

Some Tips for Motivating Students

Realize that students are individuals

Generally, motivation must be done at the individual level. Give students clear goals and directions and clear information about assessment, but assume that non-achievement or underachievement is the result of an individual problem -- perhaps the problem is that needs are not being met; perhaps it is an attribution problem, etc. Preservice teachers should learn the possible causes, then treat the individual student.

Express clear expectations

Students need to know exactly what they are supposed to do, how they will be evaluated, and what the consequences of success will be.

Provide clear feedback

To be an effective motivator, feedback must be clear and specific and must be given close in time to performance

Provide immediate feedback

Both the informational and motivational value of feedback diminishes with time.

Provide frequent feedback

No matter how powerful a reward is, it may have little impact on behavior if it is given frequently. (Frequent feedback also permits students to assess their own levels of understanding.)

Value effort

Reward students directly by praising them for their efforts. Give a separate effort grade or rating along with the usual performance grade, or include effort in the performance grade.

Teach students to praise themselves

There is research evidence that self-praise increases academic success.

Don't rely on grades as incentives

While grades may be effective incentives for older students (late high school and college), they aren't effective for younger students because they are both too remote from the effort and too abstract in meaning.