

Oldfather, P., & Thomas, S. (1998). What does it mean when high school teachers participate in collaborative research with students on literacy motivations? *Teachers College Record*, 99, 647-691.

Key Words: motivation, culturally responsive instruction

Summary:

Much of the current research on motivation focuses on literacy achievement motivation rather than on students' intrinsic motivation. The researchers, while working on a student-initiated research project with teachers and students, look at how students and teachers talk about motivation for literacy learning. This article focuses on how teachers view motivation for literacy learning across the curriculum and how this view is influenced by their teaching philosophies.

Assumptions:

- Students and teachers are most directly responsible for and affected by issues related to motivation for literacy learning.
- Language is at the center of literacy learning processes.
- Literacy learning is negotiated by members of the learning community.
- Intrinsic motivation is the natural action to engage in one's interests.
- Central to the idea of intrinsic motivation is the participant's satisfaction with the endeavor.

Findings:

- The teachers in this study felt that building personal relationships with students was the most important part of their jobs.
- Teachers saw teaching (all teaching, not just literacy) as a blend of who they are as people and teachers, what the world outside of school is, and who the students are in and out of the school setting rather than simple curriculum and best teaching practices.
- Teachers held high expectations for their students. They expected students not only to perform at a particular level or benchmark, but also to be the best that they were capable of.
- Teachers created environments where students were able to talk freely and learn from one another.
- Teachers viewed their practices and teaching philosophies as outside the accepted, traditional school norms.

Conclusions:

Teachers believed their teaching philosophies centered on student knowledge, voice, identity, and student/teacher relationships. They believed that these educational philosophies and approaches to education kept students motivated in regards to literacy learning (and other kinds of learning).

Suggestions for Teachers:

- Take time to articulate your philosophy of teaching, including your desired relationship with students. Consider how this philosophy might influence students' motivation for learning.
- Find ways to foster student talk during instruction.

Suggestions for Literacy Leaders:

- Help teachers explore the role that student talk can play instructionally.
- Help teachers explore the relationship between their relationships with students and students' motivation for learning.