

Creativity as an Intrinsic Motivator

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## Creativity as an Intrinsic Motivator

Creativity in the classroom can be used as a motivational tool for managing students' behavior because creativity in learning provides the stimulus to intrinsically motivate students to learn. This motivational method is documented to provide more engagement, more thorough learning qualities, and better internal rewards for students. Creativity is not only a good tool for higher levels of learning, but it is important for effective classroom management as well. Creativity is important for an individual's psychological, physical, social, and career success'. Individuals who make creative breakthroughs tend to be inquisitive, explorers, and tinkerers as children. (Woolfolk, 2011) Understanding what creativity is, how it is used, how it can be a motivator and the positive effects it has on students is essential to using creativity as an intrinsic motivational tool.

To understand how creativity can be used in the classroom, an understanding of exactly what creativity is becomes essential. Psychologists "define creativity in terms of a mental process." (Prabhu, Sutton, & Sauser 2008 p. 53) Educators may define creativity as "the production of novel thoughts, solutions, or products based on previous experience and knowledge." (Cole, Sugioka, & Yamagata-Lynch 1999 p. 277) Some researchers feel the need to define creativity based upon the outcome of creative actions. Prabhu, Sutton, & Sauser (2008) posit that "A creative idea is marked by three attributes: it must be original, it must be useful or appropriate for the situation in which it occurs, and it must actually be put to some use." (p. 53) As discussed by Woolfolk, the importance of creativity is important for one's psychological well being and successes. Lesson plans that spell out how learning is to take place and do not require critical thought and discovery are not creative. Without these creative elements in a lesson plan, deep engagement and understanding do not occur. It is not only essential for a teacher to foster creativity, but it is essential for the teacher to give creative options in his/her lesson plan.

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Creative learning can be in the form of the imagination, role playing, activities, games, research, and more. The level of engagement in an activity is one of the best predictors of learning.

(Demir 2011) Creativity in the classroom has a myriad of effects on the students and the classroom environment. As suggested by Cole, Sugioka, and Yamagata-Lynch (1999), it is an essential element that is necessary for learning therefore educators should provide elements in their classrooms that support creativity.

It is important for educators to understand that everyone has the capability of producing creative work and being creative. (Chaffee 2011) Imagination plays a key role in creativity, and educators can promote imaginative processes in their students in formal and informal learning environments. (Eckhoff & Urbach 2008) Imagination is so important that it has been called the “heart of creativity.” (Burnard, Craft, Cremin, Duffy, Hanson, Keene, Haynes, & Burns 2006) Educators can foster creativity in their classrooms in several ways. The way the classroom environment is set up is one way. Setting up an environment that fosters exploration and learning enhances creative abilities. It is important in this process to not undermine the creative abilities of special needs students. Technology can also be incorporated in the classroom process to promote creative expressions in all students. (Vermillion, Hannafin, & Whiescarver 2008) To understand how creativity can be used as an intrinsic motivator, a clear understanding of the different types of motivators is essential.

There are two main types of motivators; extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. An educator can choose to provide extrinsic motivations, but it is essentially the students who decide whether these extrinsic motivators actually motivate them. Extrinsic motivation is based upon the students receiving a reward of some type for their efforts. This reward can be a tangible or intangible item. Examples would be stickers, a piece of candy, or a verbal accolade.

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If a student is not motivated by a verbal accolade this type of reward would not be a motivator. This is why differentiation is important in all things educators do. Intrinsic motivation is much the opposite of extrinsic motivation in that it comes from internal motivation and not external. According to Starko (2010) “Intrinsic motivation comes from within, as a positive response to the task itself. It spurs a person to explore, to persist, and to achieve based on the satisfaction of the task itself.” (p. 247) For example, one student's reward would be the knowledge that they surpassed the goal, or the knowledge that they overcame a challenge. For some students the internal motivation is as simple as wanting to do a certain type of project, or learning more about a particular subject. (Demir 2011) The importance of either motivation is simple. A motivation must exist for a student to learn, or students do not meaningfully learn. As discussed earlier, it is up to the educator to provide an environment that would provide opportunities to foster the feelings of motivation.

From a classroom management perspective, intrinsic motivation decreases disciplinary problems. According to Baker, Lang, & Lawson (2002), “good inquiry – based activities, when properly introduced, increase student interest and motivation, and that greatly reduces classroom control problems.” (p.248) Inquiry-based activities in the classroom allow children to explore and research questions within their content areas. This in turn will shift the extrinsic motivator of a good grade into an intrinsic motivator because students want to learn to satisfy their own curiosity. One way this can be accomplished is by giving choice in learning, or choice in how assignments can be completed. When children are highly engaged in their learning and highly motivated, they stay on task and do not pose as big of a discipline problem because their attention is on the activity and learning at hand, and not on other issues. It is important for educators to understand that limits can be set without undermining intrinsic motivation as long as

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they know that the less constraints an activity has, the more creative the students are allowed to be, and therefore the more intrinsically motivated they will be. (Koestner, Ryan, Bernieri, & Holt 1984)

Controversy currently exists about which type of motivation is better than the other. According to Eisenberger and Shanock (2003) some researchers posit that the use of rewards “reduces intrinsic motivation and therefore creativity.” (p.121) Some researchers have shown though that the right reward will make individuals work at becoming more creative. As discussed earlier, not all rewards are considered motivators for every individual student. Because we can assert that creativity can be taught, it is logical to assume that extrinsic motivation can aid in more creativity for students. More creativity equals more engagement by the students, and more learning. In contrast Starko (2010) discusses how rewards made children less inclined to be intrinsically motivated and in the process stifled their creativity. Creativity and intrinsic motivation are both dependent upon the other. The argument is still present however, that in some cases students will not be intrinsically motivated to learn certain things, or complete certain tasks, therefore extrinsic motivators may need to be used. Because it is known that rewards decrease intrinsic motivation which in turns decreases creativity; it can be assumed that a project that has an extrinsic reward will be less creative than a project that was fueled by intrinsic motivation.

Creativity is an essential element in every classroom across all content areas. Creativity in lesson planning and creative measures used by students fuel engagement and deeper levels of learning. This deeper engagement is caused by students who are intrinsically motivated to learn. They want to learn for the sake of learning. In addition to the deeper level of learning taking place in the classroom, the teacher also enjoys a less disruptive room and benefits by using

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creativity and intrinsic motivation as a classroom management tool. The ultimate goal is to for students to be motivated to learn for learning's sake. Research shows that creativity and intrinsic motivation are linked. The importance of intrinsic motivation is that children who are motivated by their own internal wants pursue their learning more thoroughly than those who are doing learning for an extrinsic reward. Those who are extrinsically rewarded are more apt to do what is needed to get the grade or get the prize, while intrinsically motivated learners go above and beyond for their own personal wants and needs. It should be the goal of every teacher to intrinsically motivate their students. The more creative classrooms are made, the more intrinsic the motivation. As creativity rises, intrinsic motivation rises, and creativity raises more. The end result is deeper, more meaningful learning for all students.

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