

Motivation is an area that is relevant in and outside of the classroom. However, before a child ever steps into my high school classroom, they are influenced by countless variables that impact their achievement. The ideal developmental environment is unique to each child, but some factors influence cognitive regardless of the culture they are raised in. Secure attachment, involved and sensitive caregivers, ample stimulus, and proper human interaction help maintain ideal cognitive development. If every child could be raised with the ideal factors, schools scores might reflect greater peer relations and grades; however, this is not the case with school around the world. Numerous books have been written about school failure that date back to the Romans. *A Nation at Risk* published in the 1980's first began to chronicle school failure. The No Child Left Behind brought student achievement front and center. Student failure in and outside of the classroom is what motivates me as an educator. In order to focus on best practice models and instruction, it is equally important to understand what factors contribute to student's failure.

Motivation serves as a key determinate in student success. Lack of motivation is often times cited a reason for student failure. Carol Dweck, one of the lead researches of motivation, cited how important a student's perception of ability is on motivation. "People who attributed their failures to lack of ability . . . would become discouraged even in areas where they were capable" (Dweck). Failure for students in my own school has become increasing common. At one period of time, nearly half of the freshmen at East Kentwood Freshmen Campus were failing history. Whether or not if they attributed their failure to ability is a by gone factor, what I must work on engaging them and then

teaching them how to deal with problems and failures. Dweck concluded that teachers and society need to refocus on one's personal mindset. "Intelligence, like muscle, grows stronger through exercise. Training students to adopt a growth mind-set about intelligence had a catalytic effect on motivation and math grades; students in the control group showed no improvement." (Kravovsky). Students need to understand that a problem should be viewed as a challenge whose final outcome is determined by effort – not ability.

Student disengagement and the preexisting factors that influence it, are another area that impacts my classrooms success. Students' disengagement has its roots in early childhood development and socioeconomic backgrounds. Research has shown that a correlation exists between students from lower socioeconomic status and lower achievement scores. Students from low SOE have 525 words to the kids of professionals at the age of 3 (Risely & Hart). I.Q. has a correlation with SOE as well. Risely and Hart also concluded that children of professionals at the three years old had an average IQ of 117 while children whose parents were on welfare had an average IQ of 79. At an early age, children are already at an educational disadvantage. It is no wonder that in an assessment crazed American educational system that has clear assessment based rewards, children with lower IQ and vocabularies fall through the cracks. Repeated failure can have disastrous effects for students. Piaget suggested that a child would regress to a lower stage of development if they repeatedly failed. Coupled with the tension of difficult family, economic, and community life, it is no wonder that students bring a variety of

problems into school. Nonetheless, pandering to the lowest common denominator is not a solution.

Best practice models, especially ones that foster an emotional connection from the student to the teacher, is a model for future educational standards. With such an emphasis on rapid based curriculum and instruction, the emotional need of children is sometimes sadly missed. Classic developmental psychology has proven that humans form emotional attachments that are vital to a persons psyche. The skin to skin touch of a mother to an infant has a positive impact on a child's developmental growth. Likewise, if a secure attachment is created between a child and caregiver in the early years, children are shown to have stronger IQ's and self-confidence in later years. I believe that students also need a secure attachment to their teachers. Flip Flippen, a psychologist and founder of Capturing Kids Hearts, teaches that when you capture their hearts, you capture their minds as well and make them more attentive to what you are teaching.