Let’s Get Motivated:
A Peek at Student Motivation in Two Different Fourth Grade Classrooms

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I. Teaching Context

There are two classrooms that are participating in the same inquiry. Though they are both fourth grade classrooms in Boalsburg Elementary, they have varying atmospheres and student personalities. Classroom A contains a total of twenty-five students – thirteen being male and twelve being female. Of the thirteen males, one student is labeled with Down syndrome, one has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for a learning disability, three are part of the
Instruction Support Team (IST) program, and two receive Title I support for math and reading. Of the twelve females, one has an IEP due to Cerebral Palsy and a vision impairment, one attends speech therapy, and two receive Title I services for math and reading. Boalsburg also has a heavily populated Russian community, and four of the students are from strong Russian backgrounds. There are a total of nine students that are part of the math enrichment program offered once a week by a specialized enrichment teacher. Several of the students are involved in after school activities and more than 50% of the students are part of the music/instrument program offered at Boalsburg.

As a whole, the mixture of student personalities and abilities blend very well together. These students are a joy to work with and contribute to the safe, enjoyable classroom community that has been established since day one. There is a balanced level of positive peer role models amongst the males and females in the classroom, which allows for less behavior and academic problems. We feel confident that many teachers would feel blessed given the opportunity to work with this group of students.

The other fourth grade class consists of twenty-six individuals with varying abilities and needs. Of these twenty-six students, thirteen are girls and thirteen are boys. Academically, there is range of developmental abilities, most noticeably in math and reading. Five of the students attend Title I reading and one attends Title I math. On the opposite spectrum, five of the students attend math enrichment once a week. In addition, there is one Russian student who speaks minimal English and goes to English Language Learner (ELL) classes every afternoon for an hour.

The difference between the boys and girls in the classroom presents an interesting dynamic in the level of maturity and off-task behavior. The boys are easily distracted during
individual work time and must be constantly motivated to stay focused. During whole class situations, the boys are consistently the source of inappropriate off-task behaviors that are distracting to the entire class. The girls on the other hand are motivated and work diligently during individual work time and are far more outspoken than the boys during discussions.

One area that seems to pose difficulty for many of the students, both male and female, is social interactions between their peers. The males interact well with one another; however, there are a few male students who are looked up to by others for behavior cues. These few students act inappropriately and influence the students around them. The boys who are not a part of this group are continually trying to gain the approval of these select few. There is also another group of boys who gravitate towards each other because of their Russian heritage. All of the boys must be strategically separated during group work time in order to prevent off-task behavior. The female students in the class exclude certain individuals during free time activities, but during group work time, they do a great job including everyone.

If an outsider were to observe both classrooms, they would see a notable difference between the interactions and behaviors of the students in the two rooms. It’s hard to believe that the demographics of the classrooms are so alike. There is definitely a surprising difference observed between the two classrooms, which leads to our main wondering in this inquiry.

II. Wondering/Sub-wonderings

- What motivates our students to behave as they do and how does their level of enthusiasm and/or class chemistry relate to their attitude and performance when it comes to actually learning?
  - How can we better understand how motivation and student perceptions of learning affect student behavior and the dynamics of the classroom
environment?
- What are student perceptions of the classroom structure and dynamics?
- How do student demographics and interest levels affect student interactions and motivation?
- What is the relationship between gender and student motivation in the classroom?
- How do peer role models in the classroom play a role in the motivation and behavior of other students?
- Does parent involvement and after school routines/responsibilities affect student motivation in the classroom?

III. Data Collection and Analysis

After reviewing our sub wonderings, we decided that it would be essential to focus our surveys and observations around the main topics that each question presented. In order to gather our data in a chronological manner, we began with a simple interest survey to learn more about the students in each of our fourth grade classrooms. As time progressed, we presented our students with more targeted surveys based on their initial responses and our main wondering about student motivation. Towards the end of our inquiry, we offered our students one final task that required them to compile all of the information through a visual representation of a glyph doll. (All of these surveys can be found in appendix c and will be referred to throughout the remainder of this text.) Throughout the data collection process, we analyzed and collaborated back and forth about our observations and experiences in our classrooms.

We commenced our data collection process with a simple student interest survey. The goal of this survey was to help us get a better sense of our students’ interests and perspectives of different school subjects and activities. In addition, we wanted to use this survey as a baseline for our future data collection. The information obtained from this survey directly relates to the following sub-wondering: How do student demographics and interest levels affect student interactions and motivation? The questions in this survey asked students to indicate their favorite
school subjects, school activities, and school assignments. Furthermore, this survey provided students with an opportunity to explain their feelings and also offer advice on how we could help motivate them during lessons and activities. Upon reviewing the data from this survey, we found that math was typically the favorite subject, as well as the least favorite subject. Social studies and science were also contenders for the students’ favorite subjects in both classrooms. However, the data did not provide us with strong evidence because students responded to these questions in a variety of ways (i.e. many students couldn’t offer suggestions to improve motivation and some students stated that they didn’t have a favorite/least favorite subject, either because they liked/disliked them all equally). One pattern that we did notice from the survey was that for the most part our students were excited to come to school. To our surprise, there was little noticeable difference between the responses of the two fourth grade classrooms. We felt that the data collected from this survey was inconclusive, and as a result we decided to use a different type of survey to collect information about how our students’ view their own responsibility and intrinsic motivation.

The second survey we asked our students to complete was a self-inventory checklist. Students were asked to rate themselves by choosing the most appropriate response to each statement. The prompts on this survey were designed to collect information about students’ autonomy and intrinsic motivation. Another piece of information we wanted to obtain from this survey was how our perception of our students’ motivation compared to our students’ perception of their own motivation. We deliberately designed this survey so that it would require little writing, and as a result, we hoped students would be more likely to provide honest and accurate responses. Conversely, we found this survey to be just as inconclusive as the interest survey we distributed the week before. We did notice that most students’ responses were characteristic of
intrinsically motivated individuals. This self-checklist provided us with information that relates to the following wondering: *What is the relationship between gender and student motivation in the classroom?* In general, we observed that the female students in both classes had very similar responses to each prompt; however, the number of male students who are intrinsically motivated was slightly lower in one class. Also, upon further analysis we felt that we perceived most of the students in one class as having little intrinsic motivation, whereas these students’ responses on the checklist made it appear that they are fairly motivated and self-reliant individuals. Item number nine on the survey also made us question our students’ honesty in accurately reporting their own behaviors. The majority of students answered this statement, “I constantly complain about my work,” with “I’m rarely like this,” or “I’m never like this.” This overwhelming response was surprising to us because we have observed that the one class contains students who consistently complain about school activities and assignments.

Our doubt about the reliability of our students’ responses on the interest survey and the self-test questionnaire compelled us to seek information from an alternative source. In our effort to improve the validity of our data, we created a parent survey that asked parents to share information about their child’s homework habits, extra-curricular activities, and household responsibilities. Each question on the parent survey was designed to collect information for our sub-wondering: *Does parent involvement and after school routines/responsibilities affect student motivation in the classroom?* In both classes we found that most students had homework routines and the students’ parents were available to offer support and guidance to them. Also, most of the parents that responded to the survey wrote that their child was involved in one, if not multiple extra curricular activities. We also wanted to get a better idea of the amount of responsibility our students had around the house in order to see if these expectations were a
reflection of the student’s level of responsibility for their own behavior and work in the classroom. It came to our attention that every student in both classes had at least one responsibility at home, if not more. We understood this to mean that all of our students are familiar with responsibilities and what goes along with them.

Through even more collaboration with a few fifth grade interns, we developed a survey based on the classroom climate in each of our rooms. After discussing the different student interactions in both of our classrooms, we each became more and more interested in how our students interacted, how students view the atmosphere in the classroom, and how comfortable each individual felt in his or her own fourth grade class. Therefore, there are two sub wonderings that lead to the creation and submission of this survey: 1. *How do peer role models in the classroom play a key role in the motivation and behavior of other students?* 2. *How can we better understand how motivation and student perceptions of learning effect student behavior and the dynamics of the classroom environment?*

The *Classroom Climate Survey* was a particularly in depth survey that required a lot of analyzing and organization once the students finished. The main areas that captured our attention were: the responses the students gave rating how comfortable they felt in the classroom, the suggestions that they had for improving the team-like atmosphere, and whether a role model was present in the classroom. We found that a majority of the students in Miss Black’s classroom ranked themselves as a seven or higher on a scale of one to ten, meaning that they feel rather comfortable sharing ideas in their class. Some suggestions that the students offered to increase the team-like atmosphere involved doing more group activities and working together as a class. Also, more than half of the students in Miss Black’s class answered yes to having some type of a positive role model. Unfortunately, this role model wasn’t always one that was present
in the classroom. The students’ responses in Miss Lausch’s class were fairly neutral, almost all students said they feel comfortable sharing, but yet they don’t feel completely comfortable especially when they might be wrong. However, most of the students were unable to offer suggestions for ways Miss Lausch could make the classroom feel like a team atmosphere.

Finally, we decided that we wanted some form of survey that would allow us to put all of our results together in an anonymous form that our students would feel comfortable completing. We were aware that some students were becoming bored with the written survey format, so we decided to take a different approach with the glyph doll and allow our students to color and draw the answers to our questions. For four consecutive days, our students worked during their free time to complete the glyph doll by reading each direction carefully before completing the task. The four activities focused on four main topics – student demographics, third grade experiences, student interests, and behavior and role models. We hoped this form of data collection would help us to come up with some claims and make connections between all of our sub-wonderings.

When all of our other data was analyzed, we had a general idea about student motivation in both classrooms. By looking at the glyph dolls, we could learn about their past experiences in third grade and how all of the components relating to student motivation fit together. We did not find much of a trend with the third grade information. However, Miss Lausch noted a particular student mentioned her third grade experience as being “pretty easy” because they didn’t have much responsibility and Mrs. X was very laid back.” This comment makes us questions whether the students’ experiences in third grade have actually impacted their motivation and behavior patterns in fourth grade. While analyzing this data, we made sure to separate all of the male glyph dolls from the female glyph dolls, in order to examine any gender differences. Mainly, we found that the boys seemed to be less motivated about school and some even admitted their
inappropriate behavior through their coloring on the glyph dolls. Very few males from Miss Lausch’s class provided evidence of having a role model, but on the other hand, there were many males in Miss Black’s class who showed that a role model was evident in his life. Unfortunately, we are not sure how to perceive this information, because we do not have any clear evidence from the student’s standpoint as to why or why not this exists.

**IV. Claims/Evidence**

*Claim A: Student motivation appears to increase when students are provided with alternative choices to present/complete their work.*

**Evidence A1:** The glyph doll project was presented to our classes the weeks before and after spring break. It was the final survey/activity that we planned to administer with our students in order to wrap-up our data collection process. Both classes were very familiar with the concept of a survey and began to become restless when filling out the last one (probably due to the repetition and their lack of understanding of the real purpose). We wanted to directly involve our students in our data collection process and hoped that the glyph dolls would excite the students about their own interests and personal reflections, rather than bore them. Luckily, we got just that reaction. On one specific instance, (Thursday, March 6) a student raised his hand before reading began and asked if they were going to get a third day of glyph doll questions. Miss Black let them know that they would and that they should read over them carefully and complete them during free time while Miss Black was meeting with reading groups. Several students smiled and gasped at this moment with joy and excitement. Miss Black even noticed a few male students turn to each other with grins on their faces, appearing to be excited about the task on which they were working. Very similar results were noticed in Miss
Lausch’s class, and both teachers ended up hanging their students’ work on a bulletin board outside both of the classrooms. It wasn’t planned for the glyph dolls to be hung, but the students showed particular excitement about the project and asked a few times if they could make a bulletin board out of them. We aren’t quite sure why this reaction occurred, but we do believe that the coloring and artistic expression had something to do with the students’ changing reaction about the completion of surveys/tasks involving self-reflection and interest based questions/statements.

Evidence A2: During reading time in both classes, instructional books are a main focus. Usually, after groups finish a book the students have the opportunity to present some type of project/performance to their teacher/class to prove their learning and understanding of the text. Both teachers use strategies that involve the students deciding as a group to complete a group project or deciding to work independently on one individual project. Depending on the book, the situation usually varies. However, during our explorer reading choices, Miss Black gave the entire class the opportunity to decide if they wanted to complete a project individually or with a group. Once this was decided, the individual workers – about half of the class – were given a set of instructions for which to complete, and the other students split into two groups based on the votes for group project choices. A lot of the individual student projects were either game boards containing factual information about his/her explorer or some type of fact sheet/poster. The other students that wanted to work on a group project, split in half. One group decided to create a bulletin board about their explorer, while the second group wanted to create and perform a reader’s theatre. Everyday was exciting and eventful during reading time. Miss Black noticed that almost every student was excited and appeared to be motivated about the project he or she chose to complete. Finally, when the projects were all complete and presented/performed, Miss
Black graded them. There wasn’t a single student that scored below a B+ on his/her project. The quality work that was turned in and the work ethic that was used was phenomenal on the students behalf. Giving the students their own choice really does make a difference when considering student’s motivation and ability to succeed.

Claim B: In the classroom setting, the female students appear to display more behaviors characteristic of an academically motivated individual, compared to their male classmates.

Evidence B1: The motivation self-checklist that we distributed to our students provided us with some insightful information about our students’ perceptions of their motivation in the classroom. We organized this survey by gender and found that for most of the prompts our female students tended to rate themselves more favorably. For example, eighteen of our female students responded to the prompt: “I am responsible for my own actions” with “I am always like this.” However, only eleven of our male students reported always taking responsibility for their own actions. Based on our daily observations, we tend to agree that in general the female students in our classes are more likely to admit when they do something wrong, whereas the male students tend to blame their behavior on their friends and classmates. In addition, our students’ reactions to question number seven: “I check how I am doing in school by looking at mistakes I have made and trying to fix them,” also tended to differ between the two genders. Twenty-one of the female students claimed that they always or usually try to learn from their mistakes; however, only fourteen of our male students responded to this statement with always or usually. The information collected from this survey for the most part coincided with the observations we made in our classes throughout our data collection process.
Claim C: Our perception of our students’ motivation differed dramatically from their own views of their autonomy and intrinsic motivation.

Evidence C1: As we began our data collection process, we quickly found that our perceptions of our student’s motivation and autonomy level varied substantially from their own views. Interestingly, the class we thought possessed and demonstrated less motivation, according to their responses on the self checklist, seemed to believe they are very motivated individuals. This incongruence may suggest that our understanding of motivation is inconsistent with our students’ beliefs of what it means to be academically motivated. For the most part, students in both classes responded to the prompts on the self-checklist with “I’m always like this” or “I’m usually like this.” However, we tended to think that many of the students in the one class should have responded using the statements, “I’m sometimes like this,” “I’m rarely like this,” or “I’m never like this.” Our students’ answers to the questions: “I constantly complain about my work” served once again to reinforce our reservations about the accuracy of our student’s responses. Many of the students claimed they rarely or never complain; however, during a fifty-minute math lesson we observed that these students complained approximately twenty times. This same behavior is demonstrated consistently throughout the school day during all academic activities and most notably during activities that involve writing or critical thinking.

Evidence C2: Samples of our students’ work also helped to solidify our beliefs that our students’ views of their level of motivation did not coincide with our own views. An overwhelming majority of our students maintained that they always or usually like to achieve, and are dissatisfied when they don’t do their best. However, many of the students in the one class hand in work that we feel lacks genuine effort, thinking, or interest. For example, a gifted math student turned in his math homework with incomplete answers and multiple mistakes. This is a
common trend observed among half the students in the one class. Also, we observed that many students do not try to do their personal best when working on school assignments, but rather they do the bare minimum and then are dissatisfied with the grades they receive. When completing writing responses for instructional book groups, many students also turn in work that is unedited and sloppy. This makes us question if our students really care about the quality of their work in school.

Claim D: Student interest level and motivation is dependent upon the academic subject area.

Evidence D1: According to the initial interest survey that we distributed to our students, we found that our classes make up a diverse community with many different likes and dislikes. When asked whether they enjoyed coming to school or not, we found that every student, except for one, enjoys coming to school all of the time or some of the time. We believe this to mean that many of our students feel quite motivated to be in the classroom – whether it may be to spend time with friends or to spend the day learning. At this point, we became particularly interested as to why many students appear to behave with a lack of motivation throughout the school day. One area that we found particularly interesting in the interest survey was the question that asked each student to list his/her favorite and least favorite subject. In Miss Black’s class, almost half of the students answered that they did not have a least favorite subject (Appendix C) and they like them all, whereas Miss Lausch only had two students to list “none” for a least favorite subject in the class. We found this to be interesting and correlated with our observations that Miss Black’s class exhibits many more behaviors that lead us to believe they are more motivated.

One last interesting piece of information we found about our students’ favorite/least
favorite subject was that math was the subject that had the most votes overall. It was both the favorite and least favorite subject, which finally lead us to believe that each student’s interest level within each subject correlates with each student’s level of motivation. Based on the information in claim A.

**Evidence D2:** The glyph doll project that our students completed told us a lot about each student’s interests in and outside of school. We learned that a majority of our students are involved in after school activities, whether it is a team sport, music lessons, or a community group (i.e. Boys Scouts or Girls Scouts). The after school involvement of each student proves some level of motivation based on the student’s own interest. Otherwise, there would be very little involvement and/or every student might be participating in the same after school activity. For questions three and four on day three of the glyph doll activity, students were asked to depict whether they enjoy math/science, social studies/reading, or music/art (an attached glyph doll gives an example of one student’s work). These results proved to us that a majority of the students preferred at least one of these three subject areas in the school day. This is useful information because we can now conclude that at least every student can, and hopefully is, motivated to perform in at least one content-rich area throughout the school day. However, **all** of our students’ interests vary, which will allow motivated and non-motivated behaviors to be present throughout the entire day as subjects and student interest levels change.

**V. Reflections/ Future Practices**

During our inquiry process, we gathered information and data that has impacted our beliefs as well as our teaching practices. We plan to use this information as a guide for the decisions we make throughout our teaching careers. Although we feel we have only just begun to
learn about our students and their motivation, we have definitely discovered quite a bit about our own perceptions and practices, in addition to our students’ views and interests. As a result of our data collection, we feel it is important that motivation is modeled and expected, starting on the first day of school. By setting high expectations and showing one’s dedication and accountability, students will be familiar with the characteristics of a self-motivated person. In addition, it is crucial that a teacher takes the time to understand and learn about his/her student’s feelings, interests, and beliefs. Being aware of these characteristics in each student is a valuable tool to help teachers assess students’ work ethic and behavior patterns. Consequently, we have decided that a teacher can never learn enough about his/her students and thus, it is important to constantly be inquiring about the everyday interactions that take place in the classroom. In order to be successful teachers, we will continue to question and analyze our students and our practices throughout our teaching careers.

In conclusion, we found that the inquiry process is far from over. Although we did learn a lot, we feel that the information we gathered was inconclusive and led us to develop further questions. We spent a lot of time in the classroom gathering information through surveys and observations, but found that there was little time to follow-up and further examine our data. We planned to incorporate lessons about motivation to see how students may respond but had difficulty fitting these into our busy schedules. We felt like this might have been a key element to help us learn about our students’ motivation. Therefore, we believe this lack of evidence directly correlates to strength/weakness of our claims and evidence. Also, our methods of data collection relied heavily upon the accuracy and honesty of our students and their parents. At times, we found a discrepancy between our observations and our students’ responses, which we believe affected the results of our study. Regardless of time restraints, we managed to collect a
large sample of data and learn as much as we could about our students and their motivation(s).

We plan to keep in mind what we learned from our inquiry throughout the remainder of our internship, and we hope to expand on these ideas in the future.
Appendix A: Inquiry Brief

Wondering/Sub-wonderings

♦ What motivates our students to behave as they do and how does their level of enthusiasm and/or class chemistry relate to their attitude and performance when it comes to actually learning?
  ▪ How can we better understand how motivation and student perceptions of learning affect student behavior and the dynamics of the classroom environment?
  ▪ How do different elements/strategies of classroom management impact student behavior and motivation?
  ▪ How do teacher/student relationships and interactions effect students’ motivation and behavior?
  ▪ What are student perceptions of the classroom structure and dynamics?
  ▪ How do student demographics and interest levels affect student interactions?
  ▪ How can we better understand how students with similar demographics behave so differently in two different classrooms in the same school and grade level?
  ▪ How do peer role models in the classroom play a key role in the motivation and behavior of other students?

Teaching Context

There are two classrooms that will be participating in the same inquiry. Though they are both fourth grade classrooms in Boalsburg Elementary, they have varying atmospheres and student personalities. Classroom A contains a total of twenty-five students – thirteen being male and twelve being female. Of the thirteen males, one student is labeled with Down syndrome, one has an IEP for a learning disability, three are part of the IST program, and two receive Title I support for math and reading. Of the twelve females, one has an IEP due to Cerebral Palsy and a vision impairment, one attends speech support, and two receive Title I services for math and reading. Boalsburg also has a heavily populated Russian community, and four of the students are from strong Russian backgrounds. There are a total of nine students that are part of the math
enrichment program offered once a week by a specialized enrichment teacher. A lot of the students are involved in after school activities and more than 50% of the students are part of the music/instrument program offered at Boalsburg.

As a whole, the mixture of student personalities and abilities blend very well together. These students are a joy to work with and contribute to the safe, enjoyable classroom community that was established on day one. There is a balanced level of positive peer role models amongst the males and females in the classroom, which allows for less behavior and academic problems. We feel confident that many teachers would feel blessed given the opportunity to work with this group of students.

The other fourth grade class consists of twenty-six individuals with varying abilities and needs. Of these twenty-six students, thirteen are girls and thirteen are boys. Academically, there is a range of developmental abilities most noticeably in math and reading. Five of the students attend Title I reading and one attends Title I math. On the opposite spectrum, five the students attend math enrichment once a week. In addition, there is one Russian student who speaks minimal English and goes to English As A Second Language classes every afternoon for an hour.

The ratio of boys to girls in the classroom presents an interesting dynamic in the level of maturity and off-task behavior. The boys are easily distracted during individual work time and must be constantly motivated to stay focused. During whole class situations, the boys are consistently the source of inappropriate off-task behaviors that are distracting to the entire class. The girls on the other hand are motivated and work diligently during individual work time and are far more outspoken than the boys during discussions.

One area that seems to pose difficulty for many of the students, both male and female, is social interactions between their peers. The males interact well with one another; however, there
is a group of male students who are looked to by others for behavior cues. These few students act inappropriately and influence the students around them. The boys who are not apart of this group are continually trying to gain the approval of these select few. There is also another group of boys that gravitate towards each other because of their Russian heritage. All of the boys must be strategically separated during group work time in order to prevent off task behaviors. The female students in the class exclude certain individuals during free time activities, but during group work time, they do a great job including everyone.

If an outsider were to observe both classrooms, they would see a notable difference between the interactions and behaviors of the students in the two rooms. It’s hard to believe that the demographics of the classrooms are so alike. But, there is definitely a surprising difference observed between the two classrooms, which allows for the main wondering in this inquiry.

**Rationale**

The focus of our inquiry came about as we noticed an extreme difference in the behaviors of our students and the climate of our two classrooms. Both are fourth grade classrooms in Boalsburg Elementary School, and most of the students have grown up together. Even though these students have had similar school experiences, there still seems to be a drastic difference between the dynamics of the two classrooms. The one classroom has very few behavior problems while the other is consistently dealing with disruptive behavior. We are curious what factors have impacted the differences we have observed.

Since the start of the school year, both classrooms have spent time trying to build community, and on a daily basis, the students participate in a morning meeting specifically
geared toward developing this sense of community. Although we are aware of the importance these activities play in the interactions between the students, we believe there are other factors that may be playing a greater role in the varying behavior between the students in the two classrooms. Consequently, we have been contemplating how the motivation of our students and their beliefs about learning impact their behavior in the classroom. We would like to investigate how the motivation of our students affects their behavior exhibited in the classroom. We are curious to know how certain elements of the classroom promote our students’ intrinsic motivation and what elements dissipate this genuine desire to learn. We hope to use the information we gather to help us better understand our students’ behavior and also as a resource for our future teaching practices.

**Data Collection**

Surveys (might include)

1. Intrinsic Motivation Survey similar to the one found in *Helping Students Develop Self Motivation: A Source Book for Parents and Educators*

2. Evaluating one’s character and motivation similar to one found in *Helping Students Develop Self Motivation: A Source Book for Parents and Educators*

* adapted to fit the reading level of our students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SELF TEST</th>
<th>I’m always like this</th>
<th>I’m usually like this</th>
<th>I’m sometimes like this</th>
<th>I’m rarely like this</th>
<th>I’m never like this</th>
</tr>
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1. I try to figure out things on my own before I ask for help.
2. I know my strengths and weakness.
3. I feel responsible for my own actions. I don’t make excuses or blame others.
4. I set challenging goals for myself.
5. If I need help, I know how to ask.
6. I am always working towards my goals.
7. I check how I am doing in school by looking at mistakes I have made and trying to fix them.
8. I like to achieve and I dislike when I don’t do my best.
9. I constantly complain about my work.

3. Student Interest Inventory Survey

- Students will be asked 13 short answer questions about their likes/dislikes of school subjects, lessons, and activities. This survey will be used as the foundation for the rest of the surveys.

Name_________________     Date_____________

1. What is your favorite subject?
2. What do you like about this subject?

3. What is one project, homework, or assignment you completed this year that you really enjoyed?

4. What did you like about this assignment?

5. Think of an assignment that you worked really hard on. Why did you work hard on it? (circle all the answers that apply)
   
   A. It was my favorite subject.
   B. I liked the stuff I was learning.
   C. I liked working alone.
   D. I liked being able to work with a partner/group
   E. My teacher was excited about it.
   F. It was challenging for me.
   G. It was really easy for me.

6. What is your least favorite subject?
7. If you could change one thing about this subject what would it be?

8. Is there anything that your teacher could do to help motivate you during a lesson or class activity?

9. Does using technology such as the computers, the smartboard, or the overhead projector make you more motivated to play attention and participate in lessons?
   Why or Why not?

10. If you could choose, would you rather...
    a. work on a project in which you had to draw and color
    b. work on a project in which you had to write a story or essay
    c. work on a project in which you had to use numbers and graphs
    d. work on a project in which you had to read a story
    e. work on a project in which you had to perform a play, skit or song

11. What is your favorite part of the school day?

12. What is your least favorite part of the school day?
13. Are you excited to come to school?

4. Student Created Glyphs – presented in a 5/6 question series repeated 4/5 times

- This activity/survey will help us to get to know a little bit more about the demographic of each of our classrooms, as well as the personalities of our students, through an artistic standpoint.

- An example about a set of questions used to help us learn more about the demographics in our classroom:

**Your Glyph Doll**

1.) Give your doll green spiky hair if you are a boy and yellow curly hair if you are a girl.

2.) If you are an only child give your self a red smile for a mouth.

3.) If you have one brother or sister give yourself a purple smile. If you have two brothers or sisters give yourself a blue smile. If you have more than two brothers or sisters give yourself an orange smile.

4.) Give yourself blue eyes if you nine years old. Give yourself green eyes if you are ten years old. If you are older or younger give yourself brown eyes.

5.) Give yourself a pink necklace if you have an older brother or sister. Give yourself a black necklace if all of your siblings are younger than you. (If you do not have any siblings this doesn’t apply to you.)

6.) Give yourself a green nose if your family lives in an apartment and give yourself a yellow nose if your family lives in a house.

5. Student motivation towards rewards and reinforcement survey

- This survey will be used to collect information about student’s extrinsic motivation. We will ask students what things motivate them to follow directions and work hard in school.

6. Student motivation and behavior

- This survey will be used to collect data about what motivates our students to act the way they do. We would really like to know what different factors
motivate students with behavior problems and what factors motivate students without behavior problems.

7. Parent survey

This survey will be given to parents to fill out about their child. Through this survey we want to gather information about our students’ routines at home, homework habits, and interests. We would like to know if their behavior and interests at school are also the same at home.

This survey will consist of 10 short answer questions.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As an intern in the PDS, I have learned to constantly question my teaching practices. The current inquiry I am completing relates to student motivation in the classroom and the other fourth grade classroom at Boalsburg. I would value and appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to fill out this brief survey attached below regarding your own child. This note will help me gather even more information about your child’s motivation outside of school. I would really appreciate it if you could answer the questions to the best of your knowledge and return this packet with your child on Monday, March 17, 2008. In addition, if you haven’t heard so from your child already, he/she will be completing similar surveys in school about their own motivation and interests. I hope to use both sets of information to learn more about how I can motivate my students to become lifelong learners. Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,

Miss Lausch/ Miss Black

1. Does your child have a homework routine? If so, please describe the routine. For example does your child do her homework immediately after school, or does your child do her homework after dinner, or does your child do her homework at different times every night?

2. Where does your child do his/her homework? (in his/her room, in the kitchen, in front of the TV)
3. Does your child do his/her homework with another family member or by his/herself?

4. Does a family member check your child’s homework after he/she is done?

5. Does your child ever feel frustrated by his/her homework? If so, how often?

6. Are there any tricks you use to motivate your children with school/home work?

7. If you had to guess, what is your child’s favorite subject? Least favorite subject?

8. How do you motivate your child to help at home? Does your child have any responsibilities at home? (i.e. chores, helping out around the house, cleaning his/her own room.)

9. Is your child involved in after school activities? If so, what activities?
10. Does your child enjoy coming to school?

11. Do you do school related activities with your child (other than homework) that is not homework? (read together, flashcards, visit museums) Please write what you do.

12. What subject do you think your child struggles with (the most)? Why do you think this?

8. Individual student perceptions of the classroom community survey

This survey was adapted from one created by two fifth grade interns. We deleted some questions and added some questions in order to target our wondering and sub-wonderings.

**Anonymous Classroom Climate Survey**

1. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being to a very high degree) circle how comfortable you feel as a member of our classroom (e.g., expressing your opinions, working in groups, feeling accepted and respected as a member of our class as a team, etc)

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

   Please use the space below to clarify why you rated this as you did.

2. Provide one (or more) reason(s) you look forward to coming to school each day.
3. Have you had any experiences that have caused you to feel uncomfortable in school? In our classroom in particular?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discomfort in school?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discomfort in our classroom?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you answered “yes” to either of these questions please describe what happened in as much detail as possible without using names. Was this a temporary issue or has your discomfort been ongoing?

4. For the following series of questions, circle how true or false you find the statement to be for you. [Feel free to elaborate on your answers in the available space below each statement]:

   a. I have friends in my classroom that I can trust.
      
      Absolutely False  Somewhat False  Somewhat True  Absolutely True

   b. I have friends at school that I can trust.
      
      Absolutely False  Somewhat False  Somewhat True  Absolutely True

   c. I feel comfortable taking risks in class.
      
      Absolutely False  Somewhat False  Somewhat True  Absolutely True

We plan to consider your ideas and we appreciate your honest feedback.

What suggestions do you have that would help to make our classroom even more of an inviting place for you to work each day?
What suggestions do you have that would help to make our class feel even more like a team (and make you feel proud to be a part of it)?

Do you have a peer role model in one of the fourth grade classes? (Do not mention his/her name.)

*Circle the teacher he/she has:* Mrs. Hipp Mrs. Graham

Why is this person your role model?

*Circle all the behaviors that they demonstrate:*

- does his/her work well
- is friendly to everyone
- gets along with teachers
- follows the rules
- classmates like him/her
- likes school
- Calls out
- talks when others are talking
- forgets his/her homework
- tries really hard
- makes classmates laugh
- complains about school work

10. *Succeeding in School* provides a variety of ideas of surveys that may be used as a resource later on during the inquiry process if we find that the initial surveys aren’t providing us with necessary, valid information.

- Observations – done through specific table outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Student Participation/Engagement</th>
<th>Off-task Behavior</th>
<th>Individual Student Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Whole Group Class Activities

1. Why Do We Have Rules? Lesson 2 from Personal Power: Succeeding in School by Ruth H. Wells
2. Your View of School, Lesson 7 from Personal Power: Student Effectiveness Training

Student Interviews – based on findings through previous surveys and observations
(personalized for each student)

Data Collection Timeline

- 2/25-2/29: Survey – Student Interest Inventory, continue observations, Student motivation towards rewards and reinforcement survey, parent survey
- 3/3-3/7 Survey – student glyph series, Survey – behavior, continuation of classroom observations, analyze interest inventory, Student motivation and behavior
- 3/10-3/14 Spring Break: send home parent survey, begin answering wonderings and compile student interviews based on current information, brainstorm ways to connect and implement student ideas/motivators in classroom
- 3/17-3/21 Student motivation towards rewards and reinforcement survey, continue classroom observations, implement student motivators
- 3/24-3/28 Student motivation and behavior, classroom observations, implement student motivators
- 3/31-4/4 Analyze data between classrooms on the past 2 surveys, classroom observations, implement student motivators, continue work on inquiry paper (compile/analyze data/research)
• 4/7-4/11 complete rough draft of inquiry, possible student interview time or time to make use of motivation lesson in classroom
• 4/14-4/18 complete revisions on Inquiry and be ready to submit final copy
• 4/21-4/25 prepare 20 minute inquiry presentation of inquiry conference
• 4/28-5/2 make any necessary revisions of addition to inquiry and be ready to submit by the end of the week

Appendix B: Annotated Bibliography


Ames, an expert and leading researcher in the area of academic motivation in children, provides a prospective on learning environments in relation to student motivation patterns. In this article, she discusses the different factors including, student tasks, evaluation and recognition, autonomy, structure, and student perceptions that affect student motivation. This article presents information that will provide insight into the motivational patterns of our own students. In addition, this article investigates the classroom structure as well as how student perspectives impact individual student motivation and also the climate of the class as a whole. We believe this article will prove to be an important resource in supplementing our data collection throughout the inquiry process. Once we give our students the motivational surveys, we can use this book to compare what researchers have already been studying and what we learned about our students. We might find that there are similarities or differences between what research says and what our students say.


This resource talks about the importance of community and developing it in a classroom from the very first day. No matter what the problems may be in one’s classroom, it is always important to not lose sight of community in the classroom. Community is directly related to behavior and classroom management and is an essential component to creating a safe learning environment. We will use this research to back up the community development of our classroom and continue to build community throughout the school year. During our observations and data analysis we will be sure to compare the community that has been built or is lacking in each classroom to determine whether this is an important and/or relevant piece of information. We
may/may not find that the classroom community is correlated to the level of student motivation in the classroom.

The brain dominance inventory (1999, September 25). Retrieved February 9, 2008, from http://www.sil.org/LinguaLinks/LanguageLearning/OtherResources/YorLmngStylAndLnggLrnnng/TheBrainDominanceInventory.htm

This website provides a different insight into student learning styles by studying which side of the brain is most dominantly used. We are interested in what learning styles each of our students learn most effectively through, and would like to administer some type of test to our students. We believe that student motivation is directly related to one’s learning preference, and if a student isn’t being reached by his/her learning style he/she will not be motivated in the classroom. Another test/resource that is mentioned on this website is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator which helps one explore the different personalities presented in a classroom. If we could get our hands on these resources we could further assess our students to help them be successful in our classroom(s). A student interest survey, which has already been administered, is our way of looking into the different learning styles and motivators in the school environment.


This enlightening text provides many resources for a teacher to use in his/her classroom when particular behavior problems are taking place. One can become aware of the onset or cause of challenging behavior by learning about the child and his/her background through the research, observations, and studies present in the second chapter. After this information is learned, there are several following chapters that guide the reader to dealing with the specific behavior problem. We would like to use this resource to help us identify the specific behavior problems that are found in our classrooms, and then follow-up on those problems by using some of the strategies provided in Chandler and Dahlquist’s text.


This book takes an international perspective on student motivation. The authors use data from three different countries to compare student motivation across differing cultures. This source investigates why students in the U.S. and England are described as unmotivated while students in Eastern Europe and Asia are described as just the opposite. This source may help us determine if our students’ lack of motivation as anything to do with societal values and expectations. What also makes this book a valuable resource is that it delves into the impact student perspectives have upon their motivation and academic success. We plan on giving our students’ parents/guardians a survey that will give us some insight into their values and routines. This book will help us form questions so that we can understand how family and societal values impact out students’ motivation. Also, we will use the information about student perspectives to create a short survey that investigates how our students view our classroom climate.

This textbook devotes an entire chapter to motivation and student learning. The authors layout the information in an easy to read format that highlights the important aspects of motivation that relate to student success. A variety of theories are used to explain student motivation. In addition, an entire section of the chapter discusses the variables that affect student motivation. This will help us as we try to collect information on our students’ behavior. We can also use this section as reference as we try to create surveys and interview questions that investigate the factors that affect our students’ motivation and behavior. The last section of the chapter provides information about research that has already been done. I think this book will prove to be a very useful resource that provides us with broad overview of student motivation.


This sourcebook, targeting parents and educators, is a practical tool for helping students’ become self-motivated. It describes motivation as a habit that must be practiced and reinforced by helping students become aware of their goals and needs. It also provides tests and checklists to help assess student characteristics and students’ orientation towards certain achievement-associated behaviors. What makes this a useful resource is the suggestions and tools it gives for helping students become more motivated. This sourcebook also discusses different things teachers and parents should avoid because they negatively affect student motivation. Unlike the other sources we had found so far, this book also presents an inventory that we can give our students to assess their level of intrinsic motivation. This is an aspect of our topic that could tell us quite a bit about our students’ motivation or lack their of.


This source ties in community beliefs about student success with educational theories of motivation, self-concepts, and choices. The author uses these views as implications for successful behavior management strategies. She provides background information about behavior and motivational theories in order to lay the foundation for the management strategies she presents in her book. She discusses antecedents, consequences, and reinforcement and their affects on student success and motivation. This resource provides information that will help us better understand how these variables play a role in our students’ behaviors. It will also help us as we try to determine how much of an impact these variables have an effect on our classroom community.


In this text, Wells provides the reader with powerful resources and lesson plans to support his/her classroom community. The text is full of interesting insight into student thinking.
and motivation, views on student/teacher perception of the school day and its environment, and ways to reach out to individual students. A powerful section on building motivation and enthusiasm for learners in school allows the students to think about their future and how they are going to get there. If used correctly, this text will facilitate the teacher in helping the students realize the importance of their education and become more motivated about success. We hope to implement Wells’ ideas in each of our classroom and study the effects.


The Personal Power text collection allows the reader to study the views of student’s perspective about many different educational related aspects. In this particular edition, Wells provides the reader/teacher with lesson plans to support a classroom where the teacher and the student effectively communicate about each other’s roles and how the classroom should run. Supplementing the lesson plan text is a book filled with accompanying handouts/surveys for several lessons. Each handout/survey is designed in a different format in order to connect with learners of all different styles. We plan to administer several of the ideas from this text to connect with students who can complete surveys, illustrate their thoughts, and put their thoughts into writing.
Appendix C:
Name_________________     Date_____________

1. What is your favorite subject?

2. What do you like about this subject?

3. What is one project, homework, or assignment you completed this year that you really enjoyed?

4. What did you like about this assignment?
5. Think of an assignment that you worked really hard on. Why did you work hard on it? (circle all the answers that apply)

A. It was my favorite subject.
B. I liked the stuff I was learning.
C. I liked working alone.
D. I liked being able to work with a partner/group
E. My teacher was excited about it.
F. It was challenging for me.
G. It was really easy for me.

6. What is your least favorite subject?

7. If you could change one thing about this subject what would it be?

8. Is there anything that your teacher could do to help motivate you during a lesson or class activity?

9. Does using technology such as the computers, the smartboard, or the overhead projector make you more motivated to play attention and participate in lessons?

Why or Why not?
10. If you could choose, would you rather...
   a. work on a project in which you had to draw and color
   b. work on a project in which you had to write a story or essay
   c. work on a project in which you had to use numbers and graphs
   d. work on a project in which you had to read a story
   e. work on a project in which you had to perform a play, skit or song

11. What is your favorite part of the school day?

12. What is your least favorite part of the school day?

13. Are you excited to come to school?

   SELF TEST
   I’m always like this  I’m usually like this  I’m sometimes like this  I’m rarely like this  I’m never like this

1. I try to figure out things on my own before I ask for help.

2. I know my strengths and weaknesses.

3. I feel responsible for my own actions. I don’t make excuses or blame others.

4. I set challenging goals for myself.

5. If I need help I know how to ask.
6. I am always working towards my goals.
7. I check how I am doing in school by looking at mistakes I have made and trying to fix them.
8. I like to achieve and I dislike when I don’t do my best.
9. I constantly complain about my work.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As an intern in the PDS, I have learned to constantly question my teaching practices. The current inquiry I am completing relates to student motivation in the classroom and the other fourth grade classroom at Boalsburg. I would value and appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to fill out this brief survey attached below regarding your own child. This note will help me gather even more information about your child’s motivation outside of school. I would really appreciate it if you could answer the questions to the best of your knowledge and return this packet with your child on Monday, March 17, 2008. In addition, if you haven’t heard so from your child already, he/she will be completing similar surveys in school about their own motivation and interests. I hope to use both sets of information to learn more about how I can motivate my students to become lifelong learners. Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,

Miss Black
1. Does your child have a homework routine? If so, please describe the routine. For example does your child do her homework immediately after school, or does your child do her homework after dinner, or does your child do her homework at different times every night?

2. Where does your child do his/her homework? (in his/her room, in the kitchen, in front of the TV)

3. Does your child do his/her homework with another family member or by his/herself?

4. Does a family member check your child’s homework after he/she is done?

5. Does you child ever feel frustrated by his/her homework? If so, how often?

6. Are there any tricks you use to motivate your children with school/home work?

7. If you had to guess, what is your child’s favorite subject? Least favorite subject?
8. How do you motivate your child to help at home? Does your child have any responsibilities at home? (i.e. chores, helping out around the house, cleaning his/her own room.)

9. Is your child involved in after school activities? If so, what activities?

10. Does your child enjoy coming to school?

11. Do you do school related activities with your child, other than homework? (read together, flashcards, visit museums) Please write what you do.

12. What subject do you think your child struggles with (the most)? Why do you think this?

Anonymous Classroom Climate Survey
1. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the highest) circle how comfortable you feel as a member of our classroom. (For example, do you feel comfortable sharing ideas and working in groups with your classmates)?

   1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

   Please use the space below to tell why you chose the number you did.

2. List one (or more) reason(s) for why you look forward to coming to school each day.
3. Have you had any experiences that have caused you to feel uncomfortable in school? In our classroom?

in school? Yes No
in our classroom? Yes No

If you answered “yes” to either of these questions please describe what happened without using names. Has this happened more than once?

4. For the following questions, circle how true or false you find the statement to be for you. [Feel free to explain your answers in the space below]:

I have friends in my classroom that I can trust.

Absolutely False Somewhat False Somewhat True Absolutely True

I have friends at school that I can trust.

Absolutely False Somewhat False Somewhat True Absolutely True

d. I feel comfortable taking risks in class.

Absolutely False Somewhat False Somewhat True Absolutely True

We plan to consider your ideas and we appreciate your honest feedback.

What suggestions do you have that would help to make our class feel even more like a team (and make you feel proud to be a part of it)?

Do you have a peer role model in one of the fourth grade classes? (Do not mention his/her name.)

Circle the teacher he/she has: Mrs. Hipp Mrs. Graham

Why is this person your role model?
Circle all the behaviors that they demonstrate:

- does his/her work well
- is friendly to everyone
- gets along with teachers
- follows the rules
- classmates like him/her
- likes school
- Calls out
- talks when others are talking
- forgets his/her homework
- tries really hard
- makes classmates laugh
- complains about school work

Your Glyph Doll – Day 1

1.) Give your doll green spiky hair if you are a boy and yellow curly hair if you are a girl.

2.) If you are an only child give your self a red smile for a mouth.

3.) If you have one brother or sister give yourself a purple smile.
   If you have two brothers or sisters give yourself a blue smile.
   If you have more than two brothers or sisters give yourself an orange smile.

4.) Give yourself blue eyes if you are nine years old.
   Give yourself green eyes if you are ten years old.
   If you are older than 10 or younger than nine give yourself brown eyes.
5.) Give yourself a pink necklace if you have an older brother or sister.
   Give yourself a black necklace if all of your siblings are younger than you.

6.) Give yourself a green nose if you have traveled outside of Pennsylvania.
   Give yourself an orange nose if you have traveled outside of the country.

**Your Glyph Doll – Day 2**

1.) Give yourself a red star tattoo on your left arm if your third grade teacher was Mrs. Rockey.
   Give yourself a blue star tattoo on your left arm if your third grade teacher was Ms. Molessa.

2.) If you went to a school other than Panorama for third grade, give yourself a smiley face tattoo on your left arm.

3.) Put a brown circle on your stomach if you enjoyed your third grade class.

**Your Glyph Doll – Day 3**

1.) Give yourself a black baseball hat if you like to work on projects and assignments by yourself.
   Give yourself a red baseball hat if you would rather work on a project or assignment with others.

2.) Give yourself blue gloves if you play on a sports team.
   Give yourself yellow gloves if you participate in some other after school activity.
   Give yourself one blue glove and one yellow glove if you participate on a sports team and another after school activity.
3.) Give yourself headphones if your favorite part about coming to school is one of our specials.

4.) Put a plus sign (+) by your right hand if math/science are your favorite subjects in school.
   Put a book in your left hand if you prefer social studies/language arts during the school day.

5.) Give yourself a red belt if you like coming to school most days this year.

6.) Give yourself purple freckles if most of your friends are boys.
   Give yourself orange freckles if most of your friends are girls.
   Give yourself green freckles if you have a lot of friends that are boys and girls.

**Glyph Doll – Day 4**

1.) Give yourself orange pockets on your pants if your behavior is excellent/good most weeks (you get along with classmates, participate in discussions, get along with your teachers, and follow your class expectations).

2.) Give yourself purple pockets on your pants if your behavior is inappropriate most weeks (you argue with classmates, don’t participate during discussions, upset your teacher, and ignore your class expectations).

3.) Give yourself blue pants if you turn your homework in on time and do your best work almost every week.
Give yourself pink pants if you forget your homework a lot and don’t always try your personal best.

4.) Give yourself black boots if you have worked really hard on at least one assignment this year.

5.) Put two wheels on your right shoe if you have a friend that behaves inappropriately.
   Put four wheels on your left shoe if you have a friend that gets along well with the teacher.

6.) Draw a pink floor under your feet if you have a role-model (someone you look up to) in your class.

Appendix D:

Glyph Dolls from Students in Miss Black’s Class
Glyph Dolls from Students in Miss Lausch’s Class
Appendix E:

Comparing Favorite and Least Favorite Subjects
Self-Checklist Analysis