

## MOTIVATING STUDENTS ACCORDING TO THEIR NEEDS

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In the Spring semester of 2002 I taught a seminar at Trinity College in Washington, D.C. for instructional assistants who were teaching in schools in Montgomery County, Maryland. One of the participants in the class was having a problem motivating one of the students in her class. She had tried everything to reach this student and had failed. After she learned the concepts of Process Communications she applied them and was amazed at the results. This is her story.

David is a ninth grade student in a school for adolescents who have been coded emotionally disturbed. He has a history of being argumentative, threatening, explosive, and defiant. He had been in trouble with the law for 3 years, including a term in youth facility for assault.

David was not interested in school, was highly unmotivated, and refused to follow directions. He was a constant disruption in every class and seemed to be in distress most of the day. He was very manipulative and delighted in stirring up problems between his classmates. His attendance was poor and his schoolwork was suffering.

First I changed the way I talked to David. I began speaking his “language”. We began to communicate. I also tried using many different strategies to help motivate David. None of them worked. Finally I decided that if David was going to benefit at all from school, the teacher and I needed to change our style of teaching.

Knowing that David was a promoter personality type, I decided to try and meet his motivational needs by teaching with action and excitement. We began giving math instruction in game form. For example, one day we split the class up into two teams. I put a linear equation on each side of the board. Whichever team solved the problem correctly earned a point. We continued in this way until one team earned five points. The winning team would not have homework that night. David loved the competition and challenge. Other days we used other strategies including letting him pick the homework problems. In history class we started using role play for instruction. This was perfect

for David, meeting his need to be center stage.

At first, this new style of teaching was hard for both the teacher and myself. However, when we saw what a difference it made for David and for all our students, we were ecstatic. It was well worth making the change. David's attendance improved dramatically and he started being the first one to class everyday, every period. David's other teachers could not believe the change in him. His grades improved and he seems to really enjoy school now. He has become a real leader and positive role model in the classroom.