ABSTRACT

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF TEACHERS ROLE IN URBAN STUDENT MOTIVATION

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Teacher’s perceptions of and strategies to increase motivation in students were examined. Seventeen teachers from two urban high schools were utilized in this study. The teachers responded to a survey comprised of thirty questions exploring teacher concept of motivation, classroom strategies and teacher attitudes toward students. Focus groups looked into the subject further. Frequencies were tallied for each survey question. All of the respondents saw motivating their students as part of their role. The teachers defined motivation as a noun, verb, or verb involving a teacher action. Those who defined it as a teacher action saw instilling motivation as an important task for the teacher to undertake and cultivate within their students. The strategies to increase motivation that teacher’s listed fell into two main categories: variety and relevance. The relationship between teacher and student, and the effect it had on motivation levels was also explored.
CONCEPTUALIZATION OF TEACHERS ROLE IN URBAN STUDENT MOTIVATION

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Many referrals received by school psychologists involve students exhibiting low motivation in the classroom. There are a plethora of motivational sticker charts, contingency plans, and other techniques used to elicit higher academic motivation and performance. It seems as though educators are in constant search of the most effective way to motivate their students to want to be successful. Student motivation is an important construct to discuss, as it highly correlates with student academic achievement (Waxman & Huang, 1996). Further, motivation is an “important mediator of academic performance differences in inner-city school populations” (Schultz, 1993, p. 221). Therefore, the cultivation of motivation in urban students is an important endeavor.

Schools in general, and the children in them, have a variety of problems to face today. More specifically, inner-city schools and the children they serve have particular needs that should be addressed. One such need is that of limited aspirations. Cross (1998) illustrates this particularly troubling problem, often present among urban minority children by citing that these children often grow up “convinced that one’s life will eventually be restricted to a small and poorly rewarded set of social roles” (p. 95). Another issue with which some urban youth must cope is learned helplessness. Many possess low self-concepts and feel unable to meet the expectations of others (Kloosterman, 1988). Learned helplessness has a profound impact on these children’s motivation levels in school, as do all of the negative influences that are affecting their lives on a daily basis.

According to Schargel (1991), problems typical of inner-city schools include “a high transfer rate, an aging faculty, students entering with poor reading and math skills, a lack of motivation, low self-esteem and a history of failure” (p. 34). Johnson (1997) surveyed inner-city teachers to find out what factors they perceived as most likely putting students at risk. The lack of motivation, along with criminal behavior, substance abuse and truancy, were among the most powerful factors listed by the teachers. This indicates that urban student motivation is a concern that needs to be seriously addressed.

Several remedies do exist that can potentially counter these negative effects in the lives of these students. One such remedy is positive self-concept. This factor has been found to contribute to academic achievement and motivation (Castejon & Vera-Munoz, 1996). If children perceive themselves as able and competent to achieve on academic tasks, they are more likely to
attempt and to persist at the task (Teel, Debruin-Parecki, & Covington, 1998). Yet, motivation problems in inner-city minority children have been associated with low student global self-concept (Berry & Asamen, 1989).

A home environment that encourages and supports academic achievement yields a student who perceives themselves as competent in academic areas, and more likely to have higher achievement (Wentzel, 1998; Wentzel, 1999; Connell, Spencer, & Aber, 1994). “Successful academic achievement appears to be greatly influenced by good parenting skills and positive parental involvement” (Berry & Asamen, 1989, p. 140). Ryan (1995) found that parents who are involved in the schooling of their children have children who are more motivated to achieve, have higher academic expectations for themselves, as well as positive academic self-concepts. If these remedies can be instituted in the environment of urban youth, possible benefits may result.

Just as parents can have a positive impact on student motivation, the teachers who students see in school on a daily basis may have the greatest opportunity to affect their motivation, simply because teachers are among the few adults with whom they interact on a consistent basis. This is especially true for urban school children, who may not have consistent parental models (Johnson, 1997; Berry & Asamen, 1989). Research (Wentzel, 1997; Wentzel, 1998; Muller, Katz, & Dance 1999) shows that the degree to which teachers convey a sense of caring, support, and respect toward students will have an effect on how much of an impact they can make in the lives of their students. “Perceived support from teachers was unique in its relations to outcomes most proximal to classroom functioning, interest in class and pursuit of goals to adhere to classroom rules and norms” (Wentzel, 1998, p. 207). Muller, et al. also found that if students perceive those qualities in their teachers, they will be more likely to listen to, and learn from those teachers, as well as be more motivated in their classrooms.

Due to the important role that teachers can play in their student’s level of motivation, the purpose of this study was to examine how teachers in two inner-city Cincinnati high schools view motivation, their perceived ability to foster motivation in their students, and specific ways they attempt to promote motivation. This information will be important for school psychologists who wish to include teachers in the process of student intervention and retention. It is important to understand not only the basis of motivation but also how to foster and develop it in students. When school psychologists and teachers understand this phenomena, then they can effectively
intervene with those students whose motivation for achievement is lacking. In order to increase motivation, one must first understand what best motivates students, and how to most efficiently influence their motivation to achieve in the classroom.

The next chapter outlines literature relevant to: understanding student motivation; factors that impact motivation; teacher perceptions; and various strategies for influencing motivation. The following chapters discuss study design, followed by the study results, and a discussion of implications and applications.
Theoretical Rationale

Components of Motivation

Motivation is a concept used to understand what drives people to do certain activities, and to persist in them. The study of motivation began in 1938 when Henry Murray found that the desire to accomplish different and difficult tasks varied within the individual. The Murray construct was termed “need for achievement” (Berry & Asamen, 1989). From here, researchers began studying the concept of motivation in depth, addressing questions ranging from what motivation is, to how to motivate.

Schultz (1993) described two different motivational components. The first was “Expectancy for success” (p.222). This involved a student’s belief that they are capable of completing specific tasks, and that they are able to be successful at those tasks. According to Schultz, “students who believe they will be successful engage in more metacognition, use more effective cognitive strategies, persist on tasks longer, and are more likely to academically perform better in the classroom than those students who do not believe they can perform the task” (p.222).

While motivation itself is only indirectly related to learning, the concept is very important to understand. “It is positively related to performance. Increased performance can lead to increased learning” (Brunsma, Khmelkov, McConnell, Orr, 1996, p. 10). Schultz (1993) found that students “who reported high achievement motivation were more likely to perform closer to measured levels of IQ ability than minority children who reported low motivation” (p. 228). Kreitler, et al. (1995) also contended that motivation is necessary for academic achievement. Therefore, it is important for educators to understand the basis of what motivates students to want to do their best in school.

Extrinsic motivation. Also termed incentive motivation, extrinsic motivation is “an expectation of a reward for performance” (Brunsma, et al., 1996). External rewards such as candy, money, or free time are often used to help motivate children to complete a task that they otherwise would not have been motivated to do. External rewards such as these and others are most often used to teach a new behavior, as utilized in behavior management plans (Reynolds, Salend, & Beahan, 1989) until that behavior becomes internalized, and the reinforcer is no longer needed. Extrinsic motivation can work to produce intrinsic motivation, as long as the child experiences success, and is aware that they caused the action and result alone.
Children who are highly externally motivated are often viewed as having an external locus of control, meaning that they see “powerful others, luck, or circumstances beyond (their) control as responsible for outcomes” (Berry & Asamen, 1989, p. 47). They attribute neither success nor failure to any action that they themselves have controlled. Because of these attributions, children with a strong external locus of control often exhibit learned helplessness, believing that no amount of effort on their part will make any difference in the tasks that they attempt (Kloosterman, 1988).

*Intrinsic motivation.* A second motivational component described by Schultz (1993) is “Intrinsic value” (p.222). This component involves the student valuing the tasks done at school as an opportunity to learn and to master new skills, for learning’s sake alone. “Intrinsic motivation has to do with an internal drive to succeed at a task exclusive of external rewards” (Marchant, 1991, p. 83). It is similar to the need for achievement, in that it is “a relatively stable feature of personality, reflecting the desire to do things well and to compete against a standard of excellence. Individuals who are high in the achievement motive appear to be interested in excellence for its own sake rather than for the rewards it brings” (Berry & Asamen, 1989, p. 41). Also known as “drive motivation”, it is “a force within individuals that impels them to engage in a particular behavior” (Brunsma, et al., 1996, p. 10). The children who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to be better motivated than their peers who do not intrinsically value schoolwork. These students are “likely to be more interested and to put forth more effort than those students who are performing a task for some external reward” (Marchant, p. 83-84). A child may still complete their work when they are being externally rewarded, but as soon as that reward is no longer given the incentive to achieve has disappeared, because the incentive was placed on, as opposed to being a part of, the individual. In order for an individual to experience intrinsic motivation, Ryan & Deci (2000) contended that they “must not only experience competence or efficacy, they must also experience their behavior as self-determined” (p. 70).

Those students who have an internal locus of control do believe that their behavior is self-determined. They think of themselves as “completely responsible for (their) behavior and reinforcements” (Berry & Asamen, 1989, p. 47). Students with this internal locus of control can accept praise and criticism for their success and failures, because they know that their actions were partly responsible for the outcome of the situation. For example, they can attribute low
effort to failure, and not expect failure to occur the next time “since effort is volitionally controllable and may vary from situation to situation” (Berry & Asamen, p. 57).

Student Motivational Factors

A number of factors contribute to the motivation of the student to achieve academically. Self-concept is one such factor that has been related to school success, and it has been found that students with low self-concepts “are less involved in school activities and rarely participate in class” (Campbell & Myrick, 1990). In relation to academic motivation, self-concept has been found to contribute to academic achievement (Castejon & Vera-Munoz, 1996). “Academic achievement constitutes one area of behavior that has been widely assumed to be related to global self-concept” (Jordan, 1981, p. 509). Conversely, self-confidence has been found to increase with motivational training (Purdie & Hattie, 1995). “The key to academic self-worth is students’ perceptions of their own ability in school, especially in comparison with others” (Teel, et al., 1998, p. 481). Therefore, they may attempt to avoid humiliation in front of their peers by choosing not to try, and to give up on academic tasks (Teel, et al.). Self-concept plays not only an important role in motivation itself, but also in other factors closely related to motivation, such as thinking processes, desires, values, emotions and goals (Berry & Asamen, 1989).

Campbell & Myrick (1990) agreed that students’ self-confidence in their ability to succeed is very important to their levels of motivation. They ran a six session counseling group for low-performing students in which they taught them that they are in control of their learning, and that they have responsibility for their outcomes in school. They found that the group was effective and that “students learn in groups and can be motivated in groups” (p. 49). The motivational counseling groups also resulted in “measurable positive differences in both school attitude and classroom behavior” (p. 49).

As mentioned previously, personal goals are an important aspect of the motivational level of children in school. Goals are important, if not only for the reason that they “determine why people do what they do” (Wentzel, 1999, p. 76). Ford (1992) proposed that having personal goals is one of the processes through which motivation can be understood. Goals may be pursued for a number of reasons, either because of external controlling variables, a desire to please others, or because the goal itself has personal value for the individual wishing to obtain it (Ryan, 1993). Whatever personal goals might reflect upon the students who desire to achieve them, they should be understood within the cultural context within which the student is placed (Eccles, 1993). The
goals of the students may change if the context they are placed in is different, depending upon the values of that particular culture.

Each individual classroom establishes its own culture and goals. Students set many different kinds of goals related to school and the classroom. Those students who pursue various classroom goals that are socially oriented as well as task-related tend to be high achievers (Wentzel, 1989). These various classroom goals can have varying levels of importance to the students, and this importance may shift throughout the school year. Wentzel (1999) discussed this phenomenon:

Goal hierarchies develop over time as individuals are taught to prioritize goals and to associate goals with each other in causal fashion. For instance, children might come to school with a basic goal to establish positive relationships with others. Over time, this goal might become linked in causal fashion to more specific goals such as to establish a positive relationship with teachers, which might be accomplished by pursuing even more specific goals such as to behave appropriately, to pay attention, or to complete assignments (p. 81).

In this example, the pursuit of the goal to have a good relationship with the teacher became the child’s motivation to achieve academically. Aspects of teacher/student relationships will be examined in detail further in the paper. Relationships with parents and peers have also been found to impact student achievement motivation (Wentzel, 1998).

Parents have a significant impact on their children’s motivation, and desire to succeed in school. The parents are the primary socialization agents of their children. Research has linked parenting styles and parental beliefs about schooling with students’ academic and motivational outcomes (Wentzel, 1999; Ryan, et al., 1995). “Parents who are involved with their children’s schooling also tend to have children who expend effort to complete homework and classwork, who have high expectations for their academic success, and have strong academic self-concepts” (Wentzel, 1999, p. 84). Perceived emotional and social support from parents, as well as family cohesion, has been found to positively relate to perceived academic competence on the part of the student, relatedness to peers, as well as effort and interest in school (Connell, et al., 1994).

Baumrind (1971, 1991) was among the first researchers to expand the study of parent-child interactions and the socialization that takes place within the family. There are four dimensions of these interactions. These dimensions include structuring children’s activities, and consistent
enforcement of rules; expecting the child to perform to their potential; parents seeking children’s opinions, thoughts and feelings; and parental support, approval and acceptance. Her research has been useful in “establishing links between parenting behavior . . .and children’s academic motivation, including intrinsic interest, perceptions of academic competence and control, and helpless and mastery orientations toward learning” (Wentzel, 1999, p. 85). These studies “indicate that family socialization processes can have an impact on children’s motivation to achieve in contexts outside the home” (p. 85).

The influence of peers often seems to grow as the child gets older, and begins to seek approval and identity outside of the home. Peers can be strong motivators in regards to academic achievement, either in a positive or negative way. On one hand, “an important cause of high school students’ poor motivation is peer pressure against studying hard and achieving above the norm” (Bishop, 1989, p. 29). On the other hand, several studies have linked pursuit of academic goals with perceived emotional and social support from peers (DuBois, Felner, Brand, Adan, & Evans, 1992; Harter, 1996; Wentzel, 1994, 1997, 1998). When there is positive influence among friends, this influence is often likely to support such constructive behaviors as studying, planning for college, and avoiding self-destructive actions (Berndt & Keefe, 1996).

Peer approval and support can be very important in the life of an adolescent, as acceptance and rejection can have either a very real positive or negative impact upon the child’s self-esteem, respectively. “Peer group acceptance and membership also has been related to academic motivation” (Wentzel, 1999, p. 89). In contrast, Wentzel & Asher (1995) found that students who were rejected by peers tended to have low levels of interest in school. It is easy to understand how a student would not be interested or excited about school when their friendships are lacking. The social aspect of school is very important to children in adolescence, as they are exploring and developing social skills at this developmental stage.

Motivational factors specific to urban students. There are a number of factors that contribute to urban students’ motivation, both positively and negatively. Achievement motivation has been found to be a very important mediator in the academic performances of inner-city children (Ford, 1992; Marchant, 1991). In fact, Schultz (1993) found that achievement motivation was “strongly related to academic performance differences in minority children, independent of the intellectual ability and socioeconomic background of the child” (p. 228). This is significant because socioeconomic status has been found to be a very important factor in
academic performance, even among a sample of urban black students (Marcon, 1999). Urban minority children who were less socioeconomically advantaged and who were higher in achievement motivation performed closer to their ability levels than did urban minority children with lower motivation at the same socioeconomic level (Schultz). Anderson & Keith (1997) posed that achievement motivation may possibly have a stronger effect on the academic achievement of at-risk students than on general high school students. Therefore, it is important to look at the motivational factors that effect urban students separately from those that effect the general student population. Many of the factors are the same as the general population, but may have different effects on the urban student population; and there are several motivational factors that are unique to the urban student population.

Self-concept is an important motivational factor for all children, but especially so for urban school children, as “inadequacies in global self-concept have been repeatedly implicated as a causal factor in the academic achievement problems of inner-city minority children” (Berry & Asamen, 1989, p. 75). The findings related to the effects of self-concept on achievement and motivation have been mixed. Reis and Diaz (1999) found that minority students who had developed a strong sense of self were more likely to be motivated to achieve academically. Jordan (1981) discussed the possibility that “global self-concept might be expected to predict academic achievement only to the extent to which academic experiences are central to one’s overall self-view” (p. 510). This statement is supported by Marchant (1991) who interviewed black students in an urban elementary school and found that their sense of general self-worth did not come from their perceptions of their behavior or academic competence. Instead, their sense of self-worth primarily came from their physical appearance and athletic ability, as opposed to academic achievement. In this sense, self-concept can only affect academic achievement motivation when that self-concept is derived from academic pursuits. This academic self-concept was found to be a significant predictor of academic achievement among African-American adolescents, as was the need for academic competence, whereas global self-concept was not (Jordan, 1981). Also, Wehlage & Rutter (1986) found that self-concept and attitudes about academic competency were predictors of dropping out for at-risk students. However, when studied by Baker (1998), academic self-concept was found to negatively influence school satisfaction. It was hypothesized that the reason behind the negative influence was the observed emphasis on teacher-directed activities, independent seatwork, rote learning, and frequent
interruptions due to behavior management issues in this low income, urban environment. Students with strong academic self-concepts in this type of learning environment become quickly dissatisfied (Baker). This dissatisfaction can quickly turn to frustration and boredom. High achievers in this simplistic learning environment may easily struggle to maintain motivation, as many gifted African-American children in urban areas are underserved by gifted programs (Ford & Webb, 1994). Hence, maintaining an exciting and challenging curriculum for all urban students is of extreme importance. It must maintain those students’ interests and motivation, and be designed to draw in more student interest.

One method of involving urban students in their educational process is to give them a choice in their curriculum. This provides them a sense of control over their learning processes, which is often lacking. Fleming, Mitchell, Gorecki, & Coleman (1999) found that giving multicultural secondary students a choice of their curriculum increased student motivation and interest. If students are learning about something that they themselves decided to learn, their motivation to learn it well is likely to be higher, especially if what they are learning is what they desire and want (Kreitler, et al., 1995). Hudley (1997) agreed, stating that “personal autonomy in the selection of topics of study may be developmentally appropriate” (p. 316) for African-American adolescent students. She also stated that this autonomy might facilitate intrinsic motivation.

A poor curriculum is one that is not relevant to the students’ lives who are being taught that curriculum (Kasambira, 1984). If a student is being taught things that he thinks are not relevant to his life, then the motivation to learn those things decreases significantly. Johnson (1997) stated that in order to maintain student achievement motivation, “teachers of at-risk students must focus on lessons that are interesting and relevant” (p. 24).

The choice of curriculum and wanting it to be relevant to their lives may be one way that urban students can be sure that they will be able to meet their own personal goals. Such goals for minority students include their desire to attain individual economic security, and to collectively advance their socioeconomic group (Hamilton, 1996). The realization and believing that education is a sure way to get out of their current circumstances is a powerful motivator to do their best in school.

The most certain way that urban children will come to this realization about education early is through parental beliefs and academic support. Reis & Diaz (1999) discovered that
motivated urban students accepted their circumstances, and had support systems including “other high-achieving peers, family members, supportive teachers in previous years, and other adults” (p. 50). Parental involvement in the education of urban children has promoted the acquisition and maintenance of educational gains for those children (Rodick & Henggeler, 1980). Baker (1998) discussed the correlation of a quality family life to school satisfaction, as well as the importance of parental support to the urban students’ academic functioning.

“Successful academic achievement appears to be greatly influenced by good parenting skills and positive parental involvement” (Berry & Asamen, 1989). Ortiz (1986) conducted a study on Hispanic, Caucasian, and African-American students’ reading proficiency. Parent’s educational level, reading activities with children, and family behaviors were found to have had a direct effect on the child’s reading proficiency. Lee (1984) studied psychosocial family variables that contributed to the academic success of rural African-American adolescents. Those variables included: a close family structure; high degree of parental control; moderate family openness; high educational encouragement; strong family values; good family relationships; and a sense of responsibility on the part of the child.

Another study conducted by Clark (1983) looked at the academic achievement of ten low income African-American families, and classified and compared characteristics of families with high achieving adolescents with the families of low achieving adolescents. The family patterns of the high achieving students were as follows: frequent school contact initiated by the parents; stimulating and supportive teachers; parents and students who were psychologically and emotionally calm with each other; parents expected themselves and their student to play a major role in the students schooling; children were expected to get postsecondary training; achievement centered rules and norms were established in the home; clear and specific role boundaries were set in the home with the parents as the dominant authority; conflict within the family was infrequent; nurturance and support was provided by the parents; and parents deferred to child knowledge in intellectual matters.

The importance of home-school similarity and collaboration cannot be underestimated in the urban student population. If the two cultures are extremely dissimilar, “school may threaten their identity because their way of acting, being in the world, and perceiving the world seem incompatible with what is expected of them at school” (Berry & Asamen, 1989, p. 78). As a
result, “many urban adolescents may have a poor sense of school belonging and low school motivation” (Goodenow & Grady, 1993, p. 67).

One way to overcome this home-school disparity is to make the “classroom environment feel like a family-type atmosphere” (Howard, 2001, p. 141). Teachers should be aware of the cultural nuances of their students, and attempt to foster those similar types of interactions into their interactions with the children. If children are used to a certain type of interaction with parents at home, then they will respond better to that same type of interaction with the teacher in the classroom (Howard). Examples of such interactions include using directives, tone of voice (whether harsh or soft), the adult maintaining all authority, and certain phrases and communication styles. Also, Morrow & Young (1997) found that home-school collaboration on a family literacy program was successful, indicating the importance for communication and collaboration between a child’s home and the school. The way to be most successful in increasing motivation in students is to promote collaboration among the students, school staff, parents, and community members (Keith, 1995).

Peers can also have a significant impact on the urban students’ motivation to achieve. Reis and Diaz (1999) found that high achieving urban female students were grateful for the opportunity to be grouped with other students who wanted to work and learn in school. It is much easier to be motivated for schoolwork when the people around the student are as well, and are supporting and encouraging the student to succeed. Baker (1998) found that a positive social environment at school for low-income African-American children “reduced stress and psychological distress, and increased perceptions of social support” (p. 36). This is among one of the first preliminary steps that must be taken in order for any child to ever be motivated in school.

There are several factors that are unique to the life experience of urban students that can contribute to low motivational levels. Many of these factors have to do with the environment that they live in. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2002), in the year 2001, 22.7% of African-Americans were living below the poverty line. The rate was 16.1% inside city limits (p. 2). Riken (1995) stated that African-American teenagers were three times more likely to be killed by gun violence than by natural causes (¶7). Violence in the African-American community is an important concern (Berry & Asamen, 1989). Unemployment is also a concern among African-Americans, as 7-9% are unemployed (Democratic Caucus of the House Appropriations
Committee, 2000, ¶ 5). A final concern is the infant mortality rate for black mothers, which was estimated as high as 14 out of every 1000 births (Mathews, Menacker, MacDorman, 2002). All of these negative environmental variables combined can only begin to paint a picture of the life of many urban children. These variables can be sufficient causes of stress in the lives of these children.

According to Maslow’s need hierarchy, the children in this type of stressful environment are not able to focus on their own esteem needs, let alone the need for achievement. Their need for safety and security is often not met, and in cases of poverty, the basic needs of food and shelter are often neglected. Maslow theorized that the higher order needs cannot be met until the simpler needs of food, shelter, and love have been satisfied (Berry & Asamen, 1989). Therefore, the fact that these needs are not met for many impoverished urban students is a major factor that inhibits the fostering of achievement motivation.

School-related stress can also have an impact on school functioning and motivation in urban African-American students (Fenzel, Magaletta, Peyrot, 1997). This type of stress in these students can end up disconnecting them from the school culture, and can lead to problematic behaviors, as well as an increased likelihood of dropping out (Munsch & Wampler, 1993). Baker (1998) concurred with this finding that “stressful experiences at school (such as poor achievement or behavioral and interpersonal difficulties with teachers and peers)” (p. 28) are contributors to the decision to drop out of school. High levels of stress among inner-city students have been related to poorer school performance (Grannis, 1992).

Due to the effect that school stress can have on urban students, it is critical to understand the importance of safe, caring and supportive school and classroom environments for these children. Waxman, Huang, Anderson, & Weinstein (1997) discussed the importance of the classroom environment on urban students’ cognitive outcomes. The link between motivation and learning environment was also supported by Waxman & Huang (1996), who found that improving the two would increase inner-city children’s academic achievement, self-efficacy, and would reduce boredom. The overall learning environment can either increase or decrease the school satisfaction felt by the students who attend there. It is likely that the more satisfied a child is with their school and classroom, the more动机ated they will be to attend and to do their best to perform well.
Baker (1998) discussed a few environmental variables that most likely influence the school satisfaction among minority children. A caring and supportive school environment will definitely increase a child’s satisfaction with school, and ultimately their desire and motivation to learn (p. 27). Goodenow & Grady (1993) concurred with this finding, saying that urban students’ sense of support in school, as well as their sense of belonging can strongly influence their academic motivation.

The Teacher’s Role in Student Motivation

Due to the fact that the classroom environment exerts such a strong influence on the students’ motivational level, it would only make sense that the teacher in the classroom, who is there on a daily basis, would also have a profound effect on students’ motivation. Csikszentmihalyi & McCormack (1986) surveyed students about the major influences in their lives, and 58 percent of them mentioned one or more teachers (p. 417). As a result, it is important to look at how teachers go about motivating their students. Factors such as their personal characteristics, strategies they use in the classroom and how well they support and care for their students all combine to determine how a teacher can motivate their students, either positively or negatively (see Muller, et al., 1999).

Teacher characteristics that can impact motivation. The individual characteristics of the teacher are an important aspect of how much of an impact they may have on their students. Gezi (1990) found that effective inner-city schools had teachers who were positive about their influence on the education of their students. Csikszentmihalyi & McCormack (1986) noted that the teachers who have the most influence on their students are the ones who are able to “generate enthusiasm for learning through personal involvement with the subject matter and skill in teaching it” (p. 418). If the teacher is able to be enthusiastic about what they are teaching, the students inevitably exude that enthusiasm.

Muller, et al. (1999) looked in depth at which teacher characteristics are seen by students as motivating and encouraging. Teachers who set high standards and have high expectations for their students are more likely to elicit motivation to do well in those students (p. 295). Having high expectations for students is important, because they tend to trust adult’s ideas and beliefs about them. Therefore, if a student senses that a teacher believes that they can accomplish certain goals in the classroom, it is more likely that the student will also begin to believe that about him or herself. Gezi (1990) looked at successful inner-city schools, and found that the ones that were
successful had high expectations for their students, as well as strong leadership and a positive atmosphere. Rodick & Henggeler (1980) studied the effects of a tutoring program on the academics and motivation of inner-city adolescents. They found that the “enthusiasm and high expectations of the tutors undoubtedly evoked similar enthusiasm and motivation among the students” (p. 1129). Muller, et al. found that students feel it is important to have a teacher who is “able to believe that they can do good work and to demand it” (p. 328). Teachers must be on guard against allowing stereotypes and judgments to influence their expectations. Often, teachers develop their expectations for individual children through such student characteristics as race, behavior, and academic work, such as homework completion (Muller, et al.; Pigott & Cowen, 2000).

Other teacher characteristics that Muller, et al. (1999) found to be motivating for urban students included: sensing that the teachers judgments are fair, receiving encouragement and recognition, being fun and worthy of respect. In the same study, students also reported that they would most appreciate teachers who were understanding and empathic about their lives. The authors reported that “favorite teachers possess the following characteristics: a good sense of humor, a pedagogical approach that is fun yet educational, the ability to motivate all students to work hard, fairness and accessibility, and empathetic regard for students” (p. 315).

The most important thing that teachers can relay to their students, according to Robenstine (1997) is the rational ability to judge the importance and future implications of their own personal goals. Through accomplishing this, students will be able to see for themselves how important achieving certain goals are, and will hopefully become intrinsically motivated to work toward those goals, rather than acting “simply because of associated incentives and sanctions” (p. 304). Wentzel (1999) noted that teachers are the main avenues through which socially valued goals and expectations are taught to students. Therefore, it is primarily in the classroom that these students learn socially acceptable norms. In order to get their point across effectively, and to maintain students’ attention and enthusiasm, Johnson (1997) suggested that teachers “focus on lessons that are interesting and relevant” (p. 24).

*Strategies used to increase student motivation.* There are many different strategies one can use to motivate students to want to succeed academically. These strategies can range from specific teaching strategies to specialized programs to how one arranges the classroom environment.
There is a plethora of teaching strategies that can be used in the classroom to increase student interest and motivation. Davis (1985) interviewed 85 secondary school teachers about strategies that they use in the classroom to prompt motivation in their students. Suggestions were broken down into whole class strategies, as well as individual motivating strategies. Important for the entire class is assuring that they clearly understand any and all assignments given to them, while the expectations of the teacher are also clearly laid out. Davis also explained the importance of variety in the classroom; specifically, using a variety of media and visual aids in the classroom, as well as varying the type of assignments given allowing for use of different skills and interests on behalf of the students. In order to maintain attention and curiosity, the surveyed teachers suggested calling on random students to answer thought-provoking and problem-solving type questions at varied periods throughout a lecture, while creating “an atmosphere in which students will feel free to ask responsible questions concerning the subject matter and their understanding or lack of it” (p. 11).

Davis (1985) also discussed several individual motivation strategies used by the teachers that were surveyed. Naturally, many of these strategies revolved around individual student attention. Some of the strategies mentioned included treating each student as an individual, and knowing their personal goals and needs. Also, giving students individual praise and encouragement whenever possible is helpful in increasing individual student motivation and self-concept.

Individual student attention is one way that students know that they are important and they may also be more motivated in the classroom if they see that the teacher is taking special time to spend with them. An alternative program for troubled youth was studied by Nichols & Utesch (1998). This program was found to increase the external motivation of the students who attended. Each student received special and individual attention in addressing his or her specific needs. Gan (1999) also looked at different types of activities to evaluate their effects on motivation. Specifically, he studied computer-based cooperative learning tasks. Over the course of a year, it was found that this activity allowed the teachers more time to pay individual attention to students, and also allowed the at-risk students “to play a more leading and contributive role in the classroom” (p. 155). As a result, their motivational levels were found to be higher at the end of the year that was examined.
The climate that a teacher creates in the classroom can also have important motivational effects on students. Establishing an environment that is safe and accepting of all students is one in which students will feel more comfortable to take risks in regards to their learning. Motivation and desire for learning is increased when fear in the classroom is minimized (Kasambira, 1984). Strategies that can be employed to create a safe classroom environment include showing understanding; consideration and respect for students; treating each student as a unique individual; preparing students for changes that are to occur so that they are aware of everything, so that nothing catches them off guard; making learning experiences possible; and praising students’ efforts (Kasambira, 1984).

Relating what is being taught to the individual lives and goals of each student will further student motivation to learn by making what is being taught personally relevant to each individual student. Emphasizing the importance and relevance of the subject to the students’ lives is of utmost importance so that they can understand how the subject matter can relate to their interests and future livelihoods (Davis, 1985). Brunsma, et al. (1996) discussed the importance of making academic work relevant to the adolescent student’s future life in order to increase their motivation for studying. They laid out such ideas as matching community service projects with academic course subjects, as well as allowing students to earn occupational and technical certificates for specific skills in high school as opposed to the general diploma typically earned. Allowing for more specificity in individual curriculum development would allow students to take certain classes that would directly benefit them after graduation, therefore maintaining relevance of all classwork and material. Marchant (1991) discussed the importance of teachers giving black urban students “specific examples which highlight the relevance of doing well in school” (p. 98). Teachers were challenged to “present the ‘why’ of learning along with the ‘what’ and ‘how’” (p. 98).

Another strategy that the teachers in Davis’ (1985) survey discussed was setting appropriate and reasonable goals and objectives for the class to strive to achieve. In this way, they can evaluate their performance and success in relation to those goals. Success is a natural motivator, so knowing when they are performing successfully will give the students the self-confidence that they need to attempt the next difficult task in the classroom. Marchant (1991) found that using challenging and obtainable goals and objectives in the academic lives of black students enhanced their self-concept, which leads to increased motivation. Marchant also
discussed the importance of teachers helping students “establish their own goals and to guide students in ways that encourage self-monitoring of success” (p. 98).

Metcalf (1999) studied a solution-focused approach to motivating students in the classroom. This approach begins with the teacher looking at the student’s competencies instead of their deficits. When the teacher is able to identify when and how a student is successful, it is more likely that the student will be successful in the future, by using those methods that ensure success. This solution-focused approach also involved the students being “viewed by their teacher as totally responsible for their success” (p. 6). Metcalf discussed how a teacher could use questions to help students discover what behaviors they have implemented in the past that has made them successful at certain tasks. Helping students hone in on past successes, and how they achieved those successes is the focus of this approach. When students become aware of their successes they are likely to be more motivated to put forth effort in those areas, especially if they have concrete steps that were taken that achieved success in the past. Marchant (1991) specifically discussed black urban students, and the importance of showing them that they can succeed in education in order to increase their value of education.

Teel, et al. (1998) studied specific teaching strategies that motivate inner-city African-American students. Their research was based on the premise that the typical teaching strategies found in schools today do not capitalize on African-American students’ strengths, talents and culture. Therefore, they focused their research on four specific alternative teaching strategies. These strategies were: effort-based grading, multiple performance opportunities, increased student responsibility and choice, and validation of cultural heritage.

Effort-based grading was used “to create a classroom environment in which individual effort and group cooperation were encouraged rather than competition and a ‘win/lose’ scenario” (Teel, et al., 1998, p. 483). They found that by using this approach, “more and more students slowly became more bold and clear in their opinions and more tolerant of each other’s ideas” (p. 487). They also found that students participated “more frequently in class discussions because of the opportunities to have a discussion, because of the credit they received for participating, and because the teacher was very respectful toward their comments” (p. 487). The emphasis placed on effort as a factor in the students’ final grade seemed to encourage many to try even harder.

Giving the students multiple performance opportunities was done in order to “honor student interest, strengths, and talents by providing them with a variety of assignments as
opposed to assignments which only emphasized reading and writing” (Teel, et al., 1998, p. 483). Some of these diverse assignments included skits, worksheets, quizzes, oral presentation, art projects, map work, computer projects, reading sessions and group work (p. 483). The researchers found that when teachers used traditional pedagogy such as lectures, “African-American students’ degree of interest was consistently lower” (p. 489). However, when more innovative approaches were used, such as the ones mentioned above, “the majority of the students would consistently become more cooperative, more on-task, and more vocal” (p. 489).

Increasing student responsibility and choice involved giving them more responsibilities than are typically offered, as well as a variety of assignment choices. The students in the study were given leadership opportunities in the classroom on a voluntary basis. Results showed that when students were allowed to choose their own books and projects, they “took the work more seriously” (Teel, et al., 1998, p. 490). They felt they had more control over their learning situation, so they were more willing to cooperate during academic tasks.

Finally, in validating the students’ cultural heritage, the teacher “put together a classroom library of historical fiction and biographies which represented all of the students’ cultural backgrounds” (Teel, et al., 1998, p. 483). Students were allowed to read a book of their choice three times a week for ten minutes during class time. These tactics were found to strengthen the students’ sense of identity. Also, since all students in the class were exposed to stories of African-American interest, the African-American students’ culture was validated as equally important as other cultures. Being able to read about people who were similar to them in race and culture, while being successful and respected in the books, gave the African-American students a sense of pride and encouragement. “Culturally relevant teaching is an attempt to create a schooling experience that enables students to pursue academic excellence without abandoning their cultural integrity” (Howard, 2001, p. 136). Teaching in this manner is important when working with urban minority youth, as they often feel invalidated through more traditional teaching methods (Howard).

*Teachers’ relationship to students.* The positive relationship between a teacher and student is “essential if learning is to take place” (Muller, et al., 1999, p. 296). Hollins and Spencer (1990) found that African-American students believed that positive teacher-student relationships had an effect on their academic achievement, and that teachers who were responsive to the personal lives of students generated positive feelings in those students, which
led to increased academic effort in school. Slaughter-Defoe and Carlson (1996) found that positive interactive teacher-student relationships are the most important dimension of school climate for African-American students. Specifically, teachers who cared for, comforted, and helped students with school and personal problems made a difference in the school experience of these students.

The most salient teacher characteristics that influence their relationship with their students, as well as have a profound effect on student motivation is caring and support (Fenzel, et al., 1997; Wentzel, 1998; Wentzel, 1997; Muller, et al., 1999). If the student perceives that the teacher cares about them and their learning, they will be more willing to “invest” in the teacher and the student-teacher relationship (Muller, et al.), making it more likely that the teacher will be able to have an impact on and influence the student. The impact of caring teachers was eluded to by Wentzel (1997) who stated that “teachers who care were described as demonstrating democratic interaction styles, developing expectations for student behavior in light of individual differences, modeling a ‘caring’ attitude toward their own work, and providing constructive feedback” (p. 415-416). Fenzel, et al., (1997) also gave examples of how teachers can demonstrate their care for students, including “spending time in activities with students, maintaining personal contact with the family, and taking time to counsel students” (p. 286).

Wentzel (1997) supported the notion that “students are more likely to engage in classroom activities if they feel supported and valued” (p. 417). Being supportive of students does “not mean feeling sorry for them or their life circumstances but encouraging them to transform those circumstances” (Csikszentmihalyi & McCormack, 1986, p. 299). However, it does mean supporting them in their endeavors, having high expectations for them, and respecting them as people who are capable of succeeding. The importance of teacher support of students cannot be minimized, as evidenced by Wentzel (1998) who stated that “perceived support from teachers has been related to student reports of pursuit of goals to behave prosocially and responsibly, educational aspirations and values, intrinsic values, and self-concept” (p. 203). Specifically, in her study of relationships and motivation, Wentzel (1998) found that “perceived support from teachers was an independent, positive predictor of interest in class” (p. 206), and that “perceived support from teachers was unique in its relations to outcomes most proximal to classroom functioning, interest in class and pursuit of goals to adhere to classroom rules and
norms” (p. 207). Baker (1998) concluded that teacher support is an especially important factor for the African-American students’ academic success.

Having caring and supportive teachers is especially important to urban students. Stressing the importance of caring teachers and a caring school environment for “at-risk” students, Baker (1998) believed that without such a caring environment, these students would not establish positive affiliations with the school, thereby reducing the likelihood that the school environment could have a positive impact on them and their educational outcomes. Howard (2001) interviewed seventeen urban African-American students and found that their teachers “willingness to care about them and their ability to bond with them” (p. 137) was the most frequently mentioned attribute of their optimal learning environment.

Several other attributes of student-teacher relationships contribute to the care and supportive aspects of that relationship, and are also specifically important to the urban student in terms of their relationships to their teachers. The first of these attributes is encouragement. Muller, et al. (1999) found that minority students are “constantly watching teachers for evidence of encouragement and recognition” (p. 319). It is important to them that their efforts are recognized and encouraged. A second attribute that contributes to positive urban student-teacher relationships is respect. Respect is very important to these students, as they feel that they often do not obtain it from teachers (Muller, et al). Baker (1998) also found the receiving of respect to be an important environmental variable to ensuring a caring and supportive school environment. Howard (2001) found that African-American students surveyed actually described caring behaviors on the part of their teachers through the ways that those teachers showed them respect. Commensurate with respect is the understanding and appreciating the culture of the urban student, which is often very different from the culture of the teacher. Howard made the observation that “Far too often, African-American students are expected to disconnect from their cultural identities and characteristics and conform to their teachers’ ways of thinking, learning, behaving, and communicating, which often are diametric opposites” (p. 147). Therefore, it is important for teachers who wish to develop positive relationships with their urban minority students to learn about their cultural life and history.
Summary

Motivation to learn has been positively linked with higher academic achievement. Both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation can have this effect; however, the drive to achieve will be stronger and longer lasting when that need has been internalized. There are a number of contributing factors to students’ achievement motivation, including family support, their personal goals and self-concept, as well as supportive and caring schools and teachers. Several other factors contribute specifically to the urban students’ motivation to achieve. Some of these factors include a sense of belonging in the school, the amount of choice given in the curriculum and assignments, as well as a desire to attain individual economic security. The amount of similarity between the home and school environments and school stress can also have a positive impact on the level of urban student motivation.

Teachers can have a large impact on the achievement motivation of their students. Those teachers who believe that they are able to affect the motivation of their students, who are enthusiastic about their subject, and who set high standards and have high expectations for their students are the most effective at eliciting motivation to achieve from their students. Certain strategies can be used to further enhance student motivation. Establishing a positive and safe classroom environment is a proven approach to increasing motivation, and can be accomplished by giving each student individual attention and encouragement. Setting tangible goals for students to achieve elicits motivation by allowing students to visibly see their success. Also, teachers who demonstrate to their students how the subject they are studying is relevant to their present and future lives and interests will have more success in motivating their students. Establishing a positive relationship between the teacher and student through care and support, encouragement, understanding and respect of the student’s culture and the students themselves will also seek to increase student motivation.

Research Questions

Based on the literature that has been gathered, this research study focused on three main research questions. The first question that was explored was how the teachers surveyed conceptualized motivation and what it meant to them. The second question that was examined was what role the teacher’s feel they play in the motivation of their students to learn and succeed. Finally, a third question that was looked at was specifically what strategies teacher’s use in the classroom to help motivate their students.
Method

Context of Study

This study was completed in conjunction with a study stemming from the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative (CYC) involvement in the Pew Partnerships Wanted: Solution for America Program study. CYC is a nonprofit 501 C (3) corporation. It operates or sponsors 11 programs including the CYC Youth Leadership council, Golden Galaxy Awards Program, Hamilton County Youth Conference, Village Schools, Excellence in Education Awards Program, College Information Center, Education Talent Search Program (ETS), Mentoring and Tutoring Program, Artworks, Taft Career Academic Program (TCAP) and Inter-Agency Cooperation. Additionally, CYC works closely with other programs that share their vision, including Mayerson Academy, the Cincinnati Scholarship Association and the Greater Cincinnati Drug and Substance Abuse Program. In addition to the Executive Director of CYC, the CYC Board of Directors includes 11 community leaders that represent the educational, business and city government sectors of Cincinnati.

The original vision of CYC was viewing Cincinnati as a community where all youth graduate from high school with the training, knowledge, work habits and motivation to fully realize their potential through the combined efforts of students, their parents, schools, business and religious communities, city government and service organizations united for Cincinnati youth, and this vision still drives CYC today. The newly revised CYC vision is to insure that "all Cincinnati children will graduate from high school with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior necessary to participate fully and responsibly in the social, political, and economic life of society." Their revised mission reads, "to bring together people, institutions and other community resources for the purpose of helping students acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior necessary for full and responsible participation in society." CYC strives to achieve its mission by acting as advocate, catalyst, coordinator and/or operator of selective programs that remove barriers to children and proactively encourage steps to enable at-risk children to acquire needed knowledge, skills, and develop positive attitudes and behaviors. CYC's service area includes all children in Hamilton County, Ohio.

The program exposes youth to career/job experiences, (career exploration courses, field trips and in class presentations by employers, job shadowing and paid internships during students' junior and senior years), youth Advocates who act as job counselors to students in their
caseload, providing a home-school-internship work-site link for the students, mentoring and tutoring programs designed to provide positive role models for students in need of extra support and encouragement. For this program, community volunteers are recruited, screened and trained to serve as mentors to students. Mentors work one-on-one with students as academic coaches, providing emotional and social support, encouraging productive academic efforts and serving as positive role models. Students are referred by parents or teachers or are self-identified.

For the Pew Partnerships Wanted: Solutions for America Program study, the overall goal was to determine the effectiveness of CYC mentoring programs. Key questions addressed the general effects of mentoring, whether there are benefits that were exclusive to mentored students, whether there were common benefits across schools and whether multiple mentoring--a mentor plus youth advocate was beneficial to students. Other questions CYC hoped to be able to answer through "Wanted Research" address three categories: 1) impact of mentoring on individuals (for example, sense of self, the quality of the mentoring experience for mentors and mentees), 2) impact on school (for example, on GPA) and 3) impact on the community (for mentors, advocates, teachers and for parents of students in the programs). My advisor sought permission to include my interests in motivation into the study that she was responsible for implementing.

**Sample**

The target sample for this study is predetermined but voluntary. Approximately 50 teachers at two high schools in Cincinnati, Ohio (the schools are referred to as “School A” and to as “School T”) who have students in their classrooms who are involved in the CYC program this year were surveyed as a part of this study. However, many of the students in these teachers’ classrooms were not involved with CYC. A small sub-sample of this larger group of teachers was also engaged in a focus group discussion, to further examine teachers’ views of motivation at a more in-depth level.

Seventeen surveys were returned, producing a response rate of approximately 35%. Seven of the respondents taught at School T, whereas ten taught at School A. Fifty-nine percent (10) of the respondents were female, and 29% (5) were male. The respondent’s average number of years teaching was 18, and the average number of years teaching in the Cincinnati Public School District was 16. The average age of the teachers was 48.
Setting

Schools A and T are both within the Cincinnati Public School District in Ohio. Ninety-five percent of the student population of the district has a background of poverty. Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) was classified as Academic Watch in 2002 for school year 2000-2001, as they met only 8 out of the 27 state standards (prior to this year, they were listed as an Academic Emergency district). The district’s graduation rate was only 57.6% in 2000-2001. The average enrollment in CPS is 40,167. Student ethnicity totals in the district are as follows: 70% African-American, >1% American Indian, 1% Asian, 26% Caucasian, 1% Hispanic, and 3% Multi-Racial. The average number of students per teacher in the district is 16. Student’s rate of attendance throughout the district was 90.3%, and teacher’s rate of attendance was 94.8%. Also important to note is that 91% of high school core courses in the district are taught by teacher’s with appropriate certification.

Specifically, in 2001-2002, School T’s average enrollment was 680, and School A’s average enrollment was 1,144. School T’s student attendance rate was only 78.2%, and teacher attendance rate was 91.9%. Student ethnicity totals at School T were: 87% African-American, and 13% Caucasian. School A’s student attendance rate was 80.6%, and teacher attendance rate at was 95.8%. School A’s student ethnicity in 2002 was 90% African-American, and 9% Caucasian. All information regarding Cincinnati Public School District and School A and School T was obtained from the 2002 district and school report cards for the 2000-01 school year, as found on the State of Ohio website, http://www.ode.state.oh.us/reportcard/archives.

Instrument

No standardized survey that addressed the issue of the teacher’s role in the motivation of students could be found. Therefore, given the research of Wentzel (1997, 1998, 1999) and Muller, et al. (1999) questions exploring teacher conception of motivation, as well as questions regarding the level of involvement in the life of the student were designed. Further, questions concerning classroom strategies used to engage student learning were designed based upon the research on motivational strategies done by Teel, et al. (1998), Robenstine (1997), Howard (2001) and many others.

The survey consisted of 30 total questions. The first five questions were solely in regard to the CYC study and were not analyzed as a part of this research project. There were three open-ended questions and eight yes/no questions. Six of the questions were in three point Likert
scale form, and the last seven questions on the survey were in five-point Likert scale form. Please see Appendix B for a copy of the survey that was used.

Procedure

Once the survey questions were designed and approved, they were piloted on five teachers, who answered the questions and commented on the readability and subject matter of the questions. Suggestions were made as to wording and order of the questions, which was helpful in finalizing the survey. Piloting the questions in this manner provided face validity for the survey.

The surveys, along with a cover letter (See Appendix A) explaining the purposes of the study were delivered to School T and School A and placed in the specified CYC teachers' boxes. The teachers received the surveys, filled them out, and returned them to their principals by a specified date in a sealed drop box, approximately two weeks from the date that they were given to the teachers. After the first set of surveys was collected, a second set was handed out, again with a two-week deadline.

Several weeks following the final collection of the surveys, with the help of CYC contact people at the two high schools, the lunch hour at both schools was set aside one day for the purpose of conducting focus groups regarding the topic of student motivation and the role that teachers play therein. The contacts at the school advertised the day of the focus group, and encouraged teachers to be there. Lunch was provided for those teachers who came. Surveys were also available to be filled out by those who had not yet done so. The number of teachers present at the groups fluctuated from approximately four to eight, and the discussions lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The focus groups elaborated upon the general survey questions addressed to the larger sample. They explored the relationships that teacher’s craft with students to enhance levels of motivation and achievement, as well as specific approaches that these teachers have found helpful in motivating their students.

Analysis

There were two types of data collected in this study. Quantitative data was obtained about teachers’ opinions of motivation through the survey that was distributed to the two schools. Minimal qualitative data was also obtained from the survey, through the several open-ended questions. Focus groups were conducted following receipt of the surveys, which provided
for deeper discussion with teachers about the concept of motivation as well as the strategies and approaches that they use with their students to increase motivation.

A number of descriptive statistics were calculated to address the research questions of 1) how the teachers surveyed conceptualize motivation and what it means to them 2) what role the teacher’s feel they play in the motivation of their students to learn and succeed 3) what strategies teacher’s use in the classroom to help motivate their students. Frequencies were tallied for each survey question, resulting in percentages of the sample describing the teachers’ thoughts and beliefs about their role in motivation, and ways in which they go about motivating their students. Further, qualitative data from the survey and the focus groups added confirmation and in depth understanding to the teachers’ notions about motivation. The content of the focus groups was analyzed into central themes that were discussed. The following section will give in depth details about the frequencies and percentages found in regard to each question on the survey, as well as qualitative information and content analysis of the focus groups.
Results

Seventeen surveys out of an approximate 50 were returned. Of those returned, seven teachers were from School T, and ten were from School A. Fifty-nine percent of the respondents were female (10), and 29% (5) were male. Two respondents did not report their gender. The average number of years teaching for the sample was 18, while 16 years was the average for teaching in the Cincinnati Public School District. The average age of the respondents was 48.

The groundwork for looking at these results is laid by first noting that all (100%) of the teachers surveyed stated that they love teaching, and that they believe it is part of their role as a teacher to motivate students. This fact was a testament that the teachers who responded to the survey are most likely more motivated themselves in their role as teachers. These teachers were also therefore more likely to be positive toward their students, and to want them to succeed. Therefore, the answers that these teachers gave may be more positively skewed than would other teachers who perhaps did not enjoy their job as much. The tables of information at the end of this chapter break down the survey questions into the different topics that were addressed by the questionnaire. The percents that are reported are valid percents (missing values were omitted from the calculations).

Survey Data

The questions referred to in Table 1 were designed to measure the teachers’ beliefs about their ability to motivate and level of expended effort towards motivating students in their classrooms. All of the teachers surveyed believe that they are able to exert an average to above average effect on their students’ academic motivation (see Table 1). Over half of the teacher’s surveyed put “very much” effort into motivating their students, indicating that teachers feel as though they put a lot of effort into motivating their students. However, the numbers seem to indicate that teachers feel they are expending great effort into motivating their students, but their actual ability to motivate those students is not as high as their effort.

The following questions were designed to generate different definitions of motivation from teachers in order to get a sense of how they view motivation. Once the perception or definition of motivation is understood, it becomes easier to determine how and why they do certain activities in order to motivate their students to achieve in school.
The teachers’ definitions of motivation were classified into three different categories: noun, verb, and verb involving a teacher action. The teachers who classified motivation as a noun tend to see the concept of motivation as an inborn personality trait that is within the individual. The teachers who defined motivation as a verb see motivation as an action, something that can be taught, or disseminated or instilled into someone. Those teachers who defined motivation as involving a teacher action clearly see motivation as an important role for the teacher, and motivation is something that the teacher can cultivate in their students.

Teachers selected strategies that they would use in order to motivate their students from a list of six items (see Table 2). There was also space left for them to write other strategies that
they employ to solicit motivation from their students. As is evident in Table 2, encouragement and verbal praise were the most highly selected strategies that are used by teachers.

When asked an open-ended question about what strategies they use to create interest among the students in their classrooms, the teachers named a number of different strategies that primarily fell within two main categories: variety (using an array of strategies), and relevance (strategies that are meaningful to students). These two categories, and their specific strategies listed in order beginning with the most frequently listed strategy first are represented in Figures 2a and 2b. Figure 2c lists other miscellaneous, unrelated strategies, also listed in order of most frequently listed by the teachers. This question was directly designed to answer the third research question, which is to find out what specific strategies teachers use to motivate their students in the classroom.

Figure 2. Strategies used in class to make it interesting to students:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 2a. Variety:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• variety of modalities: lecture, multi-media, group projects, cooperative learning (prior students have said that variety works to keep them awake and interested!!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use of manipulatives in graphic organizer form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• skits, plays, poetry, independent reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• math related activities and logical thinking interspersed with traditional work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• rap for students on occasion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 2b. Relevance:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• discussion with students each day about what’s going on in city, world, school (current events)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• bring in “real world” speakers who reiterate importance of academic courses to their career aspirations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• activities that have real world connections (i.e, physics of sports)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2c. Other:
- hands on activities
- group work
- projects
- computers and field trips are felt to be best, but no time or money for either of them
- note writing, journal writing to express emotions/experiences, writing songs
- games/contests with classmates
- listen to students
- allow CHOICE in selection of novels to read
- reward with Solitaire for completing work early
- food

Figure 3 represents the answers to an open-ended question designed to uncover which factors most influenced students’ motivation in school. The answers are listed in the order from the most frequently listed influence to the least frequently listed. Interestingly, teachers were listed most frequently as motivating students. Parental involvement and peer relationships were then listed as the next two in frequency as motivational factors. Food and grades were listed as the least motivating of all of the entities listed.

Figure 3. What motivates students the most in school
- teachers who care about students as a group and individually, and are fair in discipline
- parental involvement
- peers/social relationships
- independence, which is established by graduating, being able to get a good job and make money
- enjoying the class they are in (37.5% (6) believe their students enjoy their class very much, while 62.5% (10) believe their students somewhat enjoy their class.)
- friendly atmosphere where everyone is working
- special programs, food, grades
Figure 4 compares the different strategies that the teachers stated that they use to motivate students based upon their definition of motivation, whether noun, verb, or verb involving a teacher action. This figure delineates how the strategies used to motivate students differ based upon the teachers’ definition of motivation. Also of interest is what the teachers with different definitions of motivation believe motivates students the most in school. Their viewpoints differ widely depending on if they believe that motivation is an inborn personality trait (noun), or if it can be altered by teacher actions and strategies.
**Figure 4.** Comparing definitions of motivation to strategies used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>怎样教师激励学生（来自表格2）</th>
<th>Motivation as a Noun</th>
<th>Motivation as a Verb Involving Teacher Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How teachers motivate students</td>
<td>• Verbal Praise • Encouragement • Punishment • Material Rewards • Criticism</td>
<td>• Encouragement • Verbal Praise • Reward System • Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What teachers believe motivates their students the most in school (from Figure 3)</td>
<td>• Teachers who are fair and care for students. • Parental involvement • Peers • Friendly atmosphere where everyone works • Desire to graduate in class • Enjoying the class they are in</td>
<td>• Grades • Graduation • Jobs • Money • Moving Out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies used to make class interesting (from Figure 2)</td>
<td>• Group work • Skits • Poetry • Writing songs • Teacher does not talk much—students teach each other • Variety of methodologies • Talk about current events (i.e. riots in Cincinnati) • Reward with Solitaire • Rap for students • Ask students what’s going on in city, world, and school • Note writing • Hands on activities</td>
<td>• Alternate activities • Games/contests with each other • Labs • Food</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Caring teachers
- Teacher and parental influence
- Parents
- Food
- Money
- Wanting to be out on their own
- Peers—socialization

- Listen to students
- Student choice in novels
- Lab activities with real world connections
- Bring teacher knowledge of current and historical events to the reading
- Hands on experiments
- Projects
- Computer assignments
- Group presentations
- Do things that apply to the real world (i.e. physics of sports)
- Use of manipulatives in graphic organizer form
- Nothing done is felt to be motivational for the students
Several questions were designed to examine the relationship between teacher and student. These set of questions are important due to the overwhelming research that points to the student-teacher relationship as an important factor in the academic success of students. When asked how often they get to know the hobbies and interests of their students, 30.8% (4) of the teachers said almost always, 46.2% (6) said frequently, 15.4% (2) stated somewhat often, and 7.7% (1) said that they get to know their students’ hobbies and interests very little. The teachers were also asked how personally involved they are with their students. Sixty percent (9) stated that they are very involved, and 40% (6) stated that they were somewhat involved with their students. An overwhelming 93.8% (15) of teachers responding stated that their students talk to them about personal issues that extend beyond their school lives. Therefore, the above findings that a majority of teachers responding are very involved with their students, and get to know their students and their interests are not surprising.

The teachers were also asked to list ways in which they fostered personal involvement with their students. This question was targeting the approach that teachers take to get to know their students on a more personal level. Many of the responses listed indicate that being available to listen to students when they need it was key. Other themes in the responses of how to become more involved with students reflect being supportive and caring, as well as being respectful. The strategies listed by the teachers are as follows:

- weekly group discussions
- work with each student individually on a weekly basis
- listening
- advising
- daily interactions and concern
- conferences with students
- calls home
- offer to be their mentor
- will call home and wake them up in morning
- tutor
- participate in activities with them
- attend their activities
- ask them questions about their life without being intrusive
Encouragement is an important tool that teachers often use to motivate their students (as substantiated in Table 2). Table number three indicates that a majority of the teachers surveyed “frequently” or “almost always” encourage their students to do their best in school. A great majority of teachers surveyed reported that they almost always give their students affirming and supportive words. Encouraging students could be part of the role that teachers play in motivating their students to succeed in school.

Expectations that teachers have for their students, as well as their attitude toward their ability to achieve and succeed can have a large impact on students’ own expectations for themselves. Of the teachers surveyed, 64.3% (9) considered their students motivated to achieve, and 64.7% (11) stated that they believe that their students expect to do well in school. This information lends evidence that a majority of the teachers surveyed are positive in their expectations of success for their students, and their students’ attitude toward their own success in school.

The set of questions delineated in Table 4 were designed to investigate what teachers thought about their students’ ability to achieve. They also were designed to measure how important the teachers perceived it was to the students to achieve. A majority of the teachers feel strongly that their students can be successful, and it is extremely important to them that their students succeed; however, when asked to describe their perceptions of students views of their ability to succeed, the majority of teachers believed students were not as secure in their ability to succeed. There was no great consensus on perceptions about importance of success to students. Table 4 shows that while teachers highly believe in the students’ chances for success, the teacher’s perceive that the students themselves do not have such positive feelings about their ability to succeed.

Peers can be important factors in the area of motivation to achieve academically, in a positive or a negative way. Questions were designed to assess the teachers’ perceptions of peer influences to achieve in their classrooms. Sixty percent (9) of the teachers surveyed believed that their students motivated each other to do well in school and believed that students encouraged each other in the classroom. Peer relationships are just one of many aspects that can alter student motivation.

The final question on the survey asked for any additional comments that the teachers had concerning their role in motivating their students. These comments shine a light on what a few of
the teachers thought about their students, motivation, and their role in that motivation. These comments are listed below:

- Program in class to encourage each other to be motivated to do best
- High school students are difficult to motivate—by this age their attitudes and behaviors are set in stone. They don’t connect the present with their future, they don’t respect or trust adults. No structure or rules at home. Survival, socialization, and attention are very important to them. Education is secondary. As a teacher, you have to believe that under that stone wall is a student with great/hidden potential, so you continue to encourage them and be a positive model.
- All students need consistency. I have very high expectations in my classroom. It is usually a struggle, at first, but the students do stand up to the challenge and by and large self-motivate to meet expectations.

Focus Group Themes

Content analysis of the dialogue from the two focus groups yielded three specific themes that were most salient. Those themes were ethic of care, use of multiple strategies, and operationalization of motivation. These three themes are discussed in the sections that follow.

Ethic of care. The teachers in the focus groups talked a lot about their personal role in caring for students. One of the teachers mentioned that she spends more time with her students than she does with her own family. She also said “they become my family”. Another teacher stated that she shares her life from home with her students. These teachers allow their students to get to know who they are as people, creating a more personal and caring environment in the classroom.

One of the teachers discussed a specific way that he used to take “caring” about his students to another level. He stated that many years ago, he lived in the neighborhood in which the school was located. He therefore was part of the community and knew many of the families on a more personal level. Because he had established rapport with many of the families of his students, he would often go to students’ houses during the school day. He would do that either to get them up to come to school, or to get the parents to come down to the school if the student was misbehaving or not doing his work. During that time, there was a strong home-school connection, and the two entities worked together for the betterment of student education and learning. He stated that in the present climate of the schools, that connection is missing. Many of
the teachers agreed that they are able to be much more effective when the students home
environment reinforces what is being instilled at school.

These teachers also discussed how they deeply care about the life outcomes for their
students. A group of teachers were discussing one student who “has a lot of outside issues”, and
they all expressed empathy for her. One teacher expressed their empathic feelings by stating “I
don’t know what I would do”, referring to the student’s home situation. Another teacher stated “I
don’t know how she does it”. But they then stated that she is going to graduate, and that “there’s
no greater happiness that I could have than to watch that”. Watching their students graduate
seems to be the best payoff for the teachers who work with these students. One teacher
mentioned that it is wonderful when the students come and hug her at graduation, and how that
makes all of the hard work worth it.

*Use of multiple strategies.* The teachers mentioned many strategies that they use to
connect with students on a number of levels. Several of the teachers mentioned having high
expectations for their students. One of them said, “I really believe in the tough love and I try to
do it as much as possible and I keep high standards, and those standards have to be met.”
Another teacher expressed his high expectations through his grading of student papers. He stated
that, “when they get a paper back at the very beginning of the year it will have some comments
that I make on their paper. I’m not real sure that it’s what whoever is in charge of the curriculum
would really like, but it’s stuff like ‘see me after school’, ‘this is better than the other one’. Just
to keep them on their toes with that kind of thing”.

A strategy that the teachers kept revisiting was relating the coursework that they teach to
the students’ lives. One of them said, “it’s nice to be able to tell them how the other subjects will
have an impact on what they are doing”. Another teacher discussed how she incorporated student
interests in speech class. She said, “The very last speech I said they could do a speech about
what you love doing more than anything else in the world. You can imagine with my children,
but one boy came in with all the fireman equipment, showed how to put it on and he used
somebody else. And this is a child who says very little, and he really enjoyed it. The girls did
things like setting hair, and so it’s …these are the kinds of things that need to be done. They
need that along with the other to learn. They really enjoyed being able to show what they were
really good at.” Allowing students to highlight their interests and talents in this manner is
effective in improving student educational outcomes, as was mentioned by this teacher and the student that she discussed.

When teachers are able to work together to help each other increase student success, they are able to be more successful in their efforts. The teachers in the focus groups have found this to be true, and commented on their efforts in working together for their students. Below is the dialogue that they had about this topic:

Teacher (T)3—We’ve gotten to know each other thru my students. When she has a problem w/ one of my students, she’ll tell me the positive about that student, as well as what they need to improve. She makes sure that they are on task. IF I can’t work w/ another teacher to make sure they are getting what they need, then I shouldn’t be here.

T2—We sort of play off of each other. If she tells me that “Donna” owes me three more papers, then when Donna hits the door that day, I’m waiting for her. I’ll tell the student that I talked to her, and that she is not going to graduate or pass if she doesn’t do what she’s supposed to. Then she says “I’ll get it done, I’ll get it done.”

T1—It’s so great b/c a lot of them come to me and say “You talked to Mr. Jones”. And yes I did! If I don’t get it, you know what will happen. She has a lot of outside issues, I don’t know what I would do.

Operationalization of motivation. In order to operationalize motivation for their students, the teachers were asked what they thought motivation meant to their students. Following is the dialogue that took place:

Dr. Mosley-Howard—[For] all the students that you’ve been intervening with, how would you define motivation just from their perspective, and what made the difference between Donna, and the student who didn’t make it?

T3—For me, if you walk in that classroom w/ a positive attitude.

T2—I said it’s an internal type of thing. I can be as motivated as I wanna be for Donna to graduate, but unless she has that thing that makes her want to sit down and crank those three papers out, and get her high school diploma, I can’t do it for them. I can’t write their papers, but I can encourage them.

Based upon this definition of motivation, the teachers discussed their feelings about praising students. Several of them felt that praise is overused and does the student no good in helping them better themselves. One of the teachers said, “They have to pass a state test. And so
we can’t constantly say ‘oh your wonderful, wonderful’. Of course I can do it now, because
most of my students have passed the test. I think that sets them up for failure and really isn’t
good. I’m not saying not give it to them, but if you’re just giving them positive reinforcement,
they don’t learn what they need to improve on.” Another teacher said, “I agree there are too
many accolades…there needs to be a balance…need to be there…tell them they can do better.” It
seems that these teachers want to be specific in their praise, and not just give blanket statements
of approval.

The goal that these teachers said they wanted to reach was to have their students be
intrinsically motivated to do their best academically. Therefore, they really try to instill the value
of education into their students. One of the teachers stated it this way: “There is no intrinsic
motivation with our students. I read “Rich Dad and Poor Dad”. It was a good book…it talks
about what rich versus poor dads give their children…they need to see the value of
education…we aren’t teaching them right…they expect a big payoff---guaranteed. We need to
shift the focus of education. Cincinnati Bell gives our kids a job, if they don’t want an
education, they better learn six words ‘Do you want fries with that?’”.

In order to establish intrinsic motivation in their students, several of the teachers
discussed educating their students about how their current coursework relates to their future lives
and vocations. One teacher said, “We know that they like our program, our vocational program,
they love it. So we tell them ‘look, you’re not going to be anything in this field if you don’t get
your math, science and social studies’. So we use the fact that they have a desire to do well in
these programs. We can tell them that they won’t graduate and won’t be able to go anywhere in
this field if they don’t do well in their other subjects, such as English.” Another teacher spoke
more specifically, saying, “We relate them to the real world out there. If you can’t measure like
they teach you in a math or science class you can’t measure out liquids for the hairdressing stuff
and you’ll screw up somebody’s head or burn them to death. You can’t measure skid marks at
the scene of an accident, you can’t be a police officer. Those kind of things to relate those
skills.” Helping students understand how their coursework will directly benefit their future is an
important factor in increasing their motivation in those classes.

The teachers surveyed had an overall positive view about motivation, and their ability to
motivate their students academically in the classroom. There were three categories of motivation
definition. There were those who saw motivation as an inborn personality trait, those who saw it
as an action (something that can be taught, or disseminated or instilled into someone), and those who saw motivation as something that the teacher can instill in their students. The most highly selected strategies used by teachers to motivate their students were encouragement and verbal praise. Teaching strategies most used by the teachers to increase motivation involved variety and relevance. The teachers surveyed also stated that they attempt to establish relationships with their students through being supportive and caring and having high expectations for their students. In the focus groups, the teachers talked about their role in caring for their students, and the importance of connecting personally with their students. They also discussed the multiple strategies that they use to increase student motivation, including having high expectations for student performance, relating course material to the lives of students, and working together as a team of teachers to ensure success for all students. The teachers in the focus groups also discussed operationalizing motivation for their students through using a balance of praise and constructive criticism, as well as helping students understand why specific coursework is important for them to know in their future vocations. These findings are further discussed and elaborated on in the following chapter.
Discussion

Motivation is a very complex concept to understand, and many people view it in a variety of ways. The teachers responding to the survey also defined motivation in a variety of ways. The question to answer then becomes in what way is motivating students a part of the teachers role. This question will be addressed throughout the course of this discussion.

According to the data presented in the previous chapter, teacher’s feel that they are putting more effort into motivating their students than they feel that students are actually being motivated. This could mean that they feel that the students are hard to get motivated academically, or it could mean that the teachers feel that they are not getting a return for the effort they are expending because they are not witnessing students being more motivated in school. Either way, unrequited effort is bound to end in burnout for those expending the effort. Slight burnout and frustration is evidenced in some of the comments made by the teachers. Examples of such comments include: “high school students are difficult to motivate—by this age their attitudes and behaviors are set in stone”, and “nothing I do is interesting for them”, as well as “I believe computers and field trips are the best. I don’t seem to have the time or money for field trips or computers in the classroom”. These comments reflect the frustration that can occur when attempting what can at times be a difficult and unrewarding task. A lack of resources in the urban school setting can certainly add to the frustration, as that makes it more difficult to provide reinforcers and extracurricular activities, as one of the teachers mentioned above.

The differences in the definitions of motivation are quite interesting. The noun definitions referred mostly to the internal state of a person, and they described motivation as a type of desire, both a desire to do something and a desire to succeed. The question is then raised, where do those desires come from? Are a person’s desires inherent in who they are, or can they be modified or manipulated by external forces? The noun definitions seemed to have an overall feeling of describing motivation as a part of the individual. When a schema such as motivation is viewed as inherent in an individual, then it is viewed as being a part of that person’s personality in varying degrees. When it is viewed biologically in this manner, it is most likely also viewed as unable to be cultivated or increased. That gives the student and the teacher very little power in changing their outcomes.

The verb definitions involved an action on the student’s part, such as “getting things accomplished” and “to do what needs to be done”. The definitions described as verbs involving a
teacher action involved behaviors on the teacher’s part that sought to change student behaviors or their views about academic tasks through a variety of methods. One teacher even went so far as to say that motivation is the “ability to create a change of behavior, attitude and academic achievement”. Another teacher responded that “you do whatever works for that particular student”, indicating that they realize that every student is different and has different needs. Also, the way to meet those needs may also vary depending upon the student. The teachers that considered motivation as an action involving the teacher clearly saw motivating their students as an important role for them to take. Getting students motivated is very important in terms of their academic success. Especially in urban students, learned helplessness and other ideas of school not being important or of it being perpetually unsuccessful has to be dispelled. One of the best people in those students’ lives to dispel those myths is their teacher, because they know the student, and they know the benefit of education.

Positive strategies such as encouragement and praise were most often chosen as the best to use in attempting to motivate students. Punishment, criticism and material rewards were at the bottom of the list. This is somewhat interesting though, because most behavioral systems in schools are set up to focus on the negative, and are set up to punish. Most schools use some type of sign in/check system for when children misbehave or do not do their work. Many also use a system of demerits, which can lead to a visit to the principal, Saturday school, or suspension. (A. Bonar, personal communication, January 13, 2003) As for material rewards, even though put at the bottom of the list in regards to strategies most often used by teachers, a teacher in a focus group stated “the rewards are more effective sometimes . . . students expect them all the time . . . so I try to wean them off rewards”. When teachers wrote in strategies that they use to motivate students, they all revolved around personal involvement and expressing care and concern for the individual student. A teacher who takes the time to show an individual student that they care is likely to be a positive influence and role model to that student.

The surveyed teachers were also asked how they make their classes interesting to their students. The strategies that the teachers relayed fell into three different categories: variety, relevance, and miscellaneous. If a teachers desire is to keep their students interested, the first logical step would be to keep the students interested long enough to pay attention, and keep them engaged in the class. Several of the teachers mentioned using a variety of modalities, including lecture, video, and group projects. Davis (1985) believed in the importance of variety in the
classroom. Using variety in the classroom changes the pace, and in its very nature makes children more alert to the happenings in the classroom. One teacher stated that he “raps for students on occasion”. This can be an engaging tool, as it is personally enjoyable for the students, and it shows them that their teacher cares about and is interested in some of their same hobbies. Demonstrating interest in students’ interests in such a way can be a positive foundation for building rapport, and for establishing a relationship that can have an impact in a child’s life.

Making learning relevant to the lives of each student is a very important factor in the motivation of those students. Marchant (1991) discussed the importance of citing specific examples to urban youth of how their educational experiences will benefit them in the future. One of the teachers wrote that they “bring in ‘real world’ speakers who reiterate importance of academic courses to their career aspirations”. In this way, the students have a chance to talk to someone who can tell them exactly what knowledge they use and how their education prepared them for their jobs. In the focus group, this topic was elaborated on in more detail. Those teachers stated that the importance of making their urban students understand the value and relevance of their education was great. If these students did not understand the importance of their education, they would probably not be very motivated to stay in school. These teachers seemed to spend a lot of time showing students how their education can be valuable for them personally. For example, they discussed how the students did speeches on things that they like to do. One student brought in fireman gear, and several girls spoke about being a hairdresser. Also, one teacher discussed how the team of teachers discussed with students the importance of individual subject content, such as hairdressers needing to know how to measure out chemicals when doing hair, or police officers being able to accurately measure skid marks at the scene of an accident to be a police officer.

A third category of strategies was headed under “other”, as they were miscellaneous in nature. Several of the strategies mentioned were specific teaching strategies used in the classroom, such as hands on activities, projects, journal writing and games. These types of activities would certainly maintain most students’ attention and interest. One teacher’s response indicated frustration on the teacher’s part to be able to motivate their students due to a lack of resources, specifically naming both time and money. Another teacher mentioned listening to their students, which again indicates that the teachers believe that caring and respect for students is important. Wentzel (1998) found that their students relate perceived caring and support on the
part of teachers to the pursuit of goals. Therefore, any methods that teachers use to demonstrate their caring and support for their students is necessary and beneficial. Allowing choice in selection of novels was another strategy mentioned in this section. Research does show that choice is critical in motivation and ownership of a student’s schoolwork and overall education (Fleming, et al., 1999; Kreitler, et al., 1995; Hudley, 1997). Any learning that takes place when the student has a minimal amount of choice in the topic or curriculum is likely to be much more meaningful, because they had a direct part in that process. Especially for these urban students, who may sometimes feel that their choices are limited, or are already made for them, allowing autonomy and control over even a small part of their education can have a great impact.

Teachers who care about their students were put at the top of the list of what motivates students the most in school. Therefore, teachers do see their role as important, and see themselves as important to their students. The teachers in the focus group also discussed their personal role in caring for their students, and that they actually put emotionally energy into the outcomes of their students. This belief about their role is important on the part of the teachers, for those teachers who believe that they can have an impact on the lives of their students will be more willing to attempt to do so. Parental involvement was listed as second in the list of what motivates the student to achieve. This statement is corroborated by research that has found that parental involvement increases student motivation and achievement (Connell, et al., 1994; Wentzel, 1999). Peers and social relationships were listed third. A slight majority (60% [9]) of teachers believe that peers motivate and encourage each other to do well in the classroom. This type of positive peer pressure is more likely to occur in an environment created to generate such types of interactions. Hence, class climate in which all students work together was also mentioned as a motivator. A climate such as this has to be established by the teacher and the standards they set. The teacher takes the lead in how the students will work together, and how they treat each other. Receiving independence was another motivator for students mentioned by the teachers. At the high school level, this independence is surely an important motivator, as it is only a few years away. Grades and food were mentioned last and therefore are felt to be the least motivating. These extrinsic, tangible motivators are most likely felt to be least motivating because they are not as personally important as others on the list. A question about grades is raised at this point. Where would grades fall on the list of motivators in a higher socioeconomic district? It is likely that in a different environment, different motivators would be more
important. Possibly, in a district where the push for college entrance and scholarships are held at a higher level, motivators such as grades may fall higher on the list.

When comparing the teachers’ definitions of motivation to their different strategies that they would use to motivate, several interesting findings come to light. Those who defined motivation as a noun listed more negative motivational strategies. Punishment was only listed by someone who thought of motivation as a noun. Those who defined motivation as a noun listed more internal factors such as enjoyment and desire. None of the noun definitions necessitated an action on the part of the student or the teacher. (See Figure 4).

Those teachers who described motivation as an action listed using a reward system among the strategies of how teachers could motivate their students. A reward system fits with the verb definition of motivation, as it is a strategy used specifically to change behavior. Therefore, these teachers are obviously more apt to believe that behavior (including motivation and achievement) is something that can be altered. The teachers that defined motivation as a verb also listed grades, graduation, jobs, money and moving out as motivating factors for students. All of these motivators are directly contingent upon student behavior and success.

When looking at the strategies provided by those who defined motivation as a verb involving a teacher action, they used the whole gamut of strategies on the list in the survey. They also added other strategies that were the direct responsibility of the teacher, such as calling home and sending cards. These teachers also believe that they themselves are important motivational factors, which makes sense because they see their actions as a direct part of the motivational process. The strategies that these teachers listed were more in-depth and also had more of a research base than the other categories. Examples of such strategies are allowing student choice, using real world connections, as well as applying what is learned in class to the real world. The teacher is seen as having something important to contribute to the class. One of the teachers in this category mentioned that nothing they do is felt to be motivational for the students. This would be very frustrating for a teacher who believes that it is within their role and their power to motivate students. When a person does not feel that they see the fruits of their labor, they are very likely to get frustrated and discouraged.

The teachers stated that they often get to know their students, and that they seek it out because they attempt to get to know the hobbies and interests of their students. The students and teachers are together for approximately six or seven hours per day, so they will of course get to
know each other very well. Teachers can utilize this time well to attempt to better understand and empathize with their students. It is then that teachers will be in a much better position to have an influence on the achievement motivation of the students in their classroom. Noddings (1995) described the importance of caring teachers. She stated that caring teachers become real people to their students. The teachers in the focus group held to this philosophy, in that they cared for their students and allowed them to get to know them on a more personal level. When teachers and students take the time to invest in this relationship, mutual caring and respect is likely to result. Noddings also argued that when a teacher cares for his/her students, he/she is more likely to do the best he/she can to increase student learning and achievement, as well as motivation.

The teachers listed a variety of strategies that they use to get to know their students. Working with each student individually is a positive strategy, as it is a good way for the teacher to get to know the student on a more personal level, as students often act very differently alone than they do in a group of their peers. Everyone needs to be listened to, and teachers who listen to their students certainly have a better chance of being a change agent in their lives. Listening to students is also very important to those students who do not get heard anywhere else. In order to become more personally involved in the lives of their students, teachers must show the students that they care about them. This can be done through their daily interactions and concern, as well as conferences with students to let them know how they are doing. Other surveyed teachers show their care and concern for students by calling home, being their mentor, and calling to wake them up in the mornings. When a teacher shows interest in a student and their activities by participating with them, or attending their activities, it is more likely that the student will respect the teacher and will then listen to them and be motivated by them and their example. Knowing that a teacher cares can be the best motivator of all, and being supportive of their activities is one of the best ways to show the student that the teacher does care. While showing interest in their lives, the teacher must also remember to be respectful, and not be too intrusive into areas of the child’s life that the child wants to keep private.

It is interesting that only 23.1% (3) of teachers stated that they almost always encourage their students to do their best in school, when encouragement was at the top of their list of strategies to use in motivating their students. However, when asked a more specific question of how often they give their students positive and affirming statements, almost 70% (9) of teachers said that they did so almost all of the time. It seems that giving praise and encouragement is one
of the surveyed teachers’ most used tools to motivate students. That of encourager is also an important role for the teacher to play, because students need encouragement to push them, and to help them feel more secure in their academic endeavors. On the other hand, teachers in the focus groups discussed the detriment of too much unearned praise. One teacher stated that they think unmerited praise sets the students up for failure, in that they do not learn what to improve on. The teachers discussed that there has to be balance between praise and corrective feedback. However, corrective feedback can be given to the student in an encouraging way.

Teachers’ expectations for students are very important to the success outcomes of those students. Higher expectations on the part of the teacher have been related to higher levels of student motivation and achievement (Muller, et al., 1999; Gezi, 1990). The teachers who were surveyed seemed to understand this concept, as they were positive in their expectations for their students overall. One of the teachers who made a comment at the end of the survey stated: “I have very high expectations in my classroom. It is usually a struggle, at first, but the students do stand up to the challenge and by and large self-motivate to meet expectations” (See previous chapter). A teacher in one of the focus groups also discussed how her high expectations are sometimes met with resistance at first, but then the students end up meeting those expectations throughout the course of the year. Having high expectations works for these teachers, as the students work hard to meet those expectations. These high expectations can be important to these students, because it is likely that many of them do not have high expectations set for them by other people in their life. It is very likely that in certain circumstances these expectations makes the students feel respected and valued, which is also very important to them.

It is very important for teachers to maintain a positive attitude and expectations toward their students, as the students can sense what those attitudes and expectations are for them. The student will then feed off of what they know or think that they know about what the teachers believe about them. It is interesting to note that the teachers’ expectations (64% [9] believe students can do well) for their students success is much higher than their expectations for themselves to really be able to motivate the students (38.5% [5] believed they could motivate students).

Motivation is important in order for any amount of success or achievement to take place. The teachers agreed with this philosophy, as a great majority (70.6% [12]) of them believe that their students are capable of reaching their potential if only they put forth effort. In putting forth
effort, motivation to reach a certain goal becomes evident. It was extremely important to almost all (92.3\% [12]) of the teachers that their students succeed. This is very important because of course for a teacher to have an impact on the achievement motivation of their students, they must care about their students’ success. However, when asked how important they perceive success being to their students, only 30.8\% (4) thought that it was extremely important to the students. If the importance of succeeding is low on the part of the students, then motivating them in this realm becomes more difficult. This is where making the education relevant to the lives and interests of the students becomes important. They need to be shown why their education is important directly for their lives so that they can see its impact and believe that it is personally important to them. When this is effectively done, then the student will be more likely to become personally invested in their education.

In looking at teachers’ beliefs about student success, only 11.8\% (2) of teachers strongly believe that the students believe that they could do anything. Only 30.8\% (4) strongly believe that it is important to their students to achieve. Based on these assumptions on the part of the teachers, other things in the students’ life may be more important than their educational achievement. Many of these students have a barrage of outside issues to deal with before they come to school, such as getting their basic needs met, lack of stability and support at home, as well as other emotional and physical issues. When all of these other more primitive and basic physical, psychological and emotional needs are not met, the students will have no energy or desire to put a lot of effort into their academic needs (see Berry & Asamen, 1989). A comment made by a teacher at the end of the survey substantiates this point. The teacher stated that there are “no structure or rules at home. Survival, socialization, and attention are very important to them. Education is secondary” (See previous chapter). Having no structure in the home certainly has an impact on the behavior and beliefs of the students in and about school.

Several teachers made comments at the end of the survey that warrant discussion. One of those teachers stated that “high school students are difficult to motivate”, and that “by this age their attitudes and behaviors are set in stone”. This comment seems to allude to the teacher’s belief that the students’ attitudes and behaviors are unchangeable. If this is true, frustration is inevitable because any attempts to motivate students will be unfruitful. If a teacher thinks this way, they are probably likely to quickly give up in their efforts to push their students toward success. This teacher seems to be quite frustrated and defeated in their efforts, but yet they still
have hope that “under that stone wall is a student with great/hidden potential, so you continue to encourage them and be a positive model” (See previous chapter). There seems to be some helplessness felt on the part of the teachers who put significant effort into motivating their students, but who are not seeing the immediate rewards for that effort. A teacher in one of the focus groups understood this sense of helplessness, as she knew that there was only so much that a teacher could do for the student to help them succeed, and that the rest was up to the student themselves. She stated that “I can be as motivated as I want to be for ‘Donna’ to graduate, but unless she has that thing that makes her want to sit down and crank those three papers out, and get her high school diploma, I can’t do it for them. I can’t write their papers, but I can encourage them”.

Working with students and trying to get them to see the value of their education can be a difficult endeavor, and there may be a lot of frustration and disillusionment along the way for the teacher that cares a lot about their students and their success. Many times the teachers may not see outcomes or receive the gratitude and appreciation that they so richly deserve. However, several of the teachers in the focus groups described the wonderful payoff when they are able to see the rewards for all of their hard work. One of them said “when they come to me after graduation, even the big ol’ guys will come up and throw their arms around me with tears down their face, and I just think, ‘I didn’t know they liked me that much’. So it means a lot.” Another teacher also described how all of the hard work is worth it by saying, “all but one student we’ve worked on this year is going to graduate. There’s no greater happiness that I could have than to watch that”.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. The information gleaned about how much urban students are motivated, as well as what motivates them were only teachers’ perceptions, and could be inaccurate. In fact, there was a small disparity of percentages among two questions relating to what teachers believed that their students thought and felt about their own abilities and expectations for themselves. It is surely difficult to approximate what other people feel about themselves. Also, some of the motivational factors that were ranked, such as grades and independence could be environmentally related. A comparison survey of teachers from a different environment would be needed to substantiate the uniqueness of some of the motivational factors and teachers’ viewpoints of urban children. When almost 94% (15) of
teachers stated that their students talked to them about personal issues that had to do with their lives outside of school, the question of how often and to what extent this occurs arises. Does the student share only surface level information, or are deep bonds being formed that often between teacher and student? Another limitation involves the fact that the teachers who responded to the survey are more likely to be motivated themselves to increase student motivation and potential. Further research is needed in this area in order to address these limitations, and to further elaborate on this topic.

Summary and Implications

Overall, the study found that teachers were positive in regard to their role and ability to motivate their students. In answering the three research questions, the first question was how the teachers surveyed conceptualize motivation and what it means to them. There were three categories of how the teachers viewed motivation. The first was those who viewed it as an inborn personality trait which is difficult, if not impossible to change. The second was those who viewed motivation as an action, something that can be taught, or disseminated or instilled into someone. The third way that the teachers conceptualized motivation was as something that the teacher can instill in their students.

The second research question sought to address what role the teacher’s feel they play in the motivation of their students to learn and succeed. The teachers that were surveyed felt that their role in motivating their students was a very important one, as they listed themselves among the most important motivators in the lives of students on several questions. The teachers seemed to view their role as motivator as one who encourages, praises and pushes the students to do their best. It also became apparent that they believed their role also involved motivating their students through their innovative teaching strategies.

Identifying which strategies teacher’s use in the classroom to help motivate their students was the third and final research question that this paper has sought to address. Strategies of using encouragement and praise were noted as being the most often used, and were seen as the most effective. When asked about the specific teaching strategies used to accomplish the task of motivating students, teachers most often indicated strategies involving a variety of modalities and resources, as well as relating academic tasks to the lives of the students being taught.

Motivation is the driving force behind academic achievement. It is a prerequisite to student achievement. If a student is not motivated to achieve, no amount of intervention will be
effective. Therefore, the information about strategies that increase motivation will be important for school psychologists to share with teachers so that academic interventions can be as effective as possible.

Through the information presented in this research, school psychologists can help teachers understand the powerful role they have in motivating students. The need for teachers to maintain high expectations for their urban students should be addressed. The school psychologists disseminating this information should also stress the importance for teachers to show care, support, respect and interest in their students. The specific methods to go about accomplishing this that have been discussed in this paper would be very helpful information for teachers so that they can replicate those ideas and strategies that have worked for other teachers in the quest to motivate urban students.

School psychologists who work in urban districts need to understand the importance of the teacher’s role in the motivation of students. When they understand and appreciate the important role that teachers play in the lives of their students, then they will be better equipped to assist the teachers with whom they work. School psychologists can take these research-based strategies and present them to their teachers as viable methods for increasing student motivation. This information can also help school psychologists empower the teachers in their urban districts, as they can show those teachers the impact that they are able to have on students. The research presented in this paper can also enable school psychologists working in urban districts to better understand what teachers think and believe about their job and about their ability to motivate their students to achieve. The importance of the teacher in the process of motivating urban students to achieve academically cannot be underestimated.

Often the referring problem presented to school psychologists in team meetings is in the form of academic skill deficits. Due to the information presented in this paper, and the research of many others, it is important that the team work together to verify that the issue is surely a skill deficit, and not performance. Motivation may be the underlying issue in many of school age referrals. If the teacher can reframe the referral question in this way, then interventions can be more effective when they directly deal with the underlying issue that is causing a lack of progress in the curriculum. The information in this thesis will be helpful for intervention teams as a whole, as they attempt to meet student needs in the best and most productive ways possible.
Table 1

Teachers’ beliefs about their ability to motivate students:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject of question</th>
<th>Percentage of Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How much teacher believes they are able to motivate students</td>
<td>38.5  38.5  23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort put into motivating students</td>
<td>53.8  30.8  15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Percent (n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement</td>
<td>100% (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Praise</td>
<td>94.1% (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Token economy/other reward system</td>
<td>29.4% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishment</td>
<td>17.6% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criticism</td>
<td>17.6% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material rewards</td>
<td>7.6% (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: calls home, personal cards, physical affection (handshake, pat on back)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

*Using Encouragement to Motivate Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject of question</th>
<th>Percentage of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Almost Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often teachers encourage students to do their best in school</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often teachers give students positive, affirming statements</td>
<td>69.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

Beliefs and Perceptions About Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject of question</th>
<th>Percentage of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly/Extremely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe that their students can do anything they want</td>
<td>70.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>if they try hard enough</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers perceive that their students believe they could</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do anything</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance to the teacher that students succeed</td>
<td>92.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived importance to the students that they succeed</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


Appendix A

Cover Letter & Survey

201 McGuffey Hall
Miami University
Oxford, OH 45056

Dear Sir or Madam:

My name is Kimberly Bays. I am a student enrolled in the school psychology program at Miami University of Ohio. Currently I am in the process of completing my thesis. It is with this process that I would like your assistance. My thesis is connected with a project currently being implemented by my advisor, Dr. Susan Mosley-Howard and the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative-Pew Partnership project at your high school.

The Cincinnati Youth Collaborative (CYC) implements programs designed to help students achieve, and strives to insure that “all Cincinnati children will graduate from high school with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior necessary to participate fully and responsibly in the social, political, and economic life of society.” CYC strives to achieve its mission by acting as advocate; catalyst, coordinator and/or operator of selective programs that remove barriers to children and proactively encourage steps to enable at-risk children to acquire needed knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors.

The topic of my thesis is “Teacher’s Role in Motivating Students”. I believe this topic is central to CYC program objectives. Enclosed with this letter is a copy of a questionnaire intended to explore what role teachers feel they have in motivating their students to do well in school. All responses that are provided on this questionnaire will be kept confidential. Furthermore, all surveys will be coded so that you do not have to write your name on it when it is returned.

If you agree to participate in this research project, please return the enclosed questionnaire to your principal by April 20, 2001 (there will be a box identified in which to place your survey). By returning this survey you provide your consent to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions in this survey without penalty. If you have any questions about this project please contact me at 513-xxx-xxxx, or my advisor Dr. Mosley-Howard at 1-513-xxx-xxxx. If you have questions regarding your rights as a project participant, contact the office of the Advancement of Scholarship and Teaching at Miami University at 1-513-xxx-xxxx. If you have questions regarding Cincinnati Youth Collaborative programs in your high school, contact Ms. Miriam West at xxx-xxxx. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Bays          Dr. Susan Mosley-Howard
School Psychology Graduate Student    Thesis Advisor

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Appendix B
Teacher Survey

**Teacher Survey Questions**

As indicated in the cover letter, this project explores what role teachers feel they have in motivating their students to do well in school. We thank you in advance for completing this questionnaire. All responses that are provided on this questionnaire will be kept confidential.

Please return this questionnaire to your principal by April 20, 2001 (there will be a box identified in which to place your survey). If you have any questions about this project please contact Kim Bays at 513-705-9764, student advisor Dr. Mosley-Howard at 1-513-529-6626 or Ms. Miriam West-Cincinnati Youth Collaborative at 475-4959

**Directions**: Please indicate the appropriate response.

Gender:  M   F
High School in which you teach ___________________________
Years as a teacher ________________
How many years have you worked in this district? ______
Age________________

**Directions**: We first ask questions about the CYC program, and then ask questions about student motivation. Please circle or write out your answer to the following questions. Feel free to use the back of the survey, or to attach another sheet of paper if you would like more room to write.

1. How many of your students are involved in the Cincinnati Youth Collaborative (CYC) program? ____

2. Do your students enjoy their participation in the CYC programs in which they are involved?
   
   YES     NO     DON’T KNOW

3. Do you feel that your students are benefiting from the CYC programs?
   
   YES     NO     DON’T KNOW

4. What types of activities do **you** participate in with CYC? Please list.

5. How many of your students have you referred to CYC? ____
   
   What were some of the reasons you did so?
6. What does the word “motivation” mean to you? __________________________
_________________________________________________________________

7. Do you see motivation as part of your role as a teacher (encouraging your students to learn)?
   YES         NO

8. How do you go about motivating your students? Circle all that apply
   VERBAL PRAISE       TOKEN ECONOMY/REWARD SYSTEM
   PUNISHMENT          CRITICISM
   ENCOURAGEMENT       MATERIAL REWARDS
   OTHER______________________

9. Do your students talk to you about issues in their lives outside of school?
   YES         NO

10. Overall, would you consider your students to be motivated to achieve?
    YES         NO

11. Compared to the other students in your classes, how motivated to do well in school are the students who participate in CYC activities?
    MORE         SAME         LESS

12. Has being involved in CYC programs improved the motivation of those students?
    YES         NO

13. Do you enjoy teaching? YES         NO

14. Do your students motivate each other to do well in school? YES         NO

15. Do your students encourage each other in the classroom? YES         NO

16. In general, what motivates your students the most in school? _______________
17. Overall, do your students expect to do well in school? YES NO

18. To what degree do you believe that your students can do anything they wanted or they tried hard enough?

   STRONGLY     SOMEWHAT     DO NOT
   BELIEVE      BELIEVE      BELIEVE

19. Do your students believe that they could do anything they wanted if they tried hard enough?

   STRONGLY     SOMEWHAT     DO NOT
   BELIEVE      BELIEVE      BELIEVE

20. On average, how personally involved are you with your students?

   VERY              SOMEWHAT       SCARCELY/HARDLY
   INVOLVED          INVOLVED       INVOLVED

21. How much do your students enjoy your class?

   VERY MUCH        SOMEWHAT       DO NOT
   ENJOY            ENJOY          ENJOY

22. How connected do you feel to the CYC program?

   VERY MUCH        SOMEWHAT       NO AT ALL
   CONNECTED        CONNECTED      CONNECTED

23. Please list some things that you do in class to make it interesting for your students.
24. How important is it to you that your students succeed? ____
25. How important is it to your students that they succeed? ____
26. How much do you think you, as a teacher motivate your students to succeed? ____
27. How much effort are you able to put into motivating your students to do their best in school? ____
28. How often are you able to get to know your students’ hobbies and interests? ____
29. How often do you encourage your students to do their best in school? ____
30. How often do you give your students positive, affirming statements? ____

Below please write any additional comments you may have about your role as in teacher in motivating your students.