MOTIVATION in ACADEMICS

What is motivation?
Motivation is the process which guides, initiates and maintains a certain behavior which helps us achieve our goal. It is what causes us to act and we use it subconsciously every day. It involves our biological, emotional, social and cognitive forces within us to activate our behavior and cause us to do an action. Even if it is simply making a sandwich to eat; it involves the use of motivation. Motivation can result in a positively influence study strategy and affect academic performance, adjustment and health in students in terms of education. Therefore, it is important to understand how it helps us.

Components and the Theory of Motivation
There are three components within motivation and they are:
Activation, the decision of doing something, Persistence, the length you do that something for and Intensity, the amount of effort you put in into completing something. An example would be enrolling a class to learn something, the decision you make will be Activation, how long you take the class for will be Persistence, and how often you take the class and put in effort to complete it is Intensity.

Extrinsic Motivation
When an individual completes something because of external factors such as wanting to get a trophy or for example, wanting to get the subject prize award at the end of the year, this is extrinsic motivation. Because you’re completing an action for the sake of getting something physical in return, it is extrinsic.

Intrinsic Motivation
The opposite of extrinsic is intrinsic motivation. You are motivated to complete an action due to internal factors. An example would be you wanting to complete a really difficult math’s problem because after completing it, it will cause you to feel confident about yourself and fulfillment. As you are not getting anything physically from it, it is intrinsic.
Ways of Motivating Yourself

Educational Video Games

A study done in 2013 aimed to see whether educational video games can affect the motivation in students to do better within a subject, specifically, maths. The participants were middle-school students who played a math game either individually, competitively or collaboratively. The results show that student playing under competitive situations performed best in game and also did better in their academic performance. In addition, those who played in both competitive and collaborative conditions began to develop greater interest and enjoyment in maths. From this, we can conclude that educational video games can increase your motivation to learn in school, especially in maths. Although it is hard to generalize to all ages and subjects, it is reliable and therefore can be tested again but on different groups to see the result.

Competitiveness

Competitiveness, an example of extrinsic motivation has the highest correlation with academic performance. In a 2011 study by Amrai et al, 254 university students were asked to complete questionnaires on what motivate them to work and achieve an improve academic performance. The researches placed the results into seven categories of motivation, interest in task, inclination to effort, competitiveness, social power, affiliation, social concern, praise and token then correlated each of them with academic performance. They found out that academic achievement has the highest correlation with competitiveness and the lowest correlation with praise. From this, we can conclude that competition motivates us to achieve and improve in our academics.

Self-determination

In 2002, Ryan and Deci did a study on the relative autonomous motivation also known as the self-determination motivation, a type of intrinsic motivation. Their aim was to see the correlation between a good study strategy and high study effort which leads to better academic performance. The study was conducted on students of year 2 to 6 in a University located in Amsterdam. The student completed an electronic questionnaire on personal data questions that were associated to academics and motivation. Results show a high correlation between having a good study strategy and improved academic performance. This means that students who are motivated in having a good study strategy are more likely to achieve high grades than those who don’t.

What can you do as a teacher/parent?

Although motivation comes within an individual, it can be influence by those around them. As a teacher or a parent, it is important to act and make your student/child motivated in school. It is highly suggested and from studies that positive competition and creating a fun atmosphere will motivate individuals in school. Giving them a sense of responsibility will allow them to feel motivated as well. Rewards and praise are suggested as well. Most importantly, by being enthusiastic and motivated yourself as well, you can influence others and them to feel the same way.

“Well-designed games can motivate students to learn less popular subjects, such as math”
- Jan Plass, Researcher