

Structure For Success

176. Increase the underachieving student's level of perceived competence.

One's perception of his or her competence to do a given task increases the motivation to do the task. On the other hand, a low level of perceived competence decreases motivation. Encourage your underachievers, indicating your assurances that they are able to do what is required. Your belief in their ability to be successful will help it to happen!

177. Show the student the similarities between the task at hand and other tasks at which he or she has succeeded in the past.

In working to increase the level of perceived competence your underachievers have (see Strategy 176) point out the successes they have had in the past. Emphasize the ways in which the task at hand is similar to things they have already done successfully.

178. Design an honor roll that recognizes progress toward a goal and a student's "Personal Best," not just As and Bs.



This provides the student with a sense of progress and focuses on growth the student makes, not on how far behind he or she is compared with other students. In such a system, the student is competing with himself or herself, not with other students. Athletic competition where an athlete attempts to beat his or her own best record in progress toward a goal is similar to this idea, as are the steps of progress from white belt to black belt in the martial arts. A variation on this strategy is to have a class Honor Roll which honors students who have completed a certain amount of work.

179. Make sure the student can see an end to the assignment.

Achievement is easier to strive toward when one can see the "light at the end of the tunnel." Assignments that appear to last forever with no end and no reward in sight are particularly difficult for underachievers. If an assignment seems too long, structure it so that it becomes several shorter tasks.