

Article Review: “How To Motivate Your Students To Behave Better, Work Harder, Care For Each Other... Or Anything Else You Want From Them”

Source: <https://www.smartclassroommanagement.com/2010/10/30/how-to-motivate-students/>, accessed 30 Mar 2018

Review

Article outline:

1. Lecturing individual students on poor behavior is
 - a. a common classroom management practice
 - b. a mistake, because
 - i. it is born of frustration and anger
 - ii. it is not from a pure intention to help improve behavior
 - iii. it causes student resentment
 - iv. it diminishes your influence
2. Whole class lectures are better, because they are motivational if done right
3. Steps to motivational whole class lectures
 - a. #1: Tell them what you don't like
 - i. start your speech with what you are unhappy about
 - ii. do not single anyone out
 - iii. cite specific examples
 - b. #2: Tell them why it is wrong
 - i. offer a clear explanation
 - ii. make your reasoning brief, direct, and easy to understand
 - c. #3: Tell them what you want
 - i. make your expectation of how they should behave clear
 - ii. be specific
 - iii. model or show the behavior you want
 - d. #4: Challenge them
 - i. ask them to stand up and tell you if they don't think they can do it
 - ii. you want to know now, not later when the bad behavior starts up again
 - e. #5: Challenge them again, and finish together
 - i. ask them to stand and gather around you if they think they can do it
 - ii. they can stay seated if they don't think they can
 - iii. put your hand into the center of the group, have them do the same
 - iv. finish with “now go do it, the best you can!”, “show me you can!” or similar words
4. Include your passion
 - a. You cannot just go through the motions
 - b. You have to believe they are capable
 - c. You have to show them that you believe, so they will believe, too

I see the value in making a behavior correction talk to the whole class. I see how steps 1 – 3 work. I am not sure that step 4 will always work, even if I show that I believe the students can. I suspect there will often be “that one person” who will test to see how sincere my statements are. That person will be the one who says they don’t think they can do it.

I imagine you should respond to their concerns with a question, like, “What do you think is stopping you from doing this?” or “What needs to be done to make it so you can do it?” This opens the door to negotiating the rules with the students, and other articles on this website say that is a bad idea.

One of the teachers I interviewed about his classroom management style said his policy is that everyone has a voice but he makes the rules. So perhaps asking the student what needs to be done is giving the student his voice. If the student asks for something reasonable to change, I can consider or even make the change. If the student asks for something unreasonable, I can always ask more questions, like, “Is this change going to be distracting to your classmates or to me?”

In the comments section of this article, the author says the students have a right to choose but “You are simply protecting their right and everyone else’s right to learn and enjoy learning without interference.” If they choose to not comply with the rules, they are choosing to leave if their behavior is infringing on the rights of their classmates and instructor.

The challenge for me would be to deliver that statement matter-of-factly, instead of in a manner that conveys, “You’d better comply, or else.”

I do not see step 5, gathering and putting our hands in a circle, working in a college classroom at all. I would feel silly doing it and I think the students would feel the same. But perhaps a big smile, a “thumbs up”, and saying, “Great! Let’s get going on an excellent class!” might be a good substitute.

I wonder if doing this at the beginning of the semester would be a good way to set the tone for the entire class. Explain that this classroom is a place of learning and that everyone has the right to learn and enjoy it without interference or disruption. We all are charged with the duty of safeguarding those rights. The classroom rules are designed to help us with that. Then ask if anyone feels they cannot support these goals. If anyone responds that they can’t, then we have the “why not” dialog.

There is good advice in this article. With modifications, I think there are ideas that are applicable to a community college classroom.

Article Text in Full

How To Motivate Your Students To Behave Better, Work Harder, Care For Each Other... Or Anything Else You Want From Them

by Michael Linsin on October 30, 2010

Lecturing individual students is a common classroom management practice—just another tool in a teacher’s tool belt.

But it’s a colossal mistake, born of frustration, that does nothing to curb unwanted behavior beyond several minutes.

The reason?

When you lecture individual students, it's done out of anger and not out of a pure intention to help improve behavior.

And students know it.

It causes them to dislike you, lose respect for you, and desire to get even with you—greatly diminishing your influence.

Whole-class lectures, on the other hand, can work miracles.

How To Motivate Their Socks Off

I prefer to call class lectures “motivational speeches” because that's what they're designed to do: to motivate students.

Done a certain way, a motivational speech can light a fire under a lazy class, reverse poor attitudes, inspire altruism, or stop unruly behavior in its tracks.

Here's how to do it:

Step 1: Tell them what you don't like.

Your students will behave/perform better when they know precisely what *not* to do. To that end, start your speech by pointing out what you're unhappy with. What are you seeing from your students that you want corrected? Without singling anyone out, cite specific examples.

Step 2: Tell them why it's wrong.

Explaining why is a powerful persuasion technique. Your students are much more likely to agree with you—and thus change their behavior—if you offer a clear explanation why their behavior is wrong. Make your reasoning brief, direct, and easy to understand.

Step 3: Tell them what you want.

Make clear to your students what you expect from them. In other words, how they *should* behave. Again, be specific. Show them how you want them to attend during lessons, raise their hand, choose a partner, greet their tablemates, or whatever behavior you want changed.

Step 4: Challenge them.

Ask your students, challenge them, to stand up if they feel like they're not going to be able to do what you ask—for whatever reason. Tell them that, if this is the case, if they really feel like they can't do what you expect of them, you want to know now. You don't want to wait and find out later when you see the same old behavior again.

Step 5: Challenge them again, then finish together.

Challenge your class to stand and gather around you *if* they are committed to whatever you're asking of them. If they're not, tell them to remain seated (they won't). Extend your hand into the center of the group. Ask them to do the same. Now glance around, looking them in the eyes, and say, “Now I want

you to show me, prove to me that you can listen, learn, study, and become the best students you can be.”

Then finish with a bang: “Be the best on three. One...two...three... BE THE BEST!”

Add Your Passion

The above steps won't work if you just go through the motions. It will be just another lecture, just another teacher droning on, unless you tap into that place deep inside you that believes in an individual's capacity to overcome obstacles, to rise above their circumstances, to become more than the opinions of others.

You have to believe, to know beyond a doubt, that your students are capable of fulfilling the vision of excellence you have for them. Because if you don't believe it, they won't believe it either.

So don't be afraid to let it out. Don't be afraid to show your passion for helping students become more than they think they can. Don't be afraid to show your desire to create your dream class, to make your classroom and this school year a once-in-a-lifetime experience for you and your students.

If you get goose bumps as you look into your students' eyes, if they look back at you with intensity and determination to be better students, then you know you're on the right track.