



Indicator: All teachers and teacher teams plan instruction with a curriculum guide that includes methods to enhance student motivation to learn. (E3)

Explanation: The evidence suggests that teachers have the power to help students become motivated, even when they may not naturally be, by showing them that their effort is valued, that the topic is relevant to their interests and life, and that learning can be enjoyable. When teachers purposefully incorporate methods for enhancing the Motivational Competency into their lessons and curriculum guides, these motivational, and consequently, engaging, behaviors become learning habits that foster students' willingness to learn and persist through challenges.

Questions: What methods are teachers using to motivate their students? How are teachers embedding these methods into their curricular documents and lesson plans? How are teachers collaborating across the school to incorporate the Motivational Competency into instructional plans? What supports are needed to help teachers better understand and use the Motivational Competency when planning?

What is the Motivational Competency?

The Motivational Competency explains why students engage with learning, how hard they will work on a particular task, and why they do or do not persevere to achieve their goals (Carreker & Boulware-Gooden, 2015; Headden & McKay, 2015; Redding, 2016). Usher and Kober (2012) identify four dimensions of motivation: competence, control/autonomy, interest/value, and relatedness. Toshalis and Nakkula (2012) write that, "we are motivated to devote energy to those activities in which we expect to succeed, and we subsequently tend to value those activities over others" (p. 10). If a student feels capable of accomplishing the task before them, they will be more likely to deeply engage in the work and persist.

This internal, or intrinsic, motivation also occurs when students truly enjoy or are interested in their work or goals (Redding, 2006). Carreker and Boulware-Gooden (2015) explain:

Motivation is wanting to do one task when there are competing tasks available. The learner believes that the task is important and has a belief in his or her ability to master the task through dedication and hard work. The learner persists even when mastering the task becomes difficult. (p. 8)

Many other factors affect a student's level of motivation – including their familial or social context, the classroom environment, and the degree to which teachers create an environment of mastery learning (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012; Headden & McKay, 2015; Redding, 2016). This concept of relatedness may not be as intuitive for teachers and parents to understand and foster collaboratively (Usher & Kober, 2012). Carreker and Boulware-Gooden (2015) outline a number of strategies that teachers can use to boost their students' motivational competency, including expressing confidence in their students' ability to complete and succeed in the work, sparking students' interest in lessons by starting with a related but fun activity, providing encouragement and support for students to keep going, and allow-

ing students to make decisions about project groups or topics. Redding (2006) also highlights ways that teachers can balance high expectations with a culture of caring, ensuring that students feel known, cared about, and recognized for their efforts.

Recognition for effort, as opposed to commendations for innate ability, is a critical piece of developing a growth mindset. Headden and McKay (2015) explain that students with a growth mindset “believe that with effort, their ability and performance can improve... The positive attitude prepares them for the realities of later life, helping them recover when their efforts fail to produce the outcomes they have come to expect” (p. 8). In contrast, students who have been rewarded and commended simply for being smart tend to have a fixed mindset, leading them to believe that their efforts are inconsequential and that they will simply either be good or bad at a given task (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012; Headden & McKay, 2015).

Consequently, teachers who focus on student effort and mastery of a goal, instead of performance on a test or a grade on a report card, are more likely to foster a growth mindset and consequently, higher levels of motivation, for their students (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012; Usher & Kober, 2012). This type of mindset can also be developed in the home, as a result of parental expectations, attitudes, and habits, making it even more important for schools to engage families in their children’s learning and provide them with strategies that they can use at home.

How Can Teachers Incorporate the Motivational Competency into the Curriculum?

Teachers stir students’ motivation to learn by teaching with enthusiasm, demonstrating their own delight in learning, connecting topics and assignments to students’ interests and aspirations, tapping students’ innate curiosity, and stretching students’ awareness of fascinating subjects beyond their current knowledge or interest. (Redding, 2014b, p. 17-18)

At the heart of the Motivational Competency is understanding, developing, and building upon why students work hard and want to learn. As the quote above suggests, some of this motivation can be derived from a combination of the teacher’s personality and his or her instructional practices, the way he or she presents the curricular content to encourage excitement and engage-

ment. However, some of a teacher’s ability to motivate must be planned.

Redding (2014a) writes that the curriculum provides “the scope and sequence of knowledge and skills to be mastered by students,” and therefore creates a framework for the teacher of what must be taught (p. 23). However, it is up to the teacher to help students understand why that content is important and help them get excited about learning it. Walberg (2010) writes:

The curriculum should have as its primary goal the fostering of understanding, whereby students learn individual elements in a broader network of related content and express the content in their own words, as well as connect it to prior knowledge. When students appreciate and value what they are learning, while understanding and agreeing with the reasons for learning it, they are better able to extend the curriculum of the school to other important contexts. (p. 28)

Just like the course content, these motivational pieces must also be planned. To best enhance the Motivational Competency, Redding (2014a) recommends that all teachers and instructional teams plan their instruction using a curriculum guide, a document that aligns instructional methods with the content and academic standards to be taught. This is likely a practice that teachers already do, but Redding encourages schools to incorporate their strategies for enhancing student motivation into the curriculum guide itself. By purposefully planning out ways to spark student interest, promote a growth mindset, and creating a sense of value for the topic, these behaviors will become more embedded into the instruction and culture of the school, and consequently, will foster habits of student engagement and persistence (Redding, 2014a; Redding, 2014b).

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