

Academic Motivation

What is Academic Motivation?

A student that is academically motivated wants to learn, likes learning-related activities, and believes school is important.

Development of Academic Motivation

Children are naturally motivated to learn when they are infants. A baby's struggle to reach a toy, learn to walk, or eat without help are examples of motivation to learn. This early motivation to learn is later applied to school-related activities such as reading and writing. When children are not motivated to learn, it is usually because something has gotten in the way of natural motivation. They often believe they cannot do well in school-related tasks and stop trying or do not try hard enough because they do not think their efforts will make a difference. They may also become easily frustrated and give up when learning is difficult.

Many things influence poor academic motivation to include:

- A learning disability
- Difficult temperament
- Developmental Delay
- Depression or chronic life stress

Additionally, students who have failed school before are also very likely to stop trying because they develop a belief that they are going to be unsuccessful anyway. The attitudes of adults also influence a student's belief about their academic success. Parents who have unrealistic standards can actually discourage their child's efforts.

Increasing Motivation to Learn

There are many things parents can do to increase their child's academic motivation to include:

- Talk with your child about school and show an interest in their school activities.
- Talk with your child about their career interests and how school is related to that career.
- Do family activities that encourage learning, such as visits to the museums, parks, theatre.

- Have a set routine for schoolwork. Your child should know when he or she is expected to work on their schoolwork each day.
- Set up a place to study where your child has the needed supplies and as much quiet as necessary.
- Make sure your child finishes schoolwork at home before doing things that could distract them from doing their schoolwork.
- Show your child you respect their teachers. Don't handle disagreement with the teacher in front of your child.
- Talk regularly with the teachers so each of you knows what is going on in school and home.
- Develop a system to give reinforcements at home for working hard in school.
- Balance praise and punishment when you are helping your child. Too much punishment can be discouraging. Make sure your child knows what is expected and gets some kind of recognition. Remember, rewards don't always mean getting money or privileges. Just telling your child that you are proud of them or you notice the effort they put into their work will make a big difference.

If Your Child is Already Having Problems with Academic

Motivation

- Talk with your child about the problem. Is he feeling confused or frustrated by the work? Does your child feel he is trying hard to do well?
- Talk with your child's teacher to identify areas in need or improvement.
- Let your child know you are willing to help them do better.
- Help your child identify things he does well so that the focus is only on areas of difficulty.
- Reward effort and productivity
- Provide increased rewards for improvement
- Limit things that interfere with learning, such as excessive TV, video games, computer time, etc.
- Increase the amount of time your child studies each day by a small amount – 5 to 10 minutes until you reach a reasonable goal.

Getting More Help if Necessary

- Access the resources available on campus. The before and after school tutoring center is a great place to start. Additionally, many teachers are at school early in the morning or late after school to help students individually.
- Access specific courses provided at school such as School Success, Reading Strategies, and Algebra Topics. These courses, which serve as elective credit, may provide the additional help your student needs to be successful.