

Eight AfL practices that motivate students

The ways in which students respond to assessment information and feedback depends on their experiences of learning and assessment, their identity or self-concept as learners (the learning reputation they have acquired over time, and how they are viewed by their peers and teachers). Negative views of their capabilities need to be addressed. Positive views of themselves as learners can be developed through AfL, when students are taught how to make their own assessment decisions and come to understand their learning gains.

Here are eight practices that help to motivate students:

1. Build positive relationships with students to improve participation. Achieving goals and meeting success criteria leads to students developing a sense of themselves as capable learners.
2. Consider how an assessment is going to assist students to learn, and ensure it does so.
3. Acknowledge students' motivation, experiences, and interests in setting meaningful and challenging goals with them. Goals can be long-term, describing intended progress over a term or year, or short-term, identifying the next step in the learning or how to improve a specific piece of work. Give students opportunities to set their own goals, or explain why particular teacher-set learning goals are important for students.
4. Create explicit success criteria and use these as the basis for descriptive feedback. Students can appreciate feedback that is designed to help them meet their goals. Make feedback descriptive and focused exclusively on the quality and content of the student's work.
5. Use questioning and feedback that supports a student's self-efficacy, so that the student believes they are leading the discussion and solving the problem. This makes students more engaged and increases motivation.
6. Set challenging but attainable targets and get students to keep a record of their achievement to increase their sense of self-efficacy.
7. Show a range of samples rather than only exemplars of the highest level, so that all students can see samples close to their working level.
8. Promote student ownership of learning and student self-assessment to increase engagement. Use assessment as a means to empower learners. Give students access to their own assessment records, and encourage them to engage with them. Involve students in all kinds of feedback loops. By delivering feedback to others, students become more receptive to receiving feedback. For a positive impact on self-esteem, create opportunities for self-assessment that demonstrate improvement.

...and where you could go wrong

- Making AfL teacher-centred rather than student-centred. AfL has to engage students in self-evaluative practices.