may now experience low self-efficacy. These students are more likely to drop out. Moreover, low teacher self-efficacy could affect student performance as well. Therefore, it is imperative for teachers to motivate their students
with confidence and positive experiences. These two variables help encourage students to do well. Certain instructor behaviors could influence student self-efficacy, such as:

- Focusing on student progress in specific areas; return work early and show how the student found the work easy
- Encouraging improvements
- Modeling excellent work - to show others
- Making suggestions for improvements and revise grade contingent upon corrections - give students an opportunity to succeed
- Focusing on past successful performances
- Not allowing students to focus on negative or self-defeating beliefs - conference with students - have them reflect on ways to solve problems - show that you take an interest in them
- Being realistic about issues - focus on improvements and progress - model successful behaviors - try to help students function in class, despite problems outside of class
- Stating verbal praise that is both contingent and specific

These are good behaviors to add to any instructor’s repertoire. Again, we cannot force anyone to do anything, but what we can do is to set up a positive and practical environment. If instructors establish a proactive environment, then they are more likely to encourage their students to succeed.

**Student Perception**

To identify motivational factors, what do students look for in a class?

- Instructor enthusiasm - caring and concern - helpful
- Relevance - might have to build prior knowledge and connections
- Course Organization and planning - effective lesson plans
- Appropriate level - be real about what to cover
- Active involvement - time spent on lecturing/cooperative learning activities
- Rapport with students - mentor/coach
- Use of appropriate, concrete, and understandable examples and Audio-Visual material

These are some factors affecting a student’s perception of the class. If the class is perceived as a waste of time because the instructor has not shown relevance, then the students who do not like to attend class will be less likely to do so. The main point to remember is that an instructor’s class is like a movie: if it is inactive, non-inviting, too
abstract, and irrelevant, then those student who are “at-risk” to not come, are more likely not to attend. For example, if instructor A is complaining about his poor attendance, then that instructor should promote his own high self-efficacy and reflect about what his classroom is like from his students’ point of view.

Summary

In short, all instructors can do is make the classroom environment proactive. This means that an instructor’s behavior influences his or her students’ behavior. Therefore, all instructors can do is to increase the likelihood that students will participate. All we can do is encourage our students. Instructors can show students the door, but the students have to walk through it.

References


Call for Submissions

The Center for Teaching and Learning is actively seeking instructors to submit an article on teaching tips/teaching for specific disciplines. For example, what are good activities to do in math, English, Radiology, or Massage Therapy? Please submit up to a one-page article that contains some specific methods that worked for you.

The Center for Teaching and Learning is also actively seeking instructors to submit positive reactions to any ideas mentioned in the news articles. If any tips/techniques or teaching methods that worked please submit up to a one-page article describing how you implemented the ideas or if you had observed any noticeable student improvements. Please prepare articles for the May newsletter.

Thank you,

Chris Stabile, EdD

Motivating Students: Eight Simple Rules for Teachers

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Principles of Accounting has the reputation of being a "hard and boring" course. It is difficult to motivate students to invest the time and effort necessary to succeed in the course. To meet this challenge, we have assembled a list of
eight simple rules for keeping students focused and motivated. These rules are not original, and they aren't just for those of us who teach accounting classes. Indeed, most of these time-honored suggestions apply to any course students find hard and boring, and we think that makes them broadly applicable.

**Rule 1:** Emphasize the most critical concepts continuously. Reiterate these concepts in lectures and assignments throughout the course. Include questions relating to these critical subjects on every exam, thus rewarding students for learning, retaining, and, hopefully, applying this knowledge in a variety of contexts.

**Rule 2:** Provide students with a "visual aid" when possible to explain abstract concepts. A significant proportion of today's students are visual learners. For these students, a simple diagram or flowchart truly can be more valuable than a thousand words in a text or a lecture.

**Rule 3:** Rely on logic when applicable. Point out to students which information is merely "fact" that must be memorized and which course material is based upon "logic." Show students how to employ logical thinking to learn and retain new information. For example, in the double-entry bookkeeping system, "debits" equal "credits," and debit entries cause assets to increase. These are "facts" or features of the system; they are not based on logic. However, once the student accepts the system, logic can be used to operate within the system. Continuing the example, if debit entries increase assets, it is logical that credit entries will cause assets to decrease.

**Rule 4:** Use in-class activities to reinforce newly presented material. After a new concept or subject has been presented via text reading, lecture, or class discussion, allow the students to put the concept into action by completing an in-class assignment. These assignments can be short, but they must be developed to ensure that the students understand the critical concepts underlying the new material. Typically, the most learning takes place when the students are permitted to work in small groups, to refer to their text and notes, and to ask questions of the instructor while completing the assignment. If these in-class assignments are part of the course grading scheme, class attendance also improves.

**Rule 5:** Help students create a “link” when teaching something new. If the student can “link” the new material to something already learned, the odds of learning the new material are greatly increased. Examples of possible “links” include: prior material learned in this course (e.g., the critical concepts described in Rule 1), material learned in prerequisite courses, and “real-life” experiences of the students outside the classroom.

**Rule 6:** Recognize the importance of vocabulary in a course. Students often struggle with new vocabulary in many courses, especially introductory ones. To succeed in these courses, students must become comfortable with the new terminology. As subjects are presented, new and/or confusing terms should be identified and introduced to the students. Present “real-world” definitions and alternative terminology, in addition to textbook definitions. One way to help students assimilate the course
vocabulary is to create a “living” glossary on the instructor’s website where new terminology is added, explained, and illustrated throughout the course.

**Rule 7:** Treat students with respect. Patronizing behavior may be expected in primary school teachers, and “drill sergeant” strategies may be effective in military book camps. However, most college student will not respond well to these techniques. Give students their dignity, and they will give you their best efforts.

**Rule 8:** Hold students to a high standard. If students are not required to maintain a specified level of learning and performance, only the most highly motivated students will devote the time and effort necessary to learn. In contrast, maintaining high standards not only will motivate student learning, it will also be the source of student feelings of accomplishment when those standards are met.

Each of these rules can help motivate even the most lethargic student, but Rules 7 and 8 are the most important. If students are not treated with respect and held to a high standard, scrupulously following the first six rules will have much less impact and might end up being an exercise in futility.

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[https://portal.keisercollege.edu/sites/IR/default.aspx](https://portal.keisercollege.edu/sites/IR/default.aspx)

This is a portal site to Keiser College’s Center for Teaching and Learning Resource Site. It contains teaching tips/techniques, links to research, teaching resources, and other teaching centers. This useful site is available to you if you have any questions about teaching. It is also a beginning place to get ideas for your classroom.

Sincerely,

Chris Stabile, EdD

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**Links to Current Research on Education and Motivation**

[http://www.coe.ohio-state.edu/ahoy/](http://www.coe.ohio-state.edu/ahoy/)
This is about Anita Hoy whose work in motivation and self-efficacy is important.

[http://gozips.uakron.edu/~mcgurk/number7.htm](http://gozips.uakron.edu/~mcgurk/number7.htm)
More research by Anita Hoy on college teaching and self-efficacy.

[http://www.coe.ohio-state.edu/ahoy/currentresearch.htm](http://www.coe.ohio-state.edu/ahoy/currentresearch.htm)
Current research from the American Educational Research Association.

[http://www.behavior.org/education/](http://www.behavior.org/education/)
Behavioral Analytical research on reward-based motivation.

[http://teach.northwestern.edu/literature.html](http://teach.northwestern.edu/literature.html)
Website to Northwestern University- contains sites for professional journals and other sources in Teaching and Learning literature.
**NOTICE I**

**QEP IS COMING SOON**

What is the QEP? The Quality Enhancement Plan is part of the SACS reaffirmation process that all SACS accredited institutions must complete. Our QEP is called *Keiser Writes* because the faculty found a need to enhance the quality of student writing. The faculty believes that effective writing is an essential skill to have in the modern workplace. This is a five-year process that will span across all the Keiser College campuses. This process is important because it is a value-added experience for both students and faculty. The bottom-line for the QEP is to improve student learning, which is at the center of Keiser College’s mission.

**NOTICE II**

**CONVOCATION IS SEPTEMBER 15, 2006**

Convocation involves all Keiser institutions. This is a time for the entire faculty to come together to discuss curricular issues, program concerns, and best practices. The e-Campus will also engage in convocation activities beginning on September 14 in order to bring together faculty who are spread all across the United States. Convocation is also a time to celebrate faculty achievement and to foster collaboration among the various programs. This is a time to share experiences, stories, and accomplishments. Ultimately, it is an expression of faculty camaraderie and commitment to excellence. We hope to see you at the Signature Grand in September. Please make note of this important day.