

Six “TARGET” Principles of Motivation

Principle	Educational Implications	Examples
Classroom tasks affect motivation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present new topics through tasks that students find interesting, engaging, and perhaps emotionally charged. • Encourage meaningful rather than rote learning. • Relate activities to students’ lives and goals. • Provide sufficient support that students can be successful. 	<p>Turn lessons into experiences. Do you have any lessons you could sell tickets for?</p>
The amount of autonomy students have affects motivation, especially intrinsic motivation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give students choices about what and how they learn. • Teach self-regulation strategies. • Solicit students’ opinions about classroom practices and policies. • Have students take leadership roles in some activities. 	<p>Let students choose among several ways of accomplishing an instructional objective, being sure that each choice offers sufficient scaffolding to make success likely.</p>
The amount and nature of the recognition students receive affect motivation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge not only academic successes but also personal and social successes. • Commend students for improvement as well as for mastery. • Provide concrete reinforcers for achievement only when students are not intrinsically motivated to learn. • Show students how their own efforts and strategies are directly responsible for their successes. 	<p>Commend students for participation in a community service project, kindness towards another, improved attendance, etc. Use affective statements “I really appreciate your participation in today’s lesson because it’s that kind of behavior that will help you to be successful in this class. You’re also a leader in this classroom, so your participation strengthens the learning environment for everyone.”</p>
The grouping procedures in the classroom affect motivation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide frequent opportunities for students to interact (e.g., cooperative learning activities, peer tutoring). • Plan activities to which all students can make valuable contributions. • Teach the social skills that students need to interact effectively with peers. • Create an atmosphere of mutual caring, respect, and support. 	<p>Have students work in small groups to tackle a challenging issue or problem for which there is no single “right” answer.</p>
The forms of evaluation in the classroom affect motivation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make evaluation criteria clear; specify them in advance. • Minimize or eliminate competition for grades (don’t grade on a curve). • Give specific feedback about what students are doing well. • Give concrete suggestions for how students can improve. 	<p>Give students concrete criteria with which they can evaluate the quality of their own work. Show concrete examples of mastery.</p>
How teachers schedule time affects motivation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give students enough time to gain mastery of important topics and skills. • Let students’ interests dictate some activities. • Include variety in your lessons (e.g., intersperse high-energy activities among more sedentary ones). 	<p>After explaining a new concept, engage students in a hands-on activity that lets them see the concept in action.</p>