

Middle School Teachers' Motivation Methods

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

According to the National Middle School Association (2003), there are 20,000,000 diverse, rapidly changing 10 to 15 year olds enrolled in our nation's middle level schools who are making critical and complex life choices. A middle level school is typically a school that provides education for grades five through eight. With so many students, teachers are continuously looking for ways to engage their students and promote activate learning because of the many personal change they undergo. A typical middle school student will undergo substantial change in his/her physical appearance, beliefs, and values. These changes will affect his/her performance in school and his/her relationship with adults. With these life changes, middle school students crave positive and supportive relationships from their peers and teachers. Teachers at the middle school level need to understand how these changes affect their students' academic achievement, self-concept development, and achievement motivation. (Wigfield, 2005) Teachers also need to think about other factors such as the gender, poverty, or ethnicity that can tremendously impact their students' academic achievements. (National Middle School Association, 2003)

In order to provide a learning environment conducive to the success of young adolescents, a middle school curriculum should provide and promote a learning environment based upon developmental readiness, needs, and interest. (National Middle School Association, 2003) Teachers need to create safe and challenging classrooms to promote learning as the needs of young adults change over time. Teachers also need to be able to see the differences in their students' cognitive abilities, home environment, personal physical challenges and culture.

(Theobald, 2006) Motivating middle school students is challenging because of their transformation from young children to young adults as well as their transition from the elementary into the middle school setting.

According to Margaret Theobald (2006), one of the challenges for teachers is to provide an environment and atmosphere that stimulates a student's desire to learn. In order for learning to occur, students must be willing to accept information and able to understand and process it. To teach new concepts teachers must work hard to motivate middle school students. Motivation is the study of why people think and behave the way they do (Graham, 2006). Teachers are puzzled by the fact that some students are motivated to learn while others are not. While some students appear eager to learn others do not.

This study was conducted in the Mid-Ohio Valley which is located in an area with much history, great scenery, and adventure in a location near to where the Ohio River cuts into Parkersburg, West Virginia. The targeted area covers three school districts. These districts have a school building report from "Continuous Improvement" to "Effective" according to the Ohio Department of Education and West Virginia Department of Education websites. (*West Virginia Achieves*, 2004-2005; Ohio Department of Education, 2006-2007). At each of these middle schools, there exist methods of motivation that teachers use can in their classroom to fit their school's culture and levels of student achievement. Are these districts using the same methods of motivation? Is there a connection between the school building report card and their methods of motivation? An important aspect of ensuring success at the middle school level is to make sure students are successful in their academic endeavors as this is essential for our society's future. What are the methods of motivation used in these school districts? Interviews with six

teachers provide great insight into and wisdom about their strategies and methods of motivation to future teachers, other educators and parents.

Statement of the problem

This master's research project seeks to identify methods of motivation used at the middle school level in the Mid-Ohio Valley and how these methods help motivate students. The literature will examine research on the theory of motivation and methods used in today's classroom.

Research Questions

- What is motivation in middle school setting?
- Who are the students in the middle school setting?
- What methods of motivation do teachers use in their classroom?
- How do teacher and student relationships enhance motivation?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this master's research project is to identify current methods of motivation used at the middle school level in the Mid-Ohio Valley. Research indicates that well-established methods of motivation contribute to academic achievement. The purpose of the literature review is to examine the research on motivation at the middle school level and methods that work in the classroom. The literature and this study seek to provide insight into current methods of motivation.

Limitations

For the purpose of this master's research project, six in-service teachers were interviewed who taught at the middle school level. The project focused on these teachers' views on their methods of motivation in the classroom and included one or two class period observations. The

literature study focused on journal articles concerning practices and methods of motivation in the classroom and motivation theory.

There are several limitations on this master's research project. The study focused on only six in-service teachers and one or two class period observations. Out of six teachers, one teacher refused to participate in the interview but opened her classroom for observation. All of the teachers were female and all schools were located a rural area in the Mid-Ohio Valley. There was limited time spent with each teacher. Consequently, a full comprehensive study could not be generated.

The literature research focused on motivation theory, student self-concept, classroom strategies, and student-teacher relationships. Research findings offered different methods of motivation for teachers to use between grades four and eight and provided many strategies teachers can use in their classroom that are flexible enough to accommodate any adaptations each classroom or student may need.

Definition of Terms

Cooperative Learning—students interact in purposely heterogeneous groups to support the learning of self and others in the same group.

Extrinsic motivation—motivation that comes from outside the individual; a reward system. (Graham, 2006; Kohn, 1993).

Intrinsic motivation—humans are naturally motivated to develop their intellectual and other competencies and to take pleasure in their accomplishments. (Kohn, 1993; Stipek, 2006).

Identity—a term broader than either self-concept or self-esteem, referring to individuals' general sense of themselves and their psychological reality that includes many different beliefs and attitudes about self (Wigfield, Lutz, & Wagner, 2005).

Multiple Intelligences—Gardner proposed that school should offer “individual-centered education” with curricula tailored to the needs of each child. There are nine specific intelligences found across cultures: musical, bodily-kinesthetic, linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, spiritual and naturalistic (Turnbull, Turnbull, & Wehymer, 1995, 2007)

Self-concept—an individual's beliefs about and evaluations of their characteristics, roles, abilities, and relationships (Wigfield et al., 2005).

Self-esteem—is the individuals' sense of his or her overall worth or value as a person (Wigfield et al., 2005).

Organization of the Body

Chapter One provides the background information on motivation in relation to student achievement at the middle school level and information about school districts in the Mid-Ohio Valley. Chapter Two is a literature review. Chapter Three explains the methodology used in this master's research project. Chapter Four presents the finding of the research project. Finally, Chapter Five includes the summary, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter One presented background information on issues of motivation in middle school settings and its importance to student achievement. This chapter identifies several significant factors that impact the motivation of middle school students with regard to motivational strategies teachers use in the classroom and the relationship with their students. This chapter provides a review of literature addressing middle school student motivation, classroom strategies, and student-teacher relationships. This chapter organized according to the essential questions listed in Chapter One. The first section will provide information on characteristics of middle school students. The second section will present research findings on motivation theory. The third section will address classroom strategies that promote student engagement. The fourth section will discuss the teacher's role and his/her relationship with middle school students.

Middle School Students

There are many factors that affect middle school students' motivation because they are students who are going through major physical and emotional changes between the ages of 10 and 15 years old. According to the National Middle School Association (2003), these students are forming attitudes, values, and habits of mind that will largely direct their behavior as adults. These young adults come from different backgrounds, including emotionally barren homes and unsafe and poor neighborhoods. These deprivations often leave children emotionally scared long before they enter middle school (Marshall, 1987). As students transition from grade school to middle school, there is often a decline in their academic motivation because of the larger school

environment, less personal attention, classroom ability grouping, and more formal settings (Eccles, Midgley, Reuman, Mac Iver, & Feldlaufer, 1993; Davis, 2006).

Motivation Theory

Extrinsic Motivation. Motivation is the driving force behind all the actions of an individual and it is the base of one's emotions and achievement-related goals (Rabideau, 2005). In most middle school settings, an extrinsic reward system is used to monitor student behavior and achievement. Studies show classrooms that use base reinforcement on extrinsic rewards actually hinder classroom motivation (Baltes, Cahill, & Morretto, 2000). An extrinsic rewards system is based on a token economy program where a student is rewarded a prize for doing something good or attaining a goal, and at the same time the prize is taken away when the student does not perform or attain the intended achievement goals. In *Punishment by Rewards* Kohn (1993) argues that reward systems are often successful at increasing the probability that students will do something but that as soon as the reward system is taken away their motivation decreases. Also, the more students are rewarded for doing something, the more they tend to lose interest in whatever they had to do to get the reward. Kohn (1995) suggests that in order to promote intrinsic motivation in the classroom, "teachers should provide an engaging curriculum and a caring atmosphere so kids can act on their natural desire to find out."

Baltes, Cahill, and Morretto (2000) conducted a sixteen-week research study that targeted student population in Kindergarten, fourth grade, and sixth grade at two grade school sites and one middle school site. Their findings indicated teachers actually contribute to a decline of student motivation by thinking it is necessary to "reward" students to do something. Their findings indicated low levels of academic achievement prior to their study. During the sixteen-week intervention program, the participating teachers implemented strategies that were

consistent with cooperative learning, multiple intelligences, and positive discipline to create a positive, motivating, and safe environment. Data from pre and post intervention interviews from teachers and students indicated increased motivation and reduced misbehavior that led to more time for academic instruction resulting in student academic and personal growth (Baltes, et al. 2000).

Intrinsic Motivation. Motivation is extremely important in the middle school because it can enhance or hinder the success of a student's educational experiences (Baltes et al., 2000). In order for students to feel motivated be successful at school they need to meet five basic needs. These needs are survival, belonging, power, freedom, and fun (Copeland, Davis, Foley, Morley, & Nyman, 2001). When adolescents feel secure in their environment they can focus on their interests and are able to fully engage in their learning. In the middle school classroom, students tend to question their purpose of learning. Young adolescent motivation theory is built on two broad questions which are: "How can I succeed on this task?" and "Do I want to succeed on this task?" (Eccles et al., 1993). In order for students to learn, teachers need to focus on intrinsic motivation because it is far more effective than rewards at providing excellence (Kohn, 1993). Intrinsic motivation is the key to motivating middle school students and can only be attained if students are willing to internally accept the challenge of the new concept. Research suggests that middle school students are social beings (Brazee, 2003) and have the intrinsic desire to learn and complete a task is for its own sake and rather than external factors (Baltes et al. 2000; Kohn, 1993).

Murdock and Miller (2003) examined the relation between eighth-grade students' achievement motivation and their perceptions of teacher caring. Their study included 206 students who were followed from grade seven to grade eight. The school was located in a mid-

size semi-urban school district in the Midwestern United States. The researchers assessed students' self-efficacy, intrinsic valuing of schooling, and teacher-related efforts as motivational indicators using variable-centered (regression) and person-centered (cluster analytic) techniques. Results indicated that students' perceived teacher caring accounted for their motivation in academic achievement. Findings indicated that every year when students perceived that their teacher cared about them there was a five percent increase in motivation resulting in a long-term gain year after year

Self-Regulation. For intrinsic motivation to occur, middle school students must set goals for the future that can generate sufficient emotions to produce action and think that one has the ability to achieve the stated goals (Gehlbach & Roeser, 2002). Middle school students need to take responsibility for their own learning and to become self-regulated learners because it can lead to greater academic achievement and an increase sense of efficacy (Dembo & Eaton 2000).

Dembo and Eaton (2000) studied the important component of academic success in student motivation and ability to take responsibility for one's own learning. Self-regulation is the student's ability to control the factors or conditions that affect his/her learning (Dembo & Eaton, 2000). The authors discussed each of Zimmerman's models of academic self-regulation that identify six dimensions of behavior that influence learning. Dr. Zimmerman has completed numerous studies on students' ability to accept responsibilities for their academic success. The six dimensions of self-regulated learners are motivation, methods of learning, use of time, physical environment, social environment, and performance. The study's findings suggests middle school students are able to monitor and control their behavior by setting goals, using their prior knowledge, considering alternative strategies, developing plans to resolve problems with

school work, and considering contingency plans. By doing so they are able to realize their success or failure on the given assignment or task.

Also, Dembo and Eaton (2000) found that middle school students need to experience greater autonomy in their schoolwork. Research indicates that when adolescents participate in selecting assignments they are more motivated to learn because their interests in the content increase (Dembo & Eaton, 2000). Students are motivated when they are given more autonomy because opportunities to make some of their own decisions increase the likelihood they can align their goals with those of their teachers (Gehlbach & Roeser, 2002).

Wigfield et al. (2005) discussed young adolescents' self-identity and motivational changes that happen during middle school years for middle school counselors. Studies showed that having a positive relationship with teachers and counselors could help ease the transition from the elementary to the middle school setting. The authors suggest that middle school counselors must be responsive to the developmental needs of middle school students.

Middle school counselors should be aware of students' changes in biological, cognitive, self-concept, self-esteem and identity as well as changes in achievement, peer relations, and relationships with teachers. The counselors can ease the transition to middle school by providing programs starting the year before the transition such as providing orientations during which young adolescents are counseled on goal setting, conflict resolution, and career awareness. Together with the teachers, counselors can help facilitate these programs in the curriculum to ensure success. Adolescents are more likely to be optimal learners if they are interested in what they are learning (Kohn, 1993). At this stage teachers can influence students but they cannot cause the students to become internally motivated (Corder, 1999). Middle school students need

their teachers' support to increase their motivation in class to fully benefit socially and academically.

In a review of three literatures combined with a yearlong case study in a rural middle school, Davis (2006) reported that students do better in school when they have a strong relationship with their teachers. Research also indicated that students had fun in classes where they had a good relationship with a teacher during their middle school years. The students were able to work harder and tried to do more challenging work because they felt safe and they were able to talk to the teacher and took intellectual risks. Once students are comfortable in their environment, they become secure and are ready to learn and motivated to stay on task. Furthermore, seeing one's teacher as supportive and caring increases the likelihood that students value education, see themselves as capable, subscribe to values that are consistent with those expected in schools such as being pro social and compliant, tend to set high education goals for themselves, and avoid involvement in behaviors such as cheating that could lead to disciplinary action (Murdock & Miller, 2003).

Classroom Strategies

Student-Centered Learning. A teacher's challenge is finding a creative way to design different learning environments. Student-centered learning facilitates student engagement during class time by designing hands-on activities that help students construct their own meaning of the new concept in class. In this type of classroom, students socially interact with their teachers and peers through discussions of ideas and meaning. Learning then becomes relevant to the students' lives, interests, and needs. Teachers need to remember there is no one right answer to solve problems and address actual challenges in their classroom. It is also important to note that tasks

and projects need to be personalized to motivate and interest students (Baltes et al. 2000; Kohn, 1993).

Hootstein (1995) conducted a research study in which he interviewed eighteen U. S. history teachers at the eighth-grade level and administered questionnaires to 60 of their students in seven middle schools located in a Pacific Northwest school district. His research aimed to detect differences in the effectiveness of teaching strategies used in the classroom. Results indicated that when teachers used simulations, role playing, organized group discussion, use of games, and collaborative learning, they made the class more motivating because they helped their students to construct vivid mental images of situations that are often absent from present experiences and also gave their students to have some measure of control over their school learning. (Hootstein, 1995) When both curriculum and classroom management are student-centered, students not only learn more in the short run, but develop into independent, self-disciplined, life-long learners (Erb, 1997).

Student-Led Parent-Teacher Conferences. Another method to increase motivation is to empower middle school students. Borba and Olvera (2001) discuss the use of student-led parent-teacher conferences in Gustine Middle School. Researchers reported success in the middle school located in Gustine, California that implemented a student-led parent-teacher conference in grades six, seven, and eight with 373 students. Their findings indicated that students who take ownership of their learning are able to self-reflect on what they have learned, accomplished, or failed to accomplish. Students became more aware of their strengths and weaknesses so they were able to set personal goals for improvement.

Another benefit of student-led parent-teacher conferences is the relationship between students and adults was greatly enhanced. According to Borba and Olvera (2001), the open

communication that happens between the students, teachers, and parents during the conferences allows each student to gain personal insight as a learner, enhance his or her sense of self, and concentrate on how to improve learning (Borba & Olvera, 2001).

Portfolios. Also, the collection process of student work for their portfolio enhanced student-teacher social interaction. Portfolios are collections of a student's best work over time compiled into one folder. Portfolios enable a student to look at what he or she had completed over time. Teachers can also use the portfolios to assess or evaluate a student's progress. Teachers can help empower students by giving them opportunity to choose from their work.

Research indicates that the use of student portfolios contributes to student learning because students are able to reflect what they are learning into the world around them (Copeland et al., 2001). Middle school students need to actively participate in the evaluation of their academic progress because the self-reflection and close interaction with teachers will help them to think about and act on personal initiatives to improve their own learning (Borba & Olvera, 2001). Research also reports that students who take ownership of their learning are not left at home wondering about what their teachers had to say about them.

Relevance. Teachers' classroom delivery plays an important factor in student motivation. The presence of motivation depends upon the interactions between teachers and students (Gehlbach & Roeser, 2002). Acknowledging and validating student needs can result in a humane way to create an orderly environment that provides structure and sets limits (Erb, 1997). Teachers need to make the concept interesting and relate the topics to student's interests and the world around them.

Corder (1999) found that when teachers present connections between students' lives and new lessons, students become more motivated. In this study, the researcher took ten teachers

from one Virginia middle school and observed their classroom behaviors and interactions with students. The teachers participated in an interview about their definition of motivation, general practices, and behaviors that motivated students. Results indicated that establishing a positive teacher-student relationship was a strong motivator especially when teachers presented connections between students' lives beyond the classroom and the material presented in the lesson (Corder, 1999).

Marshall (1987) found that students become highly motivated to learn when the teacher uses a great number of motivational statements regarding the purpose and the value of the lessons. This research studied teachers' strategies that supported motivation to learn. There were three fifth-grade teachers who participated in the study. Each teacher used different strategies and methods to motivate his/her students. Research results indicated that when a teacher used positive motivational statements that praised the students' achievement instead of rewards, students found the classes to be more fun and challenging, and engaged less in off-task behaviors. Motivating statements used by teachers included some of the following: "You are going to think," "I'm going to trick you", and "Look bright." Teachers also held students responsible for their homework and made learning a game (Marshall, 1987).

There are many ways to increase motivation and lessen boredom in the classroom. Hootstein (1994) discusses the following eight strategies teachers can use in the classroom:

1. Relate the learning task to the students' needs, interests, concerns, and experiences.
2. Make explicit the intended value of learning.
3. Share and model the value of learning
4. Encourage students to pursue their own interest in active ways.
5. Stimulate curiosity by offering novel, surprising, and mysterious information.

6. Create a discrepancy by providing incongruous, conflictual, and paradoxical information.
7. Ask thought-provoking questions and encourage students to ask their own questions.
8. Make abstract content more concrete or familiar.

Teachers-Student Relationship

Teachers, parents, and other educators want students to become great thinkers, wonderful readers and writers, and strong problem solvers who can make connections between different ideas. The teachers' goals for motivating middle school students should focus on quality or lasting commitment to a value. What really matters is not how motivated a student is but the source and nature of the motivation the teacher provides (Kohn, 1993). Teachers must maintain a balance between control and discipline in the classroom without compromising students' motivation to learn. Also, there is more competition that exists among students such as social comparison, ability to self-assess, and heightened self-focus (Eccles et al., 1993).

There are many strategies and teaching methods researchers offer to counter these challenging issues of middle school student motivation. The strategies and methods discussed in this paper work for middle school students and are based on intrinsic motivation. These types of methods and strategies are centered on the student's inner self such that the student is the center of his or her own learning and the drive to learn is from within him or her.

Another challenge that teachers and educators face with middle school students is they do not stay in one classroom with one teacher throughout the day (Murdock & Miller, 2003), which makes it difficult to create stronger relationships (Eccles et al., 1993; Wentzel, 1998).

Eccles et al. (1993) examined the influence of school and classroom environmental factors. They found that in order for adolescents to be engaged and ready to learn, they need a

safe, positive, and intellectually challenging environment. Factors that contributed to low motivation in the middle school came from teachers who wanted to control the classroom and gave students fewer decision-making opportunities.

Powell (1997) compared the perception of teachers and their students about the frequency with which teachers used motivational strategies that supported mastery goals with both high and low performing students. There were 47 middle school teachers and 314 high performing and 243 low performing students who participated in the study. Both teachers and students answered a 27-item questionnaire that measured the extent to which teachers used adaptive motivational strategies. Results indicated teachers used more motivational strategies with the high achieving students.

Wentzel (1998) examined the supportive relationships with parents, teachers, and peers in relation to motivation at school. There were 167 sixth graders who participated in the study. The findings indicated peer support is a positive predictor of positive behavior where students receive good grades and stay out of trouble. The perceived motivation support from parents and teachers were not so high of a motivation factor in the success of students because they only ask for support from teachers and parents as the need arises while motivational support from peers was a constant motivator in school.

Summary

Middle school students are special. Researchers indicated they undergo many changes and they are constantly thinking about their social obligations and their physical changes that could cause low motivation in academic achievement. In order to motivate middle school students, researchers suggest using intrinsic motivation over external motivation. When teachers use intrinsic motivation, middle school students are more interested in learning. Teachers need

to use different methods of motivation in their teaching methods. In research done by Borba and Olvera (2001) and Baldes (2001), middle school students show a level of increase in motivation when they are given responsibilities such as participation in parent teacher conferences and hands on activities that help construct meaning in what they are learning. Learning for middle school students must be related to their lives, interests, and needs.

More importantly, when middle school students are given directions and taught how to regulate their academic achievement, social success such as staying out of trouble and making good grades are a sign of success. According to Dembo and Eaton (2000), when middle school students learn how to regulate their learning, they tend to have a good social life.

To achieve greater success of academic achievement, teachers are the key to middle school performance. Research conducted by Powell (1997) found that teachers use more motivational strategies in the high achieving students; therefore, teachers need to use more motivational strategies on low achieving students in order to bridge the gap.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Research and Design

The purpose of this study was to find out what methods of motivation teachers are currently using in their classrooms. In order to gather the most accurate data this study used a questionnaire and classroom observation to identify the methods of motivation the teacher in this study used. The questionnaire provided additional information to validate findings from the interview. The findings of this study will help other pre-service and in-service teachers to further their knowledge about methods of motivation that work for middle school students.

Selection

The participating teachers were purposely chosen from among and with assistance of graduate students in the teacher preparation program at Ohio University. The researcher was able to identify six female teachers from four different districts in the Mid-Ohio Valley. There are many school districts surrounding the Mid-Ohio Valley but for the purpose of anonymity, the identified districts' and teachers' names have been changed. However, actual test scores and results were used to help define each school's community factors. The researcher has never met the six identified teachers prior to the day of the interview and observations.

Research Method

The research procedure included several steps. First, the researcher contacted the potential teachers and principals for the necessary time and date of the observation and interview. Of all the four schools, only McKinley Middle School's principal set the time and day and chose which teachers to be interviewed for the research. The observations took place first

and then were followed up by interviews. The interviews took place in each teacher's classroom and each interview was recorded using a digital audio recorder. During the interviews, the teachers were asked ten questions (see appendix B) and their answers were recorded. Immediately after the interview, the researcher typed the script for reference and then erased the recordings.

Schools and Community

All of the schools selected are within 25 miles from the Parkersburg-Marietta Metro area. The metro area provides many occupations; according to the U.S. Census of 2000, the top three ranking positions shows that 27.5% of the people in this metro area are in management, professional, and related occupations. Followed closely, 26.7% of the people in this metro area are in sales and office occupations. Finally, people who work in production, transportation, and material moving occupations hold 20.1% of the occupations.

The top three highest producing industries in the metro area are education, health care, and social services at 21.7%, followed by retail at 19.7%, and manufacturing at 19.1%. Also according to the U.S. Census, 18% of the people living in the metro area earn between \$50,000 and 74,999, and only 1.1% of the people make over \$200,000 or more.

Schools and Participating Teachers

Lincoln Junior High. Lincoln Junior High is connected to the Lincoln Elementary School. The school is a red brick one story building that includes grades 7-9. There were 642 students at Lincoln Junior High; 54% are male students and 46% female. There are 222 students in the 7th grade, 211 students in the 8th grade, and 209 students in the 9th grade. There were 39 teachers in the school, and for every teacher there are 17 students.

The students at Lincoln Junior High School are 98% white and 1% African American, while 1% is listed as unknown. 27% of students are eligible for free lunch, and 5% are eligible for reduced lunch. Mrs. Hedrick and Mrs. Revere are the participating teachers at this school. According to the Local School Report Card, Lincoln Junior High School students scored at the “proficient” level and above. The overall performance index score for the seventh grade is 78% and for the eighth grade is 87%.

Mrs. Hedrick had been teaching for the last eight years and began her teaching career as a substitute teacher. Mrs. Hedrick was an easy and fun person to talk to. She was eager to share her classroom and ready to answer any questions the researcher had to ask. Mrs. Hedrick quickly showed the researcher around in the classroom explaining some of the posters that her students had made. She was also an active advisor for the student government. During the initial meeting, students were constantly coming in to say ‘hi’ to greet her. The students seemed at ease with Mrs. Hedrick.

Mrs. Revere was the second participating teacher. She had been teaching for the last 25 years. She has a calm and professional demeanor. Mrs. Revere was dressed very conservatively, and she immediately began discussing the topics for the day’s lesson.

McKinley Middle School. McKinley Middle School is centrally located in an area where all the houses have two car garages. The middle school is the largest building in the Madison School District serving grades 4-8. The school recently had several upgrades: a new roof, an elevator in the building, air conditioning, a new gym floor, and new playground equipment. There was a very active parent/teacher and student group called PTSU (Parents/Teachers/Students United). This group was responsible for fundraising and activities to support student programs and facilities in the school.

There were 451 students at McKinley Middle School. The population consisted of 91% white, 6% multiracial, and 3% unspecified students. 46% of the students were economically disadvantaged, 17% were disabled, and 22% were gifted students. The school had a 96% attendance rate compared to a 94% state average. McKinley Middle School is in Continuous Improvement and did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). However, the students' Performance Index Score for 2006-07 was at 89.6%, an increase of 9.9% from two years prior. The middle school had only met 7 out of 17 state indicators and is currently in Improvement Year 1.

There were 41 staff and faculty members in the building. 90% were fully licensed. The average number of years of teaching experience was 10. 91% held a bachelor's degree and 37% had their master's degree. The average student-teacher ratio was 14 to 1.

Mrs. Young taught fifth grade mathematics and science at the McKinley Middle School. She was a short, petite woman who had been teaching for six years. Mrs. Young had a very professional demeanor in her classroom and the students seemed distant. There were no morning greetings between the teacher and the students. The students immediately sat in their assigned seats and prepared for class. She was very structured in her classroom where everything had its place. Mrs. Young was organized and on top of things as far as her students were concerned with homework and missing assignments.

Mrs. Troyer is the second participating teacher at McKinley. She taught fifth and sixth grade social studies. She was a tall woman and easily approachable. The students in her classroom seemed relaxed and ready to learn. Mrs. Troyer was patient and at times blunt when she needed to redirect a student.

Stonewall Jackson. Stonewall Jackson Middle school was located in a more rural area surrounded by trees. The one-story grayish building provided shelter for the middle and high school students. There are 266 students in the middle school for grades 6-8. 94% of the middle school students were white while 6% were unspecified. 52% of the students were economically disadvantaged, 14% disabled, and 32% gifted. The attendance rate at the school was at 94%, the same as the state average. Based on the school performance index score that measures student achievement of every tested student, Stonewall Jackson was at 82%, an increase from 71% two years ago. Currently, the school is in Continuous Improvement and has not met the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Stonewall Jackson has only met 2 of the 10 required state indicators and the school is “At Risk.”

There are 12 middle school teachers and five supporting staff. All the teachers are fully licensed. Mrs. Lander is part of this faculty. She was in her first year of teaching 7th grade mathematics. Mrs. Lander was funny, outgoing and very much enthusiastic about teaching. Her classroom was well organized and she had posters of mathematics symbols and charts on the wall. Many of her students were fond of her and willing to talk to her about their social problems. Mrs. Lander was also much aware of making sure each and every student was learning and made a conscious effort to teach the lesson’s objectives. She was very helpful and patient with her students as well.

St. Albans School. St. Albans Middle School was located near one of the major highways in the area. The school had a fenced in backyard where there were a playground, soccer field, basketball courts, and paved areas for the students to play during recess. There were no trees surrounding the three story red brick building. There were two trailers with classrooms for two 5th grade and two 6th grade classes.

St. Albans School was rated “effective.” The school had met 15 out of 19 state indicators and scored 98.4% on the Performance Index Score. However, there was a decline in the performance index score since 2004-2005 of .4%. The school also met Adequate Yearly Progress. With an Ohio State requirement of 75%, St. Albans fifth graders last year scored 85.1% in reading, 63.8% in mathematics, 78.7% in science, and 72.3% in social studies.

There were eight teachers in grades 5-8 at St. Albans who had their full credentials. The average teacher experience was 18 years. Every teacher had completed a bachelor’s degree and 89% had their master’s degree. The average student-teacher ratio was 17 to 1.

Mrs. Zornosa was part of the faculty and she taught 5th grade social studies and reading. Her classroom was located in one of the four classroom trailers just behind the main school building. Mrs. Zornosa was approachable and easy to talk to. She had decorated her classroom with many posters of reading but few maps or history timelines. Her students were friendly and she was well aware of their interest in sports events. Mrs. Zornosa was a member of the faculty who actively participated in meetings on diverse topics, from buying new textbooks to implementing new schedules for the coming year.

Observation

During the observations, the researcher sat in the back of the room away from the students and teachers. The researcher was introduced and welcomed in all of the six visited classrooms. As the class progressed with its normal routine, the researcher recorded field notes on such topics as: classroom environment, number of students, decoration or topics on the walls, the presence of motivation charts or progress charts, classroom size, classroom methods, students’ behavior, and the teacher’s attitude in delivering the lesson and how the students reacted to the method (See appendix C).

There was a total of ten classroom observations. Each teacher was observed for two class periods with the exception of Mrs. Lander and Mrs. Zornosa who were observed for only one class period. All of the observations took place in the morning before lunch with the exception of Mrs. Lander and Mrs. Zornosa's observations which took place after lunch..

Classrooms. The researcher carefully observed the room for any related posters or information that pertained to student motivation such as progress charts, behavior charts, student rules, and procedures.

All six classrooms were brightly lit by fluorescent light. Every classroom visited was located in the main building, except for Mrs. Zornosa's whose classroom was located outside the main building in a classroom trailer. All classrooms had at least three computers, bookshelves, and teacher's table and filing cabinets strategically placed around the room.

Also, all six classrooms had instructions posted in case of emergency such as fire, lock down, and tornados. Mrs. Revere and Mrs. Lander had the barest walls with only a few mathematical posters. There were no charts or progress-monitoring posters of any kind in their classrooms.

Mrs. Young and Mrs. Troyer at McKinley Middle School had lots of posters concerning students' academic subjects. Both classrooms had decorated walls with progress monitoring charts for all students to see. There were sticker charts for assignments completed. Also, both teachers used the *Uh-oh* book that was placed in front of the blackboard where all students could get access. Many of the students' assignments that received an A were put on display on one of the sidewalls. Both classrooms had large white posters with the school-wide rules to follow.

Mrs. Hedrick was the only teacher who had the lesson topic written on the black board for each of her classes. There were objectives that she wanted to cover and made sure they were

checked off as the discussion and lecture progressed. Her students were aware of the planned lesson and helped Mrs. Hedrick keep track of the objectives.

Every visited classroom had posters of school rules and student conduct posted where the students could see them. Mrs. Zornosa was the only teacher with procedure charts for classroom management. For example, there was an 8" x 10" poster beside the pencil sharpener that stated when the student could use the device. There were steps for students on how to behave during lecture, reading time, computer time, study hall, fire emergency, and even during classroom discussion.

Number of Students. The researcher noted the number of students per class. In all ten observations. The least amount of students in one class was 14 students, present in Mrs. Hedrick's class, and the classroom with the most students was Mrs. Young's class with 24 students. The average class size for the ten-class observation was 19 students. Overall, there was not an even amount of girls or boys distributed in each classroom; consequently, there were eight classes where boys dominated in number.

Desk arrangements. The researcher noted how the desks/chairs were arranged in the classroom. Out of six visited classrooms, three teachers, Mrs. Hedrick, Mrs. Young, and Mrs. Zornosa, had their chairs/tables grouped together. In Mrs. Young's class the students were given seating arrangement and paired according to their abilities. For example, a talented and gifted child was seated with a student who had an Individualized Education Program (IEP). In Mrs. Zornosa's classroom, students were not given a seating arrangement and most likely were seated with their friends. Mrs. Young had the chairs/tables grouped in sets of two in rows while Mrs. Zornosa and Mrs. Hedrick had their chairs/tables grouped in sets of six.

Teaching Method. The researcher noted what method of instruction the teachers used in their classes. Four teachers taught lessons in each of their classes except for the teachers in McKinley Middle School because Mrs. Young and Mrs. Troyen gave a short review for the test the next day and then proceeded to guide students in organizing their portfolio for the Parent Teacher Conferences.

Mrs. Hedrick and Mrs. Zornosa conducted their classes based on student-centered theory. Both teachers acted as facilitators during class discussions and students were driven to find answers and theories on the topic at hand.

Mrs. Revere lectured in a traditional way and constantly stressed mathematical vocabulary and its importance to test taking skills. The students were quiet as Mrs. Revere presented her lesson on absolute value. For the most part, Mrs. Revere presented a problem and called on students. All students who were called on offered wrong answers and Mrs. Revere reviewed the lesson again.

Mrs. Zornosa guided the students on how to draw conclusions with the materials they just read using a sequencing organizer on the board. The students were able to sequence events in social studies with Mrs. Zornosa's prompting.

Student Behavior. The researcher noted student behavior such as class participation, student redirection, and disruption. Of all classes, Mrs. Lander's class at Stonewall Jackson Middle School included the most student redirection and instances that did not work. The students were all upset about an incident that occurred during lunchtime. The students were not focused on math. The students who were trying to focus on the subject were given a candy bar and one student refused the reward.

The students in Mrs. Revere's classroom were more quiet than normal. They did not volunteer any answers to the questions she posed. Some raised their hands and did not talk until spoken to or called upon.

The students in Mrs. Young and Mrs. Troyer's classes did not like signing the Uh-oh book. There were a total of 18 students who signed the book for a variety of reasons from missing assignments, talking, and incomplete homework.

The students in Mrs. Hedrick's and Mrs. Zornosa's classes were comfortable asking questions and commented on the lesson. There was only one student who needed to be redirected to the task at hand. Mrs. Troyer's students were excited about playing a review game of social studies basketball so they seemed motivated to organize their portfolios. Interviews

All interviews took place immediately after the classroom observations. The prepared questionnaire prompted a casual conversation that took place in each of the teachers' classrooms. All of the interviews lasted fifteen minutes with the exception of Mrs. Hedrick that lasted 25 minutes. From the six identified teachers, only five teachers were interviewed. Mrs. Revere refused the interview because she had a parent conference immediately after her class. She did not suggest coming back and indicated the visit was done. One can only conclude that the parent teacher meeting was a serious one and Mrs. Revere did not know how long the meeting would last.

The interviews for each teacher may have been affected by the following such as: the time of day, the newly developed rapport between the teacher and researcher, the teachers' to-do list that is usually completed during lesson planning time, the teachers' comfort with the topic of motivation, and how the question was worded.

All five teachers responded and welcomed the questions from the questionnaire (see Appendix B). Of the entire ten questions only question six solicited a yes or no question. The other nine questions generated meaningful responses. The researcher asked the same ten questions of all five teachers and followed the same format by starting at question one to question ten. There were two teachers, Mrs. Hedrick and Mrs. Young, who answered questions one, six, and nine all when the first question was asked.

Of the five teachers interviewed, three teachers were not hurried when asked the questions. Mrs. Hedrick, Mrs. Young, and Mrs. Lander were more than happy to answer and able to give more information than what the question asked for. Mrs. Troyen and Mrs. Zornosa seemed hurried during the interview and briefly answered the questions and did not volunteer anymore than what the questions asked.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter is divided into six sections: Methods of Motivation, Meaningful Connections, Teacher Student Connections, Rewards and Punishments, Alternative Methods, and Modifications. Each section addresses one or more of the questions included in the questionnaire (see Appendix B).

Methods of Motivation

Four out of five teachers indicated they use external rewards such as giving out stickers or candy to their students. Mrs. Hedrick used stickers to reward her math students when they did a great job on an assignment or displayed great effort during class time. She used stickers as a reward but did not follow a concrete rule for rewarding her students. Mrs. Hedrick rewarded students based on her discretion alone. The stickers were usually given out the next day and she made a grand scheme when doing so.

In the course of two class observations, two students were presented stickers for a job well done during the previous day's class. Both students were very excited and proud to accept the reward. The other students in the classroom inquired into why the two students received stickers. Mrs. Hedrick quickly responded by telling the whole class that the two students wrote well thought-out math diary entries and did a very good job writing down what they learned from yesterday's lesson.

Mrs. Young and Mrs. Troyen also used stickers as positive rewards in their classroom. Their reward system was based on completing assignments such as homework, activity sheets, and passing a test. Both teachers rewarded students who scored very well on tests and activity

sheets. Mrs. Young and Mrs. Troyen had a very structured way of dispensing stickers to deserving students. For example, when a student turned in five pages of homework in a row he or she received a sticker to put on the poster displayed in the back of the classroom. When they accumulated a certain amount of stickers, the students could redeem a prize from the treat box.

Mrs. Young and Mrs. Troyen also had a structured method of punishing students who did not turn in homework or stay on task during instruction or activity work. Non-motivated students were instructed to sign their name on the Uh-oh notebook located in the front of the classroom. They were told out loud for all other students to hear that they were busy talking during instruction or did not complete their homework. When a student reached three entries in the Uh-oh notebook, the parents were called and notified. On the day of observation, Mrs. Young sent eight students to sign the Uh-oh notebook for not turning in their homework and Mrs. Troyen sent five students to sign the Uh-oh notebook.

Interestingly enough during the observation, the students who were sent to sign the Uh-oh notebook did not need to be told the reason why they were asked to sign. One student volunteered the reason why he signed the book. This student stated to the other students standing in line to sign the Uh-oh book that he did not do his homework.

During the interview, Mrs. Young stated that the Uh-oh notebook worked well for her in terms of keeping track of which student had missed homework and/or had behavioral problems. The notebook also served as documentation that could be used during Parent Teacher Conferences.

Mrs. Landers used candy instead of stickers as a reward in her classroom. She claimed, "I do not have a structured way of giving the rewards, only when I think the students deserve the candy." Mrs. Landers also said her students are always surprised at receiving the candy and they

are excited to receive the reward. During my observation, Ms. Landers gave out candies to six students who were on task and doing their work during and after instruction. One child refused the candy and claimed she did not want it, while the other four were excited to receive theirs. The rewards were handed to each child, but they were not told why they received the candy.

Mrs. Zornosa was the only teacher who did not give out rewards in her classroom. She stated she used many methods of motivation, including verbal prompts to motivate the class or students. Mrs. Zornosa also stated,

I believe fifth grade students are very social people and they have many personalities. I like mixing up my lessons so that kids do not get bored with the same routine everyday. I have to teach social studies and show them how it fits into their lives.

Mrs. Zornosa incorporated fun learning games as well in her lessons. When she reviewed for her chapter tests, she often played jeopardy, tic tac toe, or basketball questions. By using these methods, the students were playing games and yet reviewing what they learned from the chapter. For example when playing the basketball game, there were two groups of students and each student had come up in the front of the classroom to answer a question. If the student correctly answered the question, he or she was given the opportunity to shoot the basketball from a one point or two-point line. The group that earned the most points won the game.

Meaningful Connections

When asked about their motivation theories, Mrs. Hedrick and Mrs. Zornosa both offered answers with the students' interests in mind. For example, Mrs. Hedrick stated,

I have been teaching for the last six years and I know from my two middle school children I needed to be current with the social activities and athletic news within the school in my classroom in order to help motivate my students to learn.”

Mrs. Hedrick believed motivation comes from the student and it is up to her to find out how to engage them. She talked about the stickers to redirect students' behavior. She believed giving out the stickers adds a boost to her students' learning and makes them excited. After the classroom observation, Mrs. Hedrick stated,

Kids who want to learn will want to learn and their grades like A or B is their reward and they are happy with that. But you also get students who do not care at all with their grades and they are difficult to motivate so I am constantly trying to find different ways to get them to be engaged. The stickers work for now.

Mrs. Young has been teaching for four years and Mrs. Troyer has been teaching for two years. They started using the sticker rewards this year and both argued their reward system creates consistency and control in their classroom. They liked the sticker chart because the students could see their own progress. They also liked using the Uh-oh notebook because it held the students accountable while it provided the teachers with a record of the students' academic performance they could share with parents.

Mrs. Zornosa, who has taught for 27 years, believed using group work activities and hands-on projects to help build her students' self-confidence in her students. She indicated that she changes her lesson plans every year to continue to motivate herself to teach and search new ways to engage the students in her history classes. Mrs. Zornosa stated that most of her students do not like social studies and consequently she mainly relies on group work and presentations to motivate them.

Teacher Student Connections

Mrs. Hedrick used different verbal prompts to engage individual students. During the second observation the class consisted of 13 students who all struggled in math. Mrs. Hedrick

used her students' interests to motivate them to learn and solve a given perimeter problem. She quickly changed the book problem into something her students could relate to, such as using the football field as a rectangle with four sides because there are several football players in her math class who are in ninth grade. Also during observation, she used jokes to relate to the kids. Mrs. Hedrick used the perimeter of a regular size basketball court and compared its dimensions to a regular size football field. She joked about football players playing on a smaller size field to show students the relationship between the two fields. This statement immediately provoked a student-led discussion about the different dimensions of their bedrooms, closets, and classrooms. Thus Mrs. Hedrick was able to introduce more math examples based on what her students knew.

Mrs. Landers also used different verbal prompts to motivate her students using what she knew of their interest level. She also had a lot of sports enthusiasts in her classroom. Like Mrs. Hedrick, Mrs. Landers used a football field size in converting yards to meters.

Rewards and Punishments

All five teachers in this study displayed posters of school wide rules and motivation in their classroom, yet each had her own set as well. All teachers claimed they were consistent in using their methods of motivation. It was evident that students were more familiar with the classroom rewards and consequences than those the school administration had implemented.

Only two of the five teachers used the school's method of motivation, and only did so when their own classroom methods did not work. All five teachers in this study had their own motivation plans. Mrs. Hedrick stated that each of the grades in her school had its own motivation plan differed from those in other classrooms and grades. She did not offer a reason for why this was the case. Mrs. Troyen and Mrs. Young were the only teachers who used the same sticker reward program and Uh-oh notebook in their school. They both stated they wished

the school-wide rules for motivation worked in their classroom. Their school's motivation plan called for issuing tickets to reward students for good deeds. When the student collected a certain amount of tickets they could exchange them for spirit wear. If a class achieved a predetermined amount of tickets in one month, the students became eligible to participate in a reward program. These end-of-the-month rewards included such events as an assembly to meet play from the basketball team of a local university or watching a movie.

Mrs. Troyen stated she wished she could follow the school-wide program but that it simply did not work in her classroom because she claims students need immediate feedback especially on their homework assignments to motivate them. The school-wide ticket program did not motivate or entice her students to behave properly or do their homework. Mrs. Troyen strongly believed the parents in her school community were not dedicated enough to encourage their children to do their homework and do well in school.

Mrs. Zornosa indicated most of the upper grades (7th and 8th grade) at her school used the Salzman Plan which includes a five-step process of consequences prior to being referred to the principal: (1) warning, (2) last out/time out, (3) extended time out, (4) parent phone call, (5) buddy room/principal. She claimed the teachers in her school building did not agree with the Salzman plan, which the district implemented two years ago, because it gives the students too many chances before receiving a consequence for negative behavior. She also suggested that five out of the six school buildings in her district used this plan and that it worked for them but does not for her school building. However, she did not offer a reason for why this was the case.

Alternative Methods

Mrs. Hedrick indicated she resorts to changing up the routine in the classroom when her methods of motivation were not working. She claimed that middle school students are

predictable at times but unpredictable at others. When things are not going well in her classroom and the students are not cooperative, she drops the lesson and investigates the situation, sometimes changing the math topic for their journal entries. For example, instead of writing about mathematical terms or algorithms, Mrs. Hedrick she would let her students write about their thoughts and feelings that. On other occasions would take class time out of her lesson to discuss social problems. The main thing she said she did was to consult with the other seventh grade teachers concerning a troubled child during team meetings. During these meetings, the teachers talk about the methods of motivation they use in their separate classrooms. They share what methods work and what methods do not work for certain students. For example, the language arts teacher told her that she motivates her classroom by giving out chocolate candy bars to students achieve. This teacher uses a silent reward system in which she gives the chocolate candy bar to the child while explaining what he or she has accomplished. Through these team meetings, Mrs. Hedrick learns about new methods.

Mrs. Landers knows her method of motivation is not working when she gets frustrated and overwhelmed. This happens when bribing them with candy does not work.

In order to resolve a problem she said, "I usually change things around in my classroom. I just tell them to straighten up, that they are not behaving, and they need to start paying attention and learn the concept of the lesson." She claimed that when she talks to the kids this way they usually get back on task and start working again. She also stated, "My methods of motivation are a work in progress. It is my first year of teaching and I am definitely learning a lot." My observations validated her statement as she effectively redirected her students to the lesson when she admonished them for not paying attention.

When Mrs. Young and Mrs. Troyen's structured sticker programs and Uh-uh notebooks failed to motivate their students they notified their students' parents. They both believed the purpose of the notebook was to keep track of missing work as well as consistent negative behavior. The notebook provided the parents with a report that their student is not motivated. Mrs. Young stated that it served as a reality check for the parent to see their child's record of missed homework and their negative behavior. She argued it motivated parents to get their child back on track but that often after a few weeks the student would go back to the same pattern and routine of missing assignments and negative behaviors.

Modifications

Each teacher had certain ideas about how to modify her methods of motivation. Mrs. Hedrick preferred to use more manipulatives and other hands-on activities to keep her students motivated. She also stated that a teacher gets a new group of students each year and that consequently her methods of motivation will have to accommodate the new classroom structure and community.

Mrs. Young indicated she wanted to change her methods of motivation but did not know how to. She said she had spoken to the principal but that he did not suggest any other methods of motivation she could use in the classroom. Consequently, Mrs. Young did not seem motivated to find other methods than she the ones she was currently using.

Mrs. Troyen liked the sticker rewards and the Uh-uh notebook and planed to use a higher reward point system during next school year. She also said she would try hard to incorporate the school ticket program in her classroom as well.

Mrs. Landers hoped to develop more structured procedures or rules for her candy rewards and claimed that by the end of the school year she would have a better idea of how to improve her methods of motivation.

Mrs. Zornosa who uses group work to motivate her students planned to do more research and attend seminars to acquire more strategies for motivating her students through hands-on activities. She also wanted to convince the whole school to abandon the Salzman method for one that would work in their school. She was not happy with this method because it gives students too many chances to shape up. Mrs. Zornosa preferred to use a plan in which a student would not be allowed to have more than three warnings. Interestingly, she did not offer a motivation plan she would like her school to implement.

Summary

The findings indicate the teachers in this study used two major methods of motivation. All but one teacher was used external rewards such as candy or stickers. Only one of the five teachers focused on pedagogical methods, such as group work activities, to motivate her students. Because of time limitations, these findings offer only a preliminary insight into what methods of motivation these participating teachers used.

In their interviews, four out of the five teachers suggested they did not follow the school-wide student motivation plan. They indicated they were not happy using the school wide plans because it did not meet or match the motivation needs of their individual students. The findings also suggest the teachers were more inclined to motivate individual students rather than focus their efforts on an entire class.

Another finding of this research project is that teachers with more experience, such as Mrs. Zornosa, appear not to use extrinsic rewards but rather focus on intrinsic motivation,

whereas beginning teachers, such as Mrs. Landers, resort to extrinsic motivation. In addition, the findings suggest that team meetings offer teachers with an avenue to gain support from colleagues as they try to improve their students' levels of motivation. Finally, the findings indicate that teachers are genuinely interested in motivating their students.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The first section of this chapter addresses each of the four research questions that guided this research project. The second section of this chapter presents the conclusions and offers recommendations for improving student motivation.

1. What is motivation in the middle school setting?

Chapter Two of this research project concluded that methods of motivation used in a middle school setting should focus on intrinsic rather than extrinsic methods of motivation. These methods include student-centered learning, student participation in parent- teacher conferences and student self-regulation to promote constructivist learning.

Student-centered learning facilitates student engagement during class time by designing hands-on activities that help students construct their own meaning from the new lesson. In student-led parent-teacher conferences, students take ownership of their learning and they are able to self-reflect on what they have learned, accomplished, or failed to accomplish. Self-regulation implies students are guided to control the factors that affect their learning. Students are taught to self manage their academic work and social engagements and guided to resolve conflicts or problems.

2. Who are the students in the middle school setting?

Students in the middle school setting are busy young adults who often are focused on their social success and accomplishments in sports. Academic achievement is low on their list of priorities. These young adults are consumed by their physical changes and emotional growth. This creates a challenge for middle school teachers to motivate students to achieve academically.

3. What methods of motivation do teachers use in their classroom?

Only one of the five teachers in this study used intrinsic form of motivation. This teacher used group work and hands-on activities to promote motivation in the classroom. She also believed in motivating students by creating an active classroom in which she was a facilitator and the students learned by doing. Although her classroom was loud her students were on task and learning. She clearly monitored their progress during group work. At the end of class, she gained her students' attention as they collectively discussed the objectives of the lesson.

The other four teachers used stickers to motivate their students. Two of these teachers used a structured form of rewarding their students. They claimed they needed a reward structure to motivate their students to complete their work so that in the future they would be motivated to learn and do their work without being rewarded. During each of four classroom observations, these two teachers' students were on task. However, more students were in trouble for not doing their work than there were in the only teacher's classroom whose focus was intrinsic motivation. Two teachers used stickers randomly. They only awarded stickers based on their own discretion. However, throughout four observations, these two teachers were the only ones who appeared to be well aware of their students' interests and social well-being. They were able to provide alternative ways of teaching their math lessons when the concept was difficult for them. These two teachers accomplished their learning goals because they were able to teach subject content by relating to their students' interests. When the students were awarded stickers, it was a "big deal" to them. They felt proud of their recognition by constantly talking about the reward and how they worked hard to achieve the sticker.

4. How do teacher-student relationships enhance motivation?

All interviewed teachers were concerned about motivating their students. They claimed that motivating students in a middle school setting is especially challenging. How to motivate middle school students was constantly on their minds as they consciously looked for ways to motivate them. This finding of this research project provided evidence of two teachers whose math lessons incorporated their students' personal interests. They also used what they knew about their students' personalities to redirect them to the task on hand. Establishing close relationships with their students clearly was a strong motivator in the classroom. Connecting learning to students' personal interests clearly is a necessary ingredient to motivate middle school students. By making themselves available to their students, teachers are able to get to know them outside the classroom. This relationship is likely to improve teacher-student relationships and thus has a positive impact on student motivation.

Conclusions

Different methods of motivation are being used in the Mid-Ohio Valley area. There are teachers who use external rewards to elicit intrinsic motivation from students. There are teachers who use group work and hands-on activities to increase motivation in their classrooms. Each classroom constitutes a unique setting for students with different personalities, family backgrounds, and academic goals. It is up to teachers to find ways to motivate each student. The teachers in this study each generated a method of motivation that worked for her based on personal notions of classroom community. It is evident from the findings that motivating students in a middle school setting is an ongoing priority for middle school teachers.

This research project was limited to five teachers who agreed to be interviewed. However, research to fully answer the question "*What methods of motivation do teachers' use in the Mid-Ohio Valley?*" is lacking as this project was a case study. Therefore, most of the teachers

who work in this region did not have opportunity to participate. Consequently, generalizations from this study are the sole responsibility of the reader.

This study was limited to mathematics and social studies classrooms in a middle school setting. Interviewing teachers who teach other subjects such as science, language arts, or physical education might reveal additional methods of motivation by addressing such questions as “*Do science and other subjects require different methods of motivation?*” or “*Do the methods of motivation found in this research work for all subject areas?*”

Only two teachers referred parental involvement as an additional support of their students’ academic success. They invoked parental involvement only as a last resort to help students succeed academically. They did so by contacting the parents merely to let them know their child was failing.

Implications

Further research on student views of motivation in the Mid-Ohio Valley Area may well validate some or all the findings in this research. Student interviews or questionnaires may further confirm methods of motivation that work in the classroom or even suggest new methods of motivation.

Additional research on parental involvement in this region would generate a more comprehensive study. Additional questions in the teachers’ interview could uncover valuable information by asking such questions as, “*Why are the parents the last resort of motivation in your classroom?*”; “*What are your thoughts about parental involvement?*”; or “*Does your methods of motivation affect or have an effect of parental involvement?*”

Furthermore, parents can provide additional information on how to motivate their child to seek academic success. Questions such as: “*How do you motivate your child to succeed in*

school?” or “How much influence does your parental school involvement affect your child?” need to be addressed. The interviews with parents could uncover unknown factors that can further our understanding of how to motivate middle school student to be academically successful.

Added research on specific methods of instruction as well as teacher dispositions can lead to new insights and provide explanations for why teachers use certain methods of motivation in the classroom. *“How do teachers themselves keep motivated to teach and how does their level motivation impact student learning?”* and *“Is classroom instruction compromised or influenced by the methods of motivation?”* Teachers are only one of the many factors that can enhance student learning and it is important to determine what factors affect the quality of their teaching.

The suggested questions listed above are some of the many questions that this research left unanswered. Further research should suggest new solutions and produce answers to the question what methods of motivation are in common use the Mid-Ohio Valley area, and why.

APPENDIX A

Chart: Bold headings indicate school districts and the participating teacher listed below with their teaching positions.

Lincoln Junior High	McKinley Middle School
Mrs. Hedrick (7th & 8th grade math)	Mrs. Young (4th grade math & science)
Mrs. Revere (8th grade math)	Mrs. Troyen (5th grade social studies)
Stonewall Jackson Middle School	St. Albans School
Mrs. Lander (7th grade math)	Mrs. Zornosa (5th grade social studies & reading)

APPENDX B

Questions for the Questionnaire

1. What methods of motivation do you use in your classroom?
2. What is your theory behind your methods of motivation for your classroom?
3. How long have you been using this type of method of motivation?
4. Do you have a separate motivational tool for each student in the classroom?
5. What rewards or punishments do you use in the classroom?
6. Is this method used in the whole school?
7. Do other teachers in your school use these methods as well? Which one?
8. At what point do you know your method of motivation is not working?
9. Are you consistent with the method of motivation you use in your classroom? If so, how do you do this? If not, what are some of the consequences?
10. Are there any changes or modifications you would make to your current method of motivation? If so, which ones? And why?

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