Developing Self-Directed Learners

Edgenuity Instructional Services

Do's

- ✓ Begin new learning tasks with opportunities for students to ask questions and get help from their teacher or peers if they are having difficulty understanding the concepts or performances required of them.
- ✓ Provide students with meaningful choices consistent with learning objectives (e.g., what work they want to do, what relevant topics they want to study) and exercises that encourage self-monitoring of their comprehension (e.g., becoming aware of their understanding of the materials) and tracking their learning progress (e.g., keeping track of their learning progress in a journal).
- ✓ Help students deal with inevitable disappointment that comes when they don't perform as well as they hoped they would. For example, students can be taught strategies for using mistakes as learning opportunities and for controlling the negative emotions that can interfere with learning.
- ✓ Praise students for doing well on their assignments and for putting in extra effort. Use specific praise that tells students what they did well and for which learning processes and skills they are being praised.
- ✓ Involve students in setting objectives and participating in decisions about how to individualize objectives in line with curriculum standards, plus individual and collective student interests and choices. For example, students can become involved in setting their own learning goals through guided class discussions where teachers state the learning goals and possible variations in achieving those goals. In small group discussions, students can share their personal interests and then see how these fit with the teacher's list. By helping students define their personal learning goals and objectives, teachers can guide students to see whether these are consistent not only with their own interests but also how they can be aligned with curriculum standards and expectations.
- ✓ Appeal to student interest and curiosity by introducing the unfamiliar through the familiar. For example, teachers can use students' current knowledge, interests and experiences with a familiar concept, such as trying to master a videogame, to describe the background mathematics and programming that allows the games to work. Students might then be given a choice about designing a particular game routine related to these concepts.
- ✓ Reward success with praise and model how students can monitor their own progress and success with self-reward strategies. Examples of self-reward strategies include doing a favorite activity if they can accomplish their learning goals on time, including age-appropriate projects they complete alone or with selected members in their learning communities.

Don'ts:

- ✗ Link learning successes or failures to students' lack of ability or intelligence. Students can't change fixed abilities, but they can change learning habits and behaviors like effort and persistence.
- ✗ Compare individual or groups of students with each other in terms of how quickly or well they learn new material. Learning is an individual process and students need to feel good about how they approach and engage in learning tasks, whether they are motivated to persevere in the face of difficulties, and how they handle disappointments and challenges.
- ✗ Pair struggling students with students of higher ability or greater knowledge and skills, as this may result in students becoming dependent (rather than independent) learners. Unless higher ability students across the age-span are trained to work as positive tutors, motivation to learn can suffer for students at both ends of the ability or knowledge spectrums.
- ✗ Engage in teaching strategies that allow students to be passive. Instead, engage their curiosity and promote active learning. Passive teaching strategies provide students with the answers and give them little voice or choice. True engagement means letting students pursue their own questions or solve their own problems with skillful feedback from teachers or other adults supporting their learning and skill development.
- ✗ Ask students to copy your learning strategies. Instead, try to increase their awareness of themselves as self-regulated and strategic learners. Although modeling a learning strategy and asking students to emulate this strategy in their own work is helpful, this is not as effective as "talking aloud" about why a particular strategy is effective and how it works for you or for them.
- ✗ Fragment information without showing students how the fragments connect to form the whole, or "big picture." Presenting isolated facts without relating them back to the overall theme or concept being taught only causes students to lose interest. This is particularly true if they are not allowed to ask questions or contribute to solving problems associated with the activity. When new technologies are appropriately introduced into the teaching/learning cycle at all grade levels, research confirms that allowing students to pursue their own questions within well-structured learning goals allows students to self-regulate their learning time in more responsible ways, and fosters higher order metacognitive thinking skills.
- ✗ Provide students with choices without also helping them become more aware of their own needs, interests, preferences, internalizations, values, goals and aspirations. Choice by itself is not effective unless students develop the "capacity to choose" what best meets their personal learning needs and goals.

Source: https://www.apa.org/education/k12/learners