



How to Stay Motivated as a Teacher

It's fair to say that being a teacher in today's world is an enormous challenge. It takes patience, passion, resilience, and a lot of commitment.

Today's students bring a lot more than just pencils and textbooks to school—many harbor behavioral or family issues, learning disabilities, and more. As a result, we must embrace an even bigger job than just educator—we are also social workers and surrogate parents. These are duties that can easily overwhelm *any* adult.

This duality is exhausting, and it has certainly led to its own set of problems. With as many as 50 percent of new instructors leaving the education field within the first five years, teacher burnout is a grim reality that many of us witness every day.

We're *supposed* to be a positive, guiding light for our students—providing them hope and the tools they'll need to succeed well beyond their school-bound years, but how can we do that when we're feeling defeated? You can argue that learning **how to stay motivated** to do your job is just as important as keeping students inspired to learn, but it's a rarity for the general public to see it that way.

The problem is often sadly compounded by a lack of appreciation from a school's administration. Sure, it may be difficult for management in any profession to have a granular view of every good thing their employees do, but given the circumstances, sometimes the smallest gesture can go a long way.

The bottom line remains: if we want our schools filled with the *best* educators, it is essential that we employ strategies to keep them there.

Here's **how to stay motivated**. These ideas are based on my experiences and scientific research.

Value Each and Every Teacher

Simply put, teachers that are valued will know **how to stay motivated**. Show your co-worker that he is a cherished asset by recognizing him publicly for his hard work and





achievements. It certainly doesn't have to be a large gesture—you can simply announce your praise via loudspeaker (i.e. "Let's give Mr. Cox a hand for implementing the readers workshop program!") during morning announcements.

If you're feeling more ambitious, you can organize a potluck staff luncheon to congratulate each teacher for what she has brought to your school thus far. Due to our own professional obligations, we might not always be aware of how much our co-workers contribute, and this luncheon will give us all an opportunity to see our school through a bigger vantage point. Besides, when we know our value and we know our colleagues know it too, it's much easier to bounce back when hard times arise.

Provide Growth Opportunities

Administrators—I'm looking at you here. If you want to retain teachers than you must provide them with opportunities to grow. Challenge them to go to enriching, **paid seminars** that teach them how to **integrate technology**, or academic coaching. They can then use this knowledge to teach their colleagues. Research shows that when teachers are presented with opportunities like these, we become more invested in own jobs.

Give Teachers a Voice

Principals can play a big role in teacher retention and morale as well, by giving us the opportunity to be heard and voice our opinion. Many teachers feel like they don't have a voice in big-picture decision making, especially with regards to topics like curriculum changes and state assessments. Leaving us out of the loop is a strange practice indeed, considering we teachers are the ones responsible for implementing these changes into the classroom.

Getting educators involved certainly would be easy—you'd probably find that many of them would readily volunteer their time to voice their concerns. Administrators could invite a teacher from each grade to be a representative during board meetings to



gauge their opinions and strategies—it may make the difference between a lofty plan and an easily implementable one.

Empower Each Teacher's Strengths

Every teacher has that one special talent. When we're able to use that strength in the classroom, it's easy to see how much more engaged and inspired our students become. Unfortunately, some teachers may not realize what their special skill is amidst trying to satisfy the **Common Core State Standards** that have been laid before us. Thankfully, it's an easy, two-step exercise for any educator to do:

- Figure out what works in their classroom. Is there a particular lesson that just seems to click with your students? What is it and why?
- What tools or techniques do you favor to help bolster your teaching? For example, if you look back and discover that incorporating music really works for your class, that technique might be your special talent. Others may truly excel at taking advantage of noisy classrooms by implementing more group work.

Whatever answers you may collect from your introspection, these talents can empower us teachers to perform at our peak and thereby motivated to keep doing our job well.

Consider Teachers' Needs

Oftentimes our schedule is put together without getting feedback from us first—a casualty of the modern corporate world. At times, this will require us to rework our personal life, which we may have either grown accustomed to or that is inflexible (i.e. newborn care). Frustrations such as these can lead to **teacher burnout**.

Although it might not be feasible to change much about this, it helps to at least have an open forum with the administration or a discussion with a friendly, helpful colleague to discuss any pressing personal needs that may require assistance.

Behind many successful adults is a teacher that helped contribute and shape those students' foundations for the future. If the goal is to keep our top teachers motivated



and happy at work, an environment where we feel valued must prevail. Once this is established, not only will you have created a positive work environment for us teachers, but also one where students are motivated and inspired as well.

How do you keep your teachers motivated at your school? Do you do anything special? Please share your ideas in the comment section below. We would love to hear your thoughts.