

# Strategies for Increasing Student Motivation

(Adapted from *Teaching at Its Best*, Nilson, 2010)

## **Your Persona:**

- Deliver your presentations with enthusiasm and energy.
- Explain your reasons for being so interested in the material, and make it relevant to your students' concerns.
- Get to know your students.
- Foster good lines of communication in both directions.
- Use humor where appropriate.
- Maintain classroom order and civility to earn your students' respect as well as to create a positive learning environment.

## **Your Course:**

- Design, structure, and develop your course with care, and explain its organization and your rationale for it to your students.
- Allow students some voice in determining the course content, policies, conduct rules, and assignments.
- Highlight the occupational potential of your subject matter.

## **Your Teaching:**

- Explain to your class why you have chosen the teaching methods, readings, assignments, in-class activities, policies, and assessment strategies that you are using.
- Help students realize that they can transfer skills they have learned in other courses into yours and vice versa.
- Make the material and learning activities meaningful and worthwhile to students by connecting them to their futures and the real world.
- Use examples, anecdotes, and realistic case studies freely.
- Teach by inquiry when possible.
- Use a variety of student-active teaching formats and methods, such as discussion, debates, press conferences, symposia, role playing, simulations, academic games, problem-based learning, the case method, problem solving, writing exercise, and so on.
- Share strategies and tips for them to learn your material, including reading, studying, and thinking about it.
- Use cooperative learning formats.
- Hold students to high expectations.

## **Assignments and Tests:**

- Reinforce the idea that all students can improve their cognitive and other abilities with practice and are in control of their academic fates.
- Provide many and varied opportunities for graded assessment so that no single assessment counts too much toward the final grade.
- Give students plenty of opportunity to practice performing your learning outcomes before you grade them on the quality of their performance.
- Sequence your learning outcomes and assessments to foster student success.

- Give students practice tests.
- Provide review sheets that tell students what cognitive operations they will have to perform with key concepts on the tests.
- While students must acquire some facts and terminology to master the basics of any discipline, focus your tests and assignments on their conceptual understanding and ability to apply the material, and prepare them for the task accordingly.
- Design assignments that are appropriately challenging given the experience and aptitude of the class.
- Assess students on how well they achieve the learning outcomes you set for them, and remind them that this is what you are doing.
- Allow students options for demonstrating their learning, such as choices in projects and other major assignments.
- Design authentic assignments and activities—those that give students practice in their future occupational and citizenship activities.
- Give assignments that require students to reflect on their progress.
- Evaluate work by an explicit rubric (a specific set of criteria with descriptions of performance standards) that students can study and ask questions about before they tackle an assignment.
- Place appropriate emphasis on testing and grading.
- Give students prompt and constant feedback on their performance, as well as early feedback on stages and drafts of major assignments.
- Let students assess themselves.
- Show your students instances of peers who have succeeded.
- Reduce the stress level of tests by lowering the stakes. Test early and often.
- Use criterion-referenced grading instead of norm-referenced grading (i.e., use a “straight scale” instead of grading on a curve.)
- Give extra credit or bonus points (or the chance to earn back lost points) only for work that depends on students’ having done their regular assigned work.

### **Equity in the classroom**

- Create a safe climate for the expression of different points of view.
- Give attention to all students as equally as possible.
- Praise students equally for equal-quality responses.
- Use non-stereotypical examples in presentations.
- When possible, integrate course content that includes the contributions and perspectives of both genders and all cultural, ethnic, and racial groups that may be represented in your classes.
- Use gender-neutral language.
- Use pedagogical strategies that appeal to multiple learning styles.
- Discreetly ask your students with disabilities and non-English-speaking backgrounds whether you can do something in class to make their life easier, such as facing the class when you are talking.
- Be sensitive to difficulties your students may have in understanding you.