Lindsey Griffiths

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CEP 802 – Design Project

**Motivation Case:**

Brian is one of my current third grade students. This class has some fairly unique issues because their teacher last year left the school for medical reasons after Thanksgiving. Between Thanksgiving and February the class had a series of daily subs, none of whom were licensed teachers. In February a long-term substitute was hired for the duration of the school year and has since become the permanent second grade teacher. Due to these issues, some of the minor problem behaviors and academic issues the students exhibited at the beginning of second grade grew exponentially.

Brian is the student that every faculty member would agree showed the most challenging behaviors throughout the complications of last year. He would refuse to work on most assignments, particularly writing, and if pressed would run from the classroom and on several cases from the building and even the school property. The refusals, trips to the principal’s office, and running caused Brian to miss a significant amount of class time. He began the school year struggling academically in all areas, and by the end of the school year had made little to no growth in any subject. This means that he has begun third grade nearly two years behind in most subjects.

Unfortunately for Brian, most of his peers, although having experienced the same obstacles, are not having as many set-backs. Fourteen out of my seventeen students are meeting or exceeding the standard in both reading and math. They appear to be less accelerated than they would have been with a normal second grade year, but are meeting third grade criteria.

Additionally, Brian has undergone a medication change over the summer. Last year Brian was on several medications to address issues including his attention and focus. He has been taken off of all regular medications due to doctor’s orders for health concerns that began to arise because of them.

All of this information is vital to understanding Brian coming into this year. We are now three months into the school year, and Brian has continued to make positive changes to his behavior. He has not run out of the classroom once, and many of his avoidance behaviors have minimized although Brian still does not like to do much of the work and has a particular aversion to assignments that involve writing. However, Brian has been sent to the office several times, all for anger related misbehaviors. Nonetheless, Brian’s academic abilities are still much lower than where they should be.

He recognizes that his peers are not as challenged by the assignments as he is, and he does not like this. He truly wants to be as successful as those he sees around him. If he sees a classmate producing 3 pages of writing during our Writer’s Workshop, he wants to write 4 pages. However, he needs more time than most of his fellow students to complete any writing assignment, and he would rather not do it so that others cannot see his struggles. While Brian has continued to make progress with his writing skills, he still has trouble with matching his stamina to his peers, does not produce the quantity of writing per period I am hoping for, and the quality of idea organization is not at grade level. He is embarrassed by this and tries to avoid the assignment so he does not need to deal with those challenges.

Brian has tried many avoidance techniques including distracting the teacher he is speaking with by asking a non-related question to begin lengthy conversations, extreme pencil sharpening, visits to the nurse, getting drinks, and excessive use of the bathroom. As with my other struggling students I modify assignments, provide additional support, ignore his distractions, redirect him from his avoidance behaviors, and hold him accountable for work that he has not completed. However, he will still avoid any work he possibly can.

However, Brian also loves to be a helper and any time he is in the position of teacher or leader, he excels. Unfortunately, he does not have the abilities to allow him to regularly take these roles in most academic areas. Regardless, I make sure to provide as many chances for him to use these skills as possible. Additionally, I attempt to reinforce any positive participation in group activities by calling on him (particularly when I know he has the correct answer and will receive positive feedback from his classmates) and encouraging him when he remains on task.

Brian’s overall behavior has improved tremendously, but he is lacking growth in his ability/willingness to begin and continue to work on tasks independently. I am trying to help Brian overcome these hurdles and begin to be more self-motivated to complete his work without pushing him to the extreme behaviors he has used in the past. My goal is to build his self-confidence so that he will begin assignments independently and put in a good effort toward completing them. I plan to positively reinforce each small step of progress he makes in the hope that it will lead to more small steps.

**Motivational Assessment:**

For the purposes of this assessment I will focus on Brian through the lens of Writer’s Workshop. During the average Writer’s Workshop, our first lesson of the day, there is an approximately 10 minute mini-lesson, 15-20 minutes of independent writing and 5-10 minutes of sharing. The mini-lesson format varies depending on the topic being covered, but will generally include the students sitting in a group on the rug participating in a demonstration of the task for the day (using a document projector and SMARTboard). We have used the writing process to publish two pieces, one choice piece and one opinion piece.

There is a partner or small group component (e.g. discussion) if it is practical for the subject. Independent writing takes place with students at their desks, although I do have a back counter area where two students can sit facing away from the class and a desk in the hall, both of which provide work areas with fewer distractions. During this time, the children have the opportunity to partner conference, using the standards we have learned as a class, to edit and revise their work in a timely manner, and conference with a teacher. Students share on a volunteer basis by standing behind their desks and reading their work to the class.

There are 17 students in my class and our room is barely large enough. There is a full time paraprofessional who provides one-on-two support for special education students, but helps others when possible. We have three desk groups of 5 students, one group of two students with the paraprofessional, and the temporary work spaces listed above. There is a rug for the class to sit at for lessons using the SMARTboard. We have a large classroom library, and between that and a large bank of windows, we have very little wall space and what we have is used up by a number line, word wall, and a bulletin board with rotating subjects.

The primary issue is Brian’s unwillingness to begin his work in a timely manner. He participates in mini-lessons much the same as his peers by answering and asking questions, showing his thinking on the board, and otherwise following directions. He proves during this time that he thinks about the material in a way that allows him to accomplish the task set. However, when it comes time for him to write his name and begin the first sentence, he begins to avoid the task. Knowing this, Brian is always one of my first stops. I like to give him a chance to get started, but if he struggles I will brainstorm with him and help him decide on his first sentence. Once he has picked it out, I repeat it to help him remember. I will check in with him several times during the lesson and use similar techniques to keep him writing. If he has continued writing in my absence I will praise both his effort and the progress he has made. Brian will now usually produce about a page to a page and a half of writing during the Workshop, showing growth from the start of school.

When not working with Brian, I circulate and conference with students based on a weekly schedule as well as those who need regular check-ins. I ask my students not to focus on their spelling while they are writing rough drafts except for Word Wall words. I am more concerned with content than mechanics until we begin editing. This is an effort to keep all of the students writing their ideas, and hopefully decrease the anxiety levels generally associated with this subject.

Using this data in conjunction with the TARGET framework (Adapted from Ames, 1990; Ames, 1992; Brophy, 1998; Maehr & Midgley, 1991) I can assess Brian’s motivational classroom experience. This will help determine the parts of the classroom structure that promote Brian feeling motivated to learn in these lessons.

**TARGET Framework Analysis:**

**Tasks** should be selected, “…so as to provide an optimal level of challenge and to emphasize activities that students find interesting and intrinsically engaging,” (Ames, 1990; Ames, 1992; Brophy, 1998; Maehr & Midgley, 1991).

Now that the students have used the writing process several times, the content of mini-lessons has become more interesting and challenging. They have just finished a unit where students were asked to state their opinions with supporting reasons and a strong conclusion. Once they understood the concept, we were able to work together to choose topics that were interesting to them. The challenge was making sure that their work fit the framework of an opinion piece as we had learned. Students that were prepared for a greater challenge could push themselves during independent work while I could push them during conferences by as asking open ended questions or offering a more complex twist on the same topic given to the class (Stipek, pp. 259). While it was nearly impossible to have topics that were interesting to every student daily, each child was allowed to choose the piece they wanted to publish, making the task more personally meaningful (Stipek, pp. 259).

This being said, all of my students do receive the same mini-lesson. The children all need to participate in the required curriculums, now the Common Core, in order to be prepared for fourth grade. However, I conference with each student on a regular basis and use conference time to provide additional instruction as is appropriate for the student involved. Students who are ready for enrichment receive it and for students who require additional support I will re-teach to help them master those skills. One of the wonderful things about writing is that each student writes at his/her own level every time he/she picks up a pencil. My focus is to use the starting level of each student, work on certain skills with the goal of improving a particular aspect of their writing (as often as possible these goals are selected in conjunction with the student), and track their progress through records of our meetings and through daily writing material. It does not matter so much about where a student begins, but it is important that they make progress and continually improve.

**Authority** should be, “…share[d] with students by providing them choice and input on learning activities,” (Ames, 1990; Ames, 1992; Brophy, 1998; Maehr & Midgley, 1991).

In my classroom we spend a considerable amount of time as a class developing our behavioral expectations at the start of each school year. Once these have been developed, they are applied as consistently as I am able to. Students support each other in meeting these norms, but I am the primary enforcer. However, at the end of most lessons I will ask students how they feel that lesson went and why, and they will show me their initial thinking with what I call a thumb check (thumbs up, thumbs down, or somewhere in the middle). They are very good at recognizing when the classroom was a bit loud or when people were off task, as well as when everything ran smoothly. They are as honest about the negatives as they are the positives, and are open to sharing ideas for how to maintain the good while changing the not so good. There are also times when the students will approach me during the independent work portion of a lesson and tell me they feel the room is too loud or that they would like to work in an alternate location because of distractions. If I agree with them I will help that student make the changes necessary for them to remain on task and sometimes make the alterations to the whole work environment if it is needed for the majority of students.

“**Recognize** all students who make progress and show improvement, not just the highest achievers,” (Ames, 1990; Ames, 1992; Brophy, 1998; Maehr & Midgley, 1991).

I am a firm believer that all people, particularly growing children, need to be recognized for their efforts in some way. This does not mean that every child in my class receives copious praise each day, but it does mean that they are complimented when they are working hard or have made progress. This means recognizing what constitutes progress for each child. If a student, such as Brian, struggles to generate more than one sentence per day for a week, and then gradually is able to continually write at least 2-3 sentences per day that is progress for time on task and quantity of writing produced. He needs to know that his efforts are paying off. If another student writes 6 pages and all of the writing is a single sentence, it would be progress for that child to use a handful of periods to separate each thought. Again, he/she needs to know that growth has been achieved. This emphasis on, “…learning, mastery, and understanding,” (Stipek, pp. 260) allows students to focus on understanding the process instead of the quantity of writing produced.

Because of these beliefs, I try to compliment each child I meet with, either during conferences or my circulations of the classroom, on some aspect of their work or work ethic. Some children need more support than others, but all children need to be recognized. This is why I track student progress toward goals during our conferences and review that data with the student involved privately. Additionally, I encourage students to recognize each other by sharing their work. I do not force students who are truly uncomfortable to share, but I push all of the children to share at some point. This gives their classmates the opportunity to compliment each other. I will sometimes ask students privately before share time if they want to share an accomplishment I know they are proud of. I can then give them that chance, or if they do not want to read their own story but want the work shared, I will occasionally offer to read a student’s story for them. This is not my first choice, but for some students this is a huge leap, and I want them to feel secure sharing a piece of work that is personal for them.

“**Group** in ways that promote cooperative learning and minimize interpersonal competition and social comparison,” (Ames, 1990; Ames, 1992; Brophy, 1998; Maehr & Midgley, 1991).

Most of my mini-lessons are whole group based, and I prefer to have my students gathered on the rug in front of the SMARTboard during these lessons. This is because there is a document projector hooked up and this can be used for writing demonstrations. Many of these lessons also have a grouping component. Groups are usually partners, but partners and the methods they are chosen vary depending on the lesson and desired outcome. Sometimes partners are chosen by who each child is sitting next to for a turn and talk partnership, but other times I will pull from the ‘fair stick mug,’ resulting in a random selection, allow students to choose, or have a prepared list of partners based on interests, work ethic, ability level, etc.

I like to vary the groupings so that the students learn to work with all of their classmates at one point or another and this does not come easily for some children. The ability to interact with each other in a positive and productive way is just as important of a social goal for most third graders as the goals connected to a Writer’s Workshop mini-lesson. These mini-lessons are ideal opportunities to practice these skills because partner-based activities are generally less than 10 minutes and most of the kids can work with any of their peers when they know the duration is so short. I have seen a tremendous amount of improvement since the start of the school year with the children’s ability to work with one another in a productive manner.

**Evaluation** should be, “…focus[ed] on individualized assessment of progress rather than comparisons of individuals or groups,” (Ames, 1990; Ames, 1992; Brophy, 1998; Maehr & Midgley, 1991).

I help students to evaluate their own work during conferences while simultaneously providing a teacher evaluation of their work. I want to know what the student feels his/her strengths and weaknesses are, and connect them with my own findings to make sure that he/she feels connected to goals set for his/her progress. I also hope that students will progress to the point where they can select appropriate personal goals for their writing (Stipek, pp. 261). I also feel that it is important for my students to evaluate their own progress in conjunction with my evaluation so that we are a team in the learning process. I want to make sure that the goals my students set are high yet achievable, will help them to grow in a specific skill, and are measurable in some way. This does not come naturally to some children, and I want them to feel some success while ensuring that they are being pushed in some way. As students develop these abilities I am able to step back and facilitate the accomplishments of the students (Stipek, pp. 261).

Additionally, I mandate that students have several peer conferences on each of their pieces with different students as they progress through the writing process. In peer conferences I have students give their partner a compliment of at least one feature of the piece as well as at least one ‘helpful hint’, a place where they feel their partner could add more detail or improve in some way that is not spelling or punctuation. Both the compliment and helpful hint are to be content based, specific, and clear. All feedback is taken as a suggestion, and any changes to the writing piece are made by the author. The students have gotten quite good at these conferences and can usually discuss each student’s story in approximately 7 minutes or less.

One final form of evaluation also lies with the students of the class, and that is our share time at the end of most Workshops. This happens at all stages of the writing process, including before and after revisions have been made to the work. I will ask for volunteers or pull a name from our fair stick mug, but I will not force a student to share if they do not want to. After a student has read their work out loud, their peers and I have a chance to respond in the form of comments or questions, both of which can be compliments or helpful hints. This evaluation is public and everyone participates, increasing the stress level. However, by giving students the chance to pass I hope to decrease that pressure. I encourage all students to share, particularly as the year progresses, but I do not want this to be a trauma and I will not force the issue. I may offer to modify the mode of sharing by reading the piece myself. As the year has progressed fewer students have asked to pass and more students request to share each day. They are also comfortable enough to use a microphone system the classroom has installed to insure that each student can hear what is being shared.

**Time** should be used, “…in creative ways that ease the constraints of rigid scheduling and allow for more use of valuable learning activities that are hard to fit into shorter class periods,” (Ames, 1990; Ames, 1992; Brophy, 1998; Maehr & Midgley, 1991).

The overall timing of Writer’s Workshop is 30-40 minutes daily. Within that time frame, some days the writing component is 15 minutes, other times closer to 30. Similarly, the mini-lesson may last for 5 minutes, and other times for 10 or 15 minutes. Each day is different depending on the lesson being taught, the mentality of the class, or where we are in the writing process. We are not often able to extend the lesson beyond 40 minutes due to various scheduling constraints, but it is possible if necessary. However, this timeline fits well with the current stamina level of my class.

**Overall Conclusions:**

Based on the data presented in these factors, it seems clear that Brian is most motivated by his peers’ opinions of him and his ability to view himself as a successful student. He wants his classmates to see him as smart and does not feel that they currently do. He sees that he produces less writing than some of his classmates, and feels that they also see this and may be judging him. Additionally, he does not want to work in an alternate location because he feels that would be broadcasting the fact that he needs more help than the other students do. He has made significant progress, but he is working significantly below grade level. These feelings lead Brian to avoid work whenever he can. His avoidances include mildly disruptive behaviors, distracting the teacher, extreme pencil sharpening, bathroom visits, or trips to the nurse. Other people cannot see you fail if the work never gets done, and this may be more important to him than doing the assignment for credit.

However, Brian also values my opinion of his abilities. When I am able to work with him one-on-one or in a small group he will attempt his work and show how much he can do. Once he gets started and feels confident that he has some good ideas, he will now write independently until these ideas run out, usually 10-15 minutes. This provides me with opportunities to recognize his efforts and their results, which will hopefully lead to a continued upward trend in both his motivation to begin assignments and his overall ability levels. His quantity of writing is still not what I hope for at this time of year, but the quality of his work has improved tremendously, which is more important to me. He responds well to praise, and when he is recognized for one aspect of his work, he wants to get that same praise daily. He also now believes his work is worthy of sharing at the end of class and is proud of what he has completed, even if it is less than a page.

I could improve helping students to feel value in the material. Because the curriculum that I work with is highly structured, I have limited flexibility with the topics covered during Writer’s Workshop. However, I can take the time to work with my students to learn in what ways these topics may already be of value to them in their lives, and how I can help them to understand the value of the topics if they do not have a connection. I believe the class would also benefit if the students were provided with more opportunities to choose what they learn, how they learn it, and the method of evaluation. This could mean changes in how I utilize grouping, the types of mini-lessons that are taught, and how students are evaluated.

**Motivational Strategies (using the TARGET Framework):**

**Tasks** should be selected, “…so as to provide an optimal level of challenge and to emphasize activities that students find interesting and intrinsically engaging,” (Ames, 1990; Ames, 1992; Brophy, 1998; Maehr & Midgley, 1991).

Because one of Brian’s largest struggles is maintaining his stamina throughout the full workshop, one goal is to increase his interest, both initially to help him begin tasks and part-way through the lesson so that he remains invested in the assignment and will continue working throughout the lesson.  The class is on the brink of beginning a unit on narratives, providing a natural segue into initiating some of these strategies.  First, several new graphic organizers will be introduced to the class as tools to organize their thinking and help them to keep track of all the ideas they would like to write about.   These organizers will allow the children to get all of their initial thoughts written out before taking the time to process those ideas and sort them into a cohesive narrative.  They will not be as worried about forgetting what they are thinking and are less likely to get ‘stuck’ and run out of ideas.  The graphic organizers will be introduced one at a time to help minimize anxiety about using the new tool.

Additionally, all students will be asked to bring in a small selection of items, such as photographs or souvenirs from a vacation, that hold value for them.  “Students are more motivated when the topics are personally interesting,” (Stipek, pp. 181).  Each item will be used as the foundation of a different narrative writing piece.  By providing the students with both the choice of which items to bring in and the opportunity to write about something that is important to them, their interest level in the task is likely to be high.  These methods will allow the teacher to use multiple lesson formats for the same subject matter, supporting the theory that, “Variation in instruction and assignments is associated with higher levels of motivation,” (Stipek, pp. 183) and will also help to meet the students’ need for autonomy, as discussed in Brophy on page 163.

As a way to improve Brian’s stamina while writing narratives that are not about the aforementioned personal items, I also will set up the writing topic choices so that I can give a ‘twist’ part way through the lesson.  I would warn the students that they would be expected to add or change something in their story once the twist has been announced at the beginning so that they are prepared once it is announced and are not thrown so far off track that they no longer feel successful.  This twist will add something new to the assignment so that by the time that some students (Brian in particular) get bored and begin avoiding the task or get stuck, their interest can be reinvigorated and renewed, but will not be so big that the task becomes impossible.  For example, halfway through the writing time the students may be asked to change the setting or to introduce a new character.  This will hopefully increase the class’ intrinsic motivation by, “…enhance[ing] … sources of intrinsic motivation: (b) curiosity (include elements that will stimulate curiosity); … [and] (d) fantasy (embellish activities in ways that encourage students to engage in them with a playful set, identification with fictional characters, or involvement in a world of fantasy)…” (Brophy, pp. 190).  What was boring only moments earlier, will hopefully become exciting again.

**Authority** should be, “…share[d] with students by providing them choice and input on learning activities,” (Ames, 1990; Ames, 1992; Brophy, 1998; Maehr & Midgley, 1991).

I think that the best way to re-examine the authority levels in my classroom is to look at new whole class initiatives that everyone can participate in. One that I would like to implement in a class tracking system of on task workers during the workshop time. I could generate a blank bar graph format that has a place for each day in a week that will cover one month time spans. At the end of each workshop, the class would have a method of signaling if they felt they stayed on task and focused for the whole workshop (e.g. raising their hands, thumbs-up, or a more private method), and I would then fill in the bar to the appropriate number of students for that day. This tracking system would allow us to use what we are already doing with daily behavior check ins and step it up to make it more meaningful to the whole class since, “Students also are more likely to follow through when their performance will be monitored and evaluated,” (Brophy, pp. 56). We could set weekly and/or monthly class goals for how many students will be on task and for how many days. If we meet those goals, there would be a special, writing related, event as a reward. Because we are already doing parts of this method, the students know that it is absolutely possible for everyone to be on task for an entire workshop, and this is vital because, “Rewards can only act as motivators only for students who believe that they have a chance to get the rewards if they put forth reasonable efforts,” (Brophy, pp. 137). The reward is attainable, but the responsibility for achieving the reward will lie more with the children than with me.

This event would be decided and agreed upon as a class, but I would like to suggest to them a Writer’s Café where each student can set up their desks with their published stories from the year and open their notebook to their favorite rough draft story. The students would then have time to walk around the classroom and read each others’ work, perhaps with a juice box or special snack. They could talk to each other about what they liked in everyone’s stories. Another option might be a story/poetry slam where we spend one Writer’s Workshop time period giving everyone who would like to the opportunity to share. The kids could choose where they would like to sit, we could set the room up like there was a stage, and maybe even make a few decorations or posters for the event. If the class wanted to we could also invite their parents in to hear the shares.

There are many different options, but the hope for these events is to motivate each member of the class to remain on task throughout Writer’s Workshop. We would plan the desired event at the outset of the behavior tracking chart so that everyone knows exactly what we are working towards, and that we are measuring on-task behavior because that makes it easier for everyone in the class to learn and become better writers because, “The key to rewarding effectively is to do so in ways that support students’ motivation to learn…” (Brophy, pp. 136). Then, during workshop lessons and work time, the students would be able to hold each other accountable for staying focused. They may be more motivated to ignore table-group mates who try to start conversations or give each other friendly reminders to stay on task. The job of keeping the kids focused and on track will then lie more with the children themselves, allowing me to better focus on conferences and the writing needs of the students. However, I will still be able to oversee the process as the one who fills out the graphs. I will help ensure honesty as the students learn how to self-monitor their behavior during the initial phases of this plan, and I will also be the one to oversee our class’ progress toward our goal although the kids are the one who set each goal.

“**Recognize** all students who make progress and show improvement, not just the highest achievers,” (Ames, 1990; Ames, 1992; Brophy, 1998; Maehr & Midgley, 1991).

As previously stated, it is important for all students to be recognized for both their growth and their achievements. A method for this that I believe would be beneficial for Brian is for him to have a special, trusted adult within the school who he would like to go to to show off school work that he is proud of. This person would be of Brian’s choosing, with their permission, and we would work together to pick times for Brian to show off his personal achievements. These could be writing stories that he and I are both proud of, math assignments that he completed correctly with minimal help, books that he has finished reading, among many other options. The goal is for Brian to be proud of his work and to recognize that his work is worthy of being proud of. I can reinforce those feelings to an extent, but I think it would be helpful for him to have another, ‘go to’ adult, perhaps the nurse, secretary, or principal, to send those same messages. This will allow him to focus on doing work that he is proud of because, “People who focus on achieving success tend to approach achievement situations willingly, to prefer activities that are moderately difficult for them, and to engage in those activities with emphasis on developing their skills,” (Brophy, pp. 45). Currently, Brian does not trust that any hard work on his part will pay off in his academics, and until he begins to believe that his gains in work ethic and academic progress may stagnate or even stop. I am hopeful that this setup will increase Brian’s motivation so that he is more willing to put in the work needed to generate published writing pieces that meet the content and mechanic standards of third grade, without a major focus on the length of the writing piece.

“**Group** in ways that promote cooperative learning and minimize interpersonal competition and social comparison,” (Ames, 1990; Ames, 1992; Brophy, 1998; Maehr & Midgley, 1991).

I know that Brian places a high value on his peers’ opinion of him and of his work, and while my ultimate goal is to help increase both his academic abilities and self-confidence, until he has reached the point where his opinion is more important than his classmates’ I will pay very close attention to how groups are utilized, both during instruction as well as during independent work times such as peer conferences. It is important that Brian continue to feel some measure of success, particularly since he has already made so much growth in this area. Because of this, I will structure groups during my lesson so that Brian is regularly matched with students who are at a similar ability level with him while varying who is more advanced. I believe that it will be helpful for Brian to feel that he is an expert at times because he can help his partner with aspects of writing that they are struggling with, while at other times having Brian be the learner and recognizing that there is always room to grow. This represents a style of cooperative learning that will hopefully improve Brian’s intrinsic motivation to write (Brophy, pp. 170).

However, I do not want the discrepancies to be so vast that either student feels they are way out of their league. A partnership is ideal when both partners have something to offer to the other, and I think it would be helpful for me to place more emphasis on how partners and groups are chosen in order to provide support to Brian’s progress in Writer’s Workshop. Hopefully, these changes will lead to continued growth in Brian’s self-confidence as well as a more advanced rate of progress for the technical and content aspects of his writing.

**Evaluation** should be, “…focus[ed] on individualized assessment of progress rather than comparisons of individuals or groups,” (Ames, 1990; Ames, 1992; Brophy, 1998; Maehr & Midgley, 1991).

A cognitive/intrinsic motivational strategy that my school has implemented for grades 2-6 is our data binders. In these binders there are sections for reading, writing, mathematics, science, social studies, and AIMSweb (a group of assessment tools for several subject areas). The students will be given a copy of, ‘I Can’ statements for each appropriate section, based on the Common Core when possible or the district curriculum when not possible. The goal is then for each student to track his/her progress toward accomplishing tasks associated with the I Can statements, and use their progress to set personal achievement goals with teacher guidance. For example, they may have a group of I Can statements that asks them to decide if they are able to write a piece in which they state their opinion on a topic, provide supporting reasons for their opinion, and include a conclusion that relates to their opinion. The students may choose a goal that relates to any one of those statements, or perhaps something more mechanically related (e.g. punctuation or sentence structure) because they feel confident in their abilities to complete each of those tasks. When they have finished writing their opinion piece, each student would include a copy of their published opinion piece in their data binder and use that writing to analyze whether or not they can check off each of the I Can statements and the related goals. This will be helpful because, “Assessment information will be most useful to you and your students if it reflects progress made toward major instructional goals…[and] daily lesson participation and work on assignments, especially work on significant projects, should be used at least as much as tests to provide a basis for assessing progress and grading students,” (Brophy, pp. 63).

Because the students can choose their goals, they are much more likely to be invested in the area in which they would like to improve.  By setting these goals in a conference with their teacher, they can be directly connected to the workshop while still allowing for the freedom of choice.  Thus, the goal is something that the student is interested in achieving and he/she will want to participate in the lessons and assignments in order to make progress toward achieving their goal.  Students will learn about realistic goal setting, in order to produce goals that are easily achievable through dedication.  The data binders are not shared between students and these goals would be private.  We are in the very early stages of using these binders, so we do not have any results yet, but I have high hopes for how these binders will affect learning behaviors and motivation for all students involved.

**Time** should be used, “…in creative ways that ease the constraints of rigid scheduling and allow for more use of valuable learning activities that are hard to fit into shorter class periods,” (Ames, 1990; Ames, 1992; Brophy, 1998; Maehr & Midgley, 1991).

Unfortunately, the timing of our workshop is still rather inflexible. Our scheduled window of time provides for a 5-10 minute mini-lesson, 20-25 minutes of independent writing and conferences, and 5-10 minutes of sharing with the timing of each element flexing as needed based on content, the attitude of the class as a whole, and where we are in the writing process. My goal at this time is to spend as much of the allotted time actually writing as is possible, allowing my students to practice the skills we are working on as well as exercise their creative muscles as much as they can. On very rare occasions we may be able to extend the workshop, but because it means removing another mandatory component of literacy instruction (as defined by my school), it is not a viable, regular option.

References:

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