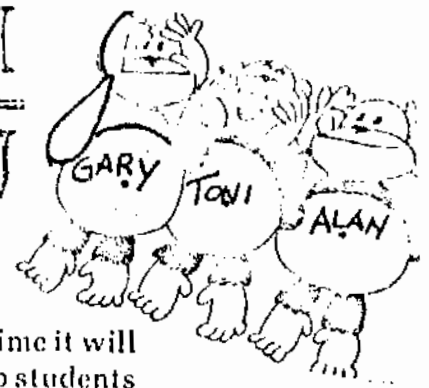


CLASSROOM MOTIVATION



ASSIGNMENT CALENDAR

After you've taught a course several times, you know how much time it will take to cover the basic concepts and what the assignments will be. Help students keep up with their work by providing them with a calendar listing assignment due dates, major tests, and chapters or pages to be covered each week. An easy way to do this is to locate a calendar with squares large enough to write or type in the information. Duplicate the calendar sheet on a copy machine and hand it out at the beginning of each month. Also post a copy on the bulletin board. Then students know exactly what will be covered when. Absent students do not have to ask what they missed; they can simply check the calendar.

REPLACE A LOW GRADE

One teacher encourages arrival to class on time by employing the replacement system. Students who do not have a single "tardy" recorded at the end of a marking period have their lowest test score replaced with an A. Works like a charm, he says. Students have been seen running to get to class on time.

PUZZLES, RHYMES, AND RIDDLES

One teacher starts every class by writing on the chalkboard a puzzle, incomplete rhyme, or riddle related to the topic under study. Not only is this a convenient way to occupy students while attendance and other clerical matters are taken care of at the beginning of the period, but also it focuses student attention on the topic at hand. The first student to supply the missing word or phrase receives an extra credit point.

FISH BOWL

One teacher writes extra credit questions on slips of paper and tosses them in a fish bowl she keeps in the classroom. When students finish their regular assignments, they have the option of going fishing—reaching into the bowl and grabbing an extra credit question. Questions that can be solved by simply looking in the textbook carry a small number of extra credit points. The whoppers—those that require research in the library—are the prize catches, for they carry more points.

PERSONAL INVITATIONS

If your school is typical of most, open house, parent conference day, and American Education Week are attended by those parents you don't really need to see. Try sending out personal invitations in the form of postcards or letters to parents you especially need to see. You may be surprised at the response a personal invitation brings.

GRAPHS

Keep a class graph of test scores so students can see their progress. To prevent embarrassment, identify students by numbers or code names, or ask them to provide pseudonyms. When a discouraged student needs a little boost, stop and point out the progress shown to date on the graph. If you don't have time to keep up with a class graph, ask students to keep their own individual graphs.

ASSIGNMENTS MAILED HOME

Home, you say? Yes. A computer science teacher received a program from one student loaded with obscenities and four-letter words. She sent it home with a note explaining what the assignment was and what she received from the student. An apology from the student and parents was quick in coming, and it was no doubt motivated by the parents' receipt of work sent home. But papers that go home need not be only bad examples of student work. One teacher sends only good papers home with a little note attached that says, "Look at the great work your son/daughter is doing in my class!" Students pay special attention to their work if they know some of it may go home.

PHONE CALLS

Most parents shudder when they answer the phone and find out someone from school is calling. "What did my kid do now?" they think. High school parents have been conditioned through many years of experience to think that something must surely be wrong if the school is calling. Too frequently parents hear only bad news from school officials. Why not tell them some good news? One teacher calls home every time a student in his class makes an A on a test or does some other worthy accomplishment. He says it only takes a few minutes, and the dividend is well worth the effort. Not only is the phone call good PR, but also the students involved work even harder on the next test to get another pat on the back.

TESTS

Whenever possible, try to personalize tests by using the names of students in your class in test questions. Watch them smile when they read their names. It makes them feel important. Try by the end of the course to have used every student's name at least once in a test question. It's a special kind of recognition they don't receive anywhere else.

REWARDS

One teacher attaches candy suckers to every A test paper. Another uses sticks of gum. Still another uses cartoon stickers. But don't limit rewards to just test grades. Students can be rewarded for any number of things—an exceptionally good research paper, neatness of work, class participation, or improvement in attitude, punctuality, or attendance, to name a few.

What would your students consider a reward for a job well done? A gift certificate from a fast-food chain? A candy bar? A new pen or pencil? A free period when they are excused from classwork to browse in the library? Try different things and see what works best with a particular group of students.

KNOWLEDGE OF RESULTS

Students are always interested in knowing how they are doing. Feedback from you can take many forms other than a grade. Verbal praise or encouragement is one form. Answer keys can be kept on your desk for students to check as they finish a project, or you can provide a "model" assignment on the overhead or run off on a copy machine. You may also visually check a portion of students' work before they are allowed to go on to another part of the assignment. Many assignments can be checked in class by exchanging papers or having students grade their own work. Whenever possible, give feedback as close to the completion of the task as possible. When it is not feasible to do this on the same day, try to get papers back to students the following day. When feedback is constant and current, students have a good idea as to how they are doing, and they are motivated to continue working.