

# **Activities to Enhance Student Motivation and Engagement**

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## **Use of Activities**

This document describes activities school staff and parents can utilize to improve motivation and engagement in the school context. Most of these activities can be implemented in just 5 - 30 minutes, and many of them can be adapted to setting-specific needs. Each activity that follows provides information on the lesson title, the grade level the activity might be most appropriate for, the estimated time the activity will take to implement, the goals of the activity, the procedures and variations of the activity, and additional comments about the activity. Next to the lesson title, a “M” means the activity primarily promotes motivation, an “E” means it primarily promotes engagement, and an “M&E” means it promotes both motivation and engagement.

## **Activities for Educators to Foster Student Motivation and Engagement**

**Lesson Title:** Interview of Parent or Caring Adult (M & E)

**Grade Level:** Any

**Estimated Time:** 10 min. per student sharing

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Students are assigned to interview a parent or caring adult about a time in their life when they overcame a social, behavioral, academic or wellness obstacle. Students are asked to take notes during the interview and share the highlights and personal reactions with the class. Guidance regarding appropriateness and family privacy may be required.

**Anticipatory Set:** Teacher shares a personal experience about having to overcome an obstacle or initiates a discussion on role models who have had to overcome challenges in their lives.

**Procedures:** The teacher explains the assignment to students and gives them an appropriate amount of time to conduct an interview. Have a few students share their stories each week over a period of time until all students who are willing have had an opportunity to do so.

**Variations:** a) Have students complete an art project with a symbolic representation of the event described by the interviewee; b) Consider giving students the option to complete a written report instead of an oral presentation; c) Consider also allowing students to individually share highlights and reactions with the teacher instead of presenting in front of the class.

**Comments:** It can be helpful if the teacher or principal provide advance notice to parents regarding the purpose, expectations and guidelines of this assignment.

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**Lesson Title:** Class Pictures, Posters, or Collages (M)

**Grade Level:** Any

**Estimated Time:** 40 min. (completed as an art activity)

**Goal/Basic Concept:** This activity provides visual representations of positive motivations for students and the classroom.

**Anticipatory Set:** Explain to students that positive efforts can be directed toward a wide range of social, behavioral, academic, athletic and physical self-improvements. The ability to change and improve who we are over time is presented as the basic theme.

**Procedures:** After explaining the basic theme to the students, have them make artwork that visually depicts the outcomes they are motivated to achieve. Consider having them draw their own pictures or cut some out from old magazines. Hang up the pictures so that they can be seen around the room.

**Variations:** a) Consider creating a collage of an individual admired pictures; b) Match the visuals to a heroic story character from a book(s) the class is reading; c) Use these visuals to decorate class file folders that students will routinely use.

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**Lesson Title:** What Does Trying Mean, What Does Trying Look Like? (M)

**Grade Level:** Any

**Estimated Time:** 10-15 min., repeated

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Many students do not have a clear understanding of what meaningful, sustained effort involves. This activity helps clear up any misunderstandings by discussing how students can judge whether they are trying hard enough and the emotional components of trying.

**Anticipatory Set:** Ask students how they know if they are trying as hard as the other students in class in regard to some assignment or activity.

**Procedures:** Engage students with multiple brief discussions over time about these topics and refer to previous discussions.

**Variations:** a) The teacher can use a direct instruction format and share her/his thoughts and feelings about a challenging situation. Include specific examples of times when one almost gave up but continued and experienced a positive outcome. b) Consider following this discussion with a series of short opportunities for students to attempt focused and sustained effort. Have a follow-up discussion following the opportunities to examine student's thoughts and feelings.

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**Lesson Title:** Barriers to Success (M & E)

**Grade Level:** Any

**Estimated Time:** 10-15 min. repeated

**Goal/Basic Concept:** This activity is designed to help students understand why people give up, identify the barriers that can inhibit effort, and learn how they might overcome these barriers.

**Anticipatory Set:** Teacher or adult shares a time when they were discouraged. They should specifically discuss what they were thinking, how they were feeling, and how they managed the situation.

**Procedures:** The teacher leads the class in a discussion about the emotional (sadness, anxiety, fear of failure, fear of success, low self-esteem, etc.), cognitive/belief (I can't, I'm not capable, I don't care, nobody cares, it's stupid, etc.), and social factors (no one else is, they might laugh, they are watching me) that contribute to discouragement or lack of effort.

**Variations:** Discuss characters from movies, books, or stories that experienced some of these emotional, cognitive, and social factors and how these characters addressed and overcame them.

**Comments:** Seek to develop an understanding that there are forces that keep us from being all we can be, but they can be addressed and overcome.

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**Lesson Title:** Motivation Word Boards (M)

**Grades:** Any

**Estimated Time:** 10-15 min.

**Goal/Basic Concept:** This activity involves developing visual and personal representations of trying and quitting and highlighting the personal and emotional differences involved in the choices to try and give up.

**Procedures:** Two posters are brought into the classroom that are divided into three columns each. One poster is titled "Trying," and the other is titled "Giving Up." The column headers are labeled, "Thinking," "Feeling," and "Doing." The teacher then helps students to identify words that appropriately fit in each of the three columns on the two sheets. Discuss the differences as a class.

**Variations:** a) The teacher keeps the posters posted for a few weeks and either adds words as they come up during class interactions or simply refers to the word boards during class; b) The teacher can discuss whether people can change their thinking and whether this is likely to change their feelings and actions. Similarly, the teacher can also discuss whether students are able to change what they do and if this might change how they think and feel.

**Comments:** Use these boards in a manner that is consistent with PBIS practices by cuing and reminding students prior to rather than correcting and punishing misbehavior after it occurs.

---

**Lesson Title:** Personal Goal Setting (M)

**Grade Level:** Any

**Estimated Time:** Weekly– 10 min. initially and 3 min. per day; repeat each week

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Introduce and initiate an ongoing, student-led process of setting personal goals and monitoring progress toward those goals.

**Anticipatory Set:** Teacher or other adult shares a goal they are setting for themselves and how they will monitor their progress over the next week.

**Procedures:** The teacher encourages thought and focus upon a wide range of goals– social, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, athletic or wellness. Provide each student with a private place to write and store their personal goals. Provide a few minutes each day to reflect and rate their effort toward obtaining their goal. Include a discussion regarding privacy and respect (hopefully as an example of PBIS school-wide expectations) regarding each student's personal goals. Provide students with examples of how to measure their progress. See the Motivation and Engagement Self-Improvement Plan in Appendix L as a potentially useful guide for this activity.

**Comments:** When instructing students about how to create goals, it is important that they understand how to make their goals proximal, specific and appropriately challenging as research suggests that these types of goals are most likely to be reached (Harris & Graham, 1996).

**Variations:** a) Over time, have students share successes from their ongoing goal setting process; b) Include a parallel process where each week the class sets a goal and monitors their group progress together; c) Consider having the principal or teacher contact families to encourage them to set a simple weekly goal and monitor their progress as a family.

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**Lesson Title:** Increase Opportunities to Respond (M & E)

**Grade Level:** Any

**Estimated Time:** Ongoing

**Goal/Basic Concept:** This activity is designed to enhance social interactions, classroom participation and academic motivation/learning by giving all students opportunities to respond in a “safe” space.

**Procedures:** Create or purchase response cards of various forms, utilize a computer app or purchase an electronic clicker system. Pose a question to the class and allow all students to respond simultaneously via response cards or a clicker system to promote active engagement and an opportunity for immediate feedback.

**Variations:** Provide Information Brief to support. Response patterns can be tied to math, statistics, or social study concepts by connecting student response data to current curriculum topics.

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**Lesson Title:** Class Goal Setting or Contracting (Social, Behavioral, or Academic) (M & E)

**Grade Level:** Any

**Estimated Time:** 20-30 minutes with periodic follow-up

**Goal/Basic Concept:** This activity introduces the class to basic concepts related to setting a goal and committing to its achievement through group efforts as a class. Staff and students work together on a regular basis (e.g. daily or weekly) to model and practice basic goal setting. The activity helps students understand the essential steps to setting a goal and seeing a goal through to completion.

**Anticipatory Set:** The teacher reviews a past success of the class and how this success was achieved, or the teacher shares a personal story of successful goal achievement.

**Procedures:** The teacher (or other staff member) first reviews basic concepts associated with a goal setting process, which can include identifying an area of need, formulating a goal, identifying needed resources, planning ahead for obstacles or barriers, measuring progress, making a commitment, obtaining support, and rewarding effort.

The teacher then seeks a timely opportunity to discuss a problem or challenge for the class. This can be any immediate academic, social, or behavioral concern that affects the majority of the students in the class. Next, the basic goal setting steps are applied to this problem or concern:

1. Define a problem or reach a consensus on whether there is a problem.
2. Clarify the evidence or data that validates the existence of the problem and use this information as baseline data on which to measure improvement.
3. Brainstorm the possible solutions to the problem as a class.
4. Agree on the goal to solve the problem as a class.
5. Agree on the steps and resources needed to improve the problem.
6. Make a commitment or contract to work on the goal that was set.
7. Anticipate and plan for challenges that may derail the effort and commitment to cooperatively address any such difficulties.
8. Decide on an appropriate reward for good progress toward the goal and reasonable timeline as to when this will be determined.

See the Motivation and Engagement Self-Improvement Plan in Appendix M as a potentially useful guide for this activity.

**Variations:** a) It can be valuable to involve other school staff members (e.g. principal, guidance counselor, occupational therapist, school psychologist, etc.) in this activity to provide additional perspectives and various sources of reinforcement; b) Baseline measurement and measurement of progress can be tied to basic math concepts that the class is currently learning.

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**Lesson Title:** Acts of Kindness & Pay it Forward (M & E)

**Grade Level:** Any

**Estimated Time:** 10-15 minutes and follow-up

**Goal/Basic Concept:** This activity is designed to enhance classroom and school climate and promote appreciation of giving and helping without the expectation of a tangible reward.

**Anticipatory Set:** The teacher stimulates a brief sharing of incidents in which one has been the beneficiary of a random act of kindness.

**Procedures:** The teacher leads a discussion about why and when people are kind to others and what motivates such behavior. The class then discusses any personal, historical, or current situation in which kindness was expressed without the expectation of anything in return. The teacher then challenges the class to experiment with this type of behavior for themselves that is within reasonable safety limits (i.e. no rushing into burning buildings). Later, the teacher revisits the experiment and asks students to share anything they noticed or learned.

**Variation:** a) Incorporate the movie "Pay it Forward" or other movies and books to stimulate thought; b) Consider ways to integrate this activity with other aspects of the curriculum.

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**Lesson Title:** Current Social Problems (E & M)

**Grade Level:** Any, but tailored to appropriate developmental level

**Estimated Time:** 30-50 minutes

**Goal/Basic Concept:** This activity provides a "safe" opportunity to discuss and problem solve a concern that is likely to be relevant to students at their particular developmental level. These discussions give students opportunities to practice sharing concerns and developing problem-solving skills to address these concerns appropriately.

**Anticipatory Set:** The teacher presents or reviews a basic problem-solving model. Teacher also reviews class expectations for respectful discussions with others.

**Procedures:** The teacher (or other staff member) first leads the class in a discussion about some of the most common pressures, problems or worries for students their age. As these concerns are identified, a list is made. The class then selects one concern to practice problem solving. The class is divided into small teams and given a time limit to work through the problem-solving model with this concern in mind. At the end of the allotted time, each team shares their solution/approach to the problem with the rest of the class. The teacher then helps the class identify the similarities and differences regarding how the concern was addressed.

**Variations:** a) Apply the process to a concern embedded in a piece of literature currently being studied; b) The teacher can also assist the teams in identifying the differences between the emotional aspects of a concern and the more cognitive components of the problem.

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**Lesson Title:** Giving a Compliment (M & E)

**Grade Level:** Any

**Estimated Time:** 5-20 minutes

**Goal/Basic Concept:** This activity helps students learn how to appropriately give other people compliments, which will likely enhance the relationships between students and lead to a more positive school climate.

**Procedures:** The teacher (or other staff member) leads the class in a discussion about why it can be hard to give others a compliment and how to give a compliment. The teacher then prompts the class to think of situations where a compliment might be warranted and how students might respond appropriately.

**Variations:** Have students role play the situations and discuss the various emotional reactions that they experience.

---

**Lesson Title:** Personal Improvement Journal (M)

**Grade Level:** Any

**Estimated Time:** 10-15 min. initial introduction with periodic reviews

**Goal/Basic Concept:** This activity introduces students to the process of maintaining a personal journal, developing a habit of daily personal reflection, and self-monitoring efforts toward a personal goal

**Procedures:**

- 1) Teacher provides guidelines, expectations and/or examples of how to maintain a personal journal.
- 2) Teacher reviews expectations and procedures for maintaining privacy of personal journals in a classroom.
- 3) Each student is to select a goal of their own choosing regarding a potential process of self-improvement. This goal can be in any positively focused realm (behavior, social interaction, self-improvement, academic achievement, wellness, physical fitness, etc.).
- 4) Students are given 5-10 minutes per day to reflect on their successes, failure, barriers and supports toward the obtainment of their goals.
- 5) Students are cued to consider the emotional, behavioral, logical and other influences in their self-reflections.
- 6) Teacher (or any other chosen adult in the building) reviews and provides brief feedback to the student's journal.

7) Periodically, students are offered the opportunity to share some of their thoughts or reflections with the class.

**Variations:** The teacher can modify the procedures to meet the needs of the students based upon the class climate.

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**Lesson Title:** Something Exciting That I Have Learned (M & E)

**Grade Level:** Any

**Estimated Time:** 15 minutes, repeated on a regular basis

**Goal/Basic Process:** This activity allows students to show appreciation for the things they are learning and to celebrate the joy of learning. It is important that staff do not fall into the trap of expecting students to rejoice over some detail associated with a class lesson. Rather, this activity encourages an appreciation of the very wide range of learning that we all experience daily. The range should be open to minor trivia, things we learn about the people important to us, personal lessons and meaningful academic details.

**Anticipatory Set:** The teacher should model openness and appreciation of learning in many forms because this activity is a personal reflection process that takes students some time and practice. The teacher may need to set some clear expectations regarding good taste, respect for differing interests of others, and respect for the feelings of others.

**Procedures:** Students are asked to share something they have learned in the recent past that was interesting or useful to them. This may be followed by a brief discussion of how others might apply this learning.

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**Lesson Title:** Stories of Perseverance (M & E)

**Grade Level:** Any

**Estimated Time:** Variable based upon grade level

**Goal/Basic Process:** This activity utilizes stories from literature, sports, current events, and history to stimulate an appreciation for the value of perseverance when faced with difficult challenges.

**Procedures:** The teacher asks students to select an individual who has demonstrated perseverance while facing a great challenge. Students then research this individual and write a report about what they learned and their own personal reactions. Classroom discussion are then incorporated when appropriate with focus on the specific lessons learned.

**Variations:** Ideally, this activity is associated with current language arts or social studies curriculum.

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**Lesson Title:** Who do you want to be? What kind of person do you want to be? (M & E)

**Grade Level:** Any, but with attention to appropriate developmental expectations

**Estimated Time:** 30 minutes with periodic revisit

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Individuals often feel as if they have little control over who they are, what they can accomplish, and their choices in life. Children often have a narrow vision of themselves or the person they might wish to become (e.g. to be liked by others, to have a particular job, or fantasies of an idealized future). There is also a wide variability in people's beliefs about what they can change or how easy it will be to make changes. The goal of this activity is to stimulate students' reflection upon potential future self-improvement combined with realistic goal setting.

**Procedures:** Students are challenged to describe themselves 20 years in the future as part of a writing assignment or classroom discussion. Students are then asked to describe the details of their life at this future point. They are also asked to describe the important choices and actions they would have made to reach this future self.

**Variations:** In small groups, students provide reactions (with guidance) and suggestions to the descriptions each of them generated.

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**Lesson Title:** Sharing Cultural Traditions (E)

**Estimated Time:** 30-60 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher invites students' family members to come into class and share their cultural traditions with other students in order to help them better understand their peers and encourage parental involvement in the classroom.

**Procedures:** Organize an event within your classroom in which you invite the students' family members to come into school for 30-60 minutes and share a cultural tradition with the students in the class. Provide a few minutes for each family member to share some information with the class.

**Variations:** a) If family members are unable to come into the school, encourage the student to interview his/her family members about cultural traditions and then share the interview with the class instead; b) Consider asking other teachers to participate in this event too

**Comments:** Although this activity might be a little more time consuming compared to other ones, it can help increase the connectedness between students, families, and staff in the school. It might be helpful to establish this as an annual event in your classroom!

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**Lesson Title:** Beginning of the Year Newsletter for Parents (E)

**Estimated Time:** 20-30 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** The school staff create a newsletter at the beginning of the year for parents. This newsletter can introduce parents to the staff members and provide important information about the school's homework policy and expectations. This newsletter helps establish open communication between parents and the school and creates strong home-school partnerships.

**Procedures:** At the beginning of the year, create a newsletter for parents. This newsletter can inform them about homework policies and school wide expectations. This newsletter can also include pictures and short descriptions of the staff members. Send home this newsletter with students sometime during the first week of school.

**Comments:** Make sure contact information is included in the newsletter in case parents have any questions!

**Variations:** Consider making a newsletter for parents more regularly throughout the school year. These newsletters can include information about upcoming events and other relevant updates.

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**Lesson Title:** Talking to Students about a Personal Challenge (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher, staff member, parent or community member talks to students about a challenging time and how he/she personally overcame it. This activity is designed to increase the level of teacher engagement in the school and have teachers model how to effectively cope during adversity.

**Procedures:** Tell students about a time when you faced a challenge along with how you successfully overcame it (i.e. training for and completing a marathon, raising a grade in a difficult course, faced a major life challenge, coped with a major loss, etc.). Give your students the opportunity to ask any questions that they might have about your experience and spend time answering them to the best of your ability so that they can better understand ways to successfully overcome challenges in their own lives.

**Variations:** If you know of a specific student who is currently struggling with something significantly challenging, set aside some time to share how you overcame a personal challenge in a more individualized setting.

**Comments:** After sharing your own experiences, it can also be helpful to have other

students in the class serve as models and share about their own challenging experiences and how they successfully overcame them!

---

**Lesson Title:** Reflection Assignment (E)

**Estimated Time:** 10 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher or other staff member asks students to write down one thing that they love about school and one thing that they wish were different in school. The teacher or staff member then reflects on this information and thinks about how it can be used to improve the learning environment and make learning a more enjoyable experience for all students.

**Procedures:** As part of an assignment or task, ask each student in your class to write down one thing that they love about school and one thing that they wish were different about school. Collect their responses and reflect on the information they provide. Write down 1-2 specific changes you can make in response to their feedback, and follow-up with the student to assess the impact of these changes.

**Variations:** Consider also informally asking students about what they love and wish was different about school and then reflect on this information gathered during the conversation.

**Comments:** It might be helpful to ask students to answer these questions throughout the school year (i.e. every 3-4 months) in order to continuously assess the learning environment in your classroom and school!

---

**Lesson Title:** Acknowledge Accomplishments in Local Newspaper (E)

**Grade Level:** Any

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher or another staff member acknowledges a student's accomplishment that is listed in a local newspaper to increase both teacher engagement and students' sense of purpose at school.

**Procedures:** Read your local newspaper and find an article about a student and a particular accomplishment. For example, you might find an article about a student's performance at a recent sporting event or band concert. Cut out the article and send it to the student with a brief note recognizing his/her achievement.

**Variations:** Create a bulletin board in your classroom where you post newspaper articles that acknowledge students in the school. Spend a few minutes sharing these articles at the

beginning of class. Another variation is to complete this for school staff, by featuring any accomplishments in the staff lounge.

**Comments:** Do not hesitate to acknowledge students who you have not met in-person before. Acknowledging new students will create even more connections between students and staff in the school, and students will most likely feel appreciated when any school staff member recognizes them!

---

**Lesson Title:** Ask Students about Their Futures (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher or other staff member asks a student about his/her future goals to increase teacher engagement and his/her sense of purpose in school.

**Procedures:** Ask one student a question related to his/her future. The question and subsequent conversation will be very different depending on the age of the student. For instance, if you are speaking with younger students, you could simply ask them what they want to be when they grow up. However, if you are talking to an older, high school student, for example, you might ask him/her about plans for after graduation.

**Variations:** You could also facilitate an in-class activity and ask everyone to write down or share a future goal or desire that they have and then follow-up with each student individually throughout the school year.

**Comments:** To further increase students' sense of purpose in school, it is especially important to help them understand how their current work in school is directly related to the goals that they have for their futures. Try to incorporate these connections within your conversations as much as possible! Or, think of ways you can make class assignments more relevant to students and their future plans.

---

**Lesson Title:** Call Absent Students (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher or another staff member calls a student who was absent from school in order to increase students' levels of connectedness to the school and the adults in the building.

**Procedures:** Identify one student who was absent from school and call home at the end of the day. Briefly check in with the student or his/her parent or guardian to see how he/she is doing. Consider also mentioning that the student was missed in class that day and offer to

help him/her catch up with missed work when he/she returns to school.

**Variations:** Emailing can also be an effective way to reach out to absent students and/or their parents or guardians.

**Comments:** It can be especially helpful to reach out to students who are consistently absent to ensure that they stay connected to the school as much as possible.

---

**Lesson Title:** Entrance Tickets (Brookhart, 2010) (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher gathers student feedback at the beginning of class through entrance tickets, which increases teacher engagement and students' sense of purpose in the classroom. After reflecting on the feedback, the teacher can make appropriate changes in the classroom to better support student learning.

**Procedures:** Provide students with an index card at the beginning of class and ask them a small number of questions to help inform future instruction. These questions can ask about the previous night's homework assignment, areas for personal improvement, and goals that the students have for the upcoming class. Collect the index cards after the students are finished addressing the questions, and reflect on their responses in order to make positive changes in the classroom.

**Variations:** Index cards can also be provided at the end of a lesson to gather student feedback regarding the day's lesson and activities.

**Comments:** The specific questions will depend on the age of the students. For example, students in elementary school might be asked, "What was hard yesterday?" or "What was easy yesterday?" On the other hand, older students might be asked, "What were the most challenging parts of your recent work?" or "What were the least challenging parts of your recent work?"

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**Lesson Title:** Fist-To-Five (Fletcher, 2002) (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher collects student feedback as instruction and learning take place to make decisions that best support student learning and increase students' sense of purpose within the classroom.

**Procedures:** During class, ask students questions that can be answered using a scale from 0 to 5. For example, you can ask, “How many more minutes do you need to finish what you are working on?” or “How clear is the work?” Have students hold up fingers to indicate their responses. Use their input to guide the remaining class.

**Comments:** It might be helpful to create a poster that outlines the rating system for students to use when you ask them questions. See below for an example of what this poster might look like:

Fist-To-Five		
5 Fingers	=	Very Clear, Extremely Well
4 Fingers	=	Clear, Good, Well
3 Fingers	=	Not Sure, Undecided
2 Fingers	=	Clear, Bad, Not so Good
1 Finger	=	Very Unclear, Terrible, Poor
Fist	=	I Have No Clue

(Middleton & Perks, 2014)

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**Lesson Title:** Think-Pair-Share (Lyman, 1981) (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher facilitates an activity with partners in order to promote positive relationships among students in the class.

**Procedures:** Before, during, or after the lesson, provide students with a prompt that asks them to think about a specific question or idea (i.e. “What do you think was the main theme of the novel?”). Then ask students to share their thoughts with a partner nearby. Finally, have a few pairs share their ideas with the rest of the class.

**Variations:** Depending on the size of the class, this activity can also be completed in small groups, rather than in pairs.

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**Lesson Title:** School Pride Posters (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5-10 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher gives students a little time to create posters and other decorations that promote school pride. These posters and other decorations will help enhance the physical environment and also remind students of the behavioral and academic expectations at school.

**Procedures:** Schedule a few minutes during the day to allow students to create posters and other decorations that promote school pride. For example, if “Respect” is a core expectation at school, you can encourage the students to write out the expectation on a poster or draw a picture of someone being respectful. After the students complete their work, display it throughout the school!

**Variations:** If it is difficult to find time to do this activity during class, consider asking students to make a poster at home in exchange for some extra credit.

**Comments:** Consider asking other teachers to participate in this activity as well in order to create even more work to display in the school!

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**Lesson Title:** Building Resiliency Stories in Students’ Reading (M)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher incorporates stories into students’ readings that demonstrate resiliency or overcoming adversity through motivation and hard work. These examples help students learn how to effectively cope with adversity and overcome the challenges that they regularly face.

**Procedures:** Assign readings that have characters who demonstrate resiliency or overcome adversity through motivation and hard work. For example, if you work with younger students, you might read “The Little Engine that Could” together. After reading, spend time talking as a class about what the character specifically did to overcome adversity and how students can apply his/her example to their own lives.

**Variations:** Instead of having a class discussion, consider having students write a paper and describe how a character overcame a challenge and how they might apply this example to their own adversities.

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**Lesson Title:** Student-Led Service Project (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** Varies

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Having students identify a need in the school or community that they can fill while also mastering content standards will help them feel meaningfully engaged and promote a sense of contribution.

**Procedures:** Allow students to identify a need in the community that they can address while mastering a content standard. For example, while learning how to write a five paragraph

letter, students may be asked how they could practice this skill while helping others. Students may decide that they could each write a five-paragraph letter to a veteran in the community, explaining reasons they are grateful for their service.

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**Lesson Title:** Weekly Highlights (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5-10 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Students share highlights from the week with the rest of the class. This activity encourages students to focus on the positive events that happen in school each week, which can help them get excited and motivated to return the following week.

**Procedures:** At the end of the week, ask students to briefly share one of their highlights from the week with the rest of the class. If time allows, ask students some follow-up questions about the experience they shared (i.e. "Why was that event so enjoyable for you?").

**Variations:** If there is limited time at the end of the week, the students can share their highlights in small groups so that this activity can be completed in an even shorter amount of time.

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**Lesson Title:** Great Expectations (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5-10 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** It can be easy for students to dwell on all the pressures, worries, and problems that they face on a regular basis in school, so this activity is designed to help students think about things in school that they are looking forward to in the future. Reminding students of these future positive experiences can increase their joy for learning and help them feel excited about coming to school each day.

**Procedures:** At the beginning of each week, give students some time to share what they are looking forward to in the upcoming week with the rest of the class. Mondays can be difficult for anyone though, so consider providing students with some prompts or reminders of exciting events that are happening that week. For instance, there might be an upcoming field trip or basketball game that you can remind the students about.

**Variations:** If there is limited time, students can share what they are looking forward to in groups so that this activity can be completed in an even shorter amount of time.

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**Lesson Title:** Affirmation Journal (Adapted from Coombs-Richardson & Meisgeier, 1996) (M)

**Estimated Time:** 5-10 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** When students have negative thoughts and beliefs about themselves, their behaviors can be negatively impacted as well. In other words, if students believe that they can't do something, research suggests that it will be difficult for them to do it even if they are capable. This activity is designed to help students identify personal strengths and recognize the importance of self-affirmation.

**Procedures:** A teacher first explains self-affirmation to students by sharing that it involves telling yourself positive things about yourself. Then the teacher explains that self-affirmation is important because saying positive things to yourself can help improve your self-esteem and ability to complete a task. Finally, the teacher gives students a few minutes to write in a journal where they talk about a successful experience that they have had recently.

**Variations:** If there is not time for students to regularly write in a journal, they can be encouraged to mentally identify or write down one positive personal success that happened during the day.

**Comments:** It might be helpful to provide students with writing prompts. A couple examples are listed below:

- I am...
- I like myself because...
- I feel good because...

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**Lesson Title:** Bouncing Ball (Adapted from Coombs-Richardson & Meisgeier, 1996) (M)

**Estimated Time:** 5-10 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** When students are not resilient, they can develop significant feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. In response to such overwhelming feelings, students can withdraw or behave irresponsibly. This activity is designed to help students recognize the importance of resiliency and learn how to overcome difficulties in their lives.

**Procedures:** The teacher first explains that resiliency is the ability to bounce back from a difficult situation. The teacher then shares that resiliency allows students to thrive in school and reminds them that everyone has the potential inner strength to overcome the challenges they face. Students are then given a few minutes to practice applying this concept by identifying a real or imaginary problem they are experiencing. Next, students list possible roadblocks to finding solutions to this problem. Finally, students are instructed to identify possible solutions to overcome these roadblocks. If there is time, students can share their examples as a class or in small groups.

**Comments:** If students are finding this activity difficult, it might be helpful to first give them an example.

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**Lesson Title:** Be All That You Can (Adapted from Coombs-Richardson & Meisgeier, 1996) (M)

**Estimated Time:** 5-10 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** It is easy for students to blame external factors for their successes and failures in school. For example, if a student doesn't earn a good grade in class, he or she might blame the teacher for being a hard grader. This lesson is designed to help students recognize their responsibility for success.

**Procedures:** The teacher divides the class into small groups. Within their small groups, students work together to identify an experience in which a group member's or another person's persistence and effort resulted in success. Students are asked to recall the goal set by this individual, the problems he or she faced in achieving this goal, and specific examples of persistence that this person exhibited. After working within groups for 5-10 minutes, students share their examples with the class.

**Comments:** If students are finding this activity difficult, it might be helpful to first give them an example.

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**Lesson Title:** Understanding the "Big Picture" (Adapted from Meltzer, 2010) (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5-10 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** It is important for teachers to provide students with the broad goals for the year along with specific goals related to each unit. In doing so, students have a better understanding of the "big picture" and the way in which information is connected within a subject, which increases engagement and allows them to set personal goals more effectively. This activity is designed to communicate these goals to students and provide them with a framework for integrating new knowledge.

**Procedures:** At the beginning of the year, a teacher shares some broad goals for the year. For example, a math teacher might share that one of the goals for the year is to understand the place value system. Similarly, the teacher will share goals at the beginning of each unit to set the stage for what students will be expected to learn. After the teacher shares the intent of the course or unit, students can be encouraged to set individual goals for themselves after considering their interests and prior knowledge. One way to facilitate individual goal setting is through K-W-L where students identify what they know (K), what they want to learn (W) and what they did learn (L).

**Comments:** Students can benefit from a visual representation of curriculum content. Consider creating a diagram, map, or timeline to help students understand the purpose of a class and the way all the information in each unit is connected to this purpose.

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**Lesson Title:** Positive Coping Statements (Adapted from Goldstein, 1999) (M)

**Estimated Time:** 5-10 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Students are inevitably going to face stressful situations that they cannot avoid. Repeating positive statements before, during, and after these situations, however, can help students better cope. This activity is designed to teach students some of these positive coping statements and provide them with an opportunity to practice applying them with personally stressful situations.

**Procedures:** A teacher first asks students to think about stressful and unavoidable situations (e.g. upcoming math test, job interview, etc.). From the generated list, identify one situation and brainstorm positive coping statements that can be applied before (“I can deal with this”), during (“I’m doing my best”), and after (“I did a good job”) the situation. After practicing as a class, ask students to identify one stressful situation they will likely face in the next week along with positive coping statements they can use before, during, and after the event. Have students write down their statements on index cards to serve as reminders of what to say to themselves when they experience the upcoming stressful situation.

**Comments:** If students are struggling to come up with positive coping statements for the upcoming stressful situation that they identified, consider brainstorming ideas as a class or in small groups.

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**Lesson Title:** Rewarding Oneself (Adapted from Begun, 1995; Begun, 1996) (M)

**Estimated Time:** 5-10 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Students are often motivated by verbal praise from other people. However, people can be busy or easily distracted, and sometimes students’ efforts are overlooked by others. Therefore, it is important for students to be able to reinforce themselves to enhance their motivation. This activity is designed to help students identify ways to reward themselves for positive behavior.

**Procedures:** A teacher first explains that good behavior can often go unnoticed, but self-rewarding can help students stay motivated. The class then brainstorms some ways that students can reward themselves. Some examples for younger students might include a pat on the back or drawing an award to display. Some examples for older students might include texting a friend or going for a walk. After brainstorming some ideas, students are given some time to practice

applying this concept. Specifically, students are asked to write down a weekly goal and identify a reward that they will give themselves for reaching this goal.

**Comments:** It might be helpful for teachers to first model this skill to students before having them practice on their own. For example, if working with younger students, a teacher could give his/herself a pat on the back for “staying seated during circle time.” Similarly, if working with older students, a teacher might go outside for a break after completing some math problems.

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**Lesson Title:** Five Things I Like About Me (M & E)

**Grade Level:** Any

**Estimated Time:** 20-30 min.

**Goal/Basic Concept:** To encourage students to mindfully appreciate their positive traits and to support improved self-esteem.

**Anticipatory Set:** Staff member discusses some of the challenges to maintaining positive beliefs about ourselves, but the importance of doing so. Staff provides guidance on the difference between appreciating our strengths vs. bragging. Staff models/shares appropriate affirmation of positive traits in self and others. Expectations for purely positive feedback to self and others are reviewed.

**Procedures:** 1) Staff reviews guidelines reflected in the Anticipatory Set above, 2) Request students take several minutes to quietly reflect upon their own positive traits, actions, beliefs, values, and abilities, 3) Request students identify or list 5 things they like about themselves, 4) Again review expectations and guidance for positive feedback and compliments to others, 5) In pairs, small groups, or as a class share and discuss positives regarding self and others in the class, 6) Staff leads a follow-up discussion of reactions and feelings associated with this activity.

**Variations:** Consider having peers add one item to each person’s list.

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**Lesson Title:** Five Things I Like To Do (Adapted from Simon, Howe and Kirschenbaum, 1984) (M & E)

**Grade Level:** Any

**Estimated Time:** 30 min.

**Goal/Basic Concept:** To encourage students to reflect upon what they value and how they might prioritize their time.

**Anticipatory Set:** Staff challenges the students to reflect upon what we value and how that may change over time. Staff may share an activity they value, why, and how they prioritize their time and money to be able to do that activity.

**Procedures:** 1) Ask students to quietly reflect upon those activities they most like to do or most value, 2) Ask students to write down the five things they most like to do, 3) Prompt students to place a dollar sign (\$) next to activities that cost more than \$10.00 to do, and a check mark next to activities that are done with other people, 4) Students share their lists with others in pairs or small groups, 5) Staff leads a discussion of what our interests might say about us, our possible interest in doing things with others, and the importance of money to do what we wish to do.

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**Lesson Title:** The Brain 101 (Adapted from Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007) (M & E)

**Grade Level:** Any

**Estimated Time:** 10-20 min.

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Students' beliefs about learning and intelligence significantly impact their motivation and achievement. For example, students with "growth" mindsets understand that intelligence is malleable and will often put forth more effort at school compared to students who believe intelligence is fixed and cannot grow or change. Fortunately, research suggests students' mindsets can change from "fixed" to "growth" when they learn about the brain and its malleable nature (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007). This activity is designed to inform students about the brain and how learning occurs to promote "growth" mindsets, motivation, and achievement.

**Procedures:** The teacher briefly teaches the class about learning and how intelligence can grow. One way this information can be presented is by reading an article titled "You Can Grow Your Intelligence" (Blackwell), which can be downloaded at <http://www.mindsetworks.com/websitemedia/youcangrowyourintelligence.pdf>. This article discusses the changes that take place in the brain when learning occurs and compares the brain to a muscle that grows and develops with practice and learning. Furthermore, this article incorporates pictures and age-appropriate language for students of all ages to understand. Whether this article is used or not, the main takeaway to emphasize to students is that the brain makes new and stronger neural connections when students learn and regularly review information. In other words, the brain grows and students become smarter from effort and learning, rather than a fixed amount of intelligence determined at birth. After reviewing these main points, the teacher then leads the class in a group discussion. Students can be asked to think about skills they have mastered after practice (i.e. sports, musical instrument, etc.). Finally, students can be encouraged to think about how their brain and intelligence can grow in similar ways with "practice" or learning.

**Variations:** a) Consider having older students research this information independently and complete some type of project to share what they learned; b) Additional visuals might be

helpful to include when working with younger students. For example, consider using a model of the brain if one is available to further illustrate the brain's anatomy and the neural connections that are formed when new things are learned.

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**Lesson Title:** Imagining Future Self (Adapted from Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006) (M & E)

**Grade Level:** Any

**Estimated Time:** 10 min.

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Research suggests when students imagine their future selves and identify specific strategies that will help them become these people, they experience a greater sense of purpose and more positive behavioral and academic outcomes (Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006). This activity is designed to provide students with opportunities to reflect on who they want to be and support this development.

**Procedures:** A teacher provides students with some time during class to reflect on their future selves and develop a plan to become these people. Specific tasks will vary depending on the grade level and available time but can include a) finding a photograph of an adult that represents their future self; b) identifying role models and obstacles that can positively or negatively impact developing into the future self; c) creating a timeline for developing into the future self that includes potential obstacles that might arise; d) brainstorming action goals and specific strategies for attaining the future self. These topics might be briefly covered one day or they can be spread out over several weeks depending on the class structure and students' needs.

**Comments:** Consider regularly checking in with students on an individual basis throughout the school year to continue brainstorming strategies and evaluate progress towards their goals and development of their future selves.

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**Lesson Title:** Making a Positive Choice and Public Commitment (M)

**Estimated Time:** 5 -10 min.

**Grade Level:** Elementary/Middle

**Goal/Basic Concept:** There is some evidence that students who make a free choice (not coaxed, not promised reward) and a public commitment (states to others, or affirms by an action) are more likely to successfully follow through and complete a task. It is also theorized that making positive choices and commitments over time promotes internalized motivation. This activity encourages students to make mindful positive choices about their academic, behavioral and social responsibilities.

**Procedures:** Teacher anticipates an upcoming task or requirement (complete homework, complete an in-class assignment with quality effort, make a commitment to a behavioral or social expectation) and asks students for a sign of positive choice to complete that task or assignment.

Examples: a) everyone who is ready to spend 30 minutes of hard work on math, come to the front of the class, b) everyone who is ready to give their best effort in gym class, please stand, c) everyone who is willing to be kind to others today, come write your name on this poster board, or d) everyone who is willing write a today's positive goal for yourself; write the goal on one of these cards and post it on this corkboard.

**Variations:** This activity can be applied to any desired academic, behavioral or social task/goal. Repeat the activity with some regularity, using different modes of indicating positive choice (raising hand, standing up, coming to a part of the room, stating a commitment to others, writing a promise to their parent, posters, or written statements).

**Comments:** It is beneficial to initially seek commitment to tasks that are likely to generate near unanimous acceptance and commitment by the students. Be observant and cautious of students who routinely fail to make positive choices and commitments, this activity could reinforce their commitment to be negative or oppositional.

---

**Lesson Title:** Positive Comments Activity (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5-10 min.

**Grade Level:** Elementary/Middle

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher facilitates an activity in which students in the class make positive comments about their peers. This activity is designed to build students' self-esteem and enhance the relationships between students.

**Procedures:** Write down the students' names on separate pieces of paper. Place all of the names in a hat or other container available in the classroom. Set aside some time during class to have each student draw a name. Then ask each student to go around the room and make a positive comment about the person on the piece of paper.

**Variations:** Draw only one name on a specific day each week and then have every student in the class share one positive comment about the one student that was selected. Pick a different student each week.

**Comments:** If students are struggling to make positive comments, it might be helpful to model an example. For example, as the teacher, draw a name and say something positive about the student whose name is on the paper (e.g. "I love the way you helped ...."). It is important to set guidelines and provide coaching on how to stay positive in our comments in advance of this activity.

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**Lesson Title:** On-Task Timer and "Freeze" (M)

**Grade Level:** Elementary/Middle School

**Estimated Time:** Random brief intervals that last a few minutes

**Goal/Basic Concept:** This activity provides students with periodic rewards for being on task during class.

**Procedures:** The teacher explains the activity to the class: a) a timer is set for a random period of time that is unknown to students; b) when the timer goes off, all students are to “freeze” where they are; c) the teacher then walks around the room and gives a reward token to all students who are on task at the freeze moment; d) tokens can be exchanged at the end of the week for reward items.

**Variations:** a) The teacher may provide an immediate reward (candy or stickers) instead of utilizing a token economy; b) Rewards may also be provided on a team basis if everyone on a team is on task.

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**Lesson Title:** Effort Meter (M)

**Grade Level:** Elementary/Middle School

**Estimated Time:** 20 minutes to construct; 2 minutes per use

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Construct a meter (Likert type scaling) for routine use for students to self-assess their motivation. Ask students how hard they are going to try before completing an assignment or activity, and then ask them how hard they actually tried after the assignment or activity. This activity can be applied to all types of social, behavioral, academic, and wellness activities.

**Anticipatory Set:** Use this meter as a tool to assist students in making a conscious effort to try on assignments and class activities. It can also be used for setting a framework for discussions about what interferes with good motivation.

**Procedures:** a) Initially provide art materials to construct a personalized Effort Meter; b) Use the meter as part of class routines both before and after assignments.

**Variations:** a) Have a large scale in the front of the room to measure overall motivation for the entire class; b) Simply have students hold up 1 to 5 fingers to indicate their level of effort; c) Have students construct meters with graphic images to depict the level of overall effort; d) Provide premade meters to students who would have difficulty constructing their own.

**Comments:** Integrate the use of the meters into daily class routines.

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**Lesson Title:** Our Class Vision (E & M)

**Grade Level:** Elementary/Middle School (requires modification for upper grades)

**Estimated Time:** 30-45 minutes

**Goal/Basic Process:** Teacher leads the class in a discussion as to the type of class they would like to become.

**Procedures:** Similar to a district mission statement, the teacher assists the students in defining a vision for the class. This discussion would focus on basic values, behaviors, and priorities for the class. The class is then divided into teams to work on a written vision statement and design a graphic image depicting core values. Ideally, building-wide PBIS expectations are integrated into the written and graphic themes.

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**Lesson Title:** Icebreaker Activity (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5-10 min.

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher or other staff member facilitates an icebreaker activity at the beginning of class to encourage stronger interpersonal connections between students by helping them get to know each other better and increase their levels of enjoyment in the classroom.

**Procedures:** Fill a jar or other container in your classroom with short icebreaker activities that would be most appropriate given the age of the students in your class. Randomly select an icebreaker activity from the jar that can be completed at the beginning of class. A list of icebreakers can be found at the link below:

<http://www.icebreakers.ws/classroom-icebreakers>

**Variations:** Randomly select an icebreaker from the jar whenever there are a few minutes remaining at the end of a class.

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**Lesson Title:** SOC Model Reflection (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 15 min.

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher asks students to use the SOC model to set a goal, develop a strategy to meet the goal, and determine how obstacles will be handled. The teacher then reflects on the use of this model to assess the learning environment and make necessary changes.

**Procedures:** As part of an assignment or task, have students use the SOC model to set a goal, develop a strategy to meet the goal, and determine how obstacles will be handled. The SOC worksheet included in Appendix L can be used to facilitate this activity. Reflect on the use of the model and think about specific ways you can address any issues during the implementation of the strategies.

**Comments:** It might be helpful to model and demonstrate application of the SOC model before this activity and over the course of the school year.

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**Lesson Title:** Relevance Mapping (Middleton & Perks, 2014) (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher or other staff member has students complete a relevance map, which asks them to write down the importance of completing a specific activity they are doing in class. This activity can help students gain a greater sense of purpose by making their learning more meaningful.

**Procedures:** At the end of a lesson or activity, have students write down the name of the activity on a piece of paper. Then ask them to write down several reasons why this activity can be important or meaningful outside of the classroom. For example, if students are learning algebraic equations, students might write about the importance of knowing how to set up an algebraic equation to know how many items they can buy at the grocery store given a certain amount of money. Have students share their ideas with their peers so that they can hear about other ways in which this activity or lesson is important outside of class.

**Variations:** If you are short on time, have students share their thoughts aloud rather than writing them down first.

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**Lesson Title:** Reflection on Relevance of Work (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 minutes

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Students will identify how the academic content they are learning is relevant to their own futures. This is important, since sometimes students become disengaged when they think, "When will I ever use this information?"

**Procedures:** When teaching content that students appear to find irrelevant to their current lives, engage in discussion about how mastering the skill could help them in their future. For example, if students feel like algebra is not useful in their daily lives, engage them in discussion about how they might decide which cell phone contract is the best deal and help them see that algebra can be useful. Then, have them brainstorm about the opportunities algebra might open up later in their lives as well (e.g., if they want to pursue a career in math or science).

**Variations:** In addition to reflecting on the relevance of the content, you could also have

students create practice problems using situations relevant to their everyday experience.

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**Lesson Title:** Identifying Reasons for Failure (Adapted from Begun, 1996) (M)

**Estimated Time:** 5-10 min.

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Given failures are inevitable in school and life, it is important for students to be able to identify specific reasons for failure in order to learn from the experience and help reduce the likelihood of failures in the future. This activity is designed to help students identify these factors that cause failure and grow from the experience.

**Procedures:** A teacher first shares that everyone will experience failure at some point in their lives. The teacher further explains that failures can be a learning experience if students can identify the reasons for the failure in order to do better in the future. Students are then asked to write a brief paragraph describing how they came back from a specific failure after learning from their experience. Students can share their stories with the class or as a small group.

**Variations:** a) Instead of writing about coming back from a personal failure, students can also be given the opportunity to practice this skill through role-playing. Divide students in small groups and give each group a scenario to role play. The scenario should include a specific failure, and students should practice learning from the failure and improving their behavior in the future.

Examples of scenarios include:

- Failing to pass a grade
- Failing a major subject
- Being cut from sports team

**Comments:** It can be helpful for a staff member to initially share an experience from their own life to demonstrate the process.

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**Lesson Title:** Famous Failures (Adapted from Lin-Siegler, Ahn, Chen, Fang, & Luna-Lucero, 2016) (M)

**Estimated Time:** 10-20 min.

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Students can sometimes view intelligence as a fixed construct. In other words, they don't think that putting forth effort will lead to success. Therefore, it is important to challenge this mindset and remind students that learning outcomes can change based on increased effort. This activity is designed to promote growth mindsets among students which can increase their motivation to learn.

**Procedures:** Identify people who are well-known for their achievements but also experienced hardships in their professional and/or personal lives. Examples can include Albert Einstein, Marie

Curie, and Michael Faraday. Ask students to choose one of these individuals to research individually and identify specific failures he/she faced. As a class, share these failures and discuss how these individuals were able to overcome them and accomplish great things.

**Variations:** If time is limited, short biographies of these famous people can be provided to students instead of having them research this information on their own. Students can then identify failures or hardships from the given information to share with the class.

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**Lesson Title:** Looking Long-Term (Adapted from Goldstein, 1999) (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5-10 min.

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** If students are asked what they want to be when they grow up, they are typically able to respond fairly quickly. In other words, students can often identify long-term goals for themselves, but they might struggle with identifying the short-term goals that are necessary to reach them. This activity is designed to help students understand that long-term goals are not realized overnight and identify short-term goals that are necessary to reach first in order to achieve long-term goals.

**Procedures:** A teacher first explains that a goal is an end toward which one strives. The teacher then further explains to students that goals can be short-term or long-term and that a series of short-term goals can be helpful and often necessary to achieve long-term goals. Then students are divided into groups of four and given an index card that has the name of the President of the United States, president of a company, movie star, politician, or teacher. Ask students to identify the short-term goals that the person noted on the card might have established in order to reach a long-term goal. Ask students to share their examples with the class.

**Variations:** a) This activity can be modified if working with younger students by walking through an example together or having them draw pictures of short-term goals. b) Instead of practicing this skill with the index card activity, students can also be given the opportunity to role play. Ask three students to serve as panelists on a television show and have the rest of the class ask them questions about their career choices. The panelists can pretend to either be their future selves or a well-known person. Questions should target the small steps that these individuals made to reach long-term goals (adapted from Dugan, 1996).

**Comments:** Feel free to adapt the names of the people written on the index cards after considering students' interests and prior knowledge.

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**Lesson Title:** Not a Problem, an Opportunity (Adapted from Goldstein, 1999) (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5-10 min.

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** It is easy for students to feel defeated after facing a difficult situation. Without a positive perspective, students can struggle to cope and bounce back. This activity is designed to challenge students to view problem situations as opportunities for growth and provide them with practice in doing so.

**Procedures:** Students are divided into groups of four and given a copy of a newspaper article about people with problems (e.g. someone who committed a crime, someone famous experiencing drug addiction). Ask students to read the article and discuss the problem and how the person might have grown from the experience. Provide each group with the opportunity to share their thoughts with the rest of the class.

**Variations:** This activity can be modified if working with younger students by having them watch a video about someone who is experiencing a problem instead of reading an article. The same points can be discussed as a class or in small groups depending on the age of the students.

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**Lesson Title:** Valuing the Task (Adapted from Meltzer, 2010) (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5-10 min.

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** According to self-determination theory, individuals are motivated to behave and make decisions that are consistent with their values. Unfortunately, many students do not inherently value the work that they do in school. This activity is designed to help students find value in their schoolwork in order to increase their motivation and engagement.

**Procedures:** Ask students to share some of their personal values and long-term goals for themselves (e.g. working hard, going to college, etc.). As a class, brainstorm ways in which the classroom lessons and requirements can help them achieve a goal they value. For example, if students say that they want to go to college after they graduate from high school, discuss how studying for upcoming tests will help them earn good grades to be accepted into college.

**Variations:** Students can also learn to value tasks by listening to what their peers value. Consider implementing a peer-mentoring program that provides mentees with the opportunity to learn about what other students value about school and learning. If a mentorship program already exists in your building, consider incorporating some discussion prompts for the mentor to use to guide the conversation (“One thing that I really value in school is...”).

**Comments:** If there is a consistent pattern among students’ behaviors in the class, consider streamlining this activity by directly asking them how engaging in this behavior relates to their values. For example, if the majority of students are not completing their math homework, ask students to think about how specifically completing their math homework every night will help them achieve their long-term goals that they have identified for themselves.

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**Lesson Title:** Self-Fulfilling Prophecies (Adapted from Goldstein, 1997)

**Estimated Time:** 20 min.

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Expectations are unsurprisingly very powerful and can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies. In other words, a prediction might happen simply because people's expectations indirectly or directly impact their behaviors and the behaviors of those around them. This activity is designed to help students understand how stereotyping can negatively impact self-perceptions and behaviors and lead to self-fulfilling prophecies.

**Procedures:** Create a set of labels that might be used to describe students (i.e. athletic, smart, unmotivated, trustworthy, focused, organized, forgetful). Write each label on an index card and pass out one card to each student. Ask students to tape the label on their heads without reading it. Then provide the students with a general prompt to discuss (e.g. future goals). Give students about 10 minutes to walk around the room and talk to different people about the prompt. Ask students to treat each other as they are labeled during the discussion. For example, information might continuously be repeated to someone who is labeled "forgetful." After about 10 minutes, engage the students in a class discussion about the activity. Ask students to share how they felt during the exercise and how they were treated by other people. Explain how stereotypes can significantly impact a person's self-esteem and the behaviors of others even if the stereotype is completely false. Close the conversation by discussing how students can keep themselves from stereotyping other people.

**Variations:** This activity might be difficult for students with low self-esteem. If this is the case for several students in the class, consider asking for a small number of volunteers to complete the activity in front of the class, and the rest of the students can observe the interactions take place.

**Comments:** Make sure that these labels are randomly assigned and have nothing to do with students' actual attributes.

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**Lesson Title:** Academic Challenge

**Estimated Time:** 10-20 min.

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** This activity involves providing students with opportunities to face an academic challenge or complete a project, which supports both student engagement and academic motivations.

**Procedures:** Regularly provide students with opportunities to face an academic challenge in small groups. Randomly assign students to small teams and have them compete on a variety of academic challenges within a specified time limit. The challenges can be to solve a problem, build a project, find solutions to social problems, complete an artistic design, etc. Ideally, each opportunity is followed by a teacher lead discussion of tools (planning, problem solving), motivation (preparation, thoughts and feelings when facing a difficulty challenge), leadership

(appropriate leadership behavior), social interaction (manners, respect, cooperation), and appropriate behavior (taking turns, sharing materials).

**Variations:** Variations of the opportunities listed above can include game show style competitions.

**Comments:** Challenges are typically offered on a weekly basis.

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**Lesson Title:** Relevance Recording (Adapted from Hulleman & Harackiewicz, 2009) (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** Ongoing

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Encouraging students to recognize the relevance of what is being taught in the classroom has been shown to increase motivation and grades, especially for students who have low expectations for success (Hulleman & Harackiewicz, 2009). This activity gives students opportunities to reflect on how the class content connects with their lives and future goals in order to promote interest and effort in the class.

**Procedures:** Regularly provide students with some time (e.g. 10 minutes) throughout the semester to write about the relevance of the course content. Specifically, encourage them to write a brief essay about the usefulness of what they are learning in class. Although students in the original study wrote an essay every 3-4 weeks, a teacher might decide to give this assignment more or less frequently depending on the needs of the students and climate of the classroom.

**Variations:** If time is limited during the school day, consider having students complete the essay as a homework assignment.

## **Activities for Parents to Foster Student Motivation and Engagement**

**Lesson Title:** Teacher Consultation (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 10-20 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Before a parent can most effectively help increase motivation and engagement, it can be helpful to first consult with the student's teacher. Although parents usually know their children better than anyone else, the teacher can offer important information regarding engagement and motivation levels in the classroom. This information is important to understand to best address motivation and engagement concerns as a parent.

**Procedures:** Schedule a time to meet with your student's teacher to discuss motivation and engagement levels in the classroom. It is helpful to ask the teacher when your child is most engaged in school and when your child is least engaged in school. You can also ask about any other relevant concerns that the teacher has. Reflect on the teacher's feedback and use this information to help increase your student's engagement and motivation using some of the strategies below!

**Variations:** If it is difficult to schedule a time to meet in person, consider calling or emailing your student's teacher instead! Teachers' phone numbers and email addresses can typically be found on the school's website.

**Comments:** It can be very difficult to ask someone for feedback, especially when it comes to your child, so this activity can be very challenging. Try not to view any teacher concerns as an attack against your student. Remember that most teachers genuinely want to help students be more engaged and motivated learners!

---

**Lesson Title:** One Positive Comment (M)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Too often students simply respond with a one-word answer (i.e. "fine") when asked about their day at school. This activity seeks to encourage students to elaborate on their responses about their days and reflect on a positive event that happened at school.

**Procedures:** After your child gets home from school, ask them to share one positive thing that happened that day. They might share something very small (i.e. "Today I sat with my friend on the bus") or a huge accomplishment (i.e. "I *finally* earned an A on my math test!")-

the important thing is that they say something positive! Then engage in some conversation about this specific event along with anything else that happened that day.

**Variations:** Some students might not be ready to engage in conversation right when they get home from school, so consider asking them about their day along with one positive thing during dinner or later in the evening.

**Comments:** It might be nice to write down some of these positive events that happened on index cards and hang them up on a wall in the house. These cards are great visuals and reminders of why the student enjoys school!

---

**Lesson Title:** Great Expectations (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Although mornings can be busy trying to get everyone off to school, it can also be a great time to ask your child about what he/she is looking forward to that day at school. These conversations can help students get more excited about the school day and serve as great reminders of what they enjoy about school.

**Procedures:** Either before your child leaves for school or during the drive to school, ask him/her to name one thing that he/she is looking forward to that day at school. Responses will most likely vary quite a bit, but the important thing is that they are positive! Engage in conversation with your student about what he/she is looking forward to. For example, you might ask, "Why are you excited about that?" And be sure to follow-up with your student at the end of the day and ask about how it went!

**Variations:** Some students might take a while to wake up in the mornings and be too groggy to engage in conversation. If this is the case, consider asking him/her about something they are excited about the night before.

**Comments:** It might be nice to write down some of the things your student is looking forward to each day on index cards. These cards are helpful visuals for students that help them remember what they are excited about in school. The cards can also help remind you to ask your student about them at the end of the day.

---

**Lesson Title:** Display Student Work (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Student work is displayed either on the refrigerator or in some other place at home where other people can see it. This display recognizes students for their

efforts and achievements in school which can help increase their joy for learning and sense of purpose at school.

**Procedures:** As your student receives graded work back from the teacher at school, select some assignments, tests, and projects to display on the refrigerator or some other place at home where other people can regularly see it. Consider displaying work that received positive feedback from the teacher or required extensive effort from the student to complete. Explain to the student why you are displaying the work. For example, you might say, "I'm going to put your history test up on the refrigerator because you improved so much from your test last month!"

**Variations:** Instead of displaying work on the refrigerator, consider hanging a bulletin board on a wall in the house and attaching work there!

**Comments:** Consider displaying new work at the end of each week!

---

**Lesson Title:** Supplementing Class Content (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min. or more depending on the specific activity

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A parent supplements what is being covered in class while at home with videos, books, or even a trip somewhere in the local community. These supplemental activities can help increase students' interest in particular topics and their motivation to learn about them.

**Procedures:** Find out what your student is learning about in class either by talking to your child directly or reaching out to the teacher. Then think about ways that you can supplement the content at home. For example, if your student is reading a particular book in class, you might rent the movie to watch at home. Similarly, if your child is learning about specific animals in biology class, you could consider taking your child to the zoo one weekend.

**Comments:** Consider giving your child some different options and allowing him/her to choose an activity to complete at home that relates to the class material. Choice is always great to incorporate, and it can significantly increase students' engagement with the material.

---

**Lesson Title:** Verbal Recognition (M)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A parent verbally praises a student, which can enhance his/her

self-esteem and increase the likelihood that the student will want to engage in this positive behavior again in the future.

**Procedures:** Verbally praise your student for anything positive that you know he/she did at school. For example, if you see your child spending a lot of time studying, you might say, "Dana- great job studying for your math test all week!"

**Variations:** If your child is especially encouraged by notes, consider writing him/her a short note instead that recognizes and praises him/her for engaging in the positive behavior instead.

**Comments:** It is important to recognize a specific behavior when praising the student. In other words, try to avoid using vague or overgeneralized statements when praising the student (i.e. "You did well today, John!"). Also, try and praise the student immediately after you see him/her engaging in the positive behavior if it is possible.

---

**Lesson Title:** Ask Students about Their Futures (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A parent asks a student about future goals and helps him/her understand how they relate to what is being learned in school. By seeing a greater purpose behind the class material, students are more likely to be engaged and motivated to learn.

**Procedures:** Ask your student a question related to his/her future. The question and subsequent conversation will be very different depending on the age of the student. For instance, if you are speaking with a younger student, you could simply ask him/her what they want to be when they grow up. However, if you are talking to an older, high school student, for example, you might ask him/her about plans for after graduation.

**Comments:** To further increase students' sense of purpose in school, it is especially important to help them understand how their current work in school is directly related to the goals that they have for their futures. Ask about what they are learning in school and then help them understand how it relates to their future goals.

---

**Lesson Title:** Collect Student Work and Review Throughout the Year (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** It can be helpful and encouraging to review growth with a student. This activity involves collecting a student's work throughout the year and reviewing it periodically. Students are more likely to be engaged with school and learning when they

can see how their efforts are leading to improvements over time.

**Procedures:** When your student brings home graded assignments, projects, and tests, select some work to keep and then store it in a safe place. At the end of each month, review all of the previous assignments, projects, and tests with your student and specifically recognize him/her for any major or minor improvements. For example, you might say, "Great work this month, Rachel! You missed 7 questions on your math test at the beginning of the month, and you didn't miss any on your most recent math test. You improved so much!"

**Variations:** If your child might benefit from more frequent encouragement/recognition, Consider reviewing previous work every 2 weeks or at the end of each week.

**Comments:** It is important to recognize your child for something specific as you review previous work. Avoid vague statements such as, "You did so well this month!"

---

**Lesson Title:** Playing Teacher (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5-20 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Parents give students opportunities to pretend to be a teacher at home where they teach the material that is being covered in class. Changing up the roles that students normally play can help them be more engaged with what they are learning in school.

**Procedures:** When your child gets home from school, give him/her opportunities to pretend to be a teacher and teach you information from class. For example, have your child walk through a homework assignment that needs completed that night. Similarly, if your child has an upcoming test, have him/her design a practice test, administer it to you, and then review the answers together.

**Variations:** If you are short on time, consider asking other siblings to act as the students. Depending on the ages of your children, you can have them rotate roles so that each child has an opportunity to play the role of the teacher.

**Comments:** Consider asking your child's teacher for practice worksheets and other relevant resources that he/she can use as the teacher.

---

**Lesson Title:** Real World Applications (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** How often do we hear students complain, “When am I ever going to need to know how to do this?” It is easy for students to become discouraged and bored with what they are learning in school when they don’t see the purpose behind it. Parents can step in and share specific examples of how they use some of the material in their daily lives. By understanding the purpose behind what they are learning in school, students will be more likely to engage with the material and be motivated to learn it.

**Procedures:** As you hear about what your child is learning in school, think of ways that you use that particular concept in your own life and share your thoughts with your student. For example, if you have an older student who is learning algebraic equations, you might explain to him/her how you use an algebraic equation to set up a monthly budget. Similarly, if you have a younger student who is just learning how to read, you might explain to him/her that you need to be able to read to follow recipes while cooking.

**Comments:** Some concepts may be more challenging than others to relate to your daily life, especially as your child gets older and takes more advanced courses. However, you can still help make the learning meaningful and purposeful for your student by making broader connections. For example, if your student is taking calculus, although he/she might never use those specific math concepts in the future, you might explain that perseverance and working hard to master difficult concepts are both skills that will be helpful as an adult.

---

**Lesson Title:** Attend a School-Sponsored Activity (E)

**Estimated Time:** 30 minutes or more depending on specific activity

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Students might not realize all the fun and excitement they are missing out on by not participating in activities after school. Therefore, it can be helpful for parents to take their children to a school-sponsored activity where they can learn about some of the activities that are available to them through the school. Attending these events encourages students to participate in an activity that is interesting to them, which helps them better connect to the school and their peers.

**Procedures:** Find an upcoming school-sponsored event that your child will find interesting. For example, if your child enjoys sports, take them to a home football game. Similarly, if your child loves music, take them to the next band concert. Regardless of the activity that you choose, try and make it as exciting as possible for the student and encourage him/her to consider participating in this event in the future.

**Variations:** Elementary schools might not offer as many activities after school. However, this activity can still be helpful by showing students what will be available to them in the future.

**Comments:** Check out the school’s website to find upcoming activities and events! Most

schools will have them posted on their homepage.

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**Lesson Title:** Teacher Appreciation Week (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A parent encourages a child to write a letter or create a small homemade gift for an adult at school during Teacher Appreciation Week. This activity can strengthen the connection between the student and an adult at the school, which can help make school a more enjoyable place to be for the student.

**Procedures:** During Teacher Appreciation Week, ask your child to write an encouraging letter or create a small homemade gift (i.e. picture frame, candle, bracelet, etc.) for an adult at school. It doesn't have to be anything too elaborate or fancy- it's just supposed to be a small gesture to help make the adult feel special and more connected to the student.

**Variations:** Consider having your child write a letter or make a small gift at the end of the school year or for his/her teacher's birthday.

**Comments:** Teacher Appreciation Week is the first full week in May of each year!

---

**Lesson Title:** Community Role Models (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Parents point out role models within the local community who demonstrate high levels of motivation, engagement, and hard work. These individuals are excellent examples for students to look up to and follow when they face various challenges in school.

**Procedures:** Identify role models within your community who demonstrate motivation, engagement, and hard work that your child might find interesting. For example, if your child is interested in sports, you might research athletes on local sports teams who have overcome significant adversity to get to where he/she is today. Casually talk about these individuals with your student and how their motivation and hard work helped them achieve their goals.

**Variations:** Consider finding a way for your child to see or meet this role model!

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**Lesson Title:** Model Overcoming Obstacles (M)

**Estimated Time:** 15 minutes or more depending on the specific activity

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Parents model for their children how to overcome obstacles by selecting a challenging task to do together, verbalizing problem-solving, and persevering to accomplish the task. This activity helps students learn how to maintain motivation and engagement during difficult tasks and gives them a helpful example to remember and follow in their daily lives.

**Procedures:** Select a challenging task to do with your child at home. For example, you might find a difficult puzzle to complete together. As you complete the task, verbalize how you solve the problem (i.e. locate border pieces, sort the other pieces by similar colors, use the picture on the box as a guide, etc.). Continue working on the task until you successfully complete it together.

**Comments:** Be sure to select a task that is both challenging and able to be done within a reasonable amount of time. This can be a tricky balance to find, but it is incredibly important for the student to view it as a difficult task and see it through to completion.

---

**Lesson Title:** PBIS Expectations (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Students can be more engaged and motivated to behave appropriately when there are consistent expectations of them at school and at home. Therefore, it can be helpful for parents to ask their children about their school's PBIS expectations, discuss what these expectations would look like at home, and reinforce these behaviors when they are seen at home.

**Procedures:** At the beginning of the school year, ask your child about his/her school's PBIS expectations and what these expectations would look like at home. For example, if "Be Responsible" is a PBIS expectation at school, you might talk about how this might involve cleaning the bedroom. Then reinforce these behaviors when they are seen at home. For instance, if you see your child cleaning his/her room you might reinforce this behavior with an extra five minutes on the computer.

**Comments:** To further increase the consistency between expectations at home and school, consider also reaching out to your child's teacher to better understand these expectations along with the reinforcement system that is used in the classroom.

---

**Lesson Title:** Contagious Enthusiasm (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Children feed off the energy from their parents. Thus, if parents are enthusiastic about learning and school, students are more likely to be excited and motivated to learn! This activity involves making brief, positive statements about the upcoming school day to help increase students' excitement and engagement levels for the day.

**Procedures:** Before your child leaves for school, think of something enthusiastic you can say to him/her. For example, you might say, "Today is going to be a great day at school!"

**Variations:** If you do not typically see your student in the morning before he/she leaves for school, consider leaving them a note instead.

**Comments:** It is important for your comments to be genuine. If your child senses any sarcasm or insincerity in your voice, he/she will be less likely to buy into what you are saying. Genuine statements that communicate authentic excitement will be most effective at increasing engagement and motivation among students.

---

**Lesson Title:** Host a Play Date (E)

**Estimated Time:** 30 min.

**Grade Level:** Elementary School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A parent hosts a play date for a group of students outside of school. This gives students an opportunity to build stronger relationships with their peers, which can make school a more enjoyable place for them to be and subsequently increase engagement and motivation.

**Procedures:** Reach out to another parent (or group of parents) from school and organize a play date at your house for the students. Think of a date and time that is most convenient for you. Consider organizing some games for the students to play if they need some structure or just give them the time to play as they wish. It doesn't really matter what you do exactly- it's just important that the students have time to build relationships with their peers!

**Variations:** Instead of inviting people over to your house, you can organize a quick trip somewhere else instead. For instance, consider taking a group of students to go get some ice cream or to play at a local park.

**Comments:** It can be difficult to coordinate schedules, but consider hosting a play date every month!

---

**Lesson Title:** Weekly Newsletter (E)

**Estimated Time:** 15 min.

**Grade Level:** Elementary/Middle School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Students record what they learned at school in a weekly newsletter that is displayed somewhere at home and shared with other family members and friends. This can help students be more engaged and motivated at school as they think about what they are learning in a new, fun way.

**Procedures:** Create a simple newsletter template for your child to fill out at home each week. For example, the newsletter might have different sections for the student to report what he/she learned that week, something funny that happened at school, and a favorite part of the week. Space can also be provided for the student to draw some pictures next to each description. After the student finishes the newsletter, display it somewhere in the house and consider sharing it with family and friends!

**Variations:** a) For children who strongly dislike writing, consider allowing them to type up the newsletter on a computer or having them tell you what to write. b) Consider asking the teacher if your child can bring a camera to school to take pictures for the newsletter.

**Comments:** Be creative with your newsletter template! Make it fun for them to help them get excited about what they are doing in school!

---

**Lesson Title:** Encouraging Note (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Between all of the projects, assignments, and tests, some weeks can be incredibly stressful for students. Fortunately, a little note of encouragement can make a big difference during these tough weeks and help foster higher levels of engagement and motivation!

**Procedures:** During a busy and stressful week for your student, write them a small note of encouragement to help them get through the week and stay fully engaged the whole time. For example, you might write, "You studied so hard for your spelling test today. You are going to do so well!" Consider leaving the note in a folder or lunchbox for your child to find at school.

**Variations:** If you think that your child might be easily embarrassed by finding a note at school, you can leave the note somewhere for them to find at home or verbally encourage them before school.

**Comments:** Try and think of an encouraging note to write once a week!

---

**Lesson Title:** Homework Helper (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** After a long day at school, homework is typically the last thing that students want to do at night. Parents can help them stay fully engaged with their assignments by encouraging them to take small breaks throughout the night.

**Procedures:** When your child is working on homework at night, think about fun ways to give him/her short breaks that last about a few minutes. Whatever you choose will obviously depend on your specific child and what he/she finds relaxing, but some examples include fixing up a fun snack to enjoy together, taking a quick walk around the block, or watching a short YouTube video. Taking these short breaks from homework can help prevent burnout and keep students fully engaged for longer periods of time.

**Comments:** The age and specific needs of the child will help determine how often you should encourage him/her to take a break. Consider taking a break every 30 minutes and then adjusting this time as necessary.

---

**Lesson Title:** Review Games (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5-20 min.

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Parents create fun review games for students to play as they study for upcoming tests. These games give students something new and different to do as they review the material, which can help keep them fully engaged while studying.

**Procedures:** When your child has an upcoming test, think about a review game that you can create and play together to help him/her study the material. The game doesn't have to be anything fancy, and there are several websites that post great game ideas (i.e. [http://www.educationworld.com/a\\_lesson/lesson/lesson306.shtml](http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson306.shtml)). Some examples include Jeopardy and matching games!

**Variations:** Consider inviting over some other students to play the review game too. This will make the games more engaging and also help students build relationships with each other outside of school.

**Comments:** Consider asking your child's teacher for review questions to incorporate into your game. This will make it easier for you to create the game and ensures that it specifically targets the information the teacher wants the students to know.

---

**Lesson Title:** Encouraging Student Involvement (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A parent encourages a student to join an after-school club or sport, which can increase a student's level of enjoyment in school, help him/her feel more connected to the school and other students, and help him/her establish a sense of purpose at school.

**Procedures:** If your child is not involved with school-related activities, encourage him/her to join an after-school club or sport that is available at your child's school. For example, you might say, "I know how much you enjoy playing soccer, Sarah. I think you would really enjoy playing on your school's soccer team!"

**Comments:** Parents can also consider setting aside some time at home to briefly talk about some of the clubs and sports offered at their students' schools to help them learn about the activities available to them and choose something that sounds interesting to them!

---

**Lesson Title:** Give Students Choices (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** With all of the homework and studying that needs completed each night, students can easily become frustrated and feel as if they do not have a say in their learning. Parents are able to restore their sense of control by giving students choices when working at home in order to increase their joy for learning, sense of purpose at school, and motivation to learn.

**Procedures:** Before asking your child to complete homework assignments after school, consider giving him/her choices regarding where, when, and how they are completed. For example, you might ask your child to decide if he/she wants to work on a homework assignment at the kitchen table or outside on the front porch. Similarly, you might ask your child if he/she wants to complete a homework assignment before or after dinner.

**Comments:** Some students will need much more structure than others and might not be able to be given as many choices. However, incorporating student choice whenever possible is going to help improve student engagement. There isn't necessarily a magic number regarding the number of choices that should be provided to students. However, it is important to offer choices that are meaningful to students and restore a sense of control.

---

**Lesson Title:** SOC Model Reflection (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Parents ask their students to use the SOC model to set a goal, develop a strategy to meet the goal, and determine how obstacles will be handled. This activity assists in the development of the student's self-regulation skills and helps parents understand how they can help support their children in this process.

**Procedures:** While having a conversation with your child, have him/her use the SOC model to set a goal, develop a strategy to meet the goal, and determine how obstacles will be handled. Reflect on the use of the model and think about specific ways you can help your child develop and reach his/her goals.

**Comments:** It might be helpful to ask students to answer these questions multiple times throughout the school year (i.e. every 3-4 months) to provide continuous support as they learn how to regulate their own learning.

## **Basic Activities for Staff to Foster Staff Motivation and Engagement**

**Lesson Title:** Encourage a Colleague

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher or other staff member enhances staff connectedness within the school by writing an encouraging note to a colleague.

**Procedures:** Put a note in a colleague's mailbox that recognizes or thanks him/her for something positive he/she has recently done. For example, if you notice a colleague spending extra time tutoring a student after school, you could write a note that says, "I just wanted to thank you for spending the extra time after school helping Rachel with her math assignment!"

**Variations:** a) Leave the note on the colleague's desk in his/her classroom b) Recognize the colleague in person if you see him/her during the school day by saying something similar to what you would write in a note

**Comments:** Try to be as specific as possible when recognizing your colleague, avoiding vague statements such as "Great job!"

---

**Lesson Title:** Talking with an Unfamiliar Colleague

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher or other staff member talks with an unfamiliar colleague to build staff connectedness in the school.

**Procedures:** Start a conversation with a colleague who you do not know very well. For example, think about a specific way to compliment your colleague or ask about how his/her day has been going so far to initiate a casual conversation.

**Comments:** Challenge yourself to talk to someone new once a week!

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**Lesson Title:** An Act of Kindness for a Colleague

**Estimated Time:** 5 minutes or more depending on specific act

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher or other staff member does something kind for a colleague to enhance staff connectedness.

**Procedures:** Complete an act of kindness for a colleague. For example, pick up an extra cup

of coffee on your way to work, or offer to fill in and complete his/her cafeteria duty for a day!

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**Lesson Title:** Monthly Potluck Lunch  
**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Add a little more excitement to the teachers' lounge by sharing some favorite dishes for a monthly potluck lunch. This is a delicious way to enhance staff connectedness and improve the overall atmosphere in the building.

**Procedures:** Create a sign-up sheet where staff can sign up to bring a dish to share during lunch on a designated day each month. Have staff bring their dishes to the teachers' lounge where everyone can enjoy during their lunch break.

**Comments:** Given the large number of people working in the building, it might be helpful to create a rotation so that different people bring in food each month. For example, each grade level might be assigned a different month to sign up to bring in something to share.

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**Lesson Title:** PBIS Raffle  
**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Since students are rewarded for engaging in PBIS, staff should also be recognized in a similar way. This will enhance staff engagement with these practices, which will in turn, lead to more positive outcomes for students and a better overall climate in the building.

**Procedures:** Design and print out tickets that staff members can give each other when they observe someone engaging in effective PBIS practices (e.g. posting expectations in their classroom, reinforcing a student for positive behavior, etc.). Then organize a monthly prize drawing and randomly pull a select number of tickets. Identify a prize that is rewarding for those working in the building to give to the winners.

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**Lesson Title:** Shout Out Board  
**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Put a shout out board in the teachers' lounge where staff members can recognize and encourage each other during the day. These comments can enhance staff connectedness and increase their enjoyment for working in the building.

**Procedures:** Hang a bulletin board in the teachers' lounge and set a stack of index cards nearby. Encourage staff members to write positive comments to each other on the index card and attach them to the bulletin board. Comments can be left anonymously if people prefer.

**Variations:** Consider putting all of the index cards into a monthly drawing and providing some type of reward to cards that are randomly pulled.

**Comments:** Try and make the bulletin board and materials as aesthetically pleasing as possible. For example, provide colored index cards and fun writing utensils for staff members to use. This will encourage participation even more.

## Everyday Practices to Support Motivation and Engagement in the Classroom

**Lesson Title:** Engaging in a Conversation about a Student's Weekend Plans (E & M)

**Grade Level:** Any

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher or other staff member engages in a conversation about students' upcoming weekend plans to facilitate stronger relationships between staff and students within the school.

**Procedures:** Before leaving school for the weekend, set aside a few minutes to ask one student about her/his upcoming weekend plans. When you return to school on Monday, specifically follow-up with that student about the plans that she/he shared. For example, if a student tells you that she will be playing in a soccer game on Saturday, you can then ask the student how the game went, when you see her/him on Monday morning.

**Comments:** If you think that it is going to be difficult to remember to follow-up with this student on Monday morning, consider writing yourself a short reminder note and keeping it on your desk!

**Variation:** Discuss something the student would like to get done, or a social effort they might make during the upcoming weekend.

---

**Lesson Title:** Morning Greetings (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5-10 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher or other staff member greets students outside the front doors before school starts to increase teacher engagement with students, facilitate stronger relationships between staff and students, and help students feel more connected to an adult at school.

**Procedures:** In the morning, stand outside the front doors and greet students by name as they arrive. A simple statement like, "Hey Justin- it's great to see you today!" can help students feel significantly more connected and excited about being at school!

**Variations:** You can also stand outside the front doors at the end of the day and recognize students by name as they leave for the day, or do the same activity at your classroom door.

**Comments:** To help students feel the most connected, it is important to be genuine in your greetings and to recognize them by their names. You might also consider initiating very brief conversations with students if there is time before class starts.

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**Lesson Title:** Incorporating Students' Interests in Class (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher incorporates students' interests into the lesson plans or class assignment to increase their joy for learning and engagement in the classroom.

**Procedures:** Design an assignment where students can choose a topic based on their own personal interests. For instance, if students are required to write a 5-paragraph paper, allow students to write about something they are enthusiastic and passionate about.

**Variations:** Incorporate students' interests (i.e. favorite characters, activities, etc.) when designing test questions or projects.

**Comments:** It might take some time before you are able to create an assignment that incorporates students' interests, as it is important to spend some time getting to know them first and understand what their interests are!

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**Lesson Title:** Encouraging Comments on Homework (M)

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher writes an encouraging comment on a student's homework assignment while grading in order to build the student's self-esteem and increase his/her joy for learning.

**Procedures:** When grading a homework assignment, a teacher makes an effort to write at least one encouraging comment on a student's homework assignment. For instance, the teacher could write, "You have done such a great job incorporating transition words at the beginning of your paragraphs, Jen!"

**Comments:** It is important to make the encouraging comment as specific as possible. It can also be helpful to write the comment on the front page of the homework assignment to increase the likelihood that the student will see it.

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**Lesson Title:** Seek New Information about a Student (E)

**Estimated Time:** 10 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** To encourage students to interact with other students with whom they may not typically interact. Enhance engagement in the school, build stronger relationships between students, and help students feel more connected to the school and the adults at the school.

**Procedures:** Teacher or other staff randomly assigns students to paired groupings. Each student is directed share something the other student might not know about them. Provide enough time for each student in the pair to share something new and provide details. Following the pair interactions, the teacher asks some students to volunteer details of something interesting they heard.

**Variations:**

A) Use the activity as a stimulus to discussing how open we decide to be with others. Issues of privacy, trust, respect for individual differences, or the risks associated with social media can be integrated into the discussion. B) A teacher or another staff member seeks to learn something new about a student and when appropriate shares with the class.

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**Lesson Title:** Incorporate Students' Favorite Characters in a Lesson (E)

**Grade Level:** Any

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher incorporates students' favorite characters within a lesson to facilitate greater teacher engagement in the school and increase students' joy of learning.

**Procedures:** Set aside a few minutes to informally ask students about their favorite characters in popular movies or TV shows. Then incorporate these characters into an upcoming lesson. For example, you can include these characters when creating story problems on math assignments.

**Variations:** You can also include these characters on problems on tests.

**Comments:** Students likely have different favorite characters, so try to incorporate several.

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**Lesson Title:** Sitting with Students at Lunch (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher or other staff member spends a few minutes sitting with some students during lunch to increase both teacher engagement within the school and student connectedness to an adult at the school.

**Procedures:** Go to the cafeteria if you have some free time during your students' lunch period. Find a group of students to sit with and spend a few minutes talking with them. For instance, you can ask them about how their days have been doing so far or about their plans for after school.

**Variations:** If you have a little more time during the lunch period, consider inviting a group of students to have lunch with you in the classroom in order to get to know them even better.

**Comments:** It can be especially helpful to spend time with students who you might not know as well to help them feel more connected to an adult at school!

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**Lesson Title:** Call Home and Make a Positive Comment (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher or another staff member calls a student's parent to share something positive that the student did that day. This phone call helps build a student's self-esteem and strengthen the relationships between the staff and parents.

**Procedures:** After observing a student engage in a positive behavior during the school day, call home and share with the student's parent. For instance, if you watch a student invite a new student to sit with her at lunch, call home and tell the student's parent about her willingness to include others at lunch.

**Variations:** If it is difficult to get a hold of a student's parent, you can send a note home with the student to give to the parent instead.

**Comments:** Try and be as specific as possible when sharing information with the student's parent.

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**Lesson Title:** Plan a Surprise (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5-60 minutes depending on the specific surprise

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher plans a small surprise for students to increase

engagement and joy for learning.

**Procedures:** Plan a small surprise for the students in your class. The specific surprise will obviously depend on the students in your class and the grade level you serve, but some examples can include bringing in ice cream for them at the end of the week or having class outdoors if the weather is nice.

**Comments:** If possible, try and plan a different surprise for students each month.

**Variation:** Have a reward/treat on hand and when you notice a particular moment of effort/cooperation/kindness. Stop everything and break out the reward.

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**Lesson Title:** Incorporate Student Choice (M & E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher or other staff member gives students choices when working in class to increase their joy for learning and sense of purpose at school.

**Procedures:** When designing a lesson plan, consider ways to give students choices regarding how to complete the assignment. For instance, you might give them an option to complete an assignment individually or as a group, or you might allow them to either write or draw their response to a question.

**Comments:** There isn't necessarily a magic number regarding the number of choices that should be provided to students. However, it is important to offer choices that are meaningful and provide equal opportunities for students to demonstrate learning.

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**Lesson Title:** Change in Scenery (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Learning in the same classroom at school each day can become very monotonous for students and decrease their engagement and motivation during class. Teachers can provide opportunities for students to experience a change in scenery in order to help them stay fully engaged with their learning and interested in the class content.

**Procedures:** Think of a location that can be used during class time, and conduct class in this space for the day. For instance, if the weather is nice, consider having class outside. If an outdoor space is not available, consider switching classrooms with another teacher or using another open location in the building (i.e. gymnasium, cafeteria, etc.).

**Comments:** Try and change up the location once a month to keep students excited and interested in coming to class to learn!

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**Lesson Title:** Immediate Polling (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5-10 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Immediate polling is a technique that provides all students with an opportunity to respond to each question. This interactive teaching tool promotes active learning and engagement because students get to use contemporary technology in the classroom. In addition, it can provide teachers with immediate feedback from students, while also allowing them to receive student feedback in a variety of ways (e.g., multiple choice, short answer, true/false).

**Procedures:** A teacher creates a set of questions to present to students who then have the opportunity to respond with clickers or some other form of technology. Depending on students' responses, the teacher can spend time correcting any misunderstandings that they have related to the class content.

**Variations:** If technology is not available, a teacher can have students write their responses down on paper or dry-erase-board and hold up their answers.

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**Lesson Title:** Response Cards (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5-10 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Response cards involve giving all students opportunities to respond to a teacher's question by holding up the correct response card. This activity encourages students to direct their attention to the lesson and stay engaged in what is being taught so that they are able to respond appropriately after a question is asked. Teachers can also provide immediate feedback to students or the whole class when their answers are incorrect.

**Procedures:** A teacher prints out responses (e.g., true, false, yes, no, etc.) on cards and hands them out to students. At different points in the lesson, the teacher can ask questions and have the students hold up the card that corresponds with the correct answer. The teacher can then spend time reviewing information if students answer incorrectly.

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**Lesson Title:** Guided Notes (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5-10 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** This practice involves presenting notes about the lesson to students and leaving blank spaces for them to write in answers and other responses that correspond with the lesson. This technique provides students with structure that helps them engage with and retain the most important parts of the lesson.

**Procedures:** This practice can be implemented in several ways. For example, the blank spaces within the notes can be used to answer brief questions with one- or two-word answers or provide more extended responses such as identifying the main idea of a passage. Teachers can also provide pretest and posttest notes so that students can see what they know before and after learning a passage. Alternatively, teachers can have students fill out the notes as they complete the lesson or have students work in small groups.

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**Lesson Title:** Choral Responding (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Any

**Goal/Basic Concept:** Choral responding can be useful for encouraging all students to respond because it requires all students to respond to a teacher's prompt or question in unison. This practice also provides teachers with the opportunity to receive immediate feedback, which helps them determine who understands the material and who might need additional support.

**Procedures:** A teacher presents a question to the class and asks all students to answer the question aloud following the prompt. Depending on students' responses, the teacher can correct any misunderstandings that students might have regarding class content.

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**Lesson Title:** Involvement During Recess (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Elementary School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher or other staff member plays games with students during recess to increase levels of teacher engagement with students in the school and help students feel more connected to an adult at the school. Playground activities are also an excellent opportunity to help students practice basic social skills (e.g. taking turns, giving a compliment, including others, etc.)

**Procedures:** Spend a few minutes playing a game with some students during their recess. For example, if there is a group of students playing soccer, consider joining the game. Or, if there is a group of students talking together in a group, consider talking with them for a few minutes with the above stated goals in mind.

**Variation:** Involve several teachers and use this involvement as a reinforcement for a class reaching an academic or behavioral goal.

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**Lesson Title:** Encourage Student Involvement (E)

**Estimated Time:** 5 min.

**Grade Level:** Middle/High School

**Goal/Basic Concept:** A teacher or other staff member encourages a student to join an after-school club or sport, which can increase his or her level of enjoyment in school, build self-esteem, increase connectedness to the school and other students, and help establish a sense of purpose at school.

**Procedures:** At some point during the school day, find a student who is not involved with school-related activities and encourage him/her to join an after-school club or sport. For example, you might approach a student during recess and say, "You made some awesome shots while playing basketball at recess today, Amanda! You should think about trying out for the basketball team this year!"

**Variations:** a) Encourage other students who are already involved with an after-school club or sport to reach out and invite other students to participate b) Consider setting aside some time during class to briefly talk about some of the clubs and sports offered at the school to help students learn about the activities available to them after school

**Comments:** It can be helpful to have a general idea of the student's interests in order to talk about specific sports or clubs that might appeal to him/her more than others!

## References

Personal goal setting- (Harris & Graham, 1996).  
Think-Pair-Share (Lyman, 1981)  
Affirmation Journal (Adapted from Coombs-Richardson & Meisgeier, 1996)  
Positive Coping Statements (Adapted from Goldstein, 1999)  
Rewarding Oneself (Adapted from Begun, 1995; Begun, 1996)  
Five Things I Like To Do (Adapted from Simon, Howe and Kirschenbaum, 1984) (M & E)  
Self-Fulfilling Prophecies (Adapted from Goldstein, 1997)  
Valuing the Task (Adapted from Meltzer, 2010)  
Entrance Tickets (Brookhart, 2010)  
Fist-To-Five (Fletcher, 2002)  
Relevance Recording (Adapted from Hulleman & Harackiewicz, 2009)  
Famous Failures (Adapted from Lin-Siegler, Ahn, Chen, Fang, & Luna-Lucero, 2016)

**Commented [NALD1]:** Rachel- Please try to find the full references for each of these. I will talk to you about where they came from.