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## Teacher toolbox : a motivational toolbox for the classroom

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# Teacher *Toolbox*

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A motivational toolbox for the classroom



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EPS 497-  
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Missing Assignments	Reference	A1, 61, F1
No outside test preparation	Reference	01, G1
Inappropriate language/actions	Reference	A1, 61, ci, G1
Lack of <i>effort</i> on assignments	Reference	01, E1, F1
Limited communication with peers	Reference	ci, F1
Tardiness/punctuality	Reference	A1, 61, G1
Lack of interest in class/assignments	Reference	01, E1, F1
Lack of respect for school authorities	Reference	61, ci, F1

## Unit Rationale

This unit was compiled to help teachers quickly find solutions to common motivational issues in the classroom. Often times teachers would love to make individual accommodations for students and try to work with their personal needs, however, this requires a great deal of time. This "toolbox" is designed to help teachers by providing blackline masters, and examples of easy to use common techniques used to increase motivation. One should note that, some of the techniques highlighted are based on extrinsic motivators, but more are based on intrinsic motivators.

Extrinsic motivators should be used sparingly because research proves that if students receive extrinsic motivation for an activity that is naturally intrinsically motivating, the intrinsic motivation for the activity decreases (Santrock, 2006). Thus, extrinsic motivators should be used only for changes in behavior, not academic goals/achievement (Stipek, 2002). This does not mean that one cannot use extrinsic rewards and that they are useless, it simply suggests that intrinsic and extrinsic motivators should be used side by side. Stipek writes, "It is unrealistic to expect students to exert effort voluntarily and enthusiastically on every school task. .. Therefore, the practical issue is how to create a context in which a focus on learning and understanding prevails, and in which extrinsic rewards and concerns about performance do not undermine intrinsic motivation and attention to understanding and mastery."

On top of using the correct motivational techniques, the classroom climate plays a big role on increasing positive intrinsic interest in tasks (Stipek, 2002). It is important to create a non-threatening environment, in which errors are accepted as a natural part of learning. To do this, one must emphasize the value of errors. By treating errors as information sources and valid contributions to discussions, students will feel that even if they speak and make an error, they are still contributing positively to class. Also, another key way to create a non-threatening environment encompasses the idea of creating a community of learners who work and discovery together. This community should not only include the children, but the teacher as well. Teachers should model enthusiasm

for each activity and be available to help students research and discover. If a community is created, students will feel more comfortable sharing their ideas and information because no one will be at risk of embarrassment.

Overall, challenging, developmentally appropriate activities are the most beneficial and intrinsically motivating for students. If tasks are perceived as too easy for students, behavioral and motivational issues will follow. Students can be motivated by using the techniques outlined in this "toolbox", however, one must remember to incorporate a mix of extrinsic and intrinsic motivators along with making sure that information is developmentally appropriate for the students. Also, one must note that none of these techniques will be beneficial for students unless they are incorporated into an environment that is mutually respectful and fosters mastery learning.

# Behavior Management Charts

## How to Use:

The children should be divided into equal groups for teams on the behavior management chart. The classroom should then agree on a set of "rules" that the whole class will abide by. These rules can target one specific behavior that the teacher wants to see reproduced each day or it can encompass a few behaviors. Whether the behavior management chart encourages one or several rules, all the rules should be posted for the kids to reference daily. Then, the chart can be laminated and written on with overhead markers for continuous use. When the children are behaving positively based on the rules, the teacher can mark their group with a star or any other positive symbol. Each month, the group that is in the lead should receive some sort of positive reward for having excellent behavior (Springer, 2005).

## Rationale:

Behavior management charts rely on the success of extrinsic motivation and behavioral learning theories. Operant conditioning is the primary reason that behavior management charts are effective (Huitt, 1997). Operant conditioning is a behaviorist theory that applies the idea of consequences to that of behavior performance. According to operant conditioning, a theory that is credited to behaviorists such as B.F. Skinner, Edward Thorndike and John Watson, consequences ultimately produce changes in behavior (Pugh, 2006). Paralleling this idea, if a teacher wishes to increase or decrease a certain behavior, they must provide an appropriate consequence for the desired action (Huitt, 1997). For example, if a student is getting good grades on homework the logical and appropriate consequence would not be to give the student an extra recess. A more logical consequence for this behavior would be for the student to receive a "free homework pass" and not have to complete the next assignment. Behaviorists also specify that consequences come in the form of both positive and negative consequences and are classified as rewards and punishments. Therefore, behavior management charts can use either rewards or punishments based on the teacher's preference (Springer, 2005). One must remember that for a

# Behavior Contract

I, \_\_\_\_\_, Student \_\_\_\_\_, hereby declare on this date, \_\_\_\_\_, that I agree to do the following:  
to turn in my homework everyday, five days each week, and for each assignment to be thoroughly completed. If I should have a late assignment, I agree to complete it within one school day.

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher Signature

My efforts at meeting this goal will be considered acceptable and complete when:  
at the end of each week, I have all five assignments turned in and at the end of the quarter when there are checks for every assignment in the grade book.

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By successfully completing the term of this contract, I will be rewarded by:

A free lunch of choice at any of the five specified restaurants agreed to by Miss. Smith. These restaurants include Subway, Jimmy Johns, McDonald's, Burger King, or Quimos.

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\_\_\_\_\_  
November 21, 2008  
Ending Date of Term

# Behavior Contract

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby declare on this  
date, \_\_\_\_\_, that I agree to do the following:

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher Signature

My efforts at meeting this goal will be considered acceptable and complete when:

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By successfully completing the term of this contract, I will be rewarded by:

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Ending Date of Term

# Using Praise to Motivate

## How to Use:

Students should receive praise throughout the day, especially when they are acting appropriately in class, to help boost their self-esteem. To use praise effectively and to help increase motivation in students who are having motivational issues, positive praise should be used often and immediately following an action. Students will begin to associate the positive response with the action and then will strive to produce the response more frequently. Using praise will work well with students who crave attention and initiate negative actions to receive more attention because they are not receiving enough. To assure that using praise works in a positive way, one must remember to focus on the positive behaviors, no matter how little they may seem.

Also, praise should be direct, specific and sincere. Students need to know that it is something that really applies their work and not just a blanket statement such as, "good job" or "way to go." Students will respond better if statements such as, "I like the way you used the color blue in your picture" is used to show that you really noticed their specific work. Focusing on the student's work is also key. Students must know that you are praising their work and not their worth as a person (Springer, 2005).

## Rationale:

Bloom's taxonomy classifies education objectives into different categories; cognitive, affective, and psychomotor (Santrock, 2006). The affective taxonomy states that students need to have their basic emotional needs met as well as cognitive and psychomotor. Therefore, in order for a student to be productive and have a complete educational experience they need to have basic affective needs met. Students need to feel that they are included, safe, and needed in the classroom. By providing positive praise to students, they feel that their presence is being acknowledged and is needed. If students feel that they are accepted in the classroom, they will in turn be more involved and committed to the learning experience. Students need to hear specific, sincere feedback from individuals they regard highly. Bloom also suggests that if a student has positive affective

## Examples of Specific Praise

### Remember:

- Be specific with praise. Students will respond more positively to direct comments.
  - Point out unique designs, characters and color patterns.
- Use their names, they enjoy personal comments. It makes them feel needed and special.
- Do not use qualitative statements, such as "Good boy."

### Examples:

1. I like the way you used blue to make the picture feel sad, John.
2. I like how you used the yellow and red to make the picture seem happy and like summer.
3. Wow, your circles are drawn with perfectly round sides.
4. I love the shapes you used. Do you know what this shape is called?

# Giving Free Choice Assignments

## How to Use:

Teachers can use free choice in a variety of ways, such as giving different choices for homework, schedule, projects, in-class activities, etc. However, one important aspect that needs to be present for free choice to work in the classroom is making sure that the teacher maintains some degree of control. To do this, the teacher should only give the students a couple options to choose from. This gives the students choice within limits and maintains the teacher's control. For example, the teacher can give the students a scheduling choice by offering to switch two subjects. By giving them only two subjects, the teacher is still comfortable with the outcome and the students feel that they are in charge and responsible for their own learning. Another example is free choice on three homework assignments. The teacher could assign homework and give the students a choice as to which of the three they wish to complete. Therefore, the teacher still knows that he/she is going to receive an assignment that helps assess his/her objectives, but the student choose the project that is more interesting.

## Rationale:

Using free choice is a positive way to increase intrinsic motivation (Springer, 2005). Students need to feel that they are playing an active role in their own lives and are meeting personal goals. To give free choice can be a little scary for teachers, however, the children will greatly benefit. By providing opportunities for free choice, students will be able to pick activities that they will succeed in and it will increase their self-determination (Pintrich, 1996). According to Deci and Ryan, self-determination increases intrinsic motivations because it measures the degree to which people make conscious choice and reflection.

Deci and Ryan also believe that people are driven by challenge and strive to better themselves, in turn feeling that they are responsible for their being (Pintrich, 1996). This will motivate them to attempt difficult tasks and in turn make them responsible for their own learning. Looking at this theory, one can see the benefits of free choice are plentiful. If students view themselves as competent,

# Using Group Work to Motivate

## How to Use:

Teachers can use group work in many ways, such as centers or tables. Teachers first should analyze if they want the students to work in academically heterogeneous or homogenous groups. Once that is determined, teachers should decide if they want the groups all working on the same project or multiple projects during centers. After these two factors are decided upon, the teacher can then implement group work during class. The teacher must know their students and place them in groups that are going to be focused on the academic task. Teachers should keep in mind that putting friends in the same group could be helpful or harmful. If students feel that they are comfortable with their friends, then they might be more inclined to ask for help and motivated to learn. They may also be more willing to offer help to others. On the other hand, they may be more off task if they are in a group with close friends (Springer, 2005).

## Rationale:

Students of all ages are often motivated by those around them and strive to be accepted and liked (Springer, 2005). Group work helps to make learning more enjoyable for the students, as well as, motivates them to try their best (Stipek, 2002). It is also believed that girls respond better to cooperative learning environments. An entire class does not have to consist of group work because individual accountability is very important but group work may help those who are struggling to feel confident asking questions and mixed ability level groups will help make students to feel competent by making them a resource for other students. Making them a resource will make them feel knowledgeable along with responsible.

If a teacher starts group work off on the right track by creating positive, non-threatening environments, then students will begin to enjoy working with peers and have a positive attitude about new ideas and knowledge (Springer, 2005). Students who engage in group work have proven to have high self-efficacy. They feel that they can complete any task because are not afraid to ask for help. In tum, teamwork, mastery learning and cooperation are fostered in the

# Making Personal Connections

## How to Use:

To help students make personal connections to activities, students need to be able to choose an activity that they can relate to because personal connections can be made through many different avenues. Personal connections may be made through an in-depth study or even everyday classroom activities. Teachers need to realize that students need to be given the opportunity to relate experiences to their own lives. If students have difficulty relating materials to their own lives, it might help if the teacher models how it can be connected to his/her life.

## Rationale:

Students will greatly benefit from making personal connections to classroom activities because research shows that students are more motivated to learn about events/topics that are connected to their lives (Springer, 2005). Students will internalize more if they can make real-world connections and are aware of the significance of the lesson. To parallel that idea, experts say that it is important to provide tasks that are similar to experiences that the students will experience outside of the classroom (Stipek, 2002). All of this information and research lends itself to the idea that the more connections a student can make to the material, the more avenues the child has for understanding. For example, if the student understands a vocabulary word with not only the definition but also many examples and can relate that information to something they have experienced, they are more likely to understand and use the vocabulary word later on.

On top of that, students who make personal connections to learning have higher self-determination because they are doing activities that they feel are important and relevant (Pintrich, 1996). The more a student feels that they are participating in something because of their own will and can take personal responsibility for learning and application, the higher their self-determination will become. Students who are autonomous and have high self-determination will in turn be more interested in learning experiences and the cycle will continue. Students will make connections and strengthen their want to learn, raising their

# Using Goals to Motivate

## How to Use:

Teachers should help students to set goals, both long and short term. A worksheet is often helpful to assist students with visualizing goals. Teachers should help students to understand the importance of goals by modeling the goals that they set for themselves. Along with a worksheet that the students can map all their goals out on, it might be helpful to have classroom goals posted and to allow the students to post their personal goals on their desks. This may be done by writing a goal on a note card and taping it to the student's desk or locker, where they can easily reference it each day (Springer, 2005).

## Rationale:

Self-efficacy is the key to many of the theories surrounding intrinsic motivation (Belsky, 2007). Albert Bandura describes self-efficacy as one's beliefs in one's ability to succeed. A formal definition is "an internal belief in our competence that predicts whether we initiate activities or persist in the face of failures, and predicts the goals we set." Goal setting is very important for individuals to feel accomplished and to focus their efforts. Students benefit greatly from goal setting because goals give students a direction to their learning and a purpose for specific tasks.

In addition, "intrinsic interest derives primarily from the feelings of competence that are associated with working on and completing tasks, and that only moderately difficult tasks engender feelings of competence when they are completed" (Stipek, 2002). "This suggests that a blanket curriculum or state goals are not going to produce the largest academic gains. Instead, personal goals that are set by the individual and are appropriate to their difficulty levels and needs are going to be the most beneficial. Also, research shows that students are more motivated when they have tasks that are challenging and properly fitted to their needs. By involving students in their own goal setting, they begin to feel accountable for their own learning and autonomous, which produces responsibility and productivity (Santrock, 2006).

## Setting Personal Goals

Goal 1: To turn in all of my homework on time each day

Date when I expect to achieve my goal: At the end of the school year

Steps I need to take in order to achieve my goal:

1. Complete my homework assignments at home each night
2. Have my parents check it and then put them in my backpack before bed
3. Put it in the turn-in bin at the beginning of every day
4. ~.

One difficulty I will have to overcome in order to achieve my goal:

Remembering to put my homework in my folder. I will do it before I brush my teeth.

Goal 2: I will be respectful of all of my peers and adults with my words.

Date when I expect to achieve my goal: By the end of the first quarter.

Steps I need to take in order to achieve my goal:

1. I need to think of my words before I say them.
2. Write down how I feel in. am upset.
- 3.
- 4.

One difficulty I will have to overcome in order to achieve my goal:

I will have difficulty when I get angry and I need to remember to wait until I calm down before answering.

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Goal 3: I want to learn how to write my name in cursive.

Date when I expect to achieve my goal: By the end of the year.

Steps I need to take in order to achieve my goal:

1. Learn each letter individually.
2. Practice each letter individually.
3. Practice everyday.
4. Put all of the letters together and practice my full name.

One difficulty I will have to overcome in order to achieve my goal:

## Setting Personal Goals

**Goal1:** -----

Date when I expect to achieve my goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Steps I need to take in order to achieve my goal:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

One difficulty I will have to overcome in order to achieve my goal:

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**Goal 2:** -----

Date when I expect to achieve my goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Steps I need to take in order to achieve my goal:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

One difficulty I will have to overcome in order to achieve my goal:

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**Goal3:** ~ \_\_\_\_\_

Date when I expect to achieve my goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Steps I need to take in order to achieve my goal:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

One difficulty I will have to overcome in order to achieve my goal:

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