2021

Implementing The Autonomy-Supportive Teaching Model with Elementary Students

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IMPLEMENTING THE AUTONOMY-SUPPORTIVE TEACHING MODEL WITH ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

A MASTER'S THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY

BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

AUGUST 2021

BETHEL UNIVERSITY

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August 2021

APPROVED

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Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to my aunt Betty, who has continuously supported me and provided me with guidance and wisdom throughout my journey in education. I would also like to thank my husband, without whom completion of this thesis would not be possible. His patience, understanding and support when I have wanted to quit have been my driving force throughout this process.

Abstract

Task avoidance and keeping students motivated in the classroom are common struggles that elementary school teachers face in their career. This literature review explores task aversiveness in elementary students and how they are motivated to complete tasks. The research shows that when the Self-Determination Theory is considered a student's psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness can be fulfilled to help students improve their intrinsic motivation and reduce task avoidance. Applying this theory to teaching is done through the application of autonomy-supportive teaching and allows the teacher to take a student-focused attitude and an understanding interpersonal tone.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In schools all over the country, teachers are looking for ways to motivate their students. This is evidenced by the books that are on the shelves at bookstores, as well as the teacher trainings targeted at how to keep students motivated. One common solution is to use a carrot and stick approach, giving students rewards for completing a task. But what if there is a better way? What if students can be taught to motivate themselves with the teacher to help guide them through their learning instead of dragging them along reluctantly? This literature review aims to shed light on why elementary students might avoid tasks in the classroom, and to provide teachers with evidence-based teaching strategies that will encourage students to independently begin, persevere, and complete tasks.

This chapter provides a brief background on the Self-Determination Theory and autonomy-supportive teaching in relation to task avoidance and motivation in elementary students, followed by the research aims of this literature review, objectives and questions. The following are the definitions of important terms that will be used in the literature review.

Task aversiveness, as defined by Steel (2007), is when "one seeks to avoid aversive stimuli" (p. 68). If a student finds a task unpleasant, it is more likely that he or she will avoid completing that task. Aversiveness to tasks often leads to task avoidance and may be influenced by a variety of personal characteristics such as a proneness to boredom and intrinsic motivation (Steel, 2007).

Motivation encompasses two different types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is executing an activity because it provides internal satisfaction. One example of intrinsic motivation is reading a book as a source of joy and finding satisfaction in learning something new. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is doing an activity because of a motivating external factor.

An example of extrinsic motivation is reading a book because there is a reward for completing a preset number of minutes in a designated amount of time (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

To get a true understanding of the connection between aversiveness to tasks and motivation, it is important to consider the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which provides insight into how and why people are motivated. Self-Determination Theory is an empirically based theory that is primarily concerned with promoting students' interests in learning, growth in competencies, and wellbeing (Ryan & Weinstein, 2009). Deci et al.(1991), put Self-Determination Theory in more standard terms stating, "when applied to education, it is primarily concerned with promoting in students an interest in learning, a valuing of education, and a confidence in their own capacities and attributes" (p. 325). Research that began with a focus on intrinsic motivation and then extrinsic motivation, was the catalyst to the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

The teaching practice that helps promote an interest in learning and enhances a student's feeling of competence is known as autonomy supportive teaching. Autonomy- supportive teaching is defined as the process of a teacher taking the student's perspectives, acknowledging their feelings and providing them with pertinent information and opportunities for choice, all while reducing the use of pressures and demands (Reeve & Cheon, 2021). Simply put, autonomy supportive teaching takes on a student-focused attitude and an understanding, interpersonal tone. This allows the teacher to take the student perspective during instruction.

To help students with aversiveness to tasks and to increase motivation, teachers can implement specific evidence-based teaching strategies. Sarode (2018) defined a teaching strategy as "a generalized plan for a lesson which includes structure desired learner behavior in terms of goals of instructions and an outline of planned tactics necessary to implement the strategy"(p.

58). In brief, a strategy is a tool used to accomplish a task. Therefore, a teaching strategy is a tool used to help teachers provide structured, goal-oriented instruction.

Learning strategies are defined as "steps taken by learners (elementary students) to enhance their learning" (Shi, 2017, p. 24). Learning strategies are also tools that help students accomplish task-oriented goals while receiving instruction. While teaching and learning strategies sound similar in definition, the key difference is who is using the strategy. For the purpose of this literature review, teaching strategies are for the classroom teacher and used during instruction. Learning strategies are taught to and utilized by elementary students.

How does a general understanding of SDT, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, address task avoidant behaviors? If a person enjoys doing an activity simply for the pleasure of doing it, as seen in intrinsic motivation, the activity will likely be completed without prompting or persuasion. However, if a person needs to be persuaded or rewarded to complete an activity, as in extrinsic motivation, they could start to avoid the task if the reward no longer shows value. Task-avoidant behaviors over long periods of time can begin to wreak havoc on one's mental and physical state including anxiety about fear of failure, which in turn can cause an overall reduced well-being. Ryan and Weinstein (2009) noted this when discussing ego-involving, which is a person's reputation or self-worth being contingent on their performance. They went on to state that, like other controlled forms of regulation, *ego-involvement* undermines intrinsic motivation, enhances anxiety, and leads to more impoverished learning.

As a special education teacher, I have seen the effects of task avoidance first hand. Some students tend to have little faith in their abilities to complete tasks and become overwhelmed when presented with large tasks because they do not possess the learning strategies necessary to follow the task through to completion. I have also personally experienced the effects of

procrastination and anxiety throughout my entire academic career, going all the way back to elementary school. In 5th grade, I was diagnosed with ADHD Inattentive Type and a learning disability in math, which provided answers for why I was struggling in school. However, my individual education plan (IEP) did not include learning strategies, coping skills, and study skills. The motivation for researching this area of study is to help teachers understand why some students avoid completing tasks and how teachers can motivate them to accomplish given tasks. This will be done by providing elementary teachers with evidence-based resources that they can use to help all students to become successful at task completion, including the use of teaching and learning strategies that can be implemented in the classroom.

Strategies for how to study and learn should be taught in elementary school, so that when students reach high school or pursue post-secondary education they are prepared for the challenges they will encounter. Bowering et al. (2017), stated that:

> Post-secondary education requires that the student possess complete cognitive, metacognitive, and psychological processes, including the desire to master challenging material (e.g., motivation and persistence), the use of sophisticated cognitive strategies (e.g., critical analysis and synthesis of information), and the ability to self-regulate (e.g., stress and time management). (p.1)

By the time students pursue post-secondary education, they are expected to have the above-mentioned skills, but what if these skills do not come naturally to students? Students that have not been taught learning strategies tend to turn to task avoidance, resulting in consequences including having points deducted for late assignments, receiving poor grades, failing classes, and repeating classes. As this pattern continues, these students may perceive the message that all they ever do is fail. Eventually, they stop trying at the first sign of struggle.

The objectives of this literature review are to address how the Self-Determination Theory and autonomy-supportive teaching can be used to understand task avoidance and motivation in elementary-age students when completing tasks. The literature review will also look at the use of Autonomy-Supportive Instructional Behaviors in combination with Marzano's Model of Attention and Engagement as effective teaching strategies that can be utilized in elementary school to increase motivation and decrease task avoidance. The following questions will help achieve the objectives of this literature review. First, how can teachers gain an understanding of task avoidance and motivation through the Self-Determination Theory and autonomy supportive teaching? Finally, what effective evidence-based teaching strategies can be implemented in the elementary classroom to help students become independent learners?

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Search Procedures

To locate the literature for this thesis, searches of EBSCO MegaFILE and ERIC were conducted for academic journals dated between 1991 to 2020. The key words used during searches included “Self-Determination Theory,” “elementary,” “task avoidance,” and “autonomy- supportive teaching.” The structure of this chapter is to review the literature on motivation and task avoidance in three sections: Why students in elementary school exhibit task avoidant behaviors, what motivates students to learn, and which research-based teaching strategies help students become independent and autonomous learners.

Task Avoidance

Students avoid academic tasks for a multitude of reasons including anxiety about the task, understanding of how the task relates to them and limited knowledge about the task. There are three innate psychological needs to consider when examining the causes of task avoidance. Deci et al. (1991), stated that these are the need for competence, the need for relatedness, and the need for autonomy (or self-determination). Competence is the understanding of how to achieve desired outcomes and knowing what steps need to be taken to achieve those outcomes. Relatedness involves developing strong and secure relationships within one’s social circle. Autonomy is demonstrated by being self-initiating and self-regulating of one’s own actions. Simply stated, motivation, performance, and development will be maximized within social environments that provide people the opportunity to satisfy their basic psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Deci et al., 1991). When the psychological needs of students have been met they can help guide the student away from task avoidance by allowing them to feel a greater sense of self-determination and ownership of their learning.

Though classrooms may not always appear chaotic, teachers are often under a lot of pressure to make sure that each student is receiving instruction at the appropriate level. This can sometimes involve a trial-and-error process as the teachers are getting to know their students. As a result, students will at times encounter tasks that are too difficult for them. Baten et al. (2019), found that this can relate negatively to individuals' perceived competence which causes frustration that can result in task avoidance.

Competence

Competence frustration denotes the presence of feelings of failure and inadequacy, which leads to outcomes including amotivation (events that convey incompetence), help-avoidance, and ill-being (Baten et al., 2019). Competence frustration can lead to student difficulties on the affective level, meaning that difficult tasks are related to negative affect, tension and self-reported anxiety, as well as higher heart rate and elevated blood pressure. It also leads to difficulties on the cognitive level, where tasks that are perceived to be too difficult may provoke negative thinking. Students engage in this through the use of negative inner speech and self-talk (Baten et al., 2019). When the need for competence has been satisfied, students feel capable of meeting new challenges and they feel confident in their ability to use and extend their skills during the completion of tasks.

Relatedness

Building relationships that provide students with a safe and secure environment helps to meet the need for relatedness. Niemiec and Ryan (2009) found that in the classroom, relatedness is deeply associated with a student feeling that the teacher genuinely likes, respects, and values him or her. When a student feels support and respect in the classroom they are more likely to engage in identified and integrated regulation behaviors while completing difficult tasks.

Students who feel disconnected or rejected, however, are more likely to reject the internalization process and will often only respond to external controls and rewards.

Autonomy

Students may have competence in their abilities and have a secure environment for learning, but if they feel controlled and void of personal choice, motivation to complete tasks decreases. If teachers do not provide opportunities for students to satisfy their need for autonomy, students can feel controlled rather than self-determined. (Deci et al., 1991). Teachers providing students with opportunities for autonomy is necessary for intrinsic motivation. When students feel controlled by threats, constant surveillance, and deadlines, a shift in thinking can take place and turn towards an external locus of control. Meeting the needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy decreases task avoidance for students. However, these needs cannot be considered alone. The next section of this literature review will address additional motivations required for students to learn.

Early research on motivation (e.g., Deci, 1971) suggested that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation appeared to be in opposition to each other and that extrinsically motivated behaviors were not self-determined. More recent research done by Ryan and Connell (1989), however suggests that there are different types of extrinsically motivated behaviors, and they differ in the extent to which they represent self-determined versus controlled responding. Four types of extrinsic motivation have been identified: external, introjected, identified, and integrated. These are built around the concept of internalization (Deci et. al, 1991).

Internalization is defined as “a proactive process through which people transform regulation by external contingencies into regulation by internal processes" (Deci et. al., 1991, p. 328). In essence, a student who is not interested in learning about multiplication would not have

the intrinsic motivation to do so. He or she would require contingent consequences such as praise and rewards from the teacher to complete tasks requiring multiplication. Internalization is demonstrated by the process of regulating a student's learning of multiplication so that it becomes internal, and therefore no longer requires external motivation from the teacher. Deci et al. (1991), stated that optimal internalization has been successful when regulations are fully integrated into the self. The four types of extrinsic motivation fall at different points along a continuum in the process of reaching optimal internalization and integration of the task within one's self.

Extrinsic Motivation

External regulation is defined as the behaviors for which the locus of initiation is external to the person (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). An example would be a student doing an assignment simply for praise from the teacher or to avoid the threat of a punishment. These behaviors represent the least self-determined form of extrinsic motivation.

Introjected regulation is taking in, but not accepting, a regulation as one's own. For example, a student may bring their planner back to school each day as required to avoid feeling like a failure. The student feels pressure and guilt to complete this task, and although the task is internal to the student, they have not identified with the regulation. It is not part of the self, and returning the planner is not really by choice. Although introjected regulation is internal to the student, it bears more resemblance to external control than to self-determination forms of regulation because it involves coercion (Deci et al., 1991).

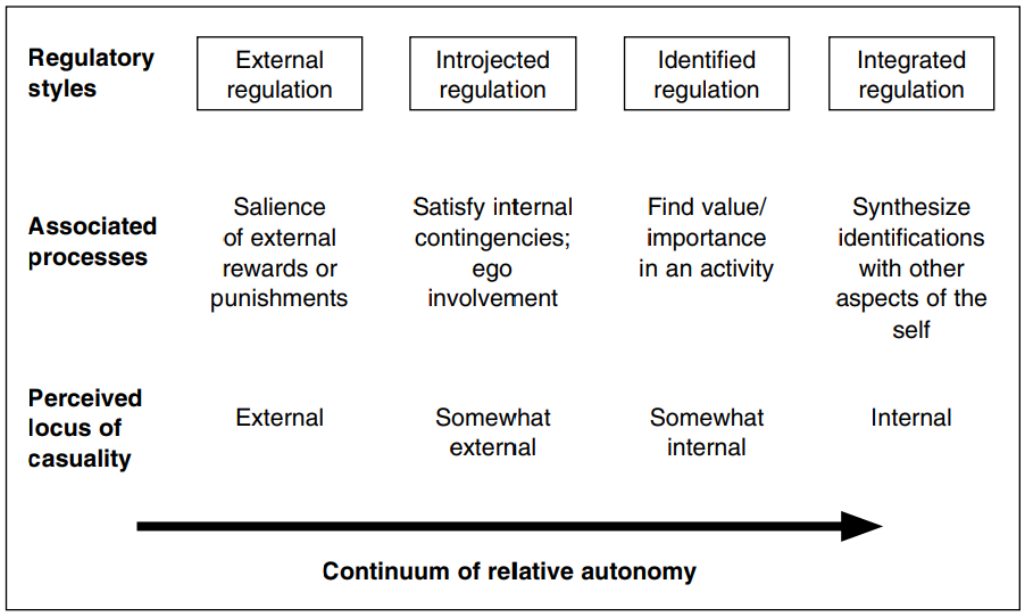
Niemiec and Ryann (2009) defined identified regulation as "behaviors that are enacted because they are considered valuable or important" (p. 138). An example of this would be a student who willingly completes extra work in science because they believe it is important for

continuing to be successful in science. Deci et al. (2009) cautioned that while the behavior is performed internally, it is still a form of extrinsic motivation because the activity is being performed as a means of achieving a given goal, rather than because it is interesting to the student. Identified regulation is moving closer to self-determination because it is being done willingly without external pressure.

The most autonomous type of extrinsic motivation is integrated motivation. This form of regulation, defined as the regulatory process, is fully integrated with the individual's coherent sense of self. This type of regulation is primarily seen in adult stages of development (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). The student who decided to complete extra science work in school, may decide to study astronomy because doing so would allow them to enter the profession in which they can help further space exploration, which is consistent with their abiding values and interests. This form of regulation is closely related to intrinsic motivation because the behaviors are being done autonomously, willingly and displaying conceptual and intuitive understanding. However, Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, and Ryan (2009) again state that intrinsic motivation and integrated regulation differ. Intrinsic motivation is an interest in the activity itself, whereas integrated regulation is characterized by the activity being personally important for a valued outcome.

By looking at the four types of extrinsic motivation, a progression of internal regulation can be understood best through a continuum as seen in Figure 1. This provides the illustration that while a student may not be intrinsically motivated to complete a task, by meeting a student's basic needs, self-regulation of one’s behaviors can be taught.

Figure 1



Note: The internalization continuum depicting the various types of extrinsic motivation posited within self-determination theory (Niemiec and Ryan, 2009, p. 137)

Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation addresses the idea that students have natural tendencies to feel competence and self-determination in the tasks they find interesting and engaging, but would students be intrinsically motivated about activities if their psychological needs were not met? One answer to this question is that intrinsically motivated behaviors are those that are engaged in without extrinsic rewards and pressure. However, intrinsic motivation is maintained by the students' psychological needs being fulfilled (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Within intrinsic motivation, autonomy addresses a student's ability to self-initiate tasks and feel in control of their own decisions. When a student's ability to control a situation is undermined by things such as monetary rewards, the need for autonomy is difficult to fulfill (Deci & Ryan, 2000). A student's need to feel competent in their abilities affects their intrinsic

motivation. When teachers provide negative feedback on a student's performance, it can leave students feeling inadequate in their abilities (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

The basic needs of autonomy and competence have been found to be the most powerful influencers of intrinsic motivation, but the need for relatedness still plays a role in maintaining intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The idea that relatedness affects intrinsic motivation can be seen in students who have a warm and caring teacher and show greater intrinsic motivation, as compared to students that have a distant or negative teacher and in response display a lower level of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

The Self-Determination Theory which encompasses promoting students' interests in learning, valuing education and confidence in their own abilities, can be seen in the previously mentioned types of motivation and through the fulfillment of the three innate psychological basic needs (competence, relatedness, and autonomy). These contribute to students being motivated and help students achieve and/or maintain intrinsic motivation with tasks. Teaching the regulatory styles and helping students reach internalization of those skills can be done with evidence-based teaching strategies that align with the Self-Determination Theory (Reeve & Cheon, 2021).

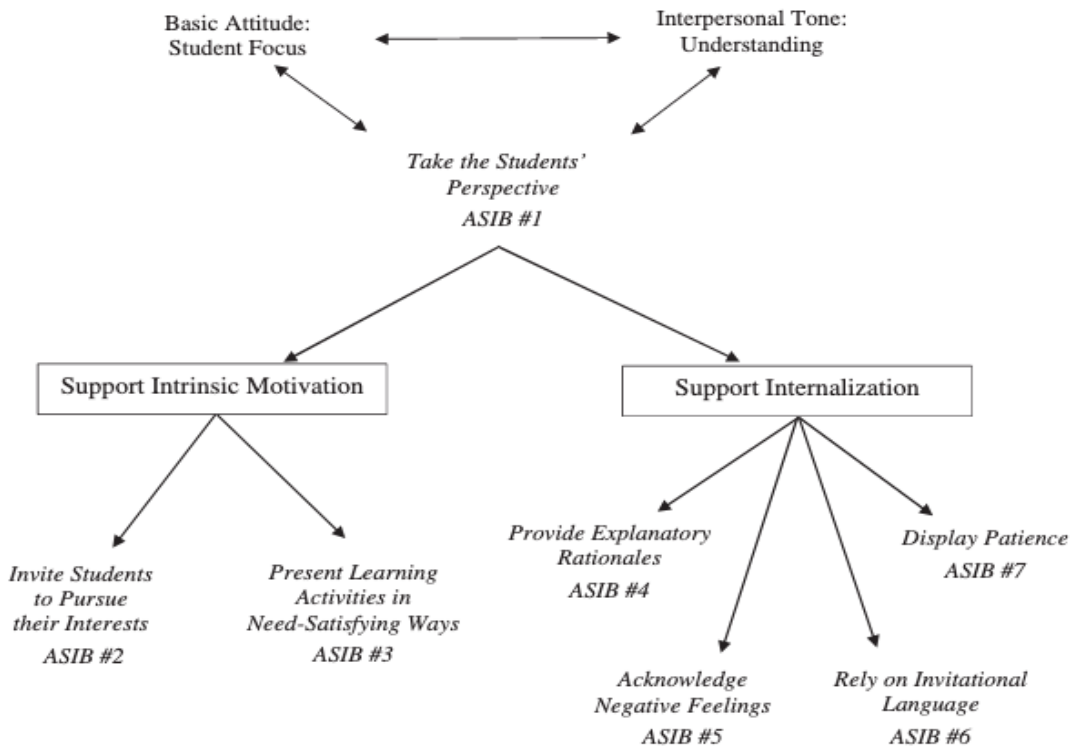
Autonomy-Supportive Teaching

> I've come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or de-humanized (Ginott, n.d.).

Haim Ginott addresses the powerful influence a teacher has over the type of environment that is created in their classroom. The positive aspects of teaching addressed in Ginott's quote show the compelling case for autonomy-supportive teaching.

One model that aligns with autonomy-supportive teaching is the Autonomy-Supportive Instructional Behaviors (ASIB) model by Reeve & Cheon (2021). This model can be used in the elementary classroom to enhance autonomy, competencies, and relatedness in students (Figure 2). Adopting a student focused attitude and an understanding interpersonal tone enables teachers to apply the seven instructional behaviors.

Figure 2



Note: Seven autonomy-supportive instructional behaviors (in italics) organized by their origins (student-focused attitude, understanding interpersonal tone) and purposes (support intrinsic

motivation, support internalization). ASIB: Autonomy-Supportive Instructional Behavior (Reeve & Cheon, 2021, p. 56).

A second model of teaching that aligns with autonomy-supportive teaching is Marzano's et al. (2011) Model of Attention and Engagement which includes four student questions that help to guide a teacher's instruction:

1. How do I feel?
2. Am I interested?
3. Is this important?
4. Can I do this?

The Model of Attention and Engagement was developed for teachers as a tool for planning and carrying out instruction that fosters student engagement. The questions "How do I feel?" and "Am I interested?" address a student's attention and whether outside information becomes stored in a student's working memory. If a student has negative emotions or is not interested in the information they likely will stop paying attention. "Is this important?" and "Can I do this?" address student engagement in the classroom. The answers a student provides to these questions impact the amount of time the information being taught stays in their working memory. If the student does not see the information as important, or the student does not believe they can complete the task, the student is more likely to quit attending to the task (paying attention) and it is less likely that the information will be stored in their working memory.

The overlap of Autonomy-Supportive Instructional Behaviors and The Model of Attention and Engagement is described by the following explanation:

Taking the students' perspective (ASIB #1) asks the student "How do you feel?". Supporting intrinsic motivation allows students to pursue their interests (ASIB #2) and provides

students with choice (ASIB #3) by asking students “What are you interested in?”. Supporting internalization is achieved by providing students with a rationale (ASIB #4) when they ask “Why is this important?”. During internalization, students may start to ask “Can I do this?” which can be addressed by working through feelings (ASIB #5), using inviting language (ASIB #6), and displaying patience (ASIB #7). By providing students opportunities presented in the combined teaching models, student’s basic needs can be met and internal regulation of skills can be reached which, in turn, leads to positive support for students with task aversiveness.

Consider the Student’s Perspective

“Perspective taking is the active consideration of others’ mental states and subjective experiences” (Reeve & Cheon, 2021, p. 57). When applied to educational instruction, perspective taking is the teacher's ability to see and experience events through the eyes of the student. Perspective taking, which asks the question “How do you feel?”, is a foundational activity to autonomy-supportive teaching. This phase involves gathering information about the students' needs and desires. It also allows the teacher to understand how the student feels during specific types of tasks. Once this has been recognized, the teacher is poised to be responsive and supportive of the student’s need for autonomy. To achieve this, the teacher needs to de-prioritize their own perspectives and adopt a student-focused attitude. One could also define taking the student’s perspective as having greater empathy.

Perspective taking, put into action, is accomplished through the use of both formal and informal formative assessments. These allow the teacher to understand what the students are thinking and wanting. Reeve and Cheon (2021) provide examples of formal and informal assessments. Exit slips can be utilized as a formal assessment and give students the opportunity to submit their reactions and suggestions for future lessons at the end of the class period.

Informal assessments consist of teachers asking questions about what the students think and how they feel about the learning material. Teachers will want to listen carefully to what students want and prefer by inviting question-asking and creating opportunities for students to express their preferences. It is important to initiate teacher-student dialogues to show students appreciation for their concerns in regards to the learning material.

Another aspect of perspective taking is creating a classroom environment where all students have a lively, positive, and accepting experience. To cultivate this environment teachers can use strategies such as effective pacing and demonstrate intensity and enthusiasm to build positive teacher-student relationships.

Effective pacing is especially important while presenting new information, as some students may already know the content and become bored, while others may become frustrated because the pace is moving too quickly. Teachers should present information in small sections after which students can break into small groups and summarize or answer questions about the current content. Monitoring energy levels should be continual and teachers may want to shorten the length of the section, if low levels are noticed, to allow students to begin processing in small groups (Mazano et al., 2011).

Demonstrating enthusiasm and humor in the classroom helps to build a positive teacher-student relationship. In the first years of teaching, the enthusiasm often comes naturally but can begin to wane over the years. Keeping a base level of enthusiasm about the content is important because it delivers the message to the students that the information being taught is exciting and worthwhile. Using personal stories and incorporating appropriate levels of humor into the lesson helps keep students engaged and fulfill their need for relatedness (Marzano et al., 2011; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009).

Support Intrinsic Motivation

Supporting intrinsic motivation requires inviting students to pursue their personal interests (ASIB #2) and presenting learning activities through choice (ASIB #3). To help guide their instruction, the teacher should ask the question to students, “What are you interested in?” When teachers invite students to pursue their personal interests with assignments and course materials, the students' attitudes toward learning begin to change. Students feel like innovators and not pawns, students experience volition (the faculty or power of using one’s will) and ownership over their behavior, and they will engage in lessons with a sense of wanting to do them (Reeve & Cheon, 2021).

The provision of choice is also a vital component of autonomy satisfaction, “when students experience a sense of choice they feel more ownership of activities and greater autonomy, resulting in an enhanced intrinsic motivation.” (Ryan & Deci, 2020, p. 4) Teachers can offer choice of activities, choice of courses, and choice of situations that the students can put themselves in. Before choice can be translated into autonomy satisfaction, teachers need to take the students’ perspective, students need to have the opportunity to explore an interest, personal goal, or express an identity, and students need to feel competent and informed to make the choice (Reeve & Cheon, 2021).

Support Internalization

Teachers can help students work through the internalization process (ABIS #4, #5, #6, and #7) by providing a rationale when they ask “Why is this important?” and supporting students when they begin to wonder “Can I do this?”. During instruction, students may complete a task that they find uninteresting and view it as busy work. Teachers can support autonomy by providing students with meaningful rationale for why the task is useful (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009).

Teachers can communicate the rationale by using the phrase “Doing this activity has been shown to be useful” and then proceeding to explain that an activity is worth doing because it fulfills one of four purposes: greater skill, better performance, deeper friendships, and an improved classroom community (Reeve & Cheon, 2021). Marzano et al. (2011) suggested helping students make personal connections with the information. Teachers can accomplish this by connecting information to the students’ lives, the student’s ambitions, and encouraging application of knowledge.

When a student feels competent in a task and believes they can successfully complete it, the student demonstrates self-efficacy. “Self-efficacy is quite possibly the most important factor affecting engagement.” (Marzano et al., 2011, p. 117) When the need for competence has been satisfied, students feel capable of meeting new challenges, and they feel confident in their ability to use and extend their skills during the completion of tasks. Alternatively, a student that does not have competence in their ability to complete a task may feel the task is impossible and may not fully engage in the teacher’s instruction. To help students answer the question “Can I do this?”, Marzano et al. identified four strategies to enhance students’ sense of self-efficacy: tracking and studying progress, using effective feedback, providing examples of self-efficacy, and teaching self-efficacy.

Tracking their own progress helps students to take ownership of their learning. Helping students track their progress sets the stage for teachers to provide feedback. The way that task expectations and feedback are communicated to students is important when teachers are supporting autonomy in the classroom. Using an inviting, as compared to a pressuring, style of communication promotes an increased willingness to learn and fosters students' engagement (Baten et al., 2019). When teachers are using invitational language, phrases like “you might want

to…" or "you might consider…." can encourage student initiative when completing tasks (Reeve & Cheon, 2021).

Using invitational language for effective feedback on a completed task sounds like, "You have proper spacing between all of your words in this written assignment which shows me that you took your time when writing." Feedback and language that reference permanent characteristics can create a fixed mindset in students, implying to students that certain characteristics cannot be changed and the student either possesses them or they do not. Feedback and general classroom language should be void of phrases that fixate on the student's behavior and instead focus on how the student completed the task. Teachers will also want to avoid pressuring language and phrases such as "you should", "you must", and "you have to" or using guilt, anxiety, or shame inducing language (Baten et al., 2020; Reeve & Cheon, 2021).

Self-efficacy is an important part of students feeling competent when completing tasks and should be addressed in the classroom. When addressing self-efficacy, teachers help students work through negative feelings about specific tasks and establish a positive mindset about their abilities. Self-efficacy can be presented in classrooms through the use of stories that demonstrate the power of self-efficacy and quotations to help students find connections. Teaching self-efficacy to students requires the student to look at their own personal mindset. Throughout the school year the classroom teacher continually addresses self-efficacy by having students reflect on their current mindset and look for growth and changes (Marzano et al., 2011).

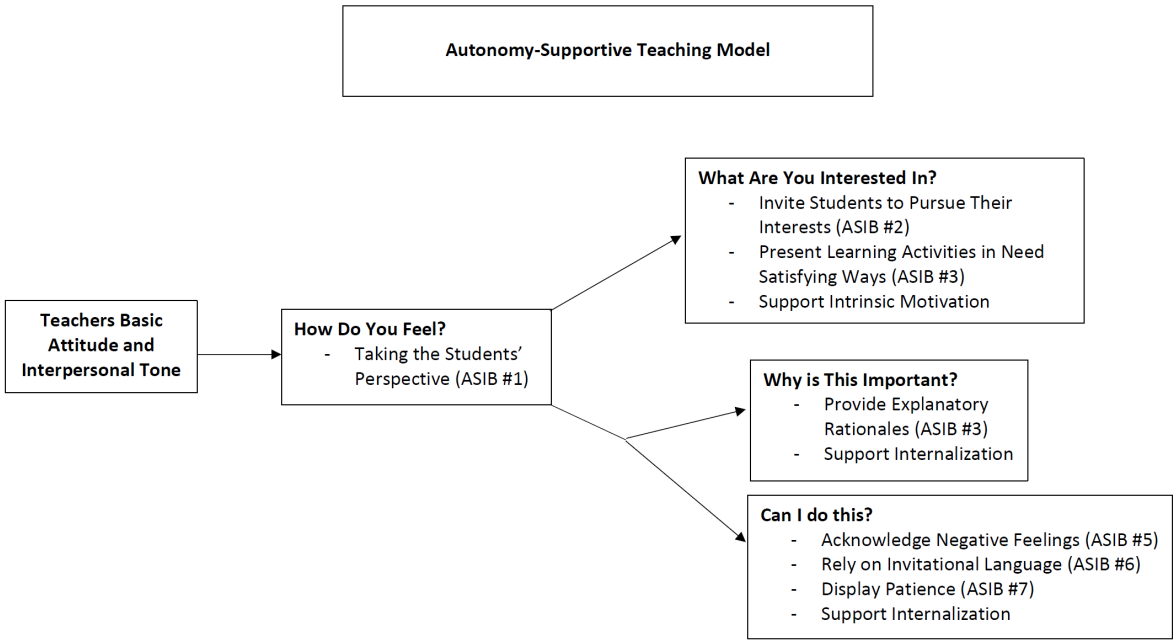
When a student is asking the question "Can I do this?" the teacher should present an optimistic calmness or patience as the student is struggling to start a task (Reeve & Cheon, 2021). When the teacher displays patience and gives the student time and space to work at their own pace, the teachers are showing a valuing of the students autonomy.

The Self-Determination Theory has shown a connection between fulfilling the need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness and students improving their intrinsic motivation. Applying this theory to teaching can be done through the use of autonomy-supportive teaching practices. The next chapter will cover the application of evidence-based teaching strategies in the elementary classroom and provide examples of ways to implement these strategies.

CHAPTER III: APPLICATION EMPHASIS

The teaching models of Marzano et al. (2011) and Reeve & Cheon (2021) closely align. Figure 3 provides teachers with a visual representation of the overlap. The purpose of demonstrating how these strategies are joined is to guide teachers in their instructional planning as they seek to motivate students.

Figure 3



Note: Autonomy-Supportive Teaching Model Alignment Between Autonomy-Supportive Instructional Behaviors (Reeve & Cheon, 2021) and Model of Attention and Engagement (Marzano et al., 2011).

Teachers Basic Attitude and Interpersonal Tone

The first step in the autonomy-supportive teaching model addresses the teachers' behaviors and attitude brought to the classroom. Ryan and Deci (2020) identified eight teacher behaviors collected from teacher surveys that can be identified as autonomy-supportive:

- listen to students
- make time for independent work
- give students opportunities to speak
- acknowledge improvement and mastery
- encourage effort
- offer progress-enabling hints when students seem stuck
- be responsive to comments and questions
- acknowledge students' perspectives

Applying these behaviors daily and being cognizant of students' overall mood and behavior, helps teachers set the foundation for successful application of the following teaching strategies.

How Do You Feel?

Take the Students' Perspective (ASIB #1)

Taking the students' perspective allows teachers to ask their students "How do you feel?". Taking the student's perspective also fulfills the need for relatedness by helping to build a strong and secure relationship (Ahn et al., 2021; Reeve & Cheon, 2021).

Using an informal assessment such as a student rating scale provides teachers with a way to learn how their students feel about various practices like their level of support and their motivation for completing schoolwork. The questions on the Student Motivation and Student Support rating scales were influenced by Domen et al. (2020) and address a student's perceptions of autonomy support provided by the teacher. These rating scales would be difficult to administer the first week of school as students are just getting to know their teacher and are still excited about being back at school. Time should be scheduled within the first month of school to administer these rating scales to students. It is important to remember that a student's responses

on the rating scales are about how they feel and what they perceive to be happening. When reviewing the students' responses it is important for the teacher to address the scales from the student's perspective rather than merely their own. By allowing this change in thinking, teachers gain a better understanding of the students interpersonal and educational needs and provide the student autonomy in how their instruction is taught. It is also helpful to administer these rating scales after winter break to allow the teacher to see if the changes they have implemented are effective in facilitating autonomous learning.

When students are filling out the Student Motivation Rating Scale, teachers should inform the students that they can mark as many responses that apply to them. When reviewing responses, teachers should keep in mind that numbers 1-5 on the Student Motivation Rating Scale display autonomous motivation and numbers 6-10 display controlled motivation. If a student selects items 1-5 on the student motivation scale it likely means that the student is already self-determined and possesses intrinsic motivation for most tasks. It is important to continue to support this intrinsic motivation through the fulfillment of their psychological basic needs. If a student selects items 6-10, a student is feeling controlled in the classroom and likely does not possess much intrinsic motivation in task completion. To support this student, teachers can start by gaining the perspective of the student and begin fostering a relationship with them.

Student Motivation Rating Scale

Directions: Have students mark as many responses that apply. Numbers 1-5 displays autonomous motivation. Numbers 6-10 displays controlled motivation.

Why do you do your schoolwork?

1. Because it is fun to do my schoolwork.
2. It is important to me to do my schoolwork.

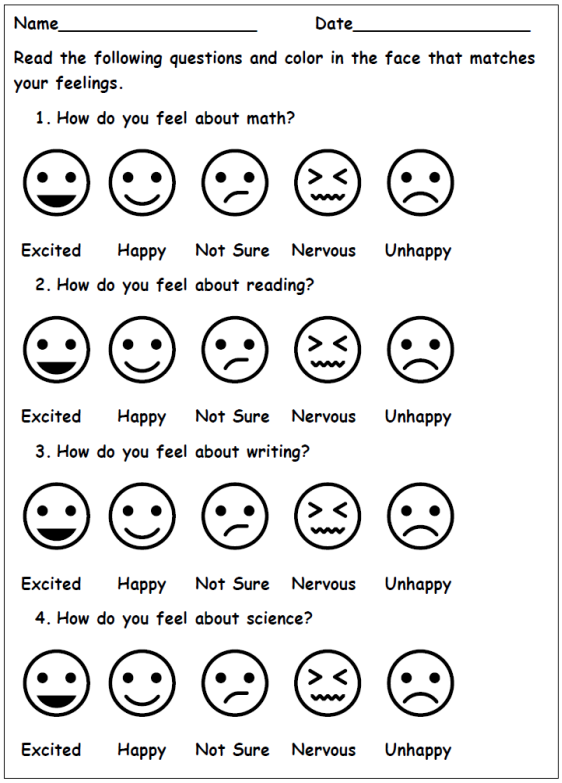
3. I want to learn new things.
4. Because I want to understand the subject.
5. Because it is important to me to try to do well in school.
6. Because I feel bad about myself if I don't do it.
7. I want others to think I am smart.
8. Because that is what I am supposed to do.
9. Because I want my teacher to say nice things about me.
10. I do my schoolwork so my teacher won't be angry with me.

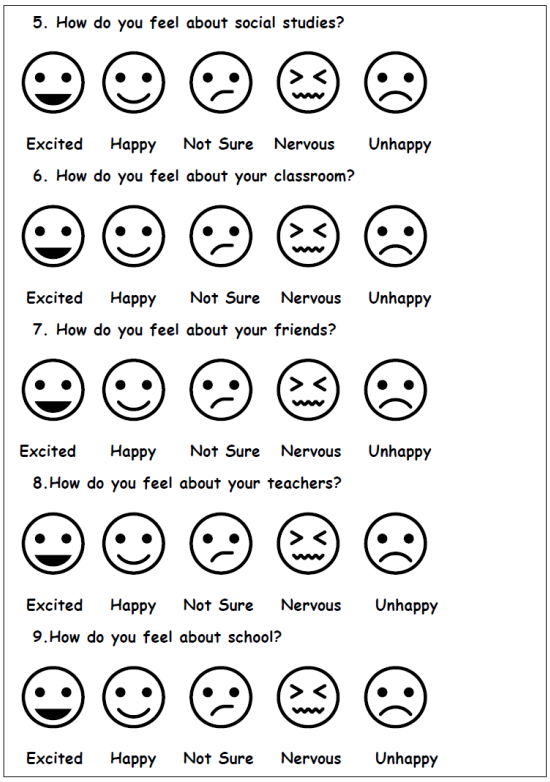
Student Support Rating Scale

1. My teacher gives me a lot of choices about how I do my schoolwork. Yes No
2. My teacher listens to my ideas. Yes No
3. If I can't solve a problem, my teacher shows me different ways to try to. Yes No
4. My teacher makes it clear what he/she expects from me in school. Yes No
5. My teacher keeps changing how he/she acts towards me. Yes No
6. My teacher makes sure I understand before he/she goes on. Yes No

The How Do You Feel rating scale is another informal assessment and allows a student to tell the teacher how they feel about specific subjects and other particular aspects of school. Providing a student with the How Do You Feel rating scale, teachers are giving students an opportunity to advocate for themselves and feel ownership for their learning. This scale can be used the first week of school or with a student that joins in the middle of year. Teachers can use the responses from this scale to inform them about subjects that a student may enjoy or dislike. With that information teachers will have a better idea which students might need more motivational supports during specific tasks.

How Do You Feel? Rating Scale



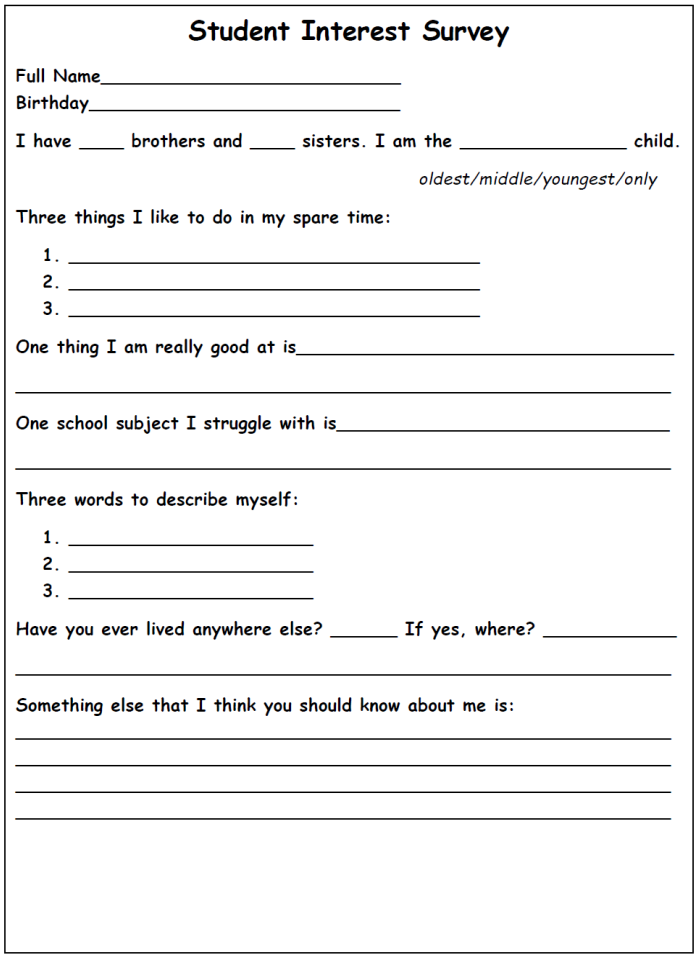


What are You Interested In?

Invite Students to Pursue Their Interests (ASIB #2)

Supporting intrinsic motivation in students involves finding what students are interested in and providing them with choices by having the teacher ask “What are you interested in?” Providing students with these opportunities satisfies the need for competence and autonomy and is necessary for students to feel intrinsic motivation when completing tasks (Deci et al., 1991). The questions on the student interest survey provides teachers with student’s interests, likes and dislikes, and basic information about their home. This survey should be administered the first week of school so the teacher can become familiar with this information and immediately use it to help build strong relationships and guide how the content is related to the students. The

Student Interest Survey should be reviewed periodically throughout the school year to make sure the teacher is staying inline with student interests and maintaining a feeling of relatedness and engagement in the classroom.



Student Interest Survey

Full Name_____
Birthday_____

I have ____ brothers and ____ sisters. I am the _____ child.
oldest/middle/youngest/only

Three things I like to do in my spare time:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

One thing I am really good at is_____

_____

One school subject I struggle with is_____

_____

Three words to describe myself:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Have you ever lived anywhere else? _____ If yes, where? _____

_____

Something else that I think you should know about me is:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Present Learning Activities in Need-Satisfying Ways (ASIB #3)

When students have completed the student interest surveys, teachers have information to provide students with choices that align with the students' interests. Providing students with learning activities that align with their needs can be done by providing students with choices. When students have choice in how they learn it supports a student's intrinsic motivation and can be done within appropriate boundaries set by the teacher. (Reeve & Cheon, 2021) The following

examples of choice can help students achieve greater autonomy in the classroom because the student gains a sense of ownership over their learning.

After students complete basic morning tasks like unpacking backpacks, milk count, or attendence, teachers can provide a choice of enjoyable activities for them to engage in as acknowledgement. Puzzles, quick games, books, or drawing allow students to socialize within their classroom community.

Ideas for students that complete tasks early to choose from include: independent reading or journaling, playing familiar math games with a friend who has also finished early, or playing a game on a classroom tablet. When establishing activities for students that finish early it is important to teach the parameters of the activities as a mini lesson so students know what is expected of them during this time.

Additional options for student choice include choice in partners, writing topics, books, and when appropriate where the student wants to sit. When students are provided with these simple examples of choice the teacher is allowing the student to pursue their personal interests which can increase the internalization of the task being completed.

Why is This Important?

Provide Explanatory Rationales (ASIB #4)

Teachers should be prepared to provide a rationale (ASIB #4) if students ask "Why is this important?". When students understand why a task is important it helps students engage with the information and reach a level of internalization (Marzano et al., 2011; Reeve & Cheon, 2021)**.** The following rationales were developed using research done by Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Reeve & Cheon, 2021; and Marzano et al., 2011. Teachers can use the phrase "Doing this activity is important because…" and then proceed to explain to the student how it fulfills making them

better at the task, helps with their friendships, or helps create a safe and secure environment in the classroom. Making personal connections to the information or task encourages application of the knowledge.

Can I Do This?

Some students, when presented with larger tasks, may exhibit task aversiveness and start to question their ability. Teachers should be prepared to answer the student's question "Can I do this?". Helping students feel competence in task completion can be done through teaching self-efficacy (Marano et al., 2011). The following strategies compiled from research done by Baten et al., 2019; Marzano et al., 2011; Reeve & Cheon, 2021; and Wilmore, 2020, can be used to help enhance students' self-efficacy.

Larger tasks could include items such as research projects, spelling tests and learning multiplication facts. Students may find it beneficial to create a list of the steps required to achieve the goal or desired task. These steps should be generated by the student with guidance from the teacher. For example, the teacher and student could sit down and look at the animal research project the student needs to complete. Together they could identify that the student needs to choose an animal, find information about the animal they chose, write one page using the information the student has collected and create a poster about their animal to present to the class.

The main objective demonstrated by this example is to provide the student with as much ownership and responsibility over their learning as possible. Once the steps have been completed, the teacher should display the list where it can be referenced frequently to help hold the student accountable in task completion. Having students track their progress on the mastery of certain tasks or subjects provides students with a visual representation of their achievements.

Most teachers are already tracking student progress in areas such as reading. This task can easily be done by the student with teacher guidance. When looking at the subject of reading for example, a student who has just finished a fluency probe may be able to document their own words per minute instead of depending on their teacher to track the results.

Acknowledge Negative Feelings (ASIB #5)

Helping students work through negative feelings and thoughts when they ask "Can I do this?" allows students to enhance their personal mindset about the competence in their abilities. The following are ways that teachers can guide students when the student is stuck in a negative mindset about themselves and their ability to complete a task:

- When a student says "This is hard, I can not do this." have the student rephrase to "I am struggling with this task, I am going to try a different way."
- When a student says "I do not like doing this." have the student rephrase to "I may not enjoy completing this task but it is important to complete because...."
- When a student says "I do not have any special talents, all my friends are more talented than I am." have the student rephrase to "Everyone has a special talent and brings something positive to the classroom. I am good at…" Guide the student to come up with at least one positive characteristic about themselves.

One final way to help students build self-efficacy and help students work through their feelings is to have students create an affirmations board about themselves. To create this board students should first create a list of characteristics that they like about themselves. Some examples are being a good listener, having compassion for others, hard worker, or problem solver. Once they have created this list, give students a piece of poster board and have them draw pictures or find pictures in magazines of their personal characteristics to create a type of collage.

These posters can be displayed around the room so the students and teacher can reference them when a student is stuck in a negative mindset.

Rely on Invitational Language (ASIB #6)

Providing students with appropriate, inviting feedback is important when students are feeling a lack of competence in their abilities. Inviting feedback is also beneficial when supporting self-determination in the classroom. This feedback should be provided using invitational language to encourage student initiative (Reeve & Cheon, 2021). The following are examples of the language that can be used when providing students with feedback:

Feedback Examples

- You tried very hard on this; nice job.
- You put a lot of effort into this; way to go.
- You were very focused; keep it up.
- You were well prepared; it sure paid off.
- You really thought this through; this is excellent work.
- You came well informed; very good.
- You were ready for this; nice work.

The following scenario is an example of how to address a student when the work has been done poorly. When reading through the scenario, notice the language the teacher uses to address what was done well and where the student had trouble. It is specific and focuses on how the student completed the work. *Mr. Smith is discussing Brian's recent performance on a math test with him after class one day. "You did well on the questions that dealt with vocabulary," he notes. "You were well prepared for those terms, but you seemed to have the most trouble with the section on 2 dimensional and 3 dimensional shapes. You didn't really describe the difference*

between the two different shapes. Maybe we can find time in class to review that so the next time it comes up on a test you will feel better prepared."

Display Patience (ASIB #7)

When applying the teaching strategies that support internalization, teachers should present the strategies with a calm patient manner. Displaying patience can be done by giving students time and space to work at their own pace and in their own way (Reeve & Cheon, 2021). An example is when a teacher provides a student with a rationale for why they can complete a task and then provides the student with some choices on how to complete the task, the teacher should give the student a few minutes to process their choices and make a decision.

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Summary

The literature review provides insight into why elementary students exhibit task avoidance, as well as how they can be motivated to complete tasks. Research on these questions took into consideration the Self-Determination Theory (Deci et al., 1991) and it's three innate psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Students exhibit task avoidance due to limited competence in completing the task, lack of feeling a personal connection with the classroom teacher, and an overall feeling of control from the teacher (Baten et al., 2019; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Student motivation looked at intrinsic motivation and the four types of extrinsic motivation. The research pointed towards the process of internalization of a task for it to become integrated within one's self (Deci et al., 1991); (Deci et al., 2009); (Niemic & Ryan, 2009).

Autonomy-Supportive Instructional Behaviors (Reeve & Cheon, 2021) and The Model of Attention and Engagement (Marzano et al., 2011) were combined to provide elementary teachers with effective, research based teaching strategies. These teaching strategies can be utilized in the classroom to help increase and maintain student motivation and task completion.

Professional Application

To create an autonomy-supportive classroom, teachers should be provided training on effective research-based teaching strategies outlined in the literature review for the strategies to be implemented successfully. Creating an autonomous learning environment has shown to have beneficial effects for both teachers and students. To accomplish this autonomous environment, continuous learning and skills refinement needs to happen for the teachers. Schools need to be

invested in autonomy-supportive teaching and have the support from administrators for the application of the strategies to be implemented successfully (Reeve & Cheon, 2021).

Autonomy-supportive teaching is more than just a list of strategies that teachers use; it is about how the teacher approaches students, both with their words and actions. It also extends outside the classroom and encompasses the environment throughout the school. It would be important to have any support staff receive training in regards to autonomy-supportive language when addressing students.

An additional aspect of applying autonomy supportive teaching in the classroom is that the teaching is individual to each student. This is beneficial because it could have a positive effect on removing barriers for students in special education and creating a more accommodating environment for that student. The student in special education could potentially stay in the classroom for longer periods of time and receive more exposure to content areas and social interactions that they might have otherwise missed out on.

Limitations of Research

Initial research on motivation and task avoidance was limited by the use of the specific vocabulary “Self-Determination Theory,” “elementary,” “task avoidance,” and “autonomy-supportive teaching.” Procrastination was originally used when referring to task avoidance, however, given the elementary age range, little research was found using this vocabulary.

Given the specific age range of the desired research, it was difficult to find elementary age teaching strategies that did not also include high school students in the research study. While the information was relevant to the topic, it proved difficult to apply these teaching strategies to elementary students due to differences in the level of ability and brain development across different ages.

Limitations of research when applied to the application emphasis involved gathering evidence-based teaching strategies that aligned with the Self-Determination Theory and autonomy-supportive teaching.

Implications for Future Research

Future research on the topic of autonomy-supportive teaching and its correlation with task avoidance and motivation should include age specific strategies that are not geared toward high school students. Providing teachers with age specific strategies that use age-appropriate vocabulary eliminates the extra step of teachers having to alter the scripts, thus making investment in the training a more successful feat.

Research in the longitudinal study of the sustainability of autonomy-supportive teaching would be beneficial. Research in this area is currently limited and looks at individual classrooms. This information could be beneficial to administrators that are looking to implement this teaching practice, as it would provide research based evidence on the cost effectiveness and long term gains on a school wide level.

When looking at research on the three psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness, research on the need for relatedness was limited. From both an educational aspect, and considering teacher-student relationships, research in this area could look further into the importance of building student relationships and how that can or might affect their motivation and task completion.

Conclusion

In conclusion, elementary students have three psychological needs: autonomy, connectedness, and relatedness that need to be met for them to experience task completion and motivation in the classroom. When teachers are able to fulfil these needs, it opens up a door to

the beautiful world of learning, questioning, and growing. Students are given the gift of having ownership of their learning and are provided with opportunities to gain confidence in advocating for their needs and desires. When students feel compelled to learn and question their world, a fire is lit inside them that is hungry for more knowledge. This fire is powerful because it is self-sustaining from within that student. A teacher only needs to light the match, then provide oxygen for the fire to grow. Imagine a world full of students that possess the confidence and inner drive, these students would be unstoppable. “The most powerful weapon on earth is the human soul on fire” (Foch, n.d.).

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Appendix A

Student Motivation Rating Scale

Why do you do your schoolwork?

1. Because it is fun to do my schoolwork.
2. It is important to me to do my schoolwork.
3. I want to learn new things.
4. Because I want to understand the subject.
5. Because it is important to me to try to do well in school.
6. Because I feel bad about myself if I don't do it.
7. I want others to think I am smart.
8. Because that is what I am supposed to do.
9. Because I want my teacher to say nice things about me.
10. I do my schoolwork so my teacher won't be angry with me.

Student Support Rating Scale

1. My teacher gives me a lot of choices about how I do my schoolwork. Yes No
2. My teacher listens to my ideas. Yes No
3. If I can't solve a problem, my teacher shows me different ways to try to. Yes No
4. My teacher makes it clear what he/she expects from me in school. Yes No
5. My teacher keeps changing how he/she acts towards me. Yes No
6. My teacher makes sure I understand before he/she goes on. Yes No

Appendix B

How Do You Feel? Rating Scale

Name_____ Date_____

Read the following questions and color in the face that matches your feelings.

1. How do you feel about math?

Excited Happy Not Sure Nervous Unhappy

2. How do you feel about reading?

Excited Happy Not Sure Nervous Unhappy

3. How do you feel about writing?

Excited Happy Not Sure Nervous Unhappy

4. How do you feel about science?

Excited Happy Not Sure Nervous Unhappy

5. How do you feel about social studies?

Excited Happy Not Sure Nervous Unhappy

6. How do you feel about your classroom?

Excited Happy Not Sure Nervous Unhappy

7. How do you feel about your friends?

Excited Happy Not Sure Nervous Unhappy

8.How do you feel about your teachers?

Excited Happy Not Sure Nervous Unhappy

9.How do you feel about school?

Excited Happy Not Sure Nervous Unhappy

Appendix C

Student Interest Survey

Student Interest Survey

Full Name_____

Birthday_____

I have _____ brothers and _____ sisters. I am the _____ child.

oldest/middle/youngest/only

Three things I like to do in my spare time:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

One thing I am really good at is_____

_____

One school subject I struggle with is_____

_____

Three words to describe myself:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Have you ever lived anywhere else? _____ If yes, where? _____

_____

Something else that I think you should know about me is:

_____

_____

_____

_____