A Formula for Optimally Motivating Your Students

\[ M = E + V - C \]

M = Motivation
E = Expectancy  \( \rightarrow \)  Can your students do the task?
V = Value  \( \rightarrow \)  Do your students want to do the task?
C = Cost  \( \rightarrow \)  Are your students free of barriers preventing them from investing time, energy, and resources into the task?

Research-Based Sources of Increasing Students’ EXPECTANCY

1. Ability/Skill
   - When students have a high level of ability and/or skill at an activity, they are more likely to experience high expectancy.
2. Effort
   - When students believe that their effort will lead to learning, they are more likely to experience high expectancy.
3. Success Experiences (direct or indirect)
   - When students are successful at an activity, or watch others have success, they are more likely to experience high expectancy.
4. Improvement and Growth Experiences
   - When students experience growth in their skills and improvement on their performance, they are more likely to experience high expectancy.
5. Clear Expectations
   - When students know what is expected of them on an activity, and have clearly defined goals, they are more likely to experience high expectancy.
6. Appropriate Challenge
   - When the difficulty of the task or activity matches students’ skill levels, they are more likely to experience high expectancy.
7. Feedback (task vs. ability)
   - When students receive feedback that is specific (rather than general) and task-focused (rather than ability-focused), they are more likely to experience high expectancy.
8. Support and Scaffolding
   - When students are appropriately supported in completing an activity (e.g., through encouragement), they are more likely to experience high expectancy.
Research-Based Sources of Increasing Students’ VALUE

1. Personal Interest (aka, Intrinsic Interest)
   - When students find academic content and activities personally interesting, they are more likely to experience high value.

2. Enjoyment/Fun
   - When students find the activities and academic content enjoyable, they are more likely to experience high value.

3. Relevance
   - When students are able to connect what they are learning to their personal lives and/or the real world, they are more likely to experience high value.

4. Context & Rationale
   - When students understand that an activity is meaningful and has a purpose, they are more likely to experience high value.

5. Variety & Novelty
   - When students engage in activities that are varied and novel, they are more likely to experience high value.

6. Enthusiastic Models
   - When students interact with teachers and other adults who are enthusiastic and passionate about learning, they are more likely to experience high value.

7. Choice & Control
   - When students feel a sense of control and choice over their learning, they are more likely to experience high value.

8. Challenge & Growth
   - When students engage in learning activities that challenge them to provide opportunities to grow and learn, they are more likely to experience high value.

9. Positive Relationships and Sense of Belongingness
   - When students experience meaningful student-student and student-teacher relationships, they are more likely to experience high value.

10. Extrinsic Benefits
    - When students receive external rewards and incentives for learning (e.g., prizes, food), they are more likely to experience high value to complete an activity but low value to produce quality work.
Research-Based Sources of Decreasing Students’ COST

1. Effort and Time Needed for the Activity
   - When students feel that the workload is unreasonable (e.g., 6 hours/night) and/or unnecessary (e.g., busy work), they are more likely to experience increased cost. Therefore, be mindful of the time and energy required for assigned work in the class.

2. Effort and Time Needed for Other Competing Activities
   - When students have too many other demands on their time or do not know how to effectively manage their time, they are more likely to experience high cost. Therefore, be mindful of the time and energy required for other activities (e.g., consider the major assignments that students have in other classes in addition to your own). In addition, encourage students to be mindful of the number of extracurricular activities that students are involved in at any one time.

3. Loss of Valued Alternative Activities
   - When students feel like the learning activity is not worth their time compared to other things they might do (e.g., socializing), they are more likely to experience high cost. Therefore, consider promoting additional values into your activity (e.g., structure classroom learning such that students need to interact with each other in order to successfully complete the activity, thus meeting students’ social needs and academic needs together).

4. Psychological and Emotional Reactions to the Activity
   - When students feel negative emotions towards an activity (e.g., anxious, stressed, bored), they are more likely to experience high cost. Therefore, be mindful of students’ emotional reactions when engaging in classroom activities, and provide a safe environment for students to communicate their concerns.

5. Physical Reactions to the Activity
   - When students lack energy or feel restless and uncomfortable (e.g., tired, cramped), they are more likely to experience high cost. Therefore, be mindful of students’ physical needs when designing classroom activities (e.g., encourage good sleeping and eating habits, provide ample space to work, breaks).