

Strategies to Improve Motivation and Success in a Classroom

Roberto Cuccu

Independent Researcher, Cagliari, Italy

This article shows different strategies that can be put into practice in order for students to be motivated and achieve success. Starting from what each student needs in order to do his/her best, in the following sections it will be considered also what can be an obstacle to this process and how to engage students in order to make them feel happy with themselves.

Keywords: motivation in learning, success at school, learning styles, teaching styles, information and communication technology (ICT) at school, diversity at school, dealing with conflicts at school, educational games, visual organizers

Introduction

The youth of today spends more time indoors than its predecessors, and less time talking to people face-to-face. Therefore, it can be harder to have meaningful relationships with others. A lot of friendships take place over the internet and this is not the same as actually meeting a person face to face. It is far too easy to communicate with a smartphone and a lot less effort than actually going out and doing something.

Kids today are overstimulated and are growing up—in ways—too fast. In other ways, they are inhibited emotionally. They are exposed to things they are too young for and fed ideals they cannot understand.

They go online and make up a “persona” they want to be.

Imagine yourself as a teacher entering for the first time a new class of students. There is in them some curiosity about you, but there is also in the background the feeling that they already know what is going to happen and they have just to say yes to you and keep on doing the usual routine, because that is what is expected from them at school.

How to change that uninspiring situation, how to move it upside down, and have those students eager to do something with you, and most of all, for themselves?

The two key words on which to work are “motivation” and “success”.

Let us define first of all these two keywords that are the focus of this article, motivation and success.

According to the linguist Nation (1975),

“Motivation” is one of the most important elements in learning. Without motivation, learning is not likely to take place. There are different types of motivation. “Motivation can come from the learner himself or it can come from outside the learner”. This first type of motivation is called “primary”. The learner feels that he/she wants to learn, that he/she is interested, and that the subject he/she is studying is exciting.

“Primary motivation” is the strongest type of motivation. “Secondary motivation” comes from the outside the learner. The learner feels that he/she must learn in order to pass a test, to avoid punishment, or to please

his/her parents or teachers. The learner is not really interested in the learning itself, but in the result of the learning. Marks, tests, and punishment are all examples of secondary motivation.

“Intrinsic motivation” fosters a sense of autonomy and purpose, driving individuals to engage in activities for the sheer joy of the experience and the inherent satisfaction derived from the task itself. It fuels creativity, and cultivates a deep sense of self-determination. In contrast, “extrinsic motivation” leverages external rewards, such as praise, recognition, or tangible incentives, to stimulate individuals’ pursuit of specific goals or behaviours (The Industry Leaders, 2025).

There is also a third condition, called “amotivation”. It can be described as a complete lack of any intent to act, no engagement at all. Such a state may arise from feelings of incompetence, lack of perceived relevance or value, and/or a sense of helplessness or inability to influence outcomes.

The second keyword is “success” (QuadC, 2023).

When we think of successful students, and about what that success looks like, the first response is typically measured by grade. Test scores are important measures and part of the fabric of education, but let us consider some of the alternatives. Essentially, something is a success when the outcome is desirable or favourable.

Success is also taking care of yourself. Success is overcoming fear. Even if it is confronting just one small fear each week, that is certainly something to feel proud of.

Here are some factors that contribute to student success.

Effective learning strategies: Strong study habits, active learning techniques, and metacognitive skills are essential for maximizing academic achievement. If they do not have them, your job as a teacher is to help them achieve the best strategies to learn in class and at home.

Supportive learning environment: A nurturing and inclusive classroom environment that fosters positive relationships, collaboration, and high expectations can significantly impact student outcomes. Some activities based on cooperation can help create this environment.

Personalized learning: Tailoring instruction and learning experiences to individual student needs, interests, and learning styles enhances engagement and motivation. As there are many learning styles in your classroom, in order to reach to them you should have different teaching styles, to connect to each one of them.

The following chapters will introduce you to different aspects connected to the life of a teenager in a classroom. You will have an overview of the different levels of learning that are achievable, to the different needs a student has to satisfy in order to feel happy with him/herself, and about the different ways we express our intelligence.

Moreover, you will become familiar with different ways to involve students in learning, taking into account their different learning styles, different mental, social conditions, and expectations.

It will also propose the use of a number of solutions that will help students to be more motivated and successful in your classroom, no matter their previous background and proficiency in the subject.

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are what you want your students to learn, either as a result of a specific lesson or on the more general scale of the entire course. Learning outcomes target knowledge, skills, or attitudes for change. One thing that is necessary to keep in mind is that to have a complete knowledge of something, you should be able to use it, in another context. That is the last level of Bloom’s taxonomy (University of Arkansas, 2022); all the previous ones are just steps to become autonomous and satisfied in your own skills.

A very effective final strategy at the end of a subject topic is to ask students to carry out real life tasks. The so-called problem-based learning begins with proposing students a problem to analyse and solve. In order to do that, students need to refer to their previous knowledge of the topic, ask themselves new questions, and identify areas in which they need new information.

At this point, they need to come up with a plan to gather the requested new information, search, and find a solution.

In planning education materials that should provide a stimulus for learning, it is necessary to remember that the best materials are not those which aim at teaching, but those that encourage students to learn something new. In order to be stimulating and motivating, the materials should be engaging but not too difficult, they should offer new ideas and information and at the same time, they should refer to previous experiences and knowledges of the students; they should encourage entertainment and creativity.

This is the reason why instead of replicating the same unit from their textbook, the materials should be chosen in order to offer in-depth analysis on what they already know or are learning.

At the end of this procedure, the teacher should propose students to do something with their new acquired knowledge.

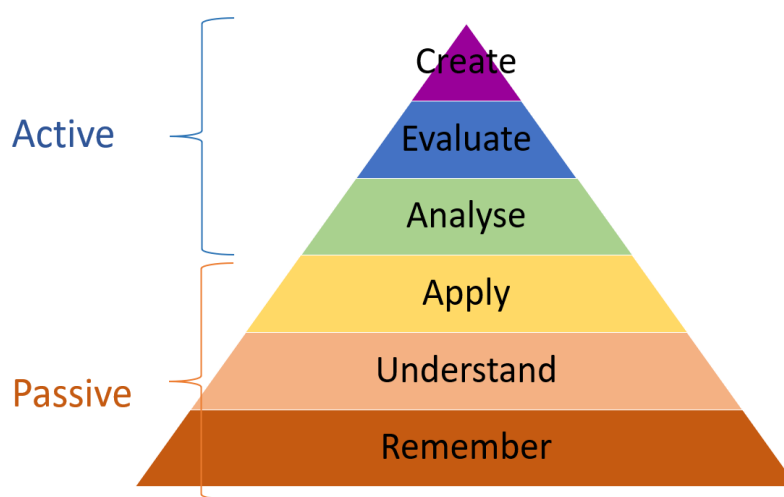


Figure 1. Bloom's taxonomy.

This image depicts the revised Bloom's taxonomy framework with educational objectives and the key levels of thinking required at each level (see Figure 1).

Another theory about learning that is necessary to have in mind is Maslow's (McLeod, 2025).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs (physiological, safety, love and belonging, self-esteem and self-actualization) is a motivational theory in psychology that provides a useful evaluation framework for teachers when reviewing and planning the efficacy of their lessons (see Figure 2). His theory argues that while people aim to meet basic needs, they seek to meet successively higher needs in the form of a hierarchy. The implication for teachers is that successful learning can only take place if all of Maslow's "needs" can be fulfilled by the learner.



Figure 2. Maslow's hierarchy.

Love and belongingness needs refer to a human emotional need for interpersonal relationships, affiliating, connectedness, and being part of a group.

Esteem needs are the fourth level in Maslow's hierarchy and include self-worth, accomplishment, and respect.

Maslow classified esteem needs into two categories: (i) esteem for oneself (dignity, achievement, mastery, and independence); and (ii) the desire for reputation or respect from others (e.g., status and prestige).

Esteem is the typical human desire to be accepted and valued by others. People often engage in a profession or hobby to gain recognition, which gives them a sense of contribution or value.

The need for respect or reputation is most important for children and adolescents and precedes real self-esteem or dignity.

Self-actualization needs are the highest level in Maslow's hierarchy, and refer to the realization of a person's potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth, and peak experiences.

Here are some ways a teacher can apply Maslow's hierarchy of needs in the classroom:

Physiological—Ensure students have access to water, food, restroom breaks, and movement. Allow snacks, flexible seating, and adequate breaks.

Safety—Maintain an orderly classroom with clear expectations. Prevent bullying. Build trust through consistency and fairness. Allow students to make mistakes safely.

Belongingness—Facilitate community and collaboration. Foster teamwork through group projects. Learn student names and backgrounds. Appreciate diversity.

Esteem—Recognize student strengths and progress. Display student work. Empower leadership roles like line leader or tech helper. Praise efforts, not just achievement.

Self-Actualization—Help students pursue interests creatively. Assign passion projects. Encourage goal-setting. Provide enrichment opportunities. Support challenging oneself.

To improve your motivation, you need to explore and discover your passions, values, and aspirations, and align your actions and decisions with them. You can also seek out and create opportunities for innovation, expression, and impact, and follow your curiosity and intuition

Accelerated Learning and Multiple Intelligences

Suggestopedia was developed by the Bulgarian doctor and psychotherapist Georgi Lozanov in the early 1970s. Its objective was to demonstrate the potentialities of the brain which are never put into work in learning processes. Its method is at the base of the development of a movement known as Accelerated Learning.

With Accelerated Learning we intend a large number of practical approaches to learning based on the new knowledge on the working of the brain, on motivation and self-esteem, on how to access different forms of intelligence, and how to withdraw information.

The principles of Accelerated Learning can be summarized in the acronym NO LIMIT (Cuccu, 2003a) (see Table 1).

Table 1

Principle of Accelerated Learning

kNow	The first principle is to <i>know</i> the brain and how it works in normal learning settings.
Open	When we <i>open</i> we relax and become more receptive to new information and ideas.
Learning	In order to have a complete <i>learning</i> process, it is necessary for the teacher to create a stimulant environment, but also one where support is present and it is possible to learn at different levels.
Input	To teach effectively the teacher must provide a new <i>input</i> , using visual, auditory and kinaesthetic channels. A class is generally made of 29% visuals, 34% auditories, and 37% of those who learn mainly in a kinaesthetic way.
Multiple	It is necessary to refer to the <i>multiple</i> intelligences present in the class, through a variety of strategies of teaching and learning.
Invest	We are <i>investing</i> well our time and efforts if we care to build and keep in our students their self-esteem and self-confidence.
Try	Students should be encouraged to <i>try</i> and explore new methods of learning and discover which is the most effective for them. They should be supported when they experiment in testing themselves and showing to themselves and to the others to have new skills. It is necessary to study using different methods.

The goal of the teacher should be to switch from the Influence of Power, to the Power of Influence (Grinder, 1983). Students should react positively to the new learning environment created by their teacher, thanks to the positive influence regarding themselves, even if it is mostly at an unconscious level.

For example, about non-verbal communication: When the teacher examines the work of a student, it is more profitable not to put yourself in front of them, with the paper between the two of you, because in this case the student feels to be in a position to be judged by the teacher.

It is more profitable and suitable to put yourself at the side of the person and analyse together the paper under scrutiny. In this way, the student feels that the object of the analysis and judgement is not his/her person, but the paper in front of them.

Although educational practices and theory are in constant evolution, our culture and many school systems still have a tendency to value linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities over others. An important part of the learning is geared towards developing those areas, or presented in a way that resonates more to and relies in greater part on the abilities of a linguistic/logical-mathematical mind¹.

¹ Retrieved from <https://www.acornhouse.school/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Screen-Shot-2013-06-24-at-12.10.55-PM.png>.

As a result of this, children who have a more dominantly linguistic/logical-mathematical mind tend to do better in most traditional school systems, having their abilities being reinforced and having learning experiences that resonate with how they specifically process information. At the same time, children who show other sets of strengths, often for example related to the arts, receive much less reinforcement of their skills and a learning experience that does not always resonate with or allow them to use their abilities.

The theory of multiple intelligences was first advanced by Howard Gardner in his 1983 book *Frames of Mind*. Challenging the traditional concept intelligence, the theory of multiple intelligences suggests that each individual has eight different types of intelligences. These intelligences combine to form any individual's specific cognitive potential (see Figure 3).

What are these intelligences? What do they mean?

1. Verbal-linguistic intelligence, refers to an individual's ability to analyse information and produce work that involves oral and written language.

2. Logical-mathematical intelligence, describes the ability to detect patterns, reason deductively and think logically, make calculations, and solve abstract problems.

3. Visual-spatial intelligence, describes the ability to manipulate and create mental images in order to solve problems and reason, to visualize concepts and space.

4. Musical intelligence, involves skill in the performance, composition, and appreciation of musical patterns. It encompasses the capacity to recognize and compose musical pitches, tones, and rhythms.

5. Naturalistic intelligence, refers to the ability to identify and distinguish among different types of plants, animals, and weather formations found in the natural world.

6. Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence, entails using one's own body to create products or solve problems.

7. Interpersonal intelligence, reflects an ability to recognize and understand other people's moods, desires, motivations, and intentions.

8. Intrapersonal intelligence, refers to people's ability to recognize and assess those same characteristics within themselves.

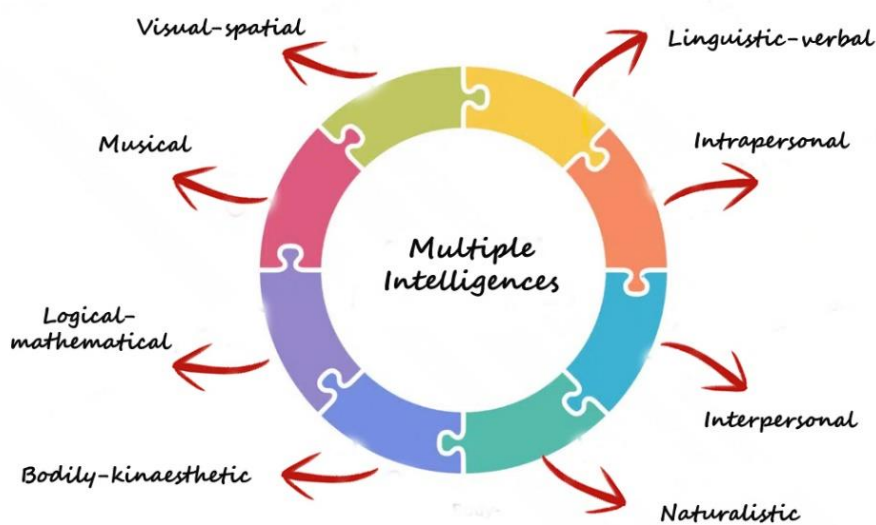


Figure 3. The multiple intelligences.

These intelligences, although separate, work together, in an infinite number of combinations, in each of our learning experiences.

To engage multiple intelligences in the classroom, it is essential to create an environment that fosters and develops all forms of intelligence. Some strategies that can be used in schools include (Smile & Learn, 2025):

- (a) Diversifying activities: Design activities and tasks that target different types of intelligence. For example, reading and writing activities for verbal-linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical challenges, art projects, or creative movement activities;
- (b) Encouraging collaboration;
- (c) Using visual and manipulatable resources;
- (d) Promoting reflection and self-awareness;
- (e) Connecting learning with nature.

Letter to a Friend

Some things to know about the teenage brain (This May Help, 2025):

1. The brain continues to change throughout life but undergoes the biggest changes during adolescence, which is why teenagers can be so unpredictable;
2. Changes to the part of the brain that deals with organising social structures are what cause teenagers to focus heavily on peer relationships and social experiences;
3. Because the brain is still developing, teenagers are more likely to respond negatively to stress than adults, increasing the chances of them developing mental health issues.

The teen years can be extremely tough and depression affects teenagers far more often than many of us realize. In fact, it is estimated that one in five adolescents from all walks of life will suffer from depression at some point during their teen years. However, while depression is highly treatable, most depressed teens never receive help.

Teen depression goes beyond moodiness. It is a serious health problem that impacts every aspect of a teen's life.

Many rebellious and unhealthy behaviours or attitudes in teenagers can be indications of depression. The following are some the ways in which teens “act out” in an attempt to cope with their emotional pain:

- (a) Persistent negative mood. Irritability, anger, and agitation may be the most prominent symptoms.
- (b) Problems at school. Depression can cause low energy and concentration difficulties. At school, this may lead to poor attendance, a drop in grades, or frustration with schoolwork in a formerly good student.
- (c) Low self-esteem. Depression can trigger and intensify feelings of ugliness, shame, failure, and unworthiness.
- (d) Smartphone addiction. Teens may go online to escape their problems, but excessive smartphone and internet use only increases their isolation, making them more depressed.
- (e) Reckless behaviour. Depressed teens may engage in dangerous or high-risk behaviours, such as reckless driving, binge drinking, and unsafe sex.
- (f) Violence. Some depressed teens—usually boys who are the bullying—can become aggressive and violent (Help Guide Org, 2025).

How to motivate a teenager who is only interested in the present time, in connecting to friends using social media, in playing video games, and in enjoying life outside school?

For some students, it is hard to stay focused when the teacher is just not entertaining; like, their voice is super monotone, and they just do not have any charisma.

This is a letter written by Hill Harper (2006), an actor who dedicated his life also to support centres for young people with problems, to a young brother, who is only interested in money. It shows the priority of having a good education in order to have a happy life and, also, have money.

How does education relate to that? Education is just like money. It is a tool that also buys you choices. On a real level, education and money are the same currency in the world. They're both tools that buy and afford you choices. Do you see how money and education relate? The more you learn, the more valuable you become and the more you can manoeuvre in the world, whether it's jobs, travel, or connections. It's the same with money. (...)

In fact, if you break it down, money can buy one thing, and one thing only, and you know what that is? Options. Money is great because it can buy you options. Money cannot buy you freedom or happiness or love. If you have enough money, it gives you options as to what you can do in your life and with your life. If you have enough money, you can go anywhere you want or buy whatever you want. Every "option" is on the table. If you have enough money and you get sick, you can afford to go to any hospital you want. See, that's where money ends, with options. If you are sick and dying, money can't make you well. (...)

More focus needs to be put on developing an inner happiness, doing what you love, and having faith that if you do these things, the money will come. (...)

Your parents and your grandparents don't know how to teach you because they grew up in a different time with different circumstances where everything was expanding, not contracting. Your school's curriculum, which means what they're trying to teach you, is probably out-of-date for today's reality as well. (...)

First you get the power by getting a good education and setting yourself up for success at whatever you do. *Education, clear and simple, is power.* Then you get the respect, because by committing yourself to learning and strengthening your mind, you gain self-respect and the respect of all those friends and family members around you. And last but not least, you get the money, because the more education you have, the higher salary you can command in the job market. (pp. 65-70)

In order to help a teenager, it is essential to establish first of all a connection, an emphatic relation that makes them feel not judged, but just supported. If this is achieved, then a number of alternatives can be presented to the teenager, and he/she will be free to choose any of them, without any obligation.

Motivation and Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

One topic that is top of mind for almost every parent and educator of teens is the effect of screen time on not just teens' academic motivation but their lives overall. There are two areas of screen use that are most concerning to parents: video games and social media. The latter is especially concerning to parents because it's so new—while the internet was in its early stages when many current parents of teens were themselves teens, the ability to share thoughts, images, and videos for immediate response from anyone online was not. And the effects of these technologies on motivation are real: Dopamine production, a key neurochemical in motivation and goal pursuit, is triggered by screen use and increased screen use correlates with decreased academic motivation. It means we can get quick hits of pleasure from very little effort, making us more inclined to seek out that easy access in the future rather than seeking it from higher-effort activities like learning, growth, and goal-pursuit. And that means that for any adults invested in supporting young people's academic motivation, paying attention to when and how they use screens matters (Block & Edwards, 2024).

Nonetheless, with a supervised use inside the classroom, digital resources can be useful.

Another strategy to improve motivation is the following, this time with the use of ICT (Cuccu, 2007).

If after having listened to how some students have presented a new topic, if you see that a part of the class has not really well understood it, what to do?

One good idea is to represent the topic from different points of view, and in the end propose some other practice. Using ICT, it is easy to create self-evaluation tests. The teacher could create them using the same ideas or sentences presented by the students, in an anonymous way. Students will recognize their production and appreciate the time and effort their teacher has spent customizing the activities, according to the needs of each one of them.

Another important aspect is that these tests allow students to check on their own if the answers are correct and, if they are not, delete them and start again.

Often these activities are carried out in pairs, as there are not as many personal computers in the laboratory for each one of them. This has a positive aspect, as students talk between them of aspects of the subject they are studying, and in doing so, those ideas, solutions will remain more impressed in their minds.

This activity is an example of the fact that students do not need always to learn from their teachers, they can also learn from each other, sharing doubts and interests and facts they know.

Diversity in the Classroom: Different Types of Students and How to Deal With Them

Learning about and understanding diversity in the classroom can enhance the chances for both students and teachers to connect and produce together better results.

First, today's teachers are likely to confront a range of different types of students—students with different socioeconomic backgrounds, different learning abilities/disabilities, and different ethnic or religious identities. Second, working effectively with classroom diversity is critical to promoting educational equity and optimizing both access and outcomes. Third, learning about diversity and developing strategies for working productively with those who are different entail short- and long-term benefits for students (School of Education, American University, Washington, DC, 2023).

Educational Equity

Educational equity refers to the idea that every student should have access to the necessary resources to reach their full academic potential.

When students from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to the same resources and opportunities as their more privileged peers, they are more likely to succeed academically and professionally. Educational equity is important because it prioritizes all students having the opportunity to reach their potential, regardless of their identity or circumstances.

Diversity, Culture, and Social Identities

Diversity in the classroom refers to differences in social identities. A person's age, race, socioeconomic status, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, and nationality all comprise a person's social identity. Our identities are intersectional and overlapping, and many aspects of our identities change over time.

Types of diversity that can be present in the classroom include:

- (a) Ability diversity: This includes differences in students' physical, mental, and learning abilities.
- (b) Socioeconomic diversity: This includes differences in income, education levels, occupations, and housing security and stability with regard to students or their families.

The research paper "Testing, Motivation and Learning the Assessment Reform Group" (2002) highlights the interrelationships between motivation, effort and self-esteem. In their "motivation for learning" approach it

is believed that self-esteem affects how one sees one's ability to be able to learn. This is called "self-efficacy", that is how "capable" learners feel in achieving and succeeding at their learning. Self-efficacy in turn affects effort, how much one is prepared to try something and continue to try before giving up. The implications of all this are that we need to support learners to feel they can try and take risks, but we must be conscious of how important success is. Learner failure could lead to a lack of effort, which itself might then affect the likelihood of success. "Low achievers" need a high level of input and support from both home and school to escape from this cycle (Kidd & Czerniawski, 2011).

A final assessment of a student should not only take into account the grades of previous tests, but also the starting level of the student, the interests shown during the year, the attempts to do his/her best, and their behaviours in the classroom.

How to Support Disabled Students

Disabled individuals, like everyone else, possess unique aspirations and talents, but they may encounter additional obstacles that can sometimes hinder their motivation.

However, with the right support, encouragement, and understanding, we can empower disabled individuals to unlock their full potential and stay motivated on their journey towards success. Here are various strategies and approaches to motivate disabled people effectively (Value Care, 2023).

Be Supportive and Encouraging

Supporting and encouraging a disabled person is fundamental to motivate them. Expressing unwavering belief in their abilities can have a profound impact on their self-esteem and determination to achieve their goals. When individuals with disabilities feel supported, they are more likely to confront challenges with resilience and confidence, propelling them towards their aspirations.

This support can take various forms, including offering words of encouragement, actively listening to their concerns, and being there during both triumphs and setbacks. It means providing a safe and nurturing environment where they feel valued and understood.

Moreover, demonstrating faith in their abilities helps counteract the doubts and uncertainties that can arise when pursuing goals, especially in the face of disability-related challenges. This belief in their potential serves as a powerful motivator, inspiring them to push beyond limitations and strive for success.

Help Set Realistic Goals

Realistic goal-setting is an essential step in motivating a disabled person. It involves breaking down larger objectives into smaller, manageable steps. By setting achievable milestones, individuals with disabilities can see tangible progress and track their accomplishments along the way. This not only boosts their confidence, but also reinforces their belief in their ability to overcome challenges.

Celebrate Successes

When successes are celebrated, it reinforces the idea that progress is attainable. It instils confidence and a sense of pride in one's abilities. Moreover, celebrating achievements cultivates a positive mindset, encouraging individuals to maintain their motivation and continue striving toward their goals.

Be Patient and Understanding

Patience entails refraining from imposing unrealistic expectations and timelines. Instead, it involves allowing disabled individuals to progress at their own speed, celebrating each milestone, no matter how small.

It's about understanding that setbacks and challenges are part of the journey and providing continuous encouragement.

Students tend to enjoy learning and to do better when they are more intrinsically, rather than extrinsically, motivated to achieve.

Conflicts Inside the Classroom

In nature, conflicts are parts of it: Clashes between opposing forces constitute the essence of life and evolution. Inside a classroom, both students and teachers have to adapt to the reality of the social roles present inside it.

Often, it happens that the behaviours of students at school have their origin from characteristics not intrinsic to their personality, but from their inability to manage complex and conflicting relationships, deriving not only from generation differences/gaps, but also from the difference in the values between the family and school context.

The presence of a condition of discomfort creates, quite often, dropping out of school especially as a consequence of disciplinary sanctions. The unease that is present in a school environment could be taken care of so that it could be adapted to acceptable levels and it could also be transformed in a growth factor thanks to dialogue, listening, and communication, that allow the person to be protagonist of their own choices. School choices should not be based on rigidity and isolation, but on relation. Teachers should address behaviours, not people.

It is a good idea to start a school year with a discussion on which guidelines to apply inside the classroom, rules that should follow both teacher and students as well; facilitate a discussion among students to reach consensus on a preferred solution; encourage them to listen to each other's perspectives, ask clarifying questions, and engage in respectful dialogue; and encourage compromise and negotiation as needed to find a solution that everyone can agree on.

When a problem arises, a way to find a way out is to brainstorm possible solutions together with the students. It is also effective to offer to talk privately during a break in class, or to go to a quieter place if it is safe; acknowledge the student's anger and let them vent to you about what is upsetting them; listen and try to understand the real issues that are concerning the student; during your conversation, summarize and clarify your understanding of what the student has said; do not disagree with the student, but build on what they have said; use active listening techniques such as paraphrasing, summarising, and asking clarifying questions to ensure that you fully grasp the situation from all angles. Active listening also creates trust between teachers and students. When students feel heard and understood, they are more likely to trust their teacher and be open to working towards a resolution together. This creates a more supportive classroom environment.

How to Help Students Have a Stronger Motivation

Often, we have to deal with student poorly motivated, who do not live in a positive way the traditional educational experience at school.

Believing one is capable of growth, both generally and in specific areas, is a crucial foundation for feeling motivated to learn, and choosing to see oneself as someone who just has not learned how to do something yet is a perfect way to build that sense of ability at a foundational level.

Success is reinforcing, and failure breeds failure (and apathy). Giving students the opportunity to succeed at something challenging but attainable will make them more likely to engage with more challenging material in the future (Block & Edwards, 2024).

One strategy the author experimented is the follow.

In order to have students involved and interested in trying something new, it is necessary that it becomes clear to them that the tools and strategies used up to that moment have not sorted the best results with all of them. It is necessary to make it clear that in the following stage of training it will create a time with a sort of buffer during which they will not be abandoned to themselves, but on the contrary, they will be supported by their class mates and teacher.

In this way, they will be able to start again with more confidence in themselves and in the new tools, strategies, without being too much obstacle by anxiety and the final assessment.

They will be informed that the final assessment will take into account most of all the procedure followed than the results obtained. In this way, who start from a disadvantaged position will feel on the same level with “the best” students in the class.

Often, students without a strong motivation believe not to have enough skills because they have so far achieved low assessments.

In order to break this circle of no new expectations about their future, the teacher could propose the following experiment in order to open new options to the class.

First of all, the teacher presents the experiment in its stages and communicates to the students the general idea and the objectives to reach with it. Once, he has the agreement of the students to participate actively, it starts.

The first activity is a short visualization of the best situation for the students. The teacher asks the students to remain seated for some minutes, in a relaxed position, with the eyes unfocused or closed. While they enjoy the relaxation of the moment, they are asked to visualize, first, themselves in the past while performing in a satisfying manner a task they wanted to realize; secondly, themselves in a moment when they relived a moment of failure at school.

After a while, they are asked to see, one after the other, the two images they have created and experience the tension that it provokes. This tension is the lever that should push them to give life to a new behaviour. Then they are asked to see themselves in their own class, putting into practice that the same behaviours and choices that have seen are the best to achieve a result.

When they see themselves in this film, they are asked to focus on details, for example, on the sound background, the colours, the bodily sensations. At the end, they are asked to breath normally, to move slightly their body and to focus again their eyes.

At the end, there is short feedback on what they have imagined and with the teacher’s commitment to contribute, so that their “dreams” begin to become a reality.

Finally, they agree on which should be the characteristics of a well-done test and they write down a reference grid.

The next step is to prepare them before a test.

Before a test, the students are divided in small groups. Every student, in turn, explains to the others how he/she is going to prepare for it, the parts in which is more confidence, and any doubts about some others. At the end of the meeting, each student has taken notes of the advice given by the others.

At the end of this experiment, the most immediate and evident result is the new atmosphere that is present inside the classroom. Apart consolidating the relationships among them, giving more confidence in themselves, having more pleasure at spending time at school, one extremely positive fact is the new relationship between students and their teacher, who is seen with different eyes and given more trust.

Advantages of Using Educational Games in the Classroom (Cuccu, 2003b)

Games can be a great way of building basic skills using growing abilities to engage deeply in new ways that thinking creates a much more meaningful and relevant way to continue to deepen those abilities.

The following strategy the author used refers to three relevant factors: collaboration, problem-solving, and entertainment. The project lasted a few months and, as a teacher of English with an expertise in ICT, the author asked every week one of his colleagues what was the topic they were dealing in their subject. Once, they told me the most recent topic in progress, the author prepared a website in English structured containing educational games focusing on the topic they were dealing with and then an online problem-solving activity to put into practice the knowledge acquired so far. The subjects involved were science, physics, and chemistry.

Every week students were invited to the computer laboratory with their subject teacher. The author introduced the session to them and then they started playing the games. It was amazing for the teachers to see their students fully engaged in what they were doing, with every now and then a look at the other class mates to see if they were doing better than themselves. Once finished the first part, they were presented to a link to a problem-solving activity based on the same topic they had been learning in class. This time they had the opportunity to do it in pairs, cooperating in finding the right answer and discussing together their mistakes if any.

This experience confirmed that educational games have many advantages, such as:

1. Train students to infer the meaning of a word from the context, offering them a powerful aid to comprehension, speeding their reading, and making them feel more autonomous;
2. In well-planned educational games, there should be some problem-solving aspect, in order to stimulate the users to use their capacities in a larger measure than during the normal activities;
3. Given the fact that the context of a new word may be derived from a group of phrases, a paragraph, or even the whole text, it will be a stimulus to pay more attention to the language units more extended than a single phrase to find help in finding the meaning of a new word;
4. And most of all, introduce an element of entertainment in the school daily routines.

Use of Visual Organizers

As far as possible, most textual communication should be transferred and reorganized in a more accessible format through visual organizers, presented in alternative ways with visual displays, subtitled videos or animations.

Graphic organizers are particularly helpful to visually represent ideas, organize information, and grasp concepts such as sequencing and cause and effect

Students with low-productive skills should be encouraged to give also non-verbal responses to show their understanding of the topic, for example, using the interactive tools of Digital Whiteboards.

As a start-up, it would be a good idea to activate learners' previous experience through the use of their own metaphors and symbols. The activity will elicit their curiosity and motivation by presenting images connected to their own interests.

A multi-sensorial Visual Atmosphere should be created in class, allowing learners to be engaged in a more holistic way and using their own preferred intelligences and learning styles.

The process could be summarized as follows:

- (a) During the first phase, "motivation to create", an individual should have a deliberate willingness to create, and the area for creation should also be selected on the basis of its emotional/aesthetic importance according to the individual.

(b) Consequently, a problem is encountered, information is sought out, and the problem is investigated.

(c) Then, it follows a period of incubation; the unconscious processes are the main forces at work for some time, the subject does not actively seek to solve the problem, it is a stage where information is “floating” in the unconscious and playing combinations.

(d) Then, hopefully, comes the insight stage, a moment where a solution comes to the mind, where all previous work come to fruition and a mental leap takes place.

There are some known obstacles that could hinder the insight stage. The most common are the so-called “epistemological obstacle and confirmation bias”.

The epistemological obstacle is knowledge coming from previous experiences and theories preventing the acquisition of new scientific knowledge. The other possible obstacle may happen when taking into account all the observed events; we only select the information that confirms our initial hypothesis, while the alternative hypotheses are not considered.

Conclusions

We have seen how to deal with teenagers at school in order to find in themselves the right motivation that might help them be happy with what they do.

They generally try to find a motivation outside themselves, to make parents, teachers, and others happy with them, but the strongest force is the motivation you find in yourself. This is even more relevant for those who are also indifferent to the secondary motivation; they feel without any motivation to be at school, just a routine they have to follow because they are forced to do it.

We have seen how to support students in order to make them achieve what they consider a success, something that can make them feel happy and proud of themselves. Of course, for each one it is different, because each one starts from a different background, with different learning skills, and different lifestyles.

To just listen and repeat what your teachers say it is not quite motivating and it does not have a real impact on your abilities to use what you have studied to enhance your future studies and find a job.

The facts you have taught to just repeat during a test need to be applied in real life situations; in this way, students will really make them theirs; they will be able to see how they can be applied to real life situations, to their own personal condition, and to the ones near them.

When something does not work, students should not blame themselves. They just have to try some alternatives. To master a concept, a skill, to reach a goal, there is not only one way. There are also different possibilities; some may be more congenial to them according to the way they learn, to their previous knowledge, to the way they feel at this moment.

Some teenagers, influenced by the world around them, think only of external factors to reach, without considering the fact that inner satisfaction, happiness is the key to success in their lives.

Teachers have at their disposal not only textbooks, but also digital resources that allow them to represent in different ways the same concept expressed in the books the students have to study. Being able to represent the basic concept of a lesson not only auditorily, but also visually and allowing your students to create on their copybooks some of these visuals and key concepts are a way to support all the learning styles present in your classroom.

Diversity is a fact teachers have to deal with every day at school, and in society. How to help teenagers who come from different social backgrounds, who have different learning styles, who have different cultures and preferences to achieve the same goal you aim for them?

The main action should be to find a way to personalize your communication inside the classroom, finding moments to deal with each one of them, find a connection, and appreciate them for what they are, without any prejudice.

In every classroom, it is quite common now to have certified disable students. Each one of them has different needs, conditions, preferences. When dealing with them, teachers should have patience, give them more time to achieve the essential steps in learning. Breaking down a desired skill to be achieved in small steps allows them to be satisfied with just small steps. When dealing with them, teachers should always think in a positive way, celebrating their even small achievements, and help them find in themselves the motivation to proceed and do more.

When you are aware or just witness conflicts in your classroom, you avoid judging any of the parts involved in the conflict. The role of a mediator is to listen separately to each of the sides, and then find the common ground among them and propose a way to move on together on the basis of what they have in common. At times, just using different words from those they use in arguing among them is a way to show an alternative to them.

Visualization is an incredible tool in the hands of an educator. It allows to have teenagers really see inside themselves and, if rightly oriented, they can find in themselves the way to move on, to avoid some wrong choices that have become now habits, to explore new alternatives in their own lives.

One thing that is often missing in a secondary school classroom is fun, entertainment. It is quite common at nursery and in the first years of primary school, but then it is put aside for more “serious” approaches. Especially when you propose problem solving activities that allow students to also have fun, and also to work with a partner, then there is the possibility of supporting each other, having the possibility to share your ideas and verify their effectiveness in solving the problem they have to solve.

Finally, if you enter a new classroom and see the teacher exploiting a visual environment to convey the basic ideas of a topic, you might also be pleased to see in the face of the students a sense of understanding, of following one or another way of presenting the main ideas, and being stimulated to be themselves there at the digital whiteboard to play with things.

At the end of this discussion, it should be clear that teachers are the key to change, to adapt the expectations and desires of the students to new ways that will allow them to feel more satisfied with themselves, to see a future with the new knowledges and skills they are acquiring, to be able to cooperate with other mates, to plan for themselves their next steps.

References

- Block, R. R., & Edwards, G. L. (2024). *Can you help me give a sh*t? Unlocking teen motivation in school and life*. Austin: Atmosphere Press.
- Cuccu, R. (2003a). *Stili di apprendimento, intelligenze multiple e profitto scolastico*. Lend e Nuova Didattica.
- Cuccu, R. (2003b). *Un modello di uso strumentale della LS per le altre discipline del curriculum*. SELM. Retrieved from <https://www.learnholistically.it/clil/Un%20modello%20di%20uso%20strumentale%20della%20LS.pdf>
- Cuccu, R. (2007). *Cultura e tecniche della mediazione—A cura di Francesca Chessa e Mara Morelli*. Cagliari, University Press Ricerche Sociali—Cuec.
- Grinder, M. (1983). *Envoy. A personal guide to classroom management*. Philadelphia: Mga Pub Consortium.
- Harper, H. (2006). *Letters to a young brother—Manifest your destiny*. Sheridan: Gotham Books.
- Help Guide Org. (March 5, 2025). *Parent's guide to teen depression*. Retrieved from <https://www.helpguide.org/mental-health/depression/parents-guide-to-teen-depression>

- Kidd, W., & Czerniawski, G. (2011). *Teaching teenagers—A toolbox for engaging and motivating learners*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- McLeod, S. (March 14, 2025). Maslow's hierarchy of needs. *SimplyPsychology*. Retrieved from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>
- Nation, I. S. P. (1975). Motivation, repetition, and language—Teaching techniques. *ELT Journal*, XXIX(2), 115-120.
- QuadC. (December 14, 2023). *What defines student success?* Retrieved from <https://www.quadc.io/blog/what-defines-student-success>
- School of Education, American University, Washington, DC. (January 27, 2023). *Diversity in the classroom: Teaching, types, and examples*. Retrieved from <https://soeonline.american.edu/blog/diversity-in-the-classroom/>
- Smile and Learn. (March 14, 2025). *Multiple intelligences and how to promote them in the classroom*. Retrieved from <https://www.smileandlearn.com/en/multiple-intelligences-and-how-to-promote-them-in-the-classroom/>
- The Industry Leaders. (January 13, 2025). *The science behind why motivation is important for success and growth*. Retrieved from <https://www.theindustryleaders.org/post/why-motivation-drives-success-and-growth>
- This May Help. (March 2, 2025). *How to help your child through the teenage years*. Retrieved from <https://thismayhelp.me/how-to-help-your-child-through-the-teenage-years/>
- University of Arkansas. (July 26, 2022). *Using Bloom's taxonomy to write effective learning objectives*. Retrieved from <https://tips.uark.edu/using-blooms-taxonomy/#gsc.tab=0>
- Value Care. (September 29, 2023). *How to motivate disabled people*. Retrieved from <https://valuecare.org.au/how-to-motivate-disabled-people/>