
Session #11

The Classroom of Choice: Need-Fulfilling Instruction

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By watching the video for this session and completing this session's learning activities, you will:

- Learn how using knowledge of basic needs can aid in making your lesson more engaging.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how to adapt lessons and activities to make them more need fulfilling.
- Develop a lesson directed toward meeting one or more of your students' basic needs.
- Analyze the video examples in terms of concepts presented in the text and supplemental readings.
- Apply what you have learned in your own teaching situation or complete an alternative application assignment.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of your application experience.

PREPARATION:

In order to focus your thinking as you begin this session, please read the following article.

Relationship-Driven Teaching

Spence Rogers and Lisa Renard

*By focusing on fulfilling fundamental emotional needs,
teachers can enhance students' motivation to learn.*

"Teaching is the greatest job on earth," proclaims Dan Langendorfer, a 16-year classroom veteran. The key to maintaining his motivation, he says, is finding the joy in helping students succeed: "As teachers, we feel successful if the kids are successful. So, anything I do to make this happen makes me a happier person."

What works for Dan as an adult also works for students. When our psychological needs are met, we want to perform to the best of our ability

in order to experience positive feelings. When Dan discusses student achievement, he isn't talking about lowering standards to inflate artificial feelings of success. He is talking about using an effective framework to help kids succeed while meeting high standards.

Fostering positive feelings as a motivational strategy in the classroom requires creating a learning context that enables students to value the activities enough to want to learn and to achieve. Learning occurs only when what is being presented is meaningful enough to the student that he or she decides to actively engage in the learning experience (Caine & Caine, 1994). People often judge an activity as meaningful when it satisfies deep-rooted human emotional needs (Glasser, 1998). When those needs are met in the classroom, students want to learn and to achieve to the highest standards.

Increased Motivation and Learning

Our relationship-centered framework for teaching focuses on fulfilling students' fundamental emotional needs to ensure that they want to learn what we teach. This framework makes sense when we consider neuroscience. Relationships in the classroom have an impact on achievement because "the brain does not naturally separate emotions from cognition, either anatomically or perceptually" (Caine & Caine, 1994). When we develop one-on-one relationship skills—becoming aware of and tending to the emotional needs of students—we enter the realm of learning as well. If learning in school meets students' emotional needs, they will more likely engage in the learning. School becomes a motivating place to be (Rogers, Ludington, & Graham, 1998).

Students are motivated when they believe that teachers treat them like people and care about them personally and educationally. When teachers apply in the classroom their knowledge of human needs, amazing things happen. These teachers treat students with respect; offer meaningful, significant choices; create valuable, fun, or interesting learning opportunities; and foster relationships that help students see teachers as teachers and not as dictators, judges, juries, or enemies. The teacher and the students collaborate for high-quality learning, and inappropriate behavior becomes a non-issue.

Given the individual nature of psychological needs, relationship-centered teaching can be overwhelming, especially with the pressure from standards and high-stake tests. What teachers need is a framework for real learning to occur.

Underlying Principles

Two principles support the framework for enhancing intrinsic motivation in classrooms. The first is Stephen Covey's concept of "seeking first to

understand" (Covey, 1989). How many times have we wondered why we can't get students to understand us? In comparison, how many times have we attempted to truly understand our students and what they find motivating? Covey says that to develop positive relationships, we need to understand other people before we can expect them to understand us. This concept is pivotal to tapping into students' intrinsic motivation to learn. We must understand the needs and the beliefs of our students as they are, not as we think that they ought to be.

The second underlying principle involves managing the learning context, not the learners. When we establish conditions likely to foster intrinsic commitment to quality rather than seek to dominate or control students, students will want to do what needs to be done (Rogers, Ludington, & Graham, 1998). A teacher who operates from understanding and shifts from managing students to managing context has the potential to elicit high levels of achievement while promoting positive self-monitoring behavior in students.

The Framework

Six standards undergird relationship-centered teaching and build a motivating learning context (Rogers, Ludington, & Graham, 1998). When these standards are met, students' core needs are met. Students want to learn, and they self-monitor their behavior.

Standard 1: Safe. For students to place a priority on learning, they must feel safe from both physical danger and embarrassment. Fear of physical harm and fear of embarrassment often have the same effect. Students should not have to worry that a lack of skills or knowledge or an embarrassing fact about their private lives might be exposed.

Eric Jensen (1998) affirms the brain-compatible necessity of this standard by stating that learning depends on "removing threat." But more important, teachers must actively create conditions for students to feel safe, such as eliminating all sarcasm and any perceptions of put-downs in the classroom. What the teacher may intend as innocent fun, a student could easily perceive as hurtful, unnecessary, and inappropriate criticism.

It is essential to ensure that students believe that taking learning risks is acceptable. We teachers don't penalize ourselves for trying varying approaches to teaching, nor do we let ourselves off the hook when our ideas fail—we simply reteach until we are successful. Feeling safe with learning risks is important for students and their motivation. Rather than excuse or punish their less-than-successful efforts, we can hold students accountable for the quality of their work while promoting innovation.

Using a "dress rehearsal" concept for setting due dates encourages students to take learning risks. If a student's work is high quality at the dress rehearsal date, he or she has no further obligation. Otherwise, the

student continues to refine the work with the teacher's support until the final due date.

Standard 2: Valuable. Students are more apt to engage fully and produce quality work if they perceive that what they are doing has value. That is, it must fill a need; solve a problem; or be interesting, fun, or enjoyable. Several strategies help students feel that the classroom is a valuable place to be:

- Ask students to find and share ways that the content is used outside of school.
- Embed content in activities that students find personally interesting and, if possible, that are also outside-of-school, real-world applications.
- Brainstorm ways to make learning the content pleasant and unique.
- Find an audience for the students' efforts. Give them opportunities to publish their writing, perform before another class, present work to parents in student-led conferences, share thinking with partners or groups, and post work in and around the school.

Standard 3: Successful. To maintain intrinsic motivation, students need evidence of success in achieving either mastery or significant progress toward mastery. Make learning activities challenging for each student and give regular and meaningful evidence of progress. For example, students could chart their progress; use learning logs to reflect on what they can do now but couldn't do before the lesson; or post goals at the beginning of a unit, review those goals periodically to monitor success, and set new goals when the first are accomplished.

Mastery learning, an idea formalized by Benjamin Bloom, James Block, and Thomas Guskey, lends itself well to meeting this standard. Though mastery learning has come under criticism when associated with inappropriate or ineffective implementation, the underlying theory of teaching and reteaching until students master a concept can powerfully affect students' perceptions of success. Another success booster is a growth portfolio, which necessitates that students track their own progress.

Standard 4: Involving. Students are more motivated to learn when they have a meaningful stake in what's going on. They want to contribute and to participate if they have helped plan, administer, and make meaningful decisions about what and how they are learning. The involvement standard asks that we give students meaningful choices in connection with content, instructional methods, assessment, and evaluation. Engage students in creating the rubrics for guiding, assessing, or evaluating their work because the process of developing a good rubric is

more important than the rubric itself. Give students options for demonstrating what they have learned or even for what color ink they use. In many classrooms, teachers ask students to devise the daily writing journal topics, which provides involvement and increases the value of the topics to the students. In other classrooms, students help ascertain their own rights and responsibilities as well as those of the teacher.

Standard 5: Caring. Students respond positively to being liked and to being accepted and respected members of the class. Everyone has a basic need for love and belonging; students are no exception. They want to feel valued and cared about. They want to be part of the group rather than outsiders.

Teachers send "I care about you" signals when they meet students with a smile or use inviting language, such as "I would like us to" instead of "you need to." Teachers tell students that they care when they listen sincerely and value every response, even when it is not what they expected or desired.

Teachers tell students that they care when they show that they want everyone to succeed by making a commitment to enabling students to do so. Simply using students' names correctly on the first day of school sends a powerful "you count to me" message. In a caring classroom, relationships based on shared respect, trust, and high expectations are nurtured among every person in the classroom.

Standard 6: Enabling. To create a motivating context, teachers must constantly seek out best practices that enable students' learning and ensure students' attainment of standards. Brain-compatible, research-supported teaching techniques allow students to move around the classroom, address multiple modes of learning, acknowledge outlets for creative presentation of learning, provide enough contrast to preclude boredom, and contribute to a motivating context.

Teachers who enable learning make it their business to understand how the brain takes in, processes, and uses information. They master strategies and techniques known to aid learning for all students instead of relying on methods they have always used. These teachers employ summarization; provide anticipatory and closure strategies; and ensure a tight alignment among curriculum, instruction, and assessment. They are not afraid to use new, theoretically sound teaching practices when what they've been doing has not led to mastery by all students.

Interconnected Standards

A spider's web is strong and beautiful—a work of art. Using the six standards in our classrooms creates a web that is just as intricate and just

as strong. The standards cannot be applied separately. They cannot be considered disconnected ideas. They cannot be applied in a step-by-step, linear manner. Rather, the six standards interact simultaneously to balance the needs of learners and to promote intrinsic motivation. Creating a motivating environment requires an abundant supply of brain-compatible, research-based strategies and techniques. Because each student comes fully equipped with a core set of emotional needs, teachers who recognize and focus on meeting those needs while teaching content build classroom environments in which the students' intrinsic motivations to learn and to succeed are the driving forces for learning excellence. The six standards and two underlying principles offer a powerful framework to create those environments and to help students want to learn what we teach.

References

- Caine, G., & Caine, R. (1994). *Making connections: Teaching and the human brain*. New York: Addison-Wesley.
- Covey, S. (1989). *The 7 habits of highly effective people*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Glasser, W. (1998). *Choice theory: A new psychology of human freedom*. New York: Harper-Perennial.
- Jensen, E. (1998). *Teaching with the brain in mind*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Rogers, S., Ludington, J., & Graham, S. (1998). *Motivation and learning*. Evergreen, CO: Peak Learning Systems.

Spence Rogers is Director of Peak Learning Systems, 6784 S. Olympus Dr., Evergreen, CO 80439 (e-mail: Peaklearn@aol.com). Lisa Renard is an English teacher who maintains the New Teacher Page at www.new-teacher.com (e-mail: renard@new-teacher.com).

Used by permission. From "Relationship Driven Teaching" by Spence Rogers and Lisa Renard in Educational Leadership, September 1999, Volume 57, No. 1, Pages 34-37. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development is a worldwide community of educators advocating sound policies and sharing best practices to achieve the success of each learner. To learn more, visit ASCD at www.ascd.org.

PREPARATION:

Please consider the following questions with respect to the above readings. If you are taking this course as a member of a study team, discuss your answers with your colleagues. If you are taking this course as an individual, reflect upon the implications your answers might have for your teaching situation.

-
1. Consider this statement from the article, “When our psychological needs are met, we want to perform to the best of our ability in order to experience positive feelings.” Does your experience with your administrators prove or disprove this statement? Explain your answer.
 2. Consider this statement from the article, “When Dan discusses student achievement, he isn't talking about lowering standards to inflate artificial feelings of success.” Would a student who succeeds with lowered standards not be as motivated as a smarter student succeeding with the higher standards? Explain your answer.
 3. Consider this statement from the article, “The teacher and the students collaborate for high-quality learning, and inappropriate behavior becomes a non-issue.” This is very close Dr. Glasser’s assertion that discipline in a quality school is not an issue. Does your own teaching experience confirm or deny these statements. Why?
 4. Consider the authors’ comments with regard to making what you are teaching useful to your students. (Useful work is also one of Dr. Glasser’s conditions for quality.) What could you do in your instruction to make what you are teaching more useful for your students?
 5. With respect to Standard 4, Involving, how could you use class meetings to further involve students?
 6. Consider your responses to 1-5 above. What implications do you see for your own classroom?

VIDEO PROGRAM:

View the video program for this session entitled, “Visual Narratives.” The running time for the video is approximately 25 minutes.

VIDEO PROGRAM OVERVIEW:

In this video, teacher Katie Nimcheski teaches a lesson about poetry to her high school students at the Creative Technology Academy in Grand Rapids Michigan. For this lesson, she uses a technique called Sensory Imaging (*The Classroom of Choice*, page 128) to engage her students in the lesson. They have previously discussed literary techniques in poetry. Now, Ms. Nimcheski will read descriptions of the devastation caused by the recent earthquake in Haiti. Then, her students will write poems based upon the sensory images they formed as she read news stories describing the event.

VIDEO AND READING FOCUS QUESTIONS:

Please consider the following questions with respect to the video, the above article, and the assigned reading in the course text. If you are taking this course as a member of a study team, discuss your answers with your colleagues. If you are taking this course as an individual, consider the implications your answers might have for your teaching situation.

1. Do you think that this was a writing assignment that was able to meet one or more of students' basic needs? If not, why not? If so, which ones and why?
2. Tying a school assignment with a real life event can make the work interesting and relevant to students. (The schools was also raising money to send to Haiti relief organizations.) Do you think this assignment did a good job of making this event more relevant to students? Why or why not?
3. Did you find the subject matter as it was presented in this lesson to be too disturbing for high school students? If so, how would you address the subject in a similar lesson? If you do not think it was too disturbing, explain why.
4. Having the students write and share their own poetry is a great way for the teacher to assess if they have learned the meaning of different literary terms. If you had found that many of the students were using these terms incorrectly as they were writing, how would you adapt the activity to address this problem on the spot?
5. If you were to do this assignment, is there anything you would do differently? If so, describe your adaptations. If not, explain why you think it was successful.
6. In the text, Jon describes Sensory Imaging as a technique that can improve comprehension and retention. Do you agree? Why? Why not?
7. Consider your responses to 1-6 above. What implications do you see for your own classroom?

APPLICATION PROJECT:

Your application assignment for this session is to create a lesson or activity that demonstrates your understanding of course content as it applies to your teaching situation. Select one of the following options:
Option 1. Develop a lesson utilizing the Sensory Imaging technique or develop a lesson designed to meet one or more of students' basic needs. If you have access to a classroom, teach your lesson. If you do not have

access to a classroom, draw on your past experience and describe the results of the implementation that you would anticipate.

Option 2. Create your own application project. (For detailed instructions and the application project rubric, please turn to the Application Project section for session 2.)

PROGRESS REPORTING

After you have completed created and implemented you application project, please turn to the Progress Report form for this session. Progress Report forms for all sessions are placed together at the back of this Course of Study book for easy removal and evaluation.

Session Notes: