

The Ten Principles of Motivation



by Julia G. Thompson

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Motivating students is a complicated business no matter what age they may be. When students want to complete their work and want to succeed, things will go well in your classroom--they will learn and you will have a rewarding day at school. Here are ten very brief ideas that I find useful in my teaching practice.

1. All learning must have a purpose. Teachers and students should work together to establish long-term goals so that the work is relevant to students' lives and driven by a purpose. I have rarely met a student who wanted to work just for the sake of working.
2. Students need the skills and knowledge necessary to complete their work and achieve their goals. Help students achieve short-term goals to develop the competencies they need to be successful. Keeping binders in order, learning to listen carefully, paying attention...these are just some of the skills that students need to make learning accessible.

3. Specific directions empower students. When students know exactly what they must do to complete assignments, they will approach their work with confidence and interest. Giving good directions is an art form. Keep them simple, brief, and logical.
4. Students want to have fun while they work. Teachers who offer enjoyable learning activities find that students are less likely to be off task. (Teachers also want to have fun when they work!)
5. Offer activities that involve higher-order thinking skills. Students find open-ended questions and critical thinking more engaging than activities involving just recall of facts. Rote drills do have a place in any learning environment, but few kids are really inspired by them. Work that requires higher-level thinking skills will move your students in the right direction.
6. Curiosity is an important component of motivation. When students want to learn more about a topic, they will tackle challenging assignments in order to satisfy their curiosity. Even something as simple as asking a provocative question to get students thinking

in a new way can spark curiosity.

7. A blend of praise and encouragement is effective in building self-reliance. Teachers who offer sincere praise and encouragement establish a positive, nurturing classroom atmosphere. When students know that they are on the right track, they will want to continue.
8. A combination of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards increases student focus and time on task behavior. When used separately, both types of rewards motivate students. However, when teachers combine them, the effect is much greater.
9. Involve students in collaborative activities. When students work together, motivation and achievement both soar.
10. Students tend to work harder when they believe that their teacher likes them. This is probably the most important principle of motivation. Why should students work for a grouchy teacher? If your students know that they matter to you, then they will be much more inclined to stay on task than if they believe that you are not invested in their success.

About Julia Thompson



As a workshop leader and writer, best-selling author Julia Thompson has taught thousands of teachers how to create student-centred classrooms, thrive during that important first year of teaching, motivate reluctant learners, prevent discipline problems, and sustain high expectations for the success of their students as well as for themselves.

A practicing classroom teacher, Julia is the author of several resources for teachers. In each of her books, she presents classroom-tested ideas, activities, and strategies designed to make each school day a successful one. Because she is a full-time teacher herself, Julia focuses her advice on the practical aspects of a teacher's busy professional life. She understands first-hand the realities of today's classroom. This extensive experience and the insights she has gained as a teacher trainer have shaped her beliefs about the daily challenges that can confront even the most steadfast teachers.

Julia's dedication to promoting excellence among her colleagues and to helping new teachers translate their dreams into successful practice is the focus of her work as an author of professional development resources and as a teacher trainer.

Books written by Julia and available to order from Amazon:

