

From the Editor's Desk:

Motivating Students without Grades

by Crystal Davis, ComMuniCator Editor, Temecula Valley USD, retired
editor@cmc-math.org



How do we teach, motivate, and engage students without grades as a motivating factor? Are grades the only way to persuade students to learn? When grades are no longer a driving force for students to learn, which is what we are experiencing in California during this season of Distance Learning, what do we do to encourage students to continue their education? These questions, now more than ever before, come to the forefront of discussion as this school year comes to a close, and we begin thinking about the uncertainties of the future.

I started thinking about which kind of teaching has motivated my students to learn regardless of their grades. The word “pedagogy” kept coming to mind. During my research of this word, I began to question what I do in my class. How do I teach? What methods and strategies do I use? Which of these techniques encourage self-motivated learning? What I found, however, was that I was asking the wrong questions. The question I should have been asking is not *how* I teach, but rather *who* should be leading the educational process.

Pedagogy

The word pedagogy comes from two Greek words: “ped” that literally translated means “child” and the suffix “agog” or “agogue” that means to lead, bring, or guide (Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online, May 1, 2020). Simply stated, pedagogy is how a child learns when the instruction is teacher-led and guided. The student is totally dependent upon the teacher, and the teacher takes full responsibility for the content and evaluation of the child’s understanding of the curriculum. The student’s prior experiences have little influence on the curriculum since units are pre-determined and are taught in sequential order. The primary motivation for this type of education is extrinsic because students are driven by grades and the consequences of failure.



Andragogy

The Greek word “andr” means “man” or “adult” (Webster 2020). Andragogy is how adults learn. Students are responsible for their own learning. The curriculum is self-determined and self-evaluated. The learner brings prior knowledge and background experiences to the class, and students learn collaboratively through sharing their thoughts. An environment that encourages self-motivation allows students to recognize gaps between what is already known about some aspect of importance in the learner’s life and what needs to be learned. The teacher’s role changes from dictating lessons to organizing activities that help students to solve real-life situations that have relevance to them. The motivation for this type of learning is intrinsic and provides the student with self-satisfaction, that leads to self-confidence and higher self-esteem. Grades then become a by-product of the learning rather than the goal of their education.



Change from Pedagogy to Andragogy

How can we change our student’s focus on grades to intrinsic motivation? Begin by thinking about how your students might need this information for their future. Help them to determine what they need to know in order to achieve what they feel is important about the subject matter. Then adjust the activities to allow students to explore solutions to those problems and to achieve their goals.

To learn more about pedagogy versus andragogy, explore the following articles:

✓ Awesome Chart on Pedagogy vs. Andragogy.
educatorstechnology.com/2013/05/awesome-chart-on-pedagogy-vs-andragogy.html

✓ The Difference Between Pedagogy, Andragogy, And Heutagogy.
teachthought.com/pedagogy/a-primer-in-heutagogy-and-self-directed-learning

