



Reading Counts



Volume 3, Issue 1

October 2003

Motivational Strategies

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I am sure many of you have experienced a time when one of your students did not feel like participating in a lesson. I know I have! Come to think of it, I worked with a student last year who never felt motivated to do anything. Every time that I would work with her, she would always make up an excuse to get out of a lesson. It was either she had a headache or a stomachache. For weeks it was one excuse after another! However, instead of giving in to every excuse she had in the book, I thought of a way to get her motivated. I told her we were going to play a game instead. As soon as she heard that, her “aches and pains” seemed to disappear! After discovering what makes her motivated, I used these tactics as a way to get her to work. Pretty soon, I did not even have to use a game to get her to read. She was coming to *me* with the books!

Although playing a game worked for my student, it may not work for everyone. However there are a variety of different incentives you can use to help your students feel more motivated to learn. One way is to use sticker books. I usually use these when I have a lot of things to do with a student. I give one sticker to him or her for each task they complete. For instance, if I have four tasks I would add four stickers to their book. This builds motivation in the students because if they know that they will receive something in the

Continued on page 2



Nicole Santariello doing a reading activity in Livonia

How to Assess Your Students' Ability Levels: 4 Quick Ways for Easy Assessment

Angie Roth
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Ask the student what he or she knows!

Children, especially younger children, love to talk about what they know. Ask them their favorite part about reading or math and their least favorite part. This provides a window in which you can judge the student's level of comfort on given concepts.

Communicate with your student's teachers!

Teachers understand that it is sometimes difficult for tutors to evaluate the student's abilities because our time is limited with the students. Ask questions about what the student's ability level is and what specific areas or concepts would be beneficial to work on. Teachers are usually more than happy to tell you all they know and provide suggestions. It is vital that you keep in communication with your teacher. Try emailing teachers or arriving early or staying a couple of minutes extra to discuss.

Create small but flexible activities within your subject in which you can build on and make more challenging!

Especially in the beginning create activities that you can increase and decrease the complexity. Observe the child's comprehension of the task and then adjust the activity to meet the student's needs.

Continued on page 4

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Motivational Strategies
- 1 How to Assess Your Students' Ability
- 2 Language Development and Literacy
- 3 Math Websites
- 3 Literacy/Reading Websites
- 4 How Really To Talk To Teachers

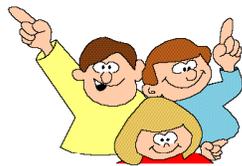
Motivation, continued from p. 1

end, they will have a goal to work towards. Another strategy that I like to use is a game. This works best when doing an activity with sight words. Usually reading sight words can be a boring and exhausting task for students. However, if you play a game together, it will make the activity more fun. If you choose to play a game, keep in mind that the student must always win. In order to do this, tell the student that they can move ahead three spaces for every word they get right, but if they get a word wrong, you can move one space. I have used this strategy many times and find that it works for most students. Using games as a part of your lesson helps build motivation especially if they are winning against the teacher!

Another way that can build motivation is to act silly! If you are reading a book with a student, act it out together. Assign characters and put on a short skit. This strategy is great to use because not only does it make it fun for the students, but it also helps them visualize what is happening in the book. The key idea to building motivation is to make learning fun for you and for your student. Reading and writing are difficult for learners as it is, so it is your job to break students away from this discouragement.

If you are having a hard time finding out what gets your students motivated, do a student inventory and ask them what they find interesting. This will help determine what types of strategies to use on a particular student. Just remember that what works for one student may not work for another. So it is in your best interest to find something that the student wants to work for. It is also good to keep in mind that motivation should be internal. Although you may use external factors, such as stickers to keep them motivated, it is better to get the students to internalize their hard work. In other words, your goal is to have the student attribute their success to their skills rather than an external reward. You can accomplish this by using external motivation in the beginning and gradually move toward something more internal, such as praise. If you are using praise to get them motivated to learn, make sure your comments make them feel like they are the best student you've ever taught! Remember the object of building motivation is to make students internalize their success rather than attribute it to an external factor, such as stickers. So my best advice to you is to use external motivation in a way that gets the students to work, but not in a way that the students expect to get something in the end.

Building motivation is a hard and gradual process; so don't be discouraged if it takes you one strategy after another to get your students excited about learning. Just keep in mind that the most important thing is to get them wanting to learn more, not wanting to receive more rewards.



Language Development and Literacy

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When "tutoring" Preschool age children we often do not find ourselves sitting down and reading a book with a child. We are often following them around from one activity to the next. At times it may seem like we are only playing with the child and not helping them learn. This is not the case. By interacting with the child and expanding on what they communicate to us, is actually doing a great deal. It has been observed that children with weak language development do not do well during reading and writing instruction. The child must have a solid language base in order to succeed in reading development.

As tutors there are many things that we can do to enhance the rate of language development. How we respond to the child may affect this rate. A child whose attempts are greeted with eye contact, acknowledgement and expansion of his/hers ideas is likely to develop language faster than a child whose communication attempts receive little or no response.

What Can Be Expected From a Child of 3-4 years of age

At the ages of three to four years old, a child typically talks in sentences of 4 words or more. They will talk about activities easily and fluently, without repeating syllables or words. The child also understands and answers simple who, what, and where questions.

What You Can Do to Help

Encouraging language development at this age can be really fun. Some activities you may do with the child include:

- Cutting out pictures from old catalogs and making a silly picture by gluing different pictures together. After, help the child explain what is silly about the picture.
- Sort pictures or items into categories. To make this more challenging have the child point out which picture does not belong, then explain why.
- Continue to expand vocabulary and the length of the child's utterances where you are going, and saying rhymes by reading, singing, talking about what you are doing and
- Read books that have a simple plot, and talk about the story line with the child; help the child retell the story or act it out with props and dress-up clothes. Tell him/her your favorite part of the story and ask them their favorite part of the story.
- Expand on social communication and story telling skills by acting out typical scenarios (ex. cooking food, going to sleep, and going to the doctor) with a dollhouse and its props.

Continued on page 4

Website Reviews

Math Websites

Laura Amidon

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It is important to keep tutoring interactive and fun! After searching through all your ideas and creative touches, you can get quite exhausted. Luckily, there are many resources available to help keep your tutoring sessions interesting and educational. The main resource that I use is the Internet, where I can search random activities and subjects that pop up with hundreds of results. I was lucky one day to stumble upon a website that contains many valuable mathematical resources for fourth and fifth graders. The website <http://www.learning.caliberinc.com/math.html> contains links to an interactive math dictionary for kids, activities that will test for understanding, and fun games that review past concepts, at the least. It also covers an array of topics from addition, to decimals, fractions, geometry, probability, graphing, and etc. I even played the Planet Hop graphing game and had a ball. Some of these links will also lead you to a home page of a different site, where you will be able to choose different grade levels to research other age appropriate activities.

Another website, www.edHelper.com, is one that I frequently use to generate problems or worksheets to help aid the students. Though I don't recommend using worksheets, this website can provide you with example questions to use in tutoring sessions. This site contains material for grades one through ten.

By using the internet as an aid, I have greatly improved my lessons. I am able to go over and beyond the material studied to incorporate learning in an interactive way. A few activities that I have used have been a tangram unit that paralleled geometry, a rounding activity using real population data from <http://www.census.gov/>, and brainteasers. The options are endless. Also keep in mind about your math manipulative kits from Math 140 and 141, as well as the new math kits that can be taken out from the office! Listed below are a couple more math sites that may be worth checking out. Happy Tutoring! :o)

www.coolmath.com

www.funbrain.com/kidscenter.html

<http://www.kidzone.ws/>

And I just stumbled across this one:

<http://www.sitesforteachers.com/>



Literacy/Reading Websites

Katie Ilardo

Team Leader- Mt. Morris Central Schools

Teachers no longer have to come up with their own lesson and activity ideas from scratch. With a click of a button, it is easy to find great lesson ideas to meet the needs of your students in fun and meaningful ways. Here is a quick review of some websites that tutors can find helpful for planning lessons and hands-on activities for students in individual and small group settings.

- 1) http://education.gsu.edu/induction/language_arts.htm#Listening%20&%20Speaking



- This great website offers various online activities that provide literacy challenges, read aloud stories, computer search games, opportunities for students to contribute their own ideas to stories, literacy circles, vocabulary games, and much more!
- Have students pick the site that interests them most and have a great time exploring the different aspects of literacy with them.

- 2) http://www.pbs.org/teachersource/arts_lit.htm

- This website offers great lesson ideas to meet the NY State Learning Standards and contains activities that combine (music, fine arts, theatre, and dance).

- 3) <http://www.learningpage.com/>

- Learning Page provides a huge collection of instructional materials that tutors can find useful for their students. It has easy to download worksheets, lesson plans, and clip art.

- 4) <http://www.proteacher.com/070009.shtml>

- Proteacher offers techniques and tips for emergent learning, phonics/decoding, reading skills, primary literacy, and reading programs.

How to Really Talk to Teachers

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It can sometimes be intimidating for tutors to approach teachers with our ideas or suggestions. Yet, we often have ideas we would like to try with our tutees. So how does one go about talking to a teacher without feeling intrusive?

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR TEACHER

1. Approach them at a time when they are not completely frazzled. If they *always* seem in a state of distress when you are there, ask them for an email address or phone number.
2. Don't be embarrassed to offer an activity that you believe may be useful. After all, you *are* there to help!
3. Make your request clear and concise (e.g. "I know of an activity that I think would really help Julia learn her site words").
4. Offer to do the necessary work to prepare the activity. (ANY teacher would love that!!)
5. And last, don't be insulted if they refuse your suggestion. Instead, ask them if there are any *other* activities that he/she can think of for you to carry out with your students.

GOOD LUCK & HAVE FUN!

Language - *continued from page 2*

What Can Be Expected From a Child of 4-5 years of age

A child of four to five years of age pays attention to short stories and answers simple questions about them. The child communicates easily with children and adults. When telling a story the child sticks to the topic and strings together ideas in an understandable sequence. The child may still have some errors in pronunciation, but is still easily understood.

What You Can Do to Help

- Give full attention to the child when he/she has spoken; be sure to get their undivided attention before speaking to them; pause after speaking, allowing him/her to respond.
- Continue to expand child's vocabulary, provide definitions for new words and use them in context.
- Encourage the child to ask for an explanation if he/she does not understand. Point out things that are the same or different and talk about spatial relationships (ex. between, under, first, etc.)
- Expand on the child's comprehension and expressive language skills by playing, "I Spy". After the child guesses what you have described, have him/her give you clues about something that he/she sees.

Language development plays a vital role in the lives of young children. As tutors of pre-schoolers we are helping them set a foundation for them to build upon and to further succeed in the future.

Thank you, teachers!



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Assessment - *continued from page 1*

Ask the teacher's permission to see student's work and progress reports!

You can surely make a good estimate of where the child falls based on analyzing student's work, test, and/or report cards. Look at areas where students are having particular difficulties and try to consider why such problems are arising. Qualitative report cards, used by many elementary schools are extremely helpful in breaking down the curriculum and expectations. Furthermore, they are a helpful source in obtaining information on the strengths and weaknesses of students and where they fall in terms of being "on track".

Most importantly be flexible! A student's understanding is constantly changing. What a student may understand one day might confuse him or her the next! Or vice versa!