



Principal's Post

About Teaching and Learning

December 13, 2015

"Farmers and gardeners know you cannot make a plant grow . . . the plant grows itself. What you can do is provide the conditions for growth." Sir Ken Robinson

It's easy to think of teaching and learning as two sides of the same coin; or as sequential events, as in teaching is followed by learning. But this is not the case at all. For teaching to lead to learning there has to be dynamic interaction between the teacher and the student. Teaching is instruction through the process of enabling, giving opportunity, mentoring, inspiring. Learning is the acquisition of knowledge, skills and concepts through practice, experience, investigation and reflection. The classroom atmosphere must be deliberately crafted to create a culture for learning. The total learning environment must stimulate scholarship.

Teachers want their students to be interested in their studies. They want students to be motivated to work hard, gain knowledge and explore the subject on a deeper level. So in planning lessons teachers often begin with the questions, how are my students motivated? What will excite them? They will sometimes decide on a reward or a prize as an incentive. This is an extrinsic motivation.

Research has been done recently that challenges the effectiveness of rewards and prizes to promote certain kinds of learning. Extrinsic motivators work best for rewarding compliance or as incentives for short term mechanical tasks. However, if used too often they lose effectiveness and actually diminish intrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation is a desire to achieve that flows from inside the individual. This motivation comes from the pleasure or satisfaction a student derives from the work itself. Intrinsic motivation leads to authentic learning because students are invested in the subject matter. For highly effective teachers nurturing intrinsic motivation becomes an essential component in establishing a classroom's culture for learning. Teachers work to create the conditions that stimulate curiosity, exploration and creativity.

There are four elements that promote intrinsic motivation:

- Autonomy: having a degree of control over what needs to happen and how it can be done
- Competence: feeling that one has the ability to be successful in doing the work
- Relatedness: doing the activity helps students feel more connected to others, and feel cared about by people whom they respect
- Relevance: the work must be seen by students as interesting and valuable to them, and useful to their present lives and/or hopes and dreams for the future.

An important goal of a quality education is to produce lifelong learners, and nurturing intrinsic motivation is a sure way to achieve that goal.

Source: <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/creating-conditions-for-student-motivation-larry-ferlazzo>