

# **INSPIRATIONAL EDUCATION**

**INDEPENDENT STUDY  
A SIX CREDIT CLASS**

Course # ED452f/ED552f

**INSTRUCTOR:**

**DR. MICHAEL SEDLER**

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**(509) 443-1605**

**THE HERITAGE INSTITUTE**

**Schoolteachers are not fully appreciated by parents until it rains all day Saturday.**

*—E. C. McKenzie*

**Please Do Not send in no more than 2 to 3 assignments at a time and I will send you back comments. Send them in numerical order (#1, #2, #3...). If you have signed up for multiple classes, please finish one before turning in work for the next one. And, there should be at least two weeks between course completions.**

**NOTE:** This is an online class and all work should be turned in through The Heritage Institute site. NO work should be sent directly to the instructor. When you registered, you should have received information as to how this process works. If you are still unsure how to do this, please contact [registrar@hol.edu](mailto:registrar@hol.edu) and they can help you with this issue.

Thank you for signing up for my independent study classes. You may take up to six months to complete this course and may obtain an additional 3 month extension. **DO NOT send in any completed papers unless you have registered for the class!**

The checklist in the manual is to help you plan your schedule to successfully complete this course. The last page of the manual includes a General Bibliography. If you prefer, you may choose an alternate book not on the suggested list.

On the following page, I have given you a brief biography/resume of my background. You will see that I have a Masters Degree in Social Work; my K-8 Teaching Certification and am a Licensed Social Worker with the State of Washington. My current primary role is as a consultant and trainer for schools, businesses and agencies. I also worked in education for 15 years as a Director of Special Education, a Behavior Intervention Specialist, School Social Worker, and Teacher.

I teach classes and seminars throughout the United States and in Canada. I am an adjunct professor through two Universities in Washington. I am available for on-site training, classes, and in services for agencies and schools. I anticipate this class will be enjoyable and full of learning. Please contact me if you would like me to be involved directly with your school or business.

Thank you, once again, for signing up for it and I look forward to working with you over the next weeks/months.

Sincerely,

Michael Sedler  
(509) 443-1605  
E-mail: [mike@communicationplus.net](mailto:mike@communicationplus.net)  
Website: [www.michaelsedler.com](http://www.michaelsedler.com)  
P.O. BOX 30310 - Spokane, WA. - 99223

**\*\*** For those working in groups (400/500 level only!)- be sure to go to The Heritage Institute website at [www.hol.edu](http://www.hol.edu) and click on the "group collaboration" icon.

1. Each group member must pick a book to read (you may all choose the same book).
2. Each group member must read the entire manual.
3. Final evaluation/integration paper must be individually authored.

Please share about my classes with others. It is my main form of advertising.

## **MICHAEL SEDLER**

(509) 443-1605 (w); (509) 939-6302 (c)

email: mike@communicationplus.net or michael@michaelsedler.com

website: www.michaelsedler.com

### **Education**

B.A., Political Science

Master Degree, Social Work

Master Degree, Divinity

Doctorate Degree, Ministry

Teaching Certificate

### **Work Experience**

Consultant/Trainer/Counselor

Director of Special Education

Developmental Disabilities Administration-behavior consultant

Supervisor, Educational Services

School Social Worker (K-12)

Behavior Intervention Specialist (K -12)

Classroom Teacher (elementary and middle school)

Assistant Pastor

### **Other Experiences**

State Correctional Facility for Juveniles, Counselor and Supervisor

Community Mental Health Therapist

State Trainer in Autism (State of Washington)

Adjunct Professor for several Universities

Student Teacher Supervisor

Consultant for schools, business, churches throughout United States

Provide weekend marriage retreats

Interview and Speech Coach/Trainer for Miss Arizona, 3<sup>rd</sup> runner-up Miss America 2012

### **Author**

***When to Speak Up and When To Shut Up.*** (Jan., 2006 Revell Books, \$5.99). Book from faith-based perspective.

Communication book discussing conflict, power struggles, listening strategies, asking questions. **(Over 400,000 copies sold).**

***What To Do When Words Get Ugly.*** (October, 2016, Revell Books, \$5.99).

Updated/edited version of "Stop The Runaway Conversation.") Two new chapters in addition to edits. Book from faith-based perspective. Importance of not listening to negative discussions and how they impact a person's attitude.

Books are available through all bookstores, at [www.bakerbooks.com](http://www.bakerbooks.com), by calling 800 877 2665, or by checking with various online book companies. Revell is a division of Baker Publishing Group. Both books are available on CD as audio books

# **INDEPENDENT STUDY COLLEGE COURSES**

THE HERITAGE INSTITUTE (credits through Antioch University, Seattle, WA)

MICHAEL SEDLER, INSTRUCTOR

Register for courses anytime. (6-month period for completion from the date you register). **Collaborate with fellow educators-only one set of assignments turned into instructor.** (Check out "Group Collaboration Guidelines" at [www.hol.edu](http://www.hol.edu)). \*\*Clock hours available for partial course completion.

The following are **3 CREDIT CLASSES** (3 quarter credits = 2 semester credits)

**1. Increasing Motivation and Self-Esteem in Students** (SS401p/SS501p)

Strategies to help students feel confident and help educators find more successful approaches with them.

**2. Parents: Adversary or Ally--A Cooperative Approach** (SS401q/SS501q)

Specific ideas on connecting with parents and helping better communication between school and home.

**3. Social Skills: A Foundation For Learning** (SS401v/SS501v)

Activities and ideas to encourage students to improve their peer and social relations.

**4. Understanding & Connecting With Aggressive Students** (ED404d/ED504d)

Each person will increase their understanding of ways to de-escalate aggression and its' causes.

**3 CREDIT COST: \$280-400/500 level; \$195-clock hours (3 quarter = 2 semester)**

The following are **5 CREDIT CLASSES:** (5 quarter credits -3.3 semester credits)

**1. Bullying Behaviors: Enough is Enough** (ED437q/ED537q)

Identification and interventions to reduce bullying behaviors and victim mentality within schools and community.

**2. Counseling Skills For Educators** (ED409r/ED509r)

Helpful ideas on listening skills, asking questions, and communicating with students.

**3. High Maintenance Behaviors & Interactions** (SS409f/SS509f)

This course investigates the many aspects of high needs people, behaviors and effective interactions.

**4. Mental Health Issues and Students** (HE402n/HE502n)

Understand various disorders (oppositional defiant, obsessive compulsive, bi-polar) and interventions.

**5. Nurturing Compassion Within Our Schools** (ED434y/ED534y)

Ideas to help adults and children learn to be more sensitive, kind, and compassionate toward one another.

**6. Organizational Teaching Skills** (ED429w/ED529w)

Increase your own organizational and time management skills as well as helping students in these areas.

**7. Stress Reduction in Staff and Students** (HE401m/HE501m)

Strategies to reduce stress, become more effective in life, and teach these skills to students.

**8. Student, Classroom and Whole-School Discipline** (ED419g/ED519g)

Focus is on negative talk, gossip and rumors within schools. Behavioral strategies for each above area.

**9. Youth Suicide** (SS404u/SS504u)

Specific discussions on signs and interventions for suicide prevention.

**5- CREDIT COST: \$415-400/500 LEVEL; \$315-clock hours (5 quarter = 3.3 semester)**

**NEXT PAGE FOR MORE CLASSES AND REGISTRATION INFORMATION**

# **INDEPENDENT STUDY COLLEGE COURSES**

THE HERITAGE INSTITUTE (credits through Antioch University, Seattle, WA)

MICHAEL SEDLER, INSTRUCTOR

The following are **6 CREDIT CLASSES**: (6 quarter credits - 4 semester credits)

## **1. Autism: Questions and Answers (ED445y/ED545y)**

Understanding the general areas of autism, diagnosis, and overall strategies for interventions for children with special needs.

## **2. Establishing Rules and Boundaries (ED445x/ED545x)**

Ideas to assist educators in setting up a successful work environment for children (rules, procedures, teaching tools).

## **3. Inspirational Education (ED452f/ED552f)**

This course will re-charge the batteries and create a new excitement about teaching in each person.

## **4. The Impact Of Trauma and Loss in Students (ED464z/ED564z)**

Strategies to support children who have experienced traumatic situations in life.

## **5. Why Children Act Out (ED458t/ED558t)**

Recognize the underlying function of behaviors and interventions approaches.

**6- CREDIT COST**: \$495--400/500 LEVEL; \$380-clock hours (6 quarter = 4 semester)

**REGISTRATION**: Call The Heritage Institute--1 (360) 341-3020

*Or register on line at [www.hol.edu](http://www.hol.edu)*

**QUESTIONS**: Please call Michael Sedler at (509) 443-1605. Leave message when necessary.

**Email address**: [mike@communicationplus.net](mailto:mike@communicationplus.net)    **Website**: [www.michaelsedler.com](http://www.michaelsedler.com)

\*\*For clock hours, only complete the first section of the course. Remember, clock hours may not transfer to other districts or states. You cannot go back and acquire credit once clock hours have been earned for a class.

**COURSE TITLE:     INSPIRATIONAL EDUCATION**

**No. OF CREDITS:   6 QUARTER CREDITS**  
**[semester equivalent = 4 credits]**

**CLOCK HRS: 60**  
**PDU: 60**  
**CEUs: 6.0 (60 hours)**  
**PENNSYLVANIA ACT 48: 60**

**INSTRUCTOR:       MICHAEL SEDLER, D. Min., M.S.W.**  
**Box 30310**  
**Spokane, WA. 99223**  
**509/443-1605     [mike@communicationplus.net](mailto:mike@communicationplus.net)**

### **ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST**

The assignment checklist will help you plan your schedule of work for this course. Check off items completed so that you can better monitor your progress. While you have six-months to complete your work, many will find a shorter time period convenient. **Complete no more than 2 to 3 assignments at a time for comments. Do NOT send further work until you receive comments from the instructor. Grades will be submitted once all assignments and the integration paper have been sent to instructor.**

***For Washington Clock Hours, Oregon Professional Development Units, Continuing Education Credits or Pennsylvania ACT 48, please complete the first 8 assignments.***

#### **Assignment #1:**

Read the entire manual. Do the Introductory page (pg. 10) and send a **one page summary** of your answers. Everyone taking the class, including in groups, must complete this assignment.

#### **Assignment #2:**

Read a book from the bibliography or one of student's choice. If taking this course in a group, each person should read a book. Only one person needs to write a summary.

Critique the book based on personal experiences and insights. Write a **2-3 page paper**.

**Assignment #3:** Complete the following pages:

- a) Activity for Engagement and Learning. (p. 15) Write a **1 page summary**.
- b) Evaluating involvement (pgs. 18-19). **1 page summary**.
- c) Inspirational Educator (p.31) **1 page summary**.

**Assignment #4:** Read "21 Ideas for Motivation" at the end of manual (pgs. 52-54), **write a 1-2 page summary**.

**Assignment #5:** Read about the topic of being a self-manager (pgs. 45-46). Do the activity at the end of the pages and write a **1-2 page summary**.

**Assignment #6:** Observe another classroom (or an instructional/structured setting) and discuss areas of motivational teaching that were observed. **Write a 1- 2-page summary**.

**Assignment #7:** Share your findings with the observed educator. Write a **one page summary** of your discussion.

**Assignment #8:** Go on line and read a minimum of 3 articles on the topic of inspiration (in any field). Write a **1-2 page summary** from one of the articles. Be sure to share the title and author of the article.

***This completes the assignments required for Washington Clock Hours, Oregon PDUs, or CEUs. Continue to next section for additional assignments required for University Quarter Credit.***

### **ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS REQUIRED for 400 or 500 LEVEL UNIVERSITY CREDIT.**

This course assumes that most participants are educators. If you are not in a school setting, please contact the instructor for course modifications. If completing during the summer, apply your ideas with youth from your neighborhood, a parks department facility, with students in another teacher's summer classroom in session, students from past years, or use one of your own children or a relative.

**Assignment #9:** Keep a 5 day journal focusing on inspirational teachings and strategies as shared within the manual. Write a **one page summary** of your reflections.

**Assignment #10:** Share one situation in the present or past school year where inspirational education was utilized. **Write 1-2 page summary.**

**Assignment #11: You must choose either “A” or “B” (Required for 400 and 500 Level)**

Assignment #A:

- Develop a lesson to reflect what you’ve learned in this course.
- Implement your lesson with students in your classroom.
- Write a **2 page commentary** on what worked well and what could be improved.
- Include any student feedback on your lesson.

**OR**

Assignment #B:

Use this option if you do not have a classroom available.

- Develop a lesson to reflect what you’ve learned in this course. (Do not implement it.)
- Write a **2 page summary** concerning any noteworthy success you’ve had as a teacher with one or more students.

### **500 LEVEL ASSIGNMENT**

**Assignment #12: (500 Level only)**

In addition to the 400 level assignments complete **one (1)** of the following options:

**Option A)** Mentor another individual in the concepts of this class. Have them share two or three key concepts that they would like to implement within their work or social setting. Develop a plan for the implementation of these ideas. **(1-2 pages).**

**OR**

**Option B)** Create a PowerPoint presentation for your staff based on this course and focused on perspectives or strategies you feel would be beneficial for your school. **Minimum of 15 slides.** Save this as a pdf.

**OR**

**Option C)** Another assignment of your own design, with instructor prior approval.

### **400 & 500 LEVEL ASSIGNMENT (To be completed by all participants taking this for credit)**

**Integration Paper**

**Assignment #13: (Required for 400 and 500 Level Credit)**

Write a **2 page** Integration Paper answering these specific questions:

- 1.What did you learn vs. what you expected to learn from this course?
- 2.What aspects of the course were most helpful and why?
- 3.What further knowledge and skills in this general area do you feel you need?
- 4.How, when and where will you use what you have learned?
- 5.How and with what other school or community members might you share what you learned?

**Must be individually authored (name and course title) for those taking in a group.**

### **QUALIFICATIONS FOR TEACHING THIS COURSE:**

Mike Sedler, M.S.W., D. Min., brings over 40 year of educational experience as a special education director, social worker, behavior specialist and teacher to each of his classes. He provides consultation and seminars throughout the United States and Canada for schools, agencies and businesses. He has a graduate degree in Social Work, a Doctoral degree in Ministry, a Counseling license, as well as his teaching certification. Mike has worked with children of all ages, specifically with children exhibiting behavioral challenges, mental health concerns, and characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorder. In addition, he taught general education classes in the elementary school and middle school arenas. All of Mike’s classes are practical and “field tested” in schools and classrooms. Educators have found success in implementing Mike’s clear and concise approaches. All of his course material may be immediately implemented into a school or a home.

**NOTES:** You may work collaboratively and submit joint assignments on all but the Integration Paper portion which must be individually authored. Alternatives to written assignments such as a video, audio tape, photo collage, etc. are permissible with prior approval of instructor.

**Full credit will be given to each student as long as all work is turned in. If something is missing, I will be in contact with you. Failure is not an option. 😊**



I was recently talking to a friend who is an outstanding educator. She loves her students, is creative, and her families adore her. But, her words to me were, “School is starting in a month and I really lack inspiration. I sure hope it comes in time for the year to begin.”

This is a common feeling and not just over the summer. We can have a mundane and exhausted feeling at any time during a school year. Naturally, it can create difficulties in teaching and in motivating students.

In this course, I have put together best practices, ideas for educating students, concepts of motivation, barriers to successful teaching, and numerous fun activities and games that encourage learning. In fact, I have placed these activities throughout the workbook. I have found that if I have “one section” with all the activities in them, they become routine and by the time you have read several of them, they blend together. So, while they are randomly placed throughout the manual, this is intentional to keep you focused on each individual one. Use of these types of engagement activities will help you to stay on the pathway of an inspirational educator.

I am excited to present this course on Inspirational Education. My hope is that it will encourage you and excite you toward teaching and learning. Personally, I have learned a great deal as I developed this class and am more activated toward teaching and assisting the individuals I work with every day. So, if this class doesn't do it for you...just know, I loved it. 😊

*“I am not a teacher, but an awakener.” Robert Frost*

## **INTRODUCTORY PAGE**

*(connected to assignment #1)*

### **Evaluating Inspirational Education**

1. Think of one teacher you had in school (preschool – graduate) that you found motivational and inspirational. What was his/her name? \_\_\_\_\_.
2. What made this person so memorable?
3. When you look at your life in general, what inspirational qualities do you have as part of your characteristics? (As an educator, parent, friend, other vocational setting, son/daughter, etc.)
4. What words of wisdom or specific life lessons do you want to impart to people you come into contact with each day (students, colleagues, etc)?
5. When your time on this earth is done, how do you want to be remembered by others?
6. At this point, are you leaving the legacy you desire? Why or why not?

**BARRIERS TO  
INSPIRATIONAL  
EDUCATION**

## LOOKING IN THE MIRROR

*“If you stop growing today, you stop teaching tomorrow.”* Howard Hendricks

If you are an educator, why did you choose this field? Think about it.

Was it for money? (Hah!)

Summers off? (So you could take more classes or work at a 2<sup>nd</sup> job)

To spend more time with your family?

Was it the quickest degree to get in your college? ☺

Did you have a desire to impact others?

Were you hoping to “touch the future?”

If you are not in education, why do you think your teachers or professors went into education?

This question is an important foundation for “inspirational education.” Unless we know the “WHY,” it is difficult to inspire and motivate others. Why are we doing the job we are doing is critical for each one of us to answer.

Write out a paragraph stating the answer to this question... “Why are you doing the job you are doing?” (You do not turn this in to the instructor)

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## WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES OF AN EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATOR?

Answer the questions below...you **do not** need to turn in to instructor

My first principal told me “Anyone can learn the content of the curriculum, but not everyone can relate it to the students. An excellent educator knows how to connect with others and help them understand that which is not easily understandable.”

### ***AN EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATOR:***

➤ **Is Teachable-** a person must be willing to learn new ways of doing things beyond what they already know. An individual needs to be open to guidance, correction, feedback, and input.

QUESTION: What do you do to maintain an open attitude and receive guidance from others? \_\_\_\_\_

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➤ **Is A Risk Taker-** each one of us needs to be available to step outside of the box. Are you still teaching the same lessons each year, with the same handouts, examples, and approaches? A risk taker changes the pace and approach and does not get locked into a specific pattern or style.

QUESTION: What do you do to increase the ability to take a risk in your job role? What was the last thing you did that was new and different? \_\_\_\_\_

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➤ **Desires Constant Growth-** taking a class shows a desire for growth in a life (and perhaps a need for credits? ☺). It is important to read books, articles, take classes, converse with others and show a true desire to increase ones knowledge base.

(Continued on next page)

QUESTION: What are some new ideas, strategies, or concepts you have learned in this past year? Share about classes, books, or areas of learning.

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➤ **Gains Understanding About His/Her Students-** do you understand stages of development? Are you up to date on music, phrases, jargon, and current cultural interests? Are you able to communicate with the students of today? This does not mean we are talking like them, acting like them, or dressing like them—that is a personal preference. What I am talking about is being able to connect with them in such a way that you appear relevant to them.

QUESTION: As you evaluate the age group you work with, are you comfortable in your knowledge of “stages of development?” Are you clear on concepts of dependency, disabilities, and difficulties in the students? Choose one way you might increase your understanding of the development stages in children.

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➤ **Has A Balanced Life (socially, emotionally, physically, spiritually, mentally)-** this means you take care of yourself and look to lead a healthy life. “You can’t give what you don’t have” and the students need you to be balanced in your life.

QUESTION: Are you unbalanced in any area of your life? What can you do to “re-balance” yourself in the coming month or two? \_\_\_\_\_

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**\*\*\*ACTIVITY FOR ENGAGEMENT AND LEARNING\*\*\***

(To be used with Assignment #3)

The use of math is a great way to engage the mind of children. There are quick and easy games that can be used to start a day, end a day, or fill space between activities.

**BUZZ**- randomly choose a number (let's say 4) which cannot be spoken aloud. Whenever the number 4 comes up, the word 'Buzz' must be said instead. For example, one student says "one", the next "two, then "three", but the fourth must say 'Buzz.' I point to children each time instead of going in a circle or row. When the number 14, 24 or any number in the 40's comes up, 'Buzz' must be said. It will keep them focused. You can count to 100 for the game (or a shorter number for time restrictions).

Variations: Use multiples of the number as well. Now the numbers 4, 8, 12, 14, 16...are not used. What a great way for young children to learn to count as well as teaching high school students math facts and elements of math.

**MENTAL MATH**- the students are asked to do math in their heads as you guide them through a problem. "Think of the number 5. Add 2. Multiply by 2. Subtract 4. Add 10. What number do you have? **20** You can make this as difficult or as easy as you would like by using various math functions including square roots or fractions.

**MENTAL MATH INTEGRATION**- one can weave in different subject areas into this type of approach. "Start with the number of ounces in a cup (8). Add the number of states in the United States (50). Subtract the number that make up a dozen (12). **Answer: 46** You can use many topics such as the number of elements on the periodic table, what number president is currently in office, how many senators are in the Senate, etc.

Share one activity game you have utilized with students. Write a 1 page summary

## **FOUR LEVELS OF LEARNING**

(Abraham Maslow, psychologist)

It is important for each educator to be aware of these four levels. In our own learning and growth, there is a dynamic tension within us. Educators know the job is difficult and challenging, but it is also rewarding and exciting. Some days seem too long while others fly by with little effort. One day we are teaching angels, the next day...well, you get it. By understanding the following levels of learning, we can increase our own competence and assist colleagues as well.

1) **UNCONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE**- this is the basic level where everyone begins their learning. Simply stated, you are lacking in knowledge and skills but don't know it. Think of pre-adolescents and adolescents who think they know it all, but are woefully lacking in experience and knowledge.

2) **CONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE**- at this level you are lacking in knowledge and you realize it. You know you don't know and this can be scary. Someone may have told you of your deficits or they may have been self-discovered through trial and error (probably much error). Our self-esteem and confidence is shaken and we may question our ability to carry out the task at hand.

3) **CONSCIOUS COMPETENCE**- ahhh, finally. We have learned some things and you are consciously aware of your knowledge. It feels good and your confidence begins to soar. But, there are still areas of "conscious incompetence" so you don't become too arrogant or cocky. After all, a difficult situation is just one student away.

4) **UNCONSCIOUS COMPETENCE**- this is the final level. You are able to achieve and accomplish to such an extent that it may be second nature. Many responses to behavior situations, academic questions, and other challenges are dealt with in an almost routine basis. The danger with this area is that we may become too robotic and fall into a rut. This interferes with our inspirational teaching approach.

Think back over the years of your life. Do you see how the various levels have been a part of your learning process?



## EVALUATE YOUR TEACHING ACTIVITIES

(This is just for you)

1=Always      2=Usually      3=Half the Time      4=Rarely      5=Never

1) I make an **intentional effort** not to lecture/tell students those things they can learn better through self-discovery.      1   2   3   4   5

2) I have a planned objective for using learning activities with my students, not just as entertainment or busywork.      1   2   3   4   5

3) I reflect on how this activity will facilitate learning and help each student to apply it to his/her educational and/or personal life.      1   2   3   4   5

4) I ask myself if this activity will be too time consuming or is unrealistic in terms of the learning outcome of the activity.      1   2   3   4   5

5) I use different types of learning activities in each of my lessons and am aware of various learning styles.      1   2   3   4   5

6) I give students a choice in certain learning activities and freedom in adjusting certain assignments around their individual needs.      1   2   3   4   5

7) I seek to increase my personal repertoire of teaching methods and learning activities to use in my classroom setting.      1   2   3   4   5

8) I make it a point to observe other educators to learn new strategies and approaches in my teaching methods.      1   2   3   4   5

9) I request feedback from colleagues, supervisors, and even students in order to adjust my approach in teaching.      1   2   3   4   5

10) I am open to guidance and instruction from other sources even when it goes against my current approach.      1   2   3   4   5

Choose one or two areas from above to focus on during your upcoming teaching times. Unless you make a conscious effort to evaluate your current teaching approach, you will limit your growth in the future.

## **EVALUATING THE INVOLVEMENT LEVEL OF YOUR SETTING**

**(To be used with Assignment #3. Activity at the end of this worksheet)**

*“Progress always involves risk. You can’t steal second base with one foot on first.”*

How active is your setting? For some, if you teach physical education, it may be said that it is very active. For others, if you teach history, some may say it is less so. However, don’t be deceived into thinking just because the students are moving around that learning is taking place. The key is to have them involved and engaged in the activities. Education today is entirely too passive. So much emphasis is placed on testing, benchmarks, proficiency levels, etc. that we forget about learning. I heard one educator say, “It doesn’t matter if my students learn, they just need to pass the proficiency test.”

### **MAXIMUM INVOLVEMENT → MAXIMUM LEARNING**

There are three old adages that we will use for our guidelines:

1. Practice makes perfect
2. Experience is the best teacher
3. We learn by doing

Take a look at your environment and apply each of these statements. If they are not actively utilized, it may be a barrier to inspirational education.

**PRACTICE** makes perfect. While practice may not make something perfect, it does assist in making it permanent. I know this from my golf swing which I have ‘practiced’ incorrectly for too many years. Changing it now is very difficult. Are you practicing the positive areas of learning for your students? In academics? In behavior? In social skills? To effectively increase learning, we must practice, practice, practice.

**EXPERIENCE** is the best teacher. While we don’t need to experience some things to know they are good or bad, it is true that once we go through an experience it may be deeply ingrained in our memory. Are your students getting a chance to experience education or simply listen to information? We must find ways to get them involved in their own learning.

**WE LEARN** by doing. This statement is actually credited to Plato. And yes, we can learn the wrong things by doing just as we can learn the correct areas. Do you have a system set up for students to practice, experience, and do the correct areas—over and over again?

(Continued on next page)

*An ancient Chinese proverb states: I hear and I forget; I see and I remember; I do and I understand.*

While we may remember only about 10% of what we hear, psychological studies show us that we can retain close to 50% of what we see and hear. And, if we add doing to the equation, the percentage of memory increases to close to 90%.

## **I DO AND I CHANGE**

### **Five Guidelines For Utilizing Effective Activities**

- ✓ ***Activity that provides direction without dictatorship.*** If you include a sphere of freedom and choice, you will find the students are more active in their engagement and learning.
  - ✓ ***Activity that stresses function and application.*** Keep your activities focused and short in duration. Our brains can only absorb so much information at a time. Avoid teaching and practicing too much at one time.
  - ✓ ***Activity with planned purpose.*** Be sure each activity has a meaningful purpose. Minimize busywork. Ask yourself, “What is the objective of my activity?” As a therapist, you may have certain IEP goals to meet, but are there other gains for the child?
  - ✓ ***Activity that is concerned with the process as well as the product.*** These students will know not only “what” they believe, but “why” as well. Today’s teaching focuses often times on the product (for reasons already stated). Remember that the process is the key to adaptation, growth, and future creativity.
  - ✓ ***Realistic activity that includes problem solving situations.*** Students are often times seeking answers to their own questions. Are we giving them tools to discover the answers? Are we emphasizing higher level and critical thinking?
- \*\* Think of one lesson plan or activity that you have used or are going to use in your educational setting. Write out the activity, the purpose of the activity, and how you can (or did) incorporate higher level thinking processes for students. **Write a One page summary.**

## **THE COMMUNICATION BARRIER TO INSPIRATIONAL EDUCATION**

To tell you the importance of communication is like telling an accountant the importance of numbers. Though it may be obvious to all, it doesn't mean we are effective in our use of it.

The word communication comes from the Latin word *communis*, meaning "common." Effective communication allows for a commonality or a common ground of interaction. It does not mean agreement or support. But, it does imply a sense of connection and relationship.

Communication has three essential components: intellect, emotion, and volition (thought, feeling, and action). Whatever it is I want to communicate to another person involves ....something I know, something I feel, and something I'm doing.

If I know something thoroughly, feel it deeply, and am doing it consistently, communication is greatly enhanced. And, if I incorporate the concept of connection and engagement with my audience, the potential for communication is highly increased.

### **Increasing Connection with Others**

1) Preparation- the more confident you are of the material, the easier it will be to explain it to others. There needs to be a structure to your content. The package must be easily opened and understood. Prior to a lesson or presentation, are you confident of the success or concerned about the failure?

2) Presentation- there are some who have a vast amount of knowledge on a topic, are passionate about it, and are fully prepared...but, they are not skilled presenters. This is a key for educators. Do you enunciate clearly? Is your volume appropriate? Do you vary your pitch? Do you engage students with animation, action, and excitement?

I know many educators who say they feel comfortable talking with children, but get very nervous when talking with adults (colleagues, parents, etc). To be an inspirational educator, one must be comfortable with all age groups.

## GET OUT OF YOUR HEAD

*“Teaching that impacts is not head to head, but heart to heart.”*

As educators, we are cognitively oriented...what we learn, what we know, what we can repeat back. If we believe this is the basis of learning, we have a barrier to inspirational education. There is an essential relationship between teaching and learning. If a learner doesn't learn, we have not taught. Teaching is what you do; learning is what the students do.

Learning begins with the feeling level. People accept what they feel disposed to accept and they reject what they feel disposed to reject. Right? Some of you may be thinking of rejecting this...hold on for a little longer.

Before teaching a concept to someone, it is imperative to create an open door to their mind and heart. If they are curious and desirous of learning, teaching will be easier. I have frequently said, “Teaching is easy....if you have students who want to learn.”

It is not simply presenting the material, but finding a way to create an environment of excitement and anticipation for learning. Think back to the teacher you shared about earlier in this class—the one who impacted you. They got into your heart, into your emotions. This teacher found a way to connect with you at a feeling **and** cognitive level. If we minimize the concept of the heart, we will minimize inspirational teaching.

### BE A PERSON OF IMPACT

1. Know your students. The more you know personally about them, the easier to make personal applications in the school setting.
2. Earn the right to be heard. Credibility always precedes communication. Find a way to engage the students and they will be more open to learning.
3. Be willing to become vulnerable before your students. Be honest and open about your life. Naturally, we must be wise as to the extent of our self-disclosure, but don't be afraid to share of about our struggles and difficulties in life. Be real and they will be able to relate.

## **FAILURE TO MOTIVATE STUDENTS**

*“The number one problem in education today is the failure to motivate learners.”*

In education, we focus more on IQ (intelligence quotient) and not enough on the MQ (motivation quotient). Teaching tends to be most effective when the learner is properly motivated.

Ineffective Motivators: guilt, trickery/deceit, threats, punishment, external rewards without intrinsic value and understanding, withdrawal of attention or compassion, to name a few.

### **TWO TYPES OF MOTIVATION:**

External (extrinsic)—motivation from without. Stickers, stars, positive comments, smiles, pats on the back, etc.

Internal (intrinsic)—motivation from within. The person has an internal sense of success and positive regard.

External rewards are good and we should continue to use them with people. After all, who doesn't like positive recognition and a compliment about work or effort? However, if we don't tie this into internal motivation, the person depends upon others for their success and personal positive regard. When I hear someone say, “I don't believe in positive reinforcement/rewards because the child will end up only working when they get something”, I realize this person doesn't understand motivation and rewards. You see, none of us will “work” unless we get something. Often times, what we get is an internal sense of satisfaction, achievement, and accomplishment. We don't need the external because we have the internal. This is what we need to teach to children.

Instead of telling the child he/she did a good job, ask them what they think first. When the child says, “Do you like my picture?”—ask them what they think first. Begin to help children look within themselves for answers instead of getting them from others.

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Internal motivation may be taught in such a way to people that increases the likelihood that they will learn intrinsic tendencies. There are four basic phases that one may use to teach internal motivation to children.

Phase One: the Telling phase. Let the child know what you are teaching them and the importance of internal motivation. Give them examples of both types of motivation and differentiate the importance of both.

Phase Two: the Showing phase. You provide a clear model of understanding for the child. Use of videos, books, stories, or personal contact with people who have accomplished due to intrinsic motivation may assist the child in buying into this concept.

Phase Three: the Doing phase (Controlled). Practice external and internal motivation within a structured setting. Allow for success through practice and repetition.

Phase Four: the Doing phase (Uncontrolled). This is done through natural learning (at recess, in class, at home). If you can involve the parents in this process, it will transfer much quicker.

**ACTIVITY:** Make a list of the external motivators that you use in your personal setting and professional setting—

Personal:

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Professional:

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Think about yourself and all the internal motivators you use in life (I am happy, I like doing this, this is fun, etc). List several personal intrinsic statements you use in life.

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**\*\*\* ACTIVITY FOR ENGAGEMENT AND LEARNING (all grade levels)\*\*\***

*The following activity allows for brief physical activity, encourages following directions, listening skills, potential review of specific areas of teaching (depending on your choice of objects), and transition skills.*

**TOUCH IT ALL:**

Let the students know that at a given signal, they will need to go and touch, in order, a list of particular items. It is best if these are written out to visually remind them as they proceed through the activity. One little rule I use is that “students may not use another person as a touch item.”

Below is an example of a couple of routines you might use. Be creative and modify this as you see necessary. It is a lot of fun, takes about 30 seconds, but allows for an increase in attention for each student. The first time or two you do this, it may take another 30 to 45 seconds to get them to calm down and back on task. Once you have done it several times, you may be surprised how quickly they get back on task.

Example One: Touch 4 things that are spelled with at least five letters; touch 3 things that are recyclable, touch 2 things that have right angles; touch one thing that is soft. (They may touch words on posters, on the board, in a book, etc to accomplish the five letters. They may touch a bottle, paper, plastic item, etc for recyclable. The right angle may be the corner of a door, the wall, etc. and the soft item may be the carpet, their own clothing, clay, etc.)

Example Two: Touch 4 things that are blue; touch 3 things that are older than 10 years; touch 2 things that you can't lift on your own; and touch one thing that is considered edible. (They may touch colors of a book, clothing, wall, poster, etc. The three items may include walls of the school, not you (as they can't touch people) ☺, a book, etc. A desk or bookcase may be used for the lifting choice and a snack item, candy bar, or other food item may be used for food).

This quick, clever little way of engaging students has many benefits that will assist you toward inspirational teaching.



## **BURNED OUT—OR EVEN FEELING A BIT TOASTY?**

*A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.*—Henry Adams

Education is a stressful profession and can easily lead to a person feeling exhausted and emotionally empty. While the following guidelines are not a guarantee to prevent burnout, they will assist you in re-discovering your joy in education.

1. Foster Positivity- Watch your negative self-talk. Rephrase statements toward a positive approach. “There are too many demands to be successful in teaching” may be changed to “I need to prioritize the demands to help me successfully accomplish my goals.”
2. Create Realistic “To Do” Lists- You can overwhelm yourself with tasks that one may feel unsuccessful regardless of how much is accomplished. Use a daily list with no more than 3 to 5 priority tasks. You can have a list of secondary tasks for when you finish the priority tasks.
3. Accept That There Are Things You Cannot Change- What? Remember, you are in charge of your attitude. Change what you can control and let go of the rest.
4. Learn To Relax- Do you have a healthy exercise and relaxation program? It is important to have ways to unwind from stressful days and situations that don’t include drugs, alcohol, more work, and isolation.
5. Be Around Funny People- Not funny looking—funny as in laughing out loud. Laughter releases natural endorphins that bring release from stress in the world. Yes, laughter is indeed a good medicine.
6. Try Something New- Get out of your rut in both your professional and personal life. Take up a new hobby, teach in a fresh way, read a different genre of book, etc.
7. Leave Your Teaching At School- While this is not always possible, be careful of working each night or long hours after the students leave. Develop organizational habits that allow you to have free time each night.
8. Talk To Positive People- Surround yourself with upbeat, encouraging people who look at life in a bright perspective. Negativism is contagious.

**UNDERSTANDING  
INSPIRATIONAL  
EDUCATION**

## **THE TOP 10 REQUIREMENTS FOR GOOD TEACHING**

*(Adapted from an article by Richard LeBlanc)*

- ❖ GOOD TEACHING is as much about passion as it is about reason. It is about both motivating students to learn and teaching them how to learn. Good teaching is done in such a way that information is relevant, meaningful and memorable. One must convey the very passion that is within oneself—remembering that you can't give what you don't have.
- ❖ GOOD TEACHING is about training students to be consumers of knowledge. It is about learning new approaches, new ideas, and keeping current in the subject areas. It bridges the gap between theory and practice in a way to help students connect the classroom with the world.
- ❖ GOOD TEACHING is about listening, caring, questioning, being responsive, and remembering that children are all different. It is about respecting others and assisting each child to maximize their own abilities.
- ❖ GOOD TEACHING is about not always having a fixed agenda or lesson plan. It is about flexibility and creativity as well as experimentation, fluidity, and openness to new ideas. It is realizing that you may only cover 50% of what you expected in a given day, but it was a 100% success.
- ❖ GOOD TEACHING is about style. It is about being an effective presenter, knowing how to capture an audience, to work the room, to create a sense of anticipation. It is about being the conductor and the class is the orchestra. We must get all the instruments to play together and be in harmony.
- ❖ GOOD TEACHING is about humor. It is about not taking yourself too seriously. One must be self-deprecating and allow the humor to flow throughout the room without sarcasm and put downs. It is about “lightening the emotional load” that comes with school especially as one advances in years.
- ❖ GOOD TEACHING is about compassion, nurturing, and developing intrinsic value within each student. It is about devoting time and energy to every student, regardless of their attitude or academic input. It is also about the thankless (and often invisible) time one puts into grading, designing and redesigning material, and preparing strategies to enhance individual learning.

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❖ GOOD TEACHING is accompanied by strong, visionary leadership. One must be inspiring and exciting to capture the hearts of each child. It is reinforced by strong morals and role model actions by each educator. Granted, we are all human and make mistakes. However, children are like sponges and will soak up bad attitudes, negative comments, sarcastic demeanors, and worn out approaches in life.

❖ GOOD TEACHING is about mentoring others and building an atmosphere of teamwork. It is assisting one's peers toward success and giving of your knowledge and perspective to increase the success of others. If you are an itinerant, moving from building to building, are you taking time to help others understand your role? As a therapist, are you helping teachers practice continuity of services within their setting?

❖ GOOD TEACHING is about having fun, experiencing the pleasure of working with children, connecting with personalities, and believing for growth and change. It is feeling the passion for each life and the possibilities within each student. It is not taking things personally and becoming too discouraged to reach out and impact students. It is about the former student who says your course or your attitude changed her life. It is about a student looking forward to having you in the coming year because he heard about your classroom. Good teachers practice their craft because they enjoy and love working with children. Good teachers choose to teach because they can't imagine doing anything else.

*“I touch the future---I teach.”* Christa McAuliffe

### **THE ATTRIBUTES OF INSPIRATIONAL EDUCATION**

*(You will use this section for the foundation of the next activity—found after these pages on p. 31).*

BE: Different, loving, helpful, understanding, patient, humorous, kind, respectful, fair, just, personable, consistent, flexible...

Add your own words to this list \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **STEPS TO SUCCESS**

1. **Have Empathy.** Creating empathy is about bonding with your students. Get on the same wavelength with them. (As a former middle school teacher, this can get scary). Get to know their emotions and feelings. Young people (preschool-high school) are easily stressed and scared of the future. They are under great pressure from inside and outside the school. All the educator might see is anger, aggression, refusal, bad attitudes, or impatience. Search for the real person underneath the feelings and find a way to open the student up. Be real, be supportive, and above all, listen to them.

2. **Develop a Positive Mental Attitude.** Working with young people with attitudinal and behavioral challenges can be exhausting and create stresses for adults (parents and educators specifically). It is important to keep a perspective and remember you were young once too—really! Keep a smile on the face and see the bright side of things (the school year will end eventually). Your attitude is contagious and your approach will either bring light to the school or cast a shadow. It is your call.

3. **‘Grow’ Your Verbal Skills.** An effective teacher needs to be a strong orator. Those who can conjure up exciting images, create interesting scenarios, and capture the imagination of the student motivate and focus students toward success. ‘Just talking to them’ means using passion, emotion, great eye contact, animated body language, voice inflection and modulation. Talk with conviction and sincerity. Believe in what you say and show enthusiasm toward learning.

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4. **Show Respect.** This can be a challenge when it is not reciprocated by students. Avoid the attitude of “show me respect and I will show you respect.” What if the student is feeling the same way? Who goes first? Just be a person of respect regardless of the situation. Talk to them as if they are the most important person in the world. An inspirational teacher knows that each person they come in contact with during the day needs encouragement, support, and respect. The law of reciprocity (you reap what you sow) will ensure that the respect you give you give out will come back to you at some point.

5. **Remember That Your Students Are Individuals.** Get to know their personal sides. What do they enjoy in life? Find out their likes and dislikes. Avoid universal rewards and consequences as each child is different. Use various teaching styles and strategies in each lesson. Have options for students whenever possible. Do not judge them, do not formulate pre-conceived thoughts based on gossip or statements from others, and do not limit them. Allow for creativity and higher level thinking—outside the box. Look for deeper meaning and emotions behind actions and comments. Minimize frustration, anger, and impatience as they yield minimal fruit in a relationship.

6. **Know That Teaching is a Noble Profession.** Regardless of newspapers, internet, politicians, community groups, and other vocal sources, educators are doing an amazing job in day and age. Is there room for improvement? Of course. Are there some rogue educators that should be banished from the profession? You bet. Does the educational setting need to be re-evaluated and modified? Without a doubt. However, the day a teacher realizes that he/she has been given a great gift—the power to change lives, is the day an inspirational educator is born. You have a choice either to believe you are a mediocre educator providing a boring approach (teaching, therapy, counseling) or you are a human being helping younger human beings to move toward a greater potential in life and make a positive mark on the world.

## INSPIRATIONAL EDUCATOR ASSIGNMENT

1. Ask a child or student about “characteristics of an inspiring or exciting educator.” Ask them to share 3 to 5 words that describe this type of educator. Write words out for this activity.

2. Ask another adult the same question as above. Follow the same procedure.

How do these words compare with your list of words?

- Share, in a couple of sentences, similarities or differences of the lists. **One paragraph.**
  
- Using the guidelines written out on the previous pages (p. 29-30, Attributes of Inspirational Education), write a **1-2 paragraph** analysis comparing and contrasting yourself to those attributes.

### **ACTIVITY FOR ENGAGEMENT AND LEARNING (all grade levels)**

The following activity will assist children in the areas of memory/recall, paying attention, focusing on details, translating information from the brain to paper, and increasing transition skills. It will take about one minute of time and may be done on a regular basis. I have used this when I found the class slipping away during a teaching time (not that this ever happens to you). When I was a social worker, it would help re-focus a child during counseling sessions, group times, or to start off with personal connections with the student.

#### **PAY ATTENTION:**

Each student should have something to write with and a piece of paper. Have the students look around the room (or whatever setting you are in) for about 30 seconds. Then, have them look only at the paper and pencil on their desk—they are not to raise their eyes up.

Ask them some questions about the room (about four or five questions is plenty)—what color is the back wall painted, what time is on the clock, whose name is written on the corner of the board (you can put this up at some point-doesn't need to be a student name), does your shirt have a collar, what is the name of the student sitting in the upper right hand corner of the room, etc.?

If you work with younger students and they don't write yet, you can ask a question and have them think it in their head. Perhaps you have them put their head down on the desk. Have them raise a hand if they know the answer (keeping their heads down). This will re-focus the energy and gain you another 5 to 10 minutes of attention from the students. You may be surprised how even the most resistant students are now drawn back into the general classroom environment with this type of activity.

Give it a try and see if you don't find results and increase their attention span.



## SO....WHAT MAKES A GREAT EDUCATOR?

**1. RESPECT-** in a school or classroom, each person's ideas and opinions are valued. Students feel safe to express their feelings and learn to listen to others. It is important to have a "welcoming" environment. If a student's comments are negative or sarcastic, find a place to encourage their individualism without putting them down. (Student)- "this stuff doesn't make sense and is a waste of time." [AVOID: "if you were more serious perhaps your grades would be better" or "please refrain from comments that are not constructive", etc]. A respectful and encouraging reply might be "You sound frustrated. Thanks for sharing. I would be glad to help you with that question once we finish this section. Thank you." This validates the student without encouraging more comments

**2. BELONGING-** a classroom or school setting should feel supportive, collaborative, and safe. Guidelines and rules allow for students to risk without the fear of negative comments, put downs, or laughter. A great educator clearly sets the tone for a safe, positive milieu.

**3. WARMTH-** other words for educator characteristics might be caring, enthusiastic, creative, fun, accessible, kind, to name a few. Good listening skills are at the forefront of education as each student should sense that the adults have time for him/her.

**4. LOVE OF LEARNING-** a truly outstanding educator shows a desire to grow and mature in life. Students should sense the love for learning and willingness to gain more knowledge. If they see the educator as a "know it all," "going through the motion," or "teaching by rote", students will respond at minimal effort levels.

**5. HIGH EXPECTATIONS-** whether you teach a basic skills class, advanced placement, a wide range of academic levels, or individual therapy sessions (OT, PT, SLP), the student should be asked to take one step beyond what they think they can do in life. Through encouragement and guidance, their attempts are the learning keys, not whether they accomplish the task.

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*“My teacher thought I was smarter than I was, so I was.”*

**6. FLEXIBILITY-** a strong educator is able to shift gears without being frustrated or impatient. If a lesson isn't working, go to plan “B.” For those that are thinking, ‘what is plan B?’—this is a problem. We need to have the ability to change directions and approaches with seamless effort. If you are one that must follow a rigid guideline or else you get flustered, it will prevent you from areas of success within your field.

**7. COLLABORATION-** connecting with colleagues on an ongoing basis is a key to balance within the educational setting. A confident educator gets ideas from others, bounces interventions and approaches off colleagues, and is willing to receive feedback from others.

**8. LEADERSHIP-** shared decision making, teamwork, and community building is a foundation for a skilled educator. Being a great educator means you can guide and lead the students toward a direction with minimal arguments and resistance. The goal: to provide opportunities for each of them to assume personal leadership and gain a sense of self-management within their lives.

While teaching is a gift that comes naturally to some, others have to work hard to feel comfortable in their situations. Both types of people can excel in education just as both types can move toward mediocrity. What about you? Which direction are you moving?

## A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Carla was a sixth grade student I had one year. She was the 5<sup>th</sup> child in the family that had gone through this school (and to most educators' relief, the last one). This was an under-organized family – a delicate way of saying somewhat dysfunctional. Carla's parents were loud, defensive, and regularly blamed the school for the lack of progress in their children. Naturally, I was thrilled to have her in my class 😊.

As was part of my process, I regularly called every parent during the first week of school. I believed (and still do) that making a positive call sets a nice tone for the year. They are 30 second calls and intended to introduce myself and let the parent(s) know that I am excited for the school year.

When I called Carla's home, her father answered the phone. The conversation went as follows:

Parent: “Yeah” [*my thoughts—“oh boy, is this going to be fun?”*]

“Hello Mr. Thomas, this is Mike Sedler and I am Carla's 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher.”

“Yeah” [*quite a wide vocabulary, right?*]

“I am just calling to let you know how much I am looking forward to having Carla in my class.” (Interruption)

“Yeah? Just wait until you get to know her.”

*[At this point, I was a bit shocked and surprised. Here I was attempting to encourage this parent and he was slamming his daughter. My final response was]:*

“I am looking forward to that Mr. Thomas. If there are any issues I will let you know, but I am expecting great things from your daughter. Thanks and have a great night.”

While I waited for some explosion from Carla or her father, there was nothing significant. While Carla had some typical 6<sup>th</sup> grade issues (and a few more), they were generally handled within the classroom. When I did meet the family—no, not at open house or conferences, they were no shows—I had a pleasant conversation. (Carla was absent one day and I took her homework to the house—I wanted to meet the family face to face. I also took a few minutes for a quick parent/teacher conference on the porch of their house).

Carla had a good year with minimal problems. In fact, except for the time she got upset with another student and dropped a few “F-bombs”, my memory of her negative behavior is blank. However, I remember Carla well as she needed frequent encouragement, guidance, and support.

It was five years later that I heard again about Carla. I received a letter in the mail from a local alternative school. Inside was a note from a teacher and another letter written by Carla. The teacher informed me that Carla was asked to write a letter to an educator in her life that made a difference. I was the recipient of such a letter. Let me quote it to you...as I still have it in my file. I will write it out as she did—mis-spelled words and all.

*Dear Mr. Sedler,*

*Thank you for being such a grate teacher. You were funny, friendly and I could trust you. I will always remeber how you cared about me and were nice. You said I could do it and you helped me do it. Thanks for being there and you are my favrite teacher.*

*Love, Carla*

(I guess I could have worked a little harder on spelling, yeah?)

Carla is one student that I appeared to have an inspirational impact on in her life. I sometimes wonder how many students I missed or overlooked. No, we can't be all things to all people-- but, honestly, I want to be. I treasure Carla's kind words as it reminds me that at least on one occasion I hit a bull's-eye on the target.

## Inspiring Your Students by Being You by Roseanne Liesveld

It seems like long ago that I had visions of being a teacher and what that looked like. The picture of what I was hoping to become as a teacher came from many different places. As a student, my best teachers were always models of what I wanted to become. My mother was a teacher, so in some ways, I spent my life emulating her. And of course there were teachers from movies or books that enticed me to envision myself as one of them.

The truth is, when I finally did become a teacher, I realized that as hard as I tried, I could not really be exactly like those models, great as they were. I taught in ways that were most natural to me, understanding that I needed to make adjustments for each student's uniqueness. After some trial and error, I became more comfortable in my own skin as a teacher, but I always felt like I had never quite reached the apex of success when I didn't "look" like other teachers I had known.

It wasn't until I learned about the concept of strengths and talents that I realized how I could become the best teacher I could be and how successful teachers were able to have the effect they did on their students' lives.

Teachers who make a difference with students seem to be more aware of their innate strengths.

When teachers learn to teach using their innate talents and strengths, it is like Independence Day for them. They finally feel what it is like to be in the zone, and they can teach powerfully, with authenticity, and with the joy that keeps them focused and engaged. Rather than wasting time trying to be like someone else, a strengths-based teacher can use her own talents to develop strengths that will take her to greatness.

But how can you figure out your natural talents to hone your strengths? There are five clues to talent that help you develop your strengths:

**1. Yearnings** reveal the presence of a powerful talent, particularly when they are felt early in life. A yearning can be described as an internal force, an almost magnetic attraction that leads you to a particular activity or environment time and again.

**2. Rapid learning** reveals other traces of talent in the context of a new challenge or environment. The speed at which you anticipate the steps of an activity, acquire a new skill, or gain new knowledge is a telltale clue to the talent's presence and power.

**3. Flow** happens when you become so engrossed in an activity that you lose track of time. It may be because the activity engages you at a deep, natural level — the level of great talent. The activity may be new, but you instinctively know what comes next.

**4. Satisfaction** is felt during those experiences where the emotional and psychological rewards are great. Typically, these are the activities you get a kick out of doing. Satisfaction is not merely a momentary pleasure; it forms your intrinsic motivation.

**5. Glimpses of excellence** are flashes of outstanding performance that you or others have observed. In these moments, the task has tapped into some of your greatest talents and directly displayed your potential for strength.

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The following example will help clarify how one might use a particular strength as a teacher. Let's say you have the Futuristic strength, but you are not sure how that works day to day in the classroom as a teacher. You are always asking yourself, "Wouldn't it be great if. . . ." You are the kind of person who loves to peer over the horizon. The future fascinates you. As if it were projected on the wall, you see in detail what the future might hold, and this vision pulls you forward into tomorrow. While the exact content of your vision will depend on your other strengths and interests, you are certain to energize others by helping them see your vision of the future. Often students need pictures that can raise their sights and thereby their spirits. You can paint a picture of the future for those students — one that they would not always see themselves. The inspiration you provide from describing a better tomorrow can catapult a student onto a completely new motivational path.

As a teacher with a Futuristic strength, I recently asked a student to find a box — any ordinary box — and put her best in it from school, work, or just notes about things she has accomplished or is proud to have done. I told her that one day — maybe five years from now — she could open that box and look at all those tokens that paved the way for her future. She loved the idea and now tucks away all of the best of herself into that ordinary shoebox. And when she opens that box, she will look at the contents and understand that they were the building blocks for her life as a successful and happy adult.

Teachers who make a difference with students seem to be more aware of their innate strengths. Teachers who are not naturally in tune with their strengths may benefit greatly from assessing them. What they might learn is that their most effective teaching styles will be largely defined by who they are and what they do most naturally. And, these teachers will find that the more they work from a strengths-based approach, the more engaged they will be in the classroom. Gallup's research on engagement has found powerful linkages between strengths, engagement, and outcomes — not the least of which is the outcome of student engagement.

Our complex world asks more of teachers now. Every day, I read more about teachers who are not engaged in their work. When people use their strengths at work, their likelihood of being engaged significantly increases. This is why it is important for teachers to be aware of their strengths. Awareness, however, is just one small step. You should always take time to create a deeper awareness of your strengths and then apply those strengths so that your brand of teaching becomes one that not only sustains you, but also has a significant effect on your students.

We all know that teachers who used their strengths made the greatest difference in our lives by allowing us to use our own unique strengths and talents. Those teachers understood us, who we were, what was important to us, and what made us different. They celebrated our strengths. Those teachers gave us opportunities to learn and grow, and they recognized and celebrated our successes.

If we know that the teachers who made the most difference in our lives were those who allowed us to soar with our strengths, then why would we not want to do the same in our classrooms? We need to use our unique set of strengths to be sure that every student learns and grows every day and feels like a real human being.

# INSPIRATIONAL EDUCATION AND MOTIVATION

*Care more than others think you should*

*Risk more than others think is wise*

*Dream more than others think is practical*

*Expect more than others think is possible*

*Work more than others think is necessary*

*“To be successful is to achieve an objective. But, to be a success is always to have yet another objective in mind after you have achieved the last one.”*

## **GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF MOTIVATION**

The following basic principles are intended to help guide you as we impact students in our schools. We already discussed aspects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in an earlier section. You may want to go back and refresh your memory regarding those key concepts.

- ▽ **The environment can be used to focus the student’s attention on what needs to be learned.** Teachers who create warm and accepting yet business-like atmospheres will promote persistent efforts and favorable attitudes toward learning. This does not mean you can’t have fun, be activity oriented, and enjoy your time of learning. It does mean that students understand that within the context of your teaching style, there is a serious educator who yearns for them to grow and mature in their learning. Use of interesting visual aids, books, posters, equipment, stories, music, etc. will all assist in motivating and capturing the attention and curiosity of the students.
- ▽ **Incentives motivate learning.** Incentives include privileges, praise, recognition, and personal support from the educator. The instructor may use many external motivators while teaching and training the students to understand and gain internal structure and confidence. In general, self-motivation without rewards will not work for most children. They have not learned and grasped the concepts of the internal locus of control. Eventually they will gain personal satisfaction with less external motivations.
- ▽ **Internal motivation is longer lasting and more self-directive than is external motivation.** As stated earlier, some children have little capacity for internal motivation and need guidance in learning this area. The use of incentives is based on the principle that learning occurs more effectively when the student experiences feelings of satisfaction. Of course, caution should be used to minimize external rewards when not necessary as it could interfere with developing internal motivation.
- ▽ **Learning is most effective when an individual is ready to learn, that is when one wants to know something.** Sometimes the student’s readiness to learn comes with time, and the instructor’s role is to encourage development. If a desired change in behavior is urgent (like it is driving you crazy), greater guidance and incentives may be needed to assist in the change. This is also a time to collaborate with others to gain new and fresh ideas. And no, this is not a time to see activate your real estate license and see about the family moving to another



district. If a student is not ready to learn, he or she may not be reliable in following guidance or responding to reinforcement. The more general sources that share a similar focus, the greater the chance of generalization for the student. You may also need to change up the reinforcements and offer a variety of incentives. However, remember that there are seasons of learning in every person and, as frustrating as it may be, a student may simply not be ready or refuse to learn at this current time. Don't lose hope and don't back down. Keep your emotions in check and don't take it personal. Be willing to outlast their "season" of life and help them be available for learning.

- ∇ **Motivation is enhanced by the way in which the instructional material is organized and presented.** Regardless of how exciting the information may be, if we are not effective presenters it will interfere with the learning process. In general, the best organized material makes the information meaningful to the individual. And, at the risk of repeating information, the presenter must show characteristics of enthusiasm, compassion, caring and show solid listening skills.

None of the techniques will produce sustained motivation unless the goals are pertinent and realistic to the learner. Think about students or children you have worked with in the past. What methods have you found that produce the greatest motivation and desire to learn? Put your thoughts down on paper and write a short paragraph of these areas.

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## **SEVEN SIMPLE RULES FOR MOTIVATING STUDENTS**

*“There are some students who will learn despite their teachers. There are some students who refuse to learn regardless of what their teachers do.”*

It is difficult to facilitate motivation within some students. Children go through seasons of learning (partly due to maturation, stages of development, life issues, etc). During a particular week, month, or sadly, even a year, a student may be resistant to learning. However, if we are persistent in our educational settings and continue to provide inspirational teachings, I believe the barriers will come down and we will gain access to the child’s heart and mind.

The following ideas are not original or intended to generate an epiphany within you. They may be reminders or guidelines for your educational settings. More importantly, you may remember some basic strategies you “used to use” and for some reason stopped utilizing.

Rule 1: Emphasize the most critical concepts continually and positively. Reiterate these ideas in lectures, assignments, and activities. Include questions about these concepts on tests and in discussions. Find a way to constantly reward students for understanding these concepts. For example, do you continually emphasize your rules in a rewarding way? Do you continually teach social skills in a rewarding way? Is academic knowledge only rewarded on tests and for certain students (those who know the right answer)?

Rule 2: Use a variety of teaching methods when sharing concepts. By using visual aids, engagement physical activities, and emphasizing productive listening tendencies, children will gain in their quest for knowledge. We all learn differently and need a variety of approaches. Too often, as children get older, we lose the variety of approaches and focus more on lecture, paper/pencil tasks, and discussions.

Rule 3: Teach concepts of fact and opinion. Help each child to understand logic and critical thinking. When they have an opinion, help them to see that it may have a basis in logic and fact or it might be solely based upon our emotions and experiences. I find this will reduce power struggles and students attempting to “force” an opinion on others.

Personal Experience—I was teaching these very concepts to my 6<sup>th</sup> grade class. We had many lively discussions and I found even the most argumentative students were beginning to be able to distinguish their personal opinion from fact. Often times a statement was prefaced with “In my opinion...”. This made the rest of the statement

easier to handle (such as... “I find this class boring.”) One day the class was exceptionally noisy and I became frustrated. My voice rose above the clamor and I emphatically said, “Quiet down. You are way too noisy.” From the back of the class, from my most rambunctious student, came the cry, “Opinion.” We all had a good laugh and I had to give him “a thumbs up” for being correct.

Rule 4: Use activities to reinforce concepts. I know this has been mentioned several times, but I want to re-iterate the importance of this area. Allow the students to put the concepts into action by completing some type of short in-class activity. It does not need to be graded or commented on—it is simply to reinforce current learning. (See the next page for a sample activity).

Rule 5: Help the child create a “link” when teaching new concepts. If the student can “link” the new material or idea to something already learned or experienced, the odds of learning the material are greatly increased. Another way of saying this is to make it practical or apply it to real life. Generalize it to their personal settings outside of the classroom and a light bulb may go on for them.

Rule 6: Use pertinent examples by bringing in outside resources. I have found that using videos, stories, music, speakers, art, or other resources will enhance the desire to learn and increase the retention of the information. I remember teaching history to 8<sup>th</sup> graders and discussing the Civil Rights Movement. This was far removed from them and difficult to fully comprehend. I asked a fellow teacher, an African American woman who grew up in the south, to speak to my class. It was one of the most powerful examples they could have seen or heard.

Rule 7: Hold the students to a standard of excellence equal to their ability and age. Be careful to not have expectations beyond their scope of maturity, intelligence, or development. I have seen first grade teachers upset because a child daydreams, doesn't listen all the time, or wants to play instead of learn. How surprising for a 6 year old? (written with a bit of sarcasm—sorry). Yes, press the students forward and toward a high standard, but be cautious to keep the expectations reasonable.

## **MORE ACTIVITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT AND LEARNING (all grade level)**

There are many ways to reinforce learning through learning games. Games are a common way to assist the child. Some take longer than others, some are meant for group involvement, and some involve student interactions.

**Jeopardy**—like the television show, the teacher states the answer and the student must come up with the accurate question. I like this because there may not be one “right question” to come up with your answer. It promotes independent thinking and creativity. You may also put students in a group so they can work together.

**Bingo**—asking a question and their card has various answers. The student must match your question with the answer on their card. This does take a little preparation time for the educator. However, with older students, they can make up the cards and questions. For example, have each student come up with three questions and answers. The educator just needs to put them together (or ask students). When I taught middle school, I was involved with three subjects. When students in my math class finished work, I might have them put together a teaching game for my English class (based on information I gave them). This was not a waste of time as they were in someone else’s English class and it helped teach them skills for another class—you are welcome!!

**Fact Or Fiction**—one of my favorites. I would put up information about the topic we have been discussing and they students would need to decide if the information was real or not. For example, “Abraham Lincoln supported the Union Army.” Fact or Fiction. “The term ‘staccato’ refers to quarter and half notes.” “Gravity only impacts something on Earth.” “The term ‘metamorphosis’ may refer to changes in plants, rocks, or people.” As you can see, this allows for a multitude of subject areas and topics. It is a fun review game. Students can answer aloud or on paper.

**Turn to Your Neighbor**- this is a quick interactive activity. After a brief lecture/discussion, have each student think of one fact you have discussed and share with a neighbor. “Think of one piece of information I shared about, keep it in your head. When I say go, share this with two people. Take turns. I will give you one minute...ready, Go!”

**Simon Says (or in my class ‘Mikey Says’)**- this age old game can be used to review topics. They were only to follow instructions when I say ‘Mikey Says.’ For example- “Mikey says- yell out a noun.” “Yell out a verb” (oops, Mikey didn’t say). “Spell ‘happiness’ to your neighbor” (oops). “Mikey says- yell out how much is  $7 \times 6$ .” “ $8 \times 3$ ” (oops). Get the picture. It is quick and easy, gets them active, but teaches a short review. It may take 30 seconds, but if you do this 4 times in an hour—you now have four quick reviews.

These are but a few ideas that one may use to engage students and reinforce learning. Once again, pick one or two out and give it a go.

**Becoming A Self-Manager**  
**Assisting in Intrinsic Learning and Motivation**  
(To be used with Assignment #5)

By now, you are getting a pretty good sense that each child will be open to greater learning when they are activated within the school setting. The more we empower them in their learning, the more excited they will be for knowledge. Inspirational educators facilitate learning and create an atmosphere of enthusiasm and excitement. The following ideas help students to be more involved in their own learning while freeing up the educator to actually “teach”. Whoo Hoo.

- Have students collect and pass out papers. This frees you up for classroom management and preparation for the upcoming task.
- If you have younger students gather on the carpet or rug, have something for them to do until everyone gets there. (Look at books, do an activity game, practice skills-with a reward). This will reduce problems if it takes a minute or more for all to sit down and be ready.
- Use of music as a warning for transition times. It can be as long or as short as you prefer. It may be used during clean up time, line up time, transitions from one project to the next. And yes, you can have the students control the music. Many times, I let them bring in their own music (but I approve the music and the lyrics must be brought in as well).
- Have an opening task or activity when students walk into the room. Avoid letting them sit for minutes at a time waiting for you to begin class. Get them involved immediately.
- Make a list of activities or tasks the children can do when they have free time (after assignments completed, before class starts, etc). They can help you develop this list (read, draw, write, talk quietly to neighbor, work on another assignment, help others).
- The previous one on the list above is important. I teach students how to assist other students. They love to be a helper and it teaches excellent social skills, communication skills as well as reinforces learning. They learn to manage their time, behavior, and own work so they can be a part of my ‘helper program.’
- Allow children to work in groups. I find that short, quick tasks help to teach the necessary skills for longer assignments. The longer time frame they get to “work together”, the greater the chance for disruption. Keep it short, keep it simple. Teach the skills by practicing them over the course of weeks and months. Slowly, lengthen out the time. This is true for all grade levels.
- Have a cue for gaining their attention. Some people use “turning the lights off/on”, “ringing of a bell”, “clapping of hands”, etc. These are fine, but I prefer something that is quieter and will generalize to all settings. It is hard to turn on the lights outside. Ringing a bell must be very loud if in the cafeteria. I use a quick, short phrase. For me, I used “timeout.” I have other colleagues that use “freeze,” “Stop, Look, Listen”, “Eyes and Ears,” “Shut Up” (just kidding). The class must be taught what to do when they hear this phrase. Practice it and reward success. Use it in various settings until they become comfortable with it.

(Continued on next page)

- Be sure to tie a behavior to all praise. Avoid statements like “good job,” “I like the way you are sitting,” or “Group two is ready” as these are not specific enough. Attach specific behaviors and actions to maximize internal learning. “Good job at standing in line with your hands to yourself” or “I like you sitting with your desk cleaned off and your hands being quiet” or “Group two has their eyes on me, their mouths quiet, and body posture ready to line up.”
- I prefer having students get help from one another (if they can) before they get help from me. This teaches them to initiate help with peers (which many feel more comfortable with), to think about their needs before asking an adult, and also teaches a process for gaining assistance. Some teachers may call it “Ask 3 before me”, although I think one or two is sufficient. Be sure they understand what they may ask assistance for with peers and when they should ask you. For example, if there is a problem between two students, they should get assistance from an adult.
- The use of “study buddies” can be a great way to teach internal or intrinsic motivation. Students are connected with two or three others and these are people they can go to for academic assistance, questions about an assignment or class rule, or to obtain information about assignments missed (due to absences) or missed instructions (because they were talking). As they get a little older, I encourage them to share phone numbers to get help at night if they forgot the instructions for homework, what was the homework, or any other types of questions. They can choose their buddies or you can assign them (I prefer assigning). I change them every couple of months. These aren’t the only people they can contact for help, but if they come to me—it is the first thing I ask about – “have you asked your study buddies?”
- Be available for students and for assistance. Do you have office hours before school, after school, during school? This will depend upon the grade level you teach, extra-curricular activities for you, whether the school has a large bus population, etc. I usually gave out my home phone number (land line) which is not unlisted. This is just me and am not saying you should do this as well. In fact, I know many peers that I would suggest not doing this because of the teaching environment and population.
- Develop as many routines, rituals, and formats as possible. The more they can function on their own, the more internal confidence they will have and therefore increase their personal independence and self-esteem.

**ACTIVITY--** Make a list of areas that you provide in your educational setting that promote self-management and intrinsic learning.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

**Share your list with another educator and get ideas from that person. Write a 2 page summary of your ideas.**

## **DEVELOPING A POSITIVE CLASSROOM CLIMATE**

1. **RECOGNIZE** individual differences. Educators need to be sensitive to differences in learning styles, in social skills, in cultural backgrounds, in cognitive abilities and should accommodate for these differences. Students are much more likely to participate actively in learning activities when they know that their teacher has carefully considered their needs.

*During the first days of school (or whenever you are reading this), let your students know that you recognize differences in each of them. You will be fair with each of them, but they may not get treated the same. Those with a need for assistance will get it from you. Those with a need for guidance will receive that as well. Each student will be given a fair amount of your time and energy based on the needs of the moment.*

2. **LEARN** the students’ names. The sooner you know all the names of your students, the sooner they will feel they are a part of the community.

*Ask the students to introduce themselves and then have them say the names of their peers. This will give you a chance to remember students as well. If necessary, write a few notes about a student to remind you of their names. I would also go around the room each day and say their names (either aloud or silently). If I was stumped, just admit it (or look at the seating chart).*

3. **SET** up the classroom so it is conducive to learning. Whether you use groups, rows, pods, tables, or some other way of arranging the seating of students, the important thing is to make sure it will work for your teaching style. If you like to have them interact and engage one another—which I hope you all do after taking this class—rows may be creating barriers for you.

*Feel free to change the seating arrangement regularly. We have convince ourselves that we need consistency and that changing the seating for students creates behavior problems and chaos in their lives. I believe the opposite is true. By frequently changing things up, it encourages flexibility, creativity, and teaches children to be able to transition more successfully.*

4. **BE** available as often as possible (before, during, and after school). This will allow students to access you more often and to allow you to connect with them for academic and emotional support.

*If you are involved in extra-curricular activities, after school may not work for you. If you have to take your own children to daycare or school, you may not get to school very early. Make this work for you. I would use my prep times, lunch time, or any other free time to be available to students. The more available I was to them, the less excuses they had about “not understanding” something.*

5. **START** when you are ready and end when you are ready. Don’t let the bell, clock, announcements, or any other artificial method be used to control the classroom. Be in charge.

(continued on next page)

*I let students know that the bell was a reminder to me that I could get ready to dismiss class. They were not to leave, get up, or put things away without my cue. I wanted them to respond to me, not the clock or bell.*

6. BE on time. Start on time and end on time. The more prepared you are to begin class, the sooner they will pay attention. We have all had those classes that start late and we naturally are slow to respond to the class.

*Use of a day starter activity will assist in getting the class started on time. If ending is difficult for you, have a student be a time keeper and a person who can remind you when it is 10 minutes prior to class ending. I guarantee the students know when it is time to leave.*

7. TEACH positive actions. Don't set up an environment where students learn behaviors from students. Be proactive and teach appropriate expectations and social skills, how to have a discussion, how to treat others, etc. Avoid falling into the trap of thinking they already have these skills, regardless of age.

*I use a model that I call "Tell-Show-Practice." I tell them my expectations, I show them (or have them model it with me), then we practice (over and over again).*

8. USE positive reinforcement. Whether you have a specific reward program in the classroom or you are intentional about praise and recognition, it is imperative to have an external reinforcement system in place.

*We have talked a lot about intrinsic or internal rewards, but the external are just as important. It reminds each child what it feels like to be recognized and appreciated. The warm feeling one gets from rewards encourages a desire to receive it more often.*



## **AND MORE ACTIVITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT AND LEARNING**

1. **End of the day** – give the students 60 seconds to clean up the floor, straighten books, etc. In your mind, choose one specific area that you have designated as the “special area.” At the end of the time, have a reward for the person(s) who cleaned up the selected area.

2. **Hand Math**- another favorite as it is active, quick, and teaches many skills. Have two students face each other and put their hands behind their backs. On each hand, they are to put out their digits from zero (a fist) to five (all fingers plus thumb). Keep them behind their back. The teacher will then say an operation (subtraction, addition) which is the signal to put out both hands. The other person must perform the operation on their partners hand and say the answer before their partner gives the answer for their hands. For example, if I put out both hands (one with two fingers and the other with 4 fingers) and my partners has 1 finger on one hand and 3 on the other, and the operation is multiplication, my partner would yell “8.” Of course, I am trying to figure out their fingers and the answer faster and would yell “3.” This is great for all students as it encourages math facts.

3. **Pick a skill**- during an independent seat work time, let your students know you will be doing a “walk about.” As you wander around the room, helping students and looking at their work, you will also be looking for specific skills to be demonstrated (nice hand writing, looking up information from the book, asking questions appropriately, helping another student appropriately, not being distracted by others, etc.). These are just examples and you can make your own large list of possibilities. Choose a couple to focus on each time. Write out how many times you see the selected skill. One additional idea is to tell them you have chosen 2 students who you are specifically looking for these skills. Do not tell them the students—this is just for you. You can keep track each time and make a target number for rewards (10 identified skills in a week) or each day (3 skills each walk).

Are you tired of using these or are you up for some different approaches?

## INSPIRATIONAL MOVIE LIST

Here are some movies that are considered inspirational by critics, fans, and the general public. Some of these are many years old while others rather new. Because they are on the list does not constitute an endorsement as much as recognition of the popularity of the movie.

**ASSIGNMENT: Take some time and watch a movie or two. Enjoy.**

Inspiration is timeless whether it is Vince Lombardi, Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi, Mother Teresa, or the person next door. Feel free to add your own inspirational movies to this list.

- ☐ Akeelah and the Bee
- ☐ Avatar
- ☐ Blackboard Jungle
- ☐ Braveheart
- ☐ Coach Carter
- ☐ Dangerous Minds
- ☐ Dead Poets Society
- ☐ Detachment
- ☐ Drumline
- ☐ Finding Forrester
- ☐ Freedom Writers
- ☐ Good Will Hunting
- ☐ Goodbye Mr. Chips
- ☐ Half Nelson
- ☐ Here Comes the Boom
- ☐ Hunky Dory
- ☐ It's a Wonderful Life
- ☐ Lean on Me
- ☐ Madame Sousatzka
- ☐ Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street
- ☐ Mona Lisa Smile

- Mr. Holland's Opus
- Music of the Heart
- Only the Strong
- Precious
- Remember the Titans
- Renaissance Man
- Rocky
- Saving Private Ryan
- Schindler's List
- School of Rock
- Sister Act
- Small Voices
- Stand and Deliver
- Take the Lead
- The Class
- The Emperor's Club
- The Great Debaters
- The Karate Kid
- The Man Without a Face
- The Miracle Worker
- The Paper Chase
- To Be and to Have
- To Kill A Mockingbird
- To Sir With Love
- Up the Down Staircase
- Vision Quest
- Won't Back Down

## **21 Simple Ideas To Improve Student Motivation by Teach Thought On Line**

**(To be used with Assignment #4. Read article and write summary)**

The best lessons, books, and materials in the world won't get students excited about learning and willing to work hard if they're not motivated.

Motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, is a key factor in the success of students at all stages of their education, and teachers can play a pivotal role in providing and encouraging that motivation in their students. Of course that's much easier said than done, as all students are motivated differently and it takes time and a lot of effort to learn to get a classroom full of kids enthusiastic about learning, working hard, and pushing themselves to excel.

Even the most well-intentioned and educated teachers sometimes lack the skills to keep kids on track, so whether you're a new teacher or an experienced one, try using these methods to motivate your students and to encourage them to live up to their true potential.

### **21 Simple Ideas To Improve Student Motivation**

1. **Give students a sense of control.** While guidance from a teacher is important to keeping kids on task and motivated, allowing students to have some choice and control over what happens in the classroom is actually one of the best ways to keep them engaged. For example, allowing students to choose the type of assignment they do or which problems to work on can give them a sense of control that may just motivate them to do more.
2. **Define the objectives.** It can be very frustrating for students to complete an assignment or even to behave in class if there aren't clearly defined objectives. Students want and need to know what is expected of them in order to stay motivated to work. At the beginning of the year, lay out clear objectives, rules, and expectations of students so that there is no confusion and students have goals to work towards.
3. **Create a threat-free environment.** While students do need to understand that there are consequences to their actions, far more motivating for students than threats are positive reinforcements. When teachers create a safe, supportive environment for students, affirming their belief in a student's abilities rather than laying out the consequences of not doing things, students are much more likely to get and stay motivated to do their work. At the end of the day, students will fulfill the expectations that the adults around them communicate, so focus on can, not can't.
4. **Change your scenery.** A classroom is a great place for learning, but sitting at a desk day in and day out can make school start to seem a bit dull for some students. To renew interest in the subject matter or just in learning in general, give your students a chance to get out of the classroom. Take field trips, bring in speakers, or even just head to the library for some research. The brain loves novelty and a new setting can be just what some students need to stay motivated to learn.
5. **Offer varied experiences.** Not all students will respond to lessons in the same way. For some, hands-on experiences may be the best. Others may love to read books quietly or to work in groups. In order to keep all students motivated, mix up your lessons so that students with different preferences will each get time focused on the things they like best. Doing so will help students stay engaged and pay attention.

6. **Use positive competition.** Competition in the classroom isn't always a bad thing, and in some cases can motivate students to try harder and work to excel. Work to foster a friendly spirit of competition in your classroom, perhaps through group games related to the material or other opportunities for students to show off their knowledge.

7. **Offer rewards.** Everyone likes getting rewards, and offering your students the chance to earn them is an excellent source of motivation. Things like pizza parties, watching movies, or even something as simple as a sticker on a paper can make students work harder and really aim to achieve. Consider the personalities and needs of your students to determine appropriate rewards for your class.

8. **Give students responsibility.** Assigning students classroom jobs is a great way to build a community and to give students a sense of motivation. Most students will see classroom jobs as a privilege rather than a burden and will work hard to ensure that they, and other students, are meeting expectations. It can also be useful to allow students to take turns leading activities or helping out so that each feels important and valued.

9. **Allow students to work together.** While not all students will jump at the chance to work in groups, many will find it fun to try to solve problems, do experiments, and work on projects with other students. The social interaction can get them excited about things in the classroom and students can motivate one another to reach a goal. Teachers need to ensure that groups are balanced and fair, however, so that some students aren't doing more work than others.

10. **Give praise when earned.** There is no other form of motivation that works quite as well as encouragement. Even as adults we crave recognition and praise, and students at any age are no exception. Teachers can give students a bounty of motivation by rewarding success publicly, giving praise for a job well done, and sharing exemplary work.

11. **Encourage self-reflection.** Most kids want to succeed, they just need help figuring out what they need to do in order to get there. One way to motivate your students is to get them to take a hard look at themselves and determine their own strengths and weaknesses. Students are often much more motivated by creating these kinds of critiques of themselves than by having a teacher do it for them, as it makes them feel in charge of creating their own objectives and goals.

12. **Be excited.** One of the best ways to get your students motivated is to share your enthusiasm. When you're excited about teaching, they'll be much more excited about learning. It's that simple.

13. **Know your students.** Getting to know your students is about more than just memorizing their names. Students need to know that their teacher has a genuine interest in them and cares about them and their success. When students feel appreciated it creates a safe learning environment and motivates them to work harder, as they want to get praise and good feedback from someone they feel knows and respects them as individuals.

14. **Harness student interests.** Knowing your students also has some other benefits, namely that it allows you to relate classroom material to things that students are interested in or have experienced. Teachers can use these interests to make things more interesting and relatable to students, keeping students motivated for longer.

15. **Help students find intrinsic motivation.** It can be great to help students get motivated, but at the end of the day they need to be able to generate their own motivation. Helping students find their own personal

reasons for doing class work and working hard, whether because they find material interesting, want to go to college, or just love to learn, is one of the most powerful gifts you can give them.

16. **Manage student anxiety.** Some students find the prospect of not doing well so anxiety-inducing that it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. For these students, teachers may find that they are most motivated by learning that struggling with a subject isn't the end of the world. Offer support no matter what the end result is and ensure that students don't feel so overwhelmed by expectations that they just give up.

17. **Make goals high but attainable.** If you're not pushing your students to do more than the bare minimum, most won't seek to push themselves on their own. Students like to be challenged and will work to achieve high expectations so long as they believe those goals to be within their reach, so don't be afraid to push students to get more out of them.

18. **Give feedback and offer chances to improve.** Students who struggle with class work can sometimes feel frustrated and get down on themselves, draining motivation. In these situations it's critical that teachers help students to learn exactly where they went wrong and how they can improve next time. Figuring out a method to get where students want to be can also help them to stay motivated to work hard.

19. **Track progress.** It can be hard for students to see just how far they've come, especially with subjects that are difficult for them. Tracking can come in handy in the classroom, not only for teachers but also for students. Teachers can use this as a way to motivate students, allowing them to see visually just how much they are learning and improving as the year goes on.

20. **Make things fun.** Not all class work needs to be a game or a good time, but students who see school as a place where they can have fun will be more motivated to pay attention and do the work that's required of them than those who regard it as a chore. Adding fun activities into your school day can help students who struggle to stay engaged and make the classroom a much more friendly place for all students.

21. **Provide opportunities for success.** Students, even the best ones, can become frustrated and demotivated when they feel like they're struggling or not getting the recognition that other students are. Make sure that all students get a chance to play to their strengths and feel included and valued. It can make a world of difference in their motivation.

**Write a 2 page summary of this article including your own ideas and perspective.**

## INSPIRATIONAL EDUCATION BIBLIOGRAPHY

You may choose a book from this list or one of your own choosing that is compatible to this course. Please let the instructor know if you choose a book that is not on this list.

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**The following two books are written by your instructor and contain a faith based perspective and biblical references.** These are available on line or through bookstores. Both books are available in CD format as audio books.

*What To Do When Words Get Ugly.* Michael Sedler. Revell Books, 2016 (edited/revised edition). Examines the topic of gossip and how it impacts people. (Adult) [www.bakerbooks.com](http://www.bakerbooks.com) 1-800-877-2665

*When to Speak Up and When to Shut Up.* Michael Sedler. Revell Books, 2006. Communication book discussing conflict and encouragement. (Adult) [www.bakerbooks.com](http://www.bakerbooks.com) 1-800-877-2665 **(over 400,000 copies sold).**

Both books are also available in CD format as audio books.