

A Formula for Optimally Motivating Your Students

$$M = E + V - C$$

M = Motivation

E = Expectancy → Can your students do the task?

V = Value → Do your students want to do the task?

C = Cost → Do your students have barriers preventing them from investing time, energy, or resources into the task?

Research-Based Sources of Increasing Students' EXPECTANCY

- 1. Ability/Skill**
- When students have a high level of ability and/or skill at an activity, they are more likely to experience high expectancy.
- 2. Effort**
- When students believe that their effort will lead to learning, they are more likely to experience high expectancy.
- 3. Success Experiences (direct or indirect)**
- When students are successful at an activity, or watch similar others have success, they are more likely to experience high expectancy.
- 4. Improvement and Growth Experiences**
- When students experience improvement and growth, they are more likely to experience high expectancy.
- 5. Teacher Expectancy**
- When teachers believe and highlight students can succeed (rather than doubt or suggest students can't succeed), students are more likely to experience high expectancy.
- 6. Appropriate Challenge**
- When the difficulty of the task or activity matches students' skill levels, they are more likely to experience high expectancy.
- 7. Clear Expectations**
- When students know what is expected of them on an activity, they are more likely to experience high expectancy.
- 8. Goal Setting**
- Students are more likely to experience high expectancy when an activity is broken down into smaller, short-term goals that will help accomplish a bigger, long-term goal.
- 9. Feedback (task vs. ability)**
- When students receive feedback that is specific (rather than general) and tasked-focused (rather than ability-focused), they are more likely to experience high expectancy.
- 10. Support**
- When students are appropriately supported in completing an activity and know where they can seek out help, they are more likely to experience high expectancy.

Research-Based Sources of Increasing Students' VALUE

- 1. Personal Interest (aka, Intrinsic Interest)**
 - *When students find academic content and activities personally interesting, they are more likely to experience high value.*
- 2. Situational Interest**
 - *If students lack personal interest, situational interest can be promoted by “catching” students’ interest through activities that grab their attention and then “holding” students’ interest by providing on-going value for what they are learning (e.g., see #3 and #4 below).*
- 3. Relevance**
 - *When students are able to connect what they are learning to their past, present, or future personal lives and/or the real world, they are more likely to experience high value.*
- 4. Context & Rationale**
 - *When students understand that an activity is meaningful and has a purpose, they are more likely to experience high value.*
- 5. Enthusiastic Models**
 - *When students interact with teachers and other adults who are enthusiastic and passionate about learning, they are more likely to experience high value.*
- 6. Variety & Novelty**
 - *When students engage in activities that are varied and novel, they are more likely to experience high value.*
- 7. Choice & Control**
 - *When students feel a sense of control and choice over their learning, they are more likely to experience high value.*
- 8. Challenge & Growth**
 - *When students engage in learning activities that appropriately challenge them and help them grow and learn, they are more likely to experience high value.*
- 9. Positive Relationships and Sense of Belongingness**
 - *When students experience meaningful student-student and student-teacher relationships, they are more likely to experience high value.*
- 10. Extrinsic Benefits**
 - *When students receive external rewards and incentives for learning (e.g., required courses), they are more likely to experience high value to complete an activity but often may experience low value to produce quality work (or just focus on doing what’s needed for the reward).*

Research-Based Sources of Decreasing Students' COST

1. Effort and Time Needed for the Activity

- When the effort and time required by an activity becomes too much, students are likely to experience high cost. So, be mindful of the workload you are assigning (e.g., Is it reasonable and/or necessary? Are you providing adequate time for students to complete it? Are you avoiding having multiple assignments due at the same time?)

2. Effort and Time Needed for Other Competing Activities

- When students have too many other activities competing for their time and energy, they are likely to experience high cost. So, consider what other things your students are required to do or are choosing to do, and help students with time management and better decision-making on what they get involved in (i.e., not being overcommitted; identifying priorities).

3. Loss of Valued Alternative Activities

- When students feel like the learning activity is not worth their time compared to other things they might do (e.g., socializing), they are likely to experience high cost. Therefore, consider integrating additional value into your activity (e.g., structure learning activities so that students interact with each other, thus meeting their academic and social needs simultaneously).

4. Psychological and Emotional Reactions to the Activity

- When students feel negative emotions towards an activity (e.g., anxiety, stress, fear of failure), they are likely to experience high cost. Look for the sources of negative emotional reactions and try to reduce them.

5. Physical Reactions to the Activity

- When students lack energy or are physically uncomfortable when doing an activity (e.g., tired, cramped, hungry), they are likely to experience high cost. Therefore, consider how you can attend to your students' physical needs as well (e.g., consider how long you can do an activity before a break is needed, create more comfortable spaces to work in, encourage good sleeping and eating habits).

Additional Information

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