

Critical findings from research on motivation

Do you understand these key assertions and related ideas about motivation?

1. Motivation directs behavior toward particular goals
goal-directed behavior – task oriented, performance oriented, mastery oriented
2. Motivation increases effort and persistence in activities
increases time on task, persistence, and perseverance
3. Motivation affects cognitive processes
focuses attention, fosters a mastery orientation, “motivated to learn”
4. Motivation determines what consequences are reinforcing and punishing
self-imposed contingencies based often on identity aspirations
5. Motivation often leads to improved performance
drop-out rates related to amount and kind of motivation
anxiety can provide motivation and improve performance, to a point... (facilitating and debilitating anxiety) – challenge vs. threat
6. Intrinsic motivation is more beneficial than extrinsic motivation
Pizza hut eroded intrinsic motivation
Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi and flow
7. Learners want to believe they are competent and have self-worth
self-handicapping strategies – not trying hard can lead to...
self-fulfilling prophecy
face-saving strategies – like humor, attempts to keep ego from being hurt
8. Learners want to determine the course of their lives to some degree
autonomy and self-determination
possible selves
9. Learners want to feel connected to other people
relatedness and socialization

Students commonly have anxiety (either facilitating or debilitating) about:

1. Physical safety... anxious if violence is common in their school or neighborhood, etc...
2. Threatened self-worth... unflattering remarks about their race, gender, etc...
3. Physical appearance... too short, too tall, too heavy, too skinny, too dark, too light etc...
4. New situation... may experience uncertainty when moving to a new school, etc...
5. Judgment or evaluation by others...low grades from teachers, accepted by peers, etc...
6. Frustrating subject matter...formed from past experiences, competence, successes and failure
7. Excessive classroom demands...too much too soon etc...
8. Classroom tests... performance anxiety...
9. The future... related to future identity and uncertainty

Question:

So how can you use these to promote facilitating anxiety without debilitating anxiety?

Promoting Motivation and Positive Affect

1. Build on and encourage intrinsic motivation when possible – model excitement, incorporate novelty (fantasy, mystery, general craziness...)
2. Use extrinsic motivators when necessary – gold stars and kudos help in small ways
3. Protect and enhance students' self-efficacy and overall sense of self-worth – pump kids up and watch out for persistent failure that can erode self-worth
4. Present challenges that students can realistically accomplish – design assignments and timelines very carefully
5. Give students control over some aspects of classroom life – rules and procedures, aspects of assignments, aspects of curriculum
6. Focus students' attention more on mastery goals than on performance goals – downplay performance goals and promote mastery goals
7. Encourage students to set their own goals for learning and performance – promote self-monitoring and set small goals to reach big goals
8. Help students meet their need for relatedness – allow for some collaboration and socialization
9. Get students emotionally involved in the subject matter – emotion promotes engagement
10. Keep anxiety at a low to moderate level – too much is bad, not enough is bad too!
11. In transition from elementary to middle and middle to high, promote relatedness – these transitions can be disconcerting so look for ways to minimize their negative effects
12. Minimize competition – competition promotes performance and task goals, not mastery goals
13. Form and communicate optimistic expectations and attributions – how you talk to your students matters!