

Academic Challenge:

Are We Barking Up
the Wrong Tree?

D. Betsy McCoach
Del Siegle

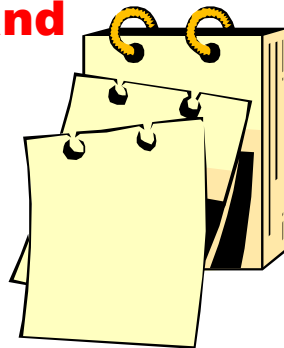
46th Annual Convention of the
National Association
for Gifted Children

Albuquerque, New Mexico
November 6, 1999

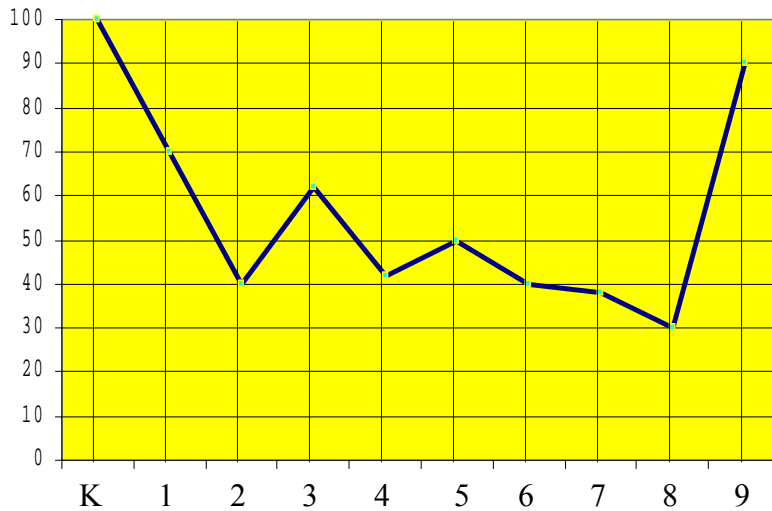


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or the past two
decades gifted education
has emphasized the need
to provide gifted and
talented students
with an
academically
challenging
curriculum.



Average Percentage of New Mathematics Content in Three Mathematics Series



78% to 88% of 5th and 6th grade average and above average readers could pass pretests on basal comprehension skills before these were covered in the basal.



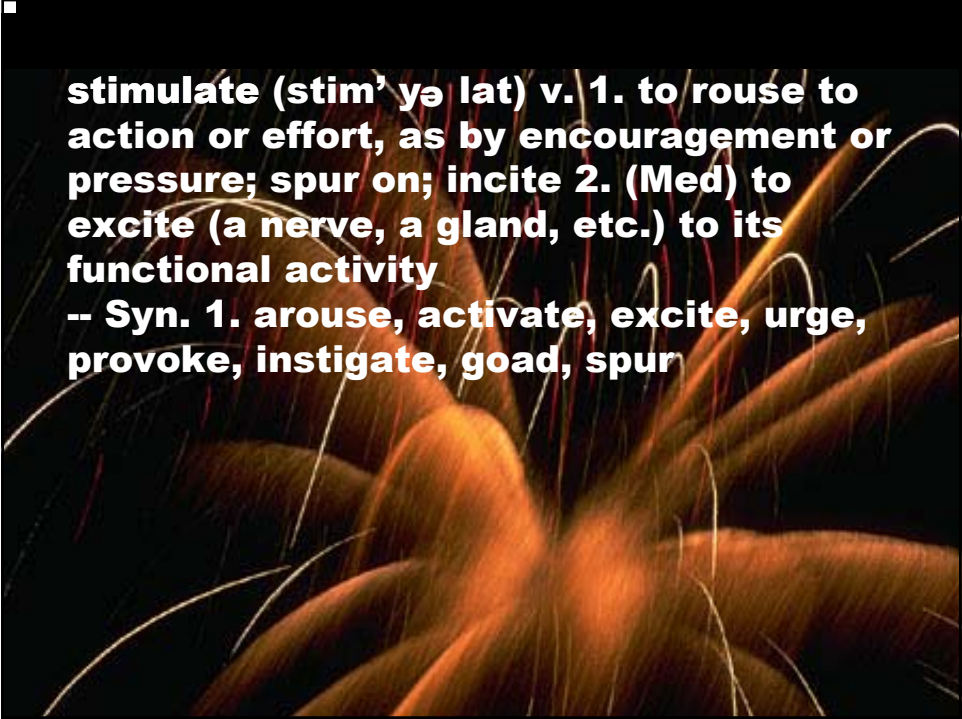
**Ever wonder why some
gifted students don't
seem motivated**



**challenge (chal' inj), n., v., 1. a call to
engage in any contest, as of skill,
strength, etc. 2. something by its**



**nature or
character serves
as a call to battle,
contest, etc. 3. a
call to fight as a
battle, a duel,
etc. 4. a demand
to explain, justify,
etc.**



stimulate (stim' yə lat) v. 1. to rouse to action or effort, as by encouragement or pressure; spur on; incite 2. (Med) to excite (a nerve, a gland, etc.) to its functional activity

-- Syn. 1. arouse, activate, excite, urge, provoke, instigate, goad, spur

Academic Challenge

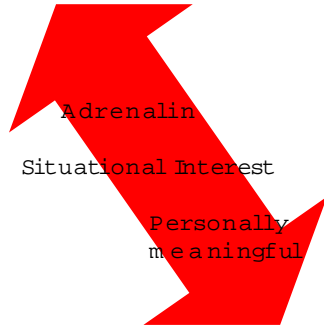
Quest for Mastery

Intellectual Stimulation

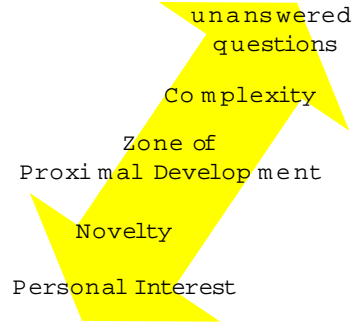
Search for Meaning

Key Features of Intellectual Stimulation

Environment



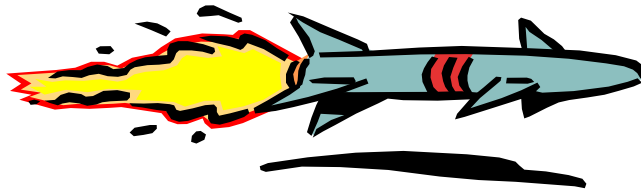
Content



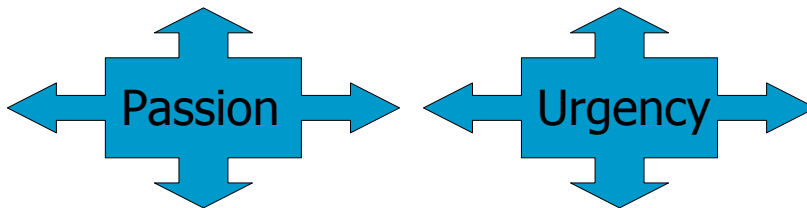
Learner

Dependent upon the learner's past experiences

Adrenalin



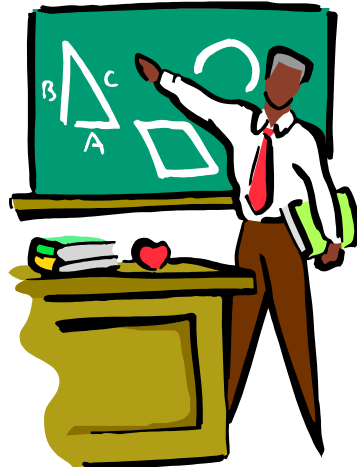
Optimal Arousal Leads to Optimal Human Performance



Situational Interest

Generated by Certain
Conditions or Concrete
Objects in the
Environment

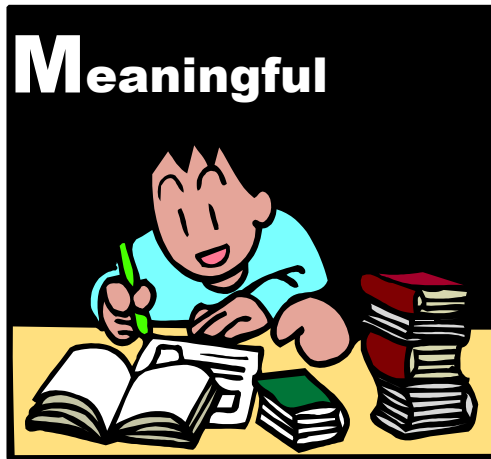
Inductive Based



Personally Meaningful



Connected to
Prior
Knowledge
and Present
Experiences



Integral to Vision of
the Future

Unanswered Questions

A Function of Ambiguity and Complexity

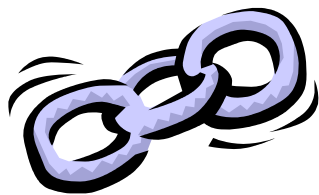


- Promotes Discussion
- Usually Involves Big Ideas
- No Content Ceiling
- Encourages Higher Level Cognition
- Offers Multiple Perspectives
- No Single Path to a Solution
- Definition of the Problem May Vary



Zone of Proximal Development

...an area in which a student will fail alone, but will succeed if given appropriate help and support.



Linking of Prior Knowledge with New Knowledge



Novelty

UNKNOWN

EXTREME

Surprise

Unique or Unusual Presentation



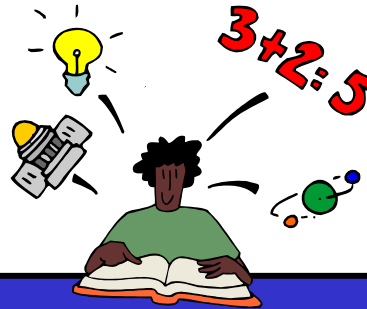
Intrinsic to the Student

Can be Piqued through Exposure but Cannot be Controlled

Personal Interest



Because content is academically challenging does not guarantee that students will find it intellectually stimulating.



- Too little academic challenge, too little intellectual stimulation produces **bored** students.
- Too much academic challenge, too little intellectual stimulation produces **“turned off”** students.
- Too much challenge with adequate intellectual stimulation produces **frustrated** students.
- Optimal challenge combined with intellectual stimulation produces students in a state of **“flow”**.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi coined the term “flow”

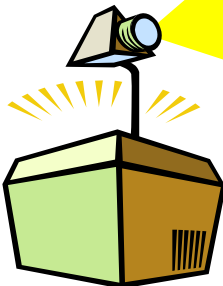
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