MOTIVATING CHILDREN TO LEARN

by:
Belen M. Cheng
Teacher III, Renato L. Cayetano Memorial School

Motivating children appears intimidating for today’s teachers-who vie with the web, computer game and infinite different electronic gadgets for kid’s attention. However, by means of fun and totally different techniques to show ancient ideas, we will still encourage twenty first century children.

Be specific. Children can understand much more than we think. Tell them what you want them to learn. Of it’s a particular reading or math strategy, explain what it is and how to do it.

Tell why it’s important. Explain how the targeted strategy can help them improve as students. Don’t dwell on the short-term benefits, such as a good grade, but the long-term effects—such as being able to help others or getting a good job one day.

Make it fun. This is probably the most important, especially if working with very young children. If you can teach concepts in other than traditional ways, it will have a lasting effect. Make games out of questions and answer like a reporter interviewing someone on TV. Videotape this and play it back for the class to see. This can be done with any academic subject. Kids love to see themselves on film or hear their recorded voices. Have smart readers recite poems or passages onto a tape, then have troubled readers hear them for fluency and expression repetition.

Try different methods for different learning styles. Not all children learn the same way, so you’ll need to differentiate your techniques. The interviewing method above may work well for shy students, so use another approach. Have them scan newspaper reports and write the interview rather than conduct it orally.
Don’t give up. Motivating students is not easy. School learning may seem to have a negative connotation for some children. Be persistent. There will always be a group that’s harder to win over. Focus your attention (for a while) on the fun everyone else is having. Ninety-nine percent of the time, the others will participate just not to miss out on something.

Let the children have a voice. They need to be able to tell you what they like or don’t like. Have a sit-down, round table discussion and let them give you a feedback. Anyone who gets to express her opinion feels like what she has to say is worthwhile, and it’s no different with children.