

Dr. Christine Davis, Editor

Classroom Management

Dr. Erin Tapley teaches Art for the Elementary/Secondary Teacher, University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh, as well as art classes for future general elementary teachers.

There is no question that to survive and especially to survive in a complex society, it is necessary to work for external goals and to postpone immediate gratifications.
(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)

Classroom management is perhaps the largest challenge for a clinical student or first year art teacher, but a close second is dealing with the unmotivated student. I know my student teachers have taken ownership of the high school classroom when they express frustration with certain students' complacency. They worry aloud about certain students who sit in class and do nothing or do anything but art.

The solution for this problem should not be creating new external motivational forces for these students but pinpointing how the student might do this for himself. Student complacency in the classroom may be an inability to release preoccupation with oneself (boredom manifestation) or one's surroundings (anxiety manifestation) but either state causes off-task behavior (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Getting the student to become more autotelic can eliminate this. An autotelic person sets attainable goals, becomes immersed in activities, maintains attentiveness to activities, and enjoys the immediate moments of these activities. Most people have felt this delightful focus at some time or another doing something they enjoy, but few realize that it can be nurtured. Although creating visual art has often been associated with exclusive talent or waves of temperamental inspiration, it is really an activity which can captivate anyone who is willing to become actively engaged in its processes.

Setting the Ground Work for Hard Work in the Art Classroom

I have found these steps helpful in increasing student motivation in the art room

- On the first day of the semester have students compile a list of what "effort" looks like and doesn't look like in terms of classroom activity. This can be an amusing and ice breaking exercise as well.
- Make analogies of the art class to athletics. Suit up, warm up, work out, and cool down (clean up).
- Have students assess their potential performance typology for your art class. Write down how **they** think they can increase their chances of experiencing "flow" in learning in your class, based on what they know of themselves and their learning style.

Empowering Projects

- State the long-term and short-term purpose of every assignment—beyond curricular requirement, i.e., imagination stretching, hypothetical graphic designer task, etc.
- Involve the class in setting assignment parameters such as deadlines but—be sure this is challenging since other great assignments await!

National Art Education
Association

1916 Association Drive

Reston, VA 20191-1590

703•860•8000

naea@dgs.dgsys.com

www.naea-reston.org

- Occasionally inject a project with community significance (Rufer, Lake, Robinson, Hicks). If the project genuinely benefits others in some way, one has just modeled good citizenship and the **service** of art therein.
- High school students also show significant interest in utilitarian creations. A good indication of an engaging project is one that goes home with them without prompting.
- Teach students to know the difference between being creatively engaged versus doing busywork and be vigilant in calling them on this matter. Question any long lasting creating process, which could be done equally well in front of a television.

Troubleshooting the Fear Factor of "Getting Started"

- List actions to be taken if a student lacks ideas for each assignment.
- Help a student focus their inspiration-seeking quest by writing down what they are looking for and setting a time limit.
- Encourage students to talk to resource personnel (such as librarians, other teachers, or adults in the community) rather than surfing the Net for ideas, images, etc.
- Demonstrate ways of transferring the external stimulus (such as a still life object to paper) so students will not become obsessed with certain inefficient or needlessly difficult methods.

Motivational Maintenance

- Minimize work to be done at home, there are usually more distractions and less materials there than students think.

- Do not listen to radio stations during the most creative process of the project (commentary encourages conversation and distractive ideas).
- Prohibit eating/drinking throughout the class.
- Ensure that classroom lighting/temperature/air flow/furniture placement is optimal for comfort and alertness.
- Minimize the "leftover" visual stimuli of the room (cover the work of a previous class with solid sheets to give each class a feeling of newness and spaciousness).
- Encourage physical dynamism in the art making process. Have students stand more than they sit.

Teacher Presence

- Be sure to model your own art making (processes) so they will understand how professionals also struggle with motivation.

References

- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow. The psychology of optimal experience*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers.
- Rufer, L., Lake, B., Robinson, E., & Hicks, J. (1998). "Stretching our boundaries and breaking barriers to the public mind." *Art Education*, 51(3), p. 43-51, May 1998. NAEA, Reston, VA.

Additional Resources

- Csikszentmihalyi, M. & Getzels, J.W. (1976). *The creative vision: A longitudinal study of problem finding in art*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Gardner, H. (1999). *The Disciplined Mind: What all students should understand*. New York: Simon & Schuster.