2009

Factors that influence student motivation

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Abstract

This paper discusses different factors in a student's education that can affect motivation and overall learning. It focuses on extrinsic and intrinsic strategies, social-cognitive processes, and the classroom environment. There have been many studies done on motivation and achievement. This paper will focus on the findings of studies done on strategies used to enhance students' beliefs about ability and emotions as well as environmental strategies used by teachers.

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MAE: Educational Psychology

2009

This Research Paper by: Abbie Petsche

Entitled: Factors that Influence Student Motivation

has been approved as meeting the
research paper requirement for the degree of

Master of Arts in Education: Educational Psychology:
Professional Development for Teachers

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9-16-09

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This paper discusses different factors in a student's education that can affect motivation and overall learning. It focuses on extrinsic and intrinsic strategies, social-cognitive processes, and the classroom environment. There have been many studies done on motivation and achievement. This paper will focus on the findings of studies done on strategies used to enhance students' beliefs about ability and emotions as well as environmental strategies used by teachers.

Statement of the Problem

Helping students achieve their best in the classroom is not always an easy task. As a teacher it becomes our duty, responsibility, but most importantly our privilege to help students foster and enhance their reading, writing, math, science, and social studies skills. We have done our "homework" and honed our skills through classes, staff development courses, and curriculum experience. In doing so, when students struggle with a specific academic area we as teachers are able to provide these students with the support, guidance, and help they need. But statistically we are still not accomplishing enough.

The current report from The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) shows this country is academically falling behind (Miller, Malley, & Burns, 2009). As the primary federal entity for collecting, analyzing, and reporting data related to education in the United States, the NCES report describes how the education system in

the United States compares with education systems in other countries--Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Russian Federation, and the United Kingdom. Twenty-seven indicators are organized into five sections:

(1) population and school enrollment;

(2) academic performance (including subsections for reading, mathematics, and science);

(3) context for learning;

(4) expenditure for education;

(5) education returns: educational attainment and income (Miller, Malley, & Burns, 2009).

In the area of academic performance, and more specifically in reading, mathematics, and science, the United States did not top any list. As a matter of fact, in science, the United States ranked as one of the lowest countries academically. When you factor into the equation the population in 2008, the 5 to 29-year-olds (roughly the population most likely to be enrolled in education) represented 34 percent of the total population in the United States (Miller, Malley, & Burns, 2009). That is too high a number to be sitting on such poor academic statistics.

The above report draws on the most current information about education from four primary sources: the Indicators of National Education Systems (INES) at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) (Miller, Malley, & Burns, 2009). These groups have also done their

"homework" and now it is time to readjust or reformulate our educational system. Motivation is now seen as a critical need in our school system.

Purpose of This Paper

The purpose of this paper is to attempt to answer two extremely important questions: (1) What factors influence student motivation? (2) What can teachers do to foster student motivation for achievement? To begin this process I must first examine my thoughts on motivation as well as my situation as a teacher in an economically poor school.

As a second grade teacher, in a low socio-economic school, I do have some students coming to school that have the desire to succeed: They want and need their school experience to be fulfilling academically and socially. They work hard in their classes and I can see they are motivated within themselves to do their personal best. However, these are the exceptions, not the norms.

All too frequently I have students in my classroom that are not motivated to do well in school. Oftentimes these students that are not self-motivated start to fall behind academically and consequently have many behavioral issues. This repeatedly leads to office referrals, sometimes disciplinary action, and continued negative behaviors and attitudes. When I have these students that are not motivated from within, I try to come up with new and exciting ways to teach, hoping to instill some form of self-motivation. For me, the debate then becomes one of intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation.

Many teachers use extrinsic motivation in the form of rewards in the classroom. These are easy to use and work well for many students. My experience with extrinsic

motivators is that they tend to wear out quickly and have no lasting effects. The idea of giving rewards for good behavior can also be controversial because then children always expect to get something for doing the right thing and that is not the message that I want to send. Some people believe that motivation needs to start extrinsically first and then move to self-motivation. It is sometimes difficult to figure out how to make that transition work.

Significance of the Problem

Motivation is perhaps the most crucial element of a child's education. According to Michael B. Brown, Ph. D at East Carolina University, an academically motivated student is a child that "wants to learn, likes learning-related activities, and believes school is important" (1998). Thus, it is logical to conclude that in order to maximize a student's potential, and in turn their educational experience, it is imperative the student be motivated.

It is much easier to work with a student that works hard and wants to do well than with a student that does not care or is not connected to school, even if that student performs better academically. It is easy to see then that motivation is an extremely important piece of a child's education. According to the McMillan Dictionary (1981), motivation is defined as, "the reason for the action; that which gives purpose and direction to behavior." Student motivation can be affected by so many factors, such as teacher enthusiasm, rewards, parent involvement, peers, personal experiences, the environment, personal interests, and self-esteem.

A teacher's role is to help students become life-long learners. In order to do this students must develop qualities of motivation that lead them to achieve goals, become independent learners, and continue to persevere even through failed attempts. Today there is so much emphasis on test taking and raising standards that motivation often gets lost. When students don't perform well on these tests, they often think of their ability as something that they cannot control and it causes them to give up. This can affect the risks that they take in learning new skills throughout their entire life.

Definition of Terms

Motivation—"the reason for the action; that which gives purpose and direction to behavior" (The Macmillan Dictionary, 1981).

Extrinsic Motivation—"Motivation from sources outside an individual" (Alderman, 2004).

Intrinsic Motivation—"The source of motivation is internal to the person" (Alderman, 2004).

Social-cognitive processes—"This perspective of motivation interrelates the factors (a) cognition-personal, such as beliefs about ability and emotions; (b) environmental, such as incentives and evaluation criteria used by the teacher; (c) and the behavior or performance of the person" (Bandura, 1986; Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

Self-efficacy—"The perceived competence about performing a specific task" (Alderman, 2004).

Performance goal—"Focus on looking smart and proving ability" (Alderman, 2004).

Learning/Mastery goal—"Focus on learning or mastery and self-referenced comparisons" (Alderman, 2004).

Attribution—"A cognitive theory that considers a person's beliefs about causes of outcomes and how those beliefs influence expectations and behavior" (Alderman, 2004).

Behaviorism— "Follows the principle belief that one's behavior is caused by one's environment" (Bandura, 1986; Pajares, 2002).

Teacher efficacy— "The extent to which teachers believe they have the capacity to affect student performance" (Ashton, 1984; Alderman, 2002).

Organization of Paper

This paper is organized into five chapters. Chapter one introduces the issue, examines the problem and its significance, and offers definitions of terminology used throughout the paper. Chapter two will focus on the educational meaning and significance of motivation. It will explain the two kinds of educational motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic, with an emphasis on the pros and cons of using external rewards to foster intrinsic motivation. Chapter three will first define the social-cognitive theory and then proceed to enumerate on the social-cognitive processes that influence motivation such as self-efficacy, achievement goals, goal setting, and the theory of attribution. Chapter four takes the reader into the classroom environment, covering strategies teachers can use to influence student motivation such as giving choice, using cooperative

learning, and building a supportive and safe environment. It will end with more instructional practices teachers can use to foster self-efficacy in students. This will lead into chapter five in which I will take the reader into my classroom. I will first introduce the reader to my students, pointing out the obstacles I encounter in my classroom daily. I will then present a picture of my classroom itself, stressing the importance of students wanting to be there. In the second half of the chapter I will attempt to apply practical classroom applications based on the findings of individual studies in previous chapters.

Chapter II

Simply put, motivation can be defined as the study of why people think and behave as they do. The term *motivation* is commonly used in everyday life. In fact, it has become so commonplace in our vocabulary, people seldom bother to stop and contemplate its meaning. Because of an overwhelming number of studies, the same commonality applies to academic motivation research (Malone & Lepper, 1987; Blumenfeld, 1992). Therefore, what do we really mean when we talk about motivation? What are the best descriptors of motivation and motivated behavior?

This chapter will begin to answer some of the above questions. It will start with the academic meaning of motivation and explain its importance. It will continue on to explain the two kinds of academic motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic, with an emphasis on the pros and cons of using external rewards to foster internal motivation. Research will be included to help educators decide if extrinsic motivators hinder or help students to become intrinsically motivated.

Educational Motivation

Motivation is of particular interest to educational psychologists because of the crucial role it plays in student learning. In the context of academic achievement, motivational concerns have been the issue of studies for many years. The history of motivational research in education can be traced through chapters on motivation in the *Encyclopedia of Educational Research* (Weiner, 1990). Through the decades, these

authors, as well as many other learned men and women, have conducted studies to try and understand what motivates people; and in this context, students.

If motivation were a straightforward concept it would be uninteresting: Motivation is considered a multifaceted, complex, yet essential element to the learning process. Motivation in education can have several effects on how students learn and their behavior toward subject matter. It can:

1. Direct behavior toward particular goals
2. Lead to increased effort and energy
3. Increase initiation of, and persistence in, activities
4. Enhance cognitive processing
5. Determine what consequences are reinforcing
6. Lead to improved performance (Ormrod 2007).

Hence, many ideas, theories, and practices have been researched and even supplemented into classrooms to help understand what motivates students.

The main issue for educational psychologists has always been how to motivate students to engage in new learning (Weiner, 1990). Conceptualizations of motivation in psychological writing show considerable variation both in terms of their scope and their level of investigation (Dornyei, 2000). However, many researchers agree motivation theories in general attempt to explain three, all interrelated, aspects of human behavior: "the *choice* of a particular action; *persistence* with it; and *effort* expended on it" (Dornyei, 2000, p. 519-520). That is, motivation is responsible for *why* people decide to do something, *how long* they are willing to sustain the activity, and *how hard* they are going to pursue it.

The challenge is to find ways of conceptualizing motivation which help teachers to understand children's progress and behavior, thereby helping them to evaluate their classroom practice and teaching methods (Galloway, Rogers, Armstrong, & Leo, 1998; Dornyei, 2000). Theories on motivation should be based on different criteria, including, but not limited to, individuality; emphasizing the various needs of students as key drivers in their actions. The problem arises because a conceptual definition alone is not enough to conduct a study that involves hypothetical constructs. There is far less agreement on the actual mediating factors and processes by means of which motivation achieves its impact on student behavior. Therefore, in the field of motivational psychology, there are a great number of competing or overlapping theories (Dornyei, 2000).

Subsequently, one of the current problems facing academic motivation research is that despite an abundance of theories and models testing specific relationships and hypotheses, no single model can encompass the full dynamics of motivated behaviors (Schunk, 1990; Bong, 1996). This is partially due to different hypothetical orientations of investigators working in the field, who tend to emphasize a particular aspect of motivational phenomena over the others. "Current academic motivation research predominantly depends on questionnaire studies that are correlational and one-shot in nature which often preclude a possibility to disclose any unknown dynamics beyond the measurement setting" (Blumenfeld, 1992, p. 275). Heavy reliance on a single scale for measuring a motivational construct tends to aggravate or enhance the problem.

Conclusively, motivation can be defined as a key element in the learning process. Motivation theories attempt to show or explain why students behave and think as they do.

Because of the differentials involved in all studies concerned with what motivates students, and because human nature is what it is, it would be impossible to offer any cut and dried formulas for teachers to use to motivate their students.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

The precise definitions and subsequent uses of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the classroom have been debated, argued, and consequently over-studied and perhaps over-researched for too long now. No definite or all-encompassing good or bad can be deciphered from all of the research to date. Suffice it to say that most educators and researchers agree there is a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Beyond that simple statement the debates as to the distinction between the two, and the pros and cons of their usability in the classroom, remain a constant issue.

In actuality there are those, such as Steven Reiss, former professor of psychology at Ohio State University, who do not believe intrinsic motivation even exists. In an article in the journal *Behavior Analyst*, Reiss' theory of motivation states there are sixteen basic desires which guide most meaningful behavior: Among these are curiosity, power, independence, and acceptance. Thus, classifying intrinsic motivation as something that makes you happy in and of itself could not possibly encompass the individual differences of each person and is therefore nonexistent as a separate, individual motivation. He believes there are too many flaws and too many variables in studies which seem to prove intrinsic motivation (Grabmeier, 2005).

Then there are those that although firmly believe intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to be separate entities, believe also that intrinsic motivation sometimes needs

the aid of extrinsic rewards to work (Schlackman, 2006). Believing this scenario leads to more problems, such as when, and what types of extrinsic rewards to use. Also, can, and when do extrinsic rewards undermine intrinsic motivation? The research continues.

For textbook purposes, there are two types of motivation—intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsically motivated behaviors are ones for which there is no apparent reward: Accomplishing the task or achieving the goal is its own reward (Deci, 1975; Cameron & Pierce, 1994). The result of such behavior is an experience of interest and enjoyment; people feel competent and self-determining, and "they perceive the locus of causality for their behavior to be internal" (Cameron & Pierce, 1994, p. 364). Intrinsically motivated behavior is seen to be inborn and natural, and is said to result in creativity, flexibility, and spontaneity (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

In the sphere of academics, the study of intrinsic motivation has been going on for more than half a century. The results from the majority of these studies classified intrinsic motivation as the "desire to engage in behaviors for no reason other than sheer enjoyment, challenge, pleasure, or interest" (Berlyn, 1960; Hunt, 1965; White, 1959; Lepper, Corpus, & Iyengar, 2005, p. 184). Yet the many variables associated with the simplistic definition, and hence the learning induced meaning and usage of intrinsic motivation must be addressed.

It would be awesome if all children enjoyed learning: This is not the case. What makes a child want to learn would have to envelop all facets of his being, including, but

not limited to, his environment, ethnicity, religious beliefs, and so on. All these, and so much more, are features in the makeup of a child, and therefore factors which could regulate the degree or extent of his or her intrinsic motivation. Yet, individuality is not an affordable luxury in the classroom and therefore, when doing research on intrinsic motivation the classroom must be lumped as one entity, dismissing individuality. Knowing this makes it almost impossible to determine if there is true intrinsic motivation as defined earlier.

Since intrinsic motivation is nearly impossible to gage in and of itself, oftentimes teachers will offer reinforcements or inducements to help students *want* to learn. Not to be confused with extrinsic motivational tools, these extrinsic rewards are deemed as minimal reinforcement aids only. Where to draw the line between extrinsic motivational tools and minimal extrinsic rewards is becoming increasingly difficult however. Another topic of debate, and thus research, are the pros and cons of using these reinforcements in the classroom.

Research

Most classroom teachers have at least some basic understanding of the principles of reinforcement and use these principles to encourage learning and to motivate students. In recent years, however, there has been a growing concern over the use of reward systems in educational settings. Several researchers now feel that incentive systems based on reinforcement may have detrimental effects (Cameron & Pierce, 1994). The argument contends reinforcement may decrease an individual's intrinsic motivation to participate in a particular activity. For example, if a child who enjoys coloring is offered external reinforcement, such as points or money, for coloring, the child may then color

less once the reward is discontinued. Hence, "one alleged effect of reinforcement is that it undermines intrinsic interest in a task" (Cameron & Pierce, 1994, p. 363).

The above quote was the result of an experimental investigation concerned with the effects of reinforcement on intrinsic motivation. Similarly, in an article published in the American Psychologist, Schwartz (1990) cited the intrinsic motivation experiment of Lepper, Greene, and Nisbett (1973). Their conclusion:

> "...reinforcement has two effects. First, predictably it gains control of [an] activity, increasing its frequency. Second, ...when reinforcement is later withdrawn, people engage in the activity even less than they did before reinforcement was introduced" (Cameron & Pierce, 1994, p. 10).

Their conclusion was in part drawn from a study involving preschool students. The subjects were chosen because in their classrooms they showed a high intrinsic interest in a certain art activity (Lepper & Hoddell, 1989). Each subject engaged in this same art activity with three distinct variables: Some were offered a prize or award for doing the activity; some were offered no prize or award; of the ones not offered the award, half received the award unexpectedly. Weeks later, back in their normal classroom environment, it was observed that the students who had been offered the reward for their efforts now showed a markedly reduced interest in doing the activity.

This study, as well as several others, led many researchers to assume there were detrimental effects when extrinsic rewards were used to foster intrinsic motivation. One such researcher, noted psychologist Edward L. Deci, for the most part agreed with this scenario. In his book, *"Why We Do What We Do: Understanding Self-Motivation,"* Deci reiterates his belief that the standard system of reward and punishment can actually work against performance (1995). For example, if a child is made or forced to do their

homework, they will get it done. However, instead of this form of motivation he recommends the support of a child's sense of autonomy. In other words, an authority figure should explain why doing homework is important which could then stimulate the child's interest and thus his commitment (Deci, 1995).

As co-author of another article, Deci reaffirms his belief:

> "... Deci and Ryan (1987) state that: In general, rewards have been found to undermine intrinsic motivation. When people received rewards for working on an interesting activity, they tended to display less interest in and willingness to work on that activity after the termination of the rewards than did people who had worked on the activity without receiving a reward" (Cameron & Pierce, 1994, p. 394).

Several researchers agree with this conclusion: Others continue to favor, and encourage the use of reinforcement principles in applied settings (Cameron & Pierce, 1994). They do not believe rewards are always harmful. Their findings indicate that generally speaking, rewarded people are still willing to work on activities and they do not display a less favorable attitude toward tasks than people who do not receive rewards (Cameron & Pierce, 1994). On the free-time measure, where intrinsic motivation has been measured analyzing free time spent doing the task after the reward is taken away, when rewards are broken down into type, expectancy, and contingency, the use of verbal rewards can produce an increase in intrinsic motivation. Unexpected tangible or material rewards have no disparaging effect; and expected material rewards are not detrimental when they are conditional on level of performance or completing or solving a task. However, expected tangible rewards do produce a decrease in intrinsic motivation when

measured by free time on said task when they are given to individuals simply for engaging in an activity (Cameron & Pierce, 1994).

For these researchers, it seems to be the type of reward, as well as the time the reward is given, that presents the problem. For example, they believe in the use of verbal rewards. They believe said verbal rewards can actually increase intrinsic motivation in students. However, material rewards are seen as controlling when their delivery is stated before the reward period (Cameron & Pierce, 1994). Also, rewards promised to persons for engaging in a task without a performance criterion are considered to be controlling and therefore also could decrease intrinsic motivation. Then too, rewards delivered to a person conditional on a specified level of performance could be construed as either informational or controlling, depending on how well a person performs in relation to the specified standard. A good performance means the reward is informational; a poor performance means it is controlling (Cameron & Pierce, 1994).

Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation relies on the use of rewards or reinforcements to get students to engage in activities. These motivational rewards can come in many forms, such as verbal praise, certificates, special privileges, and better grades, just to name a few (Alderman, 2004). While intrinsic motivation comes from within, extrinsic motivation refers to motivation that comes from outside an individual. The motivating factors are external, and provide satisfaction and pleasure that the task itself may not provide. An extrinsically motivated person will work on a task even when they have little interest in it because of the anticipated satisfaction they will get from some reward (Reinholt, 2006).

Rewards come in many forms in the school environment. Everything from gold stars, smiley face stickers, and even pizza parties have been used as motivational tools in classrooms. Then of course there are honor roles and other best-student-in-some-subject awards bestowed on the students who excel. All these, and many more awards and rewards are used by educators as props to enhance self-motivation. Many educators use these props because they see them as necessary, helpful aids to help spike a student's desire to learn (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001). However, the use of extrinsic motivational rewards has come under much scrutiny lately.

Research

While some researchers adhere to the adage *the end justifies the means,* hence whatever it takes to get these students to learn is acceptable, other researchers do not agree. These researchers believe the widespread use of rewards in schools can have a detrimental effect, oftentimes diminishing a student's self-motivation. This, in turn, stifles a child's curiosity and interest, and thus his desire to learn for the sake of learning (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001). The following scenario may help to show the differences in research outcomes and beliefs held by researchers when studying the pros and cons of extrinsic motivational rewards in the classroom.

First, Cameron and Pierce (1994) presented a meta-analysis of the effects extrinsic rewards have on intrinsic motivation. Their conclusions were published in the fall 1994 issue of *Review of Educational Research.* Although acknowledging the importance of intrinsic motivation in educational settings, they believed the use of external rewards had no detrimental effects on intrinsic motivation. If done properly and not so as to seem like a "bribe," extrinsic incentives could be the inducements needed to

foster intrinsic motivation. They stated that "teachers have no reason to resist implementing incentive systems in the classroom" (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001, p. 1).

Then, in the spring 1996 issue of *Review of Educational Research,* three commentaries on the Cameron and Pierce article were published. These commentaries argued the validity of the findings of Cameron and Pierce's meta-analysis. They believed the meta-analysis used by Cameron and Pierce was flawed and therefore, their conclusions were wrong (Kohn, 1996; Lepper, Keavney, & Drake, 1996; Ryan & Deci, 1996; Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001).

Subsequently, in the same issue of *Review of Educational Research,* Cameron and Pierce worded a rebuttal in their article entitled "Protests and Accusations Do Not Alter the Results" (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001). Here Cameron and Pierce accused the aforementioned commentators of negligence in their criticisms. There had been no reanalysis of their data, instead only criticism which suggested "that the findings (of Cameron and Pierce) are invalid due to intentional bias, deliberate misrepresentation, and inept analysis" (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001, p. 2). Also, subsequent to that exchange, Eisenberger and Cameron (1996) published an article in the *American Psychologist* which summarized the meta-analysis of Cameron and Pierce (1996). They reaffirmed their belief that intrinsic motivation is not undermined by extrinsic rewards (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001).

The battle did not end there. Rather, yet another article was published in *Psychological Bulletin,* (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999) again questioning the methods used by Cameron and Pierce (1996) and their subsequent findings (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001). While not as scathing as previous rebuttals had been, it nonetheless pointed

out the flaws in the procedures they used and therefore the errors in their meta-analysis findings. Knowing the importance of these studies, Deci, Koestner, and Ryan (1999) conducted a new meta-analysis using the same variables as Cameron and Pierce (1996). They pin-pointed the errors made by Cameron and Pierce in their meta-analysis, concluding, once again, extrinsic rewards can have a detrimental effect on intrinsic motivation (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001).

In conclusion, it was once believed that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation could not coexist as they were total opposites. Today most researchers acknowledge their differences yet accept the need for enhancement of internal motivation with the use of external reinforcements. The trick is in how to balance the use of extrinsic reinforcements in a way that will foster intrinsic motivation (Alderman, 2004). Numerous studies have been conducted to try to gage the effects of extrinsic reinforcements or rewards on intrinsic motivation. The many variables associated with each individual study and research frame tends to cloud and even change each conclusion. Obviously, this is a very important issue since incentive systems are oftentimes implemented in schools on the basis of research findings and conclusions.

Chapter III

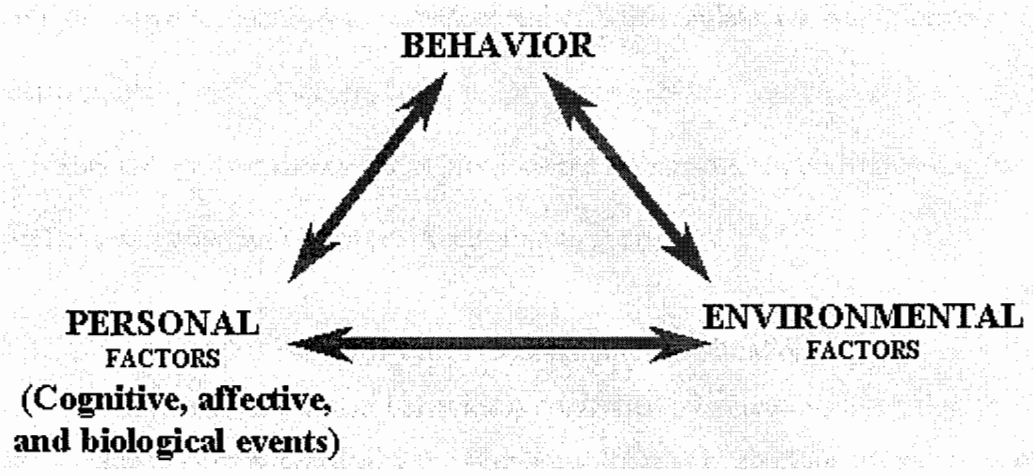
The theories on "self" and "learning" seem to have their origins from the works of noted psychiatrist Sigmund Freud (1923). Not content with the conclusions of Freud however, another theory was hypothesized by Miller and Dollard in 1941. They believed that if humans were motivated to learn a particular behavior that particular behavior would be learned through clear observations. By observing, the individual would imitate, and then be rewarded with positive reinforcement. Their theory of social learning and imitation favored drive reduction principles, thus rejecting the then acceptable behaviorist notions of associationism (Pajares, 2002).

Because they felt important elements were left out of the theory proposed by Miller and Dollard, Bandura and Walters wrote *Social Learning and Personality Development* in 1963. This book pioneered the now familiar social learning theory in which observational learning and reinforcement are predominant. But, Bandura still felt some key element was missing from his theory. With his publication of "Self-efficacy: Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change," in 1977, Bandura identified the missing piece of the puzzle—self-beliefs (Pajares, 2002).

This chapter will define the meaning of self-cognitive theory and explain its significance in the sphere of education. It will progress to the social-cognitive processes that influence motivation: self-efficacy; achievement goals; goal setting; and the theory of attribution. Their individual meanings and importance will be stressed.

Social-Cognitive Theory

When Bandura published *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory* in 1986, he was opening up a new vista of the human functioning process (Pajares, 2002). In essence, he was doing away with the old behaviorism theory and replacing it with a triadic theory of interaction.



The social-cognitive theory identifies human behavior and describes learning in terms of the interrelationship between behavior, environmental factors, and personal factors (Bandura, 1986; Pajares, 2002). Every point of the triangle is essential to the make-up of the person, and thus human functioning:

> "In the model, the interaction between the person and behavior involves the influences of a person's thoughts and actions. The interaction between the person and the environment involves human beliefs and cognitive competencies that are developed and modified by social influences and structures within the environment. The third interaction, between the environment and behavior, involves a person's behavior determining the aspects of their environment and in turn their behavior is modified by that environment" (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1986).

Bandura (1986) believed in *reciprocal determinism*, which, simply stated, means the world and a person's behavior cause each other (Bandura, 1986; Pajares, 2002). Bandura first called his new theory social learning, but later changed it to social cognitive. He did not want it to be associated with any other social learning theories of the time. He also wanted to place emphasis on the fact that "cognition plays a critical role in people's capability to construct reality, self-regulate, encode information, and perform behaviors" (Pajares, 2002, p. 1).

Social-cognitive theory (SCI) provides the framework for understanding, predicting, and changing human behavior. According to Jones:

> "the fact that behavior varies from situation to situation may not necessarily mean that behavior is controlled by situations but rather that the person is construing the situations differently and thus the same set of stimuli may provoke different responses from different people or from the same person at different times"(1989).

In the book "Educational Psychology: Developing Learners" (2007) author Jeanne Ellis Ormrod lists the main principles of social learning theory:

- People learn by observing others.
- Learning is an internal process that may or may not change behavior.
- People behave in certain ways to reach goals.
- Behavior is self-directed (as opposed to the behaviorist thought that behavior is determined by environment.)
- Reinforcement and punishment have unpredictable and indirect effects on both behavior and learning.

One of the key elements, or beliefs, embedded in the social-cognitive theory is people learn from watching others. Modeling, or learning through observation, helps a person see firsthand how new behaviors are performed. Effective modeling teaches general rules and even strategies for dealing with different situations. Therefore, modeling serves as a guide for the person's subsequent future actions (Pajares, 2002).

Bandura's social cognitive perspective presupposes individuals already have certain capabilities that define what it is to be human. Using modeling as its basis, one such capability is a person's ability to *symbolize*. By drawing on these symbolic capabilities, people can "extract meaning from their environment, construct guides for action, solve problems cognitively, support forethoughtful courses of action, gain new knowledge by reflective thought, and communicate with others at any distance in time and space" (Pajares, 2002, p. 3).

Through the use of symbols people are able to solve cognitive problems, and thus engage in the mental process known as *forethought*. By using forethought people can plan their courses of action because they are able to anticipate what consequences these actions may have. This allows them to set achievable goals and challenges for themselves: It lets them guide and regulate their activities. Without engaging in the action itself, people can plan strategies of action and anticipate the consequences of those actions (Pajares, 2002).

Another humanistic capability is that of *vicarious learning*—learning not just from their experiences, but from observing the experiences of others. In this way the trial and error process is eliminated from the equation, thus keeping costs and mistakes to a

minimum. The observational phase of vicarious learning is symbolically coded: This allows it to be a guiding mechanism for future action (Pajares, 2002).

All of the above human capabilities revolve around the use of observation. Learning by observation is governed by certain processes: These processes are attention, retention, production, and motivation. Attention means the human has the capability to choose to observe, or watch, the actions of a certain model. Retention presupposes the person will retain what he has seen in his memory. Production would then mean the person would engage in the observed behavior. If the person engages in the observed behavior and finds the results to be gratifying, he may now be motivated to repeat the behavior in the future (Pajares, 2002).

Two other capabilities Bandura found to be essential to the make-up of a human were the abilities to *self-regulate* and *self-reflect*. By using the self-regulatory mechanisms they possess, humans can self-direct behavioral changes. "The manner and degree to which people self-regulate their own actions and behavior involve the accuracy and consistency of their self-observation and self-monitoring, the judgments they make regarding their actions, choices, and attributions, and, finally, the evaluative and tangible reactions they make to their own behavior through the self-regulatory process" (Pajares, 2002, p. 4). Self-reflection, the most prominent and "distinctly human" feature of self-cognitive theory according to Bandura (1986), allows people to make sense of their many experiences. This, in turn, allows them to engage in self-evaluation, form their own self-beliefs, and even change their thinking and behavior (Pajares, 2002).

Summarizing, social cognitive theory (SCT) describes learning in terms of the interrelationship between behavior, environmental factors, and personal factors. The

learner acquires knowledge as their environment converges with personal characteristics and personal experience. Social cognitive theory provides a framework for understanding, predicting, and changing human behavior (Pajares, 2002). As an educational tool, social cognitive theory can and does make a dramatic difference.

Impact on Education

Social cognitive theory (SCT) revolves around the process of knowledge acquisition or learning directly correlated to the observation of models (Pajares, 2002). Effective modeling teaches general rules and strategies for dealing with different situations (Pajares, 2002). SCT is applied today in many different arenas, and does have an impact. Mass media, public health, marketing, and education are just a few areas which utilize SCT. One obvious example would be the use of celebrities to endorse and introduce any number of products to certain demographics. What male child, or adult for that matter, wouldn't want the same tennis shoes Michael Jordan wears. And if Marie Osmond can lose 55lbs. on Nutrisystem, you better believe moms will give it a try. This same scenario, albeit rearranged somewhat, can work for educators too.

In *Psychology of learning for instruction,* Driscoll (1994) developes a theory of cognitive information processing to explain how humans, in this case students, learn. The information processing theory treats the human learner like a computer. Information is received, processed, and stored or returned as an output. Human memory is explained in terms of its major functions: sensory memory, short-term memory and long-term memory. Information flows from sensory memory through short-term memory and, if it is deemed worth saving, into long-term memory (Driscoll, 1994).

Whether a believable synopsis, or just a means of looking at the student in the abstract, the comparison of student to computer seems a good one. Every computer (student) needs someone to start it running, to guide the mouse (literally the brain) to the correct areas, and to help it save and store important information for the future. In other words, just as a computer needs someone to make it function, so too does the student need someone to make its mental capabilities work. This job belongs to the educator, the teacher.

As noted earlier, Bandura's social cognitive theory stresses the point that most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling. It then becomes the job of the teacher to become the effective model a student needs to grow academically. The task of creating learning environments conducive to development of cognitive skills rests heavily on the talents of teachers. Thus, during the crucial formative period of children's lives, the school functions "as the primary setting for the cultivation and social validation of cognitive competencies" (Bandura, 1994, p. 9) The school also becomes the place where students acquire the knowledge and problem-solving skills essential for effective participation in the larger society (Bandura, 1994).

It is in classroom environments a student's knowledge and thinking skills are continually tested, evaluated, and socially compared. As children master cognitive skills, they develop a growing sense of their intellectual efficacy (Bandura, 1994). Also, social cognitive theory beliefs claim that learning will most likely occur if there is a close identification between the student and the teacher and if the student has a good deal of self-efficacy.

Self-Efficacy

Commonly defined, self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to accomplish or achieve a goal. It is an ability construct that refers to an individuals' beliefs about their capabilities (Graham & Weiner, 1996). It is becoming increasingly evident that human accomplishments and positive well-being require an optimistic sense of personal efficacy. This is because life is difficult: It is full of impediments. Today people face numerous frustrations, adversities, and setbacks. Instead of persevering, when faced with obstacles many people either forsake their goals or aims prematurely, or become cynical about the prospects of effecting significant changes in their lives. People must have a vigorous sense of self-efficacy to sustain and persevere in the efforts needed for success (Graham & Weiner, 1996).

The same holds true for students in the classroom. Unlike other self theories, self-efficacy beliefs are future oriented: They are visualized as expectations (Graham & Weiner, 1996). Self-efficacy "is a judgment student's make about their capability to accomplish a specific future task" (Bandura, 1986; Alderman, 2004, p. 69). The self-efficacy assumption then becomes one that believes there is a definite difference between having needed skills and using them in any given task. Accordingly, regardless of a student's actual skills, self-efficacy, or the belief a student has in his abilities, can be a strong predictor of student learning and does make a distinct difference in motivation (Alderman, 2004).

Bandura (1989) emphasized the motivational role of self-efficacy when he stated:

> "...people's self-efficacy beliefs determine their level of motivation, as reflected in how much effort they will exert in an endeavor and how long

they will persevere in the face of obstacles. The stronger the belief in their capabilities, the greater and more persistent are their efforts" (p.1176).

Therefore, students with a strong sense of efficacy are more likely to challenge themselves with difficult tasks which will in turn help heighten their intrinsic motivation (Bandura, 1997; Margolis & McCabe, 2006). These students will put forth a high degree of effort in order to meet their commitments: They will not give up easily. Rather than blaming external factors, their failures will be attributed to things which are in their control. Students with self-efficacy also recover quickly from setbacks and are likely to achieve their personal goals (Bandura, 1994; Margolis & McCabe, 2006).

On the other hand, students with low self-efficacy honestly believe they can not be successful: They are filled with doubts about their capabilities. Because of this belief, they are less likely to make an intensive, total effort. For them, challenging tasks are seen as threats that are to be avoided. Thus, students with poor self-efficacy have low aspirations. This may result in disappointing academic performances becoming part of a self-opinionated, unfulfilling cycle (Bandura, 1994; Margolis & McCabe, 2006).

A student's self-efficacy will influence his academic tasks. Self-efficacy judgments will help the student determine which activities to undertake and which to stay away from. These same judgments will help determine how much effort the student will put into a task as well as for how long they will persist when faced with obstacles (Bandura, 1986; Alderman, 2004). Beliefs about self-efficacy judgments or capabilities come from four sources of information:

1. Prior task accomplishments (mastery experiences)—Personal experience is the most robust source of self-efficacy. It is direct evidence of whether a student can do

whatever it takes to succeed. How the experience is interpreted by the student will be the influence on efficacy: Students' successful experiences boost self-efficacy, while failures erode it (Bandura, 1994; Alderman, 2004; Margolis & McCabe, 2006).

2. Vicarious Experiences—Observing a peer succeed at a task can strengthen beliefs in one's own abilities. This can be especially helpful when the student has limited skills or is attempting to learn a new skill (Bandura, 1994; Alderman, 2004; Margolis & McCabe, 2006).

3. Verbal Persuasion—Self-efficacy can be boosted with encouraging words and feedback. These help the student through the task or motivate them to make the best effort they can (Bandura, 1986; Alderman, 2004; Margolis & McCabe, 2006).

4. Physiological State (emotional state)—A positive mood can boost a student's beliefs in self-efficacy. A certain level of emotional stimulation can create an energizing feeling which could contribute to strong performances. On the other hand, anxiety can undermine self-efficacy, and thus interfere with the student's performance (Bandura, 1994; Alderman, 2004; Margolis & McCabe, 2006).

The Roman poet Virgil once noted "they are able who think they are able" (Pajares, 2002, p. 8). For a student then, it is not simply a matter of how capable one is, but of how capable one believes oneself to be. Beliefs about themselves that students create and develop and hold to be true are vital forces in their success or failure in school (Pajares, 2002).

In conclusion, researchers have established that self-efficacy beliefs and behavior changes and outcomes are highly correlated and therefore, self-efficacy is an excellent predictor of behavior (Pajares, 2002). Graham and Weiner (1996) concluded that, in

education, self-efficacy has proven to be a more consistent predictor of behavioral outcomes than have any other motivational constructs. Is it any wonder then, self-efficacy has been especially prominent in studies of educational constructs such as academic achievement, goal setting, attributions of success and failure, social comparisons, memory, problem solving, and career development (Pajares, 2002).

Achievement Goals

One of the prominent features in motivation theory is the role of goals. Goal orientation theory (also called Achievement Goal Theory) presupposes that students have distinctive orientation toward certain types of goals (De la Fuente, 2004). This theory has been the focus of a good deal of research in education due to the impact that goals are assumed to have on student performance. De la Fuente (2004) defines academic goals as "...motives of an academic nature that students use for guiding their classroom behavior" (p. 38.) The specific type of goals the student sets determines the personal experience they have following success or failure of the task in which they participated.

It must first be noted that research on achievement goal theory seems to be one of the hottest issues of the present time. It is one of the most active areas of research simply because of its numerous variables. There is a vast amount of literature which offers a critical view on the Achievement Goal Theory. Some authors take the view that the notion is a myth. Other literature states that the Achievement Goal Theory does not correlate with the goal-setting literature (Harwood, Hardy, & Swain, 2000). Suffice it to say, there have been a number of different models of goals and goal orientations put forth by achievement motivation researchers. All said models vary in their definition and

labels of goals and goal orientation. There is no consensus on the number or role of multiple goals, and thus their role in motivating students. However, most researchers agree on one fact—in social cognitive models of motivation, goal constructs are important (Pintrich, Conley, & Kempler, 2003).

Because of the differences in models and constructs, there have been numerous differences in the wording used to define achievement goals and goal orientation. In fact:

> "...within research on achievement goals, there have been a number of different labels used for essentially the same construct, including the labels mastery, task-involved, and learning goals to represent a general goal of improving competence, learning, and mastery of the task, and performance, ego-involved, and relative ability goals to represent the goal of demonstrating competence and doing better than others" (Ames, 1992; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Nicholls, 1984; Pintrich, 2000; Pintrich, Conley, & Kempler, 2003, p. 320).

In spite of all these differences, the labels mastery and performance are still the most commonly used terms when discussing the definition and meaning of achievement goal theory. Also, even though there is disagreement in some areas, there is basic agreement on the nature of the goals (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Urden, 1997; Alderman, 2004).

When a student is attuned to mastery goals, effort is seen as contributing to success: It is not a measure of ability (Middleton & Midgley, 1997). The student wants to understand what they are learning in order to master a certain skill. They seek to increase their competence using their own efforts. In other words, when oriented toward mastery goals, a student sees achievement, or success, as learning something new or mastering the task at hand (Alderman, 2004).

Elliot (1999) discussed the separation of mastery orientation into approach and avoidance categories. Mastery approach orientation leads the student to attempt to finish the task in order to increase their knowledge. Mastery avoidance orientation causes the student to avoid a task because of the belief that they are not capable of successfully completing the task. Mastery avoidance orientation could be difficult to distinguish from performance avoidance orientation; however, Brophy (2005) believes that students with a mastery avoidance orientation "share an emphasis on mastery (with the mastery-approach oriented student), but engage in the task with an emphasis on avoiding mistakes, failures, or diminution of existing skills" (p. 167).

Performance goals are measured by the competence one student feels in comparison to other students. Performance goals lead students to attempt to appear competent or to avoid appearing incompetent when compared to others (Lepper, 1988; Dweck, 1986). Unlike students with a mastery orientation, students attuned to performance goals usually become very frustrated and defensive when they are faced with failure. They attribute their failures, and even their successes, to external factors such as task difficulty, luck, and an uncontrollable lack of ability (Dweck, 1986).

Performance goal orientation is divided into two categories—performance approach and performance avoidance goals (Alderman, 2004). Students who are performance approach oriented see themselves as having a good deal of ability. They wish to demonstrate their ability by measuring themselves against the performance of other students. Performance avoidance orientation is grounded on students seeing themselves as lacking in ability. Because of their view of themselves, they try to avoid public demonstrations of achievement that would confirm their lack of ability. Using

either orientation, competence is based on their comparisons with the performance of other students (Pintrich, 2000; Alderman, 2004).

Whether a mastery or performance goal is adopted by a student oftentimes depends on their personal theory of intelligence (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Molden & Dweck, 2000; Alderman, 2006). Under the heading theory of intelligence, there are two types, incremental and entity. Students who have an incremental theory of intelligence view intelligence as a set of skills and knowledge which can be increased through practice. That is, these students feel intelligence is not fixed, but rather increased through effort and the continued acquisition of knowledge. On the other hand, the entity view of intelligence is one in which intelligence is seen as a stable either-you-have-it-or-you-don't trait (Middleton & Midgley, 1997). Using this scenario, the student is driven to either display their ability or hide their lack of ability in comparison to other students.

Summing up, it is clear that a prominent feature in motivational theory is the role of goals. Achievement goal theory has been the focus of a great deal of research in the field of education. Goal orientation theorists have engaged in attempts to determine the types of goals that are most productive for student success. There seem to be too many variables in the research, such as definitions of terminology and there subsequent meaning, and the good and bad of each term. Since goals are hypothesized as having influence on student performance however, the research does, and must continue.

Goal Setting

A thirteen-year-old boy wants to own a Mustang by the time he is twenty one. A forty-year-old woman wants her yard to be gorgeously landscaped within one year on a budget of fifty dollars. Are these goals they are setting for themselves, or just dreams they hope will come to fruition? The question then becomes, what is the difference between a dream and a goal? One simplistic, yet perceptive answer, "A dream is just a dream. A goal is a dream with a plan and a deadline" (Mackay).

In the realm of education, goal setting can play an intregal part in enhancing a child's motivation. As cognitive representations of a future event, goals:

- direct attention and action toward an intended target
- mobilize effort in proportion to the difficulty of the task to be accomplished
- promote persistence and effort over time
- promote the development of creative plans and strategies to reach them
- provide a reference point that provides information about one's performance (Locke & Latham, 1990; Locke, Shaw, Saari, & Latham, 1981; Alderman, 2004).

It becomes evident then that goal setting, as a motivational tool, can play an integral part in fostering or enhancing a student's self-efficacy. By observation, as a student progresses at his chosen task, so too his self-efficacy levels progress, and thus his intrinsic motivation is heightened (Schunk, 1989).

Setting goals can help a student focus more on their task, find strategies to help them move forward, and allow them to monitor the progress they have made on reaching

their goal (Schunk, 2001). Thus, the student is able to self-evaluate his progress through each step in reaching his goal. By seeking assistance when needed and sometimes altering specific strategies, instead of quitting when the going gets rough, students may believe they can actually reach their goal. If the goal is reached, new goals, maybe even harder goals may be chosen.

The effects of goals are reached through their properties: specificity, difficulty level, and proximity (Schunk, 1989). Specificity goals are goals that incorporate specific performance standards. Unlike standard goals based on the "do the best you can" formula, specific goals can raise performance levels because they specify the amount of effort required to reach any given goal. The difficulty level of a goal can also make a difference when trying to heighten a student's self efficacy (Alderman, 2004). If a goal is too easy it will not motivate: If a goal is too hard it will not motivate. The goal must be challenging but it also must be realistic and achievable. Proximity refers to how far into the future the goal will be completed (Schunk, 2001). Short-term goals are reached more quickly and seem to motivate the student more than goals that are long-term. This may be because proximal goals allow clear and frequent self-evaluations of progress.

In the beginning of the goal-setting process, teachers may need to set goals for their students. If the student can accept and commit to the assigned goal the benefits of goal commitment remain in tact (Schunk, 2001). While assigning goals however, the teacher must be leading the student down a path that will culminate in student self-set goals. The strategies they use to help the student set realistic future goals may be the key to enhancing motivation through goal setting.

Research on the good and bad points of goal setting is boundless. For example, there are those who support the use of specific goals (Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2000; Locke & Latham, 1990; Bandura, 1997), and then those not totally convinced of all the pinpoint merits of specific goals (Locke & Latham, 1990). These same researchers, and more, have varying views on proximal goals and difficulty levels for goals. Again, no one seems to be in complete harmony on the subject of goal setting. The research will continue, but for the present, Glenn (2003) seems to have summed it up best when he said, "Goal setting is imperative to student motivation because where there is no vision, there is no purpose and where there is no purpose, there is no stimulation to act" (Springs & Kritsonis, 2008, p. 4).

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory is to date, probably the most influential theory with implications for academic motivation. It incorporates behavior modification by emphasizing the idea that learners are strongly motivated by the pleasant outcome of being able to feel good about themselves. Attribution theory also incorporates cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory. It emphasizes that learners' current self-perceptions will strongly influence the ways in which they will interpret the success or failure of their current efforts and hence their future tendency to perform these same behaviors (Weiner, 1985; Alderman, 2004).

The roots of attribution theory germinated with Heider in 1958 (Alderman, 2004). Heider was interested in knowing the reasons people gave for their successes or failures on a task. He believed the causes people held responsible for their successes or failures

were important as they were determinants of future behaviors. Through these humble beginnings, attribution theory has emerged as a useful theoretical outline for motivational studies in education (Graham, 1991).

There have been, and still are, a range of attributional conceptions. However, the most known and followed conception of attribution theory was that formulated by Bernard Weiner and his colleagues (Graham, 1991). Weiner's model "incorporates the antecedents of attributions, the dimension or properties of causes as well as specific causes per se, and both affective and cognitive consequences of particular self-ascriptions" (Graham, 1991, p. 6). Because Weiner's theory is more complete than most others, it remains the framework of choice for educational researchers.

Originally Weiner, (1979, 1985, 1986, 1992) identified four factors related to attribution theory that influence motivation in education: ability, task difficulty, effort, and luck. Learning strategies was subsequently identified as a fifth possible reason for success or failure (Alderman, 2002). These five factors can be analyzed in the following way:

Ability—how the student rates their knowledge and skill.

Task difficulty—how easy or difficult the student feels the task is.

Effort—how hard the student tried and the time spent to accomplish a goal.

Luck—how much the student felt luck was a contributing factor.

Strategy—the type of strategy student used for learning (Alderman, 2002, p. 29-30).

Of the above, ability and effort were seen to be the most frequent reasons for success or failure (Weiner, 1992; Alderman, 2002).

According to attribution theory, the explanations people tend to make to clarify success or failure can be analyzed in terms of three sets of characteristics:

1. The cause of the success or failure may be internal or external. That is, the cause is a factor within the person such as ability or effort exerted, or a factor outside the person such as the difficulty of the task.
2. The cause of the success or failure may be either stable or unstable. This refers to whether the supposed cause is a consistent or not consistent one over a span of time. If unstable could be credited to temporary factors which could then be modified.
3. The cause of the success or failure may be either controllable or uncontrollable. A controllable factor is one which the person believes they can alter if they wish to do so. An uncontrollable factor is one the person does not believe they can easily change (Weiner, 1979; Weiner 1992; Alderman, 2002).

All three dimensions of causality affect a variety of common emotional experiences, including pride, gratitude, anger, guilt, hopelessness, pity, and shame. The theory of attribution therefore relates the structure of thinking to the dynamics of feeling and action (Weiner, 1985).

An essential assumption of attribution theory is that the student will interpret their environment in such a way as to maintain a positive self-image (Weiner, 1985). Hence, they will attribute their successes or failures to factors that will enable them to feel as good as possible about themselves. This then means that when learners succeed at an academic task, they are likely to want to attribute this success to their own efforts or

abilities, but when they fail, they will want to attribute their failure to factors over which they have no control, such as bad luck.

In conclusion, the basic principle of attribution theory as it applies to motivation is that a student's own perceptions, or attributions, for success or failure determine the amount of effort the student will expend on that activity in the future. To date, as evidenced in the *Journal of Educational Psychology,* no other motivational idea has been researched more that attribution theory (Graham, 1991). It is obvious then that attribution theory could definitely be a major contributor to the internal motivation of a student.

Chapter IV

During the formative period of children's lives, the school functions as the primary setting for the development and social validation of cognitive competencies (Bandura, 1994). School is the place where children acquire the knowledge and problem-solving skills essential for participating effectively in the larger society. It is in school their knowledge and thinking skills are continually tested, evaluated, and compared.

The ultimate aim of schools should be to nurture and cultivate the "ethical self" (Pajares, 2000). If they succeed in doing this, they will then produce competent, caring, loving, and lovable people. Schools can aid their students in these pursuits by helping them to develop habits of excellence in their scholastic work, while at the same time promoting the self-beliefs necessary to maintain that excellence throughout their adult lives.

This chapter will begin with the role of the educator in the school setting. It will progress into the classroom and center on the concepts of giving choice, using cooperative learning, and building a supportive and safe environment. It will continue on to pinpoint still other instructional practices which are aimed at increasing student self-efficacy, and hence, student motivation.

Role of the Educator

Classroom teachers do not work alone: They operate collectively within an interactive social system (Bandura, 1994). The belief systems of school staff members create school environments that can have either stimulating or demoralizing effects on how well schools function as social systems. For example, if staff members judge

themselves powerless to get students to achieve academic success, they then convey a group sense of academic ineffectiveness that can encompass the entire life of the school. However, schools in which staff members collectively judge themselves capable of promoting academic success instill in their schools a positive tone for progress.

The principle goal of educators is to increase self-efficacy beliefs in students, thus enhancing students' intrinsic motivation. To accomplish this it becomes imperative that teachers also possess a great deal of personal self-efficacy. "The development of a strong sense of efficacy can pay dividends of higher motivation, greater effort, persistence, and resilience across the span of a teaching career" (Tschannen-Moran et al, 1998; Alderman, 2004, p. 157). The efficacy beliefs of teachers are directly related to their instructional practices and therefore to various student outcomes (Pajares, 2000). As Jeanette Norden, Professor Vanderbilt Medical School states when speaking of the role of the educator:

> "Intellectual growth, intellectual development, is stimulated by how we teach. . . . All educators would agree that enthusiasm, our own awe, our curiosity, our own personalities interact in a very fundamental way when we teach other people" (Lumsden, 1996, p. 2).

The question then becomes--How do teachers develop personal self-efficacy which can then lead to high teaching efficacy?

As with self-efficacy, teacher efficacy has two components; general teaching efficacy and personal teaching efficacy (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Alderman, 2002). General teaching efficacy encompasses the beliefs the teacher holds about the teachability of students or subjects even in the face of obstacles. Personal teaching efficacy is a judgment call: Can the teacher, personally, affect student learning?

Obviously, beliefs about student's capabilities, their own capability to teach students, and even how to teach students all hinge on the teacher's own efficacy beliefs.

The question of what knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and skills teachers should possess could be the subject of much debate (Pajares, 2000). This is understandable since teachers are entrusted with transmitting to children society's beliefs, attitudes, and moral obligations, as well as information, advice, and wisdom. Since it is no longer possible to know in advance what kinds of knowledge and skill pupils will need when they enter adult life, it becomes harder to know what kinds of knowledge and skill teachers should possess. Subsequently, traditional ways of working in the classroom may not suffice, and therefore it becomes the role of the educator to strive, by all the means at their disposal, to find what can and does work to motivate students.

It is quite easy to see and understand that not only students, but also teachers, need motivation. Many tasks that teachers must perform are not pleasant; they too need to be motivated in order to perform these tasks. It is desirable that motivation for teachers be as intrinsic as possible. Toward that end, teacher self-efficacy has become an important construct in teacher education, and teacher educators should continue to explore how these beliefs develop. By knowing what factors contribute to strong and positive teaching efficacy they can then implement challenging and effective strategies into their classrooms.

Giving Choice

Any good, effective teacher knows telling is not teaching. Teachers must capitalize on and utilize any effective methods at their disposal to help ingrain self-

efficacy and subsequently intrinsic motivation into their students. One of the methods teachers oftentimes use to promote motivation is that of giving choices. If done correctly, many researchers believe choice can be a major motivator (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002; Margolis & McCabe, 2006).

Giving choice is not a simplistic endeavor by any means. Choices must be meaningful to the learners as well as acceptable to the teacher. To be a source of motivation, choice options must meet the students' need for independence, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Katz & Assor, 2007). Thus, it can be assumed choice will be motivating when the options are relevant to the students' interests and goals, are not too numerous or complex, and are fitting with the values of the students' culture. Offered in a way that meets the needs of students, choice can enhance motivation, learning, and even well-being.

The theoretical point of view that best allows for a conceptualization of choice as a motivating experience, in and of itself, is the self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Katz & Assor, 2007). Working within the SDT framework, researchers have come up with three classroom settings which could help teachers give students choices that are motivating:

Provide Autonomy-Enhancing Choices—offer choice by allowing students to participate in task and goal selection. Then allow students to choose the way they want to do the work, and how they want to be evaluated for their work. A students' sense of autonomy increases when teachers minimize interference, show understanding for students' viewpoint and feelings, and provide a relevant starting point for the task.

Provide Competence-Enhancing Choices—offer choice that is not too difficult and complex. The teacher must take into consideration students' age, cognitive abilities, and competence in the field in which the choice is offered. The teacher then provides feedback that is informative but non-comparative.

Provide Relatedness-Enhancing Choices—offer choice that does not conflict with important values of the students' culture of origin. Because there may be various ethnic groups in a classroom, teachers need to encourage peer acceptance and minimize social comparisons and competition (Katz & Assor, 2007).

Recent studies suggest that, "what students perceive as being highly valuable is probably not the mere act of choosing, but mostly the value of the options to the participants' self and personal goals" (Katz & Assor, 2007, p. 432). In one study, Flowerday et al. (2004) separated the effect of choice from the effect of interest (Katz & Assor, 2007). This study concluded that the variable that influenced learning was situational interest, not choice. Therefore, when choice was separated from other aspects such as interest, values, and goals, the act of choosing was not the major motivating property of choice. But, when a given choice did provide an opportunity for self-realization, it was seen as a motivational aid.

Before giving choice then, the teacher needs to take the time to discover the students' interests. Especially in the case of struggling students, the teacher must be prepared to go beyond the norm to first identify interests and then to develop assignments that incorporate identified interests. Likewise, choices should be presented in ways that will not stigmatize any learners (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003; Margolis & McCabe, 2006).

There are many factors and variables involved when giving choice. Because of this there are researchers that hold the belief that giving choice is not an effective tool for instilling motivation into students (Katz & Assor, 2007). However, there are many researchers who believe, if done properly, giving choice can be an effective motivational aid. For them, the following list is imperative when giving choice:

a. Offer options that seem valuable to students because they enable students to work on tasks that interest them and that allow them to achieve their goals (Flowerday & Schraw, 2000; Katz & Assor, 2007).

b. Allow some freedom in the choice of methods of performing the task, dates of evaluation, and ways of presenting the work (Reeve, Nix et al., 2003; Katz & Assor, 2007).

c. Demonstrate and explain the relevance of chosen tasks to the personal goals and interests of the students (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Reeve, Jang, Hardré, & Omura, 2002; Katz & Assor, 2007).

d. Allow students to express negative feelings and criticism (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Katz & Assor, 2007).

e. Unnecessary interruptions and attempts to provide uncalled-for help should be avoided while student is working on chosen task (Katz & Assor, 2007).

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is another classroom aid that has been well researched and documented over the years as to its effectiveness as a motivational tool: It is a teaching approach that is unique in its own way. The term refers to classroom techniques in which

students work in small groups (recommendations adhere to a maximum of six students per group) and receive rewards or recognition based on each individual group's performance (Slavin, 1980). Even though cooperative learning is not a new idea in education, in the last few years it has been reanalyzed as to its effectiveness as a motivational construct.

There are many types of cooperative learning structures or techniques (Jigsaw, STAD, Group Investigation, to name a few) (Alderman, 2002). Although each has its own wording and subsequent ways to analyze and incorporate its usage, all techniques have certain elements in common. These basic principles include:

Positive Interdependence. All members of the group must believe they are part of a team; by helping others on the team they are helping themselves. They all have a common goal and they all fail or succeed, sink or swim together.

Individual Accountability. All group members must realize that the problem before them is a group problem, and yet, individually all members must actively participate and make a sincere effort to ensure the task is completed. In this way they have a sense that as a team, as well as individually, they have learned from the task: Their individual work had a direct effect on the team's success.

Equal Participation. In one way or another all members of the team participate. In this way no single student does all the work while the rest just watch. Team communication, trust, decision making, and resolution of conflicts are essential. This allows the members of the team to have a mutual feeling of ownership.

Simultaneous Interaction. To ensure the timely completion and success of the task each member must continually communicate with other members of the group,

reflecting on how well the team is functioning and how to function even better. This back-and-forth banter ensures that all in the group are discussing strategies or problems as they progress on the task (Kagan, 1992).

Cooperative learning, when seen as a collaboration strategy, could encourage several motivational outcomes (Turner & Meyer, 1995). First, the interaction of the social elements in the group might increase interest in the activity. Second, listening to others uncertainties and faltering steps may encourage some students in the group to take more intellectual risks. Third, hearing how others go about solving their individual problems while working on the task might give other students in the group ideas on how to enhance their own learning strategies. Fourth, having the others in the group like and even praise what a student is working on for the group might bolster the student's competence. Lastly, a sense of belonging in the classroom can come from working with others.

Cooperative learning can be both a motivational and energizing tool for students. It has been found to be a beneficial learning tool for diverse groups which include minorities, lower-achieving students, and even higher-achieving students (Alderman, 2002). When all parties contribute to a group effort students often come away with a greater appreciation of each other's talents and strengths. This then means that regardless of differences in ability level, sex, disabilities, ethnic origins, and social classes, cooperative learning promotes considerably more liking among students (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). No matter what their initial impressions of, and attitudes toward, each other were when they started, students who collaborate on their studies develop considerable commitment and caring for each other.

It becomes the task of the teacher to set the framework to make cooperative learning work. Each classroom and each learning experience is different and therefore there needs to be diversity in each group setting also. Cooperative learning does not have to simply mean small groups, same-age groups, same sex groups, or same ethnicity groups. When students are placed in supportive mixed groups and issues of active, fair participation are addressed by teachers, all students can benefit from the use of cooperative learning in the classroom (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). The teacher must utilize whatever is available, whatever means necessary, and whatever cunning and clever ideas and schemes needed to ensure that cooperative learning is a success.

Building a Supportive and Safe Environment

Students have self-set ideas about school even before they enter the school building. These ideas were forged and passed down from generation to generation: You go to school, behave, do what the teacher tells you, and learn how to make a decent living when you are done! Today, the wording may have been toned down somewhat; it now includes have fun in music, art, and gym classes. However, the basic idea of the concept of schooling remains the same: The student will enter the classroom with a lifetime of personal beliefs about the schooling process. Is it any wonder then that from this preconceived idea of what schooling entails, it is essential that students find enjoyment in learning. The first step in the process of making learning enjoyable begins when students walk into their classrooms.

When the student walks into the classroom for the first day of the school year, regardless of their age or grade, the first mental note they make is the appearance of said

classroom. It is imperative that school spaces are inviting (Wolk, 2008). Desks set up like toy soldiers in a row with chalkboards or whiteboards placed in the front of the room will only set the perception of boot camp, and thus intimidate students from kindergarten through college age. Especially, but not limited to, the younger ages, classrooms should be arranged in such a way as to make students want to be there. By using splashes of color, or comfy couches, or area rugs classrooms can be transformed into warm, cozy, or exciting areas. According to Valerio (2001), a classroom is a theatrical stage that must be designed in advance to make students feel comfortable with their instructor, peers, and environment. Hallways, meeting areas, and even the school grounds need the same transformation. The possibilities are endless, but the results can have dramatic effects on the student's perception of school.

Just like animals, humans like to run in packs. By forming units and organizations together, they are connecting with others; forming bonds which include love and a sense of belonging. Furthermore, through research people have come to understand "there is a lifelong connection between the quality of our relationships and our physical and mental well-being" (Ornish, 1997; Erwin, 2003, p. 20). The first bond students will make upon entering the classroom is with their teacher. It will be the teacher's responsibility to create conditions that will give students a sense of belonging and acceptance.

Besides the outward classroom appearance, oftentimes the very mood and appearance of the teacher, or classroom instructor, will set the initial tone for the preconceived mind-set of students. Not new to the research field, the "principle of immediacy" has reemerged as what could be a helpful construct when trying to get

students to want to come to school (Rocca, 2007). The basic concept states: "people are drawn toward persons and things they like, evaluate highly, and prefer; and they avoid or move away from things they dislike, evaluate negatively, or do not prefer" (Mehrabian, 1971; Rocca, 2007). In the realm of education, instructional immediacy has been classified as behavior that brings the instructor and the students closer together (Rocca, 2007). When used as a jump-start mechanism, it could be helpful in cementing the bond between educator and learner.

When speaking about immediacy in the context of a teaching aid, the first type is non-verbal immediacy. These consist of signs, gestures, and outward appearances, all used as forms of non-speaking communication while addressing the students. The following list is a recommendation for teachers on the use of non-verbal immediacy in their classrooms—

> Gesture while talking to the class
> Use vocal variety (non-monotone) when talking to the class
> Look at the class while talking
> Smile at the class while talking
> Have a relaxed body posture while talking to the class
> Continually move around the classroom when talking
> Look very little at board or notes while talking to the class
> Professional but more casual dress, appropriate to the context (or more professional dress initially to increase credibility, then more casual dress throughout the semester) (Rocca, 2007).

The above are just some suggestions; individual educators may come up with even more distinctive and unique formulas to integrate non-verbal immediacy into their classrooms.

The second type of immediacy is known as verbal immediacy (Rocca, 2007). There are literally dozens of ways educators can incorporate verbal immediacy into the classroom setting. Below is just a small random sample—

Learn each student's name as quickly as possible, and call on students by name.
Use terms like "we" and "us" to refer to the class
Allow for small talk and out of class conversations
Ask students how they feel about things
Let students get to know about you personally (Erwin, 2003).

Even though it is imperative that the teacher shows that she is the controlling figure in the classroom, by incorporating some of the above as well as other ideas into the classroom setting, educators become part of the unit, not just the dictator who rules over the classroom with an iron fist.

Basic survival is embedded in all humans as a physical, primary facet of life. As a psychological component, survival means the need for security and order in our lives (Erwin, 2003). To help students meet their need for survival teachers can:

1. Provide opportunities for students to get food, water, and fresh air. Provide or allow snacks, allow and encourage regular water breaks, and provide outside time or just open windows in the room.
2. Maintain conduct guidelines that support safety and respect. For the well-being of all students, if needed, discipline must be enforced.
3. Develop steadfast classroom measures and routines that add to a sense of order and security (Erwin, 2003, p. 20).

By adhering to the above, the teacher will be fulfilling the student's need to feel physically and emotionally safe. A needs-satisfying environment is essential for student learning.

All of the above are essential criteria, to be used as streamers whose endings are motivational enhancements; and students have not even opened a textbook yet. This is just the beginning, the introduction to their world of learning. It is an important beginning though, as it may set the pace for the rest of their academic days.

Instructional Practices

Extensive research for several years has proven classroom structures affect the development of intellectual self-efficacy. Since each period of child development brings with it new challenges for coping efficacy, it is imperative the educator encompass the "whole" of the student and not just the intellectual, get-the-knowledge-into-their-heads aspect when teaching (Bandura, 1994). Even though the objective of the teacher is to get students to learn, what price are they willing to pay to achieve that goal?

> "If the experience of 'doing school' destroys children's spirit to learn, their sense of wonder, their curiosity about the world, and their willingness to care for the human condition, have we succeeded as educators, no matter how well our students do on standardized tests?" (Dewey, 1938; Walk, 2008, p. 8).

Educators have the awesome responsibility to educate and inspire the whole child—mind, heart, and soul (Wolk, 2008).

Research continues on efficacy beliefs as motivational aids for teachers. The theories of goal setting, attribution, and cooperative learning, just to name a few, have gone through several phases of good versus evil in their assessments as motivational aids. It is imperative this research continues if new and effective ways of classroom implementation are to be found.

Then too, findings from psychological research can be used to review the likelihood of different events occurring in the future. In this sense, research in psychology can be used as a guide, but not the determiner, for educational practice. Pintrich & Schunk (1996) offer the following suggestions as just that, a guide for teacher practice, noting these principles will need to be adapted to each specific classroom context.

1. *Help students maintain relatively accurate but high expectations and efficacy and help students avoid the illusion of incompetence.* As research has shown, students are motivated to engage in tasks and achieve when they believe they can accomplish the task. Teachers need to provide accurate feedback to students to help them develop reasonable perceptions of their competence but, at the same time, communicate that their actual competence and skills will continue to develop.
2. *Students' perceptions of competence develop not just from accurate feedback from the teacher, but through actual success on challenging academic tasks. Keep tasks and assignments at a relatively challenging but reasonable level of difficulty.* Although practice on easy tasks is very helpful for building automatic, easy skills, children also need to be challenged by tasks in order to be motivated and to actually learn new skills. Tasks should be set at a level of difficulty where most children in the classroom can master the assignment with some effort: Therefore, tasks should not be too easy, as to be ineffective, and especially not too difficult so that most children fail at the task.
3. *Foster the belief that competence or ability is a changeable, controllable aspect of development.* The vast majority of the knowledge and skills that are taught in K-12 schools can be learned by all children who do not have serious disabilities. Of course, some children may take longer to master the knowledge or skills than others, but there are very few natural limitations that are stable traits of students. If students come to understand that they can master the material with some effort,

they will be more likely to engage in the material. The teacher needs to communicate this type of positive high expectation for all students, high and low ability, females and males, minorities, and others.

4. *Decrease the amount of relative ability information that is publicly available to students.* Some teachers facilitate social comparison by posting all students' scores and grades on wall posters in the room or by having students call out their test scores in class while writing them down in the grade book. These types of practices can increase the amount of social comparison information available to children and help to lower some children's (those doing less well) self-perceptions of competence.

Again, knowing that psychology is a probabilistic science, not a deterministic one, the above principles may not apply in all situations, but as a general guideline they may be extremely effective in bolstering or maintaining a student's self-efficacy (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

Motivational researchers debate, argue, and disagree on many areas of their research. There seems to be one common area, albeit worded differently depending on the research format and conditions, in which researchers agree: Students will not respond well to motivational attempts if they are fearful, resentful, or otherwise focused on negative emotions (Brophy, 2004). To create conditions that favor motivational efforts, teachers will need to establish and maintain their classroom as a learning community—a place where students come primarily to learn, and succeed in doing so through collaboration with the educator and their classmates.

There are many more formats, many more helpful suggestions, and much more researchable material out there for teachers to delve into and implement in the hope of finding one key ingredient, or element to put all the pieces of the puzzle together. It

literally becomes a hit-and-miss guessing game; but a game that is never over until it is won. As stated in the beginning of this paper, a teacher has the duty, responsibility, but most importantly the privilege of helping students foster and enhance their reading, writing, math, science, and social studies skills. Through the course of this paper it has been explained that to accomplish this goal, the teacher needs to understand every facet of the student; their feelings, attitudes, and academic ability and aspirations. As one educator aptly put it: "When you teach the right things the right way, motivation takes care of itself. If students aren't enjoying learning, something is wrong with your curriculum and instruction—you have somehow turned an inherently enjoyable activity into drudgery" (Brophy, 2004, p. 1).

Chapter V

Through the course of this paper the reader was inundated with stacks of information concerning the right and the wrong and pros and cons of various academic constructs. The formulation and incorporation of numerous theories and principles were explained in detail. Research as to the achievability of intrinsic motivation using self theories was discussed at length. In other words, the black and white of motivation is almost complete. But children are not simply black and white on a few pieces of paper: Children are literally a myriad of color, the brilliance of which can not be shown or contained on a mere document.

Knowing this to be true, my last chapter will begin with a rather simple list intended to show the reader the intricate "rainbow" which constitutes my former and present-day students. It will then progress to my classroom, briefly explaining the actual set-up tactics I use to get my students to want to come to school. In the last section of this chapter I will explain some of the methods I use in my classroom to try to instill the sense of worth into my students. My attempts to motivate are noted, as well as some new designs, based on what I have learned from my research, I hope to incorporate in the future.

My Students

I have had students that have been taken from their biological parents by the police because of drug use. Placing the child in the system has had detrimental affects also: Being shifted from foster home to foster home because the child was unmanageable. Sometimes the parents have regained custody and then lost it again because they went

back to drugs. Some children have had to go to court when the biological parents' rights were terminated. These students have had lots of broken promises and inconsistency in their lives. They often run away at school or get ready to fight when faced with something that they don't want to do or feel like they can't do. Many of these students have been let down so many times that they have lots of trust issues. They tend to put up a tough front and don't want to fail in front of their peers. This causes a lot of bully-type behaviors. They will often say that they don't care or will tell me "you don't care about me, you don't want me here" because this is all that they know.

I frequently have students that move in and out throughout the school year. Many of these students come from inner city Chicago to live temporarily with other family members. They are exposed to much violence and negativity which shows in their words, actions, and school work.

Over 50% of our entire school population is on free and reduced lunch (low economic status). Many of these families live day to day and don't plan for the future: They live in survival mode. School is not a top priority to these families.

Many of our poor families also have multiple children at home and parents are often divorced or separated. There is very little parental support, not because they don't care, just because they don't have the time. I have a student this year in second grade that has a sister in middle school and three brothers and sisters that are not school age yet. Their mother is in jail and they are all being raised by their father who works full time.

Last year I had one student who was homeless and living in a tent through the fall and start of winter. He struggled with staying awake during the day, had poor hygiene, was hungry, and missed a lot of school because his parents often could not get him there.

He wasn't worried about his performance at school; he was worried about freezing or starving to death.

Besides having students who face mayhem in their home lives, I also have students with a variety of different learning styles and needs. I have ELL (English Language Learners) students in my classroom whose English is limited. Oftentimes their parents and families speak little or no English at all. I also have special education students that are unable to read, write, or do basic math problems. They have a wide variety of needs.

On the other end of the spectrum, I have students that are very bright but choose to take the easy way. They don't put extra time or effort into any of their work. School comes easy for them and they do not take any risks. When they are challenged or faced with something that is unknown they don't know where to begin and consequently do not want to try. They are comfortable with just getting by instead of putting forth a genuine effort to succeed.

As can be seen, my second-grade class always consists of a colorful mixture of students. For the most part their needs and wants and goals are as individualistic as they themselves are. Yet individualism is a luxury I simply can not afford. While always respecting their diversity, my job is to take this mixture and somehow combine them into caring, motivated students.

My Classroom

From research I know the importance of having an inviting classroom for my students: Wanting to learn can only be achieved if students want to be in school. My goal then is to have the most want-to-be-there classroom ever. The interior is an ever-

changing, evolving concept, but I believe the basics are in place. In some areas the scheme and colors are vibrant and bold, while in other areas more subtle, subdued colors create the theme. Areas for independent work and reading are set close to either color vicinity and students are free to choose whichever area they wish to work in. I can sometimes discern the mood of the child on any given day by the area they migrate to.

Then too, there is a corner I call my season's corner. Here the changing of the seasons is vividly emphasized with a kaleidoscope of colors and all manner of hodgepodge associated with the season. In the fall you may find a cornucopia or a miniature bow-and-arrow set displayed as a means of introducing the Thanksgiving season. A small table sits in front of my display and students are encouraged to bring in their seasonal memorabilia. Our table has been adorned with everything from dead leaves to broken baseball bats. A child is free to explain why he chose to bring in a certain item, or free to just place an item on the table with no explanation whatsoever.

Research on this paper has given me even more creative ideas for brightening up my classroom. I wish I had the room for big comfy furniture, but space is at a premium so my ideas must be corner related or able to be stored elsewhere. I have been negotiating with a local merchant who owns his own carpet business and he has agreed to cut twenty-five different colors or designs of carpeting to my specifications from remnants. My idea is to give each child their own rug to use and to take care of. My problem again is where to keep these rugs. But if the school can find me a storage area not too far from my classroom, I believe these rugs can be useful tools in teaching my students responsibility as well as areas for floor fun.

I have, and will continue to seek new innovated ways to make my classroom an inviting place for my students. All of my creative and inventive ideas will mean nothing to some of my students; the ones that literally hate anything to do with school. For some, my classroom will be a refuge, a safe place away from the drudgery and even violence that awaits them outside of school. For these, and for the students who want to learn for the sake of learning, it may be the jump-start needed to begin their life-long education process.

My Methods

How to motivate students has been uppermost on my mind since receiving my teaching degree. How to make the young mind understand the benefits and even the joys of learning is one of my ultimate goals as a teacher; for I know that only when the student really wants to learn will their school days and their whole lives be rich and rewarding. I have done extensive reading on motivation and have tried to incorporate some of my findings into my classroom. My research on this paper has given me even more helpful ideas on my never-ending quest to make my students want to learn.

Setting goals can oftentimes be a tricky endeavor: Balancing time to meet with and collaborate on goals set by second-graders I believe is the only way to get them going in the right direction. However, finding the time to have students practice or continue to work toward their specific goals is difficult, especially when individual students have their own agenda for their varying goals. Then too, a student might have one set goal they are working on only to have that particular goal waylaid by the new material they need to learn by the end of the school year constantly thrown at them.

I have many students attuned to performance goals: They measure their worth and ability by comparing themselves to other students. From my research, I now understand more clearly the two types of performance goals and am able to recognize their differences in my students. Some of my students are performance approach oriented and see themselves as having a good deal of aptitude. They wish to demonstrate their abilities by measuring themselves against the feats of other students. All too often though, these students believe themselves to be smarter and therefore better than other students. It is very difficult for me as a teacher to make them understand that even though they should be proud of their individual accomplishments it does not mean they are better than the rest of the class.

On the other hand, many of my students are performance avoidance oriented. They don't see themselves as smart or as gifted as other students so they try to avoid other students seeing their work. They become annoyed, frustrated, and even belligerent when they think they are not measuring up to other students. I actually think it is easier to help these students than students who are performance approach oriented. I can find ways to boost self-esteem: It is much harder to change the preset mind frame of a student who thinks they are better or smarter than others.

Every year I do have some students who are attuned to mastery goals: They really want to learn for the sake of learning. They want to master any goal chosen for them using their own efforts. It is up to me to take all of these students and try to come up with ways or scenarios to instill the importance of setting goals and seeing them through. With helpful insights from my research, and keeping in mind the age of my students, I tried something new last year that seems to be effective.

At the beginning of the year, each student in my class was given a data binder. These binders were used to keep track of their progress throughout the school year. Each student made goals with me and these goals were entered into their binder. Some students had multiple goals and others had just one; depending on what we both felt their beginning capabilities were. Some goals were academic and some were behavioral. We started off small so that everyone could be successful in their first attempt. We started off the year with everyone having the same goal, to learn all of their classmate's names. When students passed their goal we had a small celebration for them. The other students did not know each others goals but shared in the celebration with their peers.

We updated our data binders once a week and updated our progress on different graphs in our binder. I also met with individual students to discuss their goal and to assess them on it. If they passed it, we came up with a new goal. All of the expectations for the year were in their binder so they chose their goals from second grade expectations.

We had a bulletin board called "All Stars" in our room that had each students name on it with a certificate hanging with it. When they reached one of their goals the class celebrated as that child and I signed his/her certificate. They then were allowed to take the certificate home with them. Subsequently, a new certificate was posted for the next goal the student was working toward. Our celebrations were small, but really made the students feel good. It didn't make a difference how easy or how difficult the task was that the student was working on because no one else in the class knew what that task or goal was. In this way no one was smarter or better than anyone else, and the other students always seemed very excited for their classmates when they reached a goal. I

have seen enough positive results with this method of goal setting and I will continue to use it while investigating even more new and inventive ways to instill the importance of both setting and seeing goals through to me students.

Disruptive behavior can be a problem in many classrooms; mine is no exception. Even though the worst offenders, those who are physically abusive, must be dealt with by higher authority, the misdemeanors are my challenge. Even before extensive research I realized through trial and error harsh discipline was not an effective deterrent. Research got me thinking about ways of rewarding good behavior versus punishing bad. Then too, I realized by doing this, my students might begin to understand the advantages of making good choices.

In our classroom last year we had a positive behavior jar we used to deter disciplinary problems, as well as to help students make good choices in other areas. This may not have been the best method to use, but it seemed better than some of the other suggestions and ideas I researched in this area to help my students learn the advantages of making good choices. When students did a first-rate job at anything, including but not limited to academics, I told them they could add a marble to the jar. Other students could also give a referral to have a student put a marble in if they helped them do something or if that student really thought someone truly deserved it. The students worked together to fill the jar and subsequently all students received a reward when the jar was full. The rewards were not extravagant, but rather consisted of extra computer time or extra recess time.

In the beginning of the year, I had my students add marbles quite often so they could fill the jar fairly quickly. As the year progressed however, I backed off and didn't

hand out as many marbles. The idea here was to have students progress from the use of extrinsic rewards to more intrinsic motivation to do well. The past year was my first year using the jar-method of motivation and the results were encouraging.

Learning to interact with a large number of unfamiliar peers can be a tremendous challenge for young children entering a structured educational setting. They have different upbringings and lifestyles, both socially and emotionally. Their interests and learning abilities are as varied as they themselves are. It is up to me to devise strategies to help them learn to interact with each other competently. This will not only help them in their acquisition of academic skills and knowledge; positive interaction with others is imperative for success in life. I believe cooperative learning to be a key element or strategy needed to commence the commingling process.

I am sorry to say to date my attempts to organize my students into learning groups have not worked well. I tried a cooperative spelling class last year: One where students worked together in small groups to help each other learn the words in order to take the spelling test individually on another day. Each student's score on the test was increased by bonus points if the group succeeded in meeting my specified criteria. In this cooperative learning situation I felt all students would be concerned with how they spelled and how well the other students in their group spelled. Unfortunately however, this was not the case.

The above attempt, as with other small-group, cooperative learning attempts I have tried for the most part have not been very successful. First, the time frame allotted does not allow me to sit and supervise every group. Maybe because of their age, or their

backgrounds and upbringings, or for some other unfathomable reason, supervision is needed or chaos is inevitable.

I am careful when comprising the groups so each mixture includes different ethnic origins, social classes, and ability levels, just as research has taught me. However, I still have yet to find a format or common ground which makes these students want to work together. The higher achievers blame the lower achievers for holding them back or not doing their share; the lower achievers say the higher achievers are too bossy and demanding. The girls blame the boys and the boys blame the girls for everything that goes wrong. I have even had a few ethnic slurs thrown in when students get angry. Since I can not be with every group every minute they are together, my attempts at cooperative learning have mostly consisted of whole class participation in a given project.

This semester I am going to try something different, as I know the importance of small-group cooperative learning. I am trying to arrange with other teachers in the higher grades to borrow me some of their students, or maybe even the teachers themselves if they are willing, to come and sit-in with each small group I have. I know my students need supervision, and who better to supervise than other, older students, or other teachers. For starters, if nothing else, this will keep the mayhem from ensuing. Perhaps, hopefully, after a reasonable amount of time my students will begin to comprehend the worth of each member of their group. Then, and only then, can the rest of the positive advantages to cooperative learning start to develop.

I wish I could sum this all up by saying I have developed a practical application for every piece of research and teaching aid I wrote about in this paper. Teaching would be so easy if the educator could develop a game-plan or strategy that worked in every

classroom. I have discovered all my findings and all my research, even though very enlightening and informative, are only meant to be guidelines. Using these guidelines as my basics, it will be up to me to find what works to motivate my students. There will continue to be trial-and-error; disappointments and successes. What works this year in a certain area may prove to be a disappointment next year: For as the group of students changes each year, so too will there be a need for changes in my teaching methods. But I will continue to try to find ways to enlighten my students to the joys of learning; to motivate my students to want to learn. I must do this, for I am a teacher.

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