
Engaging Schools: Fostering High School Students' Motivation to Learn

National Research Council

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Pedagogical Knowledge: Books

DESCRIPTION

Engaging Schools: Fostering High School Students' Motivation to Learn, by the National Research Council, examines how curriculum, instruction, and the organization of schools work together to lead to student engagement or disengagement. The report cautions the urgency of reform must not lead to quick fixes but rather to the implementation of policies and practices that attend to the underlying psychological factors leading to motivation. Their recommendations include:



1. Redesigning high school courses and instructional methods to increase adolescent engagement and learning
2. Utilizing ongoing classroom based assessment of students' understanding and skills
3. Providing professional learning opportunities for high school teachers in deep content knowledge and a range of pedagogical strategies and understandings about adolescents and how they learn
4. Providing the support and resources necessary to help *all* high school students to meet challenging standards
5. Testing to assess high-level, critical thinking
6. Restructuring high schools to create smaller learning communities that foster relationships between teachers and students
7. Eliminating tracking by ability
8. Diffusing school guidance and counseling responsibilities among school staff
9. Improving communication, coordination, and trust among the adults in the various settings where adolescents spend their time
10. Making greater efforts to identify and coordinate with social and health services in the community

STAGE 1 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Engaging Schools: Fostering High School Students Motivation to Learn, by the National Research Council, supports stage 1 development of leaders working to know and model the teaching and learning principle.

Chapter 2, “The Nature and Conditions of Engagement,” provides background information on motivation and conditions that promote intellectual engagement.

Chapter 3, “Teaching and Learning,” describes three effective mathematics programs, The Algebra Project, MESA Program, and QUASAR, that provide examples of what engaging mathematics might look like in classrooms.

STAGE 2 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Engaging Schools: Fostering High School Students Motivation to Learn, by the National Research Council, supports stage 2 development of leadership of all students and teachers within the mathematics program. While many people refer to motivation as a personal quality, research shows that motivation, or student engagement, is affected by many factors including personal dispositions and beliefs shaped by the educational environment. Leaders working to develop engaging schools will find this book a helpful resource. Supporting teachers in a culture of collaboration might be enhanced by using the text to explore beliefs and practices of mathematics teachers in motivating students in an engaging, high quality program.

A five minute podcast, available at the National Academy Press website, provides a brief introduction to the ideas of motivation and engagement discussed in the text. Facilitating a collaborative group working to enhance student motivation in mathematics might begin with listening to and discussing the podcast. The Executive Summary, available from the same website, provides a brief overview for those working to promote student engagement. Partners might read one of the ten recommendations and share a statement of how the recommendation might be used in the local school. Working collaboratively, the group might choose one or more recommendations to study further and to implement.

Chapter 3, “Teaching and Learning,” provides information specific to mathematics. Three effective programs are described, The Algebra Project, MESA Program, and QUASAR, that also include the practical training and social support necessary for teachers working together to improve student learning.