

Let's Avoid:

- Comparing students (or siblings).
- Setting unrealistic expectations and then careening toward disappointment.
- Owning the ambition yourself and depriving the child of the joy of self-motivation.
- Failing to see the difference between what you want and what the child wants.



Success Begets Success

Keep in mind that students are most likely to build belief in their own capacity when they see evidence of it. It is inspiring to re-live memories of past successes when taking a new risk, so having reminders of such events ready is a good idea. When a student is able to feel the warm, safe glow of accomplishment, it is much easier to summon the self-confidence necessary to try something new.

Also, It's Good to Know When to Be Silent

Sometimes, the best thing is to let a student find the inspiration within. When we say too much, we may be interrupting a natural process of resistance and growth, and accidentally co-opting the intrinsic motivation that would have resulted. Once the message of high expectations has clearly and concisely been sent, additional talk probably isn't necessary.

Additional Resources:

www.responsiveclassroom.org

Motivating Minds: Raising Children to Love Learning by Deborah Stipek & Kathy Seal

How to Talk So Kids Can Learn by Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish

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Student Motivation

Working Together
Embracing Challenge
Building Confidence

Building a Sense of Capability

Statements for Building Students' Belief in their Own Capability

- This is something that I know you can do.
- This is clearly a strength of yours.
- See how much work you did and how well you performed? This is always possible.

Things to Remind Students

- We all learn in different ways. We all have different strengths.
- Trying something new means taking a risk. Sometimes that feels exciting, sometimes that feels scary, but it is a part of how we learn.
- Not knowing something is OK – most things have to be learned.
- We have high expectations for effort.

Replacement Suggestions:

Instead of:

- 1) See, I told you that you could do it.
- 2) I'm really proud of you.
- 3) Good job! You finally finished!
- 4) You need to get this done.

Try Saying:

- 1) Here is the evidence that you can do it.
- 2) You must be really proud of yourself.
- 3) It seems like you worked hard and put a lot of thought into this.
- 4) I see that you are ready to work carefully and make progress.

Foundations

We can teach children to develop an internal gauge for their own successful feelings by helping them to not be dependent on the praise of adults for their sense of accomplishment. There is an ever-growing collection of research that supports the idea that students who are self-motivated are also among the highest achieving. They also tend to report the lowest anxiety about school work. By choosing language carefully, we can promote strong self-motivation.

Building Motivation

Questions to Ask During Goal Setting

- Where are you now with this skill, and how does that help you to know where you want to get this year?
- What are your strengths and how can you make them stronger?
- What are you struggling with that you want to improve?
- What kinds of things can you do that will help you move toward meeting your goals?
- What is most important to you right now?

Statements for Building Motivation

- You can do this, and I will support you while you try.
- Eventually, you will get there. Now, what step do you need to take next?
- You have the skills to handle this.
- Making mistakes is important; it is how we learn. Don't let a fear of mistakes stop you from trying.

Working Backward to Set Goals

Frequently we start with a vision of the future, then work backward toward a reasonable short-term goal. For example, if a student thinks she wants to become an editor someday, developing strong reading and writing skills will be important to her. She should think about what goals she can set this year to move her along that path, like writing a beautiful narrative story, or getting into a new chapter book series.

Things to Keep In Mind

Sometimes we ask children to work hard or take risks without acknowledging their efforts. Keep in mind that empowering children with decision-making, extending their options, and respecting their vulnerability can increase their buy-in. Motivation has to come from within, but these are ways we can help build it.



Celebrate growth along with mastery.