Lighting the Fire: Motivation and the Gifted Child

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Handouts and Resources
“Education is not the filling of the pail, but the lighting of a fire.”
~ William Butler Yeats

What is motivation?

• Motivation is...
  – The inner energy that directs and regulates behavior
  – Choosing some goals and not others
  – Starting work toward a goal
  – Persevering in the work toward the goal
  – Influenced by both personal characteristics and social environmental factors
  – A determining factor in high- and low-achieving students
Renzulli’s Model of Giftedness

- Above Average Ability
- Task Commitment (Motivation)
- Creativity

Moving Beyond Goal-Orientation Theory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Goals</th>
<th>Mastery/Learning Goals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fixed Mindset</strong></td>
<td><strong>Growth Mindset</strong></td>
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<td>“The main thing I want when I do my work is to show how good I am at it.”</td>
<td>“It’s much more important for me to learn things than it is to get the best grades.”</td>
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<td>Definition: Achievement is a fixed trait that cannot be changed.</td>
<td>Definition: Achievement is a malleable quality with potential that can be developed.</td>
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<td>Response to Failure: Helplessness “I would spend less time on this subject from now on.”</td>
<td>Response to Failure: Resilience “I would work harder in this class from now on.”</td>
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Attribution Theory

Positive Causal Attributions of Success

- Internal and Controllable
  - Success due to hard work, understanding task
- Failure due to insufficient effort or using a wrong strategy

Negative Causal Attribution of Success

- External and Uncontrollable
  - Success luck, teacher liking a student
- Failure due to lack of ability or bad luck
Self-Determination Theory

**Intrinsic Motivation**  
**Extrinsic Motivation**

**INTRINSIC MOTIVATION**
- Integrated Regulation
- Identified Regulation
- Introjected Regulation
- External Regulation

**Self-Determination Theory**
Self-Determination Theory

Autonomy

Having feelings of volition and control over one's environment

Competence

Feeling capable of interacting with one's environment

Relatedness

Feeling reciprocal connection to others (caring for and feeling cared for)

TARGET Model for Building Motivation in School Setting

T TASK
A AUTHORITY
R RECOGNITION
G GROUPING
E EVALUATION
T TIME
Practices that Undermine Academic Motivation

- Authoritarian parenting/teaching style
- Treating gifted children like mini-adults
- Belief that cognitive giftedness = academic achievement/motivation
- Stressing external validations of intelligence

Strategies for Improving Academic Motivation

- Provide autonomous learning opportunities
- Continue conversations about topics of interest and encourage self-directed investigation
- Focus on process, not outcome!
- Rely on informational vs. controlling language/praise
- Explain rationale for structure and expectations; collaborate to create them
Still unmotivated?

- Is the child twice-exceptional (2e)?
- Identify level on self-determination theory and work on gradual progress through steps
- Recognize that personality is part of motivation – how can you synchronize personality and academic success?

Handouts and Resources
Suggested Resources


The Underachieving Gifted Child: Recognizing, Understanding, and Reversing Underachievement by Siegle (2012)

Self-Regulation and the Underachieving Gifted Child by Welch & Roth (2015)

Smart but Scattered: The Revolutionary Executive Skills Approach to Helping Kids Reach Their Potential by Dawson & Guare (2009)

Works Cited