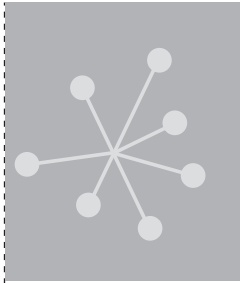




HOW TO
Motivate
Reluctant Learners

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MASTERING

THE PRINCIPLES OF GREAT

TEACHING

How to Motivate Reluctant Learners

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How to Use This Guide

At the heart of most theories and books on motivation is a presumption of effort—the idea that even students who are disengaged or disruptive will put forth some effort or comply with classroom rules most of the time. Teachers know how to handle students who are occasionally disengaged. We all also have some idea of how to handle disruptive behaviors so that students will comply with our rules even if they are not wholeheartedly cooperating. And we can work with kids who are at least willing to go through the motions. But what about students who have opted out entirely? What about students who openly resist our best efforts? While many motivational theories work well for students who are willing to at least play the game of school, they often don't address what to do about students who do not even try and may even be out-and-out hostile to learning.

This how-to guide shows you how master teachers motivate the most reluctant students—the ones who actively fight efforts to help them learn or passive-aggressively resist attempts to engage them. Rather than review tricks and strategies for setting up reward systems, or present creative new ways to entice or cajole students to do their work, this how-to guide will help you develop a plan for getting students to choose to invest in their own learning and engage meaningfully in the classroom.

The key is to examine motivation from a different perspective. We'll start by thinking of students' knowledge, effort, abilities, and interests as

“currencies”—things of value that they can “invest” in order to obtain something they want: additional knowledge or skill, satisfaction, validation, status, and so on. Through this lens, motivation can be seen as the decision students make each day to invest those currencies in the classroom. Based on the mastery principle “Start Where Your Students Are,” this guide shows you how to determine what investments you need students to make in your classroom, shape your classroom to make it more likely that students will make those investments, identify and address the reasons students aren’t investing in your classroom, and invite students to invest in your classroom and sustain their investment over time.

Use this guide to read, reflect, plan, and implement strategies that will make your classroom a place where all your students are actively participating in their own learning. Regardless of the grade level or discipline you teach, the concepts and strategies in this book will help you help your reluctant students discover their competence, successfully navigate school culture, take risks in the classroom, and become engaged in their learning.

How This Guide Is Structured

How to Motivate Reluctant Learners begins with an **Introduction to the Mastery Principle** and a **Self-Assessment**—a diagnostic tool to help you identify where your current application of the principle “Start Where Your Students Are” falls on the continuum of mastery teaching. Then, it’s on to the guide’s five chapters, each helping you take another step toward developing a comprehensive approach to motivation:

- **Chapter 1: Identifying the Right Investments** will help you figure out what motivation looks like in your classroom. You’ll reflect on the skills and behaviors you value most and determine the specific investments you want students to make in your classroom.
- **Chapter 2: Creating a Classroom Worth Investing In** will help you uncover and remove any practice- and procedure-related barriers that may be unintentionally demotivating your students. You’ll learn about the unique needs and expectations of 21st-century learners and ways to use autonomy, mastery, purpose, and belonging to create a classroom climate that students will find worth their investment.
- **Chapter 3: Understanding and Addressing Student Resistance** focuses on uncovering the reasons students are unmotivated and shares ways to start overcoming

their reluctance to learn. You'll learn how to help students let go of defensive stances and "I don't care" attitudes and begin to use their powers for good.

- **Chapter 4: Asking For and Shaping an Investment** offers ideas for how to ask for the right investment in the right way. You will learn how to use "the five Be's" to secure students' initial commitment to invest in your classroom and how to steer them toward successful engagement.

- **Chapter 5: Putting It All Together** shows you how take all that you have learned throughout this guide and develop a plan for helping students shift from unmotivated to motivated behaviors in the classroom. You'll also learn strategies for sustaining their motivation over time.



Throughout the guide, **Your Turn** sections provide suggestions for how to begin taking action in your own classroom. These suggestions are divided into four levels, keyed to your current level of principle application:

- **Acquire.** The suggestions here are designed to help those working at the novice level develop a better understanding of the principle and of their own teaching practice as it relates to the principle.

- **Apply.** The suggestions here focus on showing those working at the apprentice level how to use the guide's strategies in their teaching practice.

- **Assimilate.** The suggestions here are designed give those working at the practitioner level additional ideas about how to incorporate the principle and strategies into their existing practice.

- **Adapt.** The suggestions here will help those working at the master teacher level take a fresh look at their own practice and customize some of the guide's strategies in a way that's right for them and their students.

Think of this guide like a spiral staircase in which you return to the same concepts more than once, each time pushing yourself to an incrementally higher level as you proceed toward mastery. The breaks between each level are natural "rest stops"—places where you will know you've made substantial progress and can pause so that you won't feel overwhelmed or stuck before moving forward. Rest assured, even if you don't move beyond the *Acquire* suggestions your first time through the guide, you will still have made progress. Stop there and try those skills out in your classroom. Then, as your ability and confidence grow, you can return with the next unit in mind.

Each time you will continue enhancing your practice by ramping up to the apprentice level and beyond as you build your master teacher mindset and refine your practice.

Tools

Within each section, you'll also find other tools to help you reach your goals, including



→ **Checklists** outlining what you will accomplish at each step.



→ **Time-Saving Tips** to steer you toward information that will allow you to complete each step more quickly.



→ **Checkpoint Summaries** that quickly summarize some of the main concepts in this guide. You can use these to assess your own understanding of specific concepts and as a handy reminder of some of the key points.



→ **Take It Step by Step** boxes that summarize the key steps in a process and serve as handy reminders later on.



→ **Learn More Online** sections that point you to other strategies and additional resources available on the web.



→ **Think About** sections that raise reflection questions designed to prompt you to consider what you've read and make connections to your own classroom and teaching practice.



→ **Yes, But . . .** sections addressing common objections and reservations teachers sometimes express in relation to these strategies. These sections will help you resolve some practical challenges and overcome any hesitation you might be feeling.

You will also find a variety of worksheets, planning templates, and strategy sheets that will help you capture your learning and build a comprehensive plan. The **Appendixes** at the end of the guide offer a reference list of student currencies, a selection of instructional strategies designed to address the root causes of student resistance, and an example of a complete motivation plan. Feel free to write in this

guide, make copies of the worksheets, or download resources on the companion website, www.mindstepsinc.com/motivation.

Your Approach

If you are working through this how-to guide individually, first take time to understand the book's general framework. Preview the material and make a commitment to spend a certain amount of time each week working through the various steps. You can read through the book entirely before deciding where to begin, or you can jump right in and start trying some of the strategies outlined. Either way, be sure to reflect periodically on how applying these strategies affects your practice and your students. Then, adjust your practice accordingly.

If you are working through this book with other teachers in a small-group setting, begin with an overview of the various steps in the process and discuss which steps might give each group member the most trouble and in which steps members of your group might have some expertise. Use this information to designate a group facilitator for each step in order to keep everyone focused and on track. Then, make a commitment as a group about how you will work through the steps individually, and meet regularly to discuss your progress, share your triumphs, and brainstorm ways around your challenges. You can use the "Think About" sections as a starting point for group discussion and then share individual strategies that you have implemented in the classroom.

If you are an administrator or teacher leader, this book will give you an overview of the planning for motivation that should be happening in every classroom. And it will provide you with useful tools you can offer to teachers as you conference with them and support their professional development.

Share Your Progress

As always, we want to hear from you! Contact us at info@mindstepsinc.com to ask questions, share your experiences, and pass along success stories of how you've motivated your students. Administrators and district-level leaders are welcome to contact us to learn more about the supports Mindsteps Inc. offers for teachers and schools; give us a call at 1-888-565-8881, e-mail us at info@mindstepsinc.com, or visit us on the web at www.mindstepsinc.com.

Identifying the Right Investments



In this chapter you will . . .

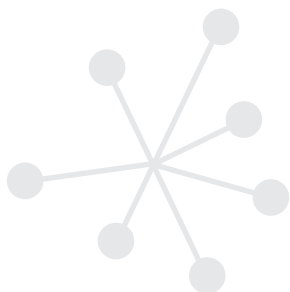
- Determine what motivation will look like in your classroom.
- Identify what investment or investments you want students to make in your classroom.
- Refine these investments to make them specific, meaningful, observable, realistic, worth the effort, and small.



Time-Saving Tools

You will complete the work in this chapter more quickly if you have the following handy:

- Your reflection from the Introduction's "Think About" section on page 19.



How do you motivate students to invest in your

classroom? The first step is to determine what specific investments you want them to make.

When teachers say that they want motivated students, they can mean vastly different things. Some teachers mean that they want their students to be inspired and develop a deep and abiding love for learning. Some mean that they want their students to be interested in their coursework and engaged in class. Some mean that they want students to try—to put forth the effort of learning and to ask questions when they don't understand. And some teachers simply want students to do their homework and come to school on time. These are all different kinds of investments.

Further complicating things is that our ideas about the kinds of investments we want students to make may or may not be realistic, or even important. We may want them to wriggle with excitement every time we pull out the place-value mats, or smile with delight each time we pass out another Elizabethan sonnet to discuss, but are excitement and delight actually prerequisites to learning? We may want them to keep meticulous desks or carefully catalog every handout using a more complicated version of the Dewey decimal system, but can students still learn effectively when their desks are less than spotless and their notebooks less than pristine? Before we work on how to get students to invest in our classrooms, the first step is to make sure that we are asking for the right investments.