

Motivating Students

You will sometimes find it a challenge to motivate some of your students. Here are some things that might help:

1. Explain Clearly

Some students have trouble staying on task. Some do poorly on assignments, or don't participate. The reason for this *may* be that they *don't fully understand what they have to do*. You may have explained your expectations clearly, but some students didn't 'get it'. You may even remember being confused yourself about a college assignment.

Be prepared to explain what you want *several times*. Talk to individuals directly. Explain *why* the class is doing this particular work, and how it will help them. Have patience.

2. Rewards

Some students aren't motivated to learn. They may be slow to start, and may have trouble staying on task.

Don't criticize or nag. Instead, reward them when they do something positive. The reward can be something as simple as praise, a kind word, a pat on the back, or a 'high five'. And you'd be amazed how well Sr High students react to stickers you put on their returned work!

Everyone likes the feeling of accomplishment and recognition; rewards for good work produce those good feelings.

3. Caring

Teachers who care, and who show they care, get better results from their students. Tell your students that you care about them. Ask them about their lives. Share information about yourself so that they get to know you. Share your faith. Share your mistakes. Share your feelings. Help students to see you as an approachable human being, rather than an aloof authority figure.

4. Participation

Students learn better when they can actively participate in their own learning. Standing in front of them and talking may be necessary sometimes, but it is the least effective way to teach, at least for a high school teacher.

(Why then are so many college courses taught this way? The person delivering the course is not so much a teacher as a lecturer. They aren't required to know anything about teaching methods).

5. Teach Inductively

Instead of presenting a lesson in the normal manner, do it backwards. Start with examples, evidence, or a story, and ask students to generalize or draw conclusions themselves. Not only will this maintain high interest, but you are also giving them practice at answering higher-order questions (synthesis and evaluation).

6. Satisfy students' needs

Students have a need to be involved, and to have fun. Satisfy these needs by allowing them a choice in what activities to do. Make some activities exciting and expect them to be noisy. Learning should be fun.

7. Make learning visual

Most students benefit from visual learning. Include pictures, drawings, charts, graphs, or real objects to illustrate your lesson. Have students draw what they have learned. Make posters for the walls. Have them make books illustrating a topic you've been learning about.

8. 'Good' Energy

If you look at what students are exposed to outside of the classroom, you will notice that 'evil' is high energy, creative, exciting, and 'does things', while 'good' is passive, resistant and boring. If you don't believe this, watch some popular cartoons or video games. Students are 'taught' to admire evil.

As a teacher you need to do something to counteract this. Find some heroes to talk about who are exciting and energetic, and *good people*. Research their lives. Post photos. Talk about them. Tell the class who your heroes are. Ask them to relate exciting stories about people in their lives.

9. Use positive emotions to enhance learning

Research has shown that people remember better when the learning is accompanied by strong emotions. If you can make your lessons fun, happy, loving, or even outrageous, kids will remember what you taught. Don't be afraid to embarrass yourself to make a lesson memorable! Bring props. Dress up!

