Motivating the Unmotivated

Utilizing Youth Development to Combat the Risk Factors for Dropping Out

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Mission: All students will graduate prepared and ready for college or career.
“Motivation is the art of getting people to do what you want them to do because they want to do it.”
- Dwight D. Eisenhower

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To transform our classrooms and the lives of children, we must be able to reach our students through a personal connection, but to be able to reach them, we must first truly understand them.

Sound biological reasons for:

- High Risk Behaviors
- Instant Gratification
- Lack of Planning & Forgetfulness
- Emotional Stewing
- Egocentrism
- Crowd Morality
- Difficulty in Self-Regulation
- Staying Up Late/Sleeping In
Case Study

Carson was a fifteen-year-old student who was struggling. Most teachers said motivation was his key issue. But lack of motivation is never a problem—it’s a symptom. The question is, what is it a symptom of? What is the real problem? Teachers labeled Carson as another unmotivated teenager who needed to “grow up” and “stop being lazy.” The consensus was simply to let him slide through school. They expected him to go through the motions and escape their class with a C or D grade.

What single variable contributes most to motivation, commitment, loyalty, pride and productivity?

Answer choices:
Age, gender, race/ethnicity, educational background, socio-economic status, family of origin, interests, school climate/culture, teacher personality, or teacher behavior.
### Stop Doing List

- Thinking like an adult.

| Stop teaching classroom rules/procedures. (Students will forget 90% of it anyway!) |
| Taking student behaviors personally. |

### To Do List

1. **Model the Way** – Set the example by aligning actions with shared values.

| Be an actor instead of a reactor. |
| Be prepared to address biological hindrances to learning (without consequences). |
| Practice even the most basic of procedures and coping skills that you expect from students. |

### Table Talk:

How might these behaviors look in a classroom? Are they applicable to all grade levels? Can you think of any examples from your own experience in the classroom as an educator or student?
“If my brain thinks something is not important it forgets the topic.”

2. Inspire a Shared Vision
• Envision the future by imagining **exciting** possibilities
• Enlist others in a common vision by **appealing** to shared aspirations.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_4F-ylzL-X4

http://www.texasindustryprofiles.com/apps/mHWOL/index.asp
Closed Card Sort

Characteristics of a High Achiever
Characteristics of a Gifted Learner
Characteristics of an Unmotivated Student

Directions
Working with a partner, sort the traits into one or more of the following categories: high achiever, gifted learner, or unmotivated student. Be prepared to share. 😊

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Closed Card Sort

Characteristics of a High Achiever
- Works hard
- Completes assignments
- Listens with interest
- Is receptive
- Is a top student
- Motivated by good grades
- Is a good memorizer
- Absorbs information

Characteristics of a Gifted Learner
- Very distractible, into everything and finishing nothing
- Poor grades because assigned work is not completed - Easily bored and inattentive
- High energy level - Zips through work and bounces around the classroom looking for something else to do.
- Adults find him or her "mouthy"
- Perceived by adults as disrespectful of authority
- Poor attitude/effort
Dabrowski’s Theory of Overexcitabilities

Potential Problems Associated with Characteristic Strengths in Gifted Children

“Overexcitabilities” refers to a person’s heightened response to stimuli. Excitability seemed to occur in five different areas:

- **Intellectual** (Intense focus on issues of fairness and logic, endless questions)
- **Imaginational** (May appear “spaced out,” divergent thinker)
- **Emotional** (Extreme emotions, worry excessively, often accused of overreacting)
- **Sensual** (Heightened senses: sounds, textures, etc.)
- **Psychomotor** (Rapid speech, fervent enthusiasm, intense physical activity)

**To Do List**
Watch for teachable moments to celebrate the student’s uniqueness while encouraging social etiquette/coping skills.
“Without sufficient challenge, effort stops.”

– Jensen & Snider (2013)

88% of high school dropouts had passing grades, but dropped out due to boredom.

(Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation: “The Silent Epidemic” March 2006)

**Stop Doing List:**
- Confusing high achievers with high-ability students & extension activities with additional work.
- Assuming all gifted students are the same & that by making them tutors you’re providing a learning extension.

**To Do List:**
- Plan for differentiation

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“If you simply try to cram more content into the same brain, without enhancing the executive function capacity, the student will get overwhelmed, bored, and frustrated, and failure will be likely.”
– Jensen & Snider (2013)

3. **Challenge the Process**
   - Search for opportunities by seeking innovative ways to change, grow, and improve.
   - Experiment and take risks
   - Constantly generate small wins and learning from mistakes.

**Stop Doing List**
Labeling kids
- Lazy
- Irresponsible
- Smart
What is something you wish your teachers knew about you?

“That I am not very smart.”

“That I don’t get the work.”

“I want to pass school.”

“That I can’t work as hard as they think I can.”

“I hate math because I struggle with it.”

“That they know I am trying to make better behavior.”

“That they knew how sensitive my feelings are.”

“That I have trouble with long words.”

“I have trouble in class sometimes and I need help.”

“I try my best.”

“That I’m a slow learner.”

“That I’m a really good kid.”

“That I try to do my best.”

“Sometimes when I get yelled at my feelings start to be broken.”
Executive Function – the critical toolbox to student success (Molfese et al., 2010)
Consequences of weak executive function = deficits in reading comprehension, math skills, emotional development, vocabulary, and sociability.

Executive function deficits can mimic the effects of:
- ADHD
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
- Preterm birth
- Brain injury
- Poverty
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Processing Skills</th>
<th>Attentional Skills</th>
<th>Memory Capacity</th>
<th>Sequencing Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Five-Step Model for Teaching a Processing Skill</td>
<td>Hardwired &amp; Reflexive (danger, novelty, affiliation, movement, risk-reward)</td>
<td>Play Games (we’re more likely to remember if we’re having fun)</td>
<td>Instead of assigning a paragraph, give students a well-written paragraph out of order to rearrange.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Process</td>
<td>Use predictions-increase the stakes (competition)</td>
<td>File Folder Activity/Pyramid/Name Game</td>
<td>Give instructions out of order &amp; let students work together to put in order first.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing Steps Activity</td>
<td>‘What’s Different?’ Activities</td>
<td>Review Sentence (content specific)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: One-shot practice is not a skill-builder. (Break it down, write it out, practice it over time.)

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4. **Enable Others to Act**
   - Foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating **relationships**

   **To Do List**
   - Show students respect for their ideas and feelings by giving them a **voice** in the classroom.
   - Ask “what” questions
   - Give students choices (one size does not fit all)
   - Be **empathetic** (without “silver lining” lectures)
   - Make instruction relevant & engaging (memorable experiences)
   - Give meaningful feedback
   - Admit when you are wrong and **apologize** without strings

   **Stop Doing List**
   Requiring students to look at you when you’re talking to them (one-on-one).
5. **Encourage the Heart**

- Keep hope and determination alive by recognizing students for the smaller, everyday accomplishments and showing appreciation for individual excellence.

“Recognition is the most powerful currency you have, and it costs you nothing.”

(Kouzes and Posner, 2008)

**To Do List**

Invite someone in to count your positive to negative ratio (3:1)

Kid President's Pep Talk to Teachers and Students!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwlhUcSGqgs