

Motivation – Awaking the Students' Natural Curiosity

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Introduction

Teachers of all grades, teachers of specific subjects have spent time reflecting on how they are able to motivate their students to learn the content material that they are planning to teach. Initially motivation is planned into units and specific lessons in a 'generic' manner. Generic describes motivation that is part of successful units and lessons that are traditionally used from one year to another. Motivation is usually not addressed until educators notice their students' lack of enthusiasm characterized by their lack of participation in class or lack of participation in group discussions or in specific projects or through their students' body language or through their vocal tones. Teachers of virtual courses do not benefit from these traditional cues. They have to ascertain whether their students' lack of participation is attributed to their confusion with the content or whether it is due to their lack of interest. I propose that student motivation in virtual classrooms must be conscientiously planned into and continuously monitored because virtual students have the power to leave the class with a mouse click.

I have set out in this paper to investigate four questions. What is motivation as I present it in this paper? What are motivational strategies that I am able to implement into my current teaching assignment? When does motivation negatively impact students? What are some special motivational strategies of virtual classrooms?

I use two generic students, Ronnie and Tommy, throughout this paper. These students are composites derived from many different students I have taught in an almost thirty year teaching career based in rural Saskatchewan.

Definition

Motivation means "to provide with a motive ... something, as a reason or desire acting as a spur to action" (Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary, 1988, p. 276). Michael Theall (1999) defines motivation as "the natural human capacity to direct energy in the pursuit of a goal" (pp. 7,8). Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995) suggest that motivation should be regarded more as intrinsic rather than extrinsic of the learner because "people are naturally curious and enjoy learning" (p. 24). Marcy Driscoll (2005) points out that curiosity and interest create motivation within the learner. Albert Bandura (1977) suggests that motivation "is primarily concerned with activation and persistence of behavior" (p. 193). In this paper I use motivation as it describes students' desire to learn. The challenge is to make learning meaningful for all students, to stimulate all students' natural curiosity, to motivate all students.

The role of self-efficacy in motivation

Intrinsic motivation according to Schunk and Pajares (Wigfield, 2002); David Johnson and Roger Johnson (Ashman Adrian F., Ashman Adrian F, 2003); and Albert Bandura (1977) centers on self-efficacy, the "individuals' confidence in their ability to organize and execute a given course of action to achieve a goal" (p. 193). Driscoll (2005) like Bandura (1977) proposes the use of learning goals rather than the use of performance goals. This is a significant shift in the way learning is currently viewed in traditional face to face classrooms. Ronnie reacts to teacher performance goals with comments such as, "I was smart in grade two but now I am dumb." The other students agree that Ronnie was indeed smart in the early grades however they quickly point out to Ronnie that he is still smart but he has to do the work. Ronnie shakes his head repeating, "I'm dumb." Does Ronnie's attitude change when he writes his own learning goals? Ronnie completes more of his work however he continues to fail to complete all of his work. Why does he not respond in a more positive fashion? What would the result be if he wrote learning goals for all of his school subjects? I believe that students like Ronnie would commit themselves more to completing their work if they are able to choose all of their work.

Why are learning goals unlike performance goals able to create motivation, interest within students? Learning goals encourage learners to increase their competence in a particular area as students attempt to understand or master something new. Learning goals access a student's self-efficacy, a student's self-confidence. Ronnie is an avid computer game player. I ask Ronnie what he does when he is killed in the game. Ronnie smiles and tells me that he just starts the game again and tries to avoid getting killed in the same way. I ask him if he ever just quits playing a hard game because he feels that he is too dumb. Ronnie proudly replies that there is no game that he can't beat. Ronnie interprets failure as a problem with his current strategy rather than with his lack of ability or level of intelligence. In addition to Ronnie's use of learning goals to successfully complete each level of a computer game Ronnie receives no grades, no marks to signify ability. Ronnie's advancement to the next level is the only indicator of success, there is no level of success which is inherent in marks such as B and B+. Many teachers and students are European descendants who traditionally "tend not to be satisfied in just viewing themselves positively but rather tend to view themselves in unrealistically positive terms" (Heine, 1997, p. 102). Children like Ronnie who are not of European heritage often feel left behind when they are content to learn and not necessarily excel in one particular area – a grade of 'Meeting Expectations' is good enough without the comment 'Ronnie is capable of better work with more effort'. Well meaning

educators, many are European descendants; want their students to not be satisfied with doing fine; instead they want their students to push themselves, to excel, to be the best that they can possibly be.

Driscoll relates efficacy to efficiency – the belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to produce given attainments. Driscoll (2005) uses Bandura’s

four principal sources by which people gain information to influence their self-efficacy beliefs:

1. Enactive mastery experiences that provide feedback on learners’ own capabilities
2. Vicarious experiences that provide comparative information about the attainments of others
3. Verbal persuasion, which provides the learner with information about what others believe he or she is capable of doing
4. Physiological states, internal feelings by which learners judge their ability to engage in the task at hand. (p. 318)

Driscoll (2005) like Bandura (1977, p. 195) put forth that a learner’s accomplishments “raise mastery experiences; repeated failures lower them, particularly if the mishaps occur early in the course of events.” Bandura (1977) found that “occasional failures that are later overcome by determined effort can strengthen self-motivated persistence.” (p. 195)

Driscoll (2005) and Bandura (1977) explain that students “seeing others perform ... activities ... can generate expectations ... that they too will improve if they intensify and persist in their efforts” (p. 197). How do children like Ronnie from a disadvantaged home life or who is of a racial minority view his classmates’ successes? Ronnie receives the highest mark in the class on a test that he and his classmates perceive as difficult. Ronnie’s classmates’ applauds his mark and he earnestly exclaims, “How did I do that?” Ronnie is an intelligent student but a student who is an under achiever in his elementary classroom because he fails to apply himself in school. Ronnie’s new positive self-image is evident for a brief amount of time before it dissipates. Why do students like Ronnie who excel in their primary grades flounder in their elementary classes? I believe that these students do not have any perceived role models – they become increasingly aware that they are different from most of their classmates in their elementary classrooms; that they are not members of the socioeconomic majority. These children’s successful role models are their peers only in age or in grade.

Notably the verbal encouragement that Ronnie’s classmates provide him is sometimes more powerful than the encouragement that his teachers offer. Why is this so? Bandura (1977, p. 198) found that teachers praise their students in an attempt to offer encouragement however their failure to arrange “conditions to facilitate effective performance will most likely lead to failures that discredit the persuaders and further undermine the recipients’ perceived self-efficacy.” This often reinforces struggling students’ low self-efficacy beliefs. Looking at my praise of Ronnie’s success and the praise that I give to my high achieving students I can see in retrospect where I successfully encourage my high achieving students and where I inadvertently reinforce Ronnie’s lack of confidence in his abilities when I fail to break the task into smaller and more attainable parts.

Driscoll (2005, p. 322) points out that a learner’s “gut feeling” provides either confidence of success or fear of failure. All too often school reinforces a sense of failure within the learner as he or she struggles, with increasing difficulty, through each school year. This struggle serves to reinforce a learner’s feeling that failure is the only possible outcome. Ronnie often avoids completing tasks to avoid failure in an attempt to qualify his lack of success is due to his failure to do the work and not because of a lack of ability. Their avoidance allows these students to save face with their peers, kids who remember them as being smart in school. Ronnie is an efficient gamer who can hold his own with many other gamers, even those who are older than him. Ronnie enjoys online gaming where he is part of a virtual community where he is one among equals, one among other gamers – where socioeconomic classes are unknown.

Attribution theory and motivation

“The guiding principle of attribution theory is that individuals search for understanding, seeking to discover why an event has occurred” (Ames and Ames Russell E., 1984, p. 18). Learners of all ages search for understanding why failure has resulted however for too many students this search ends abruptly when they believe that they are not capable to succeed in school. According to Driscoll (2005) enactive mastery experiences prove to be the “most influential source of self-efficacy beliefs because they provide the most authentic information to learners on their ability to do what it takes to succeed” (p. 318). This is evident in students like Ronnie who is not interested in school however he is an avid snowboarder. Ronnie spends hours snowboarding; falling many times even breaking his arm once, yet he perseveres until he is successful. The goal for educators is to awaken each student’s intrinsic motivation, each student’s desire to learn, to succeed.

Let’s meet another student, Tommy who exemplifies the “expectancy of success” which Bernard Weiner (1984) explains as being “intimately tied to the self, in as much as (1) casual ascriptions often concern properties of the person, such as level of ability; (2) the emotional consequences of ascriptions include self-confidence and self-worth; and (3) the assumption of mastery strivings” (Ames Russell E., p. 35). For many students achievement is the indicator of their competencies. Tommy’s parents do not expect him to pass instead they have informed him prior to the onset of the school year that he is going to be in his grade for two years. Tommy enters formal schooling with a primary learning goal – to pass his grade in one year. “Learning goals are associated with the belief that intelligence is malleable and can be developed” (Driscoll, 2005, p. 315). Tommy’s self-confidence allows him to meet each failure he encounters as a signal to change his current strategy in order to succeed. Tommy examines each problem he encounters as solvable. His solutions often see him asking for extra help usually after school. By the end of the school year Tommy is functioning at the next grade level. Tommy enters the next grade feeling competent in his ability to succeed in school. Tommy perceives failure in school as a challenge. This exemplifies Tommy’s well established positive self-efficacy.

Ronnie's success in his primary grades often results in his receiving awards in June for academic achievement, achievement he secretly attributes to magic. He feels his success is due to luck and not due to any action on his part. The older elementary grades move away from mastery learning (marks in the eighties) to concept learning where students like Ronnie often experience failure for the first time. Ronnie perceives his failure as his luck abandoning him. Ronnie feels helpless. He believes that he cannot succeed in school. This necessitates Ronnie to create a plausible excuse to mask his failure preserving his family's and his community's image of him. Driscoll (2005) like Weiner (Ames Russell E., 1984, p. 35) point out that when "faced with a performance goal, students who have little confidence in their abilities display helplessness. They avoid challenge and, given the chance, will quit rather than persist in the task" (p. 315).

Ronnie unlike Tommy did not perceive failure in school as a challenge rather as an unchangeable reality. Ronnie, outside of school, wants to be a hockey referee. This means that he must learn the hockey league's rule book. He studies it intently, passes the exam and becomes a junior hockey league referee. I ask him why he continues to study this rule book after passing the exam. He tells me that he does not want to make a wrong call during a game. I suggest that success in school is possible with the same kind of hard work. Ronnie shrugs and says that school is too hard. Ronnie fails to acknowledge his role in his success at school.

Raymond J. Wlodkowski suggests that teachers take "the four motivational conditions from the framework and transpose them into questions to use as guidelines for selecting motivational strategies and related learning activities to include in the design of the instructional plan"(1995, p. 12). (Appendix A) Wlodkowski's motivational strategies include

developing attitude: How do we create or affirm a favorable disposition toward learning through personal relevance and choice? ...
 Enhancing meaning: How do we create engaging and challenging learning experiences that include students' perspectives and values?
 ... Engendering competence: How do we create or affirm an understanding that students have effectively learned something they value and perceive as authentic to their real world? (1995, p. 13)

Developing a favorable attitude, creating challenging experiences and learning material that students value is answered when students form learning goals that Driscoll (2005) and Bandura (1977) propose.

Students' effort and motivation

Martin V. Covington (Ames Russell E., 1984, p. 89) pointed out that students like Ronnie "must thread their way between the threatening extremes of high effort – with its implications for low ability, should they fail – and no effort at all." Covington (Figure 1) found "that teachers punish diligent students less than those who do not try" (Ames Russell E., 1984, p. 87) however

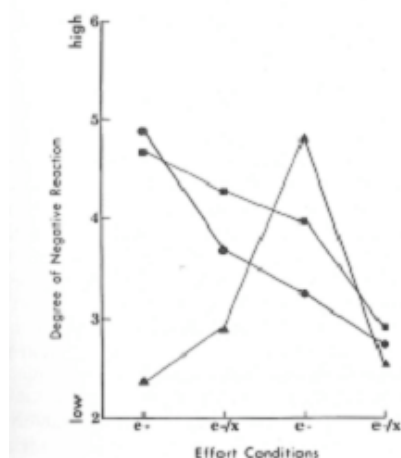


Figure 1 Teacher and student reactions to classroom failure. Triangles indicate teacher's punishment of student; squares indicate student shame; circles indicate self-perceptions of ability.

students interpreted their teachers' response differently. Teachers believed they provided encouragement however their "students felt most incompetent and experienced the greatest degree of personal dissatisfaction and shame" (Ames Russell E., 1984, p. 89). Covington (1984) pointed out that often a teacher made an "allowance for low effort if the student had a plausible explanation for why he or she did not study (e-/x). Without excuse the same low effort (e-) was severely punished" (p. 89). Covington viewed that "excuses acted to reduce student shame and feelings of worthlessness regardless of effort level"(Ames Russell E., 1984, pp. 89,90).

Ronnie often comes to school, his work forgotten at home. He receives less teacher punishment than his classmates who bring incomplete assignments and who must remain inside to finish their work. Ronnie often asks for another copy of the assignment which he completes during recess. Ronnie exemplifies the setting of a learning goal – to complete the assignment by changing his previous strategy of doing the work at home to his new strategy of completing the assignment during breaks in his school day. The teacher must avoid taking the student's learning goal and turning it into a performance goal, you will not go for recess until you complete your homework.

Covington's data shows "that students preferred to be perceived as both able and hardworking in the event of success. However, when students were forced to choose between these two positive characteristics, they picked ability" (Ames Russell E., 1984, p. 90). Students like Ronnie put less effort into their school work in order to safeguard their self-image in the face of possible failure in school however many of these intelligent students prove their abilities outside of school. Why? Covington (1984) proposed that "it is the self-enhancement of ability and feelings of competency that commands the student's highest priority" (Ames Russell E., p. 90). Covington (1984) also found that "preschool and kindergarten children [view] ability and effort [as] ... indistinguishable" (Ames Russell E., 1984, p. 90). He goes on to report that as children move through school into high school their views begin to move toward ability away from effort. Covington's research proposes that a student in high school views effort as neither "a precondition or a guarantor of success, and ability alone becomes a sufficient condition for high accomplishment" a fact that helps to explain why Ronnie is hard motivate.

a primary consequence of the prolonged or excessive use of failure-avoiding strategies, in general, is a progressive deterioration of the individual's will to learn. Psychologically speaking, this involves a transformation in the person from being success-oriented to becoming failure-prone and then, ultimately failure-accepting (Ames Russell E., 1984, pp. 90,91)

What can be done in the classroom to motivate these students to learn? Covington proposes the "need to increase the number of classroom rewards available so that students are no longer forced simply to avoid failure for the lack of opportunity to pursue success" (Ames Russell E., 1984, p. 97).

I initiated a "Student of the Week" program to motivate students like Ronnie, to help them build positive work habits. Ronnie reacted by responding that he would never be student of the week because he was dumb. I pointed out that he and his classmates need to only work for thirty minutes each night on work not finished in class or homework that I assigned such as studying for a test. Getting the work done error free was not required, doing the homework was essential. It was intended that all students could achieve this weekly reward, a homework pass, which eliminated competition. This activity reflected "the importance of sufficient rewards for all students, irrespective of ability level" (Ames Russell E., 1984, p. 79).

Covington's research pointed out that "feelings of pride act as a potent source of self-reinforcement" (Ames Russell E., 1984, p. 99). These feelings were evident in Ronnie's exclamation that his homework was done and that he felt 'awesome'. Ronnie continued getting his homework done often asking to remain inside when he knew his night was busy at home. Ronnie's belief in his ability was strengthened. Covington described teamwork as "cooperative learning in which peers set group-achievement goals, divide the work into manageable subtasks that are often self-assigned on the basis of individual interest or experience, and allocates rewards in a mutually acceptable fashion" (Ames Russell E., 1984, p. 97).

Affect of competition on motivation

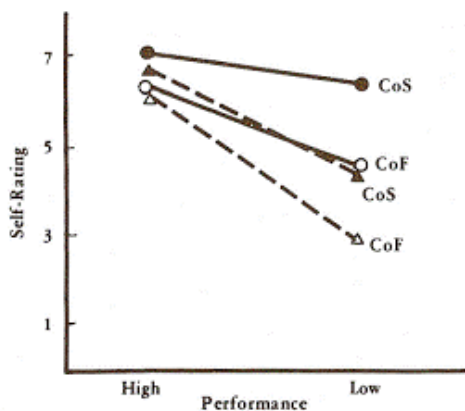
Competition is evident in many classrooms. What is the impact of competition on students' learning? "In competition, winning is 'everything' and there is substantial evidence to show that individuals will cheat, deny others of critical resources, and compete in subtle and not so subtle ways in their quest for success" (Ames Russell E., 1984, p. 190). This is not just confined to classrooms. We often hear about professional athletes taking steroids and other performance enhancing drugs in order to be the best, to be the winner. Carole Ames (1984) found in her study that "competition increased the salience of ability as a factor mediating one's performance. Competitive winners self-aggrandize their ability, judging themselves as smarter than their competitors. Losers, on the other hand, deplore their situation and self-attribute incompetence" (p. 191).

Knowingly or unknowingly our education system has been developed around the premise of competition. One example of educational competition lays in how we report student progress to our parents. Educators use letter grades which are refined by adding either a minus sign or a plus sign to discriminate between low, medium and high. Ronnie was feeling very proud of himself with his three Bs however when he arrived home he discovered that his sister had beaten him with her two B+s and one B. Ronnie's sense of pride was replaced by a feeling of being beaten, of failure. One possible solution is the use of descriptive letter grades rather than mark dependent letter grades. Prairie Valley School Division uses the letters E,M,P, and N to grade students. Each letter describes students meeting expectations, progressing towards expectations, or needing more time to meet expectation. The letter E refers to those students who are exceeding expectations. Each student's primary objective is to meet expectations. Students learn about their areas of weakness through the use of rubrics.

Competition is a natural part of life consequently I believe that effective competition should be directed at groups of children rather than at individual students. The group succeeds or fails not its individual members. Individual group members continuously work towards the completion of the project unlike in groups I once used where individual students were more concerned with their individual tasks, and whether each person did the same amount of work. Often in these groups there were students who finished early and other students who failed to get their part done or who needed help because of their inability to complete the task. Ronnie often failed to complete his part of the project which negatively impacted his group's mark consequently Ronnie's classmates preferred to not have him as part of their group. The dynamics in the new group resulted in Ronnie working at various tasks, appearing confident in what he was doing. The group's success is enjoyed by each member rather than by the group's 'smart ones'. No group member is idle during the project. There is a give and take among the members with each member working through to the completion of the project. Not once did a group member tell Ronnie to hurry up. This reflected Ames' research in which she found "a strong element of helping behavior in cooperative settings, whether it involves directly assisting another or doing one's part of the task. Finally, implied in cooperative group situations is the norm of fulfilling one's commitment to the group" (1984, p. 198). Is this typical of groups in real life? Professional hockey and football teams exemplify this philosophy of group work – members of the winning team each receive the Grey Cup ring not just the team's MVPs.

Consider how we mark group work, do we have students evaluate each other or do we have students evaluate their own performance? I

suggest that student self-evaluation should be used however each member of the group receives the same mark. One might question the importance of self-evaluation if the whole group receives the same mark. I believe the importance of self-evaluation is to allow each student an opportunity to reflect upon his or her performance. Each student identifies one area of personal weakness and one area of personal strength citing each with an example from the project. Ames (1984) wanted to know whether the success or failure of a group affected students' self-evaluations as well as what effect did self-evaluations have upon the members of the group when it was not made up of equally academic, equally skilled students. "What is striking here is that a low achiever who might otherwise maintain self-perceptions of low ability is bolstered by the positive group outcome" (Ames Russell E., 1984, p. 197). (Figure 2)



Text Box: Figure 2 Self-evaluation following high and low performances in cooperative successful (CoF) groups and Failing (CoF) groups (based on Ames 1981); solid lines refer to ability; broken lines refer to deservedness of reward.

From this we see that the performance is important but "unlike within competitive situations, an individual's performance must be interpreted within the context of the group performance" (Ames Russell E., 1984, p. 198). Ames (1984) also found that "the focus of attention would be centered on the group performance over and above any individual characteristics" (p. 195). I notice less tension among group members as they keep each person busy doing some part of the project, parts that are not the same size or type but parts that are necessary for the completion of the project.

Questioning and Motivation

What is the role of questioning in motivating students? Questioning can either deter students' motivation or help to ignite their interest. Kenneth Chuska (1995) investigated the role that questions play in student motivation. Chuska's questioning strategies include the asking of more open-ended questions; the allocation of more time for student response; the avoidance of repeating verbatim students' answers and questions; and finally talking less to allow students to talk more. Chuska (1995) found that "when the teacher asks most of the questions students perceive that they learn the information only to satisfy the teacher" (p. 18). This statement brings to mind those students who are perceived by teachers as being their 'smart' students but who are also the discipline problems in their classrooms. These students do not want to satisfy their teachers nor most adults in their lives. Chuska (1995) states that teachers are to avoid repeating questions and answers however he proposes that teachers practice paraphrasing students' answers followed by asking "other students how they interpret the response" (p. 22).

Ronnie was most involved during our Health classes because this course was designed for discussions, discussions that were sometimes started by me and other times started by the students. I like Chuska (1995) found that students must be provided with the time "to elaborate, reason, justify, and support" (p. 18) their answers. It is in this way students are shown "that it is worthwhile to delay decisions in order to explore many avenues" (p.19). These discussions resulted in answers, answers that were reached through a consensus of the students rather than being 'told' by the teacher.

Students like Ronnie would use the response, 'I don't know' during discussions in other subjects even after I assured Ronnie that "not knowing something simply indicates an area where something can be learned" (Chuska, 1995, p. 22). Chuska (1995) often found that older students preferred this response to "risking an incorrect or unacceptable answer that exposes them to ridicule by either the teacher or the class" (p.21). Chuska (1995) described two symptoms that I have recognized in students of all ages, namely the avoidance of eye contact with the teacher and the attempt to look busy when the teacher looks about deciding which student to call upon.

Chuska (1995) proposes that teachers call on reluctant students only when they are confident these students know the answers. Another strategy is to break down the question into its smaller parts then use these answers to build the broader answer to the big question. A teacher might also meet with the student privately, review the concepts of the lesson and give the student the question along with the answer that he or she will be asked in class. I find that Chuska's (1995) suggestion of using a 'question box' works extremely well in my Health classes. Students put questions into this box, anonymously, to start the next class. This helps to prevent a student being identified as the simpleton or as the brain. Interestingly students like Ronnie wait for their classmates' reaction to their questions – if it is positive Ronnie often identifies himself as the author of the question. I have not seen my students who are perceived as the 'brains' of the class speak up identifying themselves as the authors of other questions read out in class. Chuska (1995) also proposed the use of a 'question board' where students' questions are posted and where other students post their responses to these questions. This is very similar to the online classes' discussion on Blackboard.

Motivation in the virtual classroom

I propose that virtual classrooms will increasingly utilize learning goals constructed by students. It is in this way students will be able to assume a greater control of their learning which will result in heightened feelings of self-confidence. Students from disadvantage socioeconomic classes as well as those from minority races will find their virtual community an environment of equality – where actions speak louder than a student's physical attributes. The one variable that must be willing to change is the teacher – the educator must also see students with the same lens, as people of one class, of one race.

Keller and Song (1999) propose that “students will no longer be fascinated with learning from computer-assisted instruction as much as they once were. Then the question is how to get hold of their motivation during the computer-mediated instruction” (p. 513). This is a most compelling reason to investigate motivation and to examine how we can conscientiously plan motivation into our daily teaching plans. Keller (1999) identifies three approaches to the design and development of a motivational CAI (computer-assisted instruction) namely, “Computer Feature Approach” that deals with “specific computer features and novelty effects.” The second approach is identified as “the Principle Seeking Approach” which includes instructional games. In this approach the learner exercises control of the CAI when the student is part of a cooperative learning group. The third approach is “the Model Establishing Approach” which incorporates and identifies computer features which are subsequently “identified and incorporated into a practical model for designing motivating CAI” (p. 513).

Geoff-Kfour (2006) identifies three other areas that need attention in the development of an online course: a sense of community, a feeling of belonging and a means to get help when help is needed. Geoff-Kfour (2006) describes the feedback that might be given on their assignments in a virtual classroom. The feedback

is not written in a red pen on my paper, but it is in the form of an email note, personally addressed to me. There is always a personal salutation, a positive comment, and the notes do not only come after an assignment. I can write my professor anytime, and I do, and she writes back. In fact, when I open my mailbox and see that I have a message from “e teacher”, I feel quite special. (Geoff-Kfour, 2006, p. 7)

Why is it important to make virtual students feel special? It helps to eliminate the students' feelings of isolation and it helps them feel that they belong to this virtual community, that they are valued members. It also helps to create their teachers' presence. In traditional classrooms students see their teachers in each class and sometimes between classes however in virtual classrooms teachers are not often seen. Teachers may seem invisible to their students and this leaves some students feeling unimportant. The greater challenge occurs when the teacher is teaching a class that is both online as well as face to face. In this situation it is easy for the instructor to regress into the traditional teacher mode forgetting the online students.

Foley and Toporski (2004) describe several strategies that allow for successful online courses, strategies that are applicable to elementary virtual classrooms and university courses. Foley (2004) suggests the making of virtual classrooms interactive. “An interactive learning environment encourages discovery, experimentation, and experiential (hands-on and activity based) instruction that provides multiple representations of knowledge” (p. 3). This strategy addresses the constructivist learners in that it shows “how knowledge is interrelated and associated” (Foley Tim, 2004, p. 3). Related to constructivism is Foley's strategy of putting “things in context. Learners can experience problems using knowledge and skills in everyday contexts” (2004, p. 4). I have found that my graduate studies are made more meaningful as I am able to connect them to my current teaching assignment and to my prior knowledge (teaching experience).

Foley's strategies also focus on increasing students' perceptual arousal which include: “(1) incorporate novel, surprising, incongruous and uncertain events; (2) pose questions or problems to solve; (3) vary the elements of instruction; and (4) use concrete and familiar examples that are related to learners' a priori experiences” (2004, p. 3). It is in this way the learner's confidence and satisfaction is heightened. Closely related to this is Foley's strategy of diversity “incorporate various kinds of media such as text, illustrations, animations, video, audio, and simulations. Consequently, learning can take place through different sensory channels, and learning is more effective when more channels are engaged in learning” (2004, p. 4). Teachers of traditional classrooms know that diversity helps to keep students “moving, focused and motivated” (Foley Tim, 2004, p. 4).

A collaborative environment is important in a virtual classroom whether it is solely part of the virtual community such as a discussion group on Blackboard, a PLC (professional learning community) in a different town, province or country, or the corner coffee shop. Students who have the opportunity to discuss with colleagues experience an improvement in their “problem-solving strategies when learners are confronted with different interpretations of the given situation” (Foley Tim, 2004, p. 4). Collaborative groups provide learners, young and old alike with the opportunity “to engage in discussion, take responsibility for their own learning and become critical thinkers” (Foley Tim, 2004, p. 4). Bellon and Oates (2002) propose that “at regular intervals during the remaining portion of the semester, students send e-mails to summarize their progress or concerns” (p. 8). I believe students would respond favourably to summarizing their progress however students might not be as comfortable identifying their concerns, concerns they might perceive as weaknesses rather than opportunities to learn.

“Reduce Cognitive Load” (Foley Tim, 2004, p. 4) by taking the course material and package it into modules that do not overwhelm the learner. This is also important in a traditional classroom – if the learner becomes overwhelmed then he or she becomes frustrated and a sense of helplessness sets in resulting in the learner becoming withdrawn. Closely associated with reducing the cognitive load is the need to provide “adequate scaffolding. Scaffolding is a learner support structure essential for students success” (Foley Tim, 2004, p. 4). This process is dynamic as the learner moves through varying levels of competence and lack of competence. The goal is to have students become proficient in problem-solving strategies however monitoring, even if it is through email is necessary as students in online courses may run into a ‘brick wall’ during their learning journey.

Bellon and Oates (2002) point out that visuals a traditional classroom offers are not the same as visuals in a virtual classroom.

Every chapter began with a summary assignment sheet. All assignments for the chapter were listed up front and the grading requirements were clearly delineated. In an effort to add humour and enjoyment to the learning process, we added cartoons, pictures, and interesting quotes at regular intervals. (Bellon Toni, 2002, pp. 8,9)

The importance of these virtual visuals is to give the student a sense of familiarity and predictability which results in the ignition of and maintenance of motivation within the student.

Conclusion

Motivation has been and will continue to be a variable in each teacher's lesson – whether it is planned for a face to face classroom, a virtual classroom or a classroom that hosts both a face to face and virtual leaning environment. Motivation sometimes seems to be deficient in its effectiveness in some lessons while at other times student motivation is a powerful driving force. Education lags behind many other arenas of activity that learners are part of – home, clubs, sports, work places (adult learners who are not educators). Traditional educators view success and promotion all too often as how much the student fails to achieve. A mark of eighty percent tells the student that twenty percent of the material was not learned. Grading and promotion is an area of future research however I propose that it does have an impact on student motivation. Educators must become more aware of motivation and how to address the needs of many of their students who fail in school but who are able to excel in the world beyond the classroom. Virtual communities have the potential, if developed with an eye to student motivation, to unite all people and to encourage each person to realize his or her dreams.

Appendix A

Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching		
<i>Motivational Condition and Question</i>	<i>Motivational Strategy</i>	<i>Learning Activity</i>
<i>Establishing inclusion:</i> How do we create or affirm a learning atmosphere in which we feel respected by and connected to one another? (beginning)	Collaborative learning	Randomly form small groups in which students exchange experiences and expectations they have about research. List them.
<i>Developing attitude:</i> How do we create or affirm a favorable disposition toward learning through personal relevance and choice? (beginning)	Relevant learning goals	Ask students to choose something they want to research immediately among themselves.
<i>Enhancing meaning:</i> How do we create engaging and challenging learning experiences that include students' perspectives and values? (throughout)	Critical questioning and predicting	Form research teams to devise a set of questions to ask in order to make predictions. Record questions and predictions.
<i>Engendering competence:</i> How do we create or affirm an understanding that students have effectively learned something they value and perceive as authentic to their real world? (ending)	Self-assessment	After the predictions have been verified, ask students to create their own statements about what they learned about research from this process.

Figure 2 (Wlodkowski, 1995, p. 14)

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