

Book Review***Motivation to Learn: Transforming Classroom Culture to Support Student Achievement***

by Michael Middleton and Kevin Perks (2014)

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One of the most difficult and perplexing challenges for any educator is how to motivate students. For both new educational professionals and seasoned instructors, student motivation can, indeed, be daunting. It leads to the question, "What really works?" The book, *Motivation to Learn: Transforming Classroom Culture to Support Student Achievement*, by Michael Middleton and Kevin Perks seeks to answer this question.

Packed with practical applications and self-reflection, *Motivation to Learn*, is a hands-on approach to solving the motivational conundrum. Though, at times, the book, uses K-12 examples, it is still very applicable for educators at all levels. The relatively small 229-page book is designed as a workbook with surveys or reflections after main sections. The book takes a thematic approach to student motivation, weaving a story of motivational opportunities through a metaphor: "motivation is seen as a dynamic, interactive force, much like a river current" (p. 65). Using this metaphor, the authors supply hands-on strategies and tools for each layer of the motivational metaphor. Moreover, this multi-level approach allows for a deeper

understanding of student motivation which can then be selectively used for each institution's unique characteristics. Drawing upon psychology researchers such as Bandura, Gardner, and Dweck, the authors combine seemingly incompatible theories into a cohesive, holistic perspective on motivation.

Sections are well organized and easily follow the metaphor. The book is divided into three sections: "Understanding Student Motivation" (p.1), "Classroom Practices and Strategies" (p. 67), and "Maintaining and Sustaining Motivation" (p. 157). Chapter 1 defines motivation to learn through case study analysis and reflective exercises. Chapter 2 considers how teachers' beliefs influence student motivation. If educators believe in their students, then they are more likely to create lessons that will produce successful outcomes. In turn, innovative educational practices require that educators are open to new classroom strategies and to feedback. Chapter 3 discusses classroom practices and strategies that encourage "student voice" such as assignment choice (p. 73). The book suggests that educators should provide a "simple and limited" range of choices that will not overwhelm students (p.80). As students progress, their choices advance with their proficiency levels. Another championed approach is "promoting student voice and involving students in decision making...to solicit student feedback and input about instructional activities before and after learning" (p. 80). Several activities and strategies are traditional standards, such as "Entrance Tickets" (p. 83) and "Exit Tickets" (p. 84). However, every educator can have multiple takeaways from the book. Some favorite ideas include "Fist-To-Five" (p. 83) and "Collaborative Learning Practices" (p. 87). While some ideas and activities may be too time consuming for collegiate classrooms, there are plenty of activities from which

to choose. How these strategies can affect students is perhaps best summed by the statement, "Students' perception of their autonomy is a powerful component of motivation, and promoting student voice is an effective method for tapping this aspect of motivation" (p. 91). Chapter 4 discusses "Designing Meaningful Learning Tasks" (p. 95), and Chapter 5 studies ways to link "Challenge With Success" (p. 116). One great example used was "Scaffolding for Success" (p. 119). By using student's prior knowledge, educators can create lessons that snowball as previous topics are mastered. Chapter 6 discusses how positive relationships are key for learning; the book offers a variety of basic and instinctual ways to develop these relationships. For example, educators are encourage to simply mean what is said, showcase student accomplishments, and do small personal gestures for students. Chapters 7-9 brings the river metaphor full-circle with discussions on various types of "Maintaining and Sustaining Motivation" (p. 157). Truly, once students are involved and motivated to learn, educators must keep that momentum going.

Taken together, *Motivation to Learn: Transforming Classroom Culture to Support Student Achievement* by Michael Middleton and Kevin Perks is a quality resource for enhancing student motivation. With a variety of motivational levels to consider and a plethora of activities to try, the book is an excellent read when preparing for next term classes. Moreover, the hands-on, educational psychology-based methods make the book a crucial read for new professionals and, especially, educators who come from a content background rather than an educational background. Certainly, motivation is already present in students, and this book will aid in enhancing and encouraging that motivation.

References

Middleton, M. & Perks, K. (2014). *Motivation to learn: Transforming classroom culture to support student achievement*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin and Division 15 (Educational Psychology) of the American Psychology Association.