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How can teachers motivate secondary language arts students? : 5 prototypes

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Abstract

This research project began as a stream of unmotivated students walked through the door of a classroom. The author began to understand that while the current focus in American education is on standards and curriculum issues, the motivation of secondary students is often a lost and unrepresented topic in today's rhetoric. After being in the classroom for over seven years, the author was able to discern five prototypes of students. All five had different motivational styles and worked for different reasons. Using firsthand observations and scouring the current literature, the author was able to come up with some specific and varied ways to help each type of student.

The research also yielded general interventions that could be applied classroom-wide. All findings indicate that students need to feel a connection with the teacher, need to feel safe in the classroom and need to see the value in education. While there are several ways to work with students, the willingness to see motivation as a crucial element of education and a desire to help all students succeed is of the utmost importance in today's classroom.

How Can Teachers Motivate Secondary Language Arts Students?: 5 Prototypes

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This research project began as a stream of unmotivated students walked through the door of a classroom. The author began to understand that while the current focus in American education is on standards and curriculum issues, the motivation of secondary students is often a lost and unrepresented topic in today's rhetoric. After being in the classroom for over seven years, the author was able to discern five prototypes of students. All five had different motivational styles and worked for different reasons. Using firsthand observations and scouring the current literature, the author was able to come up with some specific and varied ways to help each type of student. The research also yielded general interventions that could be applied classroom-wide. All findings indicate that students need to feel a connection with the teacher, need to feel safe in the classroom and need to see the value in education. While there are several ways to work with students, the willingness to see motivation as a crucial element of education and a desire to help all students succeed is of the utmost importance in today's classroom.

Acknowledgements:

I became an educator because I care about children and I want them to be successful. I remain a teacher because I see there is much work to do in the field of education and I wish to make a difference.

Reading has always been a passion for me and it is hard to imagine that not everyone loves to read. However, it is reality. Some students have become resistant to reading by the time they walk through my classroom door. These are the students I wish most to influence. I want them to see the difference reading can make in their lives.

My family has always made me see that there is nothing quite as valuable as education. We are a family of teachers and see the quality education can bring to life. I am proud of my high school diploma from North Tama High School and my Bachelors Degree from Coe College. Perhaps, however, this degree from the University of Northern Iowa is the document most dear to me.

I am grateful to the faculty and staff at the University of Northern Iowa. Dr. Thomas Berg invited me into the program because he is passionate about making better teachers and I admire that. Dr. Rahdi Al-Mabuk took on the task of helping me with this paper because he is concerned with motivation and his insights were wonderful. Dr. Ralph Scott gave me the opportunity to present at a state conference and opened my eyes to the wonderful world of educational psychology. I am appreciative to all of you.

The faculty, staff and students of North Tama High School were extremely helpful and supportive during the writing of this paper and during my journey to earn a Masters degree. Everyday, someone makes me glad to have the job I have and I feel blessed to work in a school with such wonderful students and peers.

Lastly, I would like to thank my husband and my son. They are truly my inspiration every single day. Doug, you were very supportive during this long process and encourage me to be all that I can. Kinnick, I want you to have the same passion for reading and education that I write about in this paper. I love you both.

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INTRODUCTION

Teachers across America are constantly searching for ways to motivate students. Students are motivated for almost as many different reasons as there are children in a classroom. Some want the grade to get money from parents, while others simply want to remain academically eligible so they may participate in sports. Sometimes, teachers want the child to strive for more and to reach levels he/she never thought possible. It is nice when that is the biggest concern a teacher has but more than ever, teachers are faced with a much more daunting task. More and more, students are coming to school, especially high schools across America, with no desire to be there or to participate in their own learning. They don't want to do any work and they seemingly aren't interested in any topics presented by the teacher. Most schools today (Vander Ark 2002) serve students who are more diverse, come from more varied life circumstances, and are less motivated by traditional means" (Ediger 3). These students are the most difficult and most frustrating to work with. However, when the teacher does find a way to succeed with this type of student, it can be the most rewarding moment of a teaching career.

Many teachers feel motivation is something that cannot be taught. In essence, these teachers are correct. There is no way to jump into the heads of students and force them to want to learn and achieve. However, teachers can put things in place that are most likely to enhance the motivation that exists in each individual. "Standards, accountability, and testing are important. However, if we fail to improve student learning and motivation, nothing else matters" (Principal Leadership 3). Another concern teachers have is that with the more diverse classrooms in today's world, it becomes harder and harder to motivate with the fear of alienating students. Teachers simply need to learn all

they can about different cultures and backgrounds present in their classrooms and then go farther and learn about the lives of the students. Just because a student is Asian-American does not mean he or she will follow every stereotype set forth by that particular group. Furthermore, secondary teachers, especially, feel they cannot waste their time teaching students about motivational strategies or techniques. They think if they don't come from middle school with the strategies already in place, they are lost to them. They are not willing to waste any valuable time, which could be spent on academic curriculum, to teach students to want to learn. However, teachers need to be made aware that their jobs become much easier if those things are in place. Students become involved in the curriculum and the teacher would spend less time with discipline problems and angry parents. If students are not learning the material, teachers must determine what can be used to motivate them so learning occurs. Some researchers claim, "...a student is motivated when they express interest in a school task, feel excited about it, or think that it is important and worthwhile...feelings and beliefs about interest and value lead to more student engagement and learning" (Linnenbrink and Pintrich 120). We must first motivate students so they are able to motivate themselves farther down the road. "...Good teaching is charged with positive emotion. It is not just a matter of knowing one's subject, being efficient, having the correct competencies, or learning all the right techniques. Good teachers are not just well oiled machines. They are emotional, passionate beings who connect with their students and fill their work and their classes with pleasure, creativity, challenge and joy" (Doherty and Mayer 3). Teaching is so much more than the passing on of information about a certain subject. So while it may be

readily apparent motivation instruction goes along with everything else a teacher is paid

to do, it really is something that should be at the top of the list.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Through experience as a teacher, an eight-year career, the author has identified

five scenarios that most often walk through the classroom door. While there is no way to

pigeonhole every single student into one of these prototypes, the majority of students can

be placed into one of the following categories. The use of student profiles can be helpful

to all teachers because generally, all students share motivational styles. While it is

impossible to encompass all aspects of each individual student, some concepts cut across

certain types of students. This type of profiling allows teachers to have an informed

discussion and examination of many types of students who walk through our doors. We

are then able to share a common language, exchange ideas, take information from each

other, as well as educational research and then adapt it to work with specific students in

our classrooms.

KIM:

Kim is always on time to class. Her work is done well and on time. She reads extra and

offers insightful comments to class discussions. Kim wants to read books outside of

school time and beyond requirements for the course. She likes to talk with the instructor

about things she has read. She has a pure love of learning and of literature. She learns

because she is interested in the topics discussed in class and is willing to use her personal

time to deepen her understanding of the topics. Typically, Kim is a smart kid who

receives high marks on standardized tests. Once in a while, a "Kim" will display these

characteristics in all subject areas, but typically they are only true in one area, like math

or language arts. She might act like one of the other profiles in subjects she does not like. Kim is a rare find in the world of secondary education. She is intrinsically motivated. She likes to learn because it is fun to find new information and she is interested in finding out more about things even if it isn't an assignment.

MARK:

Mark is always on time to class. His work is done well and on time. He reads what is assigned and offers insightful comments to class discussions. Mark wants to get the most points possible on every assignment and is overly concerned about how long papers should be and wants a grade update at least weekly. Mark is concerned about getting scholarships and gaining entrance into good colleges. He is motivated to be successful, no matter the subject. He wants good grades in all his classes and is willing to work hard to get them. Once in awhile, he will turn into "Kim" and be motivated because of his passion for the topic, but this isn't always true. His parents are also very concerned about his grades and grade point average. They want him to maintain his spot as #1 in his class. (Some parents of this child actually pay the student for good grades. Sometimes, the child only seems to work to make the parents happy.) Mark is motivated by achievement. He is a good student but does not retain information for the sake of learning. He only wants the end reward or the reward offered by his parents. There is no real joy found in learning for him. Typically, he has a very high intelligence level and does well on standardized tests.

DARREN:

Darren is usually late to class and is often absent. His assignments are rarely done and he doesn't read assigned material. If an assignment is done, it is usually copied from

someone else if it can be. He doesn't contribute anything to class discussions. He isn't

rude but sits quietly thinking about other things. Darren likes to drink beer with his

friends and hunt and fish. When I tell him he will have to repeat the class, he says that's

okay. I write letters home and call his mother but it does nothing to increase his

motivation. I tell him the course is required for graduation but he says it doesn't matter.

I try to find materials he would be interested in reading and the librarian introduces him

to books about being outdoors, however, he doesn't even read those texts. He once

commented, "It's not your fault, Mrs. P. I just don't want to do any work. I like you, just

not reading or doing homework." Darren is an indifferent learner. Typically, he scores

below proficient on standardized tests and doesn't have the top intelligence in the class.

He doesn't care if he learns or not. He doesn't care about school and finds no value in the

activities presented by his teachers. His apathetic view paints the entire scene of

education for him.

BAILEY:

Bailey is on time to class. Her work is almost always done but it is usually done as fast

as she can do it. Once in awhile, she will turn in a really great paper or assignment she

has spent some time on. She is more worried about sports, boys and who said what on

MSN last night. She has a decent GPA, so she wants to get decent grades. She will work

just enough to get Bs and some As. Academics are not her interest but she does want to

go to college. Bailey's parents can typically be heard to exclaim, "Just think what you

could do if only you applied yourself." She doesn't try her best most of the time,

although she is very capable of learning and achieving. This creates a situation where her

priorities are not learning, although she does see some value in making herself a learned

person. Typically, students like Bailey are above average in intelligence and score well on standardized tests.

JEREMY:

Jeremy is sometimes late to class. He flunked the class once but wants to pass this time. His work is turned in sporadically and is done quickly. Sometimes, he copies from others so the work is done. He is worried about his grade but only works enough so it is a D or D- so he can pass the class. He asks which assignments are worth the most points so he can turn those in. He could do more but is only worried about passing and staying eligible for sports. Jeremy might like the topics but doesn't want to work outside of class to get them done. Jeremy is just hoping to get by with the minimum amount of work possible. He doesn't have a desire to learn, just to pass so he is able to participate in other activities. Usually, students like Jeremy are at or slightly above where they should be on standardized tests and posses much intelligence.

DISCLAIMER:

Students will often drift back and forth from one profile to another from year to year. They could also switch profiles based on the subject matter of the course. Also, sometimes the student has some qualities of several profiles. For example, a "Kim" might also be motivated to be at the top of the class, so she exhibits some characteristics of "Mark".

Now that these different types of learners have been identified, we are left with several questions. Some of the questions have answers and there are some solutions to some problems they present. The sad truth, however, is some of the questions will remain a mystery, which leaves the teacher with no viable options in some scenarios.

However, we are left with a laundry list of questions when considering that we must deal with all these different types of children on a daily basis.

* How do motivational styles develop?

* How do motivational types influence students' learning?

* How are self-handicapping motivational styles identified and modified?

* At some point, doesn't the teacher have to allow the student to fail? Is it ethical for the teacher to "quit"?

APPLICATION OF THE LITERATURE TO THE PROBLEM

We begin our discussion with our "dream student", Kim. Since she is doing all we ask of her and more, we want to try to discover how she got to be the way she is so we can create more students with her attitude and behaviors. "...students with positive learner self-concepts (those who said they liked and were good at learning) tended to use a deep approach to learning and those with low learner self-concept tended to adopt a surface approach to learning" (Burnett et al. 57). There is a desire to get the depth of material presented in class, versus a student who simply takes what is given by the teacher. Also, we want to find out how to keep her love of learning and reading so she remains successful throughout her lifetime. Like Kim, "Students who have optimum motivation have an edge because they have adaptive attitudes and strategies, such as maintaining intrinsic interest, goal setting, and self-monitoring" (Alderman 6). Kim is able to change based on the situation she faces. She has many abilities that allow her to adapt to almost anything. Students like Kim believe learning is more than mastering what is presented in the classroom. She believes learning makes her a better person and

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enhances her life now and in the future. They embrace the slogan, "Knowledge is power". They understand learning will only make them better.

One way to keep students like Kim motivated despite the changing subject is to incorporate "real world" skills and activities. This would also work with low-achieving students because it allows them to see school learning can apply to their futures. Research finds "....students learn more when they are creating their own learning opportunities" (T.H.E. Journal 1). It makes sense that when students are actively involved in learning, they take more from it and the impact is much greater. The idea of combining technology and service projects is somewhat new and allows teachers to help students embrace education. "Project-based service learning emphasizes educational opportunities that are interdisciplinary, student-centered, collaborative and integrated with real-world issues and practices" (T.H.E. Journal 1). These are all things we want all students to be able to do when they leave high school. More and more, employers are looking to hire people with a wide range of skills and the ability to work well with all types of people will never diminish in importance. "....many of the abilities that students acquire through technology-integrated, project-based service learning are 21st century interpersonal skills. These include teamwork and problem solving skills, as well as effective oral and written communications skills, which are highly desirable by business communities (Momentum 1). The more we can prepare students for things they will face when they graduate, the more successful we are. It is projects like this that will allow students like Kim to go above and beyond what they think they can do. "....service learning and technology are both motivators for student learning" (Momentum 2). Part of our jobs as teachers is to make sure we don't lose students like Kim. We can't focus too

much on the lower-ability students because it would be a disservice not to push Kim to be more and more.

We now turn our discussion to Mark. While he does all we ask of him, it would be great to instill a love of learning in him so he doesn't work simply for reward. Research shows us "...when students' goals are dominated by the performance orientation of seeking to outperform others or to demonstrate competence, they are less engaged in learning" (Guthrie 5). They are worried about the outcome, not the process. On the other hand, "When students believed that teachers thought that understanding the work was more important than simply answering correctly, students were likely to believe in their capacity to do the most difficult work" (Guthrie 4). We need to move Mark to the belief that the journey is more important than the destination. However, with so many other challenges in our classrooms, this seems to be something we can do if there is time. Sadly, it becomes a question of time and priorities. We can't give every single student in our classroom exactly what they need all the time, so we must focus on those with the greatest need and then work to incorporate those who need only minimal help.

Since students like Mark will not always be able to be at the top of everything they do, maybe the best gift we can give them is the ability to deal with the failure they will inevitably face. With all the best intentions of students and teachers, all people must be able to deal with failure. Alderman claims, "Failure is a part of school -- failing tests, not being the valedictorian, not placing in the state music competition..." are all part of the academic process for children (Alderman 136). Teachers must step up and help students deal with the failure that will come to them throughout their school careers.

They must understand failure is a part of the learning process and there is never a way to avoid all situations which might include failure.

> For failure experiences, or when students encounter difficulties, teacher feedback should focus on: (1) the inadequate or incorrect use of an appropriate strategy; (2) inadequate effort or perseverance; and, (3) affirmation to the student that she or he has sufficient ability to accomplish the task. The intent of such feedback is to assist students in developing beliefs that unsuccessful outcomes are not due to lack of ability, which is usually perceived as an enduring, unchangeable factor in achievement, but to strategy use and effort, which are more under the control of the student (Chapman and Tunmer 18).

We can't stop children from experiencing the pain of failure, so we must teach them to respond in positive and constructive ways. Students must possess the ability to believe things are in their control and that the future contains many possibilities for them to be successful. Without these qualities, students may fall into a cycle of failure. Students must be resilient learners in order to avoid this tragic circle. They must have the belief in themselves and in the future so they are able to continue after failing. While this is not so critical for students like Mark, because they will typically move on to a situation where they can be successful, it remains a critical point for lower level students.

We also need to make sure students like Mark have an accurate view of their abilities. While we worry about low-functioning students who have a poor view of their skills, research also finds having self-efficacy that is falsely high is also a problem. "Assuming that learners feel efficacious about surmounting problems, holding some doubt about whether one will succeed can mobilize effort and lead to better use of strategies than will feeling overly confident" (Schunk 162). Students like Mark need to feel at least a little challenged so they engage themselves to complete or solve the task we give them. If they are too confident, they may not even attempt the problem because they

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feel it is beneath them. Or, they could feel it is so easy and then not completely solve the problem when it poses a slight threat. If we offer them material or challenges at the correct level, they will engage in the task and use the skills we have taught them. It needs to make them work or they, too, will shut off in the classroom.

A secondary concern we might have for Mark is that he does not seem to enjoy learning for the sake of learning. With him, it is about points and grades and achievement levels. One way we might be able to reach him is through technology. If we can reach Mark at the advanced level where he is at, we might be able to push him even farther. Often times, Mark-type of students are not interested in reading. With the use of advanced techniques, we might be able to get Mark to experience a love of reading. "There is a growing body of small-scale research that suggests that e-mail in educational settings (usually tertiary) can build supportive and intimate communities (Lapp, 2000 and Snyder, 2000). We might be able to e-mail students like Mark ourselves, or we could connect him with older students, like college students or other advanced students around the world. When looking at how students spend their time "...55% of the respondents reported spending three hours or less per week on homework, readings, rehearsals, or other school assignments. 'Students devoted more time to personal reading online than to assigned readings for their classes'" (Reading Today 1). It makes sense that we would tap into a "genre" of interest to most of our students. By allowing Mark a venue to express himself and have discussion with other knowledgeable people, we are enhancing the education he is receiving in a heterogeneous setting. Using the internet to express personal opinions

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...affirmed their viewpoints or challenged them to think differently, they felt the person genuinely cared about their perspectives. This reinforced their own sense that they had something important to express....The technology had the ability to negotiate differences; the faceless aspect of the exchange allowed the partners to focus on the things that drew them together, in this case, making meaning from literature, not on their differences. Rather than the cross-age differences being alienating, they instead enriched the relationship and the learning. (Doherty and Mayer 6)

E-mail can be the link we need for advanced students. It could also work with lower-level students. "Communication technology offers a space where care and content can coexist and be mutually supportive" (Doherty and Mayer 9). We have to find unique ways to reach all types of students.

Darren is a student who requires much of our time. He is at serious risk of school failure, which will lead him to have only greater failures in life. "By the time students get to secondary school, many are suffering from the cumulative effect of years of struggle and failure in school" (Allen 10). The biggest problem Darren faces is not only is he not motivated to succeed in the classroom, but that if he is to succeed, it will require serious effort on his part because he is starting at a low skill level. Perhaps we don't need to know why he is at a lower level, only that he is and we must move him in a positive direction. Research has found "...unless effective remedial instruction is provided before such children reach 9 years of age, 'approximately 75% of the children will continue to have difficulties learning to read throughout high school'" (Chapman and Tunmer 6). Darren's problems started much earlier but we have to work with him now, not in the past. At the high school level, we take students where they are and work to move them in a positive direction. Research has found students end up like Darren for a myriad of reasons but the patterns include: "...lack of interest and motivation, insufficient and

inappropriate resources, insufficient reading experience, insufficient background knowledge, inability to break text codes, inadequate support and inappropriate interventions and lack of independent reading strategies" (Allen 11). One solution proposed by government officials has been to raise the standards students are expected to achieve. However, this has not increased student motivation. Many teachers claim students have changed from the once well-behaved and achievers they once were. The two recurring themes seem to be "...(a) students do not have tools like concentration, persistence, volition, goal orientation, delay of instant gratification, and strategies for acquiring and retaining new information needed to be successful; and (b) many teachers have not acquired instructional strategies to foster positive motivation" (Alderman 9). When working with students like Darren, teachers need to be armed with a wide range of techniques and strategies. This will not occur unless the teacher is active in searching for solutions to challenges students present in the classroom.

Students who don't seem to care and refuse to attempt activities in class are maybe the most frustrating thing teachers face on a daily basis. These students only try enough to make it look good or they may not even fake it for the teacher. It becomes a difficult act for the student. When one considers image is the most important thing, one realizes failure is almost never an option, especially for adolescents. Therefore, students must act like they don't care or try and then if they fail, it isn't their fault. They can claim they weren't trying and that is the reason for their failure. This way, students do not face ridicule from their peers because there is always the illusion they might have been successful if they had tried. A strategy closely related to this one is self-handicapping. This is where students have excuses ready before they even begin a task.

A sneaky form of this strategy is procrastination. Students wait until the last minute to complete a task. This way if they fail, it is because they didn't put in the time needed to succeed. If they do succeed, it must be because they are smart because they didn't put any time or effort into the task. Many teachers find even good students use this strategy so they can have an excuse if they don't do as well as usual. A third technique used by many students is goals that aren't right for them. They set goals so low, anyone could reach them. This gives them a false sense of accomplishment and they never have to face failure. On the other hand, some students set outrageous goals that can never be reached. This allows them to claim no one could achieve them and therefore, they are not dumb or lazy. They can claim that at least they strove toward something difficult even though they might have failed. The final strategy used by some students is cheating.

We need to be aware that protecting himself in the school setting might be the thing Darren values most, and therefore, the most crucial thing to remember when teaching him. When teachers make the situation competitive, the main goal of most students is to "...avoid failure and protect their self-worth from the perception that they have low ability" (Alderman 5). This leads to students adopting two main strategies, including "setting unrealistic goals (either too high or too low) and withholding effort" (Alderman 5). In Darren's case, he chooses to disengage because then he can blame his lack of effort rather than his lack of intelligence. He feels there is no way for him to succeed in this environment, so he chooses the safe route of not participating at all. The key is to get the focus of a classroom away from proving ability to developing ability and making progress. Teachers need to make sure the concern in about mastery and not competing with others. "...when students perceive that their school emphasized mastery

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goals, they were more motivated and had higher achievement scores (Principal Leadership 3). When students choose not to participate, it can lead to what many researchers call "learned helplessness". This is "...the feeling that there is little or nothing that can be done to improve their performance on tests. If unchecked, this perception of inadequacy will grow through the years and become a self-fulfilling prophecy; individuals who have such feelings doom themselves to less than optimal performance on tests critical to their lives" (McCabe 2). Students attribute failure to something inside themselves, as well as outside things they can't control. Students feel nothing they do will allow them to succeed, so they eventually stop trying. They do not see a connection between things they can do and what grades they will receive. This directly leads to whether or not they will try in future endeavors. Ultimately, when students think their failure is because they lack ability, their effort goes down. They are not willing to work hard because they don't think it makes a difference because they are dumb. Students who have learning disabilities are much more likely to be affected by this phenomenon. They have faced difficulties from the start and it is hard to motivate them to overcome the problems they face. These students and all students who deal with learned helplessness need to know seeking help is a positive thing. It can help them achieve and does not demean their ability to do the work on their own. Many children feel getting help is a sign of weakness and children need to overcome this perceived problem. Teachers need to teach and explain seeking help is a powerful learning strategy and something all students can benefit from using.

When students are challenged in their ability to believe in themselves, they often use tactics to mask their concern or what they feel are their deficits. Students, especially

teenagers, have a need to appear to be smart and confident in front of peers. "Their

motive then becomes avoiding failure and protecting their self-worth from the perception

that they have low ability" (Alderman 68). There are many ways students accomplish

this but "saving face" is the most important thing in front of others in the classroom.

Teachers often make mistakes that allow students to fall further and further into this

vicious cycle. For example, if a teacher only rewards ability and does nothing to praise

or recognize effort, many students will feel there is no reason to try. Most students will

put forth effort but only under certain circumstances.

> ...they will likely invest in activities they find interesting or valuable if
> their environment is safe and supportive and if difficulties do not lead to
> embarrassment or comparisons with more successful peers. Thus,
> attempts to increase self-efficacy must take place within emotionally safe,
> secure classes that emphasize motivational principles that create or nurture
> a desire to learn and achieve (Margolis and McCabe 168).

Students have to feel supported before they will take the risk to even try. They also have

to feel the goal is to learn, not compete with others in the room.

Besides protecting Darren from the strain of competition, we must also provide a

classroom with much structure and direction. Based on the research of Ames, classrooms

in America need "...(a) tasks that are meaningful with reasonable challenge; (b)

opportunity to participate in decision making and develop responsibility; and (c) an

evaluation system that recognizes progress and mastery of content" (Alderman 11). Our

sequence of activities need to be such that students gain skills and confidence and then

the material gets more difficult.

> To strengthen struggling learners' self-efficiency, teachers need to select
> tasks well within struggling learners' abilities, sequence tasks from easy to

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difficult, help struggling learners realize they have the skills to succeed, provide them with help and encouragement whenever needed, show them how to correct their mistakes, and introduce 'difficult' tasks only when they are no longer difficult -- when struggling learners have mastered the prerequisites on which success depends (Margolis and McCabe 165).

The scaffolding we provide students must be well planned and available to them throughout the course of their time in our classroom. We must also be available to help students who are brave enough to reach out for help. Students like Darren need to feel like we are on their side and will help them when they are working hard to achieve a task.

When students like Darren continually fail throughout their school careers, it changes something inside them. Obviously, past experiences influence the efficacy a person holds. Many researchers have coined the term self-efficacy to mean what individuals believe about their abilities. Tied up in this term is both what outcome students are expecting and how they think they can affect the outcome. "Self-efficacy develops as a result of feedback from family, school, and community interactions throughout the developmental continuum, and the interpretation and degree of attention given to each or all sources of feedback will depend upon individual cognitive and social experiences" (McCabe 2). If students are successful at something, their efficacy level rises. On the other hand, failure is almost sure to lower the level of efficacy. It is therefore important for teachers to provide activities that allow students to succeed so they believe they might do so in the future. "Self-efficacy is an important influence on motivation the degree to which an individual will become engaged in and expend physical and mental energy on an activity" (McCabe 3). If we are to push students forward academically, we must make sure their motivational aspects are all in line. McCabe advocates four areas to help students improve.

Enactive Mastery

"The recognition that one has mastered a task as a result of personal effort provides strong feedback that one possesses the ability to succeed." This indicates that teachers must find a way for all students to have some success. Success builds confidence and encourages students to continue to put forth effort. 'Enactive mastery experiences are the most influential source of efficacy information because they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed (Bandura 80). Students must complete work that is at the appropriate level, neither too hard or too easy. Material that is too difficult causes students to experience frustration and quit. Material that is too easy leads students to feel no sense of pride.

Vicarious Experiences

'Vicarious experiences (observations and comparison to the actions or skills of others) provide feedback attesting to an individual's level of competence, allowing him or her to determine the degree to which a particular skill is possessed". When teachers use peer models, others are aware that they, too, might have the same skills. Oral demonstrations of thoughts and problem-solving are keys to this technique. When students see each other succeed, they come to feel that they, too, can succeed.

Verbal Persuasion

This is when "...verbal feedback to convince the learner that he or she has been successful." The technique is useful when after a student has been successful, a teacher gives credit to hard work and using strategies. The teacher must make sure success is connected to the specific actions of the student. Using visual displays of progress is another way to incorporate this technique. Graphic representations of progress are powerful to students.

Physiological/Affective State

This is the control of physical reactions to stress and events in the learning environment. Students need to feel safe and calm in order to achieve all they can. (McCabe)

There are several ways to increase efficacy, teachers simply need to be aware how powerful it truly is.

Interestingly, students can also raise levels of self-efficacy by watching others succeed. "Students observing a model successfully perform in a threatening situation are likely to develop an expectation that they can acquire the same skill" (Alderman 62).

This means that by the teacher or peer modeling a successful experience with a concept or material, the others who observe it should also experience somewhat of a rise in efficacy level. Most researchers find peer models are more effective, especially with lower level students. Alderman claims it is because, "...low-achieving students [who] are more doubtful about attaining the level of competence demonstrated by the teacher" (Alderman 65). Models are easy to find and a simple way for teachers to help students improve efficacy. A third way for students to experience something is through praise and encouragement from the teacher. They are also able to raise efficacy if someone is there claiming to believe in their abilities. On the other hand, negative comments can also lower the efficacy of students. Teachers must be especially aware of doing this unconsciously by making sarcastic or snide comments to students. Finally, students' efficacy levels are raised through how they are feeling psychologically. Students who feel safe and nurtured are more likely to believe in themselves than a child who is nervous or feeling pressure. Teachers, therefore, have the charge to help raise the efficacy levels of students who are in their classrooms. "...studies suggest that self-efficacy can be improved through particular teacher practices" (Linnenbrink and Pintrich 129). We must just find what works for every student who walks through our doors. "...the problem of student motivation may be resolved more successfully by focusing on the organization and policies in schools and classrooms rather than trying to determine what incentives would motivate students to action" (Principal Leadership 3). Sometimes, the big picture is more important and helpful to students than quick fixes. The final thing to remember with efficacy beliefs is that believing you can do something is much more powerful than having the needed skills to accomplish a task. "Students who were

confident in their skills were much more likely to try to understand their schoolwork and think deeply about it. They also were more metacognitive, that is, more likely to plan, monitor, and regulate themselves while working on their school tasks" (Linnenbrink and Pintrich 130). As educators, we need to "...plan a program to ensure that students improve their self-regulatory behavior by learning such things as setting goals, managing time, and using appropriate study skills (Principal Leadership 3). Linnenbrick and Pintrich suggest implications for classroom practice when considering self-efficacy as a key to the success of students.

1. *Help students maintain relatively high but accurate self-efficacy beliefs.*
> This includes providing accurate and specific feedback. Teachers must also help students understand that skills are constantly developing and will improve with time and effort. To make sure students are practical, teachers must also point out weaknesses and provide students with help improving in these areas. If teachers only focus on what is good, students will not have an accurate picture of their abilities. On the other hand, only negative feedback feeds into the negative beliefs and lowers efficacy.

2. *Provide students with challenging academic tasks that most students can reach with effort.*
> This tip is becoming harder and harder to maintain. The varied levels of students within one classroom make this a difficult task for most teachers. However, all students should be able to feel competent throughout the course of the school year. It might also involve changing the assignment and making it fit each individual student. This means the higher level students might have more to do or their project might be more in-depth, while the lower level students might have less to do or a task at an appropriate level. This is very time consuming for the teacher but can be wonderful if done effectively. If we just assign easy tasks for all, students feel no sense of pride or accomplishment, so we must do this carefully.

3. *Foster the belief that competence or ability is a changeable, controllable aspect of development.*
> Teachers must make students understand intelligence is something flexible and can be changed with effort. We must have high expectations for every student, no matter what our perceptions are of that student. This can be especially difficult in a small school, where teachers might have had a student in class before or know

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what other teachers think of the student. However, teachers are obligated to forget what has happened in the past and focus on the future with each child. "Students are more likely to engage in a given activity if they believe that they can master the information with some effort." When students do fail, teachers must make students understand that with increased skill or effort, the student will be able to be successful in the future.

4. *Promote students' domain specific self-efficacy beliefs rather than global self-esteem.*

Students need to know exactly what they did right and wrong so they are able to take specific steps towards improving the outcome. "Rather than using general, often insincere praise to develop self-esteem, provide students with learning opportunities that will foster the development of self-efficacy." Students are very savvy and when we offer compliments to those who do not deserve them; they don't believe us when we truly mean something. They also pick up on the fact that we are just trying to make them feel better. Teachers must be nice but they also have an obligation to be honest with students. Too many teachers don't want to hurt anyone's feelings and in turn, they offend students with their insincere words. There is a fine line to walk when praising students but teachers must find it so their words mean something to students.

(Linnenbrink and Pintrich 134-136)

The other problem Darren faces on a daily basis is his lack of skill in reading.

Not only does this hurt him in the language arts classroom but all areas of schooling. In

an article published in *Reading Research and Instruction*, researchers have found "three

aspects of reading motivation most relevant to the instruction of remedial readers include:

(a) improving reading self-efficacy; (b) making internal and controllable outcome

attributions for successes and failures associated with reading; and (c) establishing

personally relevant value in becoming a better reader" (Quirk and Schwanenflugel 1).

The article states remedial reading programs can all be effective to improve the skills of

low-achieving readers but most lack a component of motivation to be directly instructed.

The study concluded that teachers need to focus on the motivation of students, which will

lead to improvement of reading skills. In order for readers to improve their skills, they

must spend more time reading. However, "Studies have suggested that good readers read approximately 5 times as many minutes per day as average readers and nearly 200 times as much as poor readers (Anderson, Wilson & Fielding). It becomes clear that if we want children to be better at reading, we have to motivate them to read more in the first place. "Merely having interesting books available, an appealing place to read, and discussions around reading may not be enough for struggling readers who probably cannot read such books or participate in these discussions (Quirk and Schwanenflugel 1). This reminds teachers just "pretty wrapping" will not encourage all students to read. We must improve their skills and then find specific things that make them want to read. The ideas stated above are good but to help the most desperate of our students, we need to do more and more specific strategies. One way to do this is to focus on the three most relevant areas to improve student reading motivation. Reading efficacy is how students feel about their ability to read. "The most important factor in improving reading efficacy is that the program must make gains in reading skill implicit to the students so that they are able to observe progress toward personally relevant reading goals" (Quirk and Schwanenflugel 4). As we have discussed earlier, it is important for students who are struggling to see some sort of progress, even if they aren't up to grade level. If they are able to see their hard work is paying off, they are more likely to continue to work towards goals. We must also ensure we are using specific strategies with students so they can continue to use them in order to find success. "...research has demonstrated a connection between strategy instruction and increased efficacy for successfully completing various learning tasks. Teaching strategies engenders a sense of self-control in students over their learning and has been found to raise self-efficacy (Bandura). The second area teachers

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need to focus on is how students attribute their success. "One reason that struggling readers make maladaptive outcome attributions is that students who struggle to learn often feel incompetent, shifting their focus onto comparisons with others who are also struggling (Thorkildsen & Nicholls). This becomes even more difficult to address as students age and experience repeated failure. Again, we need to show students strategies and work with them to vocally recognize challenges and how to overcome them. Techniques teachers can use include the attribution retraining discussed later in the paper. Finally, we need to make reading something every student values. We can help do this by increasing the reading level of low students. "Engagement in reading is more likely to occur when students not only value the activity, but also view improved skill as the key to attaining the personally relevant, self-set reading goal that they might have (Quirk and Schwanenflugel 6).

> In conclusion, '...it is essential for an effective remedial reading program to balance skill and strategy instruction with meaningful and interesting reading activities that allow the students to apply their improving skills in authentic and interesting tasks. Teachers need to find time to meet with each student individually each week to track individual growth. They need to work on each student's attributions for successes and failures associated with reading'" (Quirk and Schwanenflugel 7).

Teachers must make reading a priority and then use specific techniques to help all students improve.

As we turn to Bailey, we really need to question why she and other students like her have come to see school as mainly something to survive. Part of the blame, however, does not rest with students like Bailey. Alderman points out motivation is no longer something that can be assumed by teachers, as it once was. It must be specifically addressed in the classroom and taught as a skill to today's young people. The school

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must encourage students to want to learn and the teacher must encourage students, especially, to obtain high achievement. Our goal must be to push students like Bailey to become highly motivated students because she has the ability to achieve much. "When given a learning task, successful learners monitor and control their behavior as they set goals, manage their study time, use their prior knowledge, consider alternative strategies, develop a plan of attack, and consider contingency plans when they run into trouble" (Principal Leadership 1). These are the elements we need to establish in students like Bailey.

One tricky part of dealing with students like Bailey is that often times perceived ability is more instrumental in determining outcome than is actual ability. "...beliefs about ability are closely related to the expectancies students have for success on an upcoming task and values they hold for the task" (Alderman 57). Sometimes, students are affected by the beliefs of a group or class, which can overpower how they feel about their individual beliefs. In Bailey's case, it is not seen as cool to succeed if you are a popular jock, so she compromises her beliefs to fit in with the group. Self-efficacy can also determine what tasks a child will attempt to complete and how hard they will try to succeed at that task. The stronger their feelings of efficacy, the harder they will work and the more challenging tasks they will attempt. This automatically leads the child to use more learning strategies and persist longer at tasks that are difficult. Research has determined the healthiest and best possible situation is to have an efficacy level that is slightly higher than the actual ability level. This allows students to continue to push themselves through difficult or hated tasks. When we allow students like Bailey to have tasks they choose or those that involve learning about themselves, they are more likely to

put forth effort. "Students perceive these choice activities as providing useful competence information because they can learn both about themselves and the task" (Walker 177). Most students like to study about themselves and students like Bailey are always more interested when they are the topic. "When instruction is oriented around interest in an open and exploratory way, students expend more effort and are engaged longer on cognitive tasks. This increases their self-efficacy" (Walker 178). We then offer students a new place to learn, a place they didn't know existed. They are able to discover something that interests them and then will be motivated to learn more and more.

Once students become dedicated to the idea that they must spend time to improve academics, teachers must also help students control the environments in which the studying takes place. They must encourage students to see some things will not only interfere with their learning, but will hurt their progress and force the time spent to be wasted. Organization is the key to success for many students. They must be trained to have strategies for learning and that all materials need to be available for them to learn. Notetaking and other learning strategies must be directly taught to students in order for them to be able to use their abilities in the best possible way. Students must also be instructed to select the best environment for them to learn in. Sometimes, this means a perfectly quiet space with no television, music or instant messaging. However, some students find music or background noise helps them concentrate on the task at hand. They can be taught to experiment and find what works best for them.

Students like Bailey are often motivated when we challenge them. This is true usually because the work is fairly easy for them, so they don't work too hard to master it.

They figure that pretty good is fine with them and then they don't work to improve themselves. However, if we offer them a challenge, they might be encouraged to rise to meet it. "The most observable aspects of successful experiences that influence self-efficacy are when students persist at a task and expend effort in order to produce success" (Walker 175). Students can only feel a sense of accomplishment if they work hard to achieve it. Athletes, especially, need to feel they have worked and then their feelings of success are even more powerful. They can then work towards the next challenge we place before them. "Goals that are perceived as moderately difficult raise motivation and convey a clear sense of progress, which raises efficacy" (Schunk 164). Students need to feel they have overcome something or challenged themselves to have any pride in what they do. One teacher found creating a reward system of a comfy sofa made a difference in her classroom. The Friday Sofa Award was given to a student who makes progress in some way. It might be in asking for help or improving a grade. The student is given a certificate and a speech is given in front of the class. "73 percent said the Friday Sofa Award contributed to a more positive climate and 64 percent said it helped them identify skills for success. Students who actually received an award were even more supportive" (Curriculum Review 1). It made for a fun and prideful classroom. Teachers can often do simple things that can make a huge difference in motivation. If we make things too easy or so hard, there isn't progress; we are taking this away from students. In this way, teachers can offer students a look at where they have been and where they need to go. "...many students do not spontaneously self-evaluate their capabilities. One way that teachers can highlight progress is to have students periodically assess their progress in

skill acquisition" (Schunk 165). We need to make it clear that students are moving in a positive direction so they continue to learn and grow.

Progress monitoring can be very powerful to students who like to reach for goals. "Progress feedback also encourages students to move ahead and set new goals for themselves" (Cole 329). Students like to see how far they have progressed and are interested in how far they can go. When we allow students to see this information explicitly, it can be a powerful tool. "For goals to positively influence self-efficacy and motivation, they need to be personally important, to struggling learners, short-term, specific, and achievable (Margolis and McCabe 166). The students must be involved in the goal setting so they feel invested in the accomplishment of these goals. They must be short-term or broken into small parts so there is the ability to see the work they are putting forth come to fruition. They must see progress in order to be motivated to continue reaching for something better. The goals must be specific so the student can see there is actual progress. A goal to simply get better is not good because there is no way to measure if the student is reaching it. Therefore, the goal must be something that can be measured. Finally, the goal must be something the student has to work for but something the student will be able to reach with some effort. When teachers find the right balance, it can be meaningful to the students. "...the most powerful learning is that which occurs in response to challenges currently being faced by the learner and that allows for immediate application, experimentation, and adaptation on the job" (Arnau, Kahrs and Kruskamp 2). We must allow students to set a goal and then reach for it, monitor it and make adjustments. If the goal is too easy, the student will feel no sense of accomplishment in reaching the goal. However, if the goal is too difficult, the student

will become frustrated and quit trying to reach the goal. Goals are important, especially for students who enjoy challenging themselves. This can work with students at all levels and motivational styles.

A secondary problem facing students like Bailey is that they have the ability to read but they choose not to. "Unfortunately, there is increasing evidence that young people who can read are choosing not to read (Brozo & Simpson). When this occurs, they lose skills and risk facing challenges in their adult lives. As teachers, we must strive to make all students lifelong readers. "Students who read for pleasure generally score higher on standardized reading and reading-intensive tests (Momentum 1). We need to get all students to see the value in reading for not only achievement but also success in the workplace. "Literacy, including flexible reading strategies, is essential in almost any job and basic to good citizenship" (Momentum 1). If our job as high school teachers is to prepare our students for life in the "real world", we must give them the skills they need to read, as well as to instill a desire to read within all children. We must decide all reading is at least a little beneficial to students. "Since magazine reading was popular with 95 percent of the students, linking books with magazine topics that interest students might be another way to hook them into reading books" (Momentum 2). We have to find a way to tap into the interests of students and then build a connection to academic reading. This shouldn't be too difficult to do but teachers need to devote the time to searching young adult magazines to find out topics of interest and then look to the curriculum to find places to bring in the magazine reading. "Teachers are in an ideal position to interest students in leisure reading and serve as role models for reading, particularly for busy students who say they have no time for reading" (Momentum 2). We have to make a

commitment to both find interesting things for students to read and then show them there is joy in reading throughout one's lifetime. We must be committed to "showing students the benefits of independent reading is key to lifelong learning" (Momentum 2). There is no way we can possibly teach students everything they will need to know in their lifetimes but we can show them the value in reading and how it will help them throughout time, in and out of school.

Finally, there are some great ways to motivate students like Jeremy but we have to work closely with these students so they know we care and want them to succeed. "For struggling learners with expectations of failure, teachers should avoid tasks the learners find frustrating or anxiety provoking" (Margolis and McCabe 163). We must allow students like Jeremy to have success and then build them to continue on this path of success. "Once struggling learners have recent successes to draw on, teachers can help them link new work to their successes by explicitly showing and asking them how the new work resembles their recent successes and then reminding or asking them what they did to succeed" (Margolis and McCabe 164). While our contracts as teachers might only include things about imparting our curriculum to our students, we must do much work before this. We have to give the confidence to each student who indicates they can learn and then attempt to teach them some actual material. "...self-regulation can be defined as the ability of students to control the factors or conditions that affect their learning. Research indicates that students' self-regulatory beliefs and processes are highly correlated with academic achievement" (Principal Leadership 1). Jeremy's past failures and lack of effort are what drive him today. We must do much to change his thinking because "...students can do a great deal to promote their own learning through the use of

different learning and motivational strategies" (Principal Leadership 1). However, teachers must first understand what teens think about both success and failure.

Teachers of adolescents face an even more uphill battle when dealing with attribution. Teens typically compare themselves with peers more than younger students do. Young adults are also much more concerned with appearances and what their peers think of them. "Adolescents often equate expending more effort with having less ability" (Alderman 35). This means they are not willing to expend effort for fear classmates will think they are dumb. Students would rather fail and not try than look like they have to work too hard to succeed. Young girls face an even tougher challenge in the area of motivation. Research has found girls are more likely to attribute failure to lack of ability and also blame outside sources for success or failure (Alderman 35). Girls are also more likely to understate their success, while boys overestimate what they are capable of doing. Alderman suggests attribution retraining is a positive step to overcoming many of these problems. It is something that must be explicitly explained and taught to students. There are many ways to go about doing this but all must be made clear to the students.

It is easy to see self-efficacy is an important element in motivation, but teachers must also discover when students have faulty thinking or have difficulty believing they can achieve in the classroom. When there are problems, teachers must directly attack the problem or the student will continue to fail to succeed. Alderman gives readers several ways to attack the problems of self-efficacy, and they include "...(a) goals and feedback, (b) rewards, (c) self-instruction for verbalization of strategies, (d) participant modeling, and (e) various combinations of these strategies" (Alderman 64). Goal setting can be very important because it allows a child to compare progress with only oneself. There is

no pressure to compete with classmates or friends. Reaching goals allows students to feel proud, which increases self-efficacy. Rewards work in much the same way but provide something to strive for. It can sometimes give a student a reason to keep trying when he/she otherwise might quit. Alderman feels self-efficacy is strongly tied to task accomplishment. She feels the more students are able to accomplish, the higher their efficacy level will be. The teacher must therefore use strategies that allow students to complete more tasks. Research has discovered "...instructional activities that give students choice, encourage strategy use, provide for self-evaluation, and change assessment context can cultivate self-efficacy and, in turn, increase engagement of low performing students" (Walker 177). We must provide students like Jeremy some choice so they feel control. They must have the skills needed to complete the task and then when there is success, they will have some ownership in it. This leads to an increase in efficacy, which leads to attempting more and more difficult tasks in the future. Research shows us "'More so than at any other stage, young adolescents doubt their abilities to succeed at their schoolwork, question the value of doing their schoolwork, and decrease their efforts toward academics'" (Worthy & Prater 1). Our jobs are of utmost importance, especially when working with students so close to giving up.

Teachers and other adults need to make sure we aren't contributing to the problems students face. We cannot allow students to value their groups more than their individual achievement. Teachers must work to destroy the stereotype of the nerd. Being smart must be portrayed to students as something cool and nothing to be embarrassed about. One way to do this is to find role models for students to emulate who are both in style and smart. Teachers must also maintain their classrooms as places of equity.

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Athletes and other specific groups must get no special treatment that perpetuates the idea learning and reading are only for nerds. "If educators develop effective instructional practices for helping all students overcome the barriers that get in the way of reading success, students will leave our classrooms with strategies for overcoming challenging texts, choosing texts that will interest them, and using books for enjoyment and information" (Allen 14). This also leads other students, who are not members of these select groups, to feel they are not given the same treatment or attention from teachers.

Part of our job as educators is to make sure we form a connection with all students who walk through our classroom doors. It is obviously easier to form a bond with students who share our interests but we must make an effort to create a personal relationship with all children. In order for students to experience success, they must have "...high standards for academic learning and conduct, meaningful and engaging pedagogy and curriculum, professional learning communities among staff, and personalized learning environments" (The Journal of School Health 1). If we are committed to higher standards for all students, we must also be there to support their efforts. "For students to take advantage of high expectations and more advanced curricula, they need support from the people with whom they interact in school" (The Journal of School Health 1). Not only do students need to feel teachers are involved with them personally, they also "...need to feel they can make important decisions for themselves, and the work they are assigned has relevance to their present or future lives" (The Journal of School Health 1). We have to work with students so they are able to make smart decisions. "...they also need a clear sense of structure within which to make those decisions. Young people need to know what adults expect regarding conduct, that consistent and predictable

consequences result from not meeting those expectations, and that the expectations are

fair" (The Journal of School Health 1). The sense that an adult is in a role to provide

constant and unwavering support is very important to the success of students like Jeremy.

"Studies show students with caring and supportive interpersonal relationships in school

report much more positive academic attitudes and values, and more satisfaction with

school. These students also are more engaged academically" (The Journal of School

Health 1). Just having a strong connection might motivate Jeremy to put forth the effort

needed to succeed.

One motivational factor that might affect students like Jeremy is that they do not

see the value in education in general or they do not see the relevance in material being

presented. Teachers today find we must connect classroom learning with the outside

world in order to engage students.

> From this brief description of trends in the economic world, the following
> conclusions can be readily made:
>> 1. the kinds of work performed changes rather quickly in society.
>> Employees need to be flexible in finding and doing new kinds of
>> work.
>> 2. job training for the new work place is imperative.
>> 3. increased number of changes are occurring in society in a more
>> complex world.
>> 4. higher levels of education are required to meet challenges in the
>> societal arena by it as skilled or semi-skilled common workers, as
>> well as for those in the professions.
>> 5. reading proficiently, problem solving skills, together with
>> creative and critical thinking, are salient in today's world.
>
> (Ediger 2)

All students must have reading and motivational skills to survive in today's world. Most

teachers have faced the question "When will we ever use this?" or "Why do we have to

learn this?". If we ignore these types of questions long enough, students become annoyed

or start to seriously wonder what the point of education is. We need to embrace the curiosity of our students and make our passion known to them. If we can't answer these questions, maybe we need to look at what we are teaching students. Teachers need to make students part of the discussion. "Classrooms in which students are allowed and encouraged to participate in open dialogue and the exchange of ideas can help them realize the importance and value of democratic processes of learning" (Phi Delta Kappan 4). If we don't allow students to express questions or opinions, we can't expect them to value education. Education is about asking questions and finding answers. "Students at all levels should be challenged to engage in dialogue about their schooling experiences" (Phi Delta Kappan 5). When students ask questions such as the ones listed above, we must make sure they get an answer that is satisfying or at least makes sense.

> '...classroom conversations allow students to voice their opinions in a democratic environment in which their thoughts can be questioned, acknowledged, examined, challenged, or verified by others. And when students believe their voices are important to the climate of learning, their self-esteem may increase' (Phi Delta Kappan 5).

Students need to feel their concerns are valid and that someone hears their thoughts. However, we must make sure all students are given a chance to question and voice their thoughts.

> 'Dialogues are an important component of successful classrooms, and we firmly believe that the teacher has a crucial role in such conversations. Teachers must facilitate and encourage the social dynamics that contribute to such environments. We are confident that when teachers foster classroom environments of respect and invite their students to engage in meaningful dialogue and inquiry, the possibilities for motivating students to learn are greatly enhanced' (Phi Delta Kappan 5).

By allowing open and honest discussions in our classrooms, all students feel valued and understand that in our country, it is good and right to question things. We must make sure students know the value of education and that in our country, they can get an education which might lead them to exciting and fulfilling careers. Students like Jeremy need to feel education can lead to what they want in life. It might just be what allows them to succeed in school.

STEREOTYPE SUMMARY

In summary of our specific stereotypes, we find there are certain things we can do to help all five students. With Kim, we just want to keep her moving in a positive direction. One thing we can do to help her is project-based service learning. This allows Kim to gain skills she will use in the future and find relevance in classroom activities. With Mark, we need to work on increasing his intrinsic motivation. He is definitely motivated by outside sources but we need to work to instill the joy of learning. Another aspect we need to focus on is helping Mark deal with failure. He will not always be the best at everything and our focus becomes helping him deal with challenge and difficulty. Finally, we can engage Mark and maybe tap into a passion by using technology and e-mail. Darren is the most difficult student we work with. The issues we are dealing with include self-handicapping, learned helplessness and self-efficacy. There are strategies teachers can use to change Darren's thinking and work to change his perception of the value of education. His past failures are causing him to react negatively to school, therefore, we must provide him with the skills needed to be successful. Group work and other instructional strategies can help him grow as a student. Finally, goal setting is something that can help Darren see progress and then continue on the path of success.

Bailey is a charismatic student who needs our help in focus and direction. We have to work to increase her efficacy. This will help her work harder to achieve. We can also use progress monitoring to help her see her progress and then continue working. We also need to increase her reading time. One way we can do this is to help her control her environment so it is easier for learning to take place. Lastly, we looked at Jeremy. We need to work on giving him chances to have success and then look at his attribution and possibly incorporate attribution retraining. As a teacher, we must confront the stereotypes that exist within our schools and work to break them down. Jeremy must also come to value education so he works to gain the best one he can get. All students need much time and attention but these are specific things we can do as teachers to help students grow and learn.

GENERAL MOTIVATIONAL INTERVENTIONS

After looking at these particular students, we find there are things that will work with most students and are things we should be doing on a daily basis in our teaching practices. While seemingly low on the list of things teachers need to do, making sure all students are comfortable in the classroom is a major element. More and more, the social aspect of learning is important to teachers and critical for young people to be able to learn. In her text, Alderman devotes an entire chapter to helping students in the social context of our classrooms. "Social context has been found to influence classroom engagement, academic effort, and subsequent school success and failure at all levels of schooling" (Alderman 171). While it may not seem to be part of the job description of a teacher, making the classroom a safe place is critical to the achievement of our students.

Students must care not only about their own learning but that of their classmates, as well. Young people must feel supported in their efforts to learn.

The first key for students is to have a sense of membership or belonging. "A sense of school membership is based on the satisfaction of three basic human needs: autonomy, competence, and belonging or relatedness" (Alderman 172). When students feel they belong at the school, they are more likely to engage in the goals of the school. Research finds students who have social bonds are more likely to be successful. Four factors that help establish these bonds include:

* Attachment. Students who are attached feel that the school or teachers care about them and so they will care about the school. They are more likely to follow the rules and work to achieve the goals of the school.
* Commitment. The students who are committed are willing to work to achieve the goals set by the school.
* Involvement. When students are active in school activities, they are more likely to feel connected to the school and work for the good of the school.
* Belief. Students who feel that education is important and will benefit them in the future are more likely to feel connected to the school. In this element, teachers must also feel that students can and will be successful. (Alderman 173)

It is important for teachers to identify these factors within our students and then work to make them positive. Another aspect is that students need to identify with a group within the school. Young people identify with the group they belong to and follow the goals the group identifies with. "...the extent to which a group identifies with goals and values of school, and/or devalues academic effort and achievement, affects engagement for learning" (Alderman 174). If a group values school, members are likely to do the same. However, the opposite is also true.

Teachers must take the time to figure out what group students belong to and then determine what is valuable to the group. Sadly, with most groups, "...although there is positive academic peer pressure to graduate from high school, the pressure is more to get by academically rather than to excel" (Alderman 175). It is not cool for most students to do well in school, and teachers must be aware of this and then work to change it. "The emphasis is more toward getting good grades (performance goals) than on working hard and learning (learning goals)" (Alderman 175). Many students find ways to succeed by disguising the achievement so peers don't know they are as smart as they are. They might "...camouflage or disguise their true academic identity by not letting their peers know they study; by acting like the class clown; or by participating in athletics" (Alderman 179). They will do anything to conceal the fact that they achieve in school. Teachers must make it clear learning, as well as effort are the most important parts of school. Students don't see this as valuable because "...the general peer norm is to strive for academic adequacy rather than academic excellence. Peer pressure seems to impose upper as well as lower limits on intellectual effort that students can put forth without fearing some sanctions" (Alderman 175). It's okay to be smart, just not too smart. There is a general theme of anti-achievement running through America's high schools. Negative connotations are associated with high achievement in the classroom. First, there is the "brain-nerd connection" (Alderman 175). Stereotypes determine that if you are smart and do well in school, you must be a nerd, which incorporates several other negative qualities. Next, students feel if you do well, teachers will expect more of you. They would rather "fly under the radar" and just do enough to get by. Next, there is extreme pressure in areas other than academics. Students must participate in outside

activities or have a job. Students want jobs so they can afford to have the latest gadgets, clothes, and other items. However, "There is an inverse correlation between number of hours working and grade point average. The more hours worked (more than 15 hours per week is detrimental), the lower the GPA" (Alderman 175). Teachers must impress upon students that school must be at least a top priority. Finally, teachers must be aware their influence can make a big impact on students. Teachers must work to break the myth of the brain-nerd, as well as the typical myth they favor athletes. Teachers must expect the most from everyone and punish everyone fairly. Secondly, teachers must make sure learning is not about winning and losing. Effort and improvement must be separated so all students strive for more. We must make sure achievement is praised and celebrated so students see achieving as cool. In order to feel the sense of membership, teachers have to do much to ensure each classroom is a zone of safety and support. There first must be:

* Clarity of purpose or agreement on goals. Students must first be aware that there are goals for them. If there are not clear goals, teachers and students must set them so the students know what they are reaching for.
* Fairness. Students must feel teachers are going to treat everyone the same. Even small slights are noticed by students, so teachers must work to ensure a fair and equal treatment of all students.
* Personal Support. If we want students to take challenges, they must feel the teacher is there to support them. We must also make sure peers are willing to support going outside the box in order to gain knowledge.
* Successful Experiences. We can't just give students grades or make them feel good about insignificant things, but we must catch them doing good. We have to give them the tools so they can have success. (Alderman 180)

Teachers must make a connection with each student so they feel worthy of our time and supported enough to attempt to make educational growth.

One element of establishing a classroom of social support is classroom structure. "A number of studies have documented positive motivational effects when students have opportunities for some degree of autonomy or ownership in classroom learning" (Alderman 181). Students like to feel some sense of ownership in classroom decisions and in their learning. "Classroom autonomy occurs when teachers communicate choice and allow room for student initiative, with students viewing learning activities as connected to their personal goals and values" (Alderman 181). However, in order for choice to be an option, there must be a strong base of structure. Students must understand a basic sense of order before they can exercise choice. "Opportunities are provided for students to exercise control, but they are not given control. A teacher's role is to set boundaries for work, social/behavioral expectations, and responsibility" (Alderman 182). Students are able to make choices only after they have proven they are responsible enough to do so. Even so, students are not given ultimate control, they are given freedom to make choices. Teachers are still the rulers of the classroom and set the guidelines for student choices. Teachers must first establish where students are. If they are immature, teachers must provide more structure. As students mature, teachers can allow them to have more freedoms. If they are more mature to start, teachers can allow for more decision-making. The choices are always provided by the teacher but the ultimate decision can reside with the mature students. Included in classroom structure are classroom management practices. "Psychological safety is a hallmark of each of these classrooms. The students feel comfortable and supported" (Alderman 184). Students must feel safe in order to take risks. If teachers are able to create "...a sense of purpose, order, and predictability to the classroom organization allowing for greater creativity and

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active learning", students will really benefit (Alderman 184). There has to be consistency in order for students to feel safe and then grow in their learning. Research finds "....more effective teachers focus on planning and preparation designed to provide optimum learning time and prevent problems" (Alderman 184). Most problems occur when students either don't have enough to do or aren't interested in what they are supposed to be doing. Great planning and organization allow a teacher to focus on learning and not managing behaviors. Alderman also indicates establishing norms is critical to creating a positive learning environment. These include:

* Social support system and peer respect. Define respect for your classroom, along with examples of behavior that will not be tolerated. In the classroom described by Noblit (1993), 'The worst infraction of all was to laugh if someone did not know the right answer to a question'.
* Help seeking. Establish the custom that all students will be helpers and helpees at some point. Students should understand that help seeking when needed is an adaptive strategy, not cheating.
* Academic work. Discuss with students the meaning of student responsibility and the motivational effects of different attributions for success and failure.
* Accountability and monitoring. Explain how work will be monitored, how students can monitor, and the type of feedback students can expect.

(Alderman 185)

When students face a consistent, caring classroom, they are able to make choices and take risks.

Within the structured classroom, there are several ways to offer students support. "Classrooms characterized by cohesiveness, satisfaction, and goal direction were preferred by students and were associated with positive outcomes" (Alderman 186). Students like to know what is expected and then work to reach standards. There is a plan and support to get there and that is important to students. One way for students to

incorporate support is to include cooperative learning into the classroom. "....students'
social and academic peer group relations are critical for developing character, personal
ethics, and social values" (Alderman 187). Our job as teachers includes preparing
students to survive in the outside world. Working with others is critical to being
successful in a future career or in a future family situation. "Cooperative learning
structures are based on the premise that each student's efforts toward a common goal
contributes to other students' learning (Alderman 187). Building the concept of
teamwork encourages students to help each other reach high standards. Cooperative
learning leads to a class room that: "(a) encourages the formation of supportive
friendships between classmates, (b) encourages students to act in a helpful rather than
competitive ways toward classmates, and (c) provides students time and opportunity to
interact with each other" (Alderman 187-188). Again, we find when students have a
common goal, they can help each other understand and achieve more. Cooperative
learning has "...positive effects on achievement and on student self-esteem and locus of
control" (Alderman 188). Students are able to feel a connection with group members and
also feel like they have learned material. Teachers, however, have to be careful in the
selection of groups to make them effective. Each group member has to be responsible for
a specific aspect of the task so everyone remains involved and so no one member takes
over. There must also be individual accountability and a reward for the entire group so
they all work and all work to succeed. Students need to work in heterogeneous groups to
be most effective. This all leads students to see help seeking in a positive way and they
can use each other to achieve more in the general setting. This also allows them to see

the difference between help and cheating. Students will make positive strides in academic growth by using effective cooperative learning.

Teachers obviously have a huge role in establishing social support in their individual classrooms and within the school. "....there must be someone in students' lives who values them and education" (Alderman 191). As students come from more and more diverse backgrounds, teachers are sometimes the only stabilizing force in students' lives. We have to play the role of caretaker even though it is not really our job. However, as we have established, students need to feel we care about them before they will care about what we are trying to teach them. "Teachers play a critical role in creating a supportive classroom climate -- a climate characterized by mutual concern and respect" (Alderman 191). In order to do this, we have to show concern for all students in our classrooms and being interested in their lives in and out of the classroom. One way to do that is to encourage all students to succeed academically and to be interested in their personal lives.

There is much we can control in our classrooms, even if we face a multitude of challenges as students begin to walk through the door. Some research has found there are six conceptions of learning, which include "...(1) increasing one's knowledge; (2) memorizing and reproducing; (3) applying; (4) understanding; (5) seeing something in a different way and (6) changing as a person" (Burnett et al. 56). We must take the student from where the are and move them down this continuum. There are some things we can do with all students to promote success.

> 1. Educators must speak honestly with students about their present level of performance.
>> It does no good to gloss over where students are at. If we expect them to progress, we need to make sure they are clear about where

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their skill level is. We have to let them know how serious the situation is and what we can do to help them move forward.

2. Assure students that it will be clear when they meet the required grade level standard.

By giving students the goal in advance, they have something to shoot for. 'Are we asking students to keep learning without telling them the target?' It is imperative students know where they are headed so they have some idea what they are working for. We must make sure objectives are stated clearly and explained to all students.

3. Expect students to be responsible for their own progress.

At some point, we have to place some responsibility on the student. Students in high school must decide to achieve or fail. There is much we can do to help them grow but they have to make the ultimate decision. Teachers need to make this expectation clear so students take ownership in their learning, as well as the responsibility to do what needs to be done so they can succeed.

4. Assume that students are smart enough to reach the standard.

If we are to be successful teachers, we must believe all students have the ability to learn. It doesn't matter what has happened in the past. All children can learn if given the proper tools and time. "When given adequate time, decision-making power, and high expectations for learning, we believe students can and will achieve".

5. Trust students and believe they have retained knowledge.

With only a limited review, all students can remember what we have taught them in the past. It is pointless to continually repeat things over and over, throughout elementary and even upper grades. We need to have faith in what we have done in the past.

6. Don't teach students what they don't need to know; teach them what they need to know.

This relates back to our earlier discussions about relevance. We need to impart knowledge on students that will serve them in the future in some capacity. Busy work and memorization will not aid students. Teachers need to make sure curriculum aligns with their future goals and aspirations. (Principal Leadership 1-2)

There is no way to change where they are at, so we must embrace the situation we are in and then work to move them to the final level. M. Kay Alderman, in her text *Motivation for Achievement: Possibilities for Teaching and Learning,* feels classroom structure can directly influence the personalities and tendencies of the children who are involved in the classroom setting. Alderman claims, "...two roles teachers have for supporting and

cultivating motivation in the classroom: (a) establishing the classroom structure and instruction that provides the environment for optimal motivation, engagement, and learning; and (b) helping students develop the tools that will enable them to be self-regulated learners" (Alderman 5).

While all motivation is an unique compilation of many factors, researchers have discovered "...reading motivation is 'multifaceted'" (Cole 327). If we become aware of a least a minimum of these different areas, we are bound to be more effective in the classroom. "All students bring their own sets of beliefs into the classroom. Classroom activities do not directly cause beliefs, but students' beliefs may affect their participation in the learning process " (Cole 327-328). Teachers must be extremely sensitive to what the students are bringing with them into the classroom if we hope to control what goes on inside the classroom.

> Many middle level and high school students have lacked the time, the opportunity, the resources, and the environment to clock the kind of reading mileage that makes a difference in one's ability to read. Providing a wide range of interesting and challenging books and audio books that students can read along with provides the kind of supportive reading opportunity many students have missed (Allen 13).

Reading is a critical area for students and teachers must realize what is at stake. "...of the children who have difficulties in learning to read, 10% to 15% eventually drop out of high school, and about half of the adolescents and young adults with criminal records or a history of substance abuse have reading difficulties" (Chapman and Tunmer 6). Our jobs are more important than ever. We have to keep track of much more than if everybody is in the chair when we walk into the room. "It is important for educators to evaluate students' self-efficacies and then provide meaningful, motivational activities that will improve and enhance students' confidence in their abilities" (Cole 328). Our job is to

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gauge the talents of our students, allow them to experience success and then work to challenge them to achieve more. This is especially true in the area of reading and is critical for those who have experienced failure during their reading careers. "Mathewson (1994) argued that the value students hold affect their attitude toward reading, which in turn affects their intrinsic motivation to read" (Cole 328). We must show students the ability to read is important and will allow them to experience successes or pleasure if they learn how to do it effectively. "Each reader held his or her own beliefs about reading; applied specific and unique reasons and purposes for reading; and participated in varied, personal affective reactions to reading and literature" (Cole 334). In this way, we have to be connected with our students so we know how to motivate them. "...students were motivated to read by totally different factors and exhibited their own distinctive literacy personalities" (Cole 334). As teachers, we have to tap into these factors and work to utilize them in the best possible ways. When we have accomplished this, their attitudes toward wanting to succeed while reading is improved and then they are motivated to try things we want them to learn.

Cole continues by listing ideas that should work for encouraging reading in the classroom.

> * *It is crucial to offer students a rich, literate environment in the classroom. An array of books that represents a variety of topics, levels, and genres of literature is necessary to capture students' interests.*
>> This is very true and I have found having more instead of less to read is great for reaching a variety of students. However, it is difficult to do with the budgets of most schools facing a severe crunch. Instead, I send them to the media center to work with our librarian. She is very knowledgeable about a wide range of books. I try to have as many books as I can for students but tend to have mostly books I enjoy reading. By utilizing an outside source, students are much more able to find books they like. We also have a great library in town and I have often sent students there to find

material they enjoy. I think it is important to expose the kids to different people who will recommend different books.

A wide variety of reading experiences can foster engaged reading -- SSR, buddy reading, choral reading, teacher-led small groups, storytimes, read-alouds, and so on.

You never know what style of reading practice might motivate a child to read more and comprehend better. 'Students have responded by noting that SSR introduced them to genres that they may not have otherwise read. Students felt they did increase the number of books they read throughout the time of the study' (Kirby 1). '...students who voluntarily read were stronger readers and had higher achievement scores in the United States than students who did not volunteer to read on their own time. 'Reading is the only way, the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary, advanced grammar, and the only way we become good spellers' (Kirby 31). Our school has established a reading policy which states the first 15 minutes of every study hall will be devoted to silent reading. 'The research found 'that the amount of independent silent reading children do in school is significantly related to gains in reading achievement' (Kirby 20) We feel strongly that students need to read more to become better readers. '...several studies that indicate students who engage in SSR improve in both reading achievement and attitude toward reading' (Kirby 10). Teachers are also encouraged to read during this time. "We need to be seen laughing over books, being unable to put books down, ...gasping over horror stories...If children don't know we love to read, how will they realize what an absorbing rewarding activity reading is?" (Haupt 7). Choral reading has never worked well when I have tried to use it in my classroom. I don't think I really know enough about it and the students tend to feel like little kids, so they resist fully participating. One thing that has really gone over well with my students, though, is reading aloud to them. It takes them back to when they were little kids and they like the feeling of being read to. "...a reborn belief in the power of oral storytelling, and a renewed and passionate plea for parents, librarians and teachers to read aloud to children of all ages as often as possible and a more liberal attitude towards expression, movement and participation" (Haupt 3). It also helps to improve their vocabularies. We are able to discuss what is being read and everyone is able to participate. In one class, I have a group who likes to illustrate on the board as I read. This has allowed more of the class to stay focused during the reading. I wouldn't use it with every class but when I have students who are willing to participate, I am not going to stop them. Small groups are always good. I try to use them at least once a week because then every student has a chance to participate.

Some kids don't like to talk in large groups, so this allows them to ask questions and be clear without fear of embarrassment. I think the key to this category of suggestions is that experimentation is a key to success. What works with one class or one student won't always work, so teachers need to work until they find something that allows the most students to be successful. SSR is perhaps the most powerful and easily accessible tool available to teachers. 'There are many purposes to SSR:

> * Most school reading is assigned reading. SSR offers students an opportunity to read material of their own choice.
> * During SSR time, many students learn that they can use their word attack skills to figure out new words -- on their own!
> * SSR can build students' confidence in their abilities to work through reading trouble spots.
> * Many studies of whole-class groups and of select groups of unmotivated readers show that SSR can result in students wanting to read more.
> * The amount of time that students spend reading independently outside of school increases as a result of SSR, parents report. Often children ask for books to read at home.
> * SSR can be one more element in a reading program aimed at demonstrating the joy that reading can bring and developing lifelong readers and learners.'

(Kirby 26-27)

Students' voices are so important; many opportunities for them to express their opinions should be part of the fabric of the classroom culture. Response sheets to fill out after reading, class opinion graphs, and free choice of books are just a sampling of the activities that can be used to honor students' voices and choices.

In almost all my classes, I assign students to read outside novels. These are books they choose on their own with relatively little guidance from me. 'Allowing students to choose what they want to read and giving them ownership over their reading will enable them to become absorbed in books and they will engage in reading for longer periods of time' (Kohn 25). If they ask, I will recommend things or I will have them meet with the librarian to find something suitable for each student. I try to get students to read challenging literature or things they might encounter in college but that is not always the right choice for every student. Something that has also become part of my required curriculum is a conference with students after they complete a book. It gives me a chance to determine if they really read and understood the book, and it gives the student a chance to ask questions and let me know

what they thought of the book. 'Higher level critical thinking skills are an important part of comprehension. Asking questions that cause students to use inductive thinking is important. Another means of using critical thinking skills is to provide activities that are open ended and allow students the opportunity to come up with a variety of answers. Having to explain how they arrived at their choice and discerning whether or not they have used logical thinking is also important' (Hurst 4). While reading, I have students journal every 50 pages. This is another way they can comment on the literature and get their questions down on paper. The journals can then be used if the student writes a paper over the novel.

* *Thematic units and author studies allow students to experience literature and reading beyond basic comprehension and reading skills. Units such as these also make it easy for the teacher to incorporate choice into the curriculum and promote students' interests and motivation.*

This sounds great and looks really neat when they present it in college courses. However, I think it is difficult to organize information in this way. The other problem with it in my small school is that there is a shortage of materials. I don't have enough novels or other things for all my students to read things in this manner. Plus, I think it is more limiting than expanding. If the topic/theme is something the student hates, he/she is stuck with an entire unit on it. However, if the information is organized by genre, the topic is continually changing. I have found this works best with most students. I also think it is more like things they will encounter after high school. People in most jobs have to deal with lots of different things at once, not something that fits nicely into a binder.

* *Arranging opportunities for students to engage in social interactions is essential. While some students learn efficiently on their own, many children need the support of peers and talk to learn and achieve.*

(Cole 335)

While I agree with the basic philosophy presented by this recommendation, I don't think it's true for all students. I also think it gives some kids an easy way out. They figure they will be paired with someone smart who will do the work or tell them what the story was about. Kids are way too lazy now and don't want to work on their own to find success. It is also hard on the smart kid who feels pressure to give the poorer student the information. They don't want to have the burden of the unmotivated student. They are concerned about themselves and shouldn't have to have that added responsibility. I do use group work and partners in my classroom but somewhat sparingly. I used to be the smart kid and I got annoyed with having to do the work of those who chose not to do it. I know that some would argue that if you set it up correctly,

this won't happen, but that doesn't fly in the real classroom. Kids find ways to circumvent the system so I try not to give them the opportunity too often.

Teachers of language arts face an especially tough challenge if they have a classroom full of non- or reluctant readers. However, there are some very simple things educators can do to make reading a more appealing task. Teachers might create displays and give presentations to their students about cool books. The displays should be bright, colorful and grab the attention of both boys and girls. One way for teachers to present information about a variety of books would be to create a pamphlet or web site for students. Parents should also get involved in the reading of adolescents. Teachers can make it easy by creating some type of programs to force students and parents to work together in some type of reading activities. Creating a system of checking out books on a regular basis might also be beneficial. We've already discussed reading aloud to students but it is also important to read with emotion. Students are drawn in by the drama and might choose to read books by the same author. It might also be helpful to organize books into categories or genres for students, to make easy selections based on their enjoyment of previous reading experiences. Students should also be directly involved in helping peers find books for pleasure reading. "Peer recommendations were most influential in helping adolescents choose books" (Kohn 22). They can give book talks, create cards/reviews and participate in many of the same ways as teachers. One final way for students and teachers to communicate about reading is through online discussions on the internet. This creates a unique format for discussion and allows students who might be technology-oriented to get excited about reading *(Teacher Librarian* 39-40).

More and more research is telling teachers the use of young adult literature is especially powerful with reluctant readers. Many teachers won't abandon the canon they grew up with, "Despite a proliferation of excellent young adult novels that explore issues in adolescents' lives, schools often cling to badly outdated reading lists that convince adolescents that reading is boring and disconnected from their lives" (Bean 1). If we want students to read more, we must find literature they like, which encourages them to find more to read. "There is evidence that the use of young adult literature in the secondary classroom can increase the chances that students will participate in satisfying literary experiences, read more, and become lifelong readers" (Santoli & Wagner 1). If we can get them hooked on something, we can lead them to new things. "...young adult literature can better prepare students for the appreciation and understanding of classic literature" (Santoli & Wagner 1). We want students to read first and then expand their base for understanding. "...it can be effective for supporting the growth of literary understanding, for actively engaging the high school student in analytical reading and writing and for creating life-long readers out of reluctant and even poor readers (Gallo, 2001)" (Santoli & Wagner 1). Most students who enter our classrooms come with limited background knowledge and need to be enticed to read classics. One way to do that is to find literature of interest to them. Good young adult literature includes several characteristics we wish for our young people to be exposed to, including: literary elements, situations to analyze and promotes reading as adults. It is pretty common to hear the groans of high school students who have been assigned to read classic "masterpieces". If anything, the experience discourages reading because young people don't enjoy being tortured by reading boring texts. They are not able to find relevance in

the writing and students disengage. The other problem is "...the classics are often limited in the American classroom to eighteenth and nineteenth century British and American authors, they provide 'nothing more than a curriculum that is an uncritical rehash of the traditional power culture: white, male, Christian, Anglophilic'" (Santoli & Wagner 2). Students of varied backgrounds are unable to relate to these types of stories. We must offer them some alternatives.

However, we do not have to give up substance to do so. "Diana Mitchell (2002) contended that the breadth and depth of young adult literature are equal to any other genre today and that the recurring life themes of love, death, loss, racism, and friendship contained in the classics are also present in young adult literature" (Santoli & Wagner 2). Students can connect the literature with their lives and then they are more willing to engage and analyze. If time is an issue, young adult literature can help. The texts are generally not so "thick" and students are able to read them at a more rapid rate.

> Because they (young adult novels) are about adolescents and for adolescents, they put our students at the center of the learning experiences we devise. Because they illustrate for young readers what literature can be, moving them and revealing to them how literature builds knowledge and perspective, they use our time effectively. Time well spent with young adult novels may not eliminate our temptation to say 'I'm late!' on occasion, but it will eliminate our anxiety about wasting time with literature that fails to speak to our students. (Santoli & Wagner 3)

Young people want to be entertained and teachers want them to learn. The use of young adult literature allows everyone to get what he/she wants. Young adult literature allows the student to engage with a text and then the teacher can teach the same elements he or she would with a classic piece. "The literary elements and devices that are found in the classics can also be found in good-quality young adult novels. The language skills,

literary language and techniques, and literature lessons that can be taught through the classics can also be taught through young adult fiction" (Santoli & Wagner 3). Since this is true, teachers are able to use the young adult literature to lead students to classics. Teachers can then bridge the two stories together. "If educators are serious about developing students' lifelong love of reading, they need to incorporate in the curriculum literature that is captivating and issue-based" (Bean 3). It's easy to say we want students to become lifelong readers, but we really have to find concrete ways to make that happen.

When faced with challenging boys we want to embrace reading, teachers face an especially difficult task. ""Research shows that boys have a tougher time than girls learning to read, and they score lower in reading achievement tests" (Teacher Librarian 1). High school-aged boys face an especially tough battle when engaging in reading.

> ...hormones are building, aggression is increasing, and boys become even more focused on action and exploration. As they enter high school, the emphasis on strength, masculinity, social acceptance, sports, aggression, hierarchies and power increases even more. If reading isn't perceived as important, if students don't have an academic or professional goal, or if reading is identified as being 'soft' or feminine, then reading would diminish rather than develop their fragile sense of self and growing masculinity. If boys have no male role models or strong women to introduce them to relevant and exciting books, they may not pick up another novel other than those required for high school English. (Haupt 4)

Boys must have options open to them which encourage reading, rather than make it something "girlie". When looking at the research, we find the following:

* Boys don't comprehend narrative (fiction) as well as girls
* Boys have much less interest in leisure reading than girls
* Boys are often more inclined to read informational texts
* Boys are more inclined to read magazine and newspaper articles
* Boys are more inclined to read comic books and graphic novels than girls
* Boys like to read about hobbies, sports and things they do or want to do
* Boys tend to enjoy escapism and humor

* Some groups of boys are passionate about science fiction or fantasy
* The appearance of a book and cover is important to boys
* Few boys entering school call themselves "non-readers" but by high school, over half do
* Boys tend to think they are bad readers
* If reading is perceived as feminized, then boys will go to great lengths to avoid it (Jones and Fiorelli 9)

Boys might be poorer readers for many reasons. "The differences, she discovered were in the brain, with culture playing an important part but not the defining role that many people have wished to believe" (Haupt 2). When we force young men to read only from the literary canon, we are sometimes losing readers without giving them a chance.

> Consequently, if we are trying to encourage young male students to read, particularly boys in a General English class, who don't like to read and are turned off to reading and perhaps even struggling with reading, we need to provide them with the types of books that we know they enjoy. We need to give them the type of book that will grab their attention quickly and make them want to continue reading (Kohn 37).

Totally abandoning the canon is not the way to go, however. There is something to be said for attempting to read a challenging piece of literature and learning a lesson from what you read.

> If we want our male students to grow as readers and develop a life long love of reading, we need to provide them with the type of literature that we know they like, literature with which they can connect, literature that will capture their attention and draw them into the book. We want to turn these students into readers. Hopefully, once they realize that reading is fun, they can always come back to the classics if and when they are ready to do so. (Kohn 37)

There have been recent novels that make it clear all children could and will embrace the novel with interesting subject matter, even if it is long and somewhat difficult to read. "I will be eternally thankful to J.K. Rowling for proving three things: Boys will read a book, no matter how difficult or foreign, if they are motivated. Boys' books don't have

to be simplified play-by-play sports dramas, novels full of potty humor or 'plots in hyper-drive'. Children, even boys, will read hardcover fiction" (Haupt 5). Classic pieces of literature can last a lifetime and change meaning throughout the life of a child. It is the responsibility to introduce a wide variety of literature but make it clear classic pieces and those that challenge us as readers are valuable. On the other hand, it is also the job of a teacher to find something students enjoy reading. "Children need opportunities to choose materials in which they are interested and to read them at their own comfortable rates. Meanwhile, teachers should also be reading for pleasure instead of grading papers or doing clerical work. Positive demonstrations of reading for pleasure send a clear message to children that this activity is to be valued and emulated by all members of the learning community" (Sanacore 164). It only seems fair that if we're expecting students to read, we read, as well. Role modeling, as mentioned earlier, is extremely important. We must model what we expect of students. If a teacher wants students to challenge themselves and read something that causes stress and hard work, we must also allow them to find reading they like to do. In this sense, we must read many different types of genres and rely on others to help students explore literature until they find something they appreciate. "As students experience the pleasure of reading in different content areas, they expand their repertoire of interests as they engage in a diversity of text. Not surprisingly, they come to realize reading is both enjoyable and informational" (Sanacore 164). It is critical to pass on to students that reading can give us both information and pleasure. "A good reading program must help children develop into readers, who actually read literary works. A quality reading program should have three objectives: first, to build a favorable attitude towards reading; second, to develop a lasting interest in

reading; and third, to improve reading tastes. A successful reading program should create

the desire to read and foster the pleasure found in recreational reading. It should also

help develop the desire to read for personal development, to learn about the world, and to

gain increased understanding of people and society" (Richardson and Miller 6). Teachers

must also rely on the boys themselves to make reading interesting to other boys. We

have to find out what they like and use that to motivate other students. The word of a

teacher means little to high school boys but they take the words of each other as truth.

Some suggestions found in this text have been helpful to the author and would

work in many different school settings, and they include:

* Link from the library web site to the guysread.com web site which
    contains list after list of books recommended by guys for guys.
* Engage the coaches of the boys' sports teams in a Guys Read project.
    From read-alouds on the bus to away games to having athletes read
    to younger children, get coaches (whom most are teachers, few are
    librarians) involved.
* Buy a few less novels and put that money into periodicals: magazines,
    comic books and newspapers, particularly *USA Today* and at least
    one tabloid such as the *Weekly World News*.

(Jones and Fiorelli 10)

The list given by the authors was much longer but the author felt these were practical

ideas that were not too idealistic. The web site has been recommended by our librarian

for a long time and she is constantly checking it to make sure she gets updates and newer

books. It is also pretty easy for teachers to check this and find books to read and

recommend. The coaches idea the author found particularly cool since I am a coach. The

idea of reading on the bus on the way to a contest is laughable but the idea of reading to

younger students is something we have implemented this year. The elementary teachers

love it and the athletes think it is pretty cool once they do it. In a small town, where the

entire K-12 is in one building, this works out great. However, I think larger schools

could do it on a less regular basis and make it work. The younger students are in awe of the older kids, especially those who they see playing in the gym or on the field. It makes reading seem cool and encourages those who might not like school but do like sports. The idea of reading periodicals also has a huge place in high school English classrooms. Many people won't continue to read novels once they are done educating themselves but they will read magazines and newspapers.

> '...boys are quite capable at literacy skills but the skills they possess are not valued in the classroom. Surfing the net, reading video screens and engaging with computers, all demand levels of literacy competence that do not figure high in school measures of literacy competence. On the other hand, these skills are important in terns of acquiring future jobs (Simpson, 1992). Besides these skills do not undermine the boys' feelings of masculinity' (Kohn19).

Teachers need to make sure boys are proficient in these areas so they are able to have lifelong skills which keep them reading.

In many of the prototypes, we discussed attribution or self-efficacy. It is something all students need help establishing and teachers must work this area of education in order to have students who believe in themselves. One way to do this successfully is to combine strategy use and giving credit to one's self. Thus, you merge curriculum with belief in student ability. Margolis and McCabe offer teachers some general steps to follow when looking at attribution training in combination with strategy use. They offer that their plan was adapted from Mushinski Fulk, B.M., & Mastropieri, M.A. (1990).

> Step 1. *Explain purpose.*
> Explain the purpose of the strategy. Make sure the student understands how the strategy will help her. Relate the purpose to the student's frame of reference so she sees value in learning the strategy.
>
> Step 2. *Discuss effort.*

Discuss with the student how she controls her own effort and the critical role effort plays in producing successful outcomes.

Step 3. *Model examples.*
Apply the strategy correctly and incorrectly. Label the examples correct and incorrect.

Step 4. *Model attributions.*
Model controllable attributions while engaging in the strategy (e.g., "I got the right answer because I first skimmed the chapter, read all the headings and subheadings, and tried hard....I got the wrong answer because I rushed and didn't skim the whole chapter. I didn't try hard")

Step 5. *Provide guided practice.*
Give the student ample opportunity to practice the combined strategy-attribution sequence with timely task-specific feedback until she routinely gets the right answer, makes positive attributions about her efforts, and appears comfortable with the strategy (e.g., "Kelly, that's great. You got the right answer because you first skimmed the chapter and worked hard. You told yourself that putting the effort in improves your understanding").

Step 6. *Provide independent practice.*
Give the student ample opportunity to use the combined strategy-attribution sequences by herself. Monitor student behavior and offer task-specific feedback as needed (e.g., "Nice job Kelly. You worked hard and gave yourself credit for skimming the chapter before reading it. Your effort make a difference").

Step 7. *Conduct formative evaluation.*
Assess the student's progress and modify teaching strategies if difficulty is apparent (e.g., if Kelly has trouble skimming full chapters of some 20 pages, reduce skimming to a more manageable fraction and provide more frequent feedback).

Step 8. *Introduce a new strategy.*
Once the student routinely uses the strategy correctly and takes credit for making adequate effort and using it correctly, introduce a slightly different strategy appropriate for the student's instructional level. Re-institute attribution retraining sequence with Step 1.
(Margolis and McCabe 166)

This strategy is especially effective because it does combine curriculum with working with the belief systems of students in our classrooms. More than not, teachers at the high school level are not explicit enough with students. They are constantly learning new skills; we need to scaffold learning so it is absorbed by the student. It is important to model the behavior we are seeking. It is also important to offer our students guided

practice. They have the power, then, to ask questions and seek guidance without seeming to fail. It is a time when questions and confusion are expected. Therefore, students who are lost don't have to seem like failures to themselves or their classmates. They are able to get the direction they need and can then go on to be successful when working alone. This is hard to do sometimes in the secondary classroom but teachers really need to focus on this step. We rush to get through the material without making sure students have the skills and confidence to manipulate what we have given them. We need to make the effort and take the time to make sure students do have the tools needed to be successful or our work is worthless. I also like the strategy because it offers specific feedback to the student. There are never general comments about good or bad, but instead a focus on specific skills and behaviors. This allows the student to make adjustments without feeling like the teacher is attacking them personally. It also offers the teacher specific guidance on how to respond to students. There is never a feeling that comments are random or without meaning. This is a strategy that might seem time consuming but would really be worth it for teachers in the end.

At the high school level, teachers need to get students to take more responsibility for their own learning. Soon, they will move on to college or the workforce and we need to have them prepared to succeed at the next level. "By teaching responsibility, as well as content, in our classrooms, we can enhance learning, raise the level of our classrooms, and produce more responsible members of society" (Coffman 1). The first step is to make students vocalize why they are taking a particular course because even if the reason is only because it is required, we gain insight and the students take some ownership. The second step is to demand students come to class prepared. They should be required to

complete all assignments. A helpful piece to this step is to "...design interesting and unusual homework" which draws the student in and makes them want to do the work (Coffman 2). Class could start with a quick quiz over the previous material or students could bring in questions they had about yesterday's content. The third step is to help students mentally engage in the course. "Studies have shown that students are most alert and attentive during the first ten minutes of a class" (Coffman 2). This means we need to utilize this time and demand much from students to begin the hour. The fourth step is to "Make participation and interaction integral parts of the course" (Coffman 2). Students need to voice and defend their ideas as well as listen to opposing views from others. Question them about everything and allow them to discuss important concepts. The fifth step is to "Make your students responsible for each other" (Coffman 3). Have them work in partners or assign study groups. This creates a sense of team or togetherness in the classroom. The sixth step is to "Teach your students to behave responsibly in groups" (Coffman 3). Set rules for what should be done when working in groups or be sure to assign each student a role within a group before work begins. Monitor group work closely to ensure this step is met. The seventh step is to "Model higher cognitive skills. Students can expand their curiosity and learn to ask questions by watching you be curious and ask questions" (Coffman 3). Another way to engage students in this step is to ask them for more. Don't let them get away with skimming over things. They should elaborate on their answers. The eighth step is to "Have your students analyze their learning experiences" (Coffman 3). Allow them to find out how they learn best. Also, "...give your students several opportunities throughout the course to give you feedback on how the course is going and to suggest changes that would help them learn better"

(Coffman 3). This helps you and also gives the students a voice. "According to Magolda (2002), giving students a chance to evaluate the course is another way for them to challenge their reliance on external authority" (Coffman 3). Students are able to feel their opinions matter and that someone is listening to what they have to say. Students should also offer each other feedback. It will help them with a lifelong skill. The ninth step is to "End class in a meaningful way. The last ten minutes of a class can be as important as the first ten" (Coffman 4). Ask students to summarize the day's lesson or ask questions to clarify things learned. The final step is "Don't try to save your students" (Coffman 4). There are times when students need extra attention or extra consideration due to things beyond their control but we must nail them to wall when they fail and fail to plan. The real world is not very understanding so we must prepare them for this. Our job as high school teachers to is prepare students for the outside world. "By teaching responsibility, we not only enhance learning and raise the level of our classroom, but we help produce responsible citizens and productive members of society" (Coffman 4). Isn't this the most important part of our jobs?

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HOME

One resource I don't think gets used enough is parents or the home. "Parents act as the earliest and most powerful role models for the child. They not only provide the child with his/her first books and materials for writing, but also act as their first teachers (Kohn 11). The connection of parents with their children is something teachers have no control over. "...the more involved parents are in their children's education, the better personal conditions (self-concept, expectancy of control, responsibility for successes and failures derived from causal attributions, etc.) these students' ability to cope with learning

at school will be " (Gonzalez-Pienda et al. 280). It only makes sense that parents who care have kids who care. "...family is one of the most important contexts in which a child forges his or her self, developing a system of attitudes toward various environments to relate to school and learning, enhancing motivation, interest (or lack thereof) in learning, among other things. Without the children's family support, it is hard for teachers to devise academic experiences to help students learn meaningful content. For example, the results of a recent study (Gonzalez-Pienda et al., 2000) indicate that, "...in the same classroom, with the same classmates and the same teachers, the students whose parents were significantly involved in modeling the process of self-regulation of learning obtained much higher grades than the students whose parents showed very low levels of involvement" (Gonzalez-Pienda et al. 281). More specifically, "The data from the available research converge in suggesting that children who have more opportunities to engage in literacy-relevant activities at home have more positive views about reading, engage in more leisure reading, and have higher reading achievement" (Baker 90). It only makes sense that parents who value reading and share that passion with their children will have students who value reading and take pride in their ability to read at a high level. It has to start at a young age and then continue on throughout their lifetimes. However, just telling parents to read to their students will not necessarily help students who are struggling to succeed in reading. "...parents are not likely to be able to help struggling readers effectively without focused and supported instruction" (Baker 83). The only problem with this is most parents don't have the time or energy to take a class or spend a ton of time learning how to help their struggling readers.

With a minimum amount of support from teachers and the school, parents would be able to assist at home. In my opinion, just monitoring the grades and homework, parents could advance their students. Also, reading aloud and spending time reading as a family would help tremendously. Another problem is that parents with struggling readers tend to be struggling readers themselves. When we can help both groups improve their reading, we have done a real service. "...recommended that teachers build on the successful reading relationships children have with their parents. If teachers design reading activities with input from parents, this might help ensure that true home-school partnerships can be created" (Baker 95). In this way, working with individual parents is probably the best idea. Teachers can then determine what each student needs and then find a way to work with the parents to ensure the student makes progress.

> In a more general sense, 'Parents play an important role in socializing achievement beliefs in their children, conveying beliefs, values, expectations, and attributions both directly and indirectly. It is therefore important that parents be made aware of the impact of their beliefs. Parents who hold high expectations for their children's reading achievement in fact have children who are high achievers; the reverse is also true' (Baker 98).

When parents think school is important and convey that belief to their children, the children internalize those values. School becomes important to the children because the parents let them know it is important.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I feel the motivation of secondary students is critical to the future of education. While I ultimately think this paper has exposed more questions than answers, there are some good things for teachers to try. The most important element of teaching motivation is knowing and caring about the students in your room. Teachers

must make the effort to connect with each student and make them feel like there is a level of concern. This is something simple which can make a major difference to students. A simple step like this might turn around the path of even one student and that makes our efforts worthwhile. Also, there has to be an environment where students feel they can question and grow. They must feel safe but also must feel challenged so they take risks to achieve more. That brings us to the next major concern for teachers. The material presented to students must be at a level or presented in a way that makes it hard for students to reach but something they can do. Students have to be challenged so that when they learn something, they feel it is an accomplishment; however, the challenge must be achievable. This fine balance must be constantly monitored by the teacher. There is a never-ending list of what teachers might attempt to motivate adolescents but caring, safety and correct challenges are major players in the list. Teachers must decide motivation is worth their time. If they want to impart material, they must first reach the students. The reality teachers face is that motivation is an extremely complex area of human development: there are many things with produce and affect motivation. There are more questions than answers and more ways to solve a student's motivation problem than stars in the sky. However, teachers must do all they can to reach each student who walks through the door. Motivation will not go away and will not change no matter what the government decides about standards and achievement. Students must be motivated in positive ways in our classrooms and teachers must work to institute positive change in all students. Teachers across America must rise to the challenge and do all they can to help the motivation of students improve. It might be the most challenging thing we do but it could also be the most important.

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