

CEP 802
Developing Positive Attitudes Toward Learning
Michigan State University
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“I’m just not good at math.”

“I know that Anthony can do it, if only he’d try.”

“I wish that Emily was interested in science.”

“Jacob doesn’t want to do any work.”

“Sophia is so scared of making mistakes that she never participates.”

“School is boring for my child.”

“This is stupid. Who cares about the Monroe Doctrine? ”

Statements like these, from teachers, parents, and students, are commonplace in the world of school. They characterize students as having negative attitudes toward learning and signal to others a lack of motivation to learn. This course is designed to help teachers, school psychologists, and other educational staff learn new ways of conceptualizing and promoting the development of **motivation to learn**. This course examines motivation as a multidimensional concept and explores how to respond to its many forms such as work avoidance, lack of engagement, anxiety, lack of effort, and underachievement.

Course Description

Children experience difficulties in school for a variety of reasons. This course is concerned with a common explanation for why children sometimes fail to learn that is generally referred to as a “motivational problem”. When people are asked to describe the *unmotivated learner*, characteristics such as apathetic, disruptive, lazy, reluctant, disengaged, and bored, typically come to mind. They describe students who occupy every classroom and who pose daily challenges to teachers and parents. A commonly held belief is that a problem with motivation is primarily one of “will” as opposed to one of “skill”: a person is viewed as having the ability to do something, but they just won’t do it. Unlike skill

explanations, however, which are typically multifaceted in nature, the problem of will is frequently viewed as a single and uniform deficit. Rather than viewing motivation as a singular problem requiring a singular response, we will take a multidimensional approach to motivational problems.

We will examine three major theoretical perspectives that inform current research and practice in motivation: behavioral, intrinsic motivation, and cognitive-developmental models. We will use these approaches to assess motivation to learn and to design appropriate intervention strategies. The use of behavioral approaches to motivate students is common in schools. In this course, we will take a closer look at when and how behavioral approaches are most effective and consider potential benefits as well as unintended outcomes. We will also look at intrinsic motivation and how strategies that foster self-determination, personal relevance, interest, and novelty can be used to engage students more actively in learning. Finally, we will examine the cognitive-developmental perspective, which views individual's thoughts and beliefs as having a critical role in motivation and learning. We will study how cognitions or thoughts, such as perceptions of competence, control beliefs, causal attributions, and achievement goals, as well as teacher beliefs including expectations, self-efficacy, and views of success and failure, are related to motivation and engagement. We will examine a variety of classroom applications through the use of cases culminating in the design of motivational strategies to use in schools or other learning settings.

Course Objectives

The course focuses on promoting the development of *motivation to learn*. It is designed especially for educators, school psychologists, and other educational staff to learn new ways of conceptualizing and promoting motivation to learn among students.

The overall goal of this course is to help you to develop a deeper understanding of motivation and its relation to learning behaviors in educational settings. The specific objectives of the course are to:

- Develop an understanding of important student, teacher, and instructional factors that influence motivation toward learning
- Analyze the motivational characteristics of your students and classrooms or other learning settings
- Evaluate the adequacy of common motivational strategies
- Examine ways that recent research and motivational concepts can be used in schools to motivate students
- Develop a repertoire of evidence-based strategies to promote students' motivation to learn.

Course Prerequisites

No specific courses are required, but prior courses in child development and learning are recommended. Additionally, students should have access to an educational setting, broadly

defined, in which to complete the course activities. This may be a formal learning setting such as a classroom in schools or informal learning settings such as community centers and activities (e.g., soccer team, piano, gymnastics, robotics club, outdoor learning, tutoring, Scouting, etc.). Students in past courses have also worked with their own children and applied these ideas in parenting situations.

Course Schedule

The course is approximately 13 1/2 weeks long, beginning on **Wednesday, August 28, 2013** and ending on **Sunday, December 1, 2013**. The course is organized like a book where the first week and half is the Introduction and the next 11 weeks are divided into 5 Units, each two weeks long, with the exception of Unit 3, which is 3 weeks long. Each Unit begins on Sunday and ends on Saturday except for the Introduction, which begins on Wednesday, the first day of classes, and the Conclusion, which ends on Sunday, December 1. Each Unit examines a specific approach to motivation. The last week comprises the **Conclusion** to the course when we'll wrap things up and complete final assessments.

What to Expect

You can expect to spend a **minimum of 12-16 hours per week** on the course. **All work for the course must be completed by Sunday, December 1, 2013** (11:59 p.m. EST). As a rule, plan to check in on the course web site **at least twice a day**.

- Expect to spend **7-10 hours** per week actively engaged at the course web site.
- This includes participating in group discussions and completing the course activities.
- **In addition**, plan to spend a minimum of **5-6 hours** in individual time, completing the readings, reflection activities, and assignments.

Course Format

This is a fully online course on *Desire to Learn* (D2L) at MSU. In Spring 2013, MSU began the transition to this new online course management system: Desire to Learn (D2L, version 10.1). You can access the course at <https://d2l.msu.edu/>. Visit the D2L Help page to view system requirements and to test your browser: <http://help.d2l.msu.edu/>. For an introduction to D2L see: <http://help.d2l.msu.edu/students/quick-start-guide>

If You Need Help

MSU Distance Learning Services provides *technical assistance* **24 hours a day** at its Help Line:

Toll-Free	1-800-500-1554 (North America and Hawaii)
Local	517-355-2345.

For questions related to *course content* and *site-specific problems* (e.g., accessing a page), please e-mail me or my teaching assistant at: evoka@msu.edu or hickstay@msu.edu. We will do our best to respond to your messages within 24 hours or less. We can also arrange to talk in a chat room. You can also reach me by phone at 517-432-9615.

The format of the class will include features that are familiar to you from face-to-face (FTF) classes, as well as activities that take advantage of the internet's features. We will use direct instruction, group and whole class discussions, and individual and group activities to examine the ideas and issues in the course. There is also a field component to the course where you will carry out learning activities and try out ideas in a classroom or learning setting of your choice (e.g., the Design Project).

Teaching this course on the internet provides exciting and new opportunities for learning and has made possible the participation of students from all over the world. I designed a course that capitalizes on this diversity of students. This course is not like a correspondence course or an independent study where you read the material in isolation and take an exam. It is an **interactive** course with both individual and group learning activities. Participating in discussions and communicating your ideas to large and small audiences is a key feature of this course.

Each unit consists of a PowerPoint Presentation, assigned readings, individual and group activities, online discussions and a writing assignment. During each unit you will complete work individually as well as participate in small and large group discussions. Each unit generally has the following elements:

- View
- Read
- Do
- Discuss
- Write

View. Each unit begins with a PowerPoint Presentation that highlights and explains the main ideas of the unit. You will need to have the latest version of Flash (available at: <http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/>) and a browser such as Firefox or Explorer.

Read. Each unit has a set of readings that are to be completed before moving on to the remaining activities.

Do. The purpose of this course element is to provide an opportunity for you to engage with the ideas. This may take the form of an observation of learning situations as in Unit 2. The specific activity varies across the units and may be an individual or group activity. It is important to complete this activity on time because this will be the focus of the online discussions.

Discuss. The discussion is organized into small groups and class-wide discussions. The majority of your discussion will take place in Teams. You will work together in these three-four person groups for the entire course. I will create the Teams by the beginning of the second week based on your interests and backgrounds. Both groups and individuals will

have the chance to share and discuss ideas with the whole class. These class-wide discussions will take place on the designated Discussion Forum.

Write. The units have a writing activity that involves critical reflection, analysis, integration of the unit ideas, and/or summarizing Team discussions. Depending on the unit, these assignments may be individual and/or Team tasks.

Required Texts

The following books have been ordered at local university bookstores. You may also purchase the books from on-line bookstores. The Stipek book may be listed as having a publication date of 2001, but it is the same book. Use the ISBN number to verify that you are ordering the correct edition.

Brophy, J. (2010). *Motivating Students to Learn*. New York: Routledge (3rd Ed.). (ISBN 978-0415800709, Paper)

Stipek, D. (2002). *Motivation to Learn: Integrating theory and practice* (4th Ed). Boston: Allyn & Bacon. (ISBN 0-205-34285-X, Paper)

Other readings will be assigned as the course progresses. Most of these readings will be available online at the course web site.

Course Requirements

The work to be done for the course includes completing the assigned readings, participating in online discussion activities, unit written activities, and completing a Design Project. Grades will be based on your knowledge and understanding of the issues as evidenced by the quality of your ideas, written work, and contributions to class discussions.

50% Online Unit Activities and Discussions (5 @ 10% each)

Putting one's thoughts into words and sharing them with others is an important means of refining one's ideas and developing one's understandings. The goal of using a variety of discussion formats is to provide multiple ways to encourage honest and authentic participation, risk-taking, the critical examination of ideas, generation of questions, and creative thinking. To foster a constructive learning community, students are expected to abide by our class Code of Conduct.

The Team is where which much of the critical reflection on the readings and ideas will take place. Teams will have their own Discussion Forums (asynchronous) for each unit and can also have access to Team chat rooms if they choose to meet in real time. Depending on the Team, this may occur in short sessions at multiple times a day, or in extended sessions 4-5 times a week. The Teams in turn will share summaries of their discussion with the

entire class. Teams also have access to common web space to share files and work-in-progress.

The discussion activities specify minimum levels of participation. I encourage you to provide additional constructive comments that go beyond the minimal requirements. I will monitor participation to ensure that minimal requirements are met. Grades will be based on the quality of your contributions, their thoughtfulness, and value in advancing the discussion. D2L tracks participation in discussions and site engagement automatically.

10% Motivation Case and Assessment

Each student will complete a detailed description and assessment of a motivational problem as part of the Introductory and Unit 1 activities. More details will be provided in these sections of the course.

Case Conceptualization Conference. We will meet with you through video conference (e.g., Skype) to provide feedback on the case and to explore future directions for refining the case for the Design Project. Plan to spend 15-30 minutes for this meeting. Details for signing up for conference meetings will be provided later.

10% Rewards Critique

This paper critically reviews the strengths and weaknesses of the use of rewards to motivate student learning. It is completed as part of the Unit 2 activities where more details will be provided.

30% Design Project (Due Sunday, December 1, 2013, 11:59 pm EST: 12-15 page paper)

Each student will complete an original Design Project. This is a case-based project that involves designing an instructional plan that incorporates strategies that promote motivation to learn. The Design Project provides an opportunity to try out the ideas in an authentic setting with a real case. The design project must be clearly based on theories, research, and concepts presented in the course. The project consists of the following elements:

- a. Motivational Case: a detailed description of the motivational problem (revised and elaborated from the Introduction)
- b. Motivational assessment of the learner(s) and the learning context (revised and elaborated from Unit 1)
- c. Motivational intervention or instructional strategy that addresses the motivational aspects of the learning activity.

Design Project Paper. You will be able to develop the ideas for this project throughout the course by examining your case through the motivational lens in each Unit. All Design Projects must be **submitted** as a **12-15 page paper**.

Project Gallery. You will also share your project with the class in the form a short PowerPoint presentation (audio optional), video, or web page. This summary presentation will be posted in an online project gallery for the class. A more detailed description will be provided in the next few weeks as well as examples of projects completed by past students.

Guidelines for Written Work

Submission of Work. Completed assignments will be accepted at the designated Drop Box until **11:59 pm Eastern Standard Time (EST)** on the due date.

Format. Papers should be double-spaced, using APA style when citing sources within text as well as in preparing the reference list. Refer to the publication manual for specific guidelines.

American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.) Washington, D.C.: Author.

These web sites also provide information about APA Style:

APA Style: <http://www.apastyle.org/>

APA Free Style Tutorial: <http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/index.aspx>

APA Style Essentials (by Dr. Douglas Degelman)

http://www.vanguard.edu/faculty/ddegelman/index.aspx?doc_id=796