How To Motivate Your Learners

Quick Tips for Educators

1 Give students autonomy

- Offer a choice of assignments, topics, and different methods by which assignments will be assessed.
- Co-create classroom policies, e.g., expected participation.
- Determine part of the syllabus together.
- Provide annotation activities.

2 Connect with the "why"

Don't assume students perceive value. One way to address this is to make clear the relevance of your course by exploring "why" it matters.

- Explore the personal, employment, and career relevance of your course to students.
- Make clear the "transcendent purpose" of study, i.e., how our actions and studies are important for the world.
- Connect learning objectives with community service by introducing service learning.
- Try exercises that focus on affirming values.
- Use emotional hooks.
- Use puzzles and mysteries.
- Practice debates in class.
- Tell stories.

3 Help students develop a sense of competence

Foster motivation by giving students wins and a sense of progress throughout their studies:

- Offer low stakes testing.
- Build in "early wins."
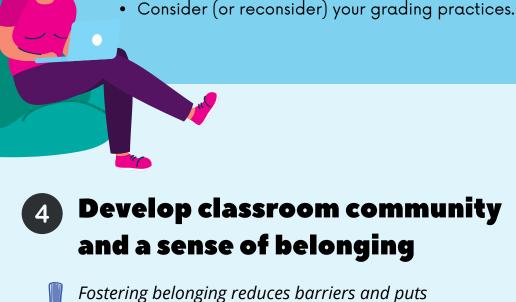- Practice transparency.
- Provide frequent feedback.
- Provide progress as well as discrepancy feedback.
- Ask "stretch it" questions.
- Check in with your students periodically.
- Consider attributional retraining.
- Share grading criteria and rubrics.
- Offer two stage exams.
- Consider (or reconsider) your grading practices.

4 Develop classroom community and a sense of belonging

Fostering belonging reduces barriers and puts students in a better frame of mind to learn:

- Learn your students' names.
- Humanise the classroom.
- Introduce warm-up activities.
- Encourage peer teaching.
- Offer multiple routes to participation.
- Make use of social apps which students can use as a backchannel for communications.
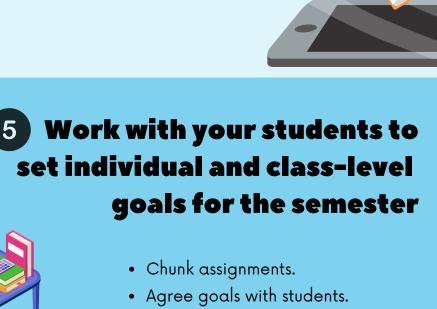- Encourage shared and group work.
- Embed universal design for learning.
- Use warm vs chilly language.
- Practice inclusive teaching.

5 Work with your students to set individual and class-level goals for the semester

- Chunk assignments.
- Agree goals with students.
- Set frequent deadlines.

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